



UK PM Johnson facing new 'partygate' claims ahead of India visit



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Jahangirpuri demolition drive: What does the law on encroachment say?



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Lack of traceability of weapons supplied to Ukraine could be a concern for US

With no American or Nato troops on the ground, the Joe Biden-led US administration has no way of knowing how the arms it is supplying to Ukraine are being used. It depends largely on information provided by Kyiv to keep track of its supply. This could become a headache for the US as in case of Afghanistan



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The constitutional amendment proposed by Sri Lanka PM Rajapaksa amid protests

The enactment of the historic 19th Amendment in April 2015 was rushed by the then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. It had removed the powers of the President to sack the Prime Minister at his discretion



(Staff Reporter) One person was killed and 13 others wounded after police opened fire at a group of people protesting against the government in Sri Lanka on Tuesday (April 19). Seeing the likely chances of protests spreading across the country, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has proposed a constitutional amendment – repealing the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, and bringing back clauses of the 19th Amendment as the 21st Amendment to the Constitution. (Contd on page 30)

A far-right rally left Sweden burning. What sparked off the protests?

The protests started after the leader of the anti-immigration and anti-Islam group Stram Kurs, the Danish-Swedish politician Rasmus Paludan announced his plans of burning the Quran



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Joe Biden Nominates Indian-American Diplomat Rachna Sachdeva As His Envoy For Mali

Last month, President Biden announced his intent to nominate Indian-origin diplomat Puneet Talwar as America's ambassador to Morocco

(SAI Bureau) US President Joe Biden has nominated Indian-American diplomat Rachna Sachdeva Korhonen as his envoy to Mali, the White House has said, the third such nomination of an Indian-American in over a month.

A career member of the US Foreign Service, Ms Korhonen currently serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary and the Executive Director of the combined Executive Offices of the State Department's Bureau

of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. She previously was the Consul General and Principal Officer of the US Consulate in Dharan, Saudi Arabia, the White House said in a statement on Friday. She also led the Management Section of the US Embassy in Colombo, and, in Washington, she served as a Special Assistant to the Under Secretary for Management. Among her other assignments, Ms Korhonen was

the Supervisory General Services Officer and Senior Human Resources Officer at the US Embassy in Riyadh, and the Political Chief of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kirkuk, Iraq. She also had assignments at the US Embassy in Kuwait and the US Consulate General in Mumbai, the White House said. Ms Korhonen completed her undergraduate degree in Computer Science and Mathematics and worked in the corporate sector for AT&T, IBM



as well as internet startup Zed announced his intent to nominate before joining the State Indian-origin diplomat Puneet Department. She is from Talwar as America's ambassador Flemington, New Jersey, to Morocco and Indian-origin according to her profile on the US political activist Shefali Razdan State Department's website. Last Duggal as his envoy to the month, President Biden Netherlands.

US Professor Calls India "Sh**hole", Indian Americans Slam Remarks

The US professor also said that the westerners have outgunned and outclassed the Asian Americans in every way



(SAI Bureau) Washington: Leading Indian-Americans, including US Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, have slammed a law professor from University of Pennsylvania for her disparaging comments about the Asian American community, with a specific disdain for Indian-Americans. In a recent interview to Fox News, Prof Amy Wax from the University of Pennsylvania alleged that "Blacks" and "non-Western" groups have "a tremendous amount of resentment and shame against western people for [their] outsized achievements and contributions." "Here's the problem. They're taught that they are better than everybody else because they are Brahmin elites and yet, on some level, their country is a sh**hole," Wax, who has a long history of inflammatory remarks, said. She also said that the westerners have outgunned and outclassed the Asian Americans in every way.

"They've realised that we've outgunned and outclassed

them in every way... They feel anger. They feel envy. They feel shame. It creates ingratitude of the most monstrous kind," she said. Wax then targeted the influential Indian-American doctors' community as well. "They are on the ramparts for the antiracism initiative for 'dump on America,'" she alleged. The comment was condemned by the Indian-Americans across the US.

"After President Trump left office, I thought the days of calling others 'sh**hole' countries were over," Krishnamoorthi said in a tweet. "As an Indian-American immigrant, I'm disgusted to hear this UPenn Professor define Indian-American immigrants, and all non-white Americans, in such insulting terms," he said. Stating that such comments are borne of hatred and fear, he emphasised that such talks make it much harder to accomplish common-sense immigration reform. "Comments like these are borne of hatred and fear, and they lead to real harm for my constituents and our minority communities. They fuel hate crimes against minorities, and they make it much harder to accomplish common-sense immigration reform," Krishnamoorthi said.

Indian-American Law professor Neil Makhiya also

slammed Wax for her comments. It's irresponsible to use your position to lend credibility to these overtly racist sentiments that don't recognise Indian-Americans for who we are," he told Axios. Indian-American Impact is slated to hold a summit next month in DC Makhiya told Axios he's planning to adjust programming to discuss the incident and create solutions against anti-Asian and South Asian hate in educational settings. "The most unfortunate

thing is that we have a lot of brilliant and incredible students at the law school," he told NBC News. "It makes you question whether she can fairly grade or educate," he said.

This is not the first time Wax's controversial comments about race have gone viral, the US media reported. Her appearance on Carlson's show is not the first time Wax has made anti-Asian remarks. In an interview in December, she said that

Indians Americans should be more "grateful" to be in the US and that the country would be "better off with fewer Asians." Penn has confirmed that the school is in the middle of disciplinary proceedings against Wax, NBC News reported. "The University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School has previously made clear that Professor Wax's views do not reflect our values or practices," it quoted a representative as saying.

Indian Navy comes to the rescue of Seychelles Coast Guard crew member seeking medical help

(SAI Bureau) India's indigenously built advanced light helicopter (ALH), operated from the Indian Navy's INS Garuda base in Kochi, successfully completed the medical evacuation of a woman crew member of a Seychelles Coast Guard ship (SCGS), off India's west coast. The patient, who was brought to INS Garuda Naval Air Base in Kochi, was shifted to INHS Sanjivani by ambulance and is said to be in a stable condition. On Thursday morning, SCGS Zoroaster vessel was being escorted by INS Sharda during the former's voyage from Kochi at India's West Coast to Victoria, Seychelles. Around 9.30 am (local time), private Allison Labiche, a crew member onboard the Seychelles' vessel, reported severe abdominal pain and was shifted to INS Sharda by boat, for further medical management and evacuation. In order to facilitate a medical evacuation, the Indian Navy had prepared the ALH and Seaking

42C helicopters at Kochi. At 12.33 pm (local time), the ALH chopper with a Naval medical officer on-board took off from the base and headed towards INS Sharda, which was 15km north of Minicoy Islands, off India's West coast. In a little over four hours, the patient was brought to Kochi for further treatment. Seychelles Peoples Defence Force Ship Zoroaster was on a goodwill visit to Kochi from April 11. Zoroaster is a fast attack craft constructed by the Garden Reach Shipbuilders Engineering (GRSE) Kolkata and presented to Seychelles People's Defence Force in 2021. The ship is on her return passage to Seychelles after participating in multi-lateral exercise MILAN-22 at Visakhapatnam. The ship also visited Kochi in January 2022 during her passage to Visakhapatnam. The visit of Zoroaster to Kochi has enhanced the defence cooperation between the two countries.



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Navy chief on three-day visit to Maldives to boost defence ties



Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar is on a three-day visit to Maldives from April 18 to 20 to boost India's defence ties with the island nation

(SAI Bureau) Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar is on a three-day visit to Maldives from April 18 to 20 to boost India's defence ties with the island nation. During the visit, the Navy

chief called on Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamad Solih, Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid, Defence Minister Mariya Ahmed Didi, and Major General Abdulla Shamaal, the

Chief of Defence Staff (CDF). After his meeting with President Solih, the Indian High Commission in Male tweeted that the Chief of the Naval Staff reiterated India's commitment to enhancing maritime cooperation with the Maldives for a safe and secure Indian Ocean region. "This visit further consolidated the strong and long-standing bilateral relations between two close maritime neighbours and also identified

new avenues of expanding the scope of bilateral cooperation in the defence and maritime domains," the Indian Navy said in a statement. Reaffirming India's commitment to the capacity-building efforts of the island nation, Admiral Kumar presented a consignment of engineering equipment for further sustenance of ships belonging to the Maldives National Defence Forces (MNDF). He also unveiled the first navigation chart

jointly produced by India and the Maldives and handed over certain hydrography equipment to consolidate the organic capabilities of the MNDF. The Navy chief hosted a reception onboard Indian Naval Ship Sutlej on Monday in honour of the Maldivian defence minister and the leadership of the MNDF. This also marks Admiral R Hari Kumar's first visit abroad since taking charge as chief of the Indian Navy in November 2021.

Shefali Duggal, US Prez Biden's envoy to Netherlands, is inspiration for Indian-Americans: community leader

Shefali Duggal (50), was born in Haridwar and moved with her family to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at the age of two. She is now a renowned political activist and US President Joe Biden's envoy to the Netherlands



(SAI Bureau) Indian-American political activist Shefali Razdan Duggal, who has been nominated by US President Joe Biden as his envoy to the Netherlands, is a source of inspiration for South Asians, in particular girls and women, an eminent community leader has said. On March 11, Biden

nominated Duggal as the US Ambassador to the Netherlands. Her nomination is pending before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

SHEFALI'S BACKGROUND

A Kashmiri pandit, Duggal, 50, was born in Haridwar and moved with her family to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at the age of two. She then moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where she grew up and graduated from Sycamore High School. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Mass Communication from Miami University and a Master of Arts degree in Media Ecology from New York University.

"Shefali has been leading our community at National Level in Democrat politics and has inspired so many South Asian

Americans and Americans all over the country to have a seat at the table and play important roles and contribute to the growth of the Democratic Party," community leader Ajay Jain Bhutoria said on Tuesday.

AMBASSADOR TO NETHERLANDS

A national community leader and President Biden's Advisor on Asian American Pacific Islander & Native Hawaiian Commission, Bhutoria was here this week to participate in the White House Easter Egg Hunt festivities as a special guest of First Lady, Dr Jill Biden. "Shefali Razdan Duggal's nomination for appointment by the president as the next ambassador to the Netherlands is a moment of great joy and pride for South

Asians and the entire Indian-American Community. I am so full of happiness to see Shefali being nominated as the next Ambassador to the Netherlands," he said. In its certificate of competency sent to the United States Senate, the State Department said that Duggal's demonstrated commitment to the American democratic process, advancing human rights, coupled with her keen understanding of the need to ensure that all voices are heard in a multi-ethnic society, make her a well-qualified candidate to serve as Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

OBAMA PRAISES SHEFALI

Describing her as "an experienced political activist, women's rights advocate and

human rights campaigner," the State Department said former US president Barack Obama appointed Duggal to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Council, and after her term expired, she has continued to serve as a Western Regional Advisor. She is a San Francisco Committee member of Human Rights Watch, a member of the Wake Forest University Leadership & Character Council and recently completed her term as a National Board Director for Emily's List. In addition, Duggal served on the Board of Advocates for Human Rights First, on the National Advisory Board for Doctors for America and was an Advisory Board Member for Beyond Bollywood (Smithsonian Institution).



Honorable Suresh Prabhu addresses At Pace University on India's role in innovation, entrepreneurship and Education
Jagdish Sewhani Consul General Randhir Jaiswal Suresh Prabhu Parliamentarian, Former Minister Marvin Krislov President Pace University



Jagdish Sewhani Consul General Randhir Jaiswal Suresh Prabhu Parliamentarian, Former Minister Marvin Krislov President Pace University with students of Pace University

Will Rahul Gandhi pick Kanhaiya Kumar as Bihar's next Congress chief?

The Bihar Congress is about to undergo a major organisational overhaul following the resignation of state party president Madan Mohan Jha. Sources said that Kanhaiya Kumar could be the next Bihar Congress president



(SAI Bureau) The Congress's Bihar unit is now charged with appointing a new president following the resignation of Madan Mohan Jha, who held the position for nearly four years. Jha resigned on Thursday in New Delhi after meeting with Rahul Gandhi. Meanwhile, the state Congress has yet to issue an official statement on the development. According to party sources who claim to be in the know, the new state Congress chief will be either a Muslim, a Dalit,

or someone from the upper castes, preferably a Bhumihar.

Party sources also said that Kanhaiya Kumar could appear as a wild card entry if Rahul Gandhi has his way. The former JNU student union president, who joined the party after leaving the CPI less than a year ago, could continue the experiment of infusing new blood that is currently taking place in the Gujarat unit led by Patidar movement leader Hardik Patel.

In addition, the RJD's withdrawal from the Congress is said to be linked to the induction of Kanhaiya, who is

seen as a potential rival to Tejashwi Yadav, as both are roughly the same age and the former is a superior orator, though the latter clearly has advantages in terms of pedigree. Kanhaiya is a 'Bhumihar from a lower middle-class family with the ability to energise young people dissatisfied with the BJP-led NDA. However, there are more experienced caste-men in the race. One of them is Shyam Sundar Singh Dheeraj, the state Congress's current working president. Ajeet Sharma, the legislature party leader, is another potential candidate, according to party sources.

Another upper-caste leader whose name is making the rounds is Vijay Shankar Dubey, a Brahmin leader and one of the state assembly's most articulate members.

The most prominent Dalit name is that of former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar. If elected, she would be the first woman to lead the Bihar Congress. MLA Rajesh Kumar and former legislature party leader Ashok Ram are two other Dalit leaders who could be considered. Among Muslims whose names might be under consideration is Shakil Ahmed Khan, who is an MLA and a national secretary.

Legal notice to AAP MP Raghav Chadha for calling BJP a party of goons

The AAP leader was served a legal notice on Sunday by Punjab BJP Yuva Morcha VP Ashok Sareen, who demanded a written apology from him for calling BJP a party of goons

(SAI Bureau) BJP Yuva Morcha 'Bharat ki jahil party'. The goons and hooligans Punjab vice-president Ashok Sareen on Sunday sent a legal notice to AAP leader Raghav Chadha demanding a written apology from him. Rajya Sabha



member and Delhi Jal board Vice Chairman Raghav Chadha kicked off a press conference, said that controversy by calling the BJP means 'Bharat ki jahil Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) party'. He also said that the as the party of 'goons' and BJP had become a party of

the IPC has demanded a written apology from him. "You have falsely and maliciously lowered the reputation and created ill will against the BJP in the minds of the people of society. The utterances on your part is derogatory, defamatory and tantamount to the character assassination of the entire BJP," the notice said. Ashok Sareen, in the legal notice sent on Sunday, has demanded a written apology from the AAP leader within three days, failing which a civil and criminal complaint will be filed.

Loudspeaker row: Raj Thackeray gives ultimatum, tells 'Hindu patriots' to be prepared by May 3

Giving an ultimatum to mosques to remove loudspeakers by May 3, Raj Thackeray asks Hindu patriots to be prepared to play Hanuman chalisa in front of mosques

(SAI Bureau) Raising the pitch for Hindutva, MNS president Raj Thackeray asked Hindu brothers to "be prepared" if loudspeakers are not removed from mosques by May 3. "I wish all the Hindu patriots of this country to stay till May 3 and after May 3, whatever mosques across the country will not take out loudspeakers, play Hanuman Chalisa in front of that mosque. If given, we will play Hanuman Chalisa 5 times," said Raj Thackeray while addressing the journalists at the MNS city office in Pune on Sunday.

He had raised the issue of Hindutva with great fervor from Gudi Padwa, the beginning of the Hindu New Year. Remove the loudspeaker from the mosque or else Hanuman Chalisa will play. Since then, the issue of loudspeakers has heated up. Stating that the loudspeaker issue is more a social issue than a religious one, Raj Thackeray said his party doesn't want peace in

society to be disturbed, "but if the use of loudspeakers continues, then the Muslims will also have to listen to our prayers on loudspeakers". "We do not want to end anyone's prayer, or are not even against it. We want the loudspeakers above the mosques, which are illegal. They should just remove them. And the clerics of mosques, who feel that their religion is bigger than this country and law and order, then it is not like that", he added. Talking about the rules for installing loudspeakers, Raj Thackeray said that the rules should be the same for all. Raj Thackeray said, "If someone takes out a political rally, then permission is required for loudspeakers, and who gives permission for azaan five times a day?" According to him, "If there was a festival of Ganpati or Navratri, then we had to get permission for loudspeaker. So who has given permission to play the loudspeaker at the mosque 5 times?"

Major fire breaks out at chemical factory in Haryana, rescue ops on

A major fire broke out in a chemical factory in Sonipat on Sunday. Rescue operations are underway

A major fire broke out in a chemical factory in the Kundli area of Sonipat in Haryana on Sunday. The Delhi fire services have sent their fire fighting forces for rescue operation at the special request of the Haryana government. The cause of the fire has not been identified yet. Meanwhile, rescue operations are underway.

Farmer unions meet Bhagwant Mann, seek compensation for damaged wheat crop

Farmers' leader Jagjit Dallewal said that CM Bhagwant Mann has assured them of help and the decision on the compensation and MSP on various crops will be taken after an assessment

(News Agency) Leaders of 23 farmer unions met Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Sunday and demanded a compensation of Rs 500 per quintal for the damaged wheat crop.

Farmer leader Jagjit Dallewal, while speaking to the media, said that the chief minister has assured them all help and the decision on the compensation and MSP on various crops, including maize, basmati rice and pulses will be taken after an assessment. A second meeting between the farmers' union and the chief minister has been scheduled for next week. In a bid to effectively check the fast depleting water table, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann exhorted the farmers to go for Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR) technology in a big way during the current Kharif Season.

Chairing a meeting of Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) led by its coordinator Dr Darshan Pal here at Punjab Bhawan this afternoon, Bhagwant Mann sought input from the

representatives of 23 farmers' organisations present in the meeting to suggest the state government for providing staggered power supply to the agriculture sector thus facilitating the farmers for sowing paddy through DSR technique and the conventional paddy transplantation.

The chief minister said the proposed staggered power supply would help in avoiding the peak load during the paddy sowing season. He also suggested ensuring equitable power supply through PSPCL as per region-wise demand, thus dividing the entire state into four zones. Mann also directed the officers to visit the villages to encourage farmers to adopt the DSR technique during the ensuing paddy season to save water and electricity. Showing concern over the findings of a study conducted by PAU experts, the Chief Minister said that it is a high time to shift from the paddy

transplantation to the eco-friendly and economically viable DSR technique, which would go a long way in saving the groundwater up to 15-20 per cent,



besides enhancing and recharging the underground water by 10-15 per cent and saving nearly Rs 3000 per acre on input costs, including labour. Motivating the farmers to opt for diversification of agriculture by sowing alternative crops like sugarcane, maize, pulses and oilseeds, Bhagwant Mann assured them that the state government would soon take up the issue of giving MSP on these crops with the Centre adding state

agencies like Markfed would also be roped in for procurement of aforesaid alternative crops on MSP.

Mann also urged the farmers to go for sowing of paddy varieties viz. PR 126 and PR 121 with a short duration of maturity, while the cultivation of Pusa 144 should be discouraged. Bhagwant Mann also asked the representatives of farmers' unions to encourage the farmers at the ground level to sow basmati as it was a less water-intensive crop and fetches a remunerative price as compared to paddy. He also assured the farmers that the state government would extend all possible marketing support for the purchase of basmati.

Emphasising the need for restoration of the canal irrigation system, the Chief Minister directed the Water Resources department to immediately chalk out a detailed action programme for the cleaning of water channels, distributaries and canals to ensure smooth flow of water up to the tail ends.



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Jahangirpuri violence: Special CP replies to why people belonging to same community arrested

In the Delhi's Jahangirpuri violence case, the police have arrested all the 14 accused named in the FIR. All these accused belong to the same community. Here is what Delhi Special CP has to say about it

(SAI Bureau) So far, 20 people have been arrested in the Delhi Jahangirpuri violence case, who belong to the same community. After the arrest of the accused of the same community, questions have been raised about this action of the police. When asked, the Special CP of Delhi Police, Deependra Pathak said that some footage of swords and guns waving during the procession has been found, on which further action will be taken after investigation. When the question was asked to the Special CP that 20 people have been arrested in the case so far who belong to only one community, why



is it so, Deependra Pathak said, "This is a very early stage and more action will be taken after that. The investigation continues". Deependra Pathak said that talks are being held with the Aman Committee to maintain a peace and cordial atmosphere in the

area. Guidelines have also been issued to some members of the Aman Committee to maintain peace in the defeat hall. He told that all the accused named in the FIR registered in the case have been arrested. On the other hand, Delhi Police claimed that

cases are already registered against Ansar, on February 20, 2009. At the main conspirator of the Jahangirpuri violence case. According to the Delhi Police, two cases of assault and several cases of gambling are registered against Ansar. 35-year-old Ansar is a resident of Jahangirpuri B Block. He was also arrested repeatedly under other sections, including two cases of assault. Along with this, a case was registered against him under the Gambling and Arms Act 5 times. Police said that further investigation is on. Mohammad Ansar was born in the slum of Jahangirpuri in 1980. Ansar's dossier

was prepared by the police at that time Ansar was arrested, he had a knife with him. According to the dossier, two cases are already registered against Ansar. In the first case, he was arrested with a knife and a section of the Arms Act was imposed against it.

The second case is of July 2018. Section 186/353 IPC (assault on government servant and obstructing government work) was imposed against Ansar. Ansar's profession has been described as a junkyard. It was told in the dossier that Ansar has studied till the fourth standard.

Pvt players now eligible to get de-mined coal land on lease for energy infrastructure projects

The Union Cabinet gave its nod to using land allocated to coal mines that have completed their lives, for creating coal and energy infrastructure



and under the coal bearing areas (acquisition and development) act, 1957, an opening has been made for the private sector. The move comes after the February 2018 decision of the Cabinet clearing the opening up of commercial coal mining for the private sector, which is considered the most ambitious coal sector reform since the nationalisation of this sector in 1973. A coal ministry source said that most of this land being unlocked is in coal mining areas. Private players who have power plants in these areas used to face problems with setting up secondary facilities like conveyor belts or coal washing for the plant. With the Cabinet's nod, private power players can't set up facilities. "To ensure that the land is used for specific purposes, the cabinet clearance comes with a caveat. These lands leased out to private players cannot be used for developing infrastructure like a residential colony or industrial complex," he said. One of the

key reasons why the government green flagged the policy is that the land tracts, which cannot be mined for coal, are prone to unauthorised encroachment. Also, coal companies that own the land have to keep spending money on maintenance and security. The ownership of land that is no longer suitable or economically viable for coal mining activities or those from which coal has been mined out/de-coaled will not change. Instead, they would only be leased out. That means private players would not become owners of the land. A government statement had said that state-owned coal companies, like Coal India Ltd (CIL) and its subsidiaries, will remain the owners of the land acquired under the CBA Act, and the policy allows only leasing of the land for the specified purposes. The policy entails the deployment of private capital in joint projects for coal and energy-related infrastructure by the state coal

companies. As per the policy cleared by the cabinet, any leased out land will be considered for activities such as setting up coal washeries, conveyor systems, establishing coal-handling plants, constructing railway sidings, rehabilitation and resettlement of project-affected families due to acquisition of land under the CBA Act or other land acquisition law, setting up thermal and renewable power projects and setting up or providing for coal development-related infrastructure, including compensatory afforestation. The entities for leasing will be selected through a transparent, fair and competitive bid process and mechanism to achieve optimal value. The company that owns the land would lease out the land for only a specific period mandated by the policy for the establishment of various coal and energy-related infrastructure, without transfer of ownership from government companies.

(SAI Bureau) The government has green flagged the entry of the private sector to yet another avenue of coal mining in India. On Wednesday, the Union Cabinet cleared a policy move to use land allocated to coal mines that have completed their lives, for creating coal and energy infrastructure.

Top coal ministry sources told India Today TV that the key decision taken in the cabinet was to make the private sector eligible to be given de-coaled land on lease from public sector coal companies like Coal India. The source said that while

large tracts are available for such activities in the first tranche, over 3200 hectares will be further made available. The source said that the government considered and cleared a proposal "for granting of the lease by land owing PSUs and coal companies to other CPSUs, state governments and private entities for the development of coal infrastructure and coal development activities without change in ownership. Sources in Coal India Ltd, the largest coal mining company in India, said that the central and state entities were already on the eligible list

Here's why Punjab govt's free power scheme will only benefit a section of consumers

Here are some of the reasons why the Punjab government's free electricity scheme will only benefit a subset of customers



exceeds 601 units. Families who live in multistorey houses with a single electricity metre will also be excluded from the free power scheme. These families will be unable to benefit from the scheme as their consumption will exceed 600 units in a billing cycle.

Opposition parties target AAP

Opposition parties such as the Shiromani Akali Dal and the BJP, which had previously expressed concern that the free power unit scheme would come with a catch, have accused the government of treating general category consumers in a stepmotherly manner.

The Bhartiya Janata Party has asked the chief minister to clarify whether the party's first guarantee was intended to benefit only a specific segment of the consumer. The Chief Minister should inform the public whether the general

category of consumers does not have families. The government, by cleverly putting the rider, has betrayed the general category of consumers," BJP leader Subhash Sharma stated.

Free power likely to increase power consumption

Meanwhile, PSPCL officials have hinted that the free power scheme will result in increased power consumption. Customers who previously received 150 free power units will now get an additional 150 units per month. The state government believes that the free power unit scheme will directly benefit 62.25 lakh power consumers. According to officials, out of a total of 73.80 lakh domestic power consumers, 62.25 consume less than 300 units per month. This represents 84 per cent of all domestic consumers.

Free power scheme to add Rs 6,000 crore burden on

exchequer

According to Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) officials, the free electricity scheme will cost the state exchequer close to Rs 6,000 crore per year. According to estimates, the subsidy will amount to half of the PSPCL's revenue. If the subsidy is not released on time, the PSPCL will face a resource shortfall. PSPCL's annual revenue is estimated to be around Rs 34,000 crores, with loan interest accounting for Rs 1,400 crore. The total subsidy bill for the state is nearly Rs 13,000 crore, which will now rise to Rs 19,000 crore. In addition, the state government has yet to release Rs 7,000 crores as a subsidy. Several state governments owe PSPCL Rs 1,300 crore. PSPCL is mired in massive debt, owing banks Rs 17,500 crores. It recently raised a Rs 100 crore loan to bridge the demand-supply gap.

(Staff Reporter) The Punjab government has finally announced the launch of its free power scheme. The 600 free power units will be distributed over a two-month billing cycle beginning July 1, 2022. Domestic consumers in the general category, on the other hand, will have to pay for the free units if their consumption exceeds 600 units. These customers will be required to pay for free units if they consume more than 600 units in a billing cycle. In other

words, the government has imposed a condition on the general category of consumers. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, while announcing the scheme, urged general category consumers to consume less power in order to reap the benefits of the free power units scheme. The scheme will benefit Dalits, backward classes, and freedom fighters who already receive 200 free units and will be exempt from paying for 600 units if their consumption

Senior Congress leaders have 'secret' understanding with BJP: Ripun Bora's scathing resignation letter

In his resignation letter submitted to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, Ripun Bora mentioned detailed reasons as to why he was "compelled to resign



(Staff Reporter) Former Assam Congress chief and former Rajya Sabha MP Ripun Bora resigned from the party and joined the Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Sunday in the presence of TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee.

Ripun Bora took to Twitter to announce his joining. "From today I have started my new political journey!" he wrote. He is the second big name from Assam Congress to join TMC. Sushmita Dev had joined TMC earlier and was sent

to Rajya Sabha from Bengal by the party. While thanking the party in his resignation letter to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, Ripun Bora mentioned the details as to why he was "compelled to take such a harsh decision

of resigning from the party." He wrote, "...Instead of fighting unitedly and aggressively to prevent BJP at this critical juncture of the country, the leaders of this grand old party at different levels are fighting with each other for their vested interest."

He added, "After a devastating defeat in Assam Assembly elections in 2016, you gave me the responsibility of Assam PCC chief. Since then I have been devoting tremendous hardwork to revive the party...

But due to continuous inner fighting by a section of senior most leaders of the Assam PCC, people lost faith in us and did not give us the mandate to form the government." He further added that it was unfortunate that some

party leaders "played role in such a manner which paved the way for the BJP's win in both Rajya Sabha seats."

"I am very pained to inform you that it is an open secret in Assam that instead of fighting against BJP, a section of senior most leaders of Assam PCC have been maintaining a secret understanding with the BJP government," he added. He concluded his letter by saying that because of all these reasons "his conscience does not allow him to continue working for the Congress. "However, in coming days, I shall continue my fight more vigorously against the BJP, to protect democracy, secularism and the Constitution of our country," he said.

Senior Army Commanders to assess national security challenges, Ukraine war impact in 5-day conference

The senior leadership of the Indian Army is set to review the operational situation along active borders and also assess the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war at the Army Commanders' Conference scheduled from April 18-22 in New Delhi

(Staff Reporter) Top Army Commanders are set to review India's national security challenges along the active borders, assess threats as well as the geo-political impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on the region in a five-day conference which has been scheduled from April 18-22, 2022 in New Delhi.

The Army Commanders' Conference is an apex level biannual event which is held in April and October every year. It is also an institutional platform for conceptual level deliberations, culminating in making important policy decisions for the Indian Army.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is expected to interact with senior army commanders and address the conference on April 21. During the conference, the



senior leadership of the Indian Army will review the operational situation along the active borders, assess threats in the entire spectrum of conflict and

undertake analysis of capability voids to further focus on capability development and operational preparedness plans.

Discussions on aspects

pertaining to infrastructure development in border areas, modernisation through indigenisation, induction of niche tech and assessment on any

impact of the Russia - Ukraine war are also scheduled, the Army said. Additionally, various agenda points sponsored by regional commands will also be deliberated upon by the senior commanders, apart from proposals concerning improving works, financial management, introducing e-vehicles, and digitisation in the Indian Army. As part of the conference, Boards of Governors meetings of the Army Welfare Education Society (AWES) and Army Group Insurance Fund (AGIF) will be organised. The conference is also a formal forum for senior leadership of the Indian Army to interact with the senior functionaries of the Department of Military Affairs and Department of Defence during the MoD Interaction Session

Divorced Muslim woman can claim maintenance as long as she does not remarry: Allahabad High Court

Allahabad High Court held that a divorced Muslim woman can claim maintenance from her husband under section 125 of Criminal Procedure Code until she remarries



woman is entitled to maintenance under section 3 and section 4 of the Act, she is not entitled to get maintenance under section 125 of CrPC. Importantly, the court had said that since the wife has accepted the divorce, she would be guided by the provisions of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act. The petition filed by her seeking maintenance under section 125 of CrPC will not be maintainable. Allahabad High Court noted that the provisions under Section 125 CrPC have beneficial laws and the benefits should be available to divorced Muslim women. Further, relying on Shabana Bano case, the court concluded that divorced Muslim women shall be entitled to claim maintenance from her husband even after the expiry of the period of iddat under section 125 of CrPC only until she remarries.

(Staff Reporter) Allahabad High Court on Monday held that a divorced Muslim woman can claim maintenance from her husband under section 125 of Criminal Procedure Code until she remarries. A woman is entitled to claim maintenance from her husband even after the expiry of the 'iddat' period.

According to Islamic law, a divorced woman has to wait during the 'iddat' period for about three months before she can remarry. Hearing the matter, a division bench of Justice Karunesh Singh Pawar made the observation while modifying the order of

the trial court passed in January 2007 and also allowed the review petition filed against the order passed by the Additional Sessions Judge, Pratapgarh in May 2008. A Muslim woman had moved to the trial court seeking maintenance for herself and her two minor children. The trial court awarded maintenance to them from the date of the order had passed. The husband then challenged the trial court order before the Additional Session Judge (ASJ), Pratapgarh, by filing a revision plea. The Additional Session Judge then overturned the order saying since a divorced Muslim

Objectionable remarks against Dalits

Deadline ends as Sunil Jakhar does not respond to Congress's show cause notice

(Staff Reporter) Former Punjab Congress President Sunil Jakhar is in no mood to reply to the show cause notice sent by the party high command as the deadline to file his reply ended on Monday. The party's disciplinary action committee, DAC, had issued a show cause notice to Sunil Jakhar last week for alleged anti-party activities and using "objectionable words" towards the Dalit community. Jakhar had been given a week's time to file his reply.

Speaking to India Today, former President Sunil Jakhar said, "I have not responded yet". He refused to comment further. For the past few weeks, Sunil Jakhar has been quite vocal against former CM Charanjit Singh Channi and had even said that Channi had been a liability to the party. He had even criticised the former CM Channi on Twitter. "An asset - r u joking ? Thank God he wasn't declared a 'National Treasure' at CWC by the 'Pbi' lady who proposed him as CM in first place May be an asset for her but for the party he

has been only a liability. Not the top brass, but his own greed pulled him and the party down," he had tweeted. Additionally, Jakhar's remark on the Dalit community had sparked a row against him as senior dalit leaders and former Cabinet Minister Raj Kumar Verma and Charanjit Singh Channi hit Jakhar back. Recently, Channi had even met Rahul Gandhi over the remarks made by Jakhar against him. The three-time MLA and one-time MP Jakhar had also triggered a controversy claiming that he was not considered as chief ministerial face of the party, since he belonged to the Hindu community in the state where Sikhs are in the majority, as compared to being in the minority across the country.

Factionalism and internal rift continues in the party as former Congress President Navjot Singh Sidhu met Jakhar at his place on April 15 while skipping the maiden function held in Amritsar by the newly-appointed state party chief, Amarinder Singh Raja Warring.

Cops in riot gear, drones surveil Jahangirpuri as Delhi Police arrests 25

Two more arrests were made today by the Delhi Police, taking the tally to 25 so far. Of the two arrested, one is Sonu Sheikh, the man who was caught on camera firing at the crowd



WHAT HAPPENED ON SATURDAY

Clashes broke out during a Hanuman Jayanti procession in Delhi's Jahangirpuri area on Saturday, injuring nine policemen and a civilian. The investigation of the clashes has been handed over to the Crime Branch and 14 teams have been formed so far to probe the case, Rakesh Asthana said, adding that four forensics teams have also visited the spot to gather evidence. The police are also ravaging through the mounting digital evidence; over 150 videos and social media posts are under their scanner. CCTV footage and digital inputs are being probed as well. The arrests have also been made based on

these videos. The Delhi top cop has vowed legal action against those who spread fake news on social media. "We are analysing the social media and if required, those spreading false news, misinformation or tweeting any rumour with an intention of disturbing the environment will not be spared and legal action will be taken against them," he said. Several videos from the spot showed people walking in the procession brandishing swords and firearms - a punishable offence in India. Several weapons have been seized by the Delhi Police, which takes orders from the central government.

(Staff Reporter) Two more arrests were made today by the Delhi Police in the Jahangirpuri violence case, taking the tally to 25 so far. Of the two, one reportedly has admitted to supplying glass bottles to rioters to throw at the procession and the other is Sonu Sheikh, the man who was caught on camera opening fire at the crowd. Fresh violence erupted in the area this afternoon after Sonu Sheikh's wife was picked up for interrogation by the police. Around 50 women gathered to protest and began throwing stones, India Today TV's reporter witnessed. This was before Sheikh's arrest this evening. Sheikh's family members threw stones at the police when they went to his house looking for him, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (North-West Delhi) told India Today TV. "Legal action is being taken. One person has been detained," an official told

India Today TV.

Heavy security deployment has been made in the area to maintain law and order. Security personnel, including many in anti-riot gear, swarmed the streets. Over 500 personnel from the Delhi Police, besides additional contingents from other forces, patrolled the area, a senior police officer said, reported news agency PTI. The personnel are armed with teargas guns and water cannons, he said, adding, drones are being used in sensitive areas for rooftop surveillance.

DELHI TOP COP'S MEDIA BRIEFING

Several politicians and social media users have been alleging that some people tried to hoist a saffron flag on a local mosque in Jahangirpuri, which led to stone pelting and violence. However, rubbing the claims, Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana said that no

such attempts were made and that people from both communities have been arrested in the case. Those involved in the violent clashes will not be spared irrespective of their class, creed or religion, he asserted at a media briefing.

CASE AGAINST ORGANISERS A case has been registered against the organisers of the rally that turned violent on Saturday. Members of right-wing organisations VHP and Bajrang Dal have been booked for the clashes.

The Delhi Police said that of the three rallies on Hanuman Jayanti, two had prior police permission and were peacefully conducted. Violence erupted during the third procession, which did not have a permit, they said.

UNION HOME MINISTER CALLS FOR STRICT ACTION

Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke with officers of the Delhi Police this evening and directed them to take strict action on the accused. The action taken against rioters must set a precedent, the Home Minister reportedly told officers. On Saturday, too, the Home Minister spoke with the Commissioner and the Special Commissioner of the Delhi Police, directing them to take all necessary action to restore normalcy in the area and act swiftly to identify and arrest those responsible for the violence.

POLITICAL BLAME GAME Delhi BJP leaders have persistently alleged that the key accused in the case is linked to the Aam Aadmi Party. In a letter

to AAP chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor demanded that the accused be expelled from the party.

After intense rounds of blame and counter-blame, AAP minister Satyendar Jain said, "I think he (the accused) must be linked to the BJP since the saffron party knows the inside story."

The Aam Aadmi Party said those involved in the violence must be meted out the "strictest punishment" and Union Home Minister Amit Shah should take steps to improve the law and order situation of the national capital. CPI(M) politburo members, including Brinda Karat, have alleged that the Hanuman Jayanti procession was armed with "swords, lathis and firearms".

Imran Khan's party picks new 'premier' of Pak-occupied Kashmir, India rejects elections

India has rejected sharply after Imran Khan's PTI party elected regional president Sardar Tanveer Ilyas as the new "premier" of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

(Staff Reporter) Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's regional president Sardar Tanveer Ilyas was on Monday elected as new "premier" of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in an election boycotted by the Opposition. Khan nominated Ilyas as the party's candidate after his hand-picked "premier" Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi resigned on Thursday following a revolt in the ruling party against him. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) jointly fielded Chaudhry Yasin against Ilyas.

The united opposition boycotted the session for the election of the prime minister, leaving no candidate in the race against Ilyas. The PTI leader secured 33

votes in his favour, the Dawn newspaper reported. Niazi had resigned on Thursday after 25 lawmakers of his party moved a resolution of no-confidence motion against him. His ouster came days after Khan lost a no-confidence vote in the National Assembly, becoming the first Pakistan prime minister to be removed unceremoniously from power. Niazi came to power last year after PTI secured 32 seats in the 53-member House. India had rejected the elections in PoK, saying the "cosmetic exercise" was nothing but an attempt by Pakistan to "camouflage its illegal occupation". Reacting strongly on the elections in the PoK, Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Arindam

Bagchi had said that Pakistan has "no locus standi on these Indian territories" and it must vacate all Indian areas under its illegal occupation. "The so-called elections in Indian territory under the illegal occupation of Pakistan are nothing but an attempt by Pakistan to camouflage its illegal occupation and the material changes undertaken by it in these territories," he had said. "Such an exercise can neither hide the illegal occupation by Pakistan nor the grave human rights violations, exploitation, and denial of freedom to people in these occupied territories," Bagchi said. The ruling party lawmakers had charged Niazi with "loss of the trust of the parliamentary party,

failure to highlight Kashmir issue and implement party manifesto in addition to bad governance, nepotism and violation of merit". Ilyas is a billionaire and he was favourite for the post of the prime minister last year after the PTI won elections. But Khan appointed little-known Niazi, leaving many PTI lawmakers wondering at the choice. Many observers believe that Ilyas's wealth is more than anything that has forced Khan to change his mind after his removal through a no-confidence vote. Financial support of the party's rich leaders would be critical for PTI to make a come back at the national level through elections which may be held by the end of the year

BJP, associates trying to create 'communal situation' in country, says Sharad Pawar

The BJP and its associates are trying to create "communal situation" in the country, NCP chief Sharad Pawar alleged against the backdrop of violence in several states on Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti



(Staff Reporter) The BJP and its associates are trying to create "communal situation" in the country, NCP chief Sharad Pawar alleged on Monday, comments coming in the backdrop of violence in several states during Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti celebrations and the issue of

loudspeakers atop mosques raging in Maharashtra. On the other hand, the NCP, a constituent of the Shiv Sena-led MVA government in the state, was at the forefront of creating an atmosphere of harmony among people, he said.

In a series of tweets, Pawar said spread of communal ideology is a "matter of concern" and added the NCP will also flag issues relating to common citizens such as rise in prices of petrol, diesel, gas and edible oil.

"The BJP and its associates are trying to create communal situation in the country. We are taking part in works of creating awareness among the people and creating atmosphere to ensure harmony among them," Pawar tweeted in Marathi.

States like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat

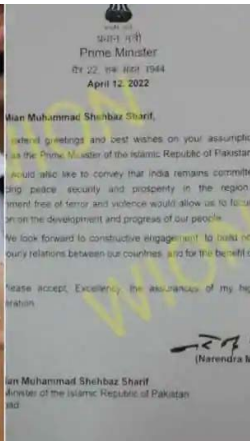
and Jharkhand saw violence during Ram Navami, while clashes broke out during a Hanuman Jayanti procession in the Delhi's Jahangirpuri area on Saturday in which nine policemen and a civilian were injured.

In Maharashtra, MNS chief Raj Thackeray has asked the MVA government to remove loudspeakers from mosques by May 3, citing noise pollution, and threatened to play Hanuman Chalisa outside mosques in a higher volume if his demand was not met. The BJP has supported Raj Thackeray's demand. Without naming anyone, the former Union Agriculture minister also said on the micro-blogging site that many leaders have expressed a wish to bring together parties opposed

to the BJP. He said West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has informed him about it in writing. "She is expecting (Maharashtra) Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and me to take initiative in this regard. We will make the final decision after speaking to other leaders. But no date has been fixed yet (for such a meeting)," he added.

Pawar, who visited Bengaluru on Monday, said the NCP is building its organisation at the national-level and noted Karnataka, where assembly polls are due in 2023, is one of the states where the party's base is weak. Pawar added he or his party colleagues will visit the BJP-ruled southern state in between over the next year to expand its activities and base there.

PM Narendra Modi asks Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif to 'build normal neighbourly relations'



development and progress of our people". New Delhi has multiple times raised the issue of cross border terrorism from Pakistan and Islamabad's support to anti-India terror groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed.

Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif had reciprocated and written back to PM Modi on Saturday (April 16). In his letter, PM Sharif had called for "meaningful engagement" between the two countries but linked it with the "resolution of all outstanding disputes, including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir". While the comments on Kashmir are a reiteration of Islamabad's long-standing policy, the lack of rhetoric seen under Imran Khan's

Prime Ministership could become an opening for any future peace talks. In the letter, Shehbaz Sharif, who has also been the longest-serving chief minister of Pakistan's Punjab province said, "We believe that peaceful and cooperative ties between Pakistan and India are imperative for progress and socio-economic uplift of our people and the region". In the letter mentioning the issue of terror, he said, "our sacrifices and contribution in fighting and eliminating terrorism are well known and globally acknowledged."

Since taking charge, both sides have seen exchanges on Twitter as well. On April 11 PM

Modi had tweeted a congratulatory message to Sharif, who had reciprocated with a message stating that Pakistan desires peaceful and cooperative ties with India, on April 12.

No formal talks have happened between India and Pakistan for years now. After India removed special status for the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan had suspended train and road linkages and recalled its envoy.

Currently, Indian and Pakistani missions in their respective countries work at half the strength and at the deputy envoy level. Pakistan also suspended trade ties, barring Pharma products.

(Staff Reporter) In a letter congratulating Pakistan's New Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Indian PM Narendra Modi has asked him to build "normal neighbourly relations" between the two countries which will be for "the benefit of the region". The letter was sent last week after PM Sharif took charge as the new Pakistani prime minister after Imran Khan lost a vote of confidence in the National Assembly.

The letter sent on April 12 called for "constructive engagement" reminding the Pakistani side that "India remains committed to advancing peace, security and prosperity in the region". By protocol and tradition, Indian PMs have written/spoken to the incoming leader of Pakistan. In 2013, the then Indian PM Manmohan Singh had written to then-PM Nawaz Sharif and in 2019, PM Modi had

spoken to then-PM Imran Khan after his victory in the elections. PM Modi in the letter to the new Pakistani PM also raised the issue of terror calling for "an environment free of terror and violence" which would allow "us to focus our attention on the

Rising fuel prices: Auto, taxi, mini bus drivers in Delhi on 2-day strike

(Staff Reporter) In the wake of increased fuel prices, various auto-rickshaw, cab, and taxi unions in the national capital went on strike on Monday, demanding a CNG subsidy and fare revisions. Later in the day, the Delhi Auto Rickshaw Sangh would organise a protest outside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence in Civil Lines to stress their demands, according to General Secretary Rajendra Soni. On Monday morning, city commuters had difficulty finding taxis and autos. Despite the fact that automobiles were available on the Ola and Uber applications, the fares were exorbitant. To mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices,

the auto and cab drivers' unions have demanded a rate increase and a reduction in CNG pricing. Despite the Delhi government's announcement that a committee would be formed to discuss a fare revision in a timely manner, they refused to call off their strike.

"Our strike has started and it will continue throughout the day. CNG has become costlier, and we cannot keep running our business on losses. We should either be provided a subsidy of Rs 35 per kg on CNG or fares should be hiked," Delhi Auto Rickshaw Sangh General Secretary Rajendra Soni said. The city's public



transportation system is supplemented by over 90,000 automobiles and over 80,000 registered taxis.

The coal crisis in the state-owned Uttar Pradesh Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam continues as only 26 per cent of the coal is left in stock

(Staff Reporter) Amidst the shortage of coal in thermal power stations, the power crisis may deepen in the densely populated state of Uttar Pradesh as only one-fourth of the coal stock is left in the state, which is way below the required level. Sources said that in the first fortnight of April, the demand for electricity increased due to scorching heat. The coal crisis in the state-owned Uttar Pradesh Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam continues as only 26 per cent of the coal that should be in stock is left.

In the last 38 years, the demand for electricity was highest in the month of April this year. While there was a power shortage of 1.1 per cent in the month of October due to the coal crisis, it was 1.4 per cent in the first fortnight of April. In Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Jharkhand, Haryana, there are power cuts ranging from 3 to 8.7 per cent. In UP, Anpara Thermal Power Project of 2,630 MW capacity is situated at the mouth of coal mine. Normally there should be 17 days of reserve coal. The other projects are Harduaganj of 1,265 MW, Obra of 1,094 MW and Parichha of 1,140 MW.

Since the coal is not at the mouth of the mine, there should be a coal stock for 26 days as per the standard norm. According to records, 5,96,700 tonnes of coal should be in stock in Anpara whereas at present there is only 3,28,100 tonnes of coal. Similarly, Harduaganj should have 4,97,000 tonnes of coal in stock but now there is only 6,5700 tonnes of coal. Obra should have 4,45,800 tonnes of coal while there is only 1,00,500 tonnes of coal. In Parichha there should be 4,30,800 tonnes of coal in stock whereas only 12,900 tonnes of coal is

left. In contrast to about 19,69,800 tonnes on all four thermal power projects, only 5,11,700 tonnes of coal is left in stock which is less than the standard norm. Speaking to India Today, Shailendra Dubey, Chairman of All India Power Engineers Federation said that as per Central Electricity Authority's latest daily coal report, the coal stock at 81 out of a total of 150 thermal power stations using domestic coal is critical. The condition of the private sector thermal plants is equally bad as the coal stock of 28 out of 54 plants is in a critical stage. Dubey said that in Uttar Pradesh the demand for electricity has reached 21,000 MW and the supply is around 19,000-20,000 MW. Union Power Minister RK Singh has blamed the steep rise in the prices of imported coal due to the Russia-Ukraine war for the coal crisis as well as the lack of adequate availability of railway wagons to transport coal to power stations. To supply coal to thermal power stations, 453 rakes are required, as against 379 rakes available in the first week of April. Also, coal inventories held by Indian power plants remain tight at nine days' worth of stock as of mid-April and could result in power outages. If coal supplies do not improve, this could become another "stagflationary

Shivraj Singh Chouhan dials parents of 16-year-old wounded in Khargone violence

(Staff Reporter) Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday spoke to the parents of the 16-year-old boy who was grievously wounded in the violence that erupted in Khargone on Ram Navami. Shivam, a resident of Khargone's Zamindar Mohalla, is battling for his life at a hospital in Indore after sustaining injuries to his skull when the Ram Navami procession he was a part of descended into chaos there was stone-pelting, clashes and arson. In a telephonic conversation with Shivam's parents, Chouhan enquired how the teenager was holding up. Shivam's father said his condition has improved over the last couple of days. Shivam's father also broached the



subject of his daughter's marriage with the chief minister. His mother also spoke of the same. To this, Chouhan assured all possible help in arranging her nuptials. Referring to himself by the popular monicker of "Mamaji", Chouhan said he would get Shivam's sister happily married off. He also called her his "niece". Khargone had witnessed communal clashes on Ram Navami last Sunday wherein stones were hurled, vehicles torched and some houses damaged, leading to the clamping of curfew in the entire city. At least 24 people, including six policemen, were injured in the violence.

BMC rejects Narayan Rane's regularisation proposal for Juhu bungalow

The BMC has rejected Union Minister Narayan Rane's regularisation proposal for his eight-storey bungalow Juhu, Mumbai



(Staff Reporter) The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has rejected Union Minister Narayan Rane's regularisation proposal for his eight-storey bungalow in the city's Juhu area. While rejecting the request, the BMC said that the structure is against Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) norms. The bungalow's height is 32 metres, in stark breach of regulations that specify a maximum height of 11.75 metres. The civic body also stated that Rane has not submitted the full layout of the structure in his application, and as a result the regularisation request cannot be approved. The BMC has previously sent two notices to Rane over the alleged unauthorised construction and alterations to his bungalow, Aadesh. The first notice stated that several changes of use in the basement of the bungalow and on all but the seventh floor of the bungalow have taken place. The second notice said that illegal rooms have been constructed from the first to the eighth floor instead of terrace gardens, which is in contravention to the plan approved by the civic body. On March 21, the BMC issued a demolition order after Rane refused to remove the unauthorised construction in the bungalow of his volition. The Union minister challenged the order in the Bombay High Court, after which the civic body withdrew it.

No leaves for UP Police personnel till May 4 in view of festivals

The Uttar Pradesh government has cancelled the leaves of all police personnel in the state till May 4 and asked those on leave to report within 24 hours

(Staff Reporter) The Uttar Pradesh government has cancelled the leaves of all police personnel in the state till May 4. Those who are on leave have been asked to report within 24 hours. The orders were passed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in view of festivals in the coming days. He also directed officials from police station to ADG level to hold dialogues with religious leaders and eminent personalities within the next 24 hours to ensure peace during the upcoming festivals. "The leave of all

administrative/police officers, from SHO, CO and district police chiefs to district magistrate, divisional commissioner is cancelled till May 4 with immediate effect. Those who are currently on leave, must return to the place of posting within the next 24 hours," the Chief Minister's office said in a statement. Further orders include deployment of additional police forces in sensitive areas, foot patrolling, and use of drones to keep an eye on the situation. Police response vehicles (PRVs) have been directed to remain active.

Amazon, Reliance, Sony competing for IPL broadcast rights in India

By Susmita Ghosh

As the IPL fever grips the Indian nation, another race is on regarding the super-festival of cricket. Mukesh Ambani's Reliance, Sony Corporation and Amazon Prime are some of the most highlighted brands that have thrown their hats to capture the broadcast rights of IPL, for the next

four seasons.

The cash-rich giant cricket Indian Premier League was founded in 2007. Now it consists of ten teams across ten different

cities in India. As it is a city-based tournament, the pride is often resonated with the whole state, seen on a wide scale of support by the fans.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is the sports organization in India that will be conducting the online auction for the bidders. Among the other competitors who have shown their keen interest to bid is the Walt Disney, Zee entertainment and Dream11 platforms. It will be the biggest viewership event of the year in India.

Due to the ever-increasing demand for IPL matches and viewers, more bidders are willing to take part in the race to capture the media rights for the sporting event. The auction will allow the winners to broadcast the live IPL matches globally on their portals between 2023 and 2027. It will help to draw a huge target audience who are keen to watch live stream online matches from their homes. The winner broadcaster will gain millions of new subscribers in a highly competitive environment within a couple of days. Indian cricket league revealed the guidelines to auction off media rights and that has created tension among the bidders, especially Reliance and Amazon. Both the companies are determined to win, in one of the world's fastest-growing markets and attract a huge fan base. It will be a great opportunity for the bidders who are planning to grow their advertising profits. At the same time, they will gain a huge

mass audience across the globe. The IPL viewing rights will also help the winning company to have a stronghold in the broadcast sector in the future. However, Amazon and Reliance representatives did not respond to the bidding on the social media platforms. Both of them are planning to strategize their goals of winning the media rights for the IPL.

The cricket auction is creating immense interest in India and the sport is

wildly popular worldwide. Online live streaming of the IPL matches on mobile and other devices will be an effective way to reach out to the country's 1.4 billion people instantly. Amazon Prime Video is a key player who wants to get a hold of the IPL rights. It will help them expand the platform's user base. The company is now facing extreme competition from retailer rivals like Reliance, who is also stubborn about increasing and expanding their digital platforms all across the globe.

The winning broadcaster will see a huge rise in profits and access to millions. This will also open doors for new growth opportunities and will allow the use of OTT platform devices regularly with loads of subscribers.

Cricket is the second biggest sport in the world and its craze in India is unparalleled. Hence, investing in the broadcasting rights of IPL will be a boon for the companies that are competing for it now. It will offer tremendous revenue opportunities in future. The broadcasters will gain prospects as well in the entertainment industry alongside. It will allow them to expand their media positions globally, as in-house quality content can be pushed to the mass using match break times. Besides, the generic ad-revenue income, the broadcasting rights will ensure an overall improvement in audience engagement and retention, which is highly sought-after by these companies.

The cricket auction is creating immense interest in India and the sport is wildly popular worldwide. Online live streaming of the IPL matches on mobile and other devices will be an effective way to reach out to the country's 1.4 billion people instantly

WPI: Still in the red category

The poor are more vulnerable to the inflationary squeeze on incomes. The government must keep this in mind while making policies

The wholesale price index (WPI) grew to 14.5% year-on-year in March, as per the Union ministry of industry and commerce. The latest data makes 2021-22 the first fiscal year since 2011-12 (when the current WPI series

While the government is claiming a record agricultural production this year,

many experts point out that wheat yields might have suffered due to an early onset of summer. If this shortage is

What does this inflationary outlook entail for the economy? Not everything is bad about it. Higher inflation is likely to boost to nominal incomes and, hence, government revenues

starts) when wholesale inflation was in double digits. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) — the benchmark inflation measure in the economy — has also stayed above the upper limit of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s tolerance zone of 6% in the past three months. Commodity prices are unlikely to come down soon. Crude oil prices continue to remain significantly above the \$100-mark despite the demand shock from the fresh Covid-19 outbreak in China. To be sure, the pandemic situation in China is not an unambiguous blessing on the inflation front. While it has helped control fuel prices to some extent, the disruption of global supply chains due to the lockdown in China will lead to more shortages and stoke inflation further. The fuel inflation sub-category was high in India's March WPI data. Now, one will have to brace for the cascading effects of the fuel price hike on other items.

Global food prices are expected to move further north due to the disruption of supplies from the Ukraine-Russia region.

significant, food inflation could experience additional tailwinds in the country. What does this inflationary outlook entail for the economy? Not everything is bad about it. Higher inflation is likely to boost to nominal incomes and, hence, government revenues. This is also likely to cushion export earnings, even if volume growth comes down in what is likely to be a subdued year for the global economy. Moreover, higher food prices are likely to usher in good times for a section of farmers. But the downsides are far from insignificant. India has massive income inequality, both among people and firms. The ability to pass on the inflationary burden — firms to consumers and employees to employers — is also a function of relative economic power. This means the poor are more vulnerable to the inflationary squeeze on incomes. The government must keep this in mind while making policies.

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Netflix reports loss of 2 lakh subscribers in 3 months; why is this happening?

Netflix has lost some 2,00,000 subscribers in the first quarter of this calendar year. What is the reason for this? What's next for the company?



Netflix has said that geopolitical tensions — led by the war in Ukraine that triggered a suspension of services in Russia — rising inflation, fierce competition, and some Covid-related disruptions have contributed to the loss of some 2,00,000 subscribers in the first quarter of this calendar year. This has happened for the first time in more than a decade, the company said, and predicted further losses going ahead. The current situation is the opposite of an earlier forecast by the streaming services major that it would add 2.5 million subscribers during the period. The company's stock tumbled a massive 26 per cent on Tuesday, erasing more than \$40 billion from its stock

market value. It also likely impacted other entertainment-related stocks — Roku dropped over 6 per cent, Walt Disney fell by 5 per cent, and Warner Bros Discovery was down by 3.5 per cent.

Why has Netflix lost subscribers?

The company lost 2,00,000 subscribers in Q1 2022 as it fell way short of its earlier forecast of adding 2.5 million subscribers. The suspension of services in Russia has resulted in a loss of 7,00,000 subscribers. Gloomier times lie ahead — the company has predicted a loss of 2 million subscribers in the coming quarter.

“Macro factors, including sluggish economic

growth, increasing inflation, geopolitical events such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and some continued disruption from COVID are likely having an impact as well,” Netflix said in a letter to shareholders. Sharing of accounts across households and the company's growth during the first two years of the pandemic which “created a lot of noise” were among the reasons the company attributed its loss of subscribers to. “...In addition to our 222m (million) paying households, we estimate that Netflix is being shared with over 100m additional households, including over 30m in the UCAN (US plus Canada) region,” the company said. Netflix also said that increasing competition from other streaming services and even traditional television was a likely reason behind its sluggish growth in the quarter.

“Competition for viewing with linear TV as well as YouTube, Amazon, and Hulu has been robust for the last 15 years. However, over the last three years, as traditional entertainment companies

realised streaming is the future, many new streaming services have also launched,” the company said. Finally, the company said, its growth over the last two years amid the pandemic “clouded the picture by significantly increasing our growth in 2020, leading us to believe that most of our slowing growth in 2021 was due to the COVID pull forward.”

So what's next for Netflix?

Netflix has so far been committed to the subscription, ad-free model for its streaming service. However, its CEO Reed Hastings hinted that the company could experiment with an ad-supported, lower-priced version of its service going forward, a model that has been used by some of its key rivals like HBO Max and Disney+. “Those who have followed Netflix know that I've been against the complexity of advertising, and a big fan of the simplicity of subscription,” said Hastings. “But, as much as I'm a fan of that, I'm a bigger fan of consumer choice.” The company also

said it was looking for ways to monetise the millions of households sharing Netflix accounts. While sharing accounts may have helped the company's growth in terms of getting more people to watch content on Netflix, the company said it also “created confusion about when and how Netflix can be shared with other households”. To get around the issue, the company started testing different approaches to monetise such households, and in March introduced two new paid sharing features, where current members have the choice to pay for additional households, in three markets in Latin America. Netflix said it was seeing good progress in terms of growth in the Asia Pacific region in a variety of markets including India. Last December, Netflix had cut subscription prices for all its plans in India, with its cheapest mobile only plan now starting from Rs 149 per month instead of the earlier Rs 199 per month, which could be a likely reason for its sustained growth in the country.

What are Digital Banking Units, and what services will they provide?

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has reiterated her Budget announcement on setting up 75 digital banking units in 75 districts of the country this year. What are DBUs, and who will set them up?

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday (April 19) reiterated her Budget announcement on setting up 75 digital banking units in 75 districts of the country this year. This is to take forward the government's agenda of digital financial inclusion.

What was the announcement?

In the Budget for 2022-23, the Finance Minister had said: “In recent years, digital banking, digital payments and fintech innovations have grown at a rapid pace in the country. Government is continuously encouraging these sectors to ensure that the benefits of digital banking reach every nook and corner of the country in a consumer-friendly manner. Taking forward this agenda, and to mark 75 years of our independence, it is proposed to set up 75 Digital Banking Units (DBUs) in 75 districts of the country by Scheduled Commercial Banks”. What are these DBUs?

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India announced the guidelines for DBUs, following the report of a working group of the Indian Banks Association.

A digital banking unit is a specialised fixed point business unit or hub housing certain minimum digital infrastructure for delivering digital banking products and services as well as servicing existing financial products and services digitally in self-service mode at any time.

Who will set up these DBUs?

Commercial banks (other than regional rural banks, payment banks and local area banks) with past digital banking experience are permitted to open

DBUs in tier 1 to tier 6 centres, unless otherwise specifically restricted, without having the need to take permission from the RBI in each case.

What are the services that will be provided by these units?

As per the RBI, each DBU must offer certain minimum digital banking products and services. Such products should be on both liabilities and assets

side of the balance sheet of the digital banking segment. Digitally value-added services to conventional products would also qualify as such. The services



include savings bank accounts under various schemes, current accounts, fixed deposits and recurring deposit accounts, digital kit for customers, mobile banking, Internet banking, debit cards, credit cards, and mass transit system cards, digital kit for merchants, UPI QR code, BHIM Aadhaar and point of sale (PoS). Other services include making applications for and onboarding

of customers for identified retail, MSME or schematic loans. This may also include end-to-end digital processing of such loans, starting from online application to disbursement and identified government sponsored schemes that are covered under the national portal.

How will these DBUs compete with fintechs?

Currently, fintechs operating as neobanks offer digital banking services but they do so in partnership with non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). Some of the neobanks offering services in India are Jupiter, Fi Money, Niyo, Razorpay X. Compared to conventional banks with online and mobile banking facilities, neobanks or digital banks excel at product innovation and offer far better digital solutions. However, given the arrangement they have currently with NBFCs or scheduled banks to conduct the actual banking part, some in the industry have pegged these digital banks as “glorified digital distribution companies”.

Why is there no debate in Parliament?

MPs are encouraged to blindly follow the party whip. The executive is less accountable and laws are passed with inadequate scrutiny

On March 29, the Assam and Meghalaya chief ministers signed an agreement to resolve the five-decade-old border dispute in the presence of the Union home minister. Two days later, the Union home ministry (MHA) decided to reduce the disturbed areas under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur after decades. Both these developments are significant for restoring normalcy and enabling perception changes about the northeastern region.

Ever since Amit Shah became the Union home minister in May 2019, efforts to address the issues of the Northeast have been moving according to a strategic plan which is premised on three objectives — ending all disputes, ushering in economic progress and taking the region's contribution to GDP back to its pre-Independence levels, and making efforts to maintain and preserve the region's languages, dialects, dance, music, food, and culture and make it attractive for the whole country. On all these fronts there is progress and a difference from the past when assurances and agreements languished due to poor or almost no implementation.

As part of that strategy, existing issues of both interstate border



disputes and insurgency have been closely studied and negotiated and a few agreements have been signed. Assam, with the maximum border disputes in the region, got into a proactive border dialogue ever since the current chief minister took office almost a year ago. The dialogues on the state's border disputes with Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram are continuing at a steady pace and while the recent agreement with Meghalaya has been signed, progress is being made in the other disputes as well. In January this year, Assam and Nagaland agreed to settle their dispute out of court and talks are on with the Arunachal Pradesh government to solve the 122 disputed sites. After the violent flare-ups witnessed last year at the Assam-Mizoram border, today there are regular

engagements to maintain peace and work out a permanent solution. The model of Assam's engagement with Meghalaya, is a good one to emulate — the two chief ministers, after two rounds of talks in August last year, constituted three committees each under cabinet ministers in their states to go into the complex boundary issues. Based on the recommendations of the committees, the first phase has seen six points of dispute, with less critical differences, being settled. A phase-wise solution is also a good confidence-building measure, apart from the experience gained on the ground in implementing the agreement. The run up to this current notification on AFSPA is also significant. The MHA has been confabulating with the state governments, irrespective of

the demands from many civil society organisations for the removal of AFSPA. Peace has been witnessed in most places across Assam, and even in Nagaland and Manipur talks with various groups for a permanent solution had resulted in a cessation of violence. The NLFT Tripura Agreement (August 2019), the Bru Agreement (January 2020), the Bodo Peace Accord (January 2020) and the Karbi Anglong Agreement (September 2021) have actually resulted in about 7,000 militants surrendering their arms. In 2021, militancy incidents had reduced by 74 per cent compared to 2014 and security personnel and civilians deaths have also come down by 60 per cent and 84 per cent, respectively, during this period.

So the demand for the removal of the disturbed areas notification (DAN) was very much justified. DAN has been in force in the whole of Assam since 1990, in all of Manipur (except the Imphal Municipality area) since 2004 and in the whole of Nagaland since 1995. With the removal of the DAN tag, AFSPA has been removed with effect from April 1 this year completely from 23 districts and partially from one district of Assam, from 15 police station areas of six districts of Manipur and from 15 police station areas in seven districts in Nagaland. DAN is currently applicable in only three districts and in two police station areas in one other district of Arunachal Pradesh. Pertinently, AFSPA was completely removed from Tripura in 2015 and Meghalaya in 2018, respectively. Clearly, more areas will be out of the ambit as the situation improves on the ground. The efforts by the Union government to make the northeastern region the main pillar of the Act East policy have been useful in bringing a sense of political stability that is very crucial for optimal economic development and capacity enhancement in the region.

Rejecting the 'behalfism' of the elites

They want to speak on behalf of subalterns. But why should they?

Can the subaltern speak? This rhetorical question has dominated the hallowed precincts of academic institutions worldwide and especially in India, in the context of social justice movements in the last few decades. There are two prisms through which to look at this question — the subaltern and the right to speak. Socially marginalised communities like Dalits and extremely backward groups did not enjoy the means to articulate and express themselves because of historical reasons and systemic exclusion. Therefore, the politics of "behalfism" has captured a prominent place within the subaltern movement in academia. Sadly, the lack of representation of marginalised communities in universities, civil society and think tanks is a key reason that this "behalfism" is sustained.

Who has been speaking on behalf of the subalterns? Clearly, elites who belonged to socially-privileged communities and were close to the structures of power. They crafted a narrative in favour of the

ruling class for a long time under the guise of giving voice to the silenced. They continue to maintain a robust grip over academic spheres and are unwilling to share the space of thought leadership with true subalterns. This came to light when an event to which I was invited on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti was cancelled by one of the premier institutions of higher education, Lady Shri Ram College in New Delhi. The theme of the event was "Ambedkar beyond Constitution" and it was being organised by the SC-ST Cell of the college. I was informed only a day prior to the event that it was cancelled.

At a time when the nation is celebrating "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav", an institution of eminence in the capital is forced to cancel an event at the behest of a student union. This is an assault on the idea of free speech and expression. The reason cited for the cancellation was my political affiliation: It was next to impossible for them to see a Dalit as the youngest-ever national

spokesperson of the largest political party in the world to come and speak before them. The student body in this case is the SFI, the student wing of the CPM. This is the same CPI (M) that for the first time in its history, inducted a Dalit, Ramchandra Dome, to its politburo earlier this month. The insensitivity of the leftist intelligentsia towards the marginalised is not a recent development. In the ideal scenario, instead of de-platforming me, they would have called and exposed me in the course of the discussion. Rationality must be the hallmark of any institution and we must not allow our institutions to become echo chambers. We come from a culture that believes in letting noble thoughts come from all directions. Ambedkar does not belong to any particular idea, ideology or institution. No one can claim to be the exclusive repository of his legacy. He belongs to every person who wants to develop a world based on inclusivity and empathy. A world that does not seek to advance

on the premise of "othering". LSR, in particular, is a crucible where the next generation of women leaders is taking shape. They will become policymakers, administrators, thinkers and activists of the future. To close them off from ideas coming from all directions is a disservice not only to the academic community but to the entire nation. The nearsighted political consideration of depriving one man of a stage is also an attempt to dilute the legacy of Ambedkar and the spirit of the Constitution. On November 25, 1949, Ambedkar gave three warnings as we began our collective journey as a constitutional democracy. His third warning on deepening constitutional values for realising a social democracy remains salient as liberty, equality and fraternity of those from marginalised communities continue to be at the mercy of intellectual elites. Regardless, they now stand exposed and I want to make it clear that I will continue to speak, write and articulate the assertions and aspirations of my community.

Police-public relationship is damaged by distrust. Saharanpur's new police cafe is a welcome step to reboot

The task for Saharanpur's cops will now be to actually build on this initiative and take constructive steps towards a more harmonious bond with the local communities. Many relationships have grown deeper and richer over a cuppa. This one can too

Could talking over chai and samosas help repair the generally unhappy relationship between police and the aam janata? That is the hope behind a new cafe run by the women and men in khaki in the Police Lines area of Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur. Bailout Cafe has come up over the dilapidated remains of an old police cafeteria. The spruced-up space, with bright pink interiors, ample seating and decor made with upcycled waste, reflects the hope that even a relationship damaged by years of mistrust can be repaired and restored. This optimism shines through even in



the exclusion of WiFi — if people can look up from their phone, perhaps they will begin to see each other in the fullness of their humanity. That the cop-citizen relationship is in dire need of a

reboot cannot be denied. It is also evident that the challenge of repairing and restoring would be formidable. This is true of any place in the country, but arguably, particularly in UP. In the Yogi

Adityanath-ruled state, the police is a favoured instrument of power, used to keep not just the criminals out, but also the dissenters down, and the populace in line. Here, for the

police to even acknowledge that it suffers from a serious image problem is a major step forward. At Bailout Cafe, this comes in the form of a stone wall featuring words like “corrupt”, “scary” and “rude” which show just how the average citizen perceives the police. Having accepted that a problem exists, the task for Saharanpur's cops will now be to actually build on this initiative and take constructive steps towards a more harmonious bond with the local communities. Many relationships have grown deeper and richer over a cuppa. This one can too.

UN failed to prevent Russia's aggression. Yet, it can't be written off

The international body's stature has been diminished by its inability to hold superpowers to account and stop wars. But its record in peace-keeping, delivering humanitarian relief is formidable

In the aftermath of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, unprovoked and without the United Nations Security Council's approval, many obituaries were written of the global body as it failed to prevent an unwanted war. Almost two decades later, the UN's relevance is yet again debated over similar circumstances as Russia, another P5 member, has invaded Ukraine without the Council's assent or any immediate provocation.

A unilateral war, without the UN's sanction, goes against the fundamentals of its Charter. After all, the organisation was established, in the wake of the devastating World War II, to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. It was created to give peace a secure foundation and to uphold equal rights of men and women, and of “nations small and large”.

Critics point out the impunity with which the five permanent members of the Security Council go about advancing their self-interests unhindered, as long as they do not step on each other's toes. Russia chairing the Council meeting to consider a resolution deploring its own actions was aptly compared to the fox being in charge of the chicken coop. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy lost no time to demand that a country that commits war crimes should not be allowed to hold a permanent seat in the Security Council. While a change there requires an amendment to the UN Charter that is next to impossible, the General Assembly did vote to suspend Russia's membership of the Human Rights Council. With President Vladimir Putin ordering his country's nuclear forces to heightened alert status, a red line

has been crossed, adding a chilling dimension to the conflict. Belarus quickly abandoning its status as a non-nuclear-weapon country, reaffirming its readiness to host Russian nuclear weapons on its territory, is a fallout of grave concern. True, the UN could not prevent the conflict in Ukraine, the first war on European soil for many decades. True, the stature of the UN stands diminished. Yet, puzzling as it may sound, the UN has a pivotal role to play amidst the war

and it will continue to have a significant role even after the war has ended.

The answer to this puzzle can be found in the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize citation. (So far, the UN, its specialised agencies, related agencies, funds, programmes, and staff have won the prestigious Peace Prize 12 times). Awarding the 100th Peace Prize to then secretary-general, Kofi Annan, the Nobel Committee stated its wish “to proclaim that the only negotiable route to global peace and co-operation goes by way of the United Nations”. It was an eloquent testimony to the UN's raison d'être in our troubled world. Ever since its inception, the UN has been at the forefront of several efforts to reconstruct societies torn apart by conflicts and to maintain ceasefire among warring parties. The first such operation, the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), launched in 1948 following the Arab-Israeli conflict the same year, is still operational. So is the second one, the UN Military Observer

Critics point out the impunity with which the five permanent members of the Security Council go about advancing their self-interests unhindered, as long as they do not step on each other's toes

Group (UNMOGIP) launched in 1949 to maintain the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir. Each, for different reasons, can be considered a failure, since neither has been able to produce or maintain peace.

Major success stories from among the more than 70 peacekeeping operations during the past 75 years do exist, however. They include, among others, restoring peace in

Cambodia, the Balkans, Timor Leste, and Liberia — all societies torn apart by brutal civil wars. Among the glaring failures are the debacle in Somalia and the inability to stop the 1994 genocide in Rwanda that killed more than 8,00,000 people in just three months.

Nearly 4,200 peacekeepers from some 120 countries have died serving under the UN flag, including more than 160 from India, the highest number for any troop-contributing nation. In 2007, India became the first country to deploy an all-women police contingent to a peacekeeping mission, to war-torn Liberia. India is currently the third-largest troop contributor to UN peace operations with over 5,500 uniformed personnel serving in seven missions.

The tragedy in Ukraine raises immediate questions: Who will stand by the country during its reconstruction? Who will protect the millions of people, internally displaced as well as those who fled the country

seeking refuge elsewhere? Europe's worst humanitarian and refugee crisis in decades has witnessed the number of refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries, including Russia, nearing five million.

Humanitarian relief has become the UN's forte, but it is not the whole story. With the war in Ukraine and NATO's increasing military build-up in Eastern Europe, more crises cannot be ruled out. There is no guarantee that the war may stop in Ukraine. A stray incident could ignite more disarray and violence ahead. Issues such as European security and arms control will need to be resolved through dialogue to prevent further disaster. In all these, the UN will have a major role to play.

While the UN will be grappling with the humanitarian crises unleashed by the war, parallel attempts are necessary to restore multilateralism as the norm of the world order. Errant superpowers exempting themselves from that principle will only lead to more catastrophes. Eventually, the very structure of the Security Council, the veto system, and even its membership will need an overhaul to reflect the realities of the 21st century.

However, those who rush to write obituaries for the UN whenever it fails to avert a conflict should not overlook the fact that the only global body of its kind is the sum of its parts and cannot exceed the political will of its member states. As Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General, famously said about the organisation: “The UN was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell.”

BCCI family photo isn't flattering. It gives world cricket's most powerful board the appearance of a fiefdom

At a time when, by all accounts, more and more people in the country disdain nepotism and when promises of equal opportunity are emphatically made by popular leaders to audiences filled with fresh and young faces, it appears that the BCCI continues to live in a bubble

Over the years, players, rules and formats have changed but the family names of those at the helm of India's cricket establishment haven't. Back in the day, there were Scindias in Madhya Pradesh, Rungtas in Rajasthan, and Mahendras in Haryana. More recently, it is the Shahs in Gujarat and the Dalmiya-Ganguly combination in Bengal. The tradition of the state cricket unit passed down as a family heirloom, a residue of feudal times, has survived the days of safari suits and is flourishing even in times when cricket is said to be corporatised. In the aftermath of the Justice RM Lodha committee's intervention, with aging satraps disqualified by the new tenure or age clauses in the constitution, over one-third of the BCCI's

state units, as reported by this paper, saw a smooth transfer of power within the family.

At a time when, by all accounts, more and more people in the country disdain nepotism and when promises of equal opportunity are emphatically made by popular leaders to audiences filled with fresh and young faces, it appears that the BCCI continues to live in a bubble. They remain aloof to the idea that organisations run by coterie foster complacency and mediocrity. The BCCI also refuses to learn from its past mistakes. The Lalit Modi affair and the N Srinivasan saga were mishaps that happened primarily because Indian cricket was a cosy club of family and friends. Each had looked the other way

when a rule was tweaked for individual benefit. They all went back a long way, no one raised the red flags at BCCI meetings. Elections did take place but the loyalty of the core group got passed from father to son. When outsiders are seen as obstructionists, organisations can't grow. They collectively stop thinking, and are bereft of new ideas.

An Indian cricket official has several perks. They have the power to direct the stream of ample funds — each state unit gets roughly Rs 40 crore annually. In a cricket-crazy country, a match-day ticket has the power to magically open doors. No wonder, then, that influential politicians, lawyers and administrators see this as the preferred career option for their sons. It

provides perfect photo-ops with cricket's swish set, and tremendous goodwill in being seen to be promoting the gladiators pulled out of obscurity by field-level scouting. The cricket board can also be an excellent finishing school, to learn the tricks of the trade, before being launched onto the bigger canvas of politics. Cricket stadiums are a networker's dream — an evening at the game can exhaust a thick wad of business cards. But power in the hands of a few isn't good for the game. The new BCCI family photo isn't flattering. It gives world cricket's most powerful board the appearance of a fiefdom, rather than the image of a professionally run, transparent and accountable sports organisation.

Face the facts on communal violence in India

Understanding climate of hate requires honest examination of its origins, perpetrators

Hate and bigotry feed on each other. They germinate and flourish on a toxic diet of divisive and schismatic ideologies and polarising creeds that discriminate against human beings on the basis of colour, region, gender, faith — and divide them between believers and non-believers — ranging the chosen ones against the idolatrous.

'Calling out hate' by S Y Quraishi (IE, April 15) has little to do with the anatomy of hate or its ongoing malignancy. It is more of an ad hominem attack on the ruling dispensation. A complex phenomenon has been over-simplified to suit a convenient political narrative. The arguments are drearily familiar, facts dodgy and conclusions delusional.

For aeons, India has had syncretic traditions inspired by the Vedic aphorism, "Ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti" (there is only one truth and learned persons call it by many names). Because of this underpinning, Indian society has never insisted on uniformity in any facet of life. Indian philosophy is a smorgasbord of varied ideas and traditions — incongruous at times, but always a part of a harmonious milieu. This equanimity of Indian society was, however, disrupted by invading creeds claiming only their God, and His messenger were true, and the rest were false and worthy of destruction, along with their followers and places of worship. The first such incursion came in 712, when Muhammad bin Qasim vanquished Sindh, and as Chach Nama, a contemporary Arab chronicle states, introduced the practice of treating local Hindus as zimmis, forcing them to pay jizya (a poll tax), as a penalty to live by

their beliefs. "Hate" and "bigotry" thus made their debut in India, which was hitherto free from this virus. Pakistan's official website credits this invasion as when the country was born as an Islamic nation in the Subcontinent.

In the 11th century, Mahmud of Ghazni, while receiving the caliphate honours on his accession to the throne, took a vow to wage jihad every year against Indian idolaters. During

his 32-year reign, he did keep his solemn promise over a dozen times. The rest is history.

But why go into the distant past? Unfortunately, the trail of hate unleashed over a thousand years ago continues to haunt us even today. The last 100-odd years witnessed the Moplah riots, Partition, and the decimation of Hindus/Sikhs/Buddhists in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Kashmir Valley. The recent pre-planned attacks on Ram Navami processions in over half a dozen states, and the onslaught on the Hanuman Janamutsav rally have reminded us that the ogre of hate is alive and stinging. It's uncanny: While communal mayhem was going on in India, Muslim mobs were fighting pitched battles against the police in dozens of towns in Spain, Sweden and the city of Jerusalem. In Sweden, Muslims were agitated over blasphemy involving the holy Quran. Protests in Spain are against the

imprisonment of a rapper convicted of insulting the monarchy and praising terrorist violence. While the issues involving these sordid episodes may differ, the pattern is common.

Were the Hindu-Muslim relations



peaceful in the past and have soured post-2014? The fact is, ties between the two communities were seldom cordial. There were intermittent skirmishes, wars and occasional short-lived opportunistic alliances. Is the current dispensation responsible for Muslim alienation? Remember, even Gandhiji failed to wean Muslims from Muhammad Ali Jinnah's schismatic movement.

In the aftermath of the Moplah violence and communal riots at several places in India, Gandhiji observed in Young India (May 24, 1924): "My own experience but confirms the opinion that the Musalman as a rule is a bully, and the Hindu as a rule is a coward". Nothing much has since changed in the Subcontinent. Can laws or police fight hate? No. If they could, Kashmiri Hindus wouldn't have gone through the hell they did in the 1990s, and would have been happily back in their homes by now. India is a secular democracy,

not because of its Constitution. It's the other way round. When Pakistan declared itself an Islamic Republic in 1947, it would have been natural for India to identify itself as a Hindu state. It didn't, and couldn't have — because of its Hindu ethos of pluralism. A Hindu-dominated India, is, and will always be, catholic, plural, myriad and a vibrant democracy. George Orwell said, "The relative freedom which we enjoy depends on public opinion. The law is no protection. Governments make laws, but whether they are carried out, and how the police behave, depends on the general temper in the country". Can one fight hate selectively? The burning of Graham Staines and his children is reprehensible. So was the lynching of Akhlaq and Junaid. But why the cowering silence on the dastardly gunning down of Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati and four of his disciples (August 2008) in Orissa for which seven Christians and a Maoist have been convicted? Over a dozen Muslim workers of the BJP have been killed in Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of India in the recent past. These victims of hate are, of course, ignored. Their deaths don't suit the narrative. Charged reactions, punctuated with half-truths, deliberate omissions and tailored narratives, offer no real solution. Pusillanimity to face facts will only exacerbate the situation and give egregious results. Ignorance is not always bliss. In this context, it's relevant to recall what Lester Pearson (14th PM of Canada) said: "Misunderstanding arising from ignorance breeds fear, and fear remains the greatest enemy of peace."

Bombay HC sends notice to central officials over order against ex-servicemen

Bombay HC has issued a notice to central government departments over the Union government's order imposing restrictions on former defence personnel from posting or publishing anything about war

The Bombay High Court has issued a notice to the Chief Secretary of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Defence and the Department of Personnel and Training over a petition filed by two defence veterans challenging the Union government's March 31 notification restricting former defence personnel from posting or publishing anything about war. The petition has been filed by Air Force veteran Sandesh Singhalkar from Nagpur and Lt Col Suresh Patil from Pune, who have served in the armed forces for 16 and 25 years, respectively. The plea filed via advocates Asim Sarode and Ajinkya Udane takes exception to the notification by the Union government, issued on March 31. The notification introduced the amendments brought into the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972.

By virtue of these modifications in the pension rules, the Union



government has prohibited former defence personnel from writing or posting anything about war or war crimes. It mandates a prior sanction from the government to publish anything in the media and social media. Further, the amended rules state that any violation would be viewed seriously and that the violators would be deprived of their pension benefits.

"Former armed forces officers have opined that such an order will curb distinguished

officers from expressing their viewpoints on contemporary issues to the public. The Amended Rule will allow the government agencies to control the narrative without any checks and balances in place. New pension rules are a gag order against retired personnel from all forces," the petition read. It added, "The decision to revoke or reduce pensionary benefits allows the government to express a colorable exercise of power. In the absence of what may be considered as

acceptable, the present rule allows the government discretion to exercise this power as per their whims and fancies.... The present amendment offers unchallenged punitive powers to the government with no checks and balances, which is objectionable." The plea makes a case for the opinions to be expressed, by stating, "By and large, the writings of retired officers have done a great deal to educate public opinion on important issues, such as police reforms, communal violence,

security policies and organisational weaknesses. Such writings are valuable because they are by officers with years of experience and reflect their distilled wisdom. Their writings also offer insights into the government's decision-making process - such insights have great significance in empowering people. It is only by creating informed public opinion that democracy can be strengthened."

One of the contentions of the petitioners is that the new amendments are a direct threat to the fundamental right of speech and expression and that, since it would impact pensions, it is thus against the right to livelihood guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Madhav Jamdar issued the notice to the central authorities and has kept the matter for hearing in the second week of June.

Test for AAP Model of Governance: Can Kejriwal, Bhagwant Mann Join Hands against Air Pollution?

A month has passed since the Aam Aadmi Party registered a historic victory in the Punjab Assembly election. The Punjab Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government made headlines for many reasons in the last one month. Last week, the Punjab government announced free electricity up to 300 units for all residents, as promised in the AAP election manifesto. Before implementing this decision, Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann sent the top state bureaucrats to meet with Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. Several opposition politicians slammed Mann and claimed that he was being remote-controlled by Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal.

Collaborations between states on important issues of policy are not new. If Kejriwal wants to give a message that Punjab and Delhi should work together, then the best issue should be air pollution. This year, Delhi has witnessed an unprecedented early heatwave and the COVID lockdown will likely be absent during Diwali. So, the pollution situation could be worse. It is the best opportunity for the AAP to demonstrate the capabilities of its governance model. To accomplish this, Kejriwal and Mann must collaborate and present a plan of action to address stubble burning in Punjab.

Air pollution is a major issue in the North

Indian states. However, Delhi particularly finds itself in the eye of the storm every winter, given that it is the country's capital. According to the recently released World Air Quality Report, Delhi is the most polluted capital in the world. But in India, the issue of air pollution is also political. Over the past several years, Delhi and Punjab governments have been at loggerheads over this issue. The AAP-led Delhi government has always maintained that uncontrolled stubble burning by Punjab farmers is the primary cause of the capital's air pollution. Until early this year, Punjab had a Congress government, but today the situation has changed. The Aam Aadmi Party is in power in both states. The politics of blaming each other will not work from this year onwards. Last month, Union Minister for Environment Bhupender Yadav told the Lok Sabha that the Arvind Kejriwal government would have to deal with the issue of air pollution by themselves. Every year, citizens of Delhi and Northern India are forced to breathe toxic air as a result of the political blame games.

A COLLABORATIVE STUDY ON SOURCES OF POLLUTION NEEDED

Now, as both Punjab and Delhi are under the AAP government, a collaborative study must take place to understand the sources

of pollution. Last year, the Delhi government had approved a real-time pollution source monitoring system that the Punjab government could adopt. Both governments must accept that they do not know how much pollution stubble burning causes. The AAP government has always looked for reports which claim that stubble burning is the key reason behind Delhi's pollution woes in winter. But this time, the party will have to change its strategy. If a collaborative study by both governments is undertaken on contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's air pollution, then it will be path-breaking work.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PUSA BIO DECOMPOSER CRUCIAL

Last year, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal brought the Pusa Bio Decomposer technique to Delhi. The Indian Agricultural Research Institute developed this bio decomposer. This is a more cost-effective alternative to stubble burning. The Delhi CM had also urged the Centre to direct neighbouring states to adopt this method. The Aam Aadmi Party believes that lack of political will was one of the key reasons behind unchecked stubble burning. Implementation of the bio decomposer technique in Punjab can end this debate. However, the execution of this technique must be done carefully. According to

several experts, this decomposer only works for early measuring varieties of paddy. The decomposing technique takes around 30 days. Therefore, using this technique can be a challenge in districts like Sangrur, where late measuring paddy varieties are present.

OPPORTUNITY FOR KEJRIWAL TO SHOWCASE AAP GOVERNANCE MODEL

The Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party has done significant work in the development of the state education system in Delhi. Collaboration in combating air pollution will provide Kejriwal with a good opportunity to present the AAP model of governance. To begin with, Punjab and Delhi governments can form an expert committee or task force to develop a collaborative action plan to combat air pollution. Punjab government will have to act on the issue of farmers' support tactfully. The AAP supported the farmers' protest, which was a major factor in its victory in the Assembly election. It will be difficult to persuade farmers to use the more cost-effective alternative of stubble burning. If the AAP government tries to penalise farmers for not adopting such techniques, farmers could agitate.

CAA protests: Violence rocks Delhi's Jamia, UP's AMU; Bengal boils, uneasy calm in Assam

Violent protests erupted near Jama Millia Islamia in Delhi and at the Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh, while West Bengal plunged deeper into chaos on Sunday during the stir over the new citizenship law



Violent protests erupted near Jama Millia Islamia in Delhi and at the Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh, while West Bengal plunged deeper into chaos on Sunday during the stir over the new citizenship law with incidents of arson and loot reported from the state and the northeast, acts which Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleged were being instigated by the "Congress and its friends". An uneasy calm prevailed in Assam, epicentre of the agitation, as curfew was relaxed in Guwahati and Dibrugarh for several hours following improvement in the situation but peaceful protests were held amid calls by the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) for resignation of its ministers. The

party, which is part of the BJP-led government in Assam, decided it will move the Supreme Court against the amendments made in the Citizenship Act. In Assam's Guwahati, two more persons succumbed to gunshot wounds suffered in the police firing on Thursday, taking the toll to four. However, protesters claimed that five persons have died in police firing.

In the national capital, protesters torched four public buses and two police vehicles as they clashed with the police in New Friends' Colony near Jamia University during a demonstration against the amended Citizenship Act, leaving six cops and two firemen injured, officials said. Sources

said that at least 31 students were brought to a nearby hospital after the violence and 11 of them were admitted. Soon after the violence, Jamia Millia Islamia Chief Proctor Waseem Ahmed Khan claimed that the Delhi Police entered the campus forcibly without any permission and beat up staff members and students who were forced to leave the campus. Condemning the police action, university vice chancellor Najma Akhtar said students who were inside the library which was allegedly surrounded by the police have been taken out and are safe. Police said they entered the university campus only to control the situation, after protesters indulged in violence. The university had on Saturday cancelled exams and announced vacation till January 5 in view of the tension, while the Aligarh Muslim University too was closed till January 5. In Uttar Pradesh, hundreds of students of Aligarh Muslim University clashed with the police at a

campus gate after which police used batons and teargas to disperse them.

Soon after the protest near the Jamia Millia University in Delhi, the students started gathering at the Babey Sir Syed Gate and shouted slogans against the law and police action on demonstrators in the national capital. AMU Proctor Prof Afifullah Khan said some security personnel have been injured in brick-batting near the gate. Police said the student broke down the police cordon. Police have sealed all gates to the campus. Students have been protesting against the law in the campus for the last few days. Internet services were shut in West Bengal's six districts -- Malda, Uttar Dinajpur, Murshidabad, Howrah, North 24 Parganas and parts of South 24 Parganas -- as the state convulsed with violence for the third successive day despite Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's appeal for calm. Hitting out at the Trinamool

Congress dispensation over advertisements against the NRC and the citizenship law, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar said it is unconstitutional and a head of government can't use public money for such campaigns. Incidents of violence, loot and arson were reported from Nadia, Birbhum, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas and Howrah districts, police said. In Amdanga area of North 24 Parganas and Nadia's Kalyani, agitators blocked thoroughfares, setting logs on fire. Shops were also ransacked and people burned tyres in Deganga in North 24 Parganas. Train services were hit in South 24 Parganas as protesters blocked tracks near Nungi and Akra stations, which were also ransacked. Similar protests were reported from Domjur of Howrah district, and parts of Burdwan and Birbhum, with agitators taking out rallies and raising slogans against the Modi government. In Malda district,

(Contd. on page 29)

What constitutes 'noise' and how can noise pollution harm you?

The political controversy in Maharashtra over the demand to remove loudspeakers from mosques raises some fundamental questions regarding noise pollution. What do the Rules say in this regard?

An ultimatum by Raj Thackeray, president of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), that repercussions would follow if speakers on mosques were not removed by May 3, has created political turmoil in the state. The Maharashtra government is relying on provisions of The Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000 to negotiate the controversy over the use of loudspeakers by mosques. What do the Rules say?

What constitutes 'noise' under the law?

As per the Central Pollution Control Board's mandate for noise pollution, 'noise' is defined as unwanted sound. Sound, which pleases the listener, is music and that which causes pain and annoyance is noise. At

times, what is music for some can be noise for others. Any unwanted sound that causes annoyance, irritation and pain to the human ear is termed 'noise'.

What do The Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000 say?

Section 2 (a) of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 includes noise in the definition of 'air pollutant'.

Noise pollution and its sources are regulated under The Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000 under The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The Act has defined ambient acceptable noise levels, silence zones, restrictions on the use of loudspeakers, horns, sound-emitting construction

equipment, and bursting of crackers. It has also laid down the responsibility for enforcement.

What is the threshold for acceptable level of noise?

Noise pollution Rules have defined the acceptable level of noise in different zones for both daytime and nighttime. In industrial areas, the permissible limit is 75 decibels (unit of sound; tenth of a 'bell', symbol dB) for daytime, and 70 dB for night. Daytime is defined as the period from 6 am to 10 pm, and night is 10 pm to 6 am of the following day. In commercial areas, these ceilings are fixed at 65 dB and 55 dB, while in residential areas they are 55 dB and 45 dB during daytime and night respectively. In silence zones, i.e., an area

comprising not less than 100 metres around hospitals, educational institutions and courts, it is 50 dB in the daytime and 40 dB during the night.

What are the rules around the use of loudspeakers?

The noise level at the boundary of the public place, where a loudspeaker or public address system or any other noise source is being used, shall not exceed 10 dB (A) above the ambient noise standards for the area or 75 dB (A), whichever is lower. The rules also state that a loudspeaker or a public address system shall not be used except after obtaining written permission from the designated authority. The state government can provide exemption during any cultural or religious festive occasion of a

limited duration not exceeding 15 days in all during a calendar year. In a report filed with the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on June 12, 2020, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) listed fines for the violation of noise pollution norms. The violation of norms regarding the use of loudspeakers/public address systems can result in seizure of the equipment, and a fine of Rs 10,000.

What are noise levels like in Maharashtra?

The 2020 Noise Monitoring report by the state Pollution Control Board (PCB) showed that noise levels at many places exceeded the laid down noise norms for Industrial, Commercial, Residential or Silence zones.

(Contd on page 29)

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Colombo Stock Exchange to remain shut for 5 days as Sri Lanka struggles to combat forex crisis

With Sri Lanka on the brink of bankruptcy and saddled with dwindling foreign reserves and \$25 billion in foreign debt, the CSE will remain temporarily closed for a week from April 18



(Staff Reporter) The Colombo Stock Exchange will remain temporarily closed for a week from Monday to provide investors an opportunity to have “more clarity and understanding” of the current economic conditions in crisis-hit Sri Lanka that would help them “to make informed investment decisions,” it was announced on Saturday. “The stock market will remain temporarily closed for a period of five business days from April

18, 2022,” the Securities and Exchange Commission of Sri Lanka (SEC) said in a press release. Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since gaining independence from the UK in 1948. The economic crisis also triggered a political turmoil in the island nation with citizens holding nationwide street protests for weeks over lengthy power cuts and shortage of fuel, food and other daily essentials and demanding ouster of

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The Board of Directors of the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) in a communication on Friday called upon the SEC to temporarily close the stock market citing the present situation in the country, the release said. Many other stakeholders of the securities market, including the Colombo Stock Brokers Association, have also sought the temporary closure of the market on the same grounds. The SEC said it carefully considered the grounds that have been adduced by them and has evaluated the impact the present situation in the country could have on the stock market, in particular the ability to conduct an orderly and fair market for trading in securities. “The SEC is of the view that it would be in the best interests of investors as well as other market participants if they are afforded an opportunity to have more clarity and understanding of the economic conditions presently prevalent, in order for them to make

informed investment decisions,” the release said.

Therefore, acting in terms of the relevant provisions, the SEC decided to direct the CSE to temporarily close the stock market for a period of five business days commencing from April 18, it said. Sri Lanka is on the brink of bankruptcy, saddled with dwindling foreign reserves and USD 25 billion in foreign debt due for repayment over the next five years. Nearly USD 7 billion is due this year only. The government announced Tuesday that it is suspending repayments of foreign debt, including bonds and government-to-government borrowing, pending the completion of a loan restructuring programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). President Rajapaksa has defended his government's actions, saying the foreign exchange crisis was not his making and the economic downturn was largely pandemic driven by the island nation's tourism revenue and inward remittances waning.

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Pakistan airstrikes in Afghanistan's Khost, Kunar provinces, at least 30 killed

At least 30 people died after Pakistani aircraft launched the airstrikes on Khost and Kunar provinces of Afghanistan on Friday night

(Staff Reporter) Local officials in Afghanistan confirmed that Pakistani aircraft launched airstrikes on the Khost province of Afghanistan on Friday night, April 15. As per the reports, at least 30 people, including women and children, were killed in the airstrike. Pakistani planes targeted areas in the Spurga district of Khost province. At least 26 Pakistani planes targeted the villages of Mirpar, Mandeh, Shaidi



and Kai in the Spurga district of Khost province. Spokesman for the Taliban

police chief in Khost province, Mostaghfar Gerbz confirmed the 8 Sobh newspaper about the attack. King Jamshid, a large ethnic group in the Waziristan region, told the newspaper that 30 people, including women and children, had been killed in the attacks. However, Gerbz said that he was unaware of the casualties in the bombing. On the other hand, on Friday at around 9:00, Pakistani troops clashed with Taliban forces in the area of Masterbel, in the Gorbz district. Meanwhile, TOLO news tweeted,

"Media reports as well as interviews with a number of eyewitnesses show that Pakistani forces have carried out airstrikes in two areas in the eastern Kunar and the southeastern Khost provinces of Afghanistan on Friday night. Pakistani media have reported that a number of anti-government militants have been killed in Pakistani airstrikes on North Waziristan. However, the Pakistani government and the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs so far have not commented on the matter. As per Afghan media, 'A tribal elder from Waziristan who lives in Khost said that Pakistani forces' aircraft targeted Waziristan migrants' camp in the area, leaving at least 30 people either killed or wounded'. Meanwhile, eyewitnesses in Kunar confirmed the death of five people in an airstrike by Pakistani forces in the province.

1 dead, 12 injured in Sri Lanka as police open fire at anti-government protesters

(Staff Reporter) The residents of Rambukkana, some 90 kilometers northeast of Colombo, were protesting at the latest fuel price hike when they clashed with the police. Scores of protesters thronged the streets and public places of Rambukkana town on Monday. The demonstration went late into the night. On Tuesday, the protesters blocked the railway track at Rambukkana. When they were asked to clear the rail line, they hurled stones at security personnel, police said. Police Spokesperson Nihal Thaldewa said police issued warnings to the protestors to leave the area. However, the protestors attempted to set fire to a fuel bowser, as well as a three-wheeler, causing damage to property, Thaldewa was quoted as saying by News 1st channel. Thaldewa said that the police had opened fire after initially using tear gas to disperse the crowd and bring the situation under control. One person was killed and 12 others injured in the firing, police said.

Taliban warns Pakistan after rocket attacks kill 5 Afghan children

Pakistan received a warning from Taliban authorities on Saturday after rocket attacks killed five children and a woman in Afghanistan



(Staff Reporter) The Taliban authorities warned Pakistan on Saturday after five children and a woman were killed in Afghanistan in alleged rocket attacks by the Pakistani military in a pre-dawn assault along the border.

Border tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have risen since the Taliban seized power last year, with Islamabad claiming militant groups were carrying out attacks from Afghan soil. The Taliban deny harbouring Pakistani militants, but are also infuriated by a fence Islamabad is erecting along their 2,700-kilometre (1,600-mile) border known as the Durand line, which was drawn up in colonial times. "Five children and a woman were killed and a man wounded in Pakistani rocket attacks in Shelton district of Kunar," provincial director of information Najibullah Hassan Abdaal told AFP referring to the eastern province of Kunar bordering

Pakistan. Ehsanullah, a resident of Shelton district who goes by one name as many Afghans do, said the assault was carried out by Pakistani military aircraft. A similar pre-dawn assault was carried out in Afghanistan's Khost province near the border, another Afghan government official said. "Pakistani helicopters bombarded four villages near the Durand line in Khost province," he said on condition of anonymity. "Only civilian houses were targeted and there were casualties," he added, but did not offer more details. Afghanistan's Taliban government warned Islamabad after the attacks. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan condemns in the strongest possible terms the bombardment and attack that has taken place from the Pakistan side on the soil of Afghanistan," government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told reporters in an audio message

Sri Lanka's main Oppn party to decide date of moving no-trust motion against Rajapaksa govt tomorrow

Sri Lanka's main opposition party, SJB, had recently announced that it will move a no-trust motion against the Rajapaksa government if it fails to take steps to address the concerns of the public



(Staff Reporter) SJB alliance (Sri Lanka's main opposition party) leader Mano Ganesan has said that the date of moving the no-confidence motion against the government of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa will be decided during the all-party meeting on Monday. "We now plan to move a no-confidence motion against the govt in the upcoming Parliament session, beginning Tuesday. The day of the motion will be decided on the agenda," he said. The SJB has been protesting against the government demanding the

resignation of the President over the economic crisis in the country. Recently, Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa also called for the Executive Presidency to be abolished, saying power should be divided between the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. Meanwhile, people gathered at Galle Face, the main beachfront in the capital Colombo, and raised slogans against President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and PM Mahinda Rajapaksa amid the economic crisis in the country.

Pakistan cabinet swearing-in delayed as President Arif Alvi excuses himself: Report

According to reports in Pakistani media, President Arif Alvi has excused himself from administering oaths to new cabinet ministers, following which the ceremony has been postponed

(Staff Reporter) Pakistan President Arif Alvi on Monday excused himself from administering oaths to new cabinet ministers, following which the ceremony has been postponed, a media report said, citing sources. Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjarani is now expected to administer the oath to the members of the federal cabinet at a ceremony which is likely to take place either on Tuesday or Wednesday, Geo News reported, citing sources in the president's house.

Last week, Sanjarani administered the oath of office to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after President Alvi, a member of ousted premier Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, went on 'sick' leave ahead of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader's inauguration.

The federal cabinet was scheduled

to take oath tonight at 8:30pm (local time) on Monday; however, when the prime minister's office contacted the president's office, Alvi refused to administer oaths, the channel said. His move has further delayed the formation of the new Cabinet, a week after Sharif was sworn-in. Meanwhile, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Khurshid Shah said that the PML-N will have the majority in the cabinet with 14 ministries. The PPP will have 11, and the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) will be given four ministries. Meanwhile, the rest of the seven positions will be allotted to other allies. PML-N leader Marriyum Aurangzeb, who is likely to become information minister, had said on Sunday that members of the federal Cabinet "are taking oath tomorrow (Monday)."

Marriyum had said that the PML-N

would get 14 ministries followed by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) with 11 ministries.

She said that all allied parties were being accommodated in the Cabinet, including JUI-F and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

On Sunday, Prime Minister Sharif consulted the ruling coalition parties and met delegations of the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and the Balochistan National Party (BNP). On the other hand, PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, being the "guarantor" in the ruling alliance, vowed to fulfil his commitments with coalition parties on the distribution of ministries.

Marriyum said a marathon meeting

of a joint committee of the alliance on forming the Cabinet took place on Sunday in which grievances of parties over the distribution of portfolios and key positions were resolved. She said the PML-N would bag the ministries of defence, finance, interior, law and justice, railways, information, energy, planning, communication, etc. PML-N leader Rana Sanaullah said that a joint committee of all allied parties in the government had finalised the formation of the new Cabinet in which almost all parties had been accommodated. He said that the ministry of foreign affairs will most likely be handed over to the PPP, while the party's chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari is deliberating

over the decision to head the ministry, Geo News reported. "I cannot ascertain whether Bilawal Bhutto will become part of Shahbaz Sharif's Cabinet," the news channel quoted him as saying. Sanaullah further said that the ministry of finance, the ministry of planning and development, the ministry of energy, and the ministry of defence will be led by PML-N. "The ministry of maritime affairs and the ministry of overseas Pakistanis and human resource development will be given to MQM and PPP, respectively," he said. A source in the PPP said Prime Minister Sharif had given all-out authority to Zardari to distribute ministries to any party according to its due share.

Hamza Shahbaz elected new CM of Pak's Punjab days after father Shehbaz Sharif becomes PM

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif's son Hamza Shahbaz becomes the 21st CM of Pakistan's Punjab

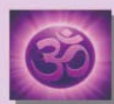


(Staff Reporter) Hamza Shahbaz, PML-N leader and son of Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif, has been elected as the chief minister of Punjab in Pakistan amid ruckus during the Assembly session. Hamza Shahbaz was elected as the 21st chief minister of Punjab with 197 votes. Meanwhile, three PTI members of the Punjab Assembly were arrested ahead of the vote for attacking Deputy Speaker Dost Mohammad Mazari as the party boycotted the session to elect the new chief minister. Hamza's rival Pervaiz Elahi did not receive

any votes as his party and PTI had boycotted the polls. The lawmakers from the ex-prime minister Imran Khan's party attacked Mazari and pulled his hair for changing his loyalty.

TV footage showed Mazari being slapped, punched and dragged by the PTI members before the security guards managed to rescue him.

The PTI lawmakers brought "lota" to the house and started chanting "lota, lota" (turncoats) as they lashed out at dissident PTI lawmakers who parted ways with the party and decided to support the Opposition.



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Pakistan PM requests China's support in reviving Karachi Circular Railway

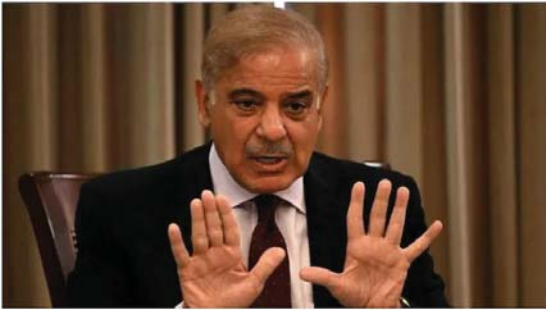
Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif requested China to support the planned revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project

(Staff Reporter) Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday requested China to support the planned revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project to end the woes of hundreds of thousands of commuters in the country's largest metropolis.

Stressing that KCR would be a "gift for the people of Karachi" and bring great dividends, Shehbaz took the opportunity of the inauguration of a mass

transit bus project here to convey his request to Chinese President Xi Jinping to "reconsider supporting KCR for Karachi".

Sharif, in his request to Beijing, underlined that the project's completion would create great feelings for China among the people of Karachi as well as the rest of Pakistan, the Dawn newspaper quoted him as saying. The original KCR was commissioned in 1964 to help Pakistan Railways employees commute from their homes in the east of the city to the city and cantonment railway stations. It was expanded over time and eventually evolved into a 44km loop connecting the Karachi port and commercial areas around



the city centre. The revived KCR project is expected to revamp the public transportation system of the metropolitan city of Karachi. Sharif, who was appointed Prime Minister a week ago, also expressed gratitude towards its "all-weather friend" China for "strengthening Pakistan's economy" and supporting it on all international forums. Islamabad Metro Bus Service project on a stretch of 11 kilometres

from Peshawar Morr to Islamabad International Airport will benefit nearly 50,000 commuters every day. The project was supposed to be launched in 2018 but was delayed. Sharif was, however, quick to blame the delay of the launch of the project on the previous government led by Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party and its "lack of will to serve people." He recalled various mass transit projects launched in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan during Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) previous tenure. Sharif also promised the people that his government will ensure the quick implementation of all the projects of public importance.

Sri Lankan Prez appoints new cabinet of 17 ministers

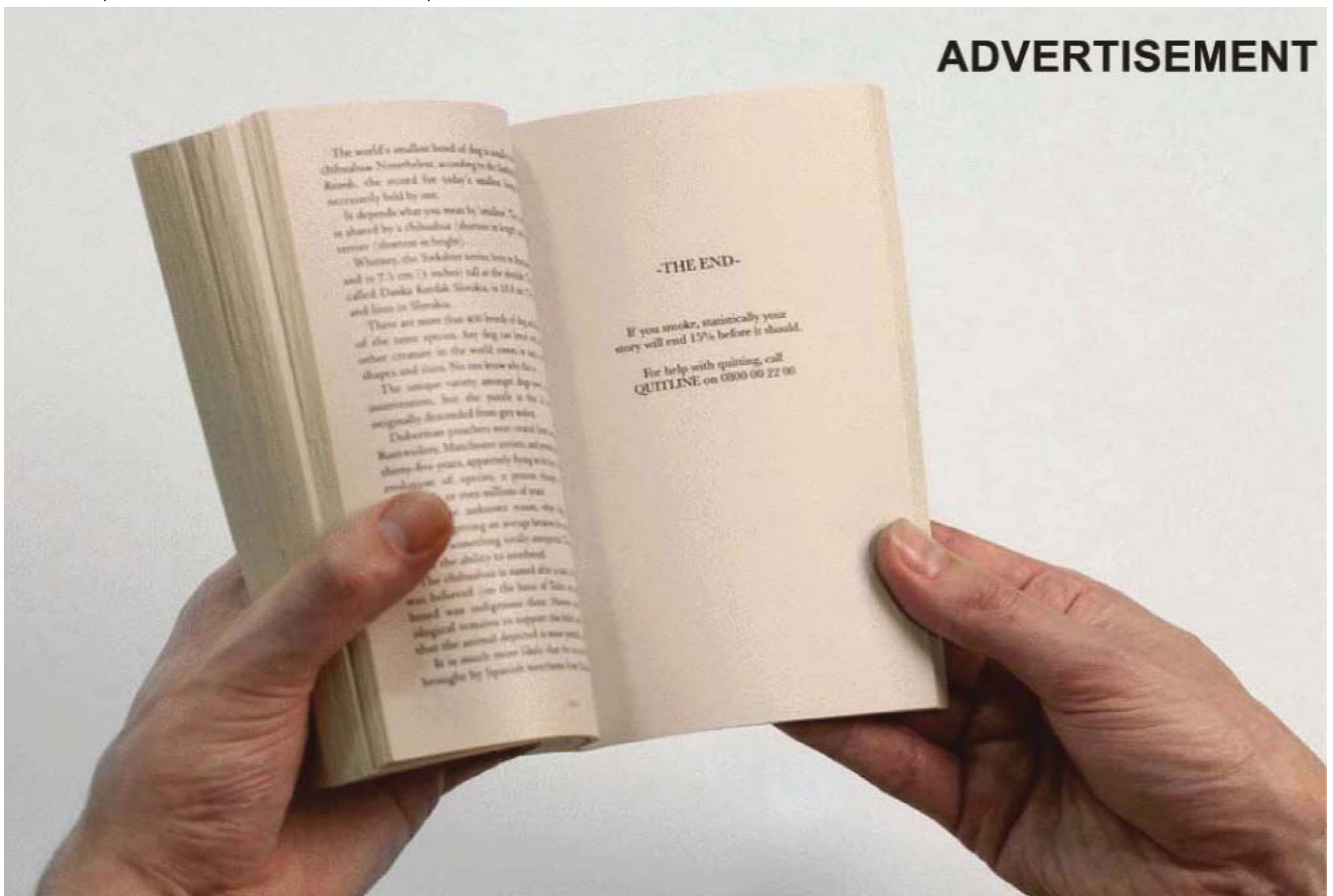
(Staff Reporter) Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa became the only member of the family to retain a cabinet position in his younger brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa's new cabinet of 17 ministers appointed on Monday, as the island nation was facing the worst economic crisis. In addition to the three ministers he had earlier appointed. That meant no place for the oldest member of the family, Chamal Rajapaksa, Mahinda's son Namal Rajapaksa, both of whom were cabinet ministers, and his nephew, Shasheendra who was a state minister. The cabinet appointment came as the island-wide protests continued to force the resignation of the president and his family for mishandling the economy.

Earlier this month, Sri Lanka's entire cabinet — aside from President Gotabaya and his elder brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa — resigned from their posts after thousands of people defied a countrywide state of emergency and curfew and joined street protests denouncing the government.

The previous cabinet had to make way for the president to form a unity cabinet with the Opposition members. The Opposition, however, declined the offer. Rajapaksa swore in a 17-member cabinet on Monday in

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since gaining independence from the UK in 1948. The economic crisis also triggered a political turmoil in the island nation with citizens holding nationwide street protests for weeks over lengthy power cuts and shortage of fuel, food and other daily essentials and demanding the ouster of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

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US, South Korea pledge 'strongest possible joint deterrent' after Pyongyang's missile test



(Staff Reporter) The United States and South Korea on Monday (April 18) signed the "strongest possible joint deterrent" to curb Pyongyang's missile tests. According to US Special

Representative for North Korea Sung Kim, "It is extremely important for the United Nations Security Council to send a clear signal to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) that we will not accept its escalatory tests as normal." He met South Korea's Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Noh Kyu-duk in Seoul to discuss North Korea's "escalatory actions." "We discussed how to respond to future DPRK actions, including a possible nuclear test," Kim said. The US is trying to lure North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions by providing political and economic benefits in return. "I once again call on Pyongyang to pursue a diplomatic path with us." "I want to make clear that we have no hostile intent towards the DPRK," he added. Underlining

his willingness to engage with North Korea "anywhere without any conditions," Kim also said the allies would "respond responsibly and decisively to provocative behaviour." Noh Kyu-duk said, "We agreed on the need to maintain the strongest possible joint deterrent capability on the peninsula." Earlier, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed the test-firing of a new type of tactical guided weapon.

The new-type tactical guided weapon system ... is of great significance in drastically improving the firepower of the frontline long-range artillery units and

enhancing the efficiency in the operation of tactical nukes," according to the North's KCNA state news agency.

The military troops of the US and South Korea are holding a nine-day annual joint military drill which consists of "defensive command post training using computer simulation." Kim Jong Un met former US President Donald Trump in 2019 to seek relief from sanctions and ask for some concessions. He wanted to revive to his moribund economy. However, the bout of doomed diplomacy collapsed and talks have been stalked ever since then.

US will no longer enforce mask mandate on aeroplanes, trains after court ruling



Judge Mizelle said the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had exceeded its authority, had not sought public comment and did not adequately explain its decisions. The Biden administration will no longer enforce a US mask mandate on public transportation

wear masks on aeroplanes, trains, and in taxis, ride-share vehicles or transit hubs, saying they needed time to assess the impact of a recent rise in Covid-19 cases. Industry groups and Republican lawmakers had wanted the administration to end the 14-month-old mask mandate last week. United Airlines said on Monday masks are no longer required on domestic flights and

select international ones, or at US airports. Alaska Airlines said face masks are now optional on its planes. The TSA and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) declined to comment. The CDC first issued a public health order requiring masks for interstate transportation in February 2021. The TSA issued a security directive to enforce the CDC order. Since

January 2021, there have been a record 7,060 unruly passenger incidents reported, 70% involving masking rules, according to the FAA. After the ruling, Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, urged "calm and consistency in the airports and on planes. The last thing we need for workers on the frontlines or passengers travelling today is confusion and chaos."

Biden announces additional military aid to Ukraine, questions Russia's claim on Mariupol

US President Joe Biden on Thursday said Russia's claim of taking control of Ukraine's port city of Mariupol is 'questionable' and announced additional military aid to Ukraine.

(Staff Reporter) "It's questionable whether he [Putin] does control Mariupol. He should allow humanitarian corridors to let people get out. There is no evidence yet that Mariupol has completely fallen," Biden said. The additional \$800 million in military aid will help Ukraine fight back against the Russian invasion, according to a White House official.

The new package includes much-needed heavy artillery and ammunition for Ukrainian forces in the escalating battle for the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin declared today that Mariupol has been 'successfully liberated' even as he asked his troops not to storm the Azovstal steel plant, the last remaining Ukrainian stronghold in the city. Mariupol, after seven weeks of Russian attacks, has been reduced to a smoking ruin. Fall of the strategic port city would be Moscow's biggest

victory of the war yet and free up troops to take part in battle for control of Ukraine's industrial east.

If Mariupol falls, Russian forces there are expected to join an all-out offensive in the coming days for control of the Donbas, the eastern industrial region that the Kremlin is bent on capturing after failing in its bid to take Kyiv.

Mariupol is home to Ukraine's neo-Nazi forces that Russia alleges are carrying out genocides on Russian people in collusion with the pro-western Ukrainian government.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

On February 24, Putin ordered "a special operation" to demilitarise Ukraine's military and ensure its neutrality with regard to his long-running strategic tussle with the US-dominated western military alliance Nato (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation).

(Staff Reporter) The Biden administration will no longer enforce a US mask mandate on public transportation, after a federal judge in Florida on Monday ruled that the 14-month-old directive was unlawful, overturning a key White House effort to reduce the spread of Covid-19. Soon after the announcement, United Airlines (UAL.O) and Alaska Airlines (ALK.N) relaxed the restrictions effective immediately on all domestic flights.

The ruling by US District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle, an appointee of President Donald Trump, came in a lawsuit filed last year in Tampa, Florida, by a group called the Health Freedom Defence Fund.

Judge Mizelle said the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had exceeded its authority with the mandate, had not sought public comment and did not adequately explain its decisions.

A US administration official said while the agencies were assessing potential next steps, the court's decision meant CDC's public transportation masking order was no longer in effect. The administration could still opt to appeal the order or seek an emergency delay in the order's enforcement. "Therefore, TSA will not enforce its Security Directives and Emergency Amendment requiring mask use on public transportation and transportation hubs at this time," the official said in a statement. The ruling comes as Covid-19 infections rise again in the United States, with 36,251 new infections reported on average each day, and 460 daily deaths, based on a seven-day average - the highest number of reported total Covid-19 deaths in the world.

The White House called the ruling "disappointing." Last week, U.S. health officials extended by 15 days the mandate requiring travellers to

US: 12 injured in shooting at South Carolina mall, 3 suspects held

A shooting at a shopping mall in Columbia, South Carolina has left 12 people injured, police said. Three suspects with firearms were detained

(Staff Reporter) Ten people were shot and two others injured in a shooting at a busy shopping mall in South Carolina's capital that authorities do not believe was a random attack. Three people who had firearms have been detained in connection with the Saturday afternoon shooting at Columbiana Centre, Columbia Police Chief W.H. "Skip" Holbrook said. He said at least one of those three people fired a weapon. "We don't believe this was random," Holbrook said. "We believe they knew each other and something led to the gunfire." Authorities said no fatalities have been reported but that eight of the victims were taken to the hospital. Of those eight, two were in critical condition and six were in stable condition, Holbrook said. The victims ranged in age from 15 to 73, he said.

Daniel Johnson said he and his family were visiting from Alabama

and were eating in the food court when they first heard shots ring out and started seeing people running. Johnson said people were screaming for their children and spouses, knocking over tables in the food court as they fled. "Everybody was trying to get outside," Johnson said. "When I was coming out, you could see baby strollers turned over, people's phones and left keys. It was kind of a hectic situation." Johnson said he gathered his wife, daughter and son and began heading toward the exit after letting the crowd clear out for a bit. "My biggest thing was — and not to sound selfish — was to make sure that our family was OK and to get them out safely because this is not something that we love to do for Easter weekend."

Heavy police presence continued in the area hours after the shooting, though officers began

letting more traffic through the streets surrounding the shopping centers and strip malls that are usually packed on weekends. Officers were also stationed outside a nearby hotel designated as a reunification area for people at the scene of the shooting and their families. Workers from a couple of stores remained clustered in the mostly empty parking lot Saturday evening, waiting for police to let them back inside to retrieve their car keys and personal belongings so they could leave. They said they did not hear or see anything during the shooting but followed the mall's alert system and were evacuated by police shortly after. They declined to give their names, citing company policies. "Today's isolated, senseless act of violence is extremely upsetting and our thoughts are with everyone impacted," Columbiana Centre said

in a statement. "We are grateful for the quick response and continued support of our security team and our partners in law enforcement."

The shooting is the latest in a rash of shootings at or near malls across the country. A 15-year-old boy was shot in the head Wednesday outside Brooklyn's Atlantic Terminal Mall. His injuries were not believed to be life-threatening. Officials said he was with a group of boys when they got into a dispute with a second group. On Tuesday, a Southern California shoe store owner mistakenly shot a 9-year-old girl while firing at two shoplifters at the Mall of Victor Valley, police said. And earlier this month, police said six people were killed and 12 others wounded in Sacramento, California, during a gunfight between rival gangs as bars closed in a busy area near the Downtown Commons shopping mall and the state Capitol.



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

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US rocked by 3 mass shootings during Easter weekend; 2 dead

Authorities in South Carolina are investigating a shooting at a nightclub early Sunday that wounded at least nine people. It was the second mass shooting in the state and the third in the nation during the Easter holiday weekend

(Staff Reporter) The shootings in South Carolina and one in Pittsburgh, in which two minors were killed early Sunday, also left at least 31 people wounded. No one was reported killed in the violence at Cara's Lounge in Hampton County, roughly 80 miles (130 kilometers) west of Charleston, according to an email from South Carolina's State Law Enforcement Division, which is investigating the shooting. A phone call to the nightclub was not answered. In Pittsburgh, two male youths were killed and at least eight people wounded when shots were fired during a party at a short-term rental property. The "vast majority" of the hundreds of people at the party were underage, the city's Police Chief Scott Schubert told reporters. Investigators believe there were multiple shooters, and Schubert said police were processing evidence at as many as eight separate crime scenes spanning a few blocks around the rental home.

GUNFIRE AT MALL

The two shootings come just a day after gunfire erupted at a busy mall in the

South Carolina state capital of Columbia, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) north of Sunday's nightclub shooting. Nine people were shot, and five people sustained other kinds of injuries while trying to flee the scene at the Columbiana Centre, Columbia Police Chief W.H. "Skip" Holbrook said Saturday. The victims ranged in age from 15 to 73. None faced life-threatening injuries. "We don't believe this was random," Holbrook said. "We believe they knew each other and something led to the gunfire."

The only person arrested in the mall shooting so far is Jewayne M. Price, 22, one of three people initially detained by law enforcement as a person of interest. Price's attorney, Todd Rutherford, told news outlets Sunday that his client fired a gun at the mall, but in self-defense. Rutherford said Price faces a charge of unlawfully carrying a pistol because he



legally owned his gun but did not have a permit to carry a weapon.

Columbia police said on Twitter that a judge agreed Sunday to let Price leave jail on a \$25,000 surety bond. He was to be on house arrest with an ankle

monitor, police said. "It was unprovoked by him. He called the police, turned himself in, turned over the firearm that was used in this, and gave a statement to the Columbia Police Department," Rutherford said, according to WMBF-TV. "That is why he got a \$25,000 bond." Police said the judge will allow Price to travel from home to work during certain hours each day. Price is forbidden from

contacting the victims and anyone else involved in the shooting.

South Carolina residents aged 21 or older can get a weapons permit, which as of last year allows them to carry weapons openly or concealed. They must have eight hours of gun training and pass a background check that includes fingerprinting. NEW YORK SUBWAY SHOOTING The three Easter weekend mass shootings are in addition to other gun violence in recent days. Last week, a gunman opened fire on a New York subway car, wounding 10 people. A suspect was arrested the next day. Earlier this month, six people were killed and 12 others wounded in Sacramento, California, during a gunfight between rival gangs as bars closed in a busy downtown area just blocks from the state Capitol. One week ago, a shooting inside a crowded nightclub in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, left a man and a woman dead and 10 people wounded. And last month, 10 people were shot at a spring break party in Dallas and several others were injured as they tried to escape the gunfire.



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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਖਾਸੀਅਤਾਨ ਸਿਰਕਲ ਰੋਡ ਤੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਾਈ

ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ: ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਖਾਸੀਅਤਾਨ ਸਿਰਕਲ ਰੋਡ ਤੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਾਈ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ ਹੋਣਗੇ। ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ ਹੋਣਗੇ। ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ ਹੋਣਗੇ।

ਨਵੇਂ ਸਾਲ ਮੌਕੇ ਅਮਰੀਕੀ ਫੌਜ ਨੇ ਬੰਬ ਦਾ ਟਵੀਟ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮੰਗੀ ਮੁਆਫੀ

ਵਿਸ਼ਵ: ਅਮਰੀਕੀ ਫੌਜ ਨੇ ਬੰਬ ਦਾ ਟਵੀਟ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮੰਗੀ ਮੁਆਫੀ। ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ ਹੋਣਗੇ। ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ ਹੋਣਗੇ।

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Lack of traceability of weapons supplied to Ukraine could be a concern for US

(Staff Reporter) The US on Wednesday, April 20, sent another batch of combat aid to help Ukraine in its fight against Russia. Just a week after US President Joe Biden announced an \$800 million military aid package for Ukraine, the Pentagon said that it has sent a batch of fighter aircraft to Kyiv.

WESTERN AID TO UKRAINE

The White House said, since the time when Biden assumed Presidency, the US has provided a total of \$3.2 billion to Ukraine and has deployed more than 1,00,000 troops to countries that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24. It has also sent \$2.6 billion in security assistance. The US is the largest supplier to Ukraine among all the 30 nations that are providing arms and ammunition amid the Russian invasion.

But for all its aid and weapons supply to Ukraine, the Biden administration has no way to track the use of the anti-tank, anti-aircraft, and other weaponry it has sent to help President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his fight against Russia.

According to CNN, this is due to a lack of US boots on the ground in the country and the easy portability of many of the smaller systems, like Javelins, now being sent by the US. The US has supplied Kyiv with Stinger anti-aircraft systems, Javelin anti-armour systems, Switchblade drones, air surveillance radars, Mi17 helicopters, 155mm Howitzers, etc. According to the Ukrainian Army, US Javelins, "causes panic" among

Russian troops.

US aid for Ukraine also includes a wide range of military equipment, ranging from 25,000 sets each of body armour and helmets to rifles and grenade launchers, thousands of other anti-tank weapons and more than 20 million rounds of ammunition.

A CALCULATED RISK

However, is the Biden administration worried about the lack of traceability of the weapons it is supplying to Ukraine? The answer may not be that simple. In the short run, the US sees the transfer of hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of equipment to be vital to the Ukrainians' ability to hold off Moscow's invasion. But in the long run, the lack of traceability could mean that some of these weapons may end up in the hands of other militaries and mercenaries that the US did not intend to arm.

"We have fidelity for a short time, but when it enters the fog of war, we have almost zero," said a source briefed on US intelligence. "It drops into a big black hole, and you have almost no sense of it at all after a short period." A defence official said that when the US started supplying military aid to Ukraine, it took a calculated risk of the shipments ending up in the wrong hands. After all the weaponry that has been pumped in for Kyiv's aid, a failure to adequately arm Ukraine against Russia could become a greater threat. With no boot on the ground, the US and Nato are mostly dependent on

Ukraine's government for battle information. Officials feel that Ukraine sees an incentive to provide information that would only boost their case for more aid, more arms, and more diplomatic assistance. "It's a war — everything they do and say publicly is designed to help them win the war. Every public statement is an information operation, every interview, every Zelenskyy appearance broadcast is an information operation," said another source familiar with western intelligence. "It doesn't mean they're wrong to do it in any way." For months, the US and western officials have put out details of what the West knows about the status of Russian forces inside Ukraine, such as how many casualties they've taken, their remaining combat power, their weapons stocks, what kinds of munitions they are using and where.

INFORMATION GAPS

But the West has large information gaps when it comes to the activities of the Ukrainian forces. According to at least two sources familiar with US and western intelligence development, even estimates of Ukrainian casualties are unclear. While the Biden administration and the Nato are providing assistance to Kyiv based on what Ukrainian forces claim they need, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has continued to accuse Europe, particularly Germany and Hungary, of continuing to boost Russia's economy by buying oil.

CAA protests: Violence rocks Delhi's Jamia, UP's AMU; Bengal boils, uneasy calm in Assam

protestors ransacked Bhaluka railway station and staged a road and rail blockade at Sagardighi. The cost of damage to railway property assessed so far during the protest in Kharagpur division is over Rs 15.77 crore till Saturday, officials said. At a poll rally in Jharkhand's Dumka, PM Modi said, "The Congress and its allies are stoking fire over the Citizenship Act, but people of northeast have rejected violence. Actions of the Congress prove that all decisions taken in Parliament are correct." "People who are setting fire (to property) can be seen on TV... They can be identified by the clothes they are wearing," he said without elaborating. In Assam, Gauhati Medical College and Hospital Superintendent Ramen Talukdar told PTI, "Ishwar Nayak died last night and Abdul Alim succumbed to his injuries this morning." Two persons, identified as Sam Stafford and Dipanjal Das, were shot dead on Thursday. Police said 175 people have been arrested and 1,406 taken into preventive custody across Assam. Special trains have been arranged to ferry stranded passengers. The

West Bengal chief minister has directed officials at Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri, two districts near Assam, to ensure supply of food and water to the passengers stranded due to the blockades. AGP leader Kumar Deepak Das said the party would file a petition in the Supreme Court for revocation of the amended Citizenship Act, even as party functionaries urged its top brass to clear their stand on the issue. Members of the AGP's Guwahati unit also held demonstrations outside party headquarters in Ambari area, demanding resignation of three ministers, including party chief Atul Bora. Later, at a press conference, Bora said as the legislation has already become an Act, at least the Brahmaputra valley should be excluded and it may be implemented in the Barak valley. The Barak valley, which has a significant Bengali population, has not seen any major agitation. AGP leader and Assam minister Keshab Mahanta said the party has not left its "old stand" of opposing the law. "Though we are a part of the NDA, our stand has not changed. We still do not

want this Act to be implemented in Assam and the northeast," he said. The party's lone MP in Rajya Sabha, Birendra Prasad Baishya, opposed the Bill during discussion, but voted in favour of it following which the party is facing severe criticism. Students organisations AASU and AJYCP also took out rallies across the state, seeking revocation of the law. Crude oil and gas production in Assam has been hit, affecting supply of petrol, diesel and LPG in many districts. The two major producers Oil India Ltd (OIL) and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) on Sunday said their gas output have totally stopped, while oil production is down by over 75 per cent. In another northeastern state of Meghalaya, curfew was relaxed in parts of Shillong from 6 am to 7 pm on Sunday. Banks and educational institutions remained shut with the North Eastern Hill University postponing all examinations to February 2020. Traffic was negligible on the roads during the relaxed hours of curfew and markets were shut for most parts of the day.

What constitutes 'noise', and how can noise pollution harm you?

The political controversy in Maharashtra over the demand to remove loudspeakers from mosques raises some fundamental questions regarding noise pollution. What do the Rules say in this regard?

The ever-increasing use of automobiles is a major cause of this pollution. People honk unnecessarily in the traffic and listen to loud music on the way, which creates high levels of noise. In 2017, a report highlighted that Delhi and Mumbai were in the list of the worst cities across the globe in terms of noise pollution. In Mumbai, a total of 15 locations were monitored. The highest noise level during the

daytime on February 21 and 22, 2021 was observed at 76.8dB (A) at Santacruz Airport and 77.9db (A) at Goregaon East respectively. During nighttime, the highest noise level on February 21 was observed at Antop Hill at 65.0dB(A), and on February 22 it was at Santacruz Airport at 69.7dB (A).

How can noise pollution impact health?

While noise pollution does not receive as

much attention as air and water pollution, it is known to impact the health of people. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), about 1.1 billion young people (aged between 12–35 years) are at the risk of hearing loss due to noise exposure. The WHO has stated that there is sufficient evidence that noise exposure at night causes self-reported sleep

disturbance and noise-induced sleep disturbance is viewed as a health problem. WHO also states there is evidence, albeit limited, that disturbed sleep causes fatigue, accidents and reduced performance. Various physical disorders due to higher noise include temporary deafness, headache and an increase in blood pressure.

UK PM Johnson facing new 'partygate' claims ahead of India visit

(Staff Reporter) British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is facing new allegations on Monday around "partygate", the scandal surrounding government officials breaching coronavirus rules with illegal lockdown gatherings, and will be hoping to escape some of the heat when he leaves for India on Thursday. Johnson has already been fined for one such party, for his birthday in June 2020, when his wife Carrie brought a cake to the Cabinet Room and has also been fined along with UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak. However, according to UK media reports, Johnson is believed to have been linked with around six out of the 12 lockdown parties under police investigation. 'The Sunday Times' quoted a source as saying that a leaving drinks gathering for Number 10 Downing Street's outgoing director of communications, Lee Cain, in November 2020 was allegedly "instigated" by Johnson. "He said he wanted to say a few words for Lee and started pouring drinks for people and drinking himself. He toasted him," the source was quoted as saying. It has led to renewed Opposition calls for Johnson, 57, to step down.

Labour Party Deputy Leader Angela Rayner said that "if the latest reports are true", it means "not only did the Prime Minister attend parties, but he had a hand in instigating at least one of them". Rayner accused him of deliberately misleading the British people "at every turn".

She added: "While the British public was making huge sacrifices, Boris Johnson was breaking the law. 'The Prime Minister has demeaned his office. The British people deserve better. While Labour has a plan for tackling the cost-of-living crisis, Tory MPs are too busy defending the indefensible actions of Boris Johnson.' While Downing Street has maintained it would not comment on the issue until Scotland Yard's investigation into the matter is concluded, Johnson will be hoping to deflect attention from the issue when Parliament returns after its Easter recess on Tuesday with other pressing matters. The conflict in Ukraine and his scheduled two-day visit to India, starting with Gujarat on Thursday, will be among the issues he is expected to focus on in Parliament.

"As we face threats to our peace and prosperity from autocratic states, it is vital that democracies and friends stick together. India, as a major economic power and the world's largest democracy, is a highly valued strategic partner for the UK in these uncertain times," Johnson said, ahead of his visit from April 21 to 22. "My visit to India will deliver on the things that really matter to the people of both our nations from job creation and economic growth, to energy security and defence," he said. The visit this week, Johnson's first as UK Prime Minister, will begin in Ahmedabad on Thursday with investment announcements in key industries in both the UK and India. He will then proceed to New Delhi to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, when the focus will be on India-UK strategic defence and diplomatic and economic partnership. According to officials on both sides, Johnson will also use his India visit to drive progress in the ongoing Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations launched earlier this year.

A far-right rally left Sweden burning. What sparked off the protests?

(Staff Reporter) Sweden has been hit by several days of unrest and protests, sparked by a far-right group's plans to burn copies of the Quran.

The protests started after the leader of the anti-immigration and anti-Islam group Stram Kurs, the Danish-Swedish politician Rasmus Paludan announced his plans of burning the Quran. While the demonstrations were cancelled in view of the growing protests, the agitators lit vehicles on fire and threw stones at the police.

What do we know about the protests in Sweden?

Paludan's plans had initially received the nod from the Swedish police but the cops had kept it on hold, hoping that the protests may die down. However, the stir only turned violent as four police cars were set on fire and five people, including four cops, had been injured. On Monday, the police announced that 40 people had been injured, including 26 cops, and more than 20 vehicles had been set on fire. According to the police, more than 200 people have been involved in violent protests, which are believed to have been organised by criminal gangs. More than 40 people have been arrested so far. The protestors threw stones, attacked police barriers and even knocked down riot fences. Cars, tires and even dustbins were set on fire and barriers were put on the streets by the protestors to halt traffic.

The agitations had taken place in cities where Paludan had announced to hold his demonstrations — Stockholm, Landskrona, Orebro, Malmo, Linkoping and Norrkoping.

On Saturday, Paludan had addressed a gathering in Malmo where protestors threw stones and the far-right leader was allegedly injured. In Norrkoping, three protestors had reportedly been hurt by gunshots fired by the police as a warning to disperse the crowd.

Anders Thornberg, the national police chief, has said that he had never witnessed violent riots on such a large scale in the country, especially in Norrkoping and Linkoping, according to BBC. Swedish police Commander Anders Wiberg said in a statement: "We do not tolerate the acts of violence that have occurred and now the police will start investigative work to prosecute the people who committed the crimes." **The right-wing that**

sparked the protests

Sweden's extremist anti-Islam party Stram Kurs was founded by Rasmus Paludan in 2017. The website of the party states: "Stram Kurs is the most patriotic political party in Denmark. We are because we have the basic position that we as a Danish political party must always prioritize the happiness of the Danes over the happiness of everyone else! It should be an obvious position for any Danish political party, but we are unfortunately the only party that thinks so."

The party has, on frequent occasions, carried out anti-Islam activities that have offended many Muslims living in the country. Other than public demonstrations of burning the Quran, the party uses social media to further its agenda.

It also wishes to ban Islam and specifically targets Muslims living in Denmark. The party had tried to contest Denmark's general elections in 2019 but failed to gather significant support. In 2020, it was accused of using unfair means of furthering their agenda through the Danish voting system and hence banned till 2022. As such, it changed its name to "Hard Line" to bypass this ban and has been operating under this name ever since. Has there been an instance of a Quran being burnt in public before?

Yes. Paludan himself has burnt the Quran in the past and has even faced repercussions for the same. In August 2019, he held a demonstration of burning the Islamic holy book, leading to around 100 people protesting against the same. He was arrested in November 2020 in France for saying that he would burn the Quran. He, along with a few other activists, were also banned from Belgium after they had planned a similar demonstration in Brussels, home to a sizeable Muslim population. In fact, Paludan ban in Sweden in 2020 came after protests against his demonstrations turned violent with cars being set on fire and shops being damaged.

So, who is this far-right leader?

Rasmus Paludan, 40, is a Danish lawyer who was granted Swedish citizenship because his father was a resident of the country. He is widely known for his anti-Islamic and racist comments and ideology and was even prohibited from practising law.

Pauldan, who was also a YouTuber, has been constantly convicted for his racist remarks and anti-Islamic insults and sentiments. In 2019, Pauldan burnt a Quran wrapped in bacon and was banned from Facebook for a month. He was also jailed in 2020 in Denmark for multiple offences, including racism. He was also prohibited from leaving Germany in 2021 after he had talked about his plans to commit anti-Islamic acts in Berlin.

However, although he plans to contest the next Swedish polls scheduled to be held in September this year, he does not have the necessary support of signatures to qualify as a candidate.

Reactions from around the world

Following the violence and Paludan's declarations, many Islamic countries have come forward to condemn the act. Iraq's foreign ministry said it had called upon Sweden's chargé d'affaires Hakan Roth in Baghdad to inform him of the "government's protest" on Sunday. "This matter has serious repercussions on the relations between Sweden and Muslims in general, whether in Islamic and Arab countries or in Muslim societies in Europe," they said.

Saudi Arabia also released a statement condemning the act: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's condemnation of the deliberate abuse of the Holy Quran, provocations, and incitement against Muslims by some extremists in Sweden. The Kingdom stresses the importance of concerted efforts to spread the values of dialogue, tolerance, coexistence, renounce hatred, extremism, and exclusion, and prevent abuse of all religions and holy sites." Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson said that she will ensure that those responsible for the attacks are arrested. She added that she did not condone Paludan's views or activities but also said that it was "unacceptable, irresponsible and illegal" to respond to it with violence. Organisations like the Muslim World League also responded to Paludan's act saying: "The Muslim World League condemns the absurd and shameful act carried out by some extremists in Sweden — who abused a copy of the Noble Quran and inciting Muslims during the Holy Month of Ramadan."

The constitutional amendment proposed by Sri Lanka PM Rajapaksa amid protests

(Staff Reporter)

What was the 19th Amendment?

The enactment of the historic 19th Amendment in April 2015 was rushed by the then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. It had removed the powers of the President to sack the Prime Minister at his discretion.

By amending the Articles 46 (2) and 48 of the Sri Lankan constitution, the cabinet ministers could have been dismissed only if the Prime Minister ceased to hold office by death, resignation or otherwise, or only if the Parliament reject a statement of government policy or the budget or if the parliament passes a vote of no confidence against the Government. The amendment also restricted the President's powers to dismiss Cabinet ministers as he was required to act on the advice of the Prime Minister.

A major criticism against the amendment, however, was that it was rushed by the then PM Wickremesinghe for his selfish needs, and without following the due process. Usually, when a Bill is tabled in parliament, it is considered the 1st reading, and the 2nd reading is the stage to discuss the amendments in detail, while 3rd reading is the comprehensive debate on the amended bill including proposals moved in. But

Wickremesinghe kept pushing amendments during the 3rd reading also, many in English, forcing several people including Tamils to demand translations. President Maithripala Sirisena was promised certain executive powers in the first term and the second term, which was expectedly a ceremonial position at the Presidency, like in India.

What was the 20th Amendment?

The 20th Amendment to the Constitution passed in October 2020 was also controversial. The 20th amendment (20A), which replaced the 19th Amendment (19A), had again enhanced the executive powers of the President in an unprecedented way besides abolishing the independent constitutional council for a Parliamentary Council.

It had passed a controversial clause that gave electoral rights to dual citizens. Passed with a two-thirds majority, the criticisms on 20A were more severe as it was observed as one that could derail the balance between the legislature, executive and judiciary by centralising maximum powers into the hands of one individual. Many conservative and radical Buddhist groups representing the majority Sinhala Buddhists also had reasons to oppose 20A on various grounds, including the clause allowing dual citizens to

become members of parliament.

Among the many criticisms, the Colombo-based Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) said the 20th amendment had removed the checks and balances on the executive presidency.

"In particular, it abolishes the binding limitations on presidential powers in relation to key appointments to independent institutions through the pluralistic and deliberative process of the Constitutional Council. It is a regression to what was in place under the Eighteenth Amendment, effectively providing sweeping powers to the President to appoint individuals to key institutions, and with it, politicising institutions that are meant to function independently of the political executive and for the benefit of citizens." The CPA also said, "The opportunity for citizens to challenge the executive actions of the President through fundamental rights applications has been removed, suggesting that the President is above the law."

21st Amendment to douse the fire

The proposed amendment to douse the fire may be one to remove several key powers of the President, essentially reducing the Presidency to a ceremonial position, like in India. It is expected that the amendment might be retaining the

powers of the President on all three armed forces while handing over almost all other key powers including governance, and cabinet ministers to the Prime Minister. At a time when Galle Face in Colombo is witnessing a huge gathering of protestors seeking the President's resignation, the Rajapaksa regime hopes to manage the situation with the proposed amendment that reduces the executive powers of the President. "There are two emerging challenges from Galle Face protests. The government cannot crackdown it as they are well disciplined and peacefully protesting. At the same time, it is inspiring and giving a morale boost to many sections outside Colombo to replicate a similar model. However, the protestors, mostly youth, do not have a programme either to gracefully back down or to force the government for a change," said Kusal Perera, a political analyst based in Colombo. However, the political stand was taken by the opposition leader Sajith Premadasa also helps the ruling regime as his position, so far, has been ambiguous; while promising a no-confidence motion against the government, he has taken a stand that his group will not be part of the interim government even as he continues to demand the resignation of the President and the Prime Minister.

Jahangirpuri demolition drive: What does the law on encroachment say?

(Staff Reporter) Even as the Supreme Court is hearing the pleas against the demolitions in Jahangirpuri and the allegations of "bulldozer politics", the North Delhi Municipal Corporation has claimed that it has the authority to remove encroachments from public roads and footpaths without any notice. Citing sections 321 and 322 of Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta on Thursday said that the action undertaken by the municipal authorities was valid. We take a look at the legal provisions and the court orders regarding encroachments and their removal.

Under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, there are specific provisions that ban encroachments into public roads/ footpaths. These are:

320. Prohibition of structures or fixtures which cause obstruction in streets—(1) No person shall, except with the permission of the Commissioner granted in this behalf, erect or set up any wall, fence, rail, post, step, booth or other structure whether fixed or movable or whether of a permanent or temporary nature, or any fixture in or upon any street or upon or over any open channel, drain, well or tank in any street so as to form an obstruction to, or an encroachment upon, or a projection over, or to occupy any portion of such street, channel, drain, well or tank. (2) Nothing in this section shall apply to any erection or thing to which clause (c) sub-section (1) of section 325 applies.

321. Prohibition of deposit of things in streets—(1) No person shall, except with the permission of

the Commissioner and on payment of such fee as he in each case thinks fit, place or deposit upon any street, or upon any open channel, drain or well in any street or upon any public place any stall, chair, bench, box, ladder, bale or other thing whatsoever so as to form an obstruction thereto or encroachment thereon. (2) Nothing in sub-section (1) applies to building materials.

MCD in its statement has particularly relied on the provision regarding removal of obstructions on the roads.

322. Power to remove anything deposited or exposed for sale in contravention of this Act. The Commissioner may, without notice, cause to be removed (a) any stall, chair, bench, box, ladder, bale or other thing whatsoever, placed, deposited, projected, attached or suspended in, upon from or to any place in contravention of this Act; (b) any article whatsoever hawked or exposed for sale on any public street or in other public places in contravention of this Act and vehicle, package, box or any other thing in or on which such article is placed.

MCD has claimed that the action undertaken is solely for removal of such temporary structures from the footpaths and streets, and therefore does not need prior notice.

What is also relevant in the context of Jahangirpuri are sections 334 and 343 of the Act, since some of the structures that have been demolished are not temporary sheds but brick construction and extensions of buildings. The DMC Act provides that sanction for extension/modification of a building has to be taken from the Corporation.

DEMOLITION ORDER

343. Order of demolition and stoppage of buildings and works in certain cases and appeal-- allows for the municipal commissioner to pass orders for demolition of the structure. However, the provision specifies that the Commissioner must pass an order "directing that such erection or work shall be demolished by the person who is the owner of the property, and the notice of demolition has to give minimum 5 and maximum 15 days time to the property owner to demolish such a structure.

The section also mandates that "no order of demolition shall be made unless the person has been given by means of a notice served in such manner as the Commissioner may think fit, a reasonable opportunity of showing cause why such order shall not be made."

This provision also allows for an appeal process against the show cause notice. Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second Act, 2011 also gives protection against demolition without rehabilitation to jhuggi dwellers.

Further, Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board Act 2010, under which the Delhi Slum and JJ Rehabilitation and Relocation Policy was notified in 2017, also states that removal of jhuggis even when encroachment is on government land cannot be done without a rehabilitation policy in place.

With regard to the Jahangirpuri issue, the residents and the government will have to clarify what exactly was demolished by the MCD. The viral videos show both kinds of structures-- brick structures, sheds and walls, as well as temporary tin and bamboo sheds.

Virtual Digital Assets are subsets of all digital assets transacted on a blockchain, such as non-fungible tokens (NFTs), cryptos and other virtual assets. The Finance Bill 2022 defined VDAs in the newly introduced Clause (47A) under Section 2 of the IT Act, 1961.

According to the Clause, VDAs are information, code, number or token not being Indian or foreign currency, generated by cryptographic means or otherwise. It is a digital representation of value that is exchanged with or without consideration. VDAs involve a



Understanding the law: Why crypto is virtual digital asset?

Gazette. The Central Government can also notify assets not considered VDAs for the proposed section. For instance, VDAs don't include subscriptions to e-commerce, OTT platforms, and mobile applications.

The Finance Bill 2022 defines what VDAs are, and cryptocurrency falls under this category. It also defines VDAs in terms of functionality as assets that may have inherent value or operate as commodities. Moreover, the Finance Bill 2022 excludes Indian and Foreign currencies from the definition of VDAs, which indicates that cryptocurrencies are not currencies. Many people are confused if the soon to be introduced digital rupee is a VDA. The digital rupee is a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) issued by the RBI. It is a digital version of the physical rupee and enjoys a sovereign guarantee or government backing. However, the digital rupee is not a virtual digital asset as it is a legal currency used in India. Moreover, digital gold, which is backed by an underlying asset, 'physical gold' is also not a virtual digital asset. Virtual digital assets may soon get a broader definition as the government brings more virtual assets under its ambit. In a nutshell, the government may fine-tune the definition of VDAs to cover any new product that emerges under the tax laws.

VDAs are information, code, number or token not being Indian or foreign currency, generated by cryptographic means or otherwise

promise or representation of having an inherent value and function as a store of value or a unit of account. It includes its use in any financial transaction or investment. However, VDAs are not limited to investment schemes and can be transferred, stored or traded electronically. VDAs include cryptos and other digital assets because of the phrase 'generated through cryptographic means or otherwise' used in the Finance Bill. Moreover, the words used to define VDAs such as 'code', 'information', 'number' provide an exhaustive definition. It may bring reward points issued by credit cards and shopping sites, airline miles, vouchers etc., under VDAs.

WHY ARE CRYPTOS DEFINED AS VDAs?

Digital assets which are not physical or tangible are classified as Virtual Digital Assets. The finance minister has announced that the RBI will issue digital currency in the next fiscal. A currency is a currency only when the Reserve Bank of India issues it, even if it is a crypto.

Digital currencies issued by the RBI are treated as currencies. Anything other than the digital currency issued by RBI, i.e. assets created by individuals, which we usually refer to as a cryptocurrency, will not be covered under the definition of currency. It would fall under 'Virtual Digital Assets'. Moreover, the

government has also included Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) or tokens of similar nature, which are cryptographic assets on a blockchain with unique identification codes under the definition of Virtual Digital Assets. The Central Government may notify any other VDA through a notification in the Official

Biden told Obama he will stand for reelection in 2024: Report

According to reports, President Joe Biden has told former US president Barack Obama that he would be standing for reelection in the 2024 US elections. There is widespread speculation over whether Biden, 79, will seek another term as president. The US president may be pitted against Trump who was beaten by Biden in the 2020 US elections. In the latest Gallup poll, Biden's current job approval ratings fell 14 points compared to the early months of his



presidency with the younger generation disappointed with the president. The Gallup poll showed Biden's job ratings was at its highest between January to June last year with 56 per cent Americans on Biden's side but it began to plummet

from July 2021 and has stayed in the 40 per cent range. Biden had declared earlier at a news conference in Brussels that he would be "fortunate if I had that same man running against me" referring to Trump. The president had told a US television network that he would retain Kamala Harris as his running mate in the 2024 polls. He added that if he was in good health then he would run again for the top job.

FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

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



Photograph taken April 2015

DESCRIPTION

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

REWARD

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

REMARKS

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

CAUTION

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

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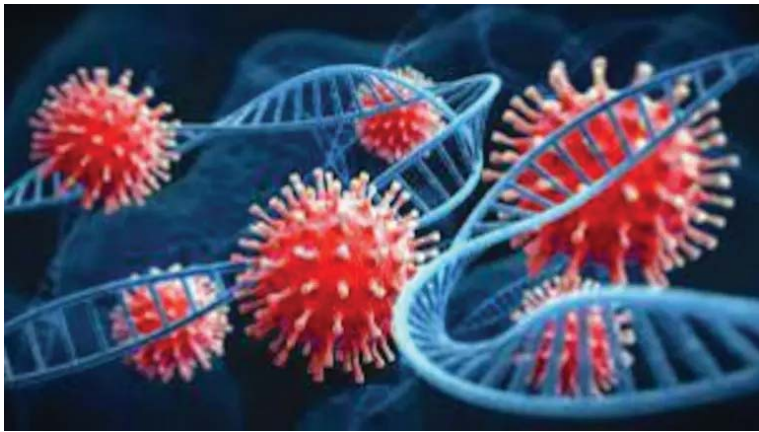
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What is the Omicron XE variant and should we be worried?

The XE variant is a recombination of Omicron variants BA.1 and BA.2 with over 1,100 cases recorded worldwide. The XE variant has been identified in the United Kingdom, India, China and Thailand. But, the XE variant should be an extra cause of concern to the general public



Every few weeks, the world hears about a new Covid variant, and it's hard to know how concerned the general public should be. Recently, a recombinant variant has emerged, dubbed Omicron XE, which is the result of two omicron strains merging together in a single host and then going on to infect others.

So what do we know about this new hybrid, and do we need to be worried about it?

OMICRON AND ITS VARIANTS

Omicron is a variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that was first discovered in Botswana on November 11, 2021. It was designated a variant of concern by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on November 26. Since this time, it has been transmitted worldwide and has replaced Delta, becoming the dominant variant. The Omicron variant has since continued to evolve to have multiple different lineages, or genetically related sub variants. This includes the original Omicron BA.1 (B.1.1.529) and also BA.2 and BA.3.

BA.2 is more infectious than BA.1 and has now taken over or outcompeted BA.1 to become the new dominant form of the SARS-CoV-2 virus worldwide, with the WHO officially announcing this to be the case on March 22, 2022.

The differences with Omicron relative to previous variants are explained by the relatively large number of mutations it has acquired, with 60 mutations not found in the original virus arising from Wuhan, China. Among these mutations are 32 genetic changes in the spike protein. The spike protein is the part of the virus it uses to attach to human cells, as well as the target of the immune response against the virus, from both vaccines and prior infection.

BA.2 shares many of these same mutations as the original

Omicron variant, but also has 28 unique genetic changes of its own. Four of these genetic changes are in the spike protein, which explains why some of its characteristics are different to the original Omicron variant (BA.1), including the fact it appears to be approximately 30 to 50% more infectious than BA.1.

WHAT'S A 'RECOMBINANT'?

Just as we have seen new variants arise, followed by the evolution of sub-variants or different lineages, the SARS-CoV-2 virus has continued to change in other ways as well. In recent times, we have seen not

just spontaneous changes in the genetic code that have accounted for the changes described above, but also so-called recombinants.

A recombinant is where related viruses exchange genetic material to create offspring with genetic material from both parent viruses. This can arise when viruses of two different strains (or variants or sub-variants) co-infect the same cell.

The genetic material of the viruses can get mixed and packaged together to make a new recombinant virus, with properties of either or both parent viruses.

The properties of the recombinant virus therefore depend on which parts of the genetic material from the parent viruses make it into the new version just like you might have your mum's nose and your dad's knees. When Delta and Omicron recombine, the resulting progeny are referred to as "Deltacron" (although more officially these are referred to as XD and XF). This type of recombinant was first identified in France in mid-February and

seems to have a genetic sequence mostly the same as Delta, but with aspects of the spike protein from Omicron BA.1.

WHERE IS THE XE VARIANT SPREADING?

XE is a recombination of BA.1 and BA.2. There are many other BA.1 and BA.2 recombinants, including XQ in the UK, XG from Denmark, XJ from Finland and XK from Belgium.

While XE still comprises a small proportion of total sequenced cases, it has shown evidence of community transmission, at least within England, where it was first detected in mid-January. There have now been just over 1,100 cases recorded.

It has also been identified in India, China and Thailand. Initially, the growth rate for XE appeared to not be significantly different from BA.2, but more recent data from the UK suggests it has a growth rate of around 10 to 20% above that of BA.2. This data remains preliminary and based on small numbers, so it may change as we get more information. If it is true, then this means XE is likely

to be slightly more contagious than BA.2, which was slightly more contagious than BA.1, which was more contagious than Delta.

SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED?

Our immune response that helps to protect against Covid-19 is generated by vaccination or from previous infection, and it mostly targets the spike protein. Given XE basically has the same spike protein as BA.2, it doesn't appear our protection against XE will be significantly reduced.

While this is something public health agencies and expert groups certainly should monitor, and they are, it isn't really something that is unexpected given the number of cases we continue to see worldwide. So it shouldn't be a cause of extra concern for the general public. The best way to slow the emergence of new variants, as well as recombinants, remains having as many people in the world protected by vaccination to reduce the pool of susceptible hosts in which these events can occur. Live TV

NSA invoked against 2 accused in Khargone communal clashes

The stringent National Security Act has been invoked against two persons allegedly involved in the violence that erupted during a Ram Navami procession in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone

The local administration has invoked the stringent National Security Act (NSA) against two persons allegedly involved in the violence that erupted during a Ram Navami procession in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone city, an official said on Tuesday. The NSA was invoked against Nawaz, a resident of Talab Chowk area and Mohsin alias Nati, resident of Jakaria Masjid area, for alleged involvement in the April 10 violence, in-charge Superintendent of Police (SP) Rohit Kashwani said. As many as 153 persons have been arrested and 65

First Information Reports (FIRs) registered in connection with the violence, he said. Kashwani urged people to help police identify the culprits. Stone-pelting took place during a Ram Navami procession in the city on April 10, leading to clashes and arson. Among the injured was Superintendent of Police Siddharth Choudhary who was hit by a bullet. Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh

Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Rajesh Rajora and Additional Director General (ADG) of Police Vipin Maheshwari visited



Khargone on Tuesday and held meetings with members of both the Hindu and Muslim communities. They also inspected riot-hit areas including Aurangpura, Talab Chowk, Sanjay Nagar, Mohan Talkies, Bhatwadi, Sarafa Bazaar and met those affected by the violence. The victims will get help and action will be taken against the rioters, the officials assured. The Madhya Pradesh government has

announced aid of Rs 1 crore for providing relief to the people affected by the violence.

The Khargone administration on Tuesday relaxed the curfew in the city from 8 am to 12 noon and from 3 pm to 5 pm. "The administration had conducted a survey and sent a report to the state government which has allotted Rs 1 crore for relief," said district collector Anugraha P. Based on this survey, financial assistance will be provided immediately to the affected people and vendors whose houses, shops and

vehicles were damaged in the violence, the collector said. Only the stores selling milk, vegetables and medicines were allowed to remain open during the relaxation of curfew. A government order said that people can purchase essential items from the shops in their neighbourhood. Petrol pumps will remain closed and the sale of kerosene will remain suspended at fair price shops, it added.

Ilhan Omar-Imran Khan meet: US lawmaker visits ex-Pakistan PM despite his America-bashing

Ilhan Omar, the first Muslim woman elected to Congress in the United States, visited former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan at his Bani Gala home and thanked him for speaking out against Islamophobia. Shireen Mazari, a former human rights minister in Imran Khan's Pakistan-e-Tehreek (PTI), posted a snapshot of the meeting on Twitter, writing that both sides discussed matters of common interest. Taking to Twitter, she wrote, "US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar called on Chairman PTI in Bani Gala. They discussed Islamophobia and related issues. @Ilhan expressed her admiration for @ImranKhanPTI and his position on and work against the Islamophobia globally. IK appreciated her courageous and principled position on issues. "Khan had earlier claimed to have been in possession of a threat letter, and alleged that a conspiracy was hatched by the US to remove him from office. The US rejected claims of any specific message being delivered to Pakistan's then-ambassador to the US, claiming that no US government agency had written a letter to Pakistan about the country's current political circumstances. According to The News International, Ilhan Abdullah Omar arrived in Islamabad earlier on Wednesday, where he was met at the Islamabad Airport by Foreign Office Director-General Americas Mohammad Mudassir Tipu. She would also visit Pakistan-occupied Kashmir during her stay in Pakistan. Omar, 37, is a member of the Democratic Party and represents Minnesota in Congress. She is one of two Muslim women elected to Congress in the United States in 2018.

Congress leaders discuss poll strategy at 10 Janpath, Sonia and Rahul Gandhi skip meet

Top Congress leaders convened at 10, Janpath for the second day in a row to discuss the party's strategy for the upcoming elections. However, sources said that Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi skipped the meeting



Top Congress leaders convened at 10, Janpath for the second day in a row to discuss the party's strategy for the upcoming Assembly polls and the 2024 general elections. Tuesday's meeting lasted nearly seven hours, sources said. The meeting at Congress president Sonia Gandhi's residence saw hectic deliberations regarding the party's battle plan in states where elections are due in the next year or two: who to form alliances with, what are the party's weaknesses, how to bolster prospects and set the poll narrative.

Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee president Kamal Nath and senior leader Digvijay Singh were reportedly present at

the meeting. On Wednesday, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel will be arriving in Delhi for another round of discussions.

Meanwhile, the Congress is gearing up for a three-day Chintan Shivir or brainstorming session in Udaipur from May 13. Besides coming up with a revival plan, leaders will also examine the long-term strategy presented by poll strategist Prashant Kishor. According to sources both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi were absent from the meetings held on Monday and Tuesday. Prashant Kishor had met with Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and other senior Congress party leaders.

'Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque near Qutub Minar was built after demolishing 27 temples: Archaeologist KK Muhammed

Famous Indian archaeologist KK Muhammed revealed that 27 temples were demolished to build the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque near Qutub Minar in Delhi, during a debate at a World Heritage Day event in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal on Monday (April 18).

"Remnants of temples, including Lord Ganesha's temple, were discovered near Qutub Minar. It establishes the existence of a temple," said the 69-year-old, who has been honoured with India's fourth highest civilian honor, Padma Shri.

Muhammed, however, said that the Qutub Minar was a different structure with its own minarets, adding that relevant evidence must be thoroughly

examined before a conclusion can be reached. At the Mangaluru Lit Fest in 2019, KK Muhammed, one of the archaeologists involved in the excavation of the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi site, had said it was advisable for Muslims to voluntarily hand over the Gyanvapi Mosque in Varanasi and the Idgah in Mathura, Lord Krishna's birthplace, to the Hindus. In Ayodhya, he added, they squandered a golden opportunity.

While these constructions were merely mosques for Muslims, they were locations of high devotion for Hindus, just as Mecca-Madina was for Muslims, according to Muhammad.

Self-driving cars: Drivers can watch TV, won't be liable for crashes, says UK draft policy

United Kingdom is bringing major changes to its Highway Code to cover the motorists who use self-driving cars. Under the proposed changes, the motorists of these cars can now binge on movies, play games and even scroll through websites if the drivers keep in a single lane and below 37 mph (59.5 kph). Moreover, the drivers won't be even liable for any accidents that take place when the car is self-driving.

The proposal by the Department for Transport (DfT) states that the insurance firms would be liable for accidents when it is in self-driving mode. However, the drivers must be ready to resume control of their cars in a timely fashion—such as when they approach motorway exits. It will remain illegal to use a phone behind the wheel. The government has described these as interim measures to support the early rollout of self-driving vehicles in UK which could take place this year. Trudy Harrison, a transport minister, said these changes were proposed following a public consultation and would be a "major milestone in

our safe introduction of self-driving vehicles", which would "revolutionise the way we travel", The Guardian reported. "This exciting technology is developing at pace right here in Great Britain and we're ensuring we have strong foundations in place for drivers when it takes to our roads," she was quoted as saying. "In doing so, we can help improve travel for all while boosting economic growth across the nation and securing Britain's place as a global science superpower," she added. According to the Daily Mail, these updates will be made to the Highway Code to legalise driverless technology before full regulations are introduced in 2025. Even though UK has expressed optimism over the safety of self-driving cars, the United States, where the use of technology is advanced, has witnessed various mishaps. In 2018, a 19-year-old pedestrian was killed by a self-driving Uber car in Arizona. Investigators said the car's safety driver, Rafaela Vasquez, had been streaming an episode of The Voice. She is awaiting a homicide trial.

Election Commission orders probe against Assam CM for poll code breach

A probe has been ordered against Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma for allegedly violating the poll code while campaigning for the Guwahati Municipal Corporation elections

The Assam State Election Commission has ordered a probe against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for allegedly violating the poll code while campaigning for the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) elections. Kamrup Metropolitan deputy commissioner Pallab Gopal Jha has been asked by the state poll panel to conduct the probe. "I am directed to forward herewith a copy of the complaint petition dated 18/04/2022

received from Sanjeev Bora, president, AJP, Kamrup (Metro), and request you to kindly enquire into the matter and furnish a report to this Commission at an early date," the Assam State Election Commission wrote in a letter to Pallab Gopal Jha. The order comes after the



Asom Jatiya Parishad reportedly lodged a complaint with the state poll panel alleging that the chief minister violated the model code of conduct by announcing sops to landless residents of Guwahati while campaigning for the BJP ahead of the GMC polls.

The regional political party also alleged that Sarma lured the voters by offering an extension of the Arunodoi scheme and also promising Rs 10 crore to each ward for developmental activities. Election for all 60 wards of the GMC is slated to be held on April 22. The counting of votes will take place on April 24. A total of 7,96,829 voters are eligible to exercise their franchise at 789 polling stations. Live TV

Co-working spaces: Commercial realty's sunrise segment

The growing number of start-ups has contributed largely to the economy by generating employment, taking services to the last mile and investing in R&D

(Staff Reporter) India, one of the youngest countries in the world, is going through an entrepreneurship revolution. The country already has more than 61,400 start-ups as per the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). The recent economic survey indicated that the number of new recognized start-ups in India stood at 14,000 in FY 2021-22. This number was only 733 in FY 2016-17. The growing number of start-ups has contributed largely to the economy by generating

employment, taking services to the last mile, and investing in R&D. The commercial real estate in the country has also benefitted from this as there is a direct correlation between the number of corporates and the demand for office spaces and warehousing.

Property rents in India are among some of the highest in the world. Office rent and capex investment for setting up office exert a serious amount of pressure on a company's financials. This pressure becomes critical for start-ups who are just

gaining feet in the market and have capital constraints. Co-working spaces have emerged to the rescue of such companies.

Co-working spaces not only help companies save on costs but also let them save on resources to manage the working spaces. It is estimated that a company can save up to 30 per cent on rent and operational costs while working in shared spaces. Co-working spaces are managed by professional companies and are served as plug-in and play spaces for the tenants. Funds and resource optimization are important for start-ups to grow and sustain their businesses. Shared offices spaces let the start-ups do this by saving costs and focusing on their core competencies. In these places, employees from different organisations share office space. This offers opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing, generating new ideas, and creativity.

Contrary to popular belief, large corporates and established market players have a much larger share in co-working spaces compared to smaller organisations, start-ups, and freelance professionals. Majority of the centres are located in the Tier 1 cities, however, Tier 2 cities like Ahmedabad, Kochi, Dehradun, Jaipur, Lucknow, etc., are catching up fast. More than 250 co-working spaces are currently operational

in tier 2 and 3 cities. Industry studies have suggested that 80 per cent of clients for topmost co-working centres belong to the large corporate sectors. During the pandemic, new forms of work style evolved. Remote working successfully helped the organisation continue working during the lockdown.

One might be inclined to believe that the pandemic was the primary reason for the success of the co-working spaces in India. However, the concept of shared office spaces had already gained popularity much before the pandemic. The rising prices of real estate and demand for flexible working conditions to maintain work-life balance were among the important reasons for this popularity.

It is evident that the co-working spaces by virtue of cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and operational efficiency are gaining popularity at an accelerated rate in the Indian market. The experiences during the pandemic have further strengthened the faith of the country's established corporates as well as start-ups in the shared and hybrid working spaces.

The exponential growth of the start-ups sector is another booster for the sector. Investments are coming from all quarters and more and more organisations are today inclined towards co-working spaces. In commercial real estate in the country, co-working is the sunrise segment.

How Modi govt's cow dung scheme is solving India's energy crisis and doubling farmers' income

In February 2018, the Narendra Modi-led government launched a new bovine-centric scheme aimed at fulfilling India's twin objectives-increase the income of farmers and provide clean energy

(Staff Reporter) GOBAR-DHAN—an amalgamation of two words gobar (cow dung) and dhan (wealth)—was launched as an extension to India's cleanliness campaign, Swachh Bharat Mission, focussing on keeping villages clean, providing a clear revenue stream for rural households, and generation of energy from cattle waste. The Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBAR-DHAN) scheme seeks to augment the income of farmers by converting biodegradable waste into compressed biogas (CBG) and aims at attracting entrepreneurs for establishing community-based CBG plants in rural areas. India's Hindu community has long venerated the cows. Rural households have for years used sun-dried cow dungs as a fuel to heat stoves, despite government efforts to phase it out with subsidised gas cylinders. But now, after four years since the launch, Indian farmers are finally reaping the benefits of continuing with their age-old practice. According to AFP,

villages on the outskirts of the central Indian city of Indore are being handsomely rewarded for handing over their mounds of cattle waste in a pilot project to help meet the city's power needs. A 46-year-old farmer said that he has sold nearly a dozen truckloads of fresh manure at \$235 per shipment—more than the monthly income of the average Indian farming household. "We have a very good quality dung, and we keep the dung clean to ensure it fetches the best price," AFP quoted Suresh Sisodia as saying. Under the project, cattle dung, along with household waste, is sent to the plant to produce flammable methane gas and an organic residue that can be used as fertiliser. Even though the intake capacity of the plant is limited for the time being, officials are working to increase the plant's capacity to make through 500 tonnes of waste, including at least 25 tonnes of bovine waste, each day—enough to power the city's public transit system, with plenty left over.

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Harshad Kumar Valand

217 Bethpage Rd, Hicksville,
HY 11801 (Above Mithaas)

Bad weather delays return of first private astronauts from space

The crew will be spending a few more days on the Space Station as Nasa and SpaceX work to identify the next window for their return

Designated to stay on the International Space Station for 10 days, the four private astronauts are well into their 12th day in zero gravity as bad weather continues to delay their return home. The Axiom Mission-1 (Ax-1) crew's return was delayed by Nasa after the customary farewell ceremony on the flying outpost. The delay was due to bad weather conditions off the coast of Florida where the spacecraft is planned for splashdown after it re-enters Earth's upper atmosphere. Nasa in a statement said, "Due to unfavorable weather, the undocking of Axiom Mission 1 (Ax1) has been postponed." "The integrated Axiom Space, Nasa, and SpaceX teams are assessing the next best opportunity for the return of Ax-1, the first all-private mission to the ISS," Axiom Space said in an update. The crew had completed the necessary



repacking of the Dragon, reacquainted themselves with undocking operations, and made the final preparations for spaceflight. The crew will be spending a few more days on the Space Station as Nasa and SpaceX works to identify the next window for their return. With the mission extended, the

four members will have to repack as and when the return day comes closer. "Teams will continue to monitor the weather at the splashdown sites prior to undocking to ensure conditions are acceptable for a safe recovery of the Dragon spacecraft and Ax-1 astronauts. The astronauts have completed the intended

research and scientist mission in what they described as a jam-packed schedule on the Space Station. The commercial space company had said that During the Ax-1 mission, the crew pioneered a new path in space to allow more opportunities for individuals, nations, and researchers around the world to

work in microgravity. During their over a week-long stay in the flying laboratory, the crew conducted over 26 experiments, including technology demonstrations. The experiments included self-assembling technology for satellites and future space habitats, cancer stem cell study, air purification, and testing edge computing, made possible by Axiom's full-service integration into the NASA process for science and technology activities. "It's been an amazing experience. A few adjectives may be unique certainly, magnificent, and to some degree humbling, but I think more than anything very, very rewarding," Commander MLA said during the ceremony. After Nasa decides on a return date, the four astronauts will begin their journey back to Earth in the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft.

PM, President, SC and polls in PoK: How Pakistan runs its 'Azad Kashmir' propaganda

As Imran Khan's party picks a new PM of PoK, here is a look at how Pakistan runs its "Azad Kashmir" propaganda through an array of "institutions".

On Monday, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was elected as the 14th "prime minister" of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Khan, who was recently ousted as Pakistan's PM, nominated Ilyas after his hand-picked Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi resigned following a revolt in the party. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), now ruling Pakistan with Shehbaz Sharif as PM, boycotted Ilyas's election. They had jointly fielded Chaudhry Yasin for the post of PoK's PM.

The proceedings happened in PoK's National Assembly, presided over by Speaker Chaudhry Anwarul Haq. The Assembly has 53 members chosen from over 700 candidates by about 20 lakh voters of PoK. But that's not all. Some might be surprised to know PoK also has federal elections, a President (Barrister Sultan

Mehmood Chaudhry, who convened the latest Assembly session), a Supreme Court, and a High Court. But why have these institutions when PoK is a territory by definition occupied by Pakistan?

Let's first understand how PoK came into being. And for that, we need to rewind to 1947 when Jammu and Kashmir was a princely state.

During Partition, Jammu and Kashmir was given the option to join either India or Pakistan, but its ruler Maharaja Hari Singh chose independence.

Pakistan invaded Jammu and Kashmir despite having signed a standstill agreement with the princely state, which turned to India for help and signed the Instrument of Accession with India.

India's response to Pakistani intrusion resulted in a war that got over in 1949 with the United Nations intervening and accepting that the merger of Jammu and Kashmir with India was legal.

The ceasefire line temporarily bifurcated Jammu and Kashmir, with India controlling about 65

per cent of the state and Pakistan the rest 35 per cent. India calls the 35 per cent part Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK). Pakistan calls it Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) or Azad Kashmir.

PoK leaders surrendered the Northern Areas to Pakistan under the Karachi Agreement of 1949. A part of PoK in the larger Ladakh region was handed over to China by Pakistan in 1963.

OW PoK IS 'GOVERNED'

PoK is divided into two parts: AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan (referred to as the 'Northern Areas' till August 2009). Muzaffarabad is the capital. PoK comprises 10 districts under three divisions — Mirpur, Muzaffarabad, and Poonch. The president is the constitutional head, while the prime minister, supported by a council of ministers, is the chief executive. The unicameral legislative assembly elects both the prime minister and the president. The territory has a Supreme Court, with a chief justice and two other judges.

There is also a high court, with three circuit benches in Kotli, Mirpur, and Rawalakot.

On the face of it, PoK seems to function as an autonomous state. Let's try to have a glimpse of life in PoK, as reported from the region by the local media this month.

Prime Minister Niazi (now ousted in a no-confidence vote like Imran Khan) announced a historic Ramadan package for the people, and said, "The AJK government will provide a subsidy of Rs 400 per 40kg of flour during Ramadan. "Subsidy amounting to Rs 56 crore would be provided under the Ramadan relief package", he said.

New Prime Minister Ilyas reiterated his party's vision to turn "Azad Kashmir into a self-reliant state" and said that people's welfare and development were among his top priorities.

A minister warned against unlawful occupation of government land and illegal construction, vowing that the practice would be thwarted with an iron hand.

Inspector General of Azad Jammu Kashmir Police (yes, PoK has its police force) Suhail Habib Tajik said the entire police

service is being digitized in all 10 district headquarters by establishing fully equipped Police Khidmat Marakiz' (Police Facilitation Centers). The initiative is aimed to ensure swift police services for combating crimes and maintaining peace.

There are many other departments, including the one for managing PoK's wildlife. A news report said in February that officials swung into action when a leopard was stoned and strangled to death by angry villagers after it descended on a human settlement in the Jhelum Valley district and wounded some people.

But the narrative remains anti-India and revolves around the idea of Kashmir's freedom. Here are some recent utterances reported by the local media. Politicians announced rallies to protest PM Modi's visit to Jammu and Kashmir in May, his first visit to the region after his government abrogated Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir to revoke its temporary special status and bifurcated the erstwhile state into two Union Territories (Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh) in 2019.

Many investments of Elon Musk

While Elon Musk's interest in buying Twitter has sent shock waves across the corporate world, he has investments in multiple companies



has a total net worth of \$264.6 billion. The Bloomberg Billionaires Index shows Musk's total net worth at \$251 billion. While Musk's interest in buying Twitter has sent shock waves across the corporate world, he has investments in multiple companies.

TWITTER

Musk has already become San Francisco-based Twitter's second-largest shareholder. Musk made the bid on Wednesday in a letter to the board of Twitter and it was made public in a regulatory filing on Thursday. His offer price of \$54.20 per share represents a 38 per cent premium to Twitter's April 1

close, the last trading day before his 9.2 per cent stake in the social media platform was made public. Last week, Musk rejected an invitation to join Twitter's board after disclosing his stake, a move analysts said signaled his takeover intentions as a board seat would have limited his shareholding to just under 15 per cent.

TESLA

Musk started financing Tesla in 2004. In 2008, he became the CEO of the world's most valuable automaker.

SPACEX

Musk revitalized the space race after he founded Space Exploration Technologies Corp. popularly known as SpaceX in

2008.

DEEPMIND TECHNOLOGIES DeepMind Technologies is an artificial intelligence company which was launched in 2010 and Musk was its pivotal investor.

In 2014, Google announced that it had acquired the company for an undisclosed amount.

THE BORING COMPANY

Musk founded an infrastructure and tunnel construction company - The Boring Company, in 2017.

PAYPAL

Musk co-founded email payment and online financial services company X.com in 1999. In 2000, X.com merged with Confinity. The entity was renamed PayPal in 2001.

(Staff Reporter) The world's richest person, Elon Musk, has offered to buy Twitter for \$43 billion. Musk's announcement came days after the Tesla Chief Executive Officer (CEO) had revealed that he owned a 9.2 per cent stake in Twitter. Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal said that the company's board was reviewing Musk's offer. Musk, however, hinted at a hostile bid bypassing Twitter's board. Musk currently tops the Forbes Billionaires List and Bloomberg Billionaires Index. According to Forbes, Musk

China's economic growth falls short of Beijing's target

China's economic growth remained below the official estimates as fresh outbreaks of Coronavirus prompted the shutdown of major industrial cities, including the financial hub of Shanghai



also cited "unprecedented downward pressure since the first quarter of 2020 due to coronavirus flare-ups, supply chain snags and external uncertainties arising from the Russia-Ukraine conflict," as per the Global Times report.

CHINA GDP GROWTH

Earlier, China set its gross domestic product (GDP) growth target for 2022 at around 5.5 per cent to focus on slower growth in order to stabilise its economic fundamentals this year, as the world's second-largest economy beefed up supportive measures to shore up growth against strong headwinds.

"We must be aware that the domestic and international environment is becoming increasingly complicated and uncertain, and that economic development is facing significant difficulties and challenges," NBS spokesperson Fu Linghui said on the Q1 figures.

"With regard to the trend of the next stage, although there is some pressure in the short term on the economy from the perspective of the whole year, China's economy is expected to maintain a recovery trend of development," he said.

Last Friday, China's central bank, in a much-anticipated move, cut its reserve requirement ratio

(RRR), or the amount of cash that banks must hold in reserve, to shore up its slowing economy amid growing headwinds.

COVID-19, LOCKDOWN IN CHINA

The current surge of the Omicron virus in China which is sending one city after another into prolonged lockdowns was largely expected to have an adverse impact on the economy.

After big cities like Xian and

Shenzhen, a lockdown was imposed in Shanghai, China's biggest business and economic hub.

The city is in the third week of lockdown. The city of 26 million came to a standstill as it continuously reported about 30,000 cases in the last two weeks with no let-up.

Shanghai acts as one of the leading drivers of China's \$18 trillion economy.

(Staff Reporter) China registered an economic growth of 4.8 per cent in the first three months of 2022. However, the first quarter growth was well below the ruling Communist Party's official target of 5.5 per cent for the entire year, according to official data released on Monday.

The country's gross domestic product grew 4.8 per cent year on year during January to March, picking up pace from a 4 per cent increase in the fourth quarter last year, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Monday.

In India, the financial year is calculated from April 1 to March 31. However, in China, the fiscal year is the same as the calendar year. So, the financial year in China is calculated from January 1 to December 31.

CHINA ECONOMY

The economic growth remained below the official estimates as fresh outbreaks of Coronavirus prompted the shutdown of major industrial cities, including the financial hub of Shanghai.

Also, there was a slump triggered by tighter government controls on the use of debt by China's vast real estate industry. Forecasters have said that will be hard to meet without more government stimulus spending, according to The Associated Press (AP).

Retail sales in China fell 3.5 percent year-on-year in March. This was the first contraction since August 2020, according to a report in China's official media, Global Times. Retail sales are considered as the main parameter to gauge consumption. Observers of China's economy

Bengal investors' summit concludes: 137 MoUs signed, over 3.4 lakh crore investment in proposals

(Staff Reporter) A two-day annual business meet concluded on Thursday with a huge response from industrialists from all across the globe. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, while speaking at the Bengal Global Business Summit closing ceremony stated, "I am told 4,300 participants across the world attended the BGBS conference". But what was the outcome of the mega event showcased by the state government to welcome investors? We have learnt that as many as 137 MoUs were signed in two days meet. According to the chief minister,

the state has received proposals of Rs 3,42,375 crores for investment. Mamata Banerjee stated, "This year's BGBS meet will generate 40 lakh jobs for the youth". There was good news for Bengal from the global platform. Andal airport and Bagdogra airport will soon be converted into international airports. Cooch Behar, Malda and more regional airports will come to connect the districts of Bengal to the other parts of the country. Mamata Banerjee has announced to hold the trade conference within the next one year. The next BGBS will be held on February 1, 2 and 3 next year. The chief minister said, "Industry is our goal".

Covid-19 cases spike, how far is India from herd immunity?

India has a requisite population with some degree of natural or artificially controlled infection to attain herd immunity. Yet, the Covid-19 cases have spiked in the country over the past week, triggering fears of the fourth wave of the pandemic in the country

(Staff Reporter) In July 1885, French chemist Louis Pasteur received two unlikely visitors, a nine-year-old boy, Joseph Meister, and his mother in his Paris clinic. A rabid dog had bitten Joseph 14 times. The virus was yet to be discovered but rabies, a viral disease, back then was known to kill most of the infected patients. Pasteur was experimenting a vaccine to treat rabies. His research was limited to dogs and rabbits. He had cured about 50 dogs before Joseph's mother turned up at his clinic. Louis Pasteur, who was not licensed to practice medicine, had developed the vaccine from the powder of dried spinal cords of humans and rabbits died of rabies.

Louis Pasteur took the help of a doctor friend to convince the woman that the new vaccine was the last hope to save her son. Louis Pasteur's friend inoculated Joseph. His life was saved and he, later on, served as the custodian of Louis Pasteur's laboratory till the Nazi German forces occupied it in 1940. Meister shot himself dead by refusing to hand over the keys to the occupiers. This was the first



instance of vaccine-induced immunity in modern science. Before Louis Pasteur's experiment to treat rabies, immunity was natural. That is, a pathogen (a disease-causing organism) would infect a person and the survivors would develop the ability to fight off the next infection. A disease would take long before it stops spreading. The development of vaccines offered humans, and some animals, the luxury of inoculated immunity, or the ability to fight off

future pathogen attacks through a controlled infection.

A pathogen, say a virus, stops infecting a population if most individuals have acquired immunity against it through natural infection or vaccination. This is called herd immunity for that population. This is how the world moved towards the eradication of polio or smallpox through universal vaccination. The same principle of universal vaccination is being applied to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. In

2020, when Covid-19, caused by SARS-CoV-2, was traversing continents, the scientific community hoped that herd immunity would be attained if 60-70 per cent population is infected or vaccinated. India is one of the worst affected countries by Covid-19. The exact penetration of SARS-CoV-2 among the Indian population is not conclusively known. A large number of Covid-19 cases went unrecorded in many states. No state, district or possibly village in the country has

remained insulated from SARS-CoV-2. To add, more than 98 per cent of the adult population has received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine.

This means that India has a requisite population with some degree of natural or artificially controlled infection to attain herd immunity. Yet, the Covid-19 cases have spiked in the country over the past week, triggering fears of the fourth wave of the pandemic in the country. The central government reported a daily spike of about 90 per cent on Monday morning.

So, what makes herd immunity a mirage?

The answer to this question lies in the basic nature of a virus, also SARS-CoV-2. Viruses mutate all the time to make themselves a more successful variant of their original strand. This mutation gives them the advantage of previously attained immunity, herd or individual, for the earlier strains or variants. The classic example of this case scenario is the common flu virus. It changes practically every season. This is why one needs to get vaccinated every year if one wants to stay clear of the common flu.

World Liver Day 2022

Dos and Don'ts to Maintain a Healthy Liver

liver gets negatively affected due to Hepatitis B, C, and alcohol or drug abuse, among other factors.

On World Liver Day 2022, here's a look at the Dos and Don'ts when it comes to maintaining a healthy liver.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DOS

Consume a good amount of green and leafy vegetables such as Spinach, Broccoli, Kale, etc. These vegetables help in triggering a natural cleansing process in the body.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DON'TS

Avoid processed foods as much as possible since these kinds of food have a high glycaemic index that leads to a fatty liver. In addition, these

foods also raise the sugar level in the body.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DOS

Switch to good fats such as those found in walnuts, avocados, and olive oil.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DON'TS

Avoid saturated and trans fats which are known as bad fats. This also includes fried foods.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DOS

Staying hydrated is one of the golden rules if you want a healthy liver. Water acts as a natural detoxifying agent and will help the liver remove waste from the body.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DON'TS

Talking about golden rules in the 'Don'ts' category, avoid consuming alcohol. Alcohol

works as a dehydrating agent and makes it difficult for the liver to get rid of the toxins in the body.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DOS

Increase the proportion of fruits in your diet. Moreover, make sure you have some Vitamin-C rich fruits.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DON'TS

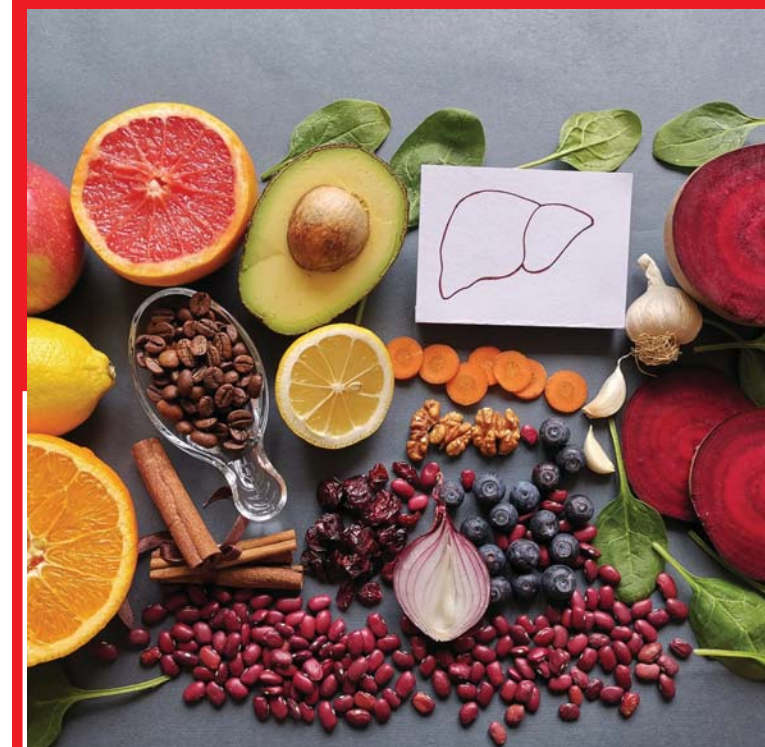
Avoid excess consumption of red meat since these foods make your liver fatty.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DOS

A universal rule that applies to almost all ailments – Exercise regularly.

WORLD LIVER DAY: DON'TS

Avoid food with high sugar content such as chocolates, candies, and soft drinks.



(Staff Reporter) **WORLD LIVER DAY 2022:** April 19 is observed as World Liver Day every year to raise awareness about the role of the liver in the overall health of the body and to make people more enlightened about the diseases and conditions related to the liver.

The second-largest organ in the body, the liver is also a highly complex organ of the body, only second to the brain. It is because the liver is responsible for a variety of crucial functions in the body that reflect on the immunity, digestion, and metabolism of the human body. Generally, the

Climate change: Indian researchers develop material that can absorb greenhouse gas, convert it to Hydrogen

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), Hyderabad have computationally designed a hybrid material that can capture methane and also act as a catalyst to convert it to high purity hydrogen

(Staff Reporter) The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its latest report called for a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in a bid to achieve net-zero goals. To boost India's chances, a team of researchers from the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT) in Hyderabad has come up with a material that can absorb greenhouse gas methane, converting it to clean Hydrogen.

The team has for now succeeded in computationally designing this hybrid material that can also simulate a process of capturing carbon dioxide in-situ and converting it to high purity hydrogen from non-fuel grade bioethanol. The team has developed a facility where they can test this material and push for innovative technology in carbon capture. The IPCC report has focused on the immediate



need to boost carbon-capturing technology across the world, especially in developing and underdeveloped countries that emit a big chunk of greenhouse gases. The Ministry of Science & Technology in a statement said that given the global warming potential of greenhouse gases, scientists are trying to explore innovative methods of absorbing these gases and converting them to useful substances. The new

facility developed by the researchers is a dual operational fixed cum fluidized bed reactor system (FBR) that can carry out enhanced steam methane reforming (SESMR) for high purity H₂ production based on the modeling and preliminary experimental studies. "It is unique and available for the first time in the country to test the performance of dual-functional materials for SESMR in the

fluidized bed reactor system. SESMR offers specific advantages of in-situ CO₂ removal through sorbents and thereby overcomes the equilibrium limitations of steam reforming and leads to high purity H₂ production," the ministry added. The team is currently involved in synthesising the dual functional materials identified from theoretical predictions while also optimising existing

sorbent/catalyst materials for meeting the increasing challenges of carbon capture and utilization and associated research. An estimated 640 million tons of methane were emitted into the atmosphere last year by human activity; roughly 36 billion tons of carbon dioxide were emitted during the same period. Preliminary analysis reveals that the annual increase in atmospheric methane during 2021 was 17 parts per billion (ppb), which was 15.3 ppb a year before. Scientists part of the IPCC has identified methane as the biggest contributor to climate change after carbon dioxide, citing fossil fuel as the biggest source of these emissions. The panel has called for drastic cuts in emissions by 2030 in order to achieve net zero by 2050 and gave the planet a fighting chance against climate change.

Chinese astronauts return to Earth after longest crewed mission

(Staff Reporter) Three Chinese astronauts on Saturday returned to Earth after completing the country's longest crewed space mission till now. The astronauts remained in space for 183 days.

While in orbit, the Shenzhou-13 mission astronauts took manual control in the Tianhe living quarters module for what state media called a "docking experiment" with the Tianzhou-2

cargo spacecraft. The astronauts - Zhai Zhigang, Ye Guangfu and a female crew member Wang Yaping - were launched into space in October. They remained in space for 183 days and completed fifth of 11 missions needed to finish the space station by the end of the year. Shenzhou-13 was the second of four planned crewed missions to complete construction of the space station,

which began last April. Shenzhou-12 returned to Earth in September. Going forward, China will launch two missions, Tianzhou-4 and Shenzhou-14. The former would be a cargo spacecraft while the latter would be a three-

person mission, as per Shao Limin, deputy technology manager of Manned Space Ship System. Shao Limin was quoted by Chinese state media. Barred by

the United States from participating in the International Space Station (ISS) in orbit, China has spent the past decade developing technologies to build its own space station, the only one in the world other than the ISS. China, which aims to become a space power by 2030, has successfully launched probes to explore Mars and became the first country to land a spacecraft on the far side of the Moon.



What is megamaser found in space by astronomers?

(Staff Reporter) In space, a powerful radiowave laser has been found by astronomers. This one-of-a-kind laser is known as megamaser. It has been observed at around 5 billion light-years away from Earth, which is the most distant ever. To reach Earth, the light from this laser has travelled 36 thousand billion billion miles (58 thousand billion billion kilometers). The megamaser was observed by a team of international astronomers with the help of the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory's MeerKAT or Karoo Array telescope.

What is a megamaser? Marcin Glowacki, who was the leader of the team and research associate at Curtin University node of the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research in Australia, said,

megamasers get created when two galaxies collide with each other. In a statement, Glowacki said, "When galaxies collide, the gas they contain becomes extremely dense and can trigger concentrated beams of light to shoot out." In a nutshell, a megamaser is actually a super-powerful laser, which is made of microwave light, said media reports.

Named Nkalakatha MeerKAT observed this light or hydroxyl megamaser, for the first time, Glowacki added. Hydroxyl, which is a chemical group, contains one hydrogen atom and one oxygen atom. It can be found when galaxies merge. The laser has also been named Nkalakatha by the research team. It means "big boss" in isiZulu, a language of the Zulus in South Africa.

Letting economic inequality flourish in a nation can turn its citizens unhappy, says study



Bartram at the University of Leicester, will be presented at the British Sociological Association's online annual conference to be held on April 21, said media reports. The study was conducted in 78 countries for around four decades. It makes it the largest longitudinal research of its kind. "When inequality increases, people with high incomes don't benefit much from their gains – many rich people are focused on those who have even more than they

do, and they never feel they have enough. But people who earn little really suffer from falling further behind – they feel excluded and frustrated by not being able to keep up even with people who receive average incomes," Bartram told the Guardian. The research has examined survey data of life satisfaction levels. In it, people gave a rating to their life satisfaction on a scale of one to 10. It also linked it to Gini coefficient numbers, which is a measure of inequality, from

1981 to 2020. In 1981, life satisfaction in the UK was 7.7 when it was witnessing a recession. Later, economic boom occurred leading to inequality and the figure dropped to 7.4 by 1999. "The data from the UK feeds into a more general finding – in wealthy countries increased inequality has a substantial negative impact on life satisfaction, and inequality has increased in most wealthy countries in recent decades," Bartram added.

(Staff Reporter) Letting economic inequality flourish in a country can turn its citizens unhappy, found a new study. The research, which has been carried out by Dr David

In shadow of Ukraine war, Russian astronauts install robotic arm controls on International Space Station



at 1555 GMT. Roscosmos head Dmitri Rogozin wrote in a post, "Ours! For the first time in many years, a completely Russian crew."

He is a nationalist ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin who is an enthusiastic supporter of Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine. Last month he tweeted, "If you block cooperation with us, who will save the ISS from uncontrolled deorbiting and falling on the US or European territory?" After successfully entering the orbital lab, Artemyev and Matveev went for a spacewalk to install a control panel for a 37-foot-long

robotic arm that will be used to move both astronauts and payloads. They also installed handrails on Nauka, Russia's primary laboratory on the space station. The engineers were scheduled to exit the Russian module Poisk after completing their seven-hour excursion. NASA has said that it "continues working with all our international partners, including the State Space Corporation Roscosmos, for the ongoing safe operations of the International Space Station." During its live feed, Artemyev can be seen wearing a red-striped spacesuit during his

fourth spacewalk. Meanwhile, Matveev can be identified by the blue stripes on his suit during his first such mission. This was the fourth spacewalk at the ISS in 2022 as per the US space agency. Russia's "special operation" in Ukraine for its "reunification and denazification" has caused a rift with the West which is not willing to collaborate with it on new missions. American astronaut Scott Kelly had refused a medal awarded to him by the Russian government in 2011. "Please, give (the medal) to Russian mothers whose sons have been killed in this unjust war," he said in a tweet.

(Staff Reporter) Russian relations with the West to their lowest point since the Soviet era. Oleg Artemyev and Denis Matveev, who belong to the Russian space agency Roscosmos, had blasted off with Sergei Korsakov to the ISS

Did climate contribute to the emergence of modern-day humans? Scientists now have answers

In the largest simulation of data spanning over two million years, scientists have found unique patterns showing how climate contributed to the emergence of modern-day humans

(Staff Reporter) The story of human evolution on a planet that has just been a few billion years old has always been intriguing and a team of scientists have now found how climate and other planetary conditions influenced their movement on the surface. Climate shifts over the last 2 million years have long been believed to have a pivotal role in the evolution of homo-sapiens. Using a massive simulation of climatic conditions spanning over two million years, scientists have shown how it contributed to the emergence of modern-day humans. They used South Korea's

fastest supercomputer named Aleph to simulate Earth's climate history over the past 2 million years along with a database of well-dated fossil remains and archeological artifacts. The study published in the journal Nature states astronomically forced changes in temperature, rainfall, and terrestrial net primary production had a major impact on the observed distributions of homo sapiens. "During the Early Pleistocene (18,00,000 years ago), hominins settled primarily in environments with weak orbital-scale climate variability. This

behaviour changed substantially after the mid-Pleistocene transition when archaic humans became global wanderers who adapted to a wide range of spatial climatic gradients," the paper read. The study is based on the largest model so far to investigate how Earth's movement led to human migration over different geological epochs. "Even though different groups of archaic humans preferred different climatic environments, their habitats all responded to climate shifts caused by astronomical changes in earth's axis

wobble, tilt, and orbital eccentricity with timescales ranging from 21 to 400 thousand years," Axel Timmermann, lead author of the study and Director of the IBS Center for Climate Physics (ICCP) said in a statement. The team ran the climate model on a supercomputer for six months in a bid to reconstruct how temperature and rainfall influenced humans over a million years. They included astronomical changes that Earth goes through over 100,000-year cycles that include its oscillations in the planet's tilt and even its orbit around the Sun, which also affects the seasons.

Influencer tries to roast Katrina Kaif's cooking skills by sending her too simple recipes, she has a humble reply

Popular social media influence Freddy Birdy shared some 'simple' recipes for Katrina Kaif to try out. However, she took his roast rather sportingly

(Staff Reporter) Katrina Kaif had the sweetest reply when an influencer tries to roast her cooking skills. Freddy Birdy, who has a popular Instagram page that is followed by multiple celebrities, shared a bunch of 'simple' recipes that Katrina could try to cook. He suggested she tried out raw mango pickle, chilly cheese toast and mangoes and ice cream. He also recommended Chinese food but told her to order it instead. Sharing his recipe for boiling eggs, he reminded Katrina to peel the shell before eating it. He later shared Katrina's reply to all his recommendations. Replying to chilly cheese toast recipe, she wrote, "This is not easy." Freddy posted her reply on his stories and wrote, "Why I love Katrina Kaif. Also proof that she is as funny as she is beautiful."

The entire interaction was shared on Reddit by a user. Fans thought Freddy was giving unwanted 'gyan' while others loved Katrina's response. "Lmao her response," wrote a fan. "She took it in good spirit but some of these were

pretty insulting tbh specially the boiled eggs one," wrote another. Someone pointed out that 20 minutes are way too long to boil an egg. "Well he clearly doesn't know how to cook. 20 mins on stove to boil an egg. Overcooked to grey," they said. Another speculated on the origins of the shady posts. Recently, Katrina had shared a picture of a plate of scrambled eggs she made for her husband Vicky Kaushal. "He was shading Katrina as halwa n egg maker. She turned the joke on him. Kat didn't come this far without tact and brains," wrote a fan.

Recently, Freddy got into a messy tiff with actor Deepika Padukone. He had shared a post on her film Gehraiyaan and made a comment on how 'hemlines and necklines' are getting shorter and longer as the release date approached. Deepika posted a message for 'morons' on Instagram Stories without mentioning anyone by name. Freddy reacted to it by saying that was the most genuine reaction she had had to something in a while.



Ranbir Kapoor returns to work after wedding with Alia Bhatt, paparazzi wish him 'shaadi mubarak'



Ranbir Kapoor was spotted back at work, two days after his wedding with Alia Bhatt. The paparazzi greeted him with good wishes

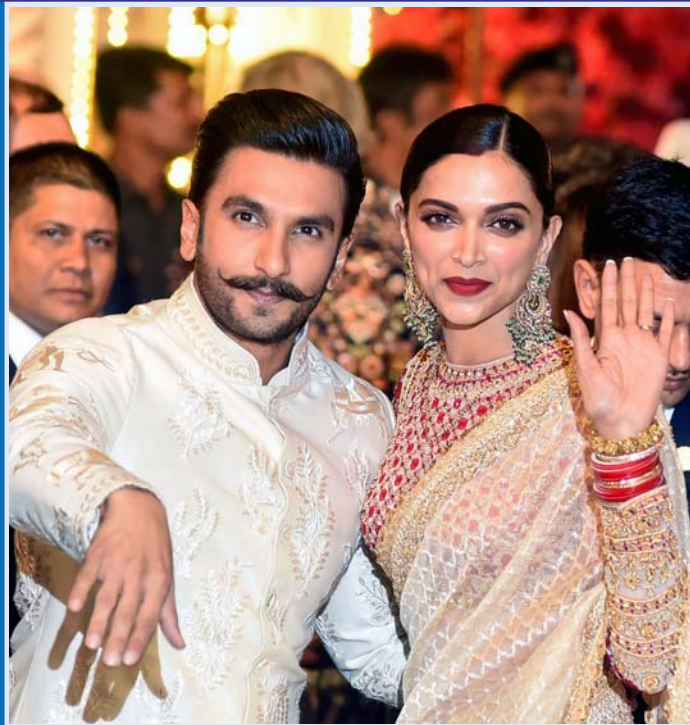
(Staff Reporter) Ranbir Kapoor has returned to work just two days after his wedding. The actor got married to Alia Bhatt on Thursday at his home in Bandra. On Sunday, he was spotted back at work as the paparazzi rushed to click his pictures and send him good wishes. The paparazzi filmed Ranbir stepping out of his car in Andheri. He wore a blue plaid shirt and beige pants. He also wore his usual black cap and a mask. The paparazzi screamed his name, asking him to pose for them. A photographer also wished him 'shaadi mubarak'. Ranbir flashed a thumbs-up sign but did not say anything and went straight inside a building.

Ranbir and Alia had been dating for five years before tying the knot. The wedding was an intimate affair, attended only by the closest family and friends, such as Ranbir's cousins Kareena Kapoor, Karisma Kapoor, sister Riddhima Kapoor

Sahni, mother Neetu Kapoor, brother-in-law Saif Ali Khan, Bharat Sahni, Alia's mother Soni Razdan, dad Mahesh Bhatt, sisters Shaheen and Pooja Bhatt and others. Filmmakers Karan Johar and Ayan Mukerji were also part of the celebrations. After the wedding, Alia shared photos from the ceremony on Instagram. "Today, surrounded by our family and friends, at home ... in our favourite spot - the balcony we've spent the last 5 years of our relationship - we got married. With so much already behind us, we can't wait to build more memories together ... memories that are full of love, laughter, comfortable silences, movie nights, silly fights, wine delights and Chinese bites. Thank you for all the love and light during this very momentous time in our lives. It has made this moment all the more special. Love, Ranbir and Alia," she wrote.

Ranveer Singh says Deepika Padukone goes through his calendar to fix his 'zero work-life balance'

Ranveer Singh has opened up about his obsession for acting, his profession, and how he was so much into it at one time that he would wish to work for 18 hours a day



(Staff Reporter) Ranveer Singh's love for acting is known to all his fans. The actor has now revealed that he was once so obsessed with his work that he would feel like doing it almost the entire day. However, it was only until wife Deepika Padukone started going through his calendar to ensure that he doesn't overdo it. Ranveer will now be seen as a Gujarati man in a social comedy, Jayeshbhai Jordaar. The film also stars Boman Irani and Ratna Pathak Shah.

In a recent interview with Grazia, Ranveer has confessed to being a workaholic until Deepika came into his life. He said, "If it were up to me, I'd work for 18 hours a day. All we have is time and what defines us is what we truly do with it."

He added, "I've been obsessed with my craft, and I had zero work-life balance for the longest time. It was only when Deepika (Padukone) came into my life that she made me

appreciate living it. She sits down with me and goes through my calendar to ensure the same." Ranveer has also shared his happiness on getting to do what he loves to do. Expressing the same, he said, "There are times when I just burst into tears. To know that despite there being so much sadness and hurt around us, I still have a home to go back to, or being able to do the work that I want to. There was a time, nine years back, when I'd complain about having too much work. I'm not that person anymore. That's the last thing I'd do now."

Ranveer was last seen as cricketer Kapil Dev in Kabir Khan's 83. Deepika was seen as his wife, Romi Dev, in the film. He is currently working on Karan Johar's directorial, Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani, which reunites him with his Gully Boy co-star Alia Bhatt. Besides Jayeshbhai Jordaar, he also has Rohit Shetty's Cirkus in the pipeline.

Ayushmann Khurrana recalls hilarious story of how Mika Singh crashed Vicky Donor shoot, got offended when called 'Micky'



marriage plans. Ayushmann found his acting to be very raw in the scene but admitted that the same worked for his character. He told Film Companion about the scene, "I remember we shot this opposite Mika Singh's farmhouse. There was this lake, that was Mika's lake, there was this mountain that was Mika's mountain, everything was owned by him. I

got a call (from Mika), 'Ha bhai tu shoot kar raha hai yaha pe (you are shooting here)?' I asked where, and he told me that I am

shooting at his property. At the next cut, Mika is coming on his speedboat, standing like that (hands on waist), through his lake with two bodyguards."

Ayushmann also revealed that Mika even got offended during the visit due to a hilarious mistake by Shoojit Sircar. He recalled, "Shoojit Sircar was like (extending hands for a handshake) 'Hi Mickey.' I told him 'Sir his name is Mika.' He is so bad with names. He would often call me Anshuman and call Yami Yamini. Shoojit Da was so bad with

names, now of course he knows our name. And Mika paaji got offended that 'Mickey'?" Ayushmaan recalled that they later visited Mika's farmhouse where there were horses and maybe 50 dogs. Meanwhile, Yami Gautam also looked back at Vicky Donor as the film completed 10 years. She shared a picture from her recent visit to the studio where she had auditioned for the movie. In the picture, she sat on the arm of a worn-down sofa while a framed poster of Vicky Donor could be seen behind her.

(Staff Reporter) Ayushmann Khurrana and Yami Gautam both made their debut with Shoojit Sircar's Vicky Donor in 2012, which also marked John Abraham's debut as a producer. The film marked 10 years of its release on Wednesday, April 20. Ayushmann Khurrana has recalled an interesting anecdote from his first movie as he completed a decade in the film industry. Ayushmann and Yami Gautam both made their debuts with Shoojit Sircar's Vicky Donor in 2012, which also marked John Abraham's debut as a producer. As the film marked 10 years of its release on Wednesday, April 20, Ayushmann looked back at a scene from it and revealed that it was filmed opposite singer Mika Singh's farmhouse.

The scene showed Yami's Ashima Roy telling Ayushmann's Vicky Arora that she is a divorced woman as they talk about their

After Khushi, Boney Kapoor to launch Anshula Kapoor in Bollywood?

Boney Kapoor wants his daughter Anshula Kapoor to become part of the film industry, according to recent reports. Boney's youngest daughter Khushi Kapoor is also making her Bollywood debut soon

(Staff Reporter) Boney Kapoor is a well-known name in Bollywood, who has produced films like Mr India, No Entry, Judaai, Wanted and others. Not only him, even his children, Arjun Kapoor and Janhvi Kapoor, have made their names in the industry. Following in their footsteps, Boney's youngest daughter, Khushi Kapoor, is also all set to make her Bollywood debut soon. Now, the producer also wants Anshula Kapoor to join the industry.

BONEY KAPOOR WANTS ANSHULA KAPOOR TO JOIN BOLLYWOOD?

Boney Kapoor, who will be making his acting

debut in the upcoming Luv Ranjan film, wants his daughter Anshula Kapoor to become part of the film industry. According to a recent report by ETimes, "Since Boney is also acting in a film, he feels that if Anshula also joins films as an actor, the Kapoors will become a 5-star family Boney, Arjun, Janhvi, Khushi and Anshula. He has seen Anshula in her school plays and vouches for her acting talent (sic)."

However, there is no official confirmation from either father Boney Kapoor or daughter Anshula Kapoor regarding the same yet.

ABOUT ANSHULA KAPOOR



Anshula Kapoor is Boney Kapoor's daughter from his first marriage with Mona Kapoor. She is Arjun Kapoor's sister. Whereas, Janhvi Kapoor and Khushi Kapoor are her half-sisters, as they are Boney's children from his second marriage with late actress Sridevi

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