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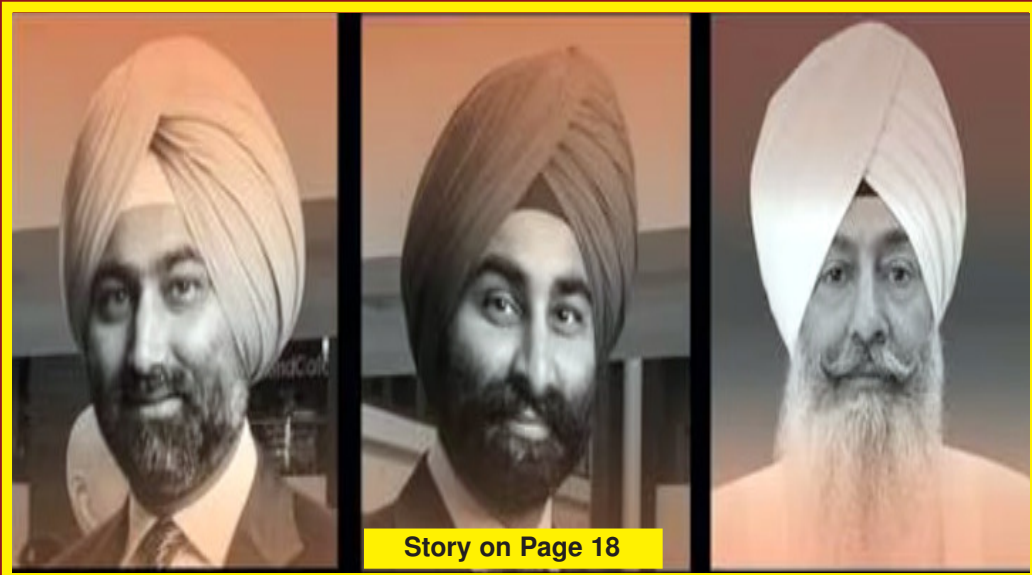
Voice of South Asian Community Since March 2002

'Jihadi bride' Shamima Begum loses court case for British citizenship



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The Baba, Singh Brothers and the Squandered Billions

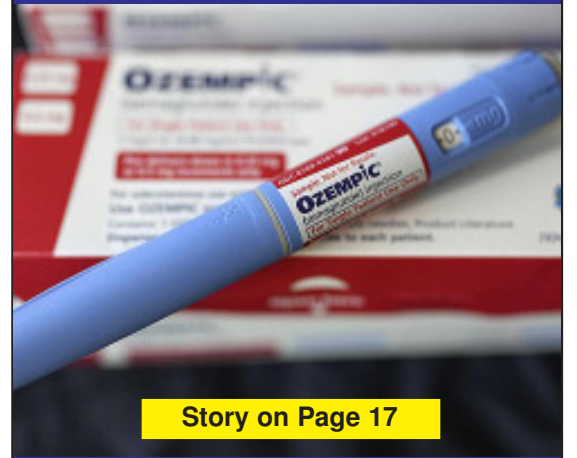


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How Malvinder and Shivinder Singh blew Rs 22,500 crore in less than a decade and lost control over Fortis Healthcare and Religare Enterprises.

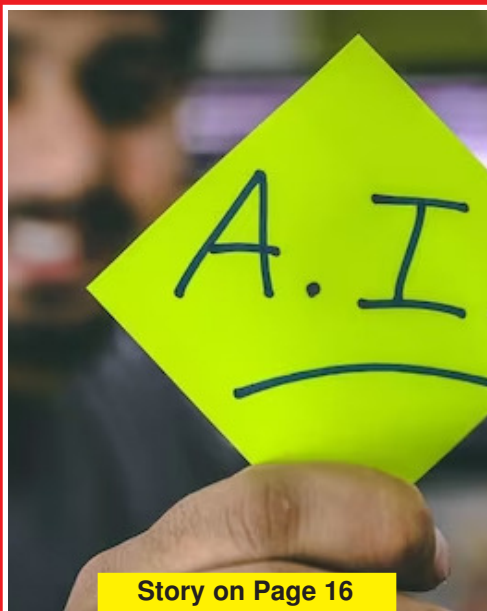
Shrinking waists and growing the economy

Weight-loss drugs like Ozempic forecast to raise US GDP by equivalent of \$360 billion, Goldman Sachs says



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'There are only two sexes'

New bill in Alabama says men and women are defined by genitals they're born with



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Press conference organized for the upcoming release of the much awaited movie 'Political War'

Indian American community lined up to support press conference for new bollywood hindi film 'Political War'.

Political War film is showcasing how the external powers are trying to break India with the help of some selfish leaders.

(Press Release) At a glittering press conference, Mr Mukesh Modi, Producer and Director of 'Political War', told the large audience at the Metropolitan Restaurant in Glen Cove, Long Island, New York, the reason why he made the movie. In a powerful statement he said, he made the movie to save Bharat from the continuous attack of overseas vested interests using unpatriotic local collaborators. In his travels and insightful observations he found anti Bharat elements, using their hateful agenda against Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to derail and destroy Bharat from regaining the rightful place in the global political and economic powerhouse. He said that this movie tells us all how to handle the challenges ahead and what they must do to fulfill their responsibilities to the country. Mr Bobby Kumar, Chairman, Human Rights, Nassau County welcomed the gathering and inspired the audience why it was essential for the Indian community to assert themselves in the politics at all levels. Politics is an essential part of our life and everybody must take part in it. He asserted that the participation in politics itself is a great victory for all of us.



The Indian Panorama's 18th-year gala is an event for the ages

(By Parveen Chopra)

The Indian Panorama is celebrating its 18th year of publication with a Gratitude Gala on February 25 in a grand way. Says its Founding Editor and Publisher Prof Indrajit Singh Saluja, "I want to say my heartfelt thanks to our readers, friends, supporters, and advertisers for the love and support they have blessed us with all these years." Prof Indrajit Saluja has become synonymous with his weekly newspaper, a labor of love. He is not only an eminent editor but also a well-respected community leader who has forged links across the ethnic, ideological and political spectrum. His friends, supporters, and who's who of the community are set to grace the gala at the glittering Pearl Banquet Hall in Hicksville not only to felicitate The Indian Panorama but also to wish him a long life on his 80th birthday.

Dignitaries

Presiding the delightful event will be Hon. Ruchira Kamboj, India's Ambassador to the United Nations, the first woman diplomat to hold that position. The new Consul General of India in New York, Amb. Binaya Srikanta Pradhan will be offered a welcome toast by the community at the event. The newly elected Congressman, Mr Tom Suozzi, whom the Indian Panorama endorsed on the first day of his campaign, has promised 'my loyal friend' Prof Saluja that he will be there to personally thank Long Island's Indian community, with



whom he has forged bonds over the years.

Honorees

The four eminent people to be honored at the gala with whom The Indian Panorama has had a long association, are:

- **Dr V.K. Raju** - Life Achievement award. The President and Founder of the Eye Foundation of America, he has a mission to eliminate childhood blindness from the world. He has helped start two eye hospitals in India and held free eye camps in 30 developing countries.
- **Ms Ranju Batra** - Excellence in Promotion of Diplomacy Award. She is the Chairperson of Diwali Foundation USA which holds the Diwali Stamp - Power of One awards event at the UN every year to honor diplomats. She also led the campaign to get USPS to release the Diwali stamp.
- **Mr Harry Singh Bolla** - Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award. He is the Founder and CEO of Bolla Oil Corporation which runs a chain of gas stations and

convenience stores in the New York area. Through his Bolla Charity Foundation, he gives back to the community here and extends help to the needy in India.

- Mrs Purnima Desai -- Excellence in Culture Award. As Founder and President of Shikshayatan Cultural Center and Sriniketan Foundation, she has been instrumental in encouraging and supporting Indian culture through music and arts training and events. She has also produced and directed over a thousand cultural programs.

US launch of Blitz India

The Indian Panorama's gala event will also get an international sheen. The US edition of Blitz India will be jointly launched by its Chairman and Editor-in-Chief, Deepak Dwivedi, CEO Sandeep Saxena, and Prof Saluja. Blitz India, the country's first chronicler of development news, has several editions in India and was launched in the UK last year. At

the event for the ages, Prof Saluja will also introduce ALotusInTheMud.com, launched by his friend, Parveen Chopra, exactly a year ago at the Indian Consulate. Lotus is a web magazine presenting free content on wellness and spirituality, a first by an Indian American.

The attendees at the gala will also be welcomed and entertained with both traditional Indian and contemporary touches.

Indefatigable Prof Saluja

For Prof Saluja, The Indian Panorama is an expression and extension of his love for India as well as a platform to project the rich South Asian culture and how our successful community has made a place in the melting pot of America. A trilingual, he has also helped start newspapers in Hindi and Punjabi. Started 18 years ago in New York, The Indian Panorama also has a Dallas edition now. It reaches the Indian diaspora in the entire US and the world. Its editorial content is the right mix of community news as well as Indian and American current affairs. Indefatigable Prof Saluja's spirit and intensity of work belie his years. He came to the US over 20 years ago after having a long career as a Professor of English Literature at leading colleges in India. Alongside, he founded a prominent monthly magazine titled 'Punjab Beat'. Robert Frost's words "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have miles to go before I sleep", aptly characterize Prof. Saluja's journey in life.

PM Modi showers bonanza of development projects worth Rs 9750 crores on Haryana

JAG MOHAN THAKEN (Chandigarh)

The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, on February 16, inaugurated, dedicated to the nation and laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth more than Rs 9750 crores in Rewari, Haryana. The projects cater to several important sectors concerning urban transport, health, rail and tourism. Shri Modi also took a walkthrough of the exhibitions showcased on the occasion. While laying the foundation stone of AIIMS at Rewari, The Prime Minister assured that he will also inaugurate Rewari AIIMS. He said this will ensure better treatment and opportunity to become a doctor for the local citizens. Noting that Rewari AIIMS is the 22nd AIIMS, PM Modi informed that 15 new AIIMS have been sanctioned in the last 10 years. More than 300 medical colleges came into being in the last 10 years. In Haryana too, work is going on to ensure at least one medical college in every district.

To be built at a cost of about Rs 1650 crores, AIIMS Rewari will be developed on 203 acres of land at village Majra Mustil Bhalkhi in Rewari. It will have facilities including the Hospital Complex with 720 beds, Medical College with 100 seats, Nursing College with 60 seats, AYUSH Block with 30 beds, residential accommodation for faculty and staff, hostel accommodation for UG and PG students, Night Shelter, Guest House, Auditorium etc. Established under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY), AIIMS Rewari will provide comprehensive, quality and holistic tertiary care health services to the people of Haryana. The facilities include patient care services in 18 Specialities and 17 Super Specialities including Cardiology, Gastroenterology, Nephrology, Urology, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Medical Oncology, Surgical Oncology, Endocrinology, Burns & Plastic Surgery. The Institute will also have facilities for Intensive Care Unit, Emergency & Trauma Unit, sixteen Modular Operation Theatres, Diagnostic Laboratories, Blood Bank, Pharmacy etc. The establishment of AIIMS in Haryana is an important milestone in providing comprehensive, quality and holistic tertiary care health services to the people of Haryana.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister paid tributes to the land of the Bravehearts Rewari and underlined the affection of the people of the region for him. He recalled his first programme as PM candidate in 2013 in Rewari and remembered the good wishes of the people. The Prime Minister said that the blessings of the people are a huge asset for him.



The Prime Minister recalled accomplishing the guarantee of 'One Rank One Pension' to ex-servicemen here in Rewari and informed about providing about Rs 1 lakh crores so far, where many ex-servicemen from Haryana have reaped its benefits. In Rewari, the Prime Minister informed that beneficiaries of OROP have received more than Rs 600 crores so far. He also pointed out that the previous government had earmarked a budget of Rs 500 crores for OROP which is less than the amount received by the families of the servicemen in Rewari alone.

The Prime Minister said that the development of Haryana is necessary for the nation to become Viksit Bharat. He mentioned dedicating to the nation and laying the foundation stone of multiple development projects today worth about Rs 10,000 crores for the modernization of roadways and railway networks along with well-equipped hospitals for the development of Haryana. Listing out the

development projects, the Prime Minister mentioned AIIMS Rewari, Gurugram Metro, several rail lines and new trains along with the experiential museum - Anubhav Kendra Jyotisar. Throwing light on Anubhav Kendra Jyotisar, the Prime Minister said that it will introduce the world to the lessons by Lord Shri Krishna in Bhagavad Gita as well as highlight the contributions of the glorious land of Haryana in Indian culture. He congratulated the people of Haryana for the development projects of today.

"Haryana is a state of amazing possibilities", the Prime Minister said emphasizing the bright future for the first-time voters of Haryana. He underlined that the double-engine government is striving to make Haryana a developed state and create new employment opportunities in every sector, be it technology or textile, tourism or trade. "Haryana is emerging as a good state for investment, and increasing investment means an increase in new job opportunities", the Prime

Minister concluded.

The Prime Minister inaugurated a newly built Anubhav Kendra Jyotisar, Kurukshetra. This experiential museum has been built at a cost of around 240 crores. The museum spans over 17 acres, encompassing over 100,000 square feet of indoor space. It will vividly bring the epic narrative of the Mahabharata and the teachings of the Gita to life. The museum also leverages cutting-edge technology, including Augmented Reality (AR), 3D laser, and projection mapping to enrich the experience of visitors. Jyotisar, Kurukshetra is the sacred site where Lord Krishna imparted the eternal wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna.

The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone and dedicated to the nation multiple railway projects. The projects whose foundation stone will be laid include the doubling of the Rewari-Kathuwas rail line (27.73 Km); doubling of the Kathuwas-Narnaul rail line (24.12 Km); doubling of the Bhiwani-Dobh Bhalil rail line (42.30 Km); and doubling of Manheru-Bawani Khera rail line (31.50 Km). Doubling these railway lines will augment the rail infrastructure in the region and help in the timely running of both passenger and freight trains. The Prime Minister dedicated to the nation the Rohtak-Meham-Hansi rail line (68 kms), which will reduce the travel time between Rohtak and Hisar. He also flagged off train service in the Rohtak-Meham-Hansi section, which will improve rail connectivity in Rohtak and Hisar region benefiting the rail passengers.

Governor of Haryana, Bandaru Dattatreya and Chief Minister of Haryana, Manohar Lal Khattar were present on the occasion among others including other Ministers of the Haryana Government and MLAs.

Modi wants to see India on top, but 'Ghamandiya' Gathbandhan leaders only want to see their sons as PM, CM: Amit Shah (Ld)

(News Agency)- Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday launched a scathing attack against the Congress, accusing the grand old party of promoting nepotism in the country. Addressing a Prabudhh Sammelan in Jaipur on Tuesday, Shah also heaped praises on Narendra Modi, saying that the Prime Minister, who accomplished many difficult tasks in the last 10 years, is now working hard to ensure that India becomes the top nation in the world by 2047. "(PM) Modi has just one aim that is to see India on top of the world. However, the leaders of the 'Ghathbandhan' of seven parties only want to see their sons and nephews as the PM and CMs. "Sonia



Gandhi aims to see her son (Rahul Gandhi) as the PM, Uddhav Thackeray wants to see his son (Aditya Thackeray) as the CM, Lalu Prasad too wants to see his son (Tejashwi Yadav) as the CM, while Mayawati wants to see her nephew (Akash Anand) as the CM. "Can such people who dream to see their

sons and relatives as PM and CMs help in nation building," Shah asked the gathering, which replied loudly: "No." "Such leaders only want their families to benefit, whereas the BJP wants Bharat to benefit," Shah added. Recalling the tenure of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Shah said, "There was time when people used to enter India and carry out blasts. You people elected PM Modi in 2014.

This government carried out surgical strikes within 10 days after the Pulwama attack in 2019. Earlier, there were only two countries which were known to hit the enemy nation by conducting strikes after crossing its borders — America and Israel.

Case against 'unknown BJP leaders' over 'Khalistani' slur against Sikh cop



done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Indian Penal Code. The complaint filed by one Gurmeet Singh said "unknown BJP leaders/members" called the Sikh police officer a 'Khalistani' to outrage his religious feelings and, spread hatred and ill-will between communities. The BJP had accused the Sikh IPS officer of violating the Calcutta High Court order that allowed its leader and West Bengal Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari to visit Sandeshkhali. Sandeshkhali has been on the boil for several weeks after multiple women accused Trinamool Congress leader Shahjahan Sheikh and his supporters of "land-grabbing and sexually assaulting" them under coercion. After Mamata Banerjee posted the video of Jaspreet Singh being called a 'Khalistani', the BJP accused her of "trying to distract from the Sandeshkhali incident".

(News Agency)- The incident took place during a BJP march to Sandeshkhali and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had posted a video of the IPS officer questioning whether he would have been called a "Khalistani" if he was not wearing a turban. The police officer was identified as Jaspreet Singh, an IPS officer of the 2016 batch. He is currently posted as Special Superintendent (Intelli-

gence) at West Bengal Police. The West Bengal Police released a video on Wednesday alleging that it was BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari who used the 'Khalistani' slur against the Sikh police officer. The FIR was filed on Friday under Sections 295A (Deliberate and malicious intention of outraging religious feeling), 505(2) (Statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes) and 34 (Acts

Oppn leaders welcome SC verdict declaring AAP councillor as Chandigarh Mayor

(News Agency)-Setting aside the election of the BJP candidate as declared by the Returning Officer, the Supreme Court on Tuesday declared AAP councillor Kuldeep Kumar as the Mayor

stitution and democracy have ultimately triumphed.

Taking to X, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said: "The Supreme Court has saved democracy from the fangs of an autocratic BJP, which resorted to dirty election manipulation. The institutional sabotage in the #ChandigarhMayorPolls is only a tip of the iceberg in Modi-Shah's devious conspiracy to trample democracy.



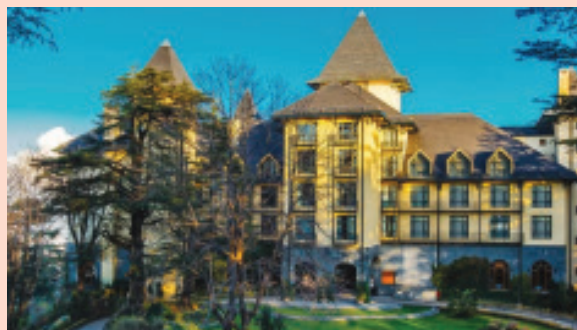
of Chandigarh Municipal Corporation while hearing a plea challenging the mayoral election. The Opposition INDIA bloc leaders were quick to latch on to the top court ruling, stating that the Con-

"All Indians must fight this onslaught on our Constitution, collectively. Never forget. Our democracy shall be at the crossroads in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections!"

Supreme Court orders handover of Wildflower Hall to Himachal govt

(News Agency)-Upholding the Himachal Pradesh High Court order, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the East India Hotels Ltd and others to vacate Wildflower Hall, a landmark luxury hotel of Oberoi Group on the outskirts of Shimla. Last month, the High Court asked the Oberoi Group to surrender possession of the five-star hotel to the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) within two months. The

government, a stakeholder in the hotel, has suspected financial wrongdoing in the management of the heritage hotel that has been running into losses since March 2001. Wildflower Hall, sought-after by high-end tourists and celebrities, is a joint venture of Mashobra Resorts, the Oberoi Group company that runs the hotel, and



the state government. It has long been under litigation between the

two partners. Disposing of the

Bail cannot be granted in SC/ST atrocities cases without hearing victim: Delhi HC

(News Agency)-The Delhi High Court has said that bail cannot be granted in cases registered under The Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, without affording the victim or complainant an opportunity to be heard.



The ruling came in response to a plea filed by the victim challenging a trial court's decision to grant bail to an accused charged with serious offences under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and provisions of the SC & ST Act. Justice Navin Chawla said that bail granted without notice to the complainant is susceptible to cancella-

tion, underscoring the mandatory nature of compliance with the relevant sections of the SC & ST Act. The complainant alleged that the bail order was issued without her being served notice or given an opportunity to present her case.

Justice Chawla concurred with the complainant's argument, acknowledging the procedural irregularity in the trial court's decision. Consequently, the court ordered the bail application to be reconsidered by the trial court, with a directive to afford the appellant, who is the alleged victim, a fair opportunity to be heard. However, in a balancing act between justice and the rights of the accused, the court stipulated that the accused should not be taken into custody for a period of 15 days, subject to further orders by the trial court.

Kerala college standoff: Talks fail, students stay put on roof and threaten to jump off

(News Agency)- A group of students at the Thodupuzha Cooperative Law College in Kerala's Idukki district were staying put on the roof of the building since Tuesday afternoon and threatening to jump off if their demands are not met. Trouble has been brewing in the college ever since the first semester results came out, sparking joint protests by various student organisations in the college who allege that the management was generous in giving internal marks to one student, bypassing the norms.

Soon some students, including girls, assembled on the roof of the building, threatening to jump off if their demands, including for the re-



removal of the Principal, are not met. The college had earlier suspended seven students who took part in the earlier protests on the same issue.

Sensing the gravity of the situation,

police also arrived and after a few rounds of conciliation talks, the suspension of the seven students was agreed to be revoked and a few of their other demands was also agreed to.

government's petition, the High Court on January 6 directed the East India Hotels (EIH) Ltd to vacate and ensure peaceful handover of the entire property of Wildflower Hall within two months. "It is held that the EIH Ltd has failed to comply with the terms of award within the period of three months from the date it attained finality, i.e. October 13, 2022," it said, observing the Oberoi Group had failed to comply with the arbitration award within the stipulated time limit of three months. Therefore, the state government became eligible to take over the possession and management of the hotel. The hotel was handed over to the Oberoi Group under a joint venture in 1995 by the then Congress government.

Govt committed to principles of systemic reforms: Haryana Governor

(News Agency)-Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya, in his address during the Budget Session in the Vidhan Sabha, said the government, which is committed to the principles of good governance through systemic reforms, has so far released Rs 74,679 crore to the beneficiaries under various welfare schemes through the direct benefit transfer (DBT) system. Highlighting the government's motto of 'Service through Good Governance', the Governor said the year 2023 was commemorated as the 'Antyodaya Utthan Varsh', dedicated to uplifting the most

marginalised individuals. "This year, the state government continues its commitment with the theme 'Sankalp Se Parinaam Varsh'. To achieve the vision of 'Antyodaya', e-governance has been extensively utilised to streamline administrative processes and reduce human intervention," he said. The Governor also informed the initiation of the 'Jan Samvad' programme by the government, which is aimed at engaging with the public and addressing their concerns.

A dedicated Jan Samvad portal has been established to handle the requests and grievances



received through this initiative. This effort has streamlined the delivery of government services and programs, ensuring accessibility and timeliness for

citizens from the comfort of their homes, he said.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra,' which commenced from Khunti, a tribal-dominated area in Jharkhand, on November 15, 2023, Dattatreya highlighted its objective of promoting inclusive development and raising awareness about the welfare policies of both the Central and state governments.

In Haryana, 6,803 programmes have been conducted across 6,225 gram panchayats and 578 urban local bodies as part of this Yatra,

drawing participation from thousands of individuals so far.

The Governor also highlighted the government's innovative measures to extend the benefits of different schemes to every household, surpassing the limitations of the Aadhaar card by introducing the 'Parivar Pehchan Patra' for family identification.

So far, approximately 2.85 crore members belonging to around 71.42 lakh families have been registered through this initiative. On the issue of corruption, the Governor underscored the government's commitment to combating it.

Delhi man murders friend after drunken spat, dumps body in sewer



(News Agency)-The body of a man, reported missing a day back, was found, bearing severe injuries, in a drain in Mangolpuri area on the outskirts of Delhi on Tuesday, police said. Police also said that they have apprehended the accused identified as Kishan Gupta a.k.a Bablu, (20), who hit Pawan with a bottle and boulders after an argument when they were drinking liquor, leading to his death.

After killing Pawan, Gupta wrapped the body in blankets and put it in a sewer hole, the official said.

A police official said that on Monday, a complaint was

received regarding the disappearance of Pawan at Raj Park police station.

"On Tuesday, information was also received regarding an unknown body of a man lying in the drain behind Agarwal Sweets, T Block, Mangolpuri following which a police team rushed to the spot," Deputy Commissioner of Police, Outer, Jimmy Chiram said.

"The dead body was identified as of Pawan, who was missing since Monday. Hence a case under section 302 and 201 of the Indian Penal Code has been registered and the accused has been arrested," he said.

PM Modi virtually inaugurates Central Sanskrit University campus in Tripura

(News Agency)-Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday virtually inaugurated the permanent campus of the Central Sanskrit University developed in Tripura's Lembucherra, university officials said. Officials added that Rs 100.83 crore were invested to build the academic, administrative and library buildings at the Ekalavya campus of the Central Sanskrit University at Lembucherra, around 12 km north of Agartala.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, who was present in the virtually organised event, later said that the inauguration of various setup of the Central Sanskrit University represents a monumental step towards the advancement of education and cultural preservation in the state. He added that the Central

Sanskrit University was established in Delhi with the aim of promoting and propagating Sanskrit across the country.

"Among the 13 campuses established nationwide, the Ekalavya campus stands as the 11th, established almost a



decade ago in Tripura. Over its decade-long journey, the campus has offered diverse courses in Shastric Departments such as Vyakarna, Sahitya, Jyotish, Dharmashastra and Shiksha Shastra alongside modern day subjects and languages," the Chief Minister said.

He added that the state witnessed significant transformations in higher educational institutions under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

"Vital infrastructure upgradation of the Ekalavya campus of the Central Sanskrit University, Maharaja Bir Bikram (MBB) University in Agartala and the Navodaya Vidyalaya in Sepahijala are among the major projects

being undertaken in Tripura," CM Saha said. The Central government has sanctioned Rs 20 crore for the MBB University under the Grants to Strengthen University (GSU) programme, he added. Union Minister of State Pratima Bhoumik and officials from Central Sanskrit University were also present during the event.

Rashly-driven truck hits flyover railing in Delhi, one dead

(News Agency)-A man sitting on the passenger side of a truck died after the rashly-driven vehicle lost control and collided with the railing on a flyover in south Delhi on Tuesday

, police said. The deceased was identified as Hansram, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Hardoi district. The impact of the collision was so strong that the vehicle's door on the passenger side got detached and fell off the flyover, while Hansram also got trapped between the railing and the truck.

A police official said information regarding the incident was received at Badarpur Police Station and a police team sent to the spot and found the accident-struck vehicle.

"On inquiry, it was revealed that Hansram had been injured and subsequently shifted to Apollo Hospital, Sarita Vihar. Also present at the scene were the driver of the truck, Prem, and Hansram's brother,

Aniket," Deputy Commissioner of Police, Southeast, Rajesh Deo said.



Aniket was questioned regarding the incident, and the crime team

was also called to inspect and photograph both the accident site (near TKD metro station flyover) and the truck.

They collected the exhibits and the truck was taken into police custody, while Aniket and Prem were brought to the police station, the DCP said. Meanwhile, information was received from the hospital that Hansram had been declared dead upon arrival.

In his statement, the deceased's brother that on

Monday night, the three of them were travelling in the vehicle from Faridabad to Tonika City. "Prem was driving, Hansram was seated on the conductor's side, and I was in the middle. Despite our requests, Prem was driving at a high speed due to the absence of traffic on the road. Around 11:45 pm, as we approached the Tughlakabad Metro Station flyover, another vehicle overtook us abruptly," he said.

SP fails to win over Raja Bhaiya for RS polls in UP

(News Agency)-- The Samajwadi Party's efforts to break the ice with former minister Raghuraj Pratap Singh aka Raja Bhaiya and ensure his support for SP in the upcoming Rajya Sabha biennial elections, seems to have been an exercise in futility. Raja Bhaiya, according to sources, is in no mood to switch loyalties from BJP to SP.

Raja Bhaiya, who shared a warm rapport with late Mulayam Singh Yadav, has had a tumultuous relationship with Akhilesh Yadav.

A minister in the Akhilesh government, Raja Bhaiya had resigned in 2013 after

his name figured in the murder of a DSP in his constituency. After the CBI gave him a clean chit, Mulayam Singh Yadav ensured that Raja Bhaiya was brought back into the ministry.

However, he finally snapped ties with Akhilesh when the latter allied with BSP in 2019 Lok Sabha

elections. Raja Bhaiya's animosity with BSP leader Mayawati is known across Uttar Pradesh. In 2002, when the BSP was in power in



the state, Mayawati had jailed him under Prevention of Terrorist Act (POTA).

In 2003, when Mulayam Singh came to power, all charges against Raja Bhaiya were dropped and he was made a cabinet minister in the SP government in 2005.

The 2022 assembly polls witnessed a war of words between Akhilesh and Raja Bhaiya when the SP president asked "Who Raja Bhaiya?"

On Tuesday evening, Samajwadi state president Naresh Uttam called on Raja Bhaiya to seek his support for the Rajya Sabha polls. He even persuaded Raja Bhaiya to speak to Akhilesh on phone and the latter asked him to let bygones be bygones.

Raja Bhaiya confirmed that the meeting had taken place but refused to comment further.

"The SP state president visited me but I am not in a position to say anything more than this about the meeting," he said.

Sources close to Raja Bhaiya said that the latter would not forget the way the SP had targeted him during the 2022 assembly polls by fielding his own former acolyte, Gulshan Yadav, against him.

Suvendu Adhikari challenges senior cop to prove his allegations on 'turban' comment



(News Agency)-Hours after the Superintendent (Intelligence Branch) Jaspreet Singh and BJP legislator Agnimitra Paul after Singh accused Paul of passing a comment relating to his turban. "You are making such a comment that is pertaining to my religion. Is this just because I am wearing a turban? I will take action on this," Singh told the fashion designer-turned-politician. However, Paul denied the allegation, saying: "I did not say anything about your religion. I just said that you should behave like an unbiased police officer."

Earlier on Tuesday, there was a heated exchange of words between the Special

Hurdles cleared for southern section of Telangana's RRR



(News Agency)-Hurdles for declaring 182-km-long southern section of the Regional Ring Road (RRR) in Telangana as a national highway have been cleared. After Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy met Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi on Tuesday to make a request, the latter instructed the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) officials to prepare the proposals to declare the southern section of RRR as a national highway.

The southern section runs from Chautuppal to Sangareddy via Amangal and Shadnagar. The northern part was already

declared part of the national highways.

According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), apart from the RRR issue, Revanth Reddy appealed to Gadkari to grant permission for the expansion of national highways in Telangana and to upgrade several important state highways to national highways. The Chief Minister handed over the list of state roads which are to be expanded as national highways in the state to the Union Minister and explained the importance of declaring those roads as national highways.

BBMP Property Tax Amendment Bill passed, penalty on tax dues to come down in Bengaluru

(News Agency)-The BBMP Amendment Bill 2024, which brings down the penalty on property tax dues by 50 per cent in Bengaluru city limits, was passed in the Karnataka Assembly on Tuesday. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who is also the Bengaluru City Development minister, tabled the Amendment Bill in the house in the post-lunch session.

With the passing of this Amendment Bill, the penalty amount has been halved, saving Bangaloreans a whopping Rs 2,700 crore. The BBMP will be able to collect penalties worth Rs 1,000 crores, said Shivakumar. The amended law will benefit a total of 13-15 lakh people in Bengaluru city including 5.51 lakh tax payers, 5-7 lakh people outside the

property tax bracket, and 3 lakh partial property tax payers. It also has a provision for a special rebate to poor segments of the society. Government residential buildings, and buildings in slums are exempt from property tax penalties. Buildings up to 1,000 square feet which are used for own use are also exemp

PM Modi sanctions 32-km-long Puri-Konark railway project: Ashwini Vaishnaw

(News Agency)-Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sanctioned a new railway line project to connect the holy city of Puri with Konark. Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that PM Modi has sanctioned the Puri-Konark railway line project, a long-standing demand of the state. He added that the land acquisition



process for the project will commence now. He said the railway line between Puri and Konark will help immensely in the promotion of spiritual, heritage and coastal tourism. "Our long-held dream of connecting Puri with Konark through the railway line is going to be materialised soon," Vaishnaw added.

Farmers and Modi govt have reached 'point of no return'. Violence has made the protest worse

The fourth round of talks between the Narendra Modi government and the farmers' representatives has failed to resolve the deadlock over the minimum support price and other demands. The farm leaders have rejected the Centre's proposal of purchasing pulses, maize, and cotton crops at MSP by government agencies for five years after entering into a contract. Logically, this promise aligns with the farmers' demand for legal guarantee of MSP. The other demands, such as a life-time pension of Rs 10,000 to all farmers aged above 60, need further discussion as they require budgetary provisions and parliamentary sanctions, which can come only after the Lok Sabha election. In any case, the pension demand sounds untenable as it will open a Pandora's box of similar demand from other groups, including the unemployed.

While the talks are not helping, violence is making the situation worse. A section of the farmers protesting at the Delhi-Haryana border reportedly turned violent and were subjected to tear gas shells and police firing, which has allegedly caused the death of a 21-year-old farmer. Twelve police personnel have also been reportedly injured. The protest was expected to go out of hand and turn violent when some anti-social elements infiltrated the protesting groups. It's only going to become worse now with the farmers resuming their march to Delhi—"Dilli Chalo"—after a two-day hiatus. From the looks of it, the farmers and the Centre seem ready to enter into a battle similar to the 2020-2021 protests over the farm laws. While the government hopes to engage the farmers for a fifth round of talks, the farmers' leadership appears divided. It will be unfortunate if they take an obstinate stand and refuse further dialogue with the government. When they do come to the negotiating table, the Punjab farmers must remember that they cannot insist on a solution that applies to farmers elsewhere in the country without first understanding their stance. The government cannot be expected to unilaterally apply any outcome from discussion with Punjab protesters across the country. The fact that the ongoing protest has given no indication of what farmers outside Punjab want makes it clear that the protesters are simply intent on demonstrating their destructive power and using anger against the Modi government as a negotiating tool ahead of the Lok Sabha election.

The government's proposal to buy pulses after a five-year contract is part of a larger plan to increase cultivation, reduce dependence on imports of pulses mainly from Canada, and increase the buffer stock to meet challenges of shortages during festive seasons and crop failures. The four-day Pulses 24 conference organised by the Global Pulse Conference and the National Federation of Agricultural Cooperative marketing has unveiled a roadmap in this regard. It would have been to the

best advantage of the farmers if they had accepted the MSP offer by the government and then negotiated with the government on other proposals later.

A challenge for the govt

It is nobody's argument that farmers do not face problems. Like any other sector, the farm sector too has its own list of woes, both natural and man-made. While the crop pattern in Punjab requires excessive water, farmers have resorted to deep well boring, thus depleting the groundwater in most parts of the state. Since electricity is free, many borewell pumps operate for longer periods, pumping out more water. The government needs to set up agriculture institutes and conduct regular camps for farmers in as many states as possible on changing crop patterns, water usage, and market mechanisms. The Union government and state governments conduct regular training and skill-upgradation camps for handloom weavers. A similar approach can be adopted for farmers depending on their respective crops.

The "Green Revolution" of 1968 changed the way governments handled farmers' issues and provided relief for crop failures. Over the years, successive governments have come up with more farmer-friendly schemes. The four major crop insurance schemes—Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme, Coconut Palm Insurance Scheme, and the Unified Package Insurance Scheme—are compulsory. The crop loan schemes of the government are also beneficial to farmers, and loan waivers are almost a regular ritual during elections. Agricultural income is tax-free, making it a bone of contention, especially during violent agitations and "Delhi Siege" protests, which tend to disrupt normal life in the capital city.

The Modi government should convince the farmers that major reforms, introduction of technology and a new market mechanism is needed in the agriculture sector. But past experience and red-tape approach makes the farmers apprehensive of reforms. Both the government and the farmers cannot stand at the 'point of no return' for long. The sooner they come out of this Catch-22 situation, the better. The leaders who called for farmers to join the protest should ensure that the protest remains violence-free and weed out anti-social and unwanted elements that bring disgrace to the protest and weaken the genuine issues and demands of the farmers. On its part the Union and state governments should not only popularise existing farmer-friendly schemes but also include farmers' representatives in the decision-making process. This is not the first time that farmers have taken to the streets. Besides, farmers' protests are reported in several parts of the world, implying a larger problem triggered by climate change and other global issues. There are attempts to dismiss these protests as a new form of 'culture war by far-right political groups.'

(By Seshadri Chari)

The first space war is coming. Here are 3 things the US must do to win

China, Russia working hard to displace the US as chance of war in space increases

Americans got a wake-up call when House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Turner and the White House let us know that the Russians were thinking about sending nuclear weapons into space, to destroy U.S. satellites if we ever wind up in a shooting war with Moscow.

Russian nukes in space are the nightmare we've all worried about since the Russians launched their first Sputnik satellite back in 1957. Six and a half decades later, we are learning that international agreements that are supposed to stop that threat mean nothing to a dictator like Russian President Vladimir Putin — and that America needs to get serious about defending its assets in space, including GPS.

We need the capability to deter the growing space threat from both Russia and China, before our perceived weakness triggers a full-scale war in space.

The truth is, whoever controls the space domain will dominate the future global economy. If America was the preeminent space power from Presidents John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan, we've let our edge slip away, while China and Russia aim to displace us altogether.

The US needs to work more closely with private companies as part of the space race. FILE: A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launches the third pair of O3b mPOWER satellites for Luxembourg-based company SES from pad 40 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Cape Canaveral. (Paul Hennessy/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images)

In fact, a State of the Space Industrial Base conference report issued in 2022 predicted that China will overtake the U.S. as the dominant space power by 2032. In Russia's case, their anti-satellite warfare program already includes ground-based lasers that can blind satellite sensors, and electronic warfare tools aimed to knock out GPS and satellite-enabled weapons systems, a Pentagon official told Congress in 2023. China first successfully tested an anti-satellite kill vehicle back in 2007. It now has an entire arsenal of ground-based counter-space weapons from electronic warfare systems to anti-satellite missiles, all ready to deploy in case of war to render our forces deaf, dumb and blind.

What's President Joe Biden's response? In 2022, Vice President Kamala Harris announced that the U.S. was going to renounce all anti-satellite testing. That must have provoked gales of laughter in both Moscow and Beijing. President Donald Trump understood the nature of the space threat, and the long-term stakes involved. That's why he created the Space Force, so that we could take defending the space domain as seriously as our military takes defending the other four domains: land, air, sea and cyber. But China continues to surge ahead. In 2018 there were 141 space-related companies in China; in 2022 that jumped to 433. In 2023 China was second only to the U.S. in space launches, with 67 versus 109. Without SpaceX, the U.S. launches would number only 11.

(By Arthur Herman Fox News)



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India-Taiwan relations are making China uneasy. So it's turning to disinformation

By SANA HASHM

India and Taiwan have made sustained efforts to advance their relations in recent times, actively working to strengthen ties and move beyond the sporadic nature that once characterised their relationship. A pivotal moment in the evolution of India's Taiwan policy unfolded last week with the signing of a labour pact between the India-Taipei Association and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre. These offices serve as the countries' de facto embassies in Taipei and New Delhi, respectively.

Reportedly signed after prolonged negotiations and discussions, this pact will allow Indian workers to seek employment in Taiwan, which is facing a labour shortage in areas such as manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. As India's approach toward Taiwan continues to mature, the overarching goal remains to sustain this positive momentum and cultivate deeper cooperation across various domains covered within the framework of their unofficial relations. The labour pact is now slated for a thorough



review in the Legislative Yuan. Beyond its symbolic significance, the pact holds immense potential in strengthening commercial linkages and foster closer people-to-people connections.

A mutually beneficial relationship

Currently, the Indian expatriate community in Taiwan – about 5,000 people – is predominantly engaged in white-collar professions. With the pact opening blue-collar employment opportunities for Indians, there exists a prospect for a notable increase in the Indian population in Taiwan. This demographic shift not only promises to deepen people-to-people ties but can also pique the Indian government's interest in Taiwan.

Taiwan grapples with a significant labour deficit exacerbated by declining birth rates and an ageing populace, making this pact instrumental in mitigating pressing demographic challenges.

Strategically, many Indians continue to harbour apprehensions about Taiwan's perceived riskiness, largely influenced by concerns surrounding the China threat. However, the anticipated increase in the number of Indians in Taiwan holds promise in fostering deeper familiarity with the island nation in India. This firsthand exposure has the potential to dispel existing misconceptions and nurture a more nuanced understanding of Taiwan's

geopolitical complexities among Indians. China factor in India-Taiwan relations

The prevailing narrative often connects India-Taiwan relations to the deteriorating India-China ties. However, it's important to recognise that, while this factor could be considered influential, India's foreign policy is guided by its own interests. Some may find it challenging to comprehend but India does not make all its decisions in response to China-related considerations.

Given the strained state of India-China relations and efforts to manage this challenging dynamic, New Delhi is striving to maintain a delicate balance between its engagement with Taipei and its adversarial relationship with Beijing. Currently, India is prioritising the enhancement of traditional areas of cooperation with Taiwan.

However, there's considerable untapped potential in India-Taiwan relations, particularly in the realm of economic cooperation. Failure to prioritise the economic dimension of this partnership, mainly from Taiwan's side, could impede the overall progress of

bilateral relations.

Shadow of China's disinformation campaign

The growing rapport between India and Taiwan presents a challenge for China. New Delhi is often perceived as a counterbalance to Beijing and is also an important member of the Quad (with Australia, Japan and the United States). Naturally, China may harbour unease regarding the deepening ties between India and Taiwan. Taiwan, in its pursuit to diversify its external engagements, has broadened its outreach endeavours, aiming to reduce its reliance on China. India's engagement with Taiwan aligns with its consistent approach of recognising the country as a crucial economic partner.

While China did not directly influence the India-Taiwan relations nor motivated the signing of the pact, it remains entwined with the politicisation surrounding the agreement. Last year, unverified claims suggested an influx of 100,000 Indian migrant workers into Taiwan due to the pact. It sparked widespread online protests against the agreement.

The twisted irony in Alabama's court decision on embryos



By Mary Ziegler

The Alabama Supreme Court's ruling on Friday will transform infertility care across the state, potentially setting the stage for a ruling that a fetus or even an embryo outside the womb holds constitutional rights.

The ruling is a reminder of how important fetal personhood is becoming for both the antiabortion movement and the Republican Party — and of its potentially drastic

consequences. In the United States today, recognizing the value of an embryo or fetus sets a precedent that no state can permit access to abortion — and that anyone who chooses abortion may be committing a crime. The irony in the Alabama court's decision is that more Americans who want to be parents will be unable to achieve that dream. The ruling is extraordinary not only in declaring personhood before birth but also

in applying the idea to embryos that haven't been implanted in the uterus. But the ruling is not just bizarre; its consequences may be profound. If an embryo is a person, it can no longer be destroyed, donated for research or potentially even stored. Some abortion opponents argue that if embryos are persons, each one that is created must be implanted — and that would make even storing embryos for future use impermissible. If any of that comes to pass — and in Alabama, it likely will — that will transform how in vitro fertilization (IVF) works, and will mean a lower rate of success for Americans who already struggle to start a family.

The court's ruling could set a precedent for other conservative states that embrace the idea of personhood before birth, making it harder to pursue IVF across large swaths of the country. The decision will also bolster a broader antiabortion effort to recognize a fetus in the womb or even a frozen

embryo as a person under federal constitutional law, helping abortion opponents make the case that if states already sometimes treat an embryo or fetus as a rights-holder, constitutional law should do the same. The Alabama case began when three couples visited a fertility clinic in Mobile to pursue IVF: a treatment in which multiple eggs are harvested, fertilized and implanted to create a pregnancy. Across the US annually, about 2% of births involve IVF. The success rate of each IVF cycle can be low given the age and previous medical condition of the patient. Since many patients who turn to fertility clinics experience trouble getting pregnant, physicians routinely create and store excess embryos so that patients can try again if a first attempt fails. IVF is also expensive — an average cycle can cost anywhere between \$12,000 and \$30,000, even when patients can use embryos they've already created. This means that

patients have more embryos than they implant in a given cycle, which they can choose to store, give to other patients or donate for research.

The three Alabama couples elected to store their excess embryos at the Mobile clinic from 2013 to 2016. In December 2020, however, a patient from an attached hospital entered the clinic, handled some of the embryos and injured their hand, given the subzero temperatures at which the embryos are stored. As a result, they dropped the embryos and accidentally destroyed them.

The plaintiffs sued, first alleging that the clinic was negligent in how it monitored the embryos, contending that the clinic breached the contract it signed with the couples. The couples also had a much more controversial claim: that their embryos counted as "children" or "persons" under the state's wrongful death of a minor law.

Two Years Of Russia-Ukraine Crisis - This Is A War With No Winners

By Harsh V. Pant

Alexei Navalny, one of Russia's most prominent opposition figures, has died, becoming another one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's critics who paid the ultimate price for their beliefs and conviction. Russian authorities are talking of a certain "sudden death syndrome" at a remote Arctic prison as the cause of Navalny's death, but his wife has accused Vladimir Putin directly, of killing him in prison and then hiding his body to cover their traces. It has now become standard for such voices to pay this high a price in Russia. One by one, all such figures have been silenced, and all that remains is the bravado of Putin, who looms large over the Russian political landscape, with his position strengthening by the day even as a large number of Russian lives are lost on the battlefields of Ukraine, for some illusory gains. This Is Putin's Moment, Despite It All

Navalny's death is being condemned widely; most Western governments are calling it a 'murder'. Calling for an international investigation into the circumstances of Navalny's death, the European Union's (EU) foreign



affairs chief has underlined that "Navalny was murdered in a Russian jail by Putin's regime". The EU has maintained that the "ultimate responsibility for the death of Navalny lies with President Putin and the Russian authorities". The statement has called for an independent and transparent international investigation into the circumstances. Holding Putin squarely responsible for the Russian opposition leader's death, US President Joe Biden is reportedly "considering additional sanctions" on

Moscow. Even Donald Trump has been forced to break his silence on the tragedy, but in his unique Trumpian style, he managed to link Navalny's imprisonment to his own legal trials in the US.

However, despite all the rhetoric coming out from Western capitals, this is Putin's moment as he enters the third year of this war against Ukraine. He has succeeded in crushing all dissent and opposition in Russia, and the tide seems to be turning in his favour in this war. The retreat of Ukrainian

forces from Avdiivka in the eastern Donetsk region last week may not change anything in a wider strategic sense, but it certainly would come as a morale booster for the Russian forces, which are likely to use this to their advantage on the eastern front. The Ukrainian army would now be under pressure along the entire frontier in this sector.

An Economy Flourishing On War- The Russian military adventure is being sustained by an economy that continues to be robust despite all challenges. Putin's coffers are overflowing

with cash as his country continues to sell record amounts of crude oil. War is fueling economic growth in Russia, with its economy growing faster than the whole G7 last year. It is likely to repeat this performance in 2024, according to the International Monetary Fund. This resilience has allowed Putin to keep the West on tenterhooks, patiently testing how far it would continue to support Ukraine despite the economic turmoil it faces. There are rumblings of discontent already apparent in the West, and the US political divide, in particular, is getting sharper by the day. For Ukraine, this is a delicate situation as it lacks manpower and ammunition. Western aid is drying up too. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has been left appealing for more weapons, underscoring that an "artificial deficit of weapons" will only help Russia. US President Joe Biden agrees, and he has blamed Ukraine's withdrawal from the eastern front on the Congress's inability to approve further aid for Kyiv. But there is little he can do in the face of Republican opposition in the Congress.

Fashionable Collaborators Of Murderous Regimes, Beware!

By Nishtha Gautam

Are there any mitigating circumstances for the actions of the collaborators of a murderous regime?

In the graveyards of empires, the tombstones of collaborators invite scorn instead of awe or hatred. Collaborators do not start cults. Unless they are couturiers. A new series on Apple TV has attempted to expose the glamorous world, literally to its seams, by telling the tale of how some of the biggest names in luxury fashion today dealt with their biggest challenge: survival. The New Look transports the viewers to the world of haute couture legends-Coco Chanel, Christian Dior, Pierre Balmain, Cristobal Balenciaga-names that today mean little beyond the labels on clothes, accessories, cosmetics et al in countless influencer videos.

The companies bearing the names of these designers today are behemoths that bear little to no resemblance with their founders.



Their customers care for the brand logo more than the creator. But when some of the leaders of the global fashion industry were struggling to keep afloat during the Nazi occupation of France in WWII, survival had a bloodier meaning than quarterly profits or year-on-year growth. This is the premise of the show-how the world of high fashion survived World War II.

Survival As Defence

However, when, and for whom, can survival become a defence plea in the court of moral judgment? Not many in the fashion world are aware that Elsa Schiaparelli, Christian Dior, Pierre Balmain, Cristobal Balenciaga and many other couturiers were dressing up the Nazis and their families when the Holocaust was in full swing. Hitler's close aide, Heinrich Himmler, even tried his best to convince the fashion industry stalwarts in Paris to move to

Germany. While French couturiers stayed put in Paris, they continued to create uniforms for German soldiers and dresses for their wives and girlfriends in return for concessions for raw material supplies that were getting increasingly difficult to procure. The Nazis' dandyism kept the French fashion industry afloat, and couturiers alive. Coco Chanel, arrested for being a collaborator after the Allies won WWII, was unlikely to have stayed alive if the Nazis hadn't taken a fancy to her personality. While she didn't dress the Nazis, she certainly had dalliances with some of them. Chanel, the woman who ruled the interwar sartorial world, has long been seen by cultural materialism theorists as the epitome of corrupt capitalism that flourishes at all costs. She was the prime reason why Simone de Beauvoir grew suspicious of fashion. In all these years of lambasting Chanel's choices during the Nazi

occupation years, a clear moral and ethical code ought to have emerged. Except there is none. Or if there is one, it is applied selectively. Worse, it is problematised further when profiteers begin to claim legitimacy.

Chanel And Galileo

Chanel wasn't the only one making compromises, though she seems to have been disproportionately indicted. The high-voltage intellectual circuit comprising Jean-Paul Sartre, Cocteau, Christian Dior, Yves Montand, Maurice Chevalier, Pablo Picasso, Raoul Dufy, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, Georges Braque, Joan Miró, Wassily Kandinsky and Albert Camus et al kept the sparks flying while living and working in Paris during the German occupation. More than seventy galleries were allowed to be run in the capital of global arts, but only when all collaborating artists attested that they were not Jewish.

PPP's Electoral Mandate is for Sindhudesh, not Pakistan



By: Arun Anand]

Pakistan's long-delayed polls have yielded a hung parliament. The results at both national and provincial levels expectedly echo the deep-seated fissures along ethnic lines within the nation. This demonstrates the continued artificiality of Pakistan's existence, which emerged from the British-orchestrated partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, marking the conclusion of their colonial hegemony in the region. The electoral landscape, both nationally and provincially, underscores the persistent divisions that stem from this historical legacy.

In Sindh, the electoral victory overwhelmingly favours the province-based Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of the Bhutto-Zardari family. PPP's landslide victory not only signifies the rejection of its rival mainstream political entities like the Punjab-based Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) but also serves as a potent and unequivocal expression of Sindhi nationalism and the yearning for 'Sindhudesh' (self-determination). Attempting to interpret this mandate through any other lens would grossly undermine the genuine aspirations of the Sindhi populace and disrespect their democratic choice. This vote and mandate for Sindhi nationalism is not an isolated incident but rather

a continuation of a historical trend. Sindhi people have historically demonstrated determination in prioritising support for the province-based parties to deny space to any extra-regional party trying to make inroads in the political landscape of the region. This refocuses the conversation back to Sindhi nationalism and its longstanding popular aspiration of a separate Sindhudesh with provincial autonomy as a short-term means to achieve that objective. Top of Form It is reiterated that the Sindhi nationalistic struggle predates the inception of the State of Pakistan in 1947 and is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural fabric of the region.

While the circumstances of the day and Machiavellian political machinations of a few may have linked its fate to Pakistan, the dissonance with the idea of this newly created "Muslim State", emerged within the first decade. More so, the language-based oppression, through which Pakistan's political masters imposed the Urdu language across the country, along with its systematic demographic alteration designs to obliterate the Sindhi character of the province, only fueled popular suspicions of an impending danger to their culture and identity. To the consternating chagrin of

ethnically distinct regions such as Sindh, Balochistan, Bengal and Pashtun lands, the consolidation of power within the newly established state by a coalition of Muhajirs (migrants) and Punjabis was a dangerous mix. It not only posed an existential threat to the culturally distinctive lands but also facilitated the exploitation of their rich resources. Interestingly, the concerns regarding land grabbing by Punjabis also predate Pakistan's creation. The subsequent consolidation of power within this community, which was one of the largest population groups along with Bengalis in Pakistan, only served to validate these fears. For instance, Sayed Noor Muhammad Shah, a Muslim League legislator in a March 13, 1947 address in the Sindh Assembly rued that Punjabi Muslims never lose an opportunity to grab land even if that meant demolishing houses, mosques and even graves. "They have such land-grabbing instincts that in their vicinity, the Sindhi Musalmans cannot find even an inch of land for burying their dead," Shah had lamented. The concerns and fears of Sindhi people, such as those voiced by Shah, were soon realised when the Pakistani state lost no time in attempting to change the character and cultural milieu of

Sindh province by bringing a large number of migrants to settle across Sindh. This was most prominent in Karachi, then Pakistan's federal capital, which was transformed into a dominant Urdu-speaking city within no time. In response to these existential challenges, the movement for Sindhi nationalism gained momentum in the 1960s, propelled by the literary activism of influential figures such as Ghulam Murtaza Syed, known as GM Syed, who reinvigorated the nationalist aspirations of the Sindhi people. In his seminal blueprint for Sindhudesh, A Nation in Chains, Syed exposed how the government of Liaquat Ali Khan initiated a demographic alteration program to render Sindh a Sindhi minority region by orchestrating "orgies of brute mass violence against the life, property and honour of the Hindu nationals of Sindh" to pave way for a "mass immigration" of Muhajir migrants in the province.

More so, Pakistan's experiment with the One-Unit political system, proclaimed in 1955 meant that the regional identities were subsumed effectively. It unleashed a dark epoch on the land, which revered its distinctive linguistic and cultural traditions along with syncretic religious orientation, and placed it at the disposal of the dominant Punjabi elite and their Muhajir collaborators. This had prompted

GM Syed to argue that the One-Unit façade to centralise and control Pakistan's power dynamics violated Sindh's "right of self-determination" as it ended its "separate national identity." As the Pakistani state inflicted mass violence across the country, particularly in Bangla-dominated East Pakistan, resulting in its secession and emergence as Bangladesh in 1971, it reinvigorated all the ethnic nationalists in the country from Balochistan to Pashtun tribal regions to Sindh. As such, GM Syed decidedly gave the call for the establishment of Sindhudesh in 1972, paving the way for a formal political struggle towards achieving this objective. These political quests invited the lethal wrath of the 'wounded' Pakistani security establishment, which had freshly tasted a humiliating defeat in Dhaka, turning the towns and villages of the province red.

It is pertinent to mention that the cause of Sindhi nationalism survived the state's wrath but flourished in the 1970s and 80s even as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, himself a Sindhi, ruled Pakistan for much of the 1970s decade and led the charge against the Sindhi nationalists. Yet when the same Bhutto was executed by General Zia-ul-Haq in 1979, the Sindhi nationalists protested this gruesome political murder. Even as the Bhutto family-led Pakistan People's Party (PPP) became a party to the Punjabi dominated Army inflicted oppression, even the funeral of assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2007 resonated with the slogans of "Pakistan nakhabey" (we don't want Pakistan), with protestors and provincial political leaders insisting, in unison, that the former prime minister was killed "because of her Sindhi origins."

Moreover, the Sindhi people have consistently employed strategic voting tactics to prevent major political parties, particularly those rooted in Punjab, from gaining significant traction in the region, even if that meant handing over the electoral governance of the province to PPP, despite ideological reservations. This trend persisted in the recently concluded election of 2024 as well, where the PPP secured a resounding victory both at the provincial and as well as winning near total seats of the National Assembly in the province.

India's Plan to Become the World's Third Largest Economy by 2027



By: KA Badarinath

Three significant developments were reported in the last couple of days, all three relating to the economy are intrinsically linked and have long-lasting impacts globally. Japanese economy contracted for two consecutive quarters ending 2023 and reported recession. The embattled United Kingdom has also officially shifted into a recession-hit zone after the last two quarters of 2023. This has had an immediate impact. Japan moved to fourth position in the global economic sweepstakes while Germany moved up the rankings to third place.

All these were prominently reported in the last two days thereby leading to questions on the Indian economy's future as we head for another Lok Sabha election in the next two months.

Firstly, the United Kingdom moved from stagnation to recession after economic contraction of 0.1 per cent (July-September 2023) and 0.3 per cent (October-December 2023). Loss of appetite for goods and services leading to negative consumer sentiment and political slugfest between Tories and Labour ahead of this year's elections contributed to the recession that the Bank of England and analysts prefer to term as 'technical'. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak however is gung-ho about the prospects going forward. Secondly, the curious case of Japan needs significant explanation. An ageing population, negative growth in its numbers for the nth year, and scarcity of workers impacting output to Yen's valuation vis-à-vis the US greenback have been identified as major factors. Japan's



economy shrank by 3.3 per cent (July-September 2023) and 0.4 per cent in October-December 2023. Yen depreciation has impacted valuations across the spectrum. During the last one year or more, the Yen has reported a depreciation of 20 per cent against major currencies while its 30 per cent against the US dollar.

On October 20, 2022, the Yen slipped to its worst levels at 150 as against the US dollar. In the last one week, it has been hovering around 104.7-105 against the US dollar. Yen depreciation vis-à-vis the US dollar is significant given that Japan imports from the United States both food and energy products.

Thirdly, Germany moving in as the third biggest economy at \$4.55 trillion as against \$4.19 trillion of Japan is significant for more than one reason. While Yen's continued depreciation

played a big part in Japan's GDP, Germany's performance on the economic front has been modest while dealing with its labour issues, human resources shortages and euro valuations. The German economy contracted by 0.3 per cent in 2023 while analysts expect a modest positive growth of 0.3 per cent in 2024 followed by 1.2 per cent in 2025. Trade-driven recovery may be expected in Germany. But fingers are crossed, given the demand slump internationally and production woes in Germany.

There's a fourth factor that's discussed intermittently and rather in subdued voices. The United States, the largest economy, seems to have avoided recession in 2023 with a soft landing and there's a likelihood of slipping into contraction mode this year. Some do suggest that the US economy was already on the decline owing to high

inflation and retail prices though officially there's no word on it as of now.

The fifth big factor is China which has gone through a lot in the last several months. Chinese economy, the second largest globally, may expand by 4.6 per cent in 2024 and 4 per cent in 2025. Where does it leave the dragon economy in the Year of Dragon that foresees everything good? Protracted Covid-related restrictions have subdued the Chinese economy under President Xi Jinping though officially the economy expanded 5.6 per cent in 2023. International Monetary Fund does not believe these figures and it has its own data points that estimate a much lower expansion. In this backdrop, what happens in India will be more than interesting to watch for both Indians and the global populace looking for a straw of support in their struggle to counter the global downturn on the economic front.

With El Nino receding and the monsoon forecast being very positive, India will continue to be the 'brightest star' with 6.5-7 per cent growth. Apart from being the fastest-growing economy, India-induced expansion is bound to keep the tide on the positive side globally.

However, global headwinds cannot be wished away. Russia-Ukraine War is not coming to an end anytime now while the second bloody conflict between Hamas and Israel gets only worse. Shipping lines on international waters, especially in the Red Sea, are impacted, and thereby safe movement of vessels has been constricted.

Also, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has established its own track record, working independently of the Federal Reserve and European Central Bank on monetary policy issues. Continued strong domestic consumption, expansion in goods & services output coupled with healthy capital inflows – both domestic and foreign – will only keep the Indian economic wheel on an even keel. In this backdrop, stable and strong political dispensation lends strength to argue that overtaking both Japan and Germany to become the third-largest economy globally by 2027 or a wee bit earlier is credible. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised within and outside Parliament that Bharat will be the third largest economy in his third term with over \$5 trillion valuation. Strong fundamentals and resilient economic order coupled with a reformer in Prime Minister Modi would help hasten the process. If a global upturn happens in the next few years as estimated by some economists, then India's place under the sun is assured sooner than later.

Fencing of India-Myanmar Border Exhibits Amit Shah's Decisiveness

By: Jaideep Saikia

There are many naysayers who are of the vehemence that the fencing of the entire 1643 km India-Myanmar border is not a good idea. Such personages — and they unfortunately include people such as a former Indian envoy to Myanmar — cite aspects ranging from the virtual end of the Free Movement Regime (FMR) which permits people living along the border on either side to travel 16 km into each other's country, without visa, for primarily trade to the human aspect pertaining to the demographic contiguity, that characterises both India and Myanmar in the borderlands. But if a dispassionate cost-benefit analysis of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's decision to fence the border is undertaken, then the pros will outnumber the cons.

The ongoing turmoil in Manipur is a direct result of the open border with Myanmar. As I have written earlier in these columns, the Valley-Based-Insurgent Groups (VBIGs), including the United National Liberation Front (Koirang), the People's Liberation Front (Manipur), the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, the Kangleipak Communist Party and the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (collectively known as the Group of Five (G-5), which is the new avatar of the Coordination Committee (CorCom) after the return of the United National Liberation Front (Pamei) to the mainstream, are billeted in three neat clusters in Myanmar's Sagaing Division. After the military takeover of February 1, 2021, the above underground groups came to an understanding with the Myanmar Army (MA). The VBIGs will no longer be touched, harassed or ousted from their safe havens in what has come to be known as the Northern, Central and Southern clusters in Sagaing Division. In return, the VBIGs would have to aid the MA to quell the civil



unrest that erupted after the coup d'état. The development not only led to an end to the modicum of military cooperation that had been witnessed in the years preceding the military takeover by way of Operations Sunrise-I and Sunrise-II, which demolished several India Insurgent Groups' (IIGs) camps in and around Taga (a hunting ground for IIGs just West of the Chindwin river), but the unprecedented situation in Manipur saw hordes of VBIG cadres entering Manipur to battle the Kukis and the security forces. The fact that the porous border also facilitated illegal migration, drugs and arms smuggling from Myanmar by social formations that had affiliations with people in Manipur and have begun to occupy forest lands in the state seems to be borne out by a plethora of facts. Also, several thousand anti-Junta rebels have fled to India since the February 1, 2021 military coup in Myanmar. Of late, even MA personnel had begun to enter Mizoram in a bid to escape the pursuing People's Defence Force (the National Unity Government's armed wing) and various ethnic militias. It is in this backdrop that I wish to examine the issue of the India-Myanmar border fence. At the very outset, it must be understood that fences are not walls. They are created to manage legal, regulated movement.

I was an international visitor to the United States at the invitation of the US Department of State in 2003. One of the tours took 25 other law enforcers and conflict theorists from around the world as well to many places in the US including the US-Mexico border in San Diego. The manner in which the completely (and concretely, not merely fenced) sealed border is run has to be seen to be believed. We watched as US law enforcers carefully checked the credentials of Mexicans entering the US territory for a day's work. They would return after work after paying their taxes to US treasuries and naturally stringent rules governing such entry and exit ensured that they had no political rights in the US. We also witnessed American K-9 dogs waylaying a car entering from Mexico. The driver, we later learnt, was attempting to ferry drugs into the US. Detailed briefings, a tour of the detention centres where Mexicans who were caught trying to enter the US illegally and the formidable wall which led into the Pacific brought back a recall of my own. In an article I had written way back in the North East Sun (Delhi) in its 20-26 May 1995 issue, I had worked out a blueprint for a work permit idea. In San Diego, eight years later, I felt smug about the idea of a work permit for Bangladeshis

illegally entering Assam. The fact that it was almost on similar lines with what I witnessed at the US-Mexican border, convinced me that my theory, if it were to be tried and tested, could work for Assam and the rest of the Northeast as well. After all, in 1995, when I first seriously thought of the problem of illegal migration into Assam from Bangladesh, the issue was taking ominous portents and shapes. Indeed, the problem has not left us until today. But today, I hail the Modi government's commitment to construct impenetrable borders. Amit Shah's decision to build a fence along the entire 1643-kilometre-long India-Myanmar border is bold. It will facilitate better surveillance and prevent illegal migration and ingress of VBIGs. Furthermore, the fencing of the border has nothing to do with the "Neighbourhood First" policy. I have been critical of the policy for a number of reasons, but fencing the India-Myanmar border is not one of them. Indeed, even if the Free Movement Regime (FMR) has to be jettisoned, then so be it. I, for the life of me, cannot think of one reason which characterised it as a great idea, even when it came into being in 2018. If the FMR was anvil to keep border trade alive then there are several mechanisms to ensure its continuance including the Border

Haat system that is in place at the India-Bangladesh border. I had been to Mon not too many months ago. Although I could not make it to Longwa (Oting held greater interest for the student of security in me), the Konyak chieftain's village where the 'Angh' (King/Chieftain) sleeps in India and eats in Myanmar is an interest for many. But the fact of the matter is that these are fables for travelogues and tourist brochures. The Assam Rifles, which guard the border with great tenacity and for which it is now being lampooned in Valley Manipur, too, would testify to the fact that although all borders are in the final analyses imaginary, walls make better neighbours. Even beasts mark their territory and would not countenance trespass. On the India-Myanmar border, it is trespass, transgression and temerity.

If one is pointing fingers at the decision to fence the India-Myanmar border stating that it would sound the death knell to people-to-people contact between the two countries, then it must be stated that the FMR has not achieved that by any standard or measure. If anything, it has only facilitated the unfettered movement of insurgents, drug peddlers and gun runners. It is surprising that knowledgeable people who are aware of Indian Insurgent camps just across the border (for instance in Somra Tracts of the Sagaing Division) should be criticising Amit Shah's decision to fence the India-Myanmar border. Even a fool knows that a Naga of Myanmar who has a social affiliation with a Naga of India has no interest in Bodh Gaya, the pilgrimage circuit of which would continue, fence or no fence. Also, the contiguity which characterises, for instance, the Naga people (if the broad social formation can be termed as "Naga people") is not limited to just 16 km that the FMR has permitted, but can actually go all the way to Taga, a place which is inhabited by Rangpang Nagas.

Electoral Bonds-Beyond The Supreme Court's Brake, A Few Questions

By Anirudh Burman

The Supreme Court's recent decision to strike down the electoral bonds scheme introduced in 2016-17 has undone the most significant change to electoral finance laws in recent years. Central to the court's decision is the tension between privacy and disclosure, a tension that animates all laws on electoral funding. While voters have a right to know about their candidates and parties, donors also need some privacy of political affiliation to express their support freely. Electoral bonds, now a defunct financial instrument, were designed as anonymous bearer instruments, issued exclusively by the State Bank of India. These bonds, accessible to Indian citizens and entities and redeemable by political parties meeting certain vote thresholds, ostensibly aimed at streamlining political donations by directing them through formal banking channels. The introduction of these bonds was accompanied by a reduction in the limit for cash donations. Bonds were issued in specific denominations ranging



from ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 1 crore and were valid for a period of 15 days from the date of issuance.

While introducing the scheme, former Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had argued, "Donors have also expressed reluctance in donating by cheque or other transparent methods as it would disclose their identity and entail adverse consequences...". However, the Election Commission of India had opposed the scheme strongly as, in addition to providing confidentiality of contributions through bearer bonds, the legislative changes that introduced the scheme also removed requirements imposed on

companies to disclose their contributions in their annual accounts. In addition, these changes also removed the earlier limit on corporate donations.

Why The SC Struck Down The Scheme

The court struck down the scheme on two grounds. First, it held that the scheme did not adequately balance informational privacy with the right of voters to information about political parties and their donors. In the court, the government had submitted that informational privacy is important for free political expression. The petitioners on the other hand had argued that voters have a right to

relevant information about their candidates. While the court accepted the need for informational privacy of political affiliation as an important value, it held that under the scheme, while donors were assured of complete confidentiality, voters would never know the details of donors and contributions through electoral bonds. The court reasoned that other existing mechanisms like electoral trusts maintain this balance much better. In the case of trusts, the details of donors are known and the details of recipient political parties are known, but there is no way to know which donor contributed to which party, since the contribution is made by the trust.

Secondly, the court found the removal of limits on corporate donations under the Companies Act to be arbitrary, reasoning that equating corporate entities with individuals in the context of political contributions ignores the disproportionate financial influence of corporations.

On The Confidentiality Issue

The decision of the court leaves campaign finance laws in the same

state it was before 2017-18. Contributions below a threshold of ₹ 20,000 do not have to be accounted for by political parties, companies are subject to the overall limit of 7.5% profits, and the erstwhile disclosure requirements have been restored. The court's decision restores transparency requirements and also reduces the specific kind of confidentiality that the electoral bonds sought to provide.

In theory, the confidentiality of political affiliation has significant value in competitive politics. The court in its judgment agrees with the importance of this value. Confidentiality allows citizens to vote with their money discreetly. This is an important part of the free exercise of political preferences. However, in practice, this confidentiality was not complete. As investigative reports found, each electoral bond had a serial number that can be tracked to identify its purchaser, raising concerns about confidentiality. This when the objective of the electoral bonds scheme was to ease the reluctance of donors from donating through formal channels.

Farmers' Protest 2.0 A Front For Anti-India Forces?

By: Zeba Zoariah

The farmers are staging a comeback with 'Delhi Chalo 2.0', aiming for the stars in their demands from the government. Despite the government consistently increasing the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for the 22 crops, these farmers want more, seemingly unaware of the ongoing increments. Hold on tight, there's a hefty wishlist! They are after a complete debt waiver, a monthly pension for farmers above 60, and a throwback to the Land Acquisition Act of 2013. It's like asking for a windfall while overlooking the financial reality.

And it doesn't stop there – they're suggesting axing all current free trade agreements and bidding farewell to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Because who needs global collaboration when you can slam the door on progress?

In this ironic farmyard tale, we will delve into the amusing intricacies of why these demands might be a bit too much. From pushing for a law to guarantee MSP, despite consistent increases, to proposing a

complete withdrawal from the WTO and scrapping existing FTAs – these farmers seem to be on a quest for demands that defy both logic and economic sense. Welcome to "Farmers Protest 2.0: Demanding the Unattainable", where the sequel might leave you scratching your head more than applauding. In the ongoing series of negotiations between the Central government and farmers' unions, the fourth round took place in Chandigarh on Sunday night. Amidst the persistent 'Delhi Chalo' march and the pressing demands for unmet promises, farmers decided to momentarily halt their march after the meeting. The saga continues, with each meeting feeling like a chapter in a story with an uncertain ending.

Now, let's delve into the government's proposals:

Long-Term Crop Commitment: The Central government presented a five-year plan for the procurement of pulses, maize, and cotton crops through government agencies at minimum support prices. A strategic move to provide stability in an otherwise tumultuous agricultural landscape.

Structured Agricultural Contracts:

Piyush Goyal outlined a cooperative approach. The NCCF and NAFED will enter into contracts with farmers cultivating tur dal, urad dal, masoor dal, or maize, assuring them a minimum support price for their produce over the next five years. It's a serious attempt at bringing structure to the uncertainty looming over agricultural incomes.

This meeting, the fourth in the series held on February 8, 12, and 15, aims to find common ground amid the complexities of the farmers' demands and the government's policy proposals. Amidst the sealed borders, fuming farmers, chaotic rallies, attacking journalists, disruptions, and traffic jams courtesy of the so-called farm protests, one might wonder: is this a genuine outcry or just a well-timed theatrical performance aimed at garnering social media buzz before the Lok Sabha elections? The farmers leading the charge hail from the politically crucial states of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh – a strategic move given their significance in the Hindi heartland.



Could it be that these protests are more about creating hashtags than addressing agricultural concerns? The opposition INDIA bloc, sensing its last chance to make a splash before the 97 crore voters hit the polls in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, might just be orchestrating a political symphony disguised as a farmers' protest.

Facing an existential crisis with exits from the Nitish Kumar-led JD(U) and the RLD, the INDI alliance is also dealing with partners like Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal declaring their solo election plans. Now, the

pieces of the puzzle seem to fall into place – it's not just about crop prices and farm laws, it's about political survival and manoeuvring. Is this their response to 'Abki Baar, 400 Paar'?

Well, time will tell. Let's go back to a time when the experts thought the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was in trouble in Rajasthan and just hanging on in Madhya Pradesh. Rajasthan's voters were pretty fed up with the ruling party for 20 years, but this time, farmers took centre stage, making their voices heard through votes.

Floundering I.N.D.I.A Cuts A Sorry Figure Against BJP's '370' Push

By **Shubhabrata Bhattacharya**

It was a politically charged weekend. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) held its extended national council meeting at New Delhi's Bharat Mandapam, the venue of the G20 event. Rahul Gandhi's Yatra 2.0 entered Uttar Pradesh to be greeted by the news that Samajwadi Party's (SP) Akhilesh Yadav had abandoned his plans to join the rally at Amethi. Another I.N.D.I.A bloc entity, Trinamool Congress's (TMC) Mamata Banerjee, who was the first to abandon the Congress, ran into rough weather as reports of harassment of women by TMC leaders in Sandeshkhali hogged media attention.

Amidst all this, Congress strongman Kamal Nath left behind his scheduled programme on his turf, Chhindwara, to fly to Delhi with his son Nakul. This triggered speculation that attrition in the ranks of the Grand Old Party was now becoming a continuing process. Crisis seems to be becoming synonymous with Congress: some are full-blown, others are brewing. If it's true that even Kamal Nath, once described as Indira Gandhi's



'third son', is today feeling stuck and contemplating options, then it may be a harbinger of a larger exodus of time-tested loyalists.

In case Kamal Nath decides to cross over to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he will be the 10th ex-Congress chief minister to do so in the past 10 years. Amarinder Singh (Punjab), Digambar Kamat (Goa), S.M. Krishna (Karnataka), Vijay Bahuguna (Uttarakhand), N.Kiran Reddy (undivided Andhra), Pema Khandu (Arunachal), late Narayan Datt Tiwari (Uttarakhand, and earlier Uttar Pradesh), and, most recently, Ashok Chavan (Maharashtra), are a few who have jumped ship in the past. Besides, three sitting BJP chief ministers-

Himanta Biswa Sarma (Assam), N.Biren Singh (Manipur) and Manik Saha (Tripura)-are former Congressmen. Many former Pradesh Congress presidents too have quit in the party's Rahul Gandhi era.

Congress No Longer In The Driver's Seat

Rahul's Yatra 2.0 had its moment of glory when it was exiting from Bihar and the Rashtriya Janata Dal's (RJD) Tejashwi Yadav joined him in the Sasaram region. Photographs of him driving a jeep with Rahul beside him and Congress veteran and former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar in the backseat were symbolic of perhaps the fact that the Congress no longer occupies the driver's seat in national

politics. After being defeated by Smriti Irani in 2019, Monday was the first time Rahul visited his former constituency, Uttar Pradesh's Amethi. This comes on the heels of Sonia Gandhi opting out of the 2024 contest in neighbouring Rae Bareilly (which has been a family bastion since 1952). Poor health, she said, made her choose the Rajya Sabha route to remain an MP. The BJP, meanwhile, has denied tickets to seven ministers who are Rajya Sabha MPs, asking them to contest the Lok Sabha elections instead. The beeline for the Rajya Sabha within the Congress is in sharp contrast to this outreach.

Sonia's emotional farewell note to Rae Bareilly voters also did not assure them that a member of her family would replace her as Congress candidate. True, Priyanka Vadra's name has cropped up from time to time. However, in the absence of a categorical statement from the party, and with speculation that Mallikarjun Kharge may contest the seat, ambiguity persists.

I.N.D.I.A Bloc, Wasnik Panel - Rudderless Ships

The I.N.D.I.A bloc (which Amit Shah calls a 'coalition of seven

families') is still officially functioning, though seat-sharing talks have run aground in most states, with parties like the TMC, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the SP suo motu announcing candidates for several seats. The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) factions in Maharashtra have also posed problems for the Grand Old Party in the state. The AAP, meanwhile, which aims to displace the Congress as the main opposition party by 2029, has asserted its newly gained status of a national party by naming candidates in Assam, Gujarat, Goa, and Haryana, and showing the thumb to the Congress in Punjab and Delhi. The five-member panel under Mukul Wasnik set up by the Congress for seat-sharing talks has cut a sorry figure too. The panel has to seek directions from party chief Mallikarjun Kharge, who, in turn, tells it to consult Rahul. He then further rolls the ball towards organisation general secretary K.C.Venugopal. And as Rahul and Venugopal keep busy with Yatra 2.0, the Wasnik panel is left twiddling its thumbs in Delhi.

From Noakhali to Sandeshkhali: Nothing Has Changed in Bengal for Hindus

By: **Gopal Goswami**

Sandeshkhali of Bengal has recently been a hot topic throughout the country. Hindus are safer in Bangladesh than in the "Hindu Rashtra". Local Hindus and news media are unable to speak out against it out of fear of life. The country's major news media headlines are enough to highlight the gravity of the issue. The media and social media are full of news and conversations about West Bengal's Sandeshkhali. What really occurred there? What is the religious angle to it that exploded? Why are people claiming that what occurred to Hindus way back in Noakhali is now occurring in Sandeshkhali? Whatever happened to Hindus in West Bengal before Independence continues to this day. Only the names of the places have changed; nothing else has altered in the circumstances. In Bengal, Noakhali episodes involving such



heinous historical events are still repeated from time to time. In the present day, Noakhali is in Bangladesh, a Hindu graveyard. The country's political temperature has also begun to rise because of the exposure of sad episodes in Sandeshkhali, 24 North Parganas district, around 75 kilometres from Kolkata. The sort of discoveries that are being made, the way Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) administration is behaving and encouraging the criminals, it must be argued that

Noakhali before 1947 and today's Sandeshkhali are identical. The tragedies of modern-day Sandeshkhali are comparable to the horrors of 1946 Noakhali. Looking at Sandeshkhali, we can see that it is a border area of Islamic Bangladesh, with a population dominated by Hindu Scheduled Castes. Sandeshkhali is one of West Bengal's 14 assembly constituencies along the India-Bangladesh border. It is nothing short of a tragedy for the Hindus who live there that all 14

assembly constituencies, including Sandeshkhali, have fallen victim to well-planned conspiracies backed by the TMC. The number of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants is growing unexpectedly. There is little doubt that the illegal infiltration of Islamic Bangladeshis is part of a larger scheme to change the demographic of 14 seats, which is being carried out with the support of the TMC. This location is also the epicentre of Pakistan's ISI in anti-India terrorist activity.

Aside from that, due to the entrance of Islamic Bangladeshis, criminal activities in these regions are steadily expanding. It is also true that until recently, the Muslim population of Sandeshkhali was minimal; but due to illegal Bangladeshi infiltration, a population imbalance has occurred, and the number of jihadi elements is steadily increasing. As a result,

the region has been cruelly affected by demographic shifts. The Rohingyas make up the greatest group of unlawful infiltrators. Keep in mind that most of the criminals involved in the previous elections' violence were Muslim. Most of the cases here are linked to cattle smuggling, narcotics, illicit firearms, and people trafficking, with Muslims being charged with all these unlawful activities. The current revelations of Sandeshkhali have been going on for numerous years, but nothing was coming out due to the TMC. In 2000, a Hindu Scheduled Caste woman was gang-raped in the Basanti assembly of South 24 Parganas. Workers from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) had openly spoken out against the tragedy. As a result, four RSS workers were murdered. Hundreds of cases of gang rape involving Hindu women have been reported.

Indian-origin student froze to death in Illinois after nightclub denied entry

Akul Dhawan was found frozen to death close to his University of Illinois campus on January 20, but the cause of his death was revealed after a month. He died of hypothermia after being denied entry to a nearby nightclub.

Akul Dhawan, an Indian-origin student of Illinois University, died of hypothermia after being denied entry to a nearby club during a night out with friends.

The revelation by the Champaign County Coroner's Office in a February 20 news release comes a month after Akul Dhawan's death. Dhawan was found dead on January 20, according to the campus police department. Dhawan had been drinking with friends that evening, but things changed around 11:30 pm. Dhawan's friends entered the Canopy Club, a venue near the campus, where they had already been that night, but staff refused entry to Dhawan, according to police. Surveillance footage indicates that he attempted to get back inside the club "several times, but staff repeatedly turned him away". Dhawan also declined two rideshare that were called for him, according to The Kansas City Star.



TEMPERATURE AT -2.7 DEGREES CELSIUS WHEN AKUL WAS OUT

On the night of Dhawan's death, the temperature dropped to 27 degrees Fahrenheit (-2.7 degrees Celsius), according to weather.com reported by the Kansas City Star. Throughout the night, calls from friends to Dhawan went unanswered. A worried friend reached out to campus police for help in finding him, said the police. Despite efforts to locate him, including a thorough search along

the likely route back to campus, they couldn't find Akul Dhawan.

Additionally, police contacted individuals acquainted with Dhawan and reached out to area hospitals for information. The next morning, Dhawan was discovered "lying on concrete steps" behind a building and pronounced dead at the scene, according to The Kansas City Star. The coroner's office explained the cause of death and said, "acute alcohol intoxication and prolonged exposure to

extremely cold temperatures, significantly contributed to his death".

AKUL'S FAMILY QUESTIONED POLICE IN OPEN LETTER

The family wrote in an open letter published in The News-Gazette, "We have been asking why Akul was found 10 hours later, rather than immediately after he was reported missing, when he could still be saved. The locations where he was reported missing and where he was found are less than 200 feet apart. 200 feet!" Akul's parents, Ish and Ritu Dhawan, are residents of the San Francisco Bay Area in California. While officials assert they responded promptly to the situation based on available information. Dhawan's family expressed frustration that "the police never searched for our son", reported The Kansas City Star. Dhawan's untimely death occurred during his first week back at college after winter break. His family mourned the loss of a "promising young man with his entire future ahead of him". We were so proud of our son for completing his semester and thriving at the university. He was a very smart kid who had his whole life before him," the letter said. "We will never be the same."

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Can India Become the Global Deep Tech Powerhouse?

India is becoming the hotbed for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and deep tech research, therefore, it comes as no surprise that during the 2021-2023 period, the industry saw an investment of more than \$1 billion. According to a report, 'The India Deep Science Tech Report', investments in India's deep-science technologies (tech) have consistently doubled or more every three years since 2010.

According to the report, India is at a point of inflection in the AI and deep tech arena. Projections see investments in this space surpassing \$10 billion by 2029. The report, analyzing investment data from 2010 to 2023 sourced from Tracxn and media reports, reveals a steady increase in the total number of investments in deep-science tech companies. It also highlights an exponential growth in the number of investment rounds exceeding \$5 million. Importantly, since 2017, there has been a greater frequency of follow-up investments compared to new funding rounds, indicating investors' dedication to scaling up.

However, the massive investments did not just occur overnight, there have been massive scaling up of the economy, a boost to the automobile industry, along with the push by the Indian government to set up a semiconductor manufacturing value chain in the country. These have all helped in settling investors' nerves, seeing India on an upward trajectory.

Before we dive in, let us understand what Deep Tech actually is.

WHAT IS DEEP TECH?

Deep technology or deep tech refers to sophisticated technologies built on significant scientific advancements, capable of revolutionising conventional industries and sparking the emergence of new markets. It encompasses groundbreaking innovations that turn what was previously considered science fiction into tangible reality.

Think of it like this. Regular tech is like your smartphone or social media apps, they're cool and all. Deep tech, on the other hand, is like the stuff straight out of a science fiction movie. It's based on groundbreaking scientific



discoveries and engineering feats, and it has the potential to totally transform industries and create entirely new markets. Take AI, for example. We're not just talking about Siri or Alexa here, we're talking about machines that can learn and think for themselves, making decisions and solving problems in ways that even the smartest humans can't. That's the kind of game-changing tech that falls under the umbrella of deep tech. Deep tech is revolutionary technology built on scientific breakthroughs. It includes AI, biotechnology, quantum computing and advanced materials science. Unlike everyday gadgets, deep tech has the potential to transform industries and create new markets.

These are just a few examples of the many deep tech startups flourishing in India and reshaping industries. Their efforts are also positioning India as a global hub for cutting-edge innovation.

More startups are leveraging deep tech. India has seen a surge in startups using AI, machine learning, blockchain, robotics and biotechnology. The number is steadily growing, fueled by increased access to technology, supportive policies, growing investor interest, and a vibrant entrepreneurial culture. Billions are pouring into India's booming deep-tech scene, fueling a surge of innovative startups across various sectors. Bengaluru takes the top spot, followed by Delhi and Mumbai, attracting a staggering \$2.7 billion in venture funding for

discoveries and engineering feats, and it has the potential to totally transform industries and create entirely new markets. Take AI, for example. We're not just talking about Siri or Alexa here, we're talking about machines that can learn and think for themselves, making decisions and solving problems in ways that even the smartest humans can't. That's the kind of game-changing tech that falls under the umbrella of deep tech. Deep tech is revolutionary technology built on scientific breakthroughs. It includes AI, biotechnology, quantum computing and advanced materials science. Unlike everyday gadgets, deep tech has the potential to transform industries and create new markets.

deep-tech in 2021 alone. This funding frenzy is partly driven by the explosion of interest in generative AI, with technologies like ChatGPT paving the way. India's deep-tech ecosystem has witnessed remarkable growth, expanding by 53% in the last decade and reaching par with developed markets like the US, China, and Europe. This impressive growth reflects investor confidence in the transformative potential of deep-tech solutions, evident in their commanding 12% share of total startup funding in India.

Deep science in electronics, particularly focusing on AI and chip design, is propelling innovations in space tech and telecom. With over \$1 billion in private investment already secured, Indian space startups are soaring towards a potential \$100 billion space economy by 2040, according to analysts. This sector saw a meteoric rise with 54 new startups established in just one year, collectively raising \$123.9 million in funding. Digantara, a company mapping space debris, and Skyroot Aerospace, developing launch vehicles, are just a few examples of the many exciting players in this rapidly growing field.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING?

India's deep tech scene is experiencing a seismic shift, driven not just by financial muscle, but by a carefully orchestrated strategy. The government is playing a pivotal role, injecting billions

into transformative technologies such as electric vehicles, battery storage, and even quantum computing. This unprecedented investment signals a resolute commitment to accelerating R&D and solidifying India's position as a global innovation leader.

However, it's not merely throwing money at the problem. India is meticulously crafting a supportive ecosystem for deep tech startups. Imagine the National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) as a launchpad, streamlining regulations, simplifying funding access, and offering robust intellectual property protection.

This nurturing environment empowers game-changing ventures to thrive. Recognizing the power of collaboration, India is fostering dynamic partnerships between industry giants, research institutions, and educational powerhouses. This strategic collaboration unlocks optimal resource utilization and expedites the translation of groundbreaking ideas into tangible solutions.

Furthermore, the government's commitment extends beyond funding and policy. A dedicated Rs 1 lakh crore corpus fuels the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), a powerhouse for research across diverse fields. This strategic investment provides resources and sets the strategic direction, ensuring research efforts align

with national innovation goals. India's talent pool is another crucial ingredient in this recipe for success. World-class individuals eager to contribute to cutting-edge technologies are attracted by the supportive ecosystem, strategic investments, and vibrant research landscape. This confluence further accelerates the pace of innovation.

The future of Indian deep tech is brimming with potential. Mark your calendars and keep your eyes peeled, because the next big innovation might just be around the corner. With unwavering government support, a treasure trove of untapped opportunities, and a pool of world-class talent, this is not just a tech story; it's a story of transformation. India is not just catching up; it's setting the pace for innovation in key sectors, and the world is watching.

KEY AREAS OF DEEP INVESTMENTS

The four leading areas of deep tech in India – AI, biotech, advanced materials, and electronics – each hold immense potential for unlocking multi-billion dollar market opportunities. Forget Silicon Valley, India's deep tech landscape is experiencing a meteoric rise, fueled by a potent duo: a surge in investments and a government policy acting as a launchpad. While the billions flowing into AI, biotech, and advanced materials grab headlines, the real star of the show is the strategic vision guiding this growth.

This ascent is not merely about numbers, though the figures are impressive. Over \$1 billion invested in deep-science technologies since 2021, projections exceeding \$10 billion by 2029, and a 53% growth in the deep tech ecosystem within a decade – but they only tell part of the story. The true power lies in how these investments are being guided to achieve maximum impact.

The road ahead isn't without its challenges. Gaps in funding for certain areas, particularly chip development in electronics, need to be addressed. But with unwavering government support, a treasure trove of untapped opportunities, and a relentless focus on impact, India's deep tech revolution is poised for even greater heights.

'There are only two sexes'

New bill in Alabama says men and women are defined by genitals they're born with



There is language in the bill to account for people who are considered intersex and are born with a combination of male and female genitals.

It says their sex can be defined as unknown 'when sex cannot be medically determined for developmental or other reasons.' Fewer than one in 1,000 babies are intersex.

The bill is being sponsored by Republican State Senator April Weaver, who said she was doing so to 'stand for women's rights.' Weaver said: 'This bill is a definitional bill for our courts to have guidance when interpreting laws that already exist in Alabama. 'Most important to acknowledge in this bill is that there are only two sexes - male and female and the term sex is objective and fixed.' The legislation would give businesses the power to enforce single-sex spaces without infringing on trans people's rights. It comes amid growing debate about whether trans people should be allowed to compete in women's sports or share bathrooms with women. A proponent of the bill, Becky Gerritson, executive director of the Eagle Forum of Alabama, said the definitions would give guidance to the courts. 'This bill will help preserve those single-sex spaces which ensure privacy, safety, equal opportunity,' Gerritson said. But during a public hearing,

opponents said the legislation is part of ongoing attacks on the rights of transgender people to simply go about their daily lives. 'I'm here to say that I'm literally just a woman. I'm also transgender. People like me have always existed... and it's OK that we exist,' Allison Montgomery told the County and Municipal Government Committee. Montgomery said what proponents are seeking would mean that men who have 'taken testosterone for years and have developed full beards' would be required to use women's restrooms because their bodies once produced ova. The measure would create a vague exemption for people with intersex conditions - saying that individuals with congenital or medically verifiable differences in sex development

'must be accommodated' in accordance with federal law - while declaring that such people 'are not a third sex.' Democratic senators Linda Coleman-Madison from Birmingham and Merika Coleman from Pleasant Grove questioned the need for the bill. 'This is just so heartbreaking. We spend all of this time about trying to keep people down who are not like us. It's sad,' Coleman-Madison said.

The bill will now be considered by the Republican-led full Senate as early as this week. It is part of a wave of legislation in Republican states that seek to regulate which bathrooms transgender people use, which school sports teams they can play on, and to prohibit puberty blockers and hormone therapy for minors.

A new bill advancing in Alabama would mean there are only two sexes in the eyes of the law.

The legislation says men and women are defined based on the genitals they were born with and that sex is 'objective and fixed'.

The female Republican lawmaker sponsoring the bill said it would give schools and local governments the power to set up single-sex spaces such as bathrooms without fear of legal backlash. It also requires state health departments, social services and other agencies who collect information to log people based on their gender from birth.

The bill doesn't carry any other action except to define the terms. It also assures Alabamans they can still identify as whatever gender they wish.

But opponents say it could lead to unintended consequences - such as trans people being put in prisons

with inmates of a particular gender they do not identify with. It comes after Alabama's Supreme Court ruled that embryos were children, opening the door for families and IVF doctors to be sued for destroying them.

The new SB 92 bill that would strictly define who is considered male or female was advanced on Tuesday by the Alabama Senate County and Municipal Government Committee.

It defines a woman as a person 'who has, had, will have, or would have, but for a developmental anomaly, genetic anomaly, or accident, the reproductive system that at some point produces ova.' Ova, or eggs, are the female reproductive cells produced in the ovaries.

The bill defines a man as an 'individual who has, had, will have, or would have, but for a developmental anomaly, genetic anomaly, or accident, the reproductive system that at some point produces sperm.'

Police: Levittown man arrested for DWI following 3-vehicle crash in Hicksville

A Levittown man is facing a DWI charge after a three-vehicle crash occurred Monday in Hicksville. Police say 31-year-old Amrinder Singh was driving a black Chevy Suburban eastbound on Old Country Road when he struck a Dodge Ram traveling in the same direction. Singh continued driving and then hit a Honda CRV on the same road, according to authorities. Officers investigating the incident determined that Singh



was drunk at the time of the crash. Police say the drivers of the two other cars were

hospitalized with minor injuries. Singh is scheduled to face a judge Tuesday.

Shrinking waists and growing the economy

Weight-loss drugs like Ozempic forecast to raise US GDP by equivalent of \$360 billion, Goldman Sachs says

The widespread use of weight-loss drugs in the US could boost gross domestic product (GDP) in the coming years. Analysts at Goldman Sachs estimate they could raise GDP by 1 to 3 percent by the end of the decade, the equivalent of around \$360 billion. They predict that slimmed-down workers will be more efficient and take less sick days due to obesity-related illnesses. 'If GLP-1 usage ultimately increases by this amount and results in lower obesity rates, we see scope for significant spillovers to the broader economy,' Goldman economists said in a note. 'Academic studies find that obese individuals are both less likely to work and less productive when they do.' Some analysts have predicted the market for weight-loss drugs could reach \$100 billion a year by the end of the decade, with Ozempic maker Novo Nordisk and Mounjaro producer Eli Lilly

leading the race. The class of drugs, called GLP-1 agonists, are being keenly pursued by several companies and more could enter the market depending on clinical trials. The brokerage estimated weight-loss drugs could bolster U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) by 0.4 percent in a scenario with 30 million users, and could rise to 1 percent with 60 million users. The current wave of healthcare innovation such as AI-powered drug discovery coupled with GLP-1s could raise the level of U.S. GDP by 1.3 percent in the coming years, equivalent to \$360 billion per year in current exchange rates, with potential for an increase ranging from 0.6 percent to 3.2 percent. 'Effects are likely to be larger in the U.S. than in other countries, as health outcomes in other developed markets are generally better,' the brokerage added.

The Baba, Singh Brothers and the Squandered Rs 225,00,00,00,000

How Malvinder and Shivinder Singh blew Rs 22,500 crore in less than a decade and lost control over Fortis Healthcare and Religare Enterprises.

An influential 'Baba' and his family with a weakness for materialism; two young businessmen loaded with nearly Rs10,000 crore from an asset sale; and a family confidante have together cooked a cauldron that Bollywood potboilers are made of. Their machinations wrecked a flourishing empire and vapourised nearly \$3.2 billion (Rs22,500 crore then) into thin air.

Business chatter has been abuzz ever since brothers Malvinder and Shivinder Singh's debt pile of nearly Rs 13,000 crore came to light two years back. That was shocking considering that, as recently as June 2008, they had hit gold with Rs9,576 crore in cash from Japan's Daiichi Sankyo for the sale of India's then largest pharmaceuticals company Ranbaxy Laboratories—an inheritance from father Parvinder Singh.

How could they squander Rs22,500 crore, lose control of prized possessions such as Fortis Healthcare, once the country's largest hospital chain, and one of the largest NBFCs Religare Enterprises—all in a span of less than a decade? Two years after the Singh-Daiichi deal, Ajay and Swati Piramal also sold their pharma business to Abbott Laboratories for Rs18,000 crore. They re-invested the money to build assets worth Rs25,000 crore in just the listed companies across realty, finance and pharmaceutical research.

For long, the Singh brothers kept their fall from grace a closely guarded secret, avoiding meetings and discussions on the topic. But, for the first time ever, here is the inside story of how the brothers not just lost their wealth but also their companies and reputation. "Today we have lost control of all our key businesses - Fortis, SRL and Religare in our committed effort to repay our debts and also as a result of invocation of pledged shares by the banks. This has ultimately led to insignificant shareholding remaining with us in these businesses," Malvinder and Shivinder Singh said in a joint email response to our questions. Such decimation of a flourishing and diversified empire within a decade is unprecedented in India's corporate history. So, how did this happen?

The answer lies hidden in a maze of a dozen companies. But before we get to that, let's



understand the family dynamics between the Baba, Gurinder Singh Dhillon, the brothers and family confidante Sunil Naraindas Godhwani.

Dhillon—better known as 'Babaji' or the 'Saint of Beas' is the spiritual guru of the Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB). The head of RSSB works pro bono, draws no salary nor any benefits from the sect. Dhillon battled cancer and recovered from it in 2013. RSSB has over two million followers and a vast land bank across the country. It has over 5,000 centres that can accommodate between 50 and 5 lakh people during congregations. The sect is a 1918 breakaway faction of the Radha Soami sect founded at Agra in 1861 by Shiv Dayal Singh. Dhillon has headed the sect since inheriting it in 1990 from maternal uncle Charan Singh who was the spiritual guru between 1951 and 1990. Charan Singh's daughter Nimmi Singh is Malvinder & Shivinders mother and wife of Late Parvinder Singh. Thus, Dhillon is the brothers' maternal uncle.

In comes confidante Godhwani, who was recommended and backed by Dhillon to run non-banking finance company Religare Enterprises. The Singhs often referred to him as their third brother but he once said he owed his allegiance to nobody except Dhillon. He is now called the "self-proclaimed third brother". The bond was to strengthen further as Godhwani's daughter Simran was engaged to Dhillon's younger son Gurkirat. The proposed marriage, however, never went through as the two parted ways. It was fine as long as it was all within the family. But that was not to be.

Too much money spoiled the brotherhood.

There are three dimensions to the Singh potboiler—Singh brothers' relationship with Dhillon; their ties with each other and the

relationship with Godhwani. In the first, being the head of the sect and a father figure to Singh brothers, Dhillon had an upper hand; in the second, equal partners Malvinder and Shivinder were led by Malvinder; in the third, Godhwani, being backed by the Dhillons, pretty much ran Religare independently.

But it all begins and ends with money. Once the proceeds of the Ranbaxy sale were received, the Singh brothers paid nearly Rs2,000 crore in taxes and previous loan repayments. Of the remaining Rs7,500 crore, Rs1,750 crore were invested in Religare to fund its growth; about Rs2,230 crore was invested in Fortis' growth.

But most importantly, Rs2,700 crore were transferred to companies owned by the Dhillon family, Gurinder Dhillon's wife Shabnam Dhillon and companies associated with RSSB's senior functionaries. While Religare and Fortis are examples of reckless expansion and its consequences, the money transferred to Dhillon and associates—which (with interest) is now estimated to be between Rs4000-5,000 crore—remains unpaid to the Singhs. It isn't clear why this money was never returned. Dhillon and the Singh brothers did not respond to detailed questions on whether this money was owed to Dhillon and associates for any previous transactions or was only loaned to them.

Loaded with massive cash, Religare and Fortis went on a rapid-fire expansion and acquisition spree. On the other hand, the Dhillon family and RSSB associates got lured by the real estate sector, which was delivering phenomenal returns between 2008 and 2011. Recipient companies raised further loans at 12-14 per cent interest to buy more real estate.

All turned out to be fatal errors.

Once the slowdown hit, Religare

and Fortis were unable to service the massive debt raised during the expansion spree (see graphic). The Singh brothers' only fallback option may have been funds given to Dhillon and associates. But that was not to be. In the slowdown-ravaged economy, the real estate sector had gone into a spiral by then and prices crashed. The Dhillons were trapped and so were the brothers. A detailed mail sent to Dhillons and Singhs did not elicit any response on this. There began a vicious cycle of mortgaging assets and equity in group companies to raise loans to pay off previous liabilities. RoC records show that between 2008 and 2016, group holding companies RHC Holding and Oscar Investments pledged immovable properties and shares valued at up to Rs15,276 crore to various banks and financial institutions, including to Nimmi Singh, to raise resources between them. Of these, just RHC's pledges (some of which may have been to raise resources to pay off previous loans) starting November 8, 2010, add up to an astounding Rs12,800 crore.

RHC Holding and Oscar Investments, which had debt of barely Rs15 crore and Rs60 crore, respectively, in March 2009, had total outstanding debt of Rs4,063 crore and Rs840 crore in March 2016 & March 2017, respectively (the latest data available with RoC). As they scrambled to pay off debts, the Singh brothers' resolution efforts were blocked multiple times by Daiichi Sankyo through court-led interventions to ensure the brothers had enough assets to pay off the \$500 million arbitration order it had won against them. Daiichi Sankyo had accused the Singh brothers of concealing crucial information during the sale of Ranbaxy.

Singhs have contested this claim. The order is currently reserved by Court of Appeals in Singapore and is expected anytime now.

As they moved to settle their dues by selling assets in group companies, Daiichi Sankyo moved court to protect its interest by securing several injunctions preventing them from divesting their assets or equity. In the last hearing of the case on August 10, the Delhi High Court froze all bank accounts of the brothers alleging they misled the courts.

Starved of cash, businesses went into a tailspin.

Since debt remained unpaid and the value of the pledged shares dropped due to build-up of losses at Fortis and Religare, the lenders invoked hypothecation. Promoter holding in the two key companies, Fortis and Religare, which was 63 per cent and 72 per cent, fell to 0.6 per cent and 1.5 per cent, respectively. The Singhs lost control and stepped down from both the firms in February 2018. While Fortis will now be owned by Malaysia's IHH Healthcare, which has emerged as the highest bidder, Religare is controlled by PE firm Bay Capital.

"Given the circumstances and immense challenges facing us today, we assure all our stakeholders that we are doing whatever it takes to resolve the issues and will not shy away from our current responsibilities. We have been constantly making all possible efforts to clear our liabilities. Unfortunately, the adverse ruling by the Delhi High Court and the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the Daiichi Sankyo arbitration case, compounded the problems, resulting in severe liquidity pressures, which has triggered unanticipated defaults with banks and lenders. Such large and complex matters will need time," says the Singh brothers' response.

A 6' tall, bearded trans basketballer arrogantly slams a young girl to the ground.

(News Agency)-We used to have a name for violence against women and girls.

When men punched, pushed or slapped us, that was 'domestic abuse', 'assault'. Now it has a different name – 'sport'.

The latest exhausting headline: a girls basketball game at a Massachusetts high school had to be abandoned earlier this month after three female players were injured at the hands of a trans student.

Footage of the incident at the Collegiate Charter School of Lowell is shocking.

We see one girl hurled to the ground by a six-foot male, sporting facial hair. The male wrenches the ball from her hands. The girl – barely reaching the male's shoulder height – is slammed down.

She tries to sit up repeatedly but collapses each time, holding her lower back in agony.

Other girls run over to comfort her but the male player simply turns away, nonchalantly shooting the ball through the net with one hand, catching it with the other. It's a perfect picture of arrogance and disdain.

But it's also a snapshot of a deep-rooted and unmistakable contempt for women that I believe drives the trans lobby's ceaseless tirade against us and our spaces.

I have to applaud the school's basketball coach, Kevin Ortins, who called a halt to the game. Though I'm



not sure he had much of a choice, considering there weren't many uninjured girls left on the bench.

The school issued a statement afterwards, saying that their players 'feared getting injured and not being able to compete in the upcoming playoffs'.

Notably, there was not one mention of the trans-identifying male player – just that three girls had '[gone] down' in the first half of the game.

How pathetic.

As long as sporting authorities lie down in the face of trans madness and encourage males to invade female spaces with impunity, incidents like this are only going to increase in frequency and severity.

Women are constantly told that we have to 'accept' trans-identifying

males into our teams, and into our changing rooms. That to speak up makes us hateful bigots. That these athletes come in the name of compassion, kindness and inclusivity. But can you honestly tell me that you see any of those positive virtues in that video? All I see is masculine aggression and entitlement. It is not 'compassionate' to ask a young girl to undress in front of males in a locker room. To allow those men to expose themselves in front of minors. Nor is it 'kind' to allow girls to be bullied and battered by those who – let's be honest – were mediocre at best when competing in the men's category, and now want a chance to take all the medals.

Asking girls to smile and step aside, so that a women's podium can be filled

with men is not 'inclusive'. We have reached this farcical point where I have to spell out black from white until I'm blue in the face because a rabid trans-rights lobby tells us daily that if we don't listen to their nonsensical demands then children will kill themselves and blood is on our hands. Adopting the mantle of victimhood, it seems, is a free pass to commit violence against women and infringe upon our First Amendment rights without accountability or responsibility.

In fact, they're practically cheered along.

The radical Left have made the likes of Lia Thomas – who I swam against – their chief banner bearers.

But the great irony is that, for all the readiness to demonstrate their oh-so-feminist credentials, they're blind to the lunacy of helping males steal women's opportunities, emboldening them to physically and psychologically attack us. Make no mistake: they are not being 'brave'. They are not being 'their true selves'. These athletes are just abusive, narcissistic misogynists.

But this isn't a battle we can fight alone.

When men felt threatened by a trans influencer, Dylan Mulvaney, promoting their favorite Bud Light beer, they responded with a boycott.

Where are those men now?

Calls grow in Nepal for restoration of Hindu state

(News Agency)- Nepal is witnessing a growing call for the restoration of the Hindu state.

The erstwhile Hindu state, adopted federal, secular, and democratic identity in 2008.

The changes took place after the CPN (Maoist) decided to join the political mainstream after shunning the decade-long "people's war" in 2006 that killed over 13,000 people.

Leaders of major political parties are calling for the restoration of the Hindu state in Nepal by establishing the 'Vaidik Sanatan Hindu State'.

The calls for the restoration of the Hindu state are also gaining strength inside the Nepali Congress, the grand old party of Nepali politics which is also the largest party in all three tiers of the government — local, federal, and provinces.



As many as 950 general committee members of the party 'Mahasamiti' during the ongoing 14th Kathmandu meeting in Kathmandu have signed a petition calling for the restoration of

the Hindu state in Nepal.

Over 2,200 Nepali Congress delegates are attending the Mahasamiti meeting which is considered as the highest-level policy-making body of the party.

Lawmaker and central working committee member of the party, Shankar Bhandari, is leading the campaign in the Nepali Congress for the restoration of the Hindu state.

Over 950 general committee members have signed the petition calling for the restoration of the Hindu state, said Lokesh Dhakal who is another leader of the campaign.

The majority of the general committee members are in favour of the Hindu state so the Nepali Congress should take the lead of this moment, the pro-Hindu campaigners have said.

"Eye For Eye": Taliban Publicly Executes 2 Murder Convicts In Stadium

(News Agency)-Taliban authorities publicly executed two men convicted of murder in a football stadium in eastern Afghanistan on Thursday, according to an AFP journalist at the scene.

Both men were executed by multiple gunshots to the back in Ghazni city after Supreme Court official Atiqullah Darwish read aloud a death warrant signed by Taliban Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada.

"These two people were convicted of the crime of murder... after two years of trial in the courts of the country, the order has been signed," Darwish said. Thousands of men gathered in the stadium to witness the execution.

Families of the convicted men's victims were present and asked if they wanted to grant the condemned a last-minute reprieve but they declined in both cases.

The Taliban administration in Kabul has not been officially recognised by any other government since it took power in 2021 and imposed an austere interpretation of Islam. Akhundzada ordered judges in 2022 to fully implement all aspects of Islamic law -- including "eye for an eye" punishments known as "qisas".

Islamic law, or sharia, acts as a code of living for Muslims worldwide, offering guidance on issues such as modesty,

finance and crime.

However, interpretations vary according to local custom,



culture and religious schools of thought.

Taliban scholars in Afghanistan have employed one of the most extreme interpretations of the code, including capital and corporal punishments little used by most modern Muslim states.

- Regular floggings -

Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent building a new judicial system under the last foreign-backed

government, a combination of Islamic and secular law with qualified prosecutors, defence lawyers and judges.

However, many Afghans complained of corruption, bribery and the slow delivery of justice.

Public executions were common during the Taliban's first rule from 1996 to 2001.

Thursday's executions are believed to be the third and fourth death penalties meted out since the Taliban authorities returned to power.

The first two had also been convicted of murder.

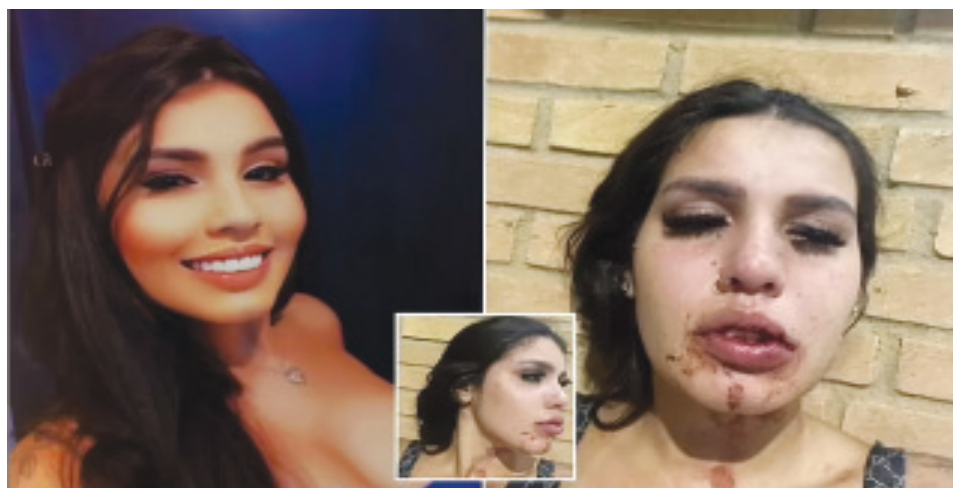
There have been regular public floggings for other crimes, however, including theft, adultery and alcohol consumption. The previous execution was carried out in June 2023, when a convicted murderer was shot dead in the grounds of a mosque in Laghman province in front of some 2,000 people. Many governments, international

organisations and aid agencies cut off or severely scaled back their funding for Afghanistan in response -- causing a serious knock to the already struggling economy.

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The Taliban government has also barred girls and women from high schools and universities, banned them from parks, funfairs and gyms, and ordered them to cover up in public.

Instagram star is 'drugged, gang-raped and beaten by fellow influencers who invited her to a party'



(News Agency)-A teenage influencer is demanding justice in Brazil after saying she was drugged, raped and beaten by a group of fellow influencers.

Geovana Pontes claims the group invited her to a party, where they attacked her.

The 19-year-old shared photographs with her nearly 250,000 followers on January 29, showing injuries which she alleges were caused by the attack. Shockingly, she accused other social media influencers of raping her and beating her - as well as a friend who had also been invited to the party hosted on a farm. She captioned the graphic photographs showing her bloodied face and her apparently lying on the floor with the word 'Justica!!!' ('Justice').

Another photo showed her outside a police station. Pontes's post has gone viral over the last month with nearly 200,000 likes.

She has now spoken to local media outlet Record TV about her online claims, saying it took place at a party on a farm in Igarata,

in the Brazilian state of Sao Paulo.

She said she was drugged and forced to have sex with at least three young men.

Pontes also claims she was invited to the party and went with a friend, who was also attacked by the group of men.

She claims the men locked a door, preventing her and her friend from leaving. 'There was no food, there was no signal, there was nothing. There was no way I could even get out. No one entered and no one left the house,' she told Record.

Pontes claimed '(one of the influencers) grabbed me by the neck and punched me in the mouth. It was at that moment that I fell with everything backwards, and two others were saying: "Yeah, it really hits. That's it. That's what you deserve".

'I had sex without my consent. I was vulnerable. I didn't know what was happening.'

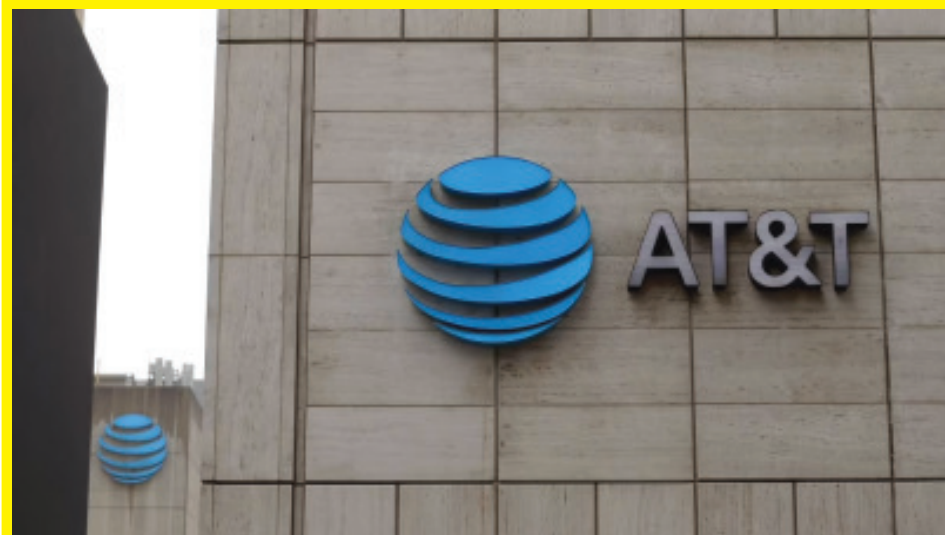
According to Brazilian newspaper O Globo, police are investigating a complaint from the teenager of rape, aggression and false imprisonment.

Cell outage across the US: AT&T is 'working urgently to restore service' as more than 70,000 customers are hit by nationwide communications blackout

(News Agency)-AT&T have said they 'working urgently' to restore network outages that is affecting over 70,000 of their customers.

AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile users

reports at 4:30am before again jumping just before 7:15am to over 51,000.ust after 11am, AT&T said that they had managed to restore three-quarters of their network, with teams 'working as quickly as



reported early Thursday that they are having network issues nationwide and in Canada.

According to DownDetector, over 70,000 customers are now reporting outages on the AT&T network. The cause of the problem has not been revealed.

In a statement, the company said: 'Some of our customers are experiencing wireless service interruptions this morning. We are working urgently to restore service to them. We encourage the use of Wi-Fi calling until service is restored.'

The spike in the outages occurred around 4am Eastern time and also effected some customers with Verizon, T-Mobile and UScellular.

The largest number of issues was reported by AT&T users, which spiked at 31,931

possible'.

Shortly after 3pm EST, AT&T confirmed they had restored connection to all of those effected.

The network added: 'We sincerely apologize to them. Keeping our customers connected remains our top priority, and we are taking steps to ensure our customers do not experience this again in the future.'

The issue had left AT&T iPhone users stuck in SOS mode, meaning that users can only make calls to emergency services.

Cricket, which is also part of AT&T, reported having 11,000 users down, while 2,800 Verizon customers are experiencing outages, with a further 1,000 T-Mobile users reportedly also being affected.

Pakistan to Seek at Least \$6 Billion in New IMF Loan Program, Bloomberg Reports

(News Agency)-Pakistan plans to seek a new loan of at least \$6 billion from the International Monetary Fund to help the incoming government repay billions in debt due this year, Bloomberg News reported on Thursday, citing a Pakistani official.

The country will seek to negotiate an Extended Fund Facility with the IMF, the report said, adding that the talks with the global lender were expected to start in March or April.

Pakistan averted default last summer thanks to a short-term International Monetary Fund bailout, but the programme expires next month and a new government will have to negotiate a long-term arrangement to keep the \$350 billion economy stable. Ahead of the bailout, the



South Asian nation had to undertake a slew of measures demanded by the IMF, including revising its budget, a hike in its

benchmark interest rate, and increases in electricity and natural gas prices.

The IMF staff continues a

dialogue with authorities on needed longer-term reform efforts, a spokesperson for the fund said, adding that the fund is

available, if requested, to support the post-election government through a new arrangement to address Pakistan's ongoing challenges.

Pakistan's caretaker finance minister did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on the Bloomberg report. Pakistan's vulnerable external position means that securing financing from multilateral and bilateral partners will be one of the most urgent issues facing the next government, ratings agency Fitch said on Monday. "A new deal is key to the country's credit profile, and we assume one will be achieved within a few months, but an extended negotiation or failure to secure it would increase external liquidity stress and raise the probability of default," it said.

How is Myanmar's civil war impacting Bangladesh?



(News Agency)-Fighting between Myanmar's junta and rebel groups in Rakhine state is growing more intense. Neighboring Bangladesh may soon need to reach out to rebels on security and refugee issues. Fighting between Myanmar's junta and the Arakan Army (AA) rebel group in western Myanmar's Rakhine state has intensified. Casualties have also been recorded in Bangladesh, with two people killed by an errant mortar round this month and several injured by gunshots from across the border. Rebel fighters have recently taken control of the Myanmar border region, and are seeking to oust junta forces from elsewhere in the state. This

comes as a heavy blow for the Myanmar's ruling junta, which seized power in February 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi to find itself embroiled in a wide-scale civil war. The Arakan Army is the military wing of the Rakhine ethnic minority that seeks autonomy from Myanmar's central government. It has been attacking army outposts in Rakhine state since November 2023.

Rohingya refugees skeptical of return to Rakhine

Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country, which shares a 271-kilometer (168 miles) border with Buddhist-dominated Myanmar.

Bangladesh is also the home of

more than a million mostly Muslim Rohingya refugees, which have been fleeing Myanmar for decades, and especially after Myanmar launched a brutal "clearance operation" in Rakhine state against them in 2017.

Talking to DW, several Rohingya refugees in the coastal Bangladeshi town of Cox's Bazar commented on the success of the AA rebels with skepticism. They do not believe that predominantly Buddhist rebel force is willing to do much to improve their fate, even if the rebels manage to oust the junta. "Buddhists have indeed been fighting against the Myanmar government in Rakhine, but we want citizenship upon

return," Rashid, a Rohingya camp leader, told DW.

"We have never heard from [the AA] that they will take us back by providing us citizenship." Should Dhaka reach out to rebels?

However, Bangladeshi security expert M Sakhawat Hossain is more optimistic. The retired general points to pledges made by Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) to ensure safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of Rohingya from Bangladesh.

The NUG is a shadow government comprised out of activists and elected ministers who were ousted by the military coup.

The body enjoys a good deal of international support and has plans of taking power in Naypyidaw after the junta is defeated.

"The United League of Arakan (ULA), the political wing of the Arakan Army, will rule Rakhine state if the junta government loses its battles against the rebels and the NUG takes control of Myanmar. The NUG supports the ULA, which means that the Rohingya community has a better chance to get citizenship under the NUG and ULA," Hossain told DW. He thinks that Bangladesh needs to develop informal communication with key decision-

makers in Rakhine for the future. "I have been saying for years that Bangladesh needs to support the AA for its own interest. This support can be informal, like many other countries do. It's not important for Bangladesh what is happening in the whole of Myanmar, but what is happening in Rakhine and Chin states are very important for us in terms of security and refugee issues," he said.

Sending back Rohingyas could backfire

At the same time, Bangladesh must be cautious in reaching out to rebels in any way, according to Michael Kugelman, South Asia director of the Washington-based Wilson Center think tank.

"[Bangladesh] needs workable relations with the junta for the sake of border security cooperation and negotiations over the Rohingya. If Dhaka opens up channels with the rebels and the junta knows this, that could have deleterious implications for Dhaka's interests," he told DW.

Kugelman acknowledged that the rebels are making rapid gains against the junta. But this could push the junta to resort to even more brutal tactics, and that could in turn intensify the conflict and increase spillover effects in Bangladesh.

Reem Shaikh turns to studies to prep for 'Raisinghani vs Raisinghani' role

Mumbai- Actress Reem Shaikh, who plays the role of a lawyer in legal drama 'Raisinghani vs Raisinghani' revealed how she turned back to studies to dive into the nitty gritty of the profession.

Reem portrays Ankita, a character with unwavering determination and ambition, vying for an internship at Raisinghani Legal and aspiring to become a top-notch lawyer.

Talking about the preparations for the role, the 'Gul Makai' fame diva said: "When this opportunity came my way, I was immediately drawn to the world of law, fascinated by arguments, sessions, justice and more in the courtroom."

"I asked a friend who was studying law to lend me some books. As, I delved into their pages, I was overwhelmed by the amount of learning and research necessary to excel in this field. However, for the show, I'm grateful to the writers for

bringing in great research and insights to build this legal drama," shared Reem.

Delving further into the insights of the character, the actress known for her work in 'Fanaa: Ishq Mein Marjawaan' said: "While I am not physically stepping into a courtroom, the show allowed me to advocate for someone on screen, engaging in a dramatic battle. As an actor, I continuously craft my narrative with each character, infusing life into stories that echo the depths of human experience."

"Though the stage may not resemble a courtroom, every performance serves as a poignant argument for the universal emotions that connect us all," she added. The show weaves the lives of legal professionals, probing the intricacies of moral dilemmas and the challenge of choosing the right path over the easy one. It stars Jennifer Winget, Karan Wahi, and Reem Shaikh in the lead.

The show airs on Sony LIV.

Britney Spears says 'being single is awesome,' amid dating rumours



Los Angeles- Pop icon Britney Spears has insisted she is still single, despite being linked to an ex. The 'Toxic singer' opened up about her love-life as she shared another dancing video on Instagram.

She said, "Being single is awesome," seemingly shutting down rumours she is back with her felon ex Paul Richard Soliz, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'.

"Beautiful Sunday. Hopeless romantic, understanding that being single is awesome," she added. It came as it was reported the star was dating Soliz,

a convicted felon who worked as her housekeeper to 'clean toilets, mop floors and pick up trash'.

Sources told Us Weekly Paul is very much back on the scene. One said: "Britney and Paul are definitely together. He's still in the picture."

A second source confirmed the same, despite Britney declaring to fans she is still a free agent. Just last week Britney boldly declared she "loves" someone new, five months after her sad split from her husband of one year Sam Asghari.



Martin Scorsese to play Dante Alighieri's mentor in Julian Schnabel's film

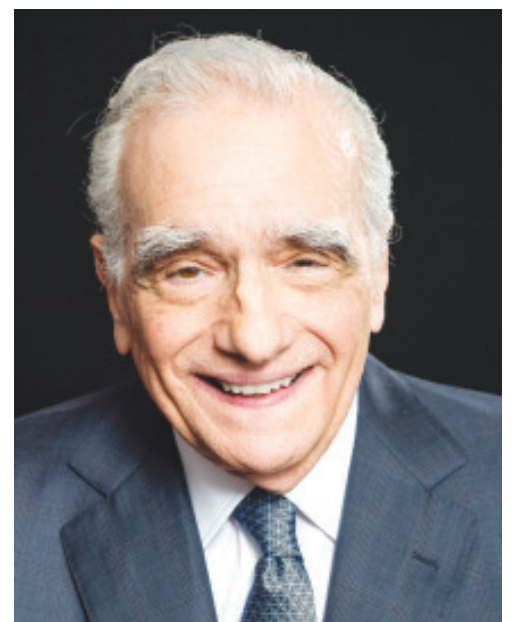
Los Angeles- Acclaimed filmmaker Martin Scorsese will soon be seen playing Italian poet Dante Alighieri's mentor in Julian Schnabel's upcoming film 'In the Hand of Dante'.

Martin has a small but an impactful role. He will be playing an elderly sage who influenced Alighieri while he is writing 'The Divine Comedy' in Julian Schnabel's crime mystery 'In the Hands of Dante', reports variety.com. Martin, who will be honoured with Berlin Film Festival's honorary Golden Bear, has made a special appearance in several films by him and has often performed in movies by other makers.

He essayed Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh in a segment of Akira Kurosawa's 1990 film 'Dreams' and also performed as voice talent as the loan shark pufferfish in 'Shark Tale'. 'In The Hand of Dante' also has British musician and actor Benjamin Clementine, who along with contributing to the film's score will be playing a quintessentially grey character who seesaws between past

and present.

Others in the cast comprise John Malkovich and Louis Cancelmi, who plays



both a present-day hitman named Lefty and nobleman Guido da Polenta, who was Dante's benefactor. The film was shot largely in Italy including breath-taking locations such as Sicily, Venice, Verona, Rome and Viterbo.

Shriya Saran reveals her daughter's hand were burned during the shoot of 'Showtime'

For actress Shriya Saran, the filming of her latest show, 'Showtime' became a bittersweet journey due to her personal challenges. She revealed that during the shoot of the series her daughter Radha's hand got burned.

Talking about the shooting, Shriya, who is known for her work in 'Drishyam' said: "So, also while we were shooting this show, it was a very tough time for me personally because my daughter had burned her hand and I was like a reckless case. But somehow acting and coming back to a set kind of calmed me down because otherwise I was emotionally very, very stressed."

"And the show is also very interesting. It has a lot going on. There's a lot of undercurrents going on. Like every scene has a backstory," she added.

Shriya got married to her Russian boyfriend Andrei Koscheev in March 2018. Their daughter was born in January 2021.

'Showtime' is helmed by Emraan Hashmi, Mahima Makwana, Mouni Roy, Rajeev Khandelwal, Shriya Saran, Vishal Vashishtha, Neeraj Madhav, Vijay Raaz and Naseeruddin Shah in pivotal roles.

Created by Sumit Roy, showrunner and directed by Mihir Desai and directed by Archit Kumar, the show will stream from March 8 on Disney+ Hotstar.

'Jihadi bride' Shamima Begum loses court case for British citizenship



Shamima Begum, then a 15-year-old, left the UK to join the Islamic State terror group in Syria in 2015. Known as the 'jihadi bride', Begum on Friday lost the court case to get back her British citizenship.

Former "Islamic State bride" Shamima Begum, who left the UK to join the IS terrorist group in Syria at the age of 15, has lost her case for the reclamation of her British citizenship.

Shamima Begum, born in the UK to parents with Bangladeshi roots, went to Syria with two school friends in 2015 to join the terrorist group IS. On Friday, Shamima Begum lost her court appeal challenging the UK government's 2019 decision to remove her British citizenship. Three judges of the court of appeals on Friday dismissed her arguments for restoration of citizenship on all grounds. The Court of Appeal judgment said then UK home secretary Sajid Javid was entitled to reach the

decision that she was dangerous. She now lives in the al-Roj detention camp in northeastern Syria.

In 2023, Begum told the BBC from the Syrian camp that being stuck there was "worse than being in a prison", adding, "At least with prison sentences you know that there will be an end, but here you don't know if there's going to be an end."

HOW UK'S SHAMIMA BECAME 'JIHADI BRIDE'

While Shamima Begum's two friends, Kadiza Sultana and Amira Abase, are believed to have been killed, she herself lived under IS rule for more than three years. Shamima Begum became popular as an "ISIS bride" or "jihadi bride" after she married a Dutch IS fighter in Syria. Shamima Begum resurfaced in 2019 at a Syrian refugee camp and requested that she be allowed back into the UK. She was stripped of her UK citizenship on national security grounds in 2019.



Maisie Williams had identity crisis after 'Game Of Thrones'



Actress Maisie Williams, who shot to stardom at 12 with her role as Arya Stark in 'Game Of Thrones', said that being part of such a popular fantasy show gave her an identity crisis as she was growing up in the spotlight. "I was so lost for so long and I knew that I was, and when I couldn't pin down what I felt my identity was within that, it brought me a lot of discomfort. Now I feel a lot more comfortable in my own skin. It's hard to even put myself back there and talk about how tough it was because I think it's done," Maisie told The Sunday Times newspaper. The 26-year-old star shared that she felt very down when she was trying to break away from her 'Game of Thrones' character. Maisie even shared that she was finding it difficult to landing roles, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Bombay HC stays release, directs Netflix to screen Indrani Mukerjea docu-series for CBI



The Bombay High Court has stayed the release of a Netflix docu-series on former media executive Indrani Mukerjea's role in the Sheena Bora case while directing the streaming platform to hold a screening of it for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Netflix told the high court Thursday that it has no objection to holding a screening of the docu-series for officials of the CBI. It also said that it will not release the docu-series until 29 February, when the high court will next hear the CBI's plea against the docu-series. Based on the aftermath of the disappearance of Indrani's daughter Sheena Bora, the docu-series was to be released on 23 February. With the trial in the case still underway, CBI had opposed the release of the docu-series titled 'The Indrani Mukerjea Story: Buried Truth'. The trial in the case, in which Indrani is among the prime accused, is

still underway and nearly 45 witnesses are yet to be examined.

Directed by Shaana Levy and Uraaz Bahl, the docu-series — being promoted on Indrani's Instagram account — promises to reveal "bizarre secrets" of a dysfunctional family. Once released, it will be available in multiple languages: Hindi, English, Tamil and Telugu.

Following her release on bail in May 2022, Indrani had last year released her memoir, which she promoted as her version of what happened to Sheena Bora. Speaking to ThePrint last August, Indrani had said that she was "very close" to Sheena and that her daughter never expressed any grievance about her being a "bad mother". She maintained that she was being unfairly judged for decisions she took when she was young.

What CBI told SC

The CBI had moved the Bombay High Court after a special court Tuesday

dismissed its plea seeking a stay on the release of the docu-series. In its application, CBI sought to "issue directions to [the] accused and other concerned for staying/stopping the featuring of the accused persons and the persons connected with the case in the documentary by Netflix and its broadcasting on any platform".

The agency claimed that the docu-series may pose a direct threat to the safety of witnesses by potentially disclosing their identities, compromising their security, and deterring them from delivering truthful testimony.

It also submitted to the high court that it feared the docu-series could lead to a prejudicial atmosphere and mislead the public on the facts of the case. The counsel for the CBI contended that Indrani's motive to feature in the docu-series and its release was mala fide. A special court which earlier this week

dismissed the CBI's plea seeking a stay had noted that its refusal was based on the grounds that it felt it had "no inherent powers" to prevent the release of the docu-series.

The special court judge held that the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 contain the remedy for the exigency of the situation, for which the CBI had called upon the court to invoke its inherent power, "which I fear is not vested with this court". The judge later asked the CBI to pursue appropriate legal remedy for the same.

Sheena Bora case

Sheena Bora was allegedly strangled to death in a car by Indrani Mukerjea, her former husband Sanjeev Khanna and then driver Shyamvar Rai in April 2012. Bora was Indrani's daughter from her previous marriage.

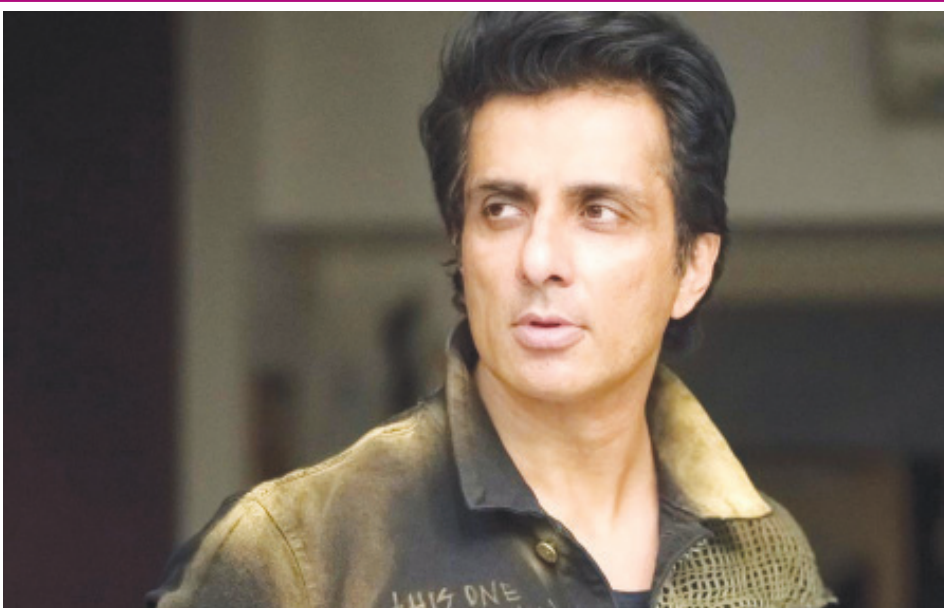
Indrani's alleged role in the case came to light only in August 2015 after driver Shyamvar Rai admitted to his role in Sheena's death following his arrest in another case. An FIR was later registered based on which police arrested Indrani, her then husband Peter Mukerjea and former husband Sanjeev Khanna in connection with Sheena's death.

Indrani was lodged at the Byculla women's prison in Mumbai for more than six years before the Supreme Court granted her bail in May 2022. According to the bail copy, which ThePrint has seen, the CBI alleged that Indrani murdered Sheena because she was annoyed with the latter's relationship with Rahul Mukerjea. Rahul was the son of Indrani's husband at the time, Peter Mukerjea, from his previous marriage.

The apex court felt that since the trial would take more time to complete, Indrani was "entitled to be released on bail".

Sonu Sood impressed with his CCL team pacers performance ahead of tournament

Mumbai- Actor Sonu Sood, who is gearing up for the upcoming edition of the 'Celebrity Cricket League' (CCL), is pretty happy with the way his team Punjab de Sher has performed during the practise sessions. Sonu, who serves as the skipper for Punjab de Sher, is specifically impressed with the performance of his pacers during the practice. The 'Celebrity Cricket League' features notable figures such as Salman Khan, Sohail Khan, Sonu Sood, Riteish Deshmukh, Mohanlal, Bobby Deol and Manoj Tiwari. Talking about what lies ahead in the tournament for his team, the 'Yuva' actor said in a statement: "CCL is an opportunity for us to venture into sports and bring out the best of ourselves



in sports by taking a break from on-screen and getting on-field. This season, the stakes are even higher as our matches will be broadcasting live on JioCinema, reaching a vast audience across the platform." He further mentioned that before the start of the upcoming season their practice games showed their progress. He said: "I'm happy with how our fast bowlers performed during the practice matches, proving we have a strong team and a long run ahead. We will surely give a tough time to the opponents in this season. This season, I surely believe we can win! With our hard work and solid performance, Punjab de Sher is ready to compete and make a statement in the tournament."

Beyonce reminisces about being inspired by her mother's salon

Grammy-winner Beyonce worked in her mother Tina Knowles' hair salon during her younger years, and she shared that it's been a huge inspiration to her throughout her adult life.

Beyonce told Essence magazine: "My mom had a roster of amazing clients at her salon, and while the environment was therapeutic for them, it was also for me."

It was the salon that made Beyonce realise her dream of being a performer. "She found a therapist for me, during a period when I was extremely introverted

and hardly spoke. It was in her salon that I realised my dreams of being a performer — inspired by one of her clients who happened to be an opera singer," said Beyonce, who is married to rapper Jay-Z.

The 'Single Ladies' hitmaker added: "I was captivated by her stories of a recent trip to Germany. In awe, I distinctly remember telling my mom that I wanted to be just like her client."

It was those experiences that helped Beyonce in character building and sense of style, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Sonam Kapoor in elite company on UK's Top 40 Best Dressed List



Actress Sonam Kapoor has made it to the UK's Top 40 Best Dressed people list joining names such as Harry Styles, Kate Middleton, Rosamund Pike and Kate Moss, among many others.

Last night, UK's prestigious media house The Standard, hailed Sonam as one of UK's Top 40 Best Dressed people. Others who are in the list include names such as Sienna Miller, Bianca Jagger, Alexa Chung, Stormzy, Naomi Campbell, Edward Enninfu, Stella McCartney, Phoebe Philo, Akshata Murty (businessperson and wife of

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak). In Sonam's citation The Standard wrote, "The Bollywood sensation is a Notting Hill girl and international fixture of the couture circuit — not to mention one of Dior and Valentino's top clients."

Recently, according to a global fashion report, Sonam was among the list of celebrities like Zendaya, Kylie Jenner, Kendall Jenner, Blackpink, BTS, etc who had the highest impact for luxury fashion brands in 2023.

Talking about her work on the big screen Sonam is gearing up for 'Battle For Bittora'.



Choreographer Bosco Martis: Akshay, Tiger's energy made it feel more like fun than work



Choreographer Bosco Martis has talked about working with Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff in the title track of 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan'. Bosco said that their energy made it feel more like fun than work.

The title track for the upcoming film 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan', featuring the dynamic duo Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff, is choreographed by the renowned Bosco-Caesar.

On working with the action stars Akshay and Tiger, choreographer Bosco said that he is sure the journey was truly eventful for the

entire team. "It's commendable how they managed a massive crew of more than 100 dancers. Shooting in unique locations added to the excitement. Working with Akshay and Tiger was a joy; their energy made it feel more like fun than work," he said.

Bosco revealed that Akshay's humour kept the entire team entertained.

"Kudos to the whole team for pulling off this project seamlessly. I hope audiences enjoy what we've created for them."

Pay close attention to matters of the heart

Technology executives are notorious for believing they have special powers and are indestructible. They become obsessed with making money and achieving success – to the detriment of their health. I know because I am one of them.

Heart disease is the leading killer of adults in the US, and according to The New York Times, Americans of south Asian extraction are four times as likely as members of the general population to develop it, and tend to do so a decade sooner.

The Times article cited a seven-year study by University of California San Francisco and Northwestern University named Mediators of Atherosclerosis in South Asians Living in America, or Masala, which followed more than 900 south Asians in Chicago and the Bay Area. They suffered from high blood pressure, high triglycerides, abnormal cholesterol, and type-2 diabetes at relatively low body weights.

I have a feeling that it isn't just my Indian friends in Silicon Valley who need to worry; heart disease is a common problem in the business world — also in India. Technology executives are

notorious for believing they have special powers and are indestructible. They become obsessed with making money and achieving success — to the detriment of their health.

I know because I am one of them.

I started a company back in 1997, which became one of the hottest startups of its time. All was great until the dot-com bubble burst and 9/11 compounded the economic shock in 2001. After a year of extremely long hours and incredible teamwork, we turned the company around and were on track for 200% annual growth rates and 25% profit margins. I was determined to make it as big a success as my previous startup, which we had taken public, and believed that nothing could stop me.

I was wrong. My body could stop me.



On a flight home from Mexico, where I went to take a short celebratory vacation, I started to feel a shooting pain in my left arm. It was as if electricity were passing through my veins. I ignored it — as I had ignored the back pain that I'd felt on the cruise to Cancún and my extreme nausea after climbing the Chichen Itza pyramid — because I thought I was indestructible.

Fortunately, my wife, Tavinder insisted that I see a doctor as soon as the flight landed. But I had not been sick in a decade and didn't have a personal physician. I didn't know whom to call. So we just went to the

nearest hospital: The University of North Carolina Medical Center. There, the nurse strapped an EKG monitor to my chest, reviewed the results, and started making phone calls. Then she pulled Tavinder aside to talk to her. Before I could understand what was going on, doctors had put me on a stretcher and taken me into an operating room, where I was sedated. I woke up to learn that I had been having a major heart attack and needed placement of two stents in my arteries. The doctor said that if I had checked in two hours later, I would not have checked out: I would have ended up in the

morgue. I share this story because I want others who are as careless about their health as I was to realise that they too are vulnerable. You may not subscribe to anything called a work-life balance, but your body certainly does. You need to monitor and nurture your body. I used to have an obsession with building businesses and forgot about building health. I was focused on the destination rather than on the journey. I caution you to not do the same. Get regular checkups; exercise; meditate; learn to relax. Do the things that are fun and good for the soul.

How exercise can help you fight jet lag symptoms

Exercise has been known to cause changes to our body clock. But can exercise help jet lag?



Finding it hard to cope with jet lag, shift-based work? Doing some exercise can shift the human body clock and help you adjust to the shifted schedules, suggests new research. The study, from the Arizona State University, showed that exercise can shift the human body clock with the direction and amount of this effect depending on the time of day or night in which people exercise. Exercising at 7 a.m. or between 1 and 4 p.m. advanced the body clock to an earlier time, and exercising between 7 and 10 p.m. delayed the body clock to a later time. Exercising between 1 and 4 a.m. and at 10 a.m., however, had little effect on the body clock, and the phase-shifting effects of exercise did not differ based on age or gender, the researchers explained. "Exercise has been known to cause changes to our body clock. We were able to clearly show in this study when exercise delays the body clock and when it advances it," said lead author Shawn Youngstedt, from the varsity, adding, "This is the first study to compare exercise's effects on the body clock, and could open up the possibility of using exercise to help counter the negative effects of jet lag and shift work."

Antarctic fungus can bring cheaper cancer drugs

At present, the anti-cancer drug costs around Rs 2,000 for a vial of 10,000 units, and the monthly cost of treatment ranges between Rs 10,000 and Rs 20,000.

Researchers from Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad, and National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Goa, have isolated a fungus from Antarctic soil and moss that can produce an anti-cancer drug used to treat Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL), which is a common form of childhood cancer.

The drug produced from the Antarctic fungi will be cheaper and lead to fewer side effects than the ones currently available in the market, according to researchers whose findings were published in the journal Scientific Reports this month.

ALL is a type of blood cancer where immature white blood cells are produced in excess. The chemotherapeutic enzyme currently in use to test ALL, L-Asparaginase, is isolated from bacteria such as E.Coli and E. Chrysanthemum grown in a liquid medium.

"The Antarctic fungus, on other hand, can be grown on solid mediums, mostly agricultural waste like rice husk and wheat bran and



does not need specialised medium, which brings down the cost of production," said Dr Devarai Santhosh Kumar, principal investigator and associate professor in the department of chemical engineering at IIT Hyderabad.

"The method can be easily scaled up. We already have the fungus stored in a frozen state so that we would not have to go back to collect samples for expansion of production," he added.

The National Cancer Registry programme puts the incidence of

ALL in various parts of India between 16.9 and 61.3 per million for boys and between 10.3 and 45.8 per million for girls under the age of 15. At present, the drug costs around ₹2,000 for a vial of 10,000 units, and the monthly cost of treatment ranges between ₹10,000 and ₹20,000. "The dosage depends on the height and weight of the patient. ALL patients have to take it from at least six months to several years, depending on when cancer goes into remission. Most people - six or seven of 10 in India - are not able to afford it.

YouTube brings new channel pages for creators on its TV app

Google-owned YouTube has unveiled a new look for creators' channels on its TV app, with the goal of improving the user experience and making content more accessible on the big screen.

New features include a more modern layout, improved action buttons, and the ability to play a mix of video content.

YouTube said in its video announcing changes to creators' pages that the update focuses on offering a more immersive layout and easier access to Subscribe.



The new design comes after the company revealed new data indicating that top creators who

receive the majority of their watch time on TVs had grown more than 400 per cent in the past

three years.

"Viewers want everything in one place, from a live sports game to

the BBC to Khan Academy and NikkieTutorials. And they're watching YouTube the way we

used to sit down together for traditional TV shows — on the biggest screen in the home with friends and family," YouTube CEO, Neal Mohan, said in a blogpost. According to the company, views of YouTube Shorts on connected TVs have increased by over 100 per cent from January to September 2023. The company also noted that viewers globally now watch more than 1 billion hours on average of YouTube content on their TVs every day. Nielsen, the global leader in insights, data and analytics, has crowned YouTube as the number-one streaming platform in the US by watch time for one full year.

Researchers identify 275 mn new genetic variants: Study'



Us dataset has already led researchers to findings that expand what we know about health — many that may not have been possible without our participants' contributions of DNA and other health information. Their participation is setting a course for a future where scientific discovery is more inclusive, with broader benefits for all," Denny added. The mission of the 'All of Us Research Program' is to accelerate health research and medical breakthroughs, enabling individualised prevention, treatment, and care for all, according to NIH.

Researchers have discovered more than 275 million previously unreported genetic variants, the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) said. The new genetic variants were identified from data shared by nearly 250,000 participants of the NIH's 'All of Us Research Program'. Half of the genomic data are from participants of non-European genetic ancestry, news agency reported. The unexplored cache of variants provides researchers new pathways to better understand the genetic

influences on health and disease, especially in communities who have been left out of research in the past, said the NIH on Tuesday. Nearly four million of the newly identified variants are in areas that may be tied to disease risk. "As a physician, I've seen the impact the lack of diversity in genomic research has had in deepening health disparities and limiting care for patients," said Josh Denny, chief executive officer of the 'All of Us Research Program' and an author of the study. "The All of

The programme will partner with one million or more people across the US to build the most diverse biomedical data resource of its kind, to help researchers gain better insights into the biological, environmental and behavioural factors that influence health.

US court awards 20 yrs jail term to 2 guilty in \$3 mn iPhone repair scheme



A U.S. court has found two Chinese nationals guilty of a "sophisticated scheme to defraud Apple out of millions of dollars' worth of iPhones." The scam involved submitting counterfeit iPhones to Apple for repair, which were then replaced with genuine iPhones. Haotian Sun, 33, and Pengfei Xue, 33, were found guilty by a federal jury in the US District Court of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, which carry a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. The judge scheduled sentencing for June 21, 2024. Both Chinese nationals received shipments of counterfeit iPhones from Hong

Kong between May 2017 and September 2019, returning them to Apple retail shops and Apple Authorised Service Providers with falsified serial numbers and/or IMEI numbers. Over the course of two years, more than 5,000 iPhones were submitted to Apple. "Trial evidence showed that conspirators submitted more than 5,000 inauthentic phones to Apple during the conspiracy, intending to cause a loss of more than \$3 million to Apple," the US Attorney's Office noted. Sun and Xue used various aliases during the scheme. They were arrested on December 5, 2019.

Byju's rights issue to raise \$200 mn fully subscribed

Edtech firm Byju's rights issue to raise \$200 million at a 99 per cent valuation cut has been fully subscribed. In a shareholders' letter accessed by VOICE, founder and CEO Byju Raveendran said that this \$200 million raise will give the company "the capital it needs to ensure that we can take care of the current liabilities and also provide sufficient growth capital to get us back to our former glory". The company, valued at \$22 billion in its last financing round in early 2022, announced last month that it would raise approximately \$200 million through a rights issue. The



announcement comes ahead of Byju's extraordinary general meeting on February 23, at which a few of its biggest investors will vote to oust the company's leadership and reconstitute its Board. In the letter, the CEO also committed to restructuring the Board and appointing two non-executive directors to the Board by the mutual consent of the founder and shareholders after the FY23 Audit, which the company expected to close by the end of the quarter. "To ensure transparency with regard to the usage of funds raised through the rights issue, we will appoint a third-party agency to monitor the same.

Jungle Ventures infuses another \$20 mn in Indian ice cream brand Walko Food'



based VC firm Jungle Ventures on Wednesday said it will infuse another \$20 million in India's fastest growing ice cream brand Walko Food. This is Jungle's second investment into Walko Food within less than 12 months.

Since its last funding round with Jungle in May 2023, Walko Food has introduced Yummo, its latest ice cream brand, tapping into a \$3 billion market.

The latest round of capital will further boost Walko's expansion across its product portfolio and

customer reach, and accelerate its penetration into the Indian ice cream market, the company said in a statement.

"This collaboration is a testament to Jungle Ventures' confidence in Walko's management team and its vision to nurture and grow our existing brands, including NIC, Grameen Kulfi, and Cream Pot, across various sales channels," said Sanjiv Shah, Director, Walko Food Company. Earlier, the company appointed celebrity Rashmika Mandanna as its

brand ambassador for its premium ice cream brand NIC.

"Walko is tapping into a multi-billion-dollar opportunity in the Indian ice cream industry. In

recent years, ice cream has captivated Indian consumers, causing a structural shift in dessert consumption patterns from traditional Indian sweets to ice cream," said Arpit Beri, Partner, India Investments at Jungle Ventures. Jungle Ventures is focused on early to growth-stage companies in Southeast Asia and India.

Why Jio Financial shares gained 15% in early trade today



The shares of Jio Financial Services surged over 14 per cent in early trade on Friday to reach a record high, marking the fifth consecutive session of gains for the company.

The stock's value went up by 14.50 per cent, reaching a new high of Rs 347.

Over the past three months, Jio Financial shares have soared by more than 48 per cent, and year-to-date, the increase has surpassed 40 per cent. This surge has propelled the company's market capitalisation beyond Rs 2 lakh crore. Jio Finance shares continued their upward momentum, trading 8.52 per cent higher at Rs 328.65 per

share at 11:20 am on the BSE. The trading volume for Jio Financial Services witnessed a spike, with 98.57 lakh shares changing hands on the BSE.

This surge in volume exceeded the two-week average volume of 25.48 lakh shares. The turnover amounted to Rs 321.74 crore, with a market capitalisation of Rs 2,13,216.22 crore.

Earlier this month, the financial arm of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) dispelled rumours suggesting negotiations for the acquisition of Paytm wallet. In an exchange filing, the company stated that such reports were speculative and clarified that no negotiations were underway.

Haivision to Announce First Quarter Fiscal 2024 Financial Results on March 14, 2024

Haivision Systems Inc. ("Haivision") (TSX: HAI), a leading global provider of mission critical, real-time video networking and visual collaboration solutions, plans to announce financial results for its first quarter ended January 31, 2024 after markets close on Thursday, March 14, 2024. The earnings release will be followed by a conference call to discuss first quarter fiscal 2024 results at 5:15 p.m. ET.

To register for this conference call, please use this link: <https://registrations.events/direct/Q4I980420> After registering, a confirmation will be sent through email, including dial in details and unique conference call codes for entry. Registration is open through the live call, to ensure you are connected for the full call we suggest registering a day in advance or at minimum 10 minutes before the start of the call. Alternatively, you can access the webcast through this link: <https://events.q4inc.com/attendee/467403164>.

A replay of the Conference Call



will be available approximately two hours following the completion of the call by dialing (647) 362-9199 or toll-free at (800) 770-2030 (Conference ID: 33414).

About Haivision

Haivision is a leading global provider of mission-critical, real-time networking and visual collaboration solutions. Our connected cloud and intelligent edge technologies enable organizations to engage

audiences, enhance collaboration, and support decision making. We provide high quality, low latency, secure, and reliable live video at a global scale. Haivision open sourced its award-winning SRT

low latency video streaming protocol and founded the SRT Alliance to support its adoption. Awarded an Emmy® for Technology and Engineering from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Haivision continues to fuel the future of IP video transformation.

Founded in 2004, Haivision is headquartered in Montreal and Chicago with offices, sales, and support located throughout the Americas, Europe, and Asia. To learn more, visit Haivision.com.

Mobileum selected as a Technology Platform for NTT Communications' Global Connected Car Project

Mobileum Inc. ("Mobileum"), a leading global provider of telecom analytics solutions, is pleased to announce that NTT Communications Corporation (NTT Com), an NTT Group subsidiary, selected Mobileum to provide the technology platform to deliver its connected car solutions to a global car OEM business case. Mobileum provides connectivity management, connectivity testing and fraud prevention solutions for the connected car market. The solution provides an integrated approach, for eSIM connectivity management, quality testing and fraud detection and prevention across NTT Com connected cars

portfolio. According to Juniper Research, the number of connected cars is projected to surge by 91%, reaching 367 million by 2027, up from 192 million in 2023. Car manufacturers are increasingly providing connected car infotainment, safety, and utility services to create new digital revenue streams and enhanced customer experiences. To ensure the security and quality of these services, manufacturers require a platform for testing connectivity, expanding digital services, and safeguarding end-customers. NTT Com will rely on Mobileum's integrated solution, combining a Connectivity Management

Platform (CMP) with Service Assurance and Fraud Management solutions to deliver a consistent and high-quality customer journey for car manufacturers. This will allow NTT Com to deploy, test, and secure extensive connected infrastructures, meeting the evolving needs of the automotive industry. With the proliferation of digital services and the expanding connected car fleet, the automotive industry faces heightened concerns regarding continuous connectivity, introducing security and fraud risks that can adversely affect various stakeholders, including car manufacturers, businesses, and consumers.

TRUTH IS UNDER ATTACK.

AS WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange mounts a last-ditch effort against being extradited from the UK to the US, one must remember that the stakes involved transcend his individual fate. His case is a litmus test for free

speech, press freedom and the public's right to know. At the heart of the matter is the fear that Mr Assange's extradition could end whistle-blowing as we know it, transforming the act of exposing wrongdoing into a crime such as

espionage. He stands accused of facilitating the biggest release of classified information in US history, yet it must be recognised that he played the role of a publisher. The material released by WikiLeaks exposed potential war

crimes by the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan. These revelations are undeniably in the public interest and highlight the crucial role of whistle-blowers and investigative journalism in holding the powerful to account. The argument against Mr Assange's extradition is not merely in defence of press freedom; it makes a case to safeguard the means through which society uncovers the truth.

The UK government faces a critical decision. By deciding against Mr Assange's extradition, it would send a powerful message in defence of freedom of expression and the essential role of journalism in democracy. Moreover, technical grounds exist, such as a provision in the US-UK extradition treaty that allows for no extradition in cases of a political nature. There are grave concerns about America's motivations behind its pursuit of Mr Assange. It appears to want to set an example, warning others of the consequences of exposing government secrets. It is imperative for the UK to resist being complicit in this endeavour. Equally important is Mr Assange's health, already compromised by years of confinement. Extradition to face a potentially disproportionate sentence puts his very life in danger. This is a moment for the UK to uphold free speech and defend the right to expose the truth without fear.

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Don't expect Supreme Court to be India's Opposition. Its job isn't that

I assume you have been following the strange saga of the Chandigarh Mayoral Election. The latest instalment is the Supreme Court's intervention, which has resulted in the appointment of the real winner of the election—the man who had been cheated out of victory—as the Mayor. If you care about electoral democracy, as I imagine we all do, then you must be relieved that justice has been done.

I share your relief. But I think two other emotions are also called for: horror and caution. Horror because of the brazenness of what transpired in Chandigarh. I wrote about it a couple of weeks ago. But if you missed that article or if you have spent the last month on Mars or Venus, blissfully unaware of what has been going on here on Earth, let me offer a quick summary.

What transpired

On 30 January, an election to appoint the Mayor of Chandigarh was held. In the House of 35, the Aam Aadmi Party had 13 votes. It tied up with the Congress, which had seven. With 20 out of 35 votes, it should have been a shoo-in for AAP candidate Kuldeep Kumar.

Except that the presiding officer for the election, Bharatiya Janata Party member Anil Masih, waited for all the votes to come in and then sat down and personally defaced eight ballot papers, all of which were votes for Kuldeep Kumar. After invalidating these ballots, he declared the BJP candidate elected.

Reporters covering the counting said on air



that the presiding officer was fiddling with the ballot papers. But Masih went ahead undeterred and declared that the BJP candidate had been elected as Mayor. Rather than accept that there had been a problem with the counting, the BJP — which must have known what was going on — delightedly embraced this illegally procured victory and celebrated the success of its candidate.

It is not much of an excuse, but you could possibly argue that local BJP office-bearers can be petty. You could also argue that a Mayoral election is a big deal for the city's BJP unit, so they accepted the victory no matter how illegitimately it had been secured.

But even so, how can any national political party cheat so blatantly? So shamelessly?

BJP ignored abuse

What's worse is that once the matter went national, nobody from the central BJP leadership—which, presumably, realises that the Mayoral election in Chandigarh is not a huge deal in national terms—bothered to step in. It would have been simple enough to get the bogus winner to resign and call for a fresh election. In any case, the BJP is busy organising defections from AAP in Chandigarh so who knows, by the time a second election came around, it might even have won.

But no. The national leadership looked benignly at this open abuse of the electoral process and its minions in the media declared 'a big defeat for the INDIA alliance.' The matter went to the Supreme Court, which was appalled upon viewing the footage

of the presiding officer defacing the ballots. "It is evident the presiding officer is guilty of serious misdemeanours in doing what he did in his capacity as presiding officer", said the Court. As for the shameless presiding officer himself, the court said "A fit and proper case is made out under section 340 of Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) in respect of the presiding officer."

Three cheers for the Supreme Court and I am glad to see that it pulled no punches. But the bigger question remains: it is now increasingly clear that the BJP will win the next election. It really doesn't need to worry about a small-time Mayoral Election in Chandigarh. So why did it allow its office-bearers to rig this election so brazenly? Why doesn't the senior leadership step in? Why, instead of just admitting that its members behaved disgracefully, does the BJP engage India's top lawyers and try and justify its audacity in the Supreme Court? I can think of no reasonable answer to those questions. Nor have I come across any satisfactory explanations offered by the BJP itself. Why taint a big national victory to come with cheating in a small-time election? Why demonstrate such open contempt for the democratic process? There has been much praise of the Supreme Court over the last week by journalists, commentators and ordinary citizens, not only because of its actions in the Chandigarh case but because of the judgment striking down Electoral Bonds as unconstitutional.

Putin's neo-Gulags are tools of political terror. Navalny death reveals Russia's tyrannical past

By PRAVEEN SWAMI

As journalist George Kennan descended into hell, he noticed the words of Christ hammered above the vermin-infested planks serving as beds: "Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The air, Kennan recorded, was "saturated with the strong, peculiar odour that is characteristic of Siberian prisons". The stench of excrement mingled with that from the rotting wood floorboards, and "pungent, slightly ammoniacal exhalations from long unwashed human bodies."

The promise of the Son of God went unfulfilled, except for those released by disease or despair. Historians Michael Haynes and Romy Hasan estimate that 18 million people passed through the Gulags, with the bodies of some 1.7 million ending up in unmarked pits, claimed by the cold, sodden earth of the Taiga. Last week, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny died in Federal Penitentiary 3, or the 'Polar wolf', located in the town of Kharp within the Arctic Circle. The institution previously housed prisoners of



the 301st Gulag, who were condemned to work on Joseph Stalin's doomed effort to build a railway line through northern Siberia. PoSince 2003, the Gulags have again become the pillars upholding the regime. Tens of thousands of neo-Gulag prisoners feed the frontlines of President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and sustain his military-industrial infrastructure, noted investigative journalists Irina Borogan and Andrei Soldatov. In some cases, pardoned convicts were guilty of such

brutal crimes that their communities refused to allow their burial as war heroes. The Russian prison population, estimated at roughly 420,000 two years ago, has fallen to a historic low of about 266,000—but only because convicts are released to aid the war effort. Even as prison camps empty, the number of political prisoners has reached record levels.

Alexei Navalny's story illustrates that Putin's neo-Gulags are also instruments of political terror—raising the question of

how distant post-Soviet Russia is from its brutal past. The state of Market Stalinism Encircled by three layers of barbed wire fences and punctuated by watchtowers, Federal Penitentiary 6—also known as Perm-36—was the only Gulag to survive the Soviet Union. Located near the city of Perm, the Gulag was painstakingly preserved by a group of historians and political activists, who opened it to the public in 1995 as the Museum of the History of Political Repression. However, the government took over the museum in 2015. Exhibits on the terrors of the Stalin era were taken down and museum guides were instructed to educate visitors on the heroic contributions of camp labour to the Second World War. The blossoming of freedoms after the Soviet Union collapsed has often been seen as holding historical opportunities. However, President Boris Yeltsin's regime concentrated powers in his person, sidelining institutions and Parliament. Laws were flouted, and corrupt oligarchs pillaged the state's resources, even as ordinary people's incomes were savaged.

Sundar Pichai on the big picture in AI | The promise of AI for India and the world

Every technology shift is an opportunity to advance scientific discovery, accelerate human progress and improve lives. AI will do this on an unprecedented scale and India is uniquely positioned to play a leading role

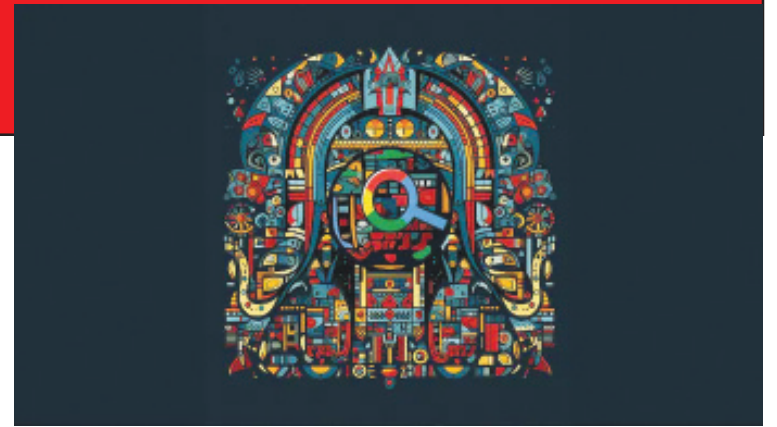
By Sundar Pichai

In 2019, Google introduced a reading tutor app for young students in India, powered by Artificial Intelligence. Seeing a classroom full of children discovering a love for books with the help of AI was a moment I'll never forget. By that time, Google had been investing in the underlying technology and breakthroughs for several years. But being in the classroom that day gave me an even clearer sense of AI's potential to improve lives—and the deep responsibility we have to get it right.

Fast forward to today. Millions of people are using generative AI-powered tools that didn't exist a year ago. Tools like Bard, our conversational AI interface, which people across the country are using in nine different Indian languages, or our generative AI search experience, called SGE, to get answers to complex questions in both English and Hindi. Yet we are still only in the very early stages of a shift that

will drive new waves of innovation, accelerate economic progress and create opportunities for people everywhere. This opportunity ahead is why we have taken a bold and responsible approach to AI. We are being bold in our ambitions to make sure that we are pursuing applications that can be useful and have an impact. And we are doing it responsibly, guided by the AI principles we established in 2018, which are rooted in the belief that AI should be developed to benefit society while avoiding harmful applications. Our ultimate goal is to make AI more helpful for everyone, everywhere in the world. There is no doubt in my mind that AI will be the biggest shift we experience in our lifetimes. In India, we see some important drivers of progress that are unique here: first, the energy and ingenuity of the young population who are shaping how the technology is being used. Second, the opportunity that India has to leapfrog and develop the

next generation of solutions—similar to what the country has done with digital payments. Of course, India is already applying AI to make progress in fundamental areas. One example is using AI to make information more accessible to people in their native languages. Google is working with the Indian government to collate and open-source speech data for almost 800 dialects, while our Google Research team in Bengaluru is building a unified model that can handle over 100 different Indian languages. Other promising opportunities lie in healthcare. Google is partnering with hospitals and nonprofits to apply AI in screening for eye disease, detecting tuberculosis and improving maternal health. In agriculture, which employs hundreds of millions of people in India, AI can help transform access to information. For example, the Telangana state government is using Google models to map field health and



support sustainable farming, and the nonprofit Wadhvani AI is creating an app to provide accurate crop health data to individual farmers.

One of the most critical areas where generative AI can help is by enabling everyone to succeed in the digital economy. This includes bringing citizen services and programmes to more Indians across the country. To do this, Google Cloud is partnering with Axis My India to build an inclusive and multilingual superapp that helps people access government services, regardless of their language or where they live. Meanwhile, a new generation of 'AI-first' Indian developers and startups is emerging to grow the

digital economy. Entrepreneurs in our India startups accelerator programme are using AI to discover antibodies, increase access to education, help small businesses reach their customers, and more. Innovations that start in India are being used worldwide. That early version of our literacy app became Read Along, an online tutor that has helped over 30 million children globally learn to read. Our Flood Hub tool, which uses AI to forecast and help authorities warn at-risk communities, has expanded from India to more than 80 countries and can help predict flooding events a week ahead of time for 460 million people.

George Santos is one of the few Republicans who finally took things too far

By Jill Filipovic

Disgraced former New York congressman George Santos just won't go away.

After being expelled from the House of Representatives last year following a series of ethical violations including a finding that he attempted to "fraudulently exploit" his campaign for monetary gain, Santos has been negotiating with federal prosecutors to avoid going to jail on criminal fraud charges, selling gossip on X (formerly Twitter) and hawking videos on Cameo.

Now, he's suing Jimmy Kimmel, alleging that Kimmel, using a fake name and profile, bought 14 of his Cameo videos and then broadcast some of the content on television for a segment called "Will Santos Say It," in which he highlighted clips of Santos saying ridiculous things. The comedian, the lawsuit claims, was in violation of the copyright and "for the sole purpose of capitalizing on and ridiculing



Plaintiff's gregarious personality." Santos is also suing ABC and Disney, the company and parent company that air "Jimmy Kimmel Live." The suit may have merit, which adds to the irony: Santos, the alleged fraudster, is suing Kimmel for fraud.

Given the accusations that got him booted from the House and made him the subject of far-reaching media inquiries — Santos was accused of using campaign funds for things like cosmetic treatments and purchases at Sephora and Only

Fans, and is a serial fabulist who seems to have lied about everything from his resume to his mother being killed in 9/11 — you would think that Santos would slink away in shame. But that would require him to have shame.

Instead, Santos seems to have learned from the best: former President Donald Trump. Santos is not as rich or charismatic as Trump, but he does seem to be aping some of the former president's strategies. Chief among them: dominate the

attention economy. Many who find Trump abhorrent, myself included, notice that the more we hear from the man, the more we are horrified that anyone would want to hear from him. But this is far from a universal response. For a great many Americans, it seems that Trump's media dominance is a kind of exposure therapy, and when his shocking statements are in the news again and again, they begin to feel less shocking and more normal. And for many of these Americans, Trump made politics fun and entertaining. The Republican Party didn't even publish a new platform for the last presidential election. Fealty to Trump, the entertainer-in-chief, seemed to be the only rule.

Santos is acting in kind. He lacks the kind of virulent base that Trump enjoys, as well as the political success. But perhaps he realizes that being outrageous garners attention and, in today's GOP, attention — even negative

attention — is worth something. Being accused even of serious crimes isn't a deal-breaker for voters or party leaders.

He is far from the only person who seems to understand that shocking, offensive and even allegedly illegal behavior can be a benefit for Republican politicians. There is no shortage of Republican elected officials and prominent commentators who have not only paid no price for outrageous commentary and behavior, but have in fact seen their stars rise. Calling the GOP a "clown show" is now practically a cliché — pause and consider that fact — but it's a fitting term. The party is increasingly made up of profoundly unserious, unqualified, unethical people for whom chaos seems to be the ultimate goal. It's not that American politics were fully buttoned-up until Trump descended a golden escalator and turned the whole system on its head.

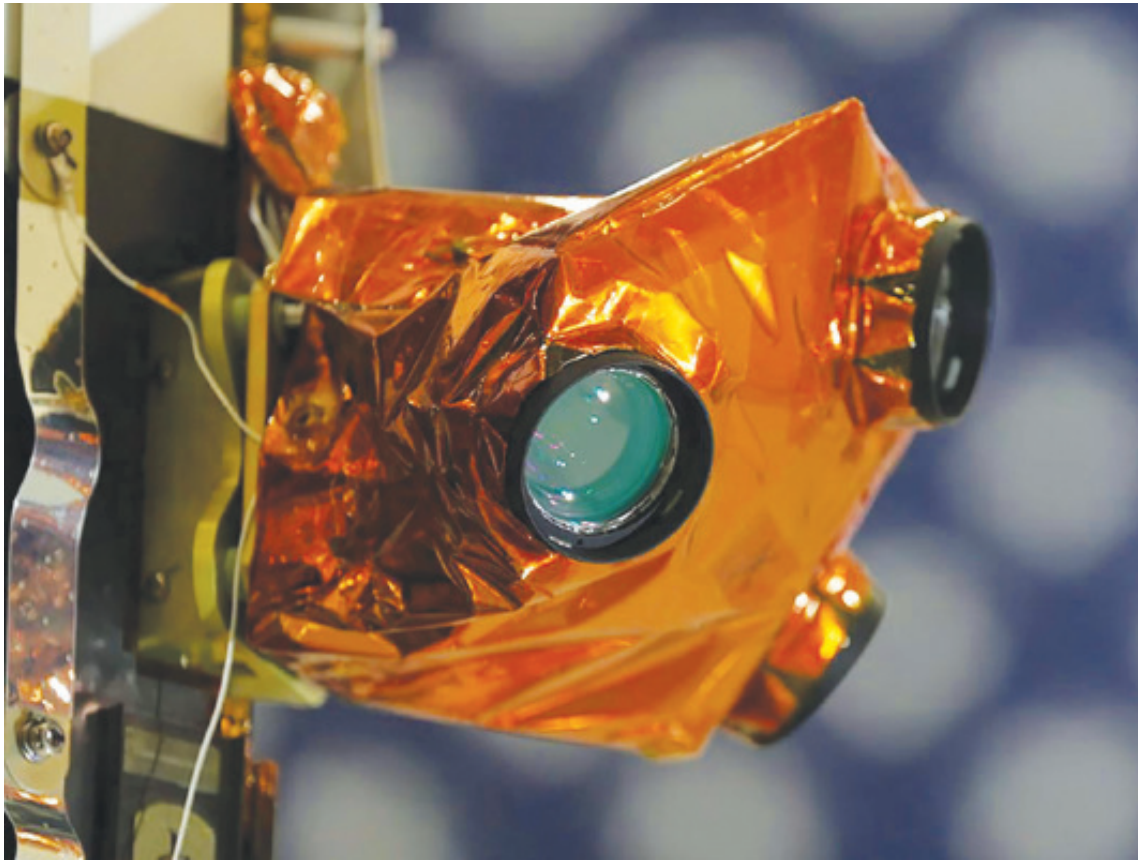
Odysseus becomes first US spacecraft to land on moon in over 50 years

Odysseus has now officially made history with its successful lunar touchdown — and none of it could have happened without some fast work from engineers on the ground and a breath-catching save from a NASA payload.

Before descent, Intuitive Machines, which developed the Odysseus lunar lander, revealed crucial pieces of the vehicle's navigation equipment were not working.

Fortunately, NASA — which considers itself one of many customers on this mission — had an experimental instrument already on board Odysseus that could be swapped in to make up for the malfunctioning equipment.

Engineers were able to bypass Odysseus' broken pieces and land using two lasers that are



part of NASA's Navigation Doppler Lidar, or NDL, payload. Here's how the NDL is described in IM-1's press kit:

The NDL is a LIDAR-based (Light Detection and Ranging) sensor composed of an optical head with three small telescopes and a box with electronics and photonics. NDL uses lasers to provide extremely precise velocity and range (distance to the ground) sensing during the descent and landing of the lander. This instrument operates on the same principles of radar, similar to a police radar detector, but uses pulses of light from a laser instead of radio waves and with very high accuracy. This will enhance the capabilities of space vehicles to execute precision navigation and controlled soft landings.

Art in space: Sculpture hitches a ride to the moon on Odysseus lunar lander

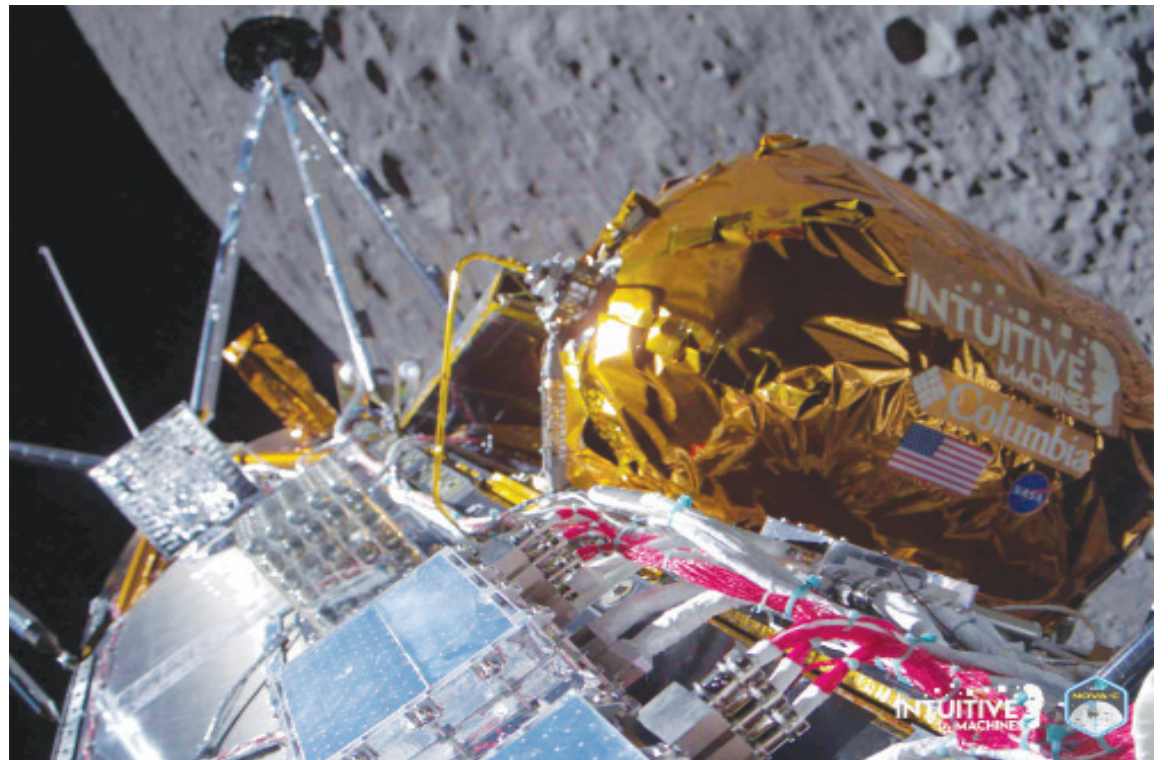


Exchanging the gallery space for a transparent box in space, the American artist Jeff Koons now has one of his works of art on the moon.

On Thursday, a sculpture called "Moon Phases" hitched a ride on the Odysseus lunar lander as it touched down on the moon. It marked the United States' first

landing on the lunar surface in more than 50 years.

The artwork depicts 125 mini-sculptures of the moon contained in a box, measuring about one inch in diameter. "Moon Phases" shows 62 phases of the moon as seen from Earth, 62 phases visible from other viewpoints in space,



and one lunar eclipse. Each sculpture is inscribed with the name of a groundbreaking figure in human history, including Aristotle, David Bowie, Leonardo da Vinci, Gandhi, Billie Holiday, Gabriel García Márquez, Andy Warhol and Virginia Woolf. Koons "has drawn inspiration from the Moon as a symbol of curiosity and determination," according to a statement from his gallery, Pace.

But the art market wouldn't be able to do much with far-flung sculptures "exhibited" in outer space, so there's a commercial

component to Koons' project as well. Pace Verso, the NFT wing of Pace, is also offering NFTs of each sculpture, while Koons has produced larger, coinciding physical sculptures of his "Moon Phases" to remain on Earth.

Odysseus is "upright and starting to send data"

Jackie Wattles

After some intense waiting, Intuitive Machines, the company behind the Odysseus lunar landing mission, has confirmed the spacecraft is "upright and starting to send data."

That's a major milestone.

An upright landing potentially puts Odysseus in a better position than even Japan's SLIM "Moon Sniper" mission. SLIM was deemed a success as it made a soft touchdown, but later was revealed to have landed in a position that left its solar panels pointed in the wrong direction, causing that spacecraft to quickly lose power. "Right now, we are working to downlink the first images from the lunar surface," Intuitive Machines said in a post on social media platform X.