



The South Asian



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Bollywood daddies are suddenly looking hotter



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## Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Could be Fined Heavily, Says Supreme Court



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## Illegal Indians in America-Now rank 3rd after Mexico and El Salvador

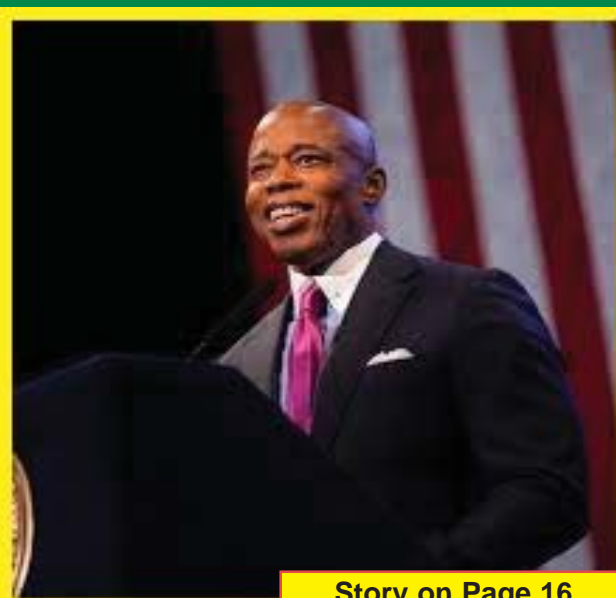
*The United States has around 725,000 illegal immigrants from India, the third-largest population of unauthorised immigrants after Mexico and El Salvador.*



(Sai Bureau)- Indians constitute the third-largest illegal immigrant population in the United States, a recent study by the Pew Research Center has revealed. The study, conducted by the Washington-based think tank, indicates that the country currently has over 725,000 Indians living illegally.

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## Eric Adam, Not in Joe's Good Books Anymore



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## In Italy's biggest mafia trial, 207 accused sentenced to 2,100 years in jail



(Sai Bureau)- The 'ndrangheta, one of the world's most powerful crime syndicates, has bases globally and holds a monopoly on cocaine importation in Europe.

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## Probe Agency Seizes Assets Worth ? 752 Crore Of Company Linked To Gandhis



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# ITServe's Women's Panel Discusses 'Direct Client Engagement in the World of Contingent Workforce'

(By Our Staff Reporter)-A panel of distinguished women leaders from across the United States were part of a high-powered discussion on 'Direct Client Engagement in the World of Contingent Workforce' on the final day of ITServe Alliance's flagship Synergy 2023 Atlantic City in New Jersey.

Keisha Stephens, CCWP, Director of People Operations, Empowering Employees for Success & Driving Operational Excellence, SIA DE&I Influencer and Contingent Workforce Program Game Changer; Pamela Randall, CCWP, a Talent Solution Strategist, Change Agent with Sustainable Results and Making Possible a Better Future; Jamhali Portus, a Global Contingent Workforce Management Professional, who is passionate about creating the best-in-class contingent workforce management program with a focus on Quality, Efficiency, Cost and Risk; and, Semonie Kong, a CWP Program Manager, Atlassian, were the panelists at the lively and enlightening discussion that focussed on empowering women. Moderated by Shabana Siraj and Lavanya Poosarla, the distinguished speakers on the panel shared with the audience a wealth of



knowledge about this crucial topic, and it was heartening to see a packed audience who found it to be one of the standout sessions.

"Personally, one of the event's highlights for me was moderating the panel discussion titled 'Direct Client Engagement in the World of Contingent Workforce,'" said Siraj. "What made this event more special was that it was an all women's panel, highlighting the diverse perspectives and talents that are driving innovation in our industry."

ITServe Alliance Synergy 2023 has marked a significant milestone in its 13-year

history, and one couldn't be more thrilled with the outcome. This event brought together an impressive lineup of keynote speakers who covered a diverse array of topics, ranging from leadership and technology to startups, immigration, PAC, M&A, and the CIO & CTO Forum.

ITServe had esteemed speakers such as @Steve Forbes from Forbes, @Jack Kass from OpenAI, Kevin O'Leary from Shark Tank, @Sheila Blair from FDIC, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and @Praneesh Murthy, former CEO of IGATE, sharing their valuable insights and expertise. "Thank you to everyone who

made ITServe Alliance Synergy 2023 a resounding success. Looking forward to continued collaboration and growth in the years to come, particularly for all the efforts by Vinay Mahajan, President of ITServe; Venu Sangani, Synergy Director; Jagadeesh Mosali, President-Elect ITServe; and Vinay Parachuri," said Poosarla. Key ITServe members who were instrumental in organizing the discussions included; Hima Kolanagireddy, Deepali Sontakke, Jyoti Vazirani, Pushyami Duvvuri, Divya Bala, Ruchi (Joshi) Anand, Anna Kolluri, Ranjani Mohana, Nazeera Dawood, and Sangita Datta.



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# Ayurveda Day Event Hosted by Indian Consulate in New York



(Sai Bureau)-The Consulate General of India in New York, in partnership with Elements hosted an event to mark Ayurveda Day on November 18, 2023 at the Consulate. The theme for this year is "Ayurveda for One Health" with the tagline "Ayurveda for everyone on every day" focusing on interface among human, animals, plant and environment. The emphasis of the day was on ways to incorporate everyday natural ingredients/ items for betterment of wellness and health and also also highlight Ayurveda's adaptability to contemporary lifestyle. Prominent members of the Ayurveda and yoga fraternity, and members of the community & media, besides people from diverse backgrounds, attended the event. In his welcome remarks, Consul General



Mr. Randhir Jaiswal spoke on how Ayurvedic principles and their applications in modern life can be of immense benefit. Insightful remarks from keynote speaker Dr. Bal Ram Singh, Professor at Institute of Advanced Sciences, highlighted the profound significance and proven benefits of Ayurveda. Ayurveda experts from various fields held interactive DIY sessions on herbal remedies, and mindful living. Ms. Shadoh Punnappuzha, founder of Taila Skincare, demonstrated how Ayurvedic ingredients in skin oil can promote better skincare and blood circulation. This was followed by a session on how the right colors can boost mental health,

productivity and aid with sleep and stress. Ms. Alak Vasa and Mr. Kushal Choksi of Elements, spoke on mindful




eating and its health benefits. Mr. Aniket Gune and Ms. Ruchika Lal of Art of Living Foundation, led a short meditation session to focus on mental & spiritual approach of Ayurveda to health. The event was well attended and was also showcased live on social media.

## FOOD DRIVE PROJECT ORGANIZED BY THE INDO AMERICAN LIONS CLUB



(Sai Bureau)-The Indo American Lions Club recently organized a few FOOD DRIVE PROJECTS. The First Food distribution was done at the Food Distribution Center on Nassau Road in Roosevelt. This included Non Perishable boxed and canned Food for underprivileged. The second as well as the third distribution was done at The Bethany House in Baldwin which supports women and children and The Glory House Recovery Center in Hempstead which helps and supports women who are struggling to recover from addiction and domestic abuse. (Seen in Pictures) Club President- Shyam Gajwani, Founder President- Indu Gajwani, Vice President- Anju Sharma, Secretary- Sanju Sharma, BOD-Nimesh Shah, Food Drive Project Chair Poojaa Makhijani along with committee members Shyam Agarwal, Madhu Agarwal, Sandeep Khatri, Lata Khatri were also present. Club Service Chair-Pradeep Gosalia, Volunteer Chairs Hargovind Gupta and Yogini Oza joined to help in food distribution.

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## Arrested Haryana school principal 'sexually harassed' 142 girl students, probe on

## 4 dead, 5 injured as speeding car crashes into tree in UP's Kanpur

**At least 142 girl students have levelled sexual harassment allegations against the principal of a government school in Haryana's Jind district who was arrested earlier this month.**



them to his office and "indulge in obscene acts", State Commission for Women's chairperson Renu Bhatia said. The Jind District Collector has confirmed the case. The matter is being investigated by various departments.

An initial complaint from a few female students of the school was forwarded by the Haryana State Commission for Women to the police on September 14 but action was taken only on October 30. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) was then formed to investigate the matter. The Education Department suspended the accused on October 27

(News Agency)-As many as 142 girl students have levelled sexual harassment allegations against the principal of a government school in Haryana's Jind district. Initially, 60 girl students accused him of

sexual harassment, but now the number has risen to 142.

The disclosure came during the investigation by the Sexual Harassment Committee.

The victims alleged that the 55-year-old accused used to call



(News Agency)--Four people died after a speeding car lost control and crashed into a tree in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur Dehat, the police said on Thursday. The driver and four children were severely injured in the accident, the police added. The police reached the spot and admitted the victims to a nearby hospital for treatment. However, upon reaching the hospital, four people, including a child, succumbed to their injuries. Another child, who is in

critical condition, has been referred to Kanpur's Hallet Hospital for advanced treatment. Kanpur Dehat Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) BBGTS Murty confirmed the incident and said, "Four people are now in a better condition and adequate care and aid have been provided to the injured patients." "Everyone is on the spot and that there are no issues of law and order in the case," the ACP added.

## 'Give death penalty if we...': Yoga guru Ramdev on Supreme Court warning Patanjali

## Atiq Ahmed's close aide arrested after encounter in UP's Prayagraj: Police



(News Agency)-A day after the Supreme Court cautioned Patanjali Ayurveda against airing 'false' and 'misleading' advertisements, Baba Ramdev alleged a "gang of doctors" in modern medicine of running propaganda against the company. Addressing the media on Wednesday, Ramdev, the co-founder of Patanjali Ayurveda, said, "A group of doctors is propagating against yoga, Ayurveda, naturopathy, and our Sanatana values. The false propaganda claims that there is no solution in the synthetic world for diseases like blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, arthritis, liver disease, kidney failure, etc." Baba Ramdev said his company has substantial real-world and scientific evidence of curing people through Patanjali's medicines.

"In yoga, Ayurveda, and

naturopathy, with integrated and evidence-based treatment systems, we cure diseases like type 1 diabetes, thyroid issues, high blood pressure, normalising sugar levels, obesity, and others. This is not false; this is true," Ramdev claimed.

(News Agency)-According to the police, Mohammed Nafees alias Nafees Biryani was a key accused in the Umesh Pal murder and a reward of Rs 50,000 was also announced for any leads to him. Slain gangster Atiq Ahmed's close aide was arrested by the police in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj district after an encounter on Wednesday night. According to the police, Mohammed Nafees alias Nafees Biryani was a key accused in the Umesh Pal murder and a reward of Rs 50,000 was also announced for any leads to him.

Notably, Umesh Pal, the main witness in the BSP MLA Raju Pal murder case, was shot dead in broad daylight outside his home in Prayagraj's Dhoomanganj area on February 24, 2023. As



per the police, the Hyundai Creta car used in the murder belonged to Mohammad Nafees, who had been absconding since the killing. Nafees was also a key financier of the slain gangster Atiq Ahmed. In the retaliatory fire, one of them was shot in the leg and arrested, while the other managed to escape. The wounded man was admitted to a hospital for treatment. During interrogation, the injured man revealed his name to be Mohammad Nafees alias Nafees Biryani, a key accused in the Umesh Pal murder case. In April this year, Ahmed and his brother Ashraf were shot dead by two men posing as media persons when the two jailed criminals were being taken to a hospital in Prayagraj in police custody.

## After UP, Karnataka BJP leaders urge for nationwide ban on Halal certification

(News Agency)-The development comes days after the Uttar Pradesh government implemented a similar ban. The Halal certification ensures that the products and services comply with Islamic law. In a letter to Union Minister Piyush Goyal, BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yathnal urged for the prohibition of halal certification agencies in India. It has come to my attention that several Islamic organisations, under the guise of religious entities, are actively promoting 'Hala'

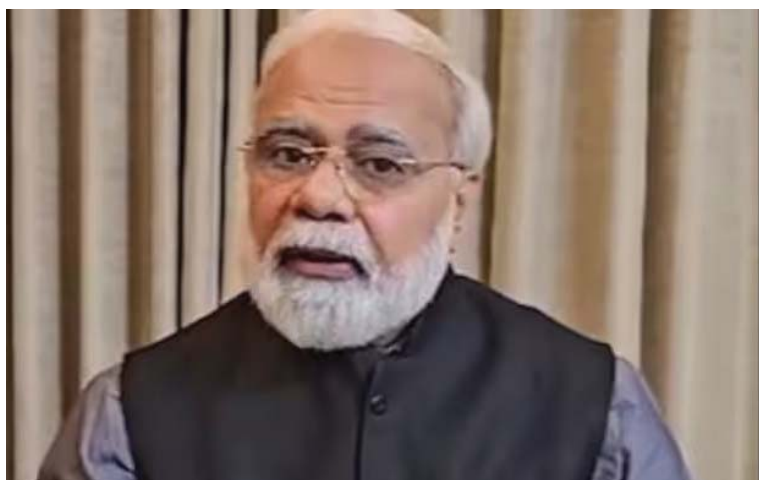
certifications across various sectors, including meat production, food products, cosmetics, and other consumer goods," he stated in the letter. "The issuance of Halal certifications to restaurants, hotels, slaughterhouses, and cosmetic products, is a cause for concern," he added. On Saturday, the Uttar Pradesh government imposed the ban in the interest of public health and to prevent confusion. The order from the Uttar Pradesh Food Commissioner said, "In the interest of public health, production,

storing, distribution and sale of halal-certified edible items are banned in Uttar Pradesh with immediate effect." Before the ban, the state police, on November 17, registered a case in Lucknow against entities such as Halal India Private Limited Chennai, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind Halal Trust Delhi, Halal Council of India Mumbai, Jamiat Ulama Maharashtra and others for allegedly exploiting religious sentiments to boost sales by providing halal certificates to customers of a specific religion.



# It was me': PM's doppelganger clarifies viral garba video was not 'deepfake'

Referring to the viral garba video featuring him, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that he has not played it since he was young. He also cautioned against the dangers posed by deepfakes, while urging citizens and media of India to be vigilant.



a clarification, saying that it was not deepfake but a case of him.

Taking to Instagram, businessman Vikas Mahante, who is PM Modi's doppelgänger, clarified that it was not deepfake. "Shedding the light on the recent issue of deepfake raised by our Honourable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi ji, I would like to address you all that the person in the viral video is me, Mr Vikas Mahante," he said on the social networking site.

Mahante further said that in "no way" can he "claim to be or impersonate" the Prime

Minister. "As an artist and an actor, I am invited to many such events for being a prominent lookalike of our PM. I would like to clarify that in no way, I claim to be or impersonate Modi ji and do no such thing that would tarnish his image as the Prime Minister of India. It is my honour to share his ideologies amongst people who love and respect him and I hope to continue to do that in the future as well. I hope to continue to do that in the future as well," the businessman wrote on Instagram. Addressing journalists at BJP's Diwali Milan programme at the party's

headquarters in Delhi on Friday (November 17), PM Modi said that deepfakes are one of the biggest threats that the Indian system is facing currently, adding that these can cause chaos in society. The Prime Minister also urged the media to educate people about the increasing problem. He also said that both media and citizens must be vigilant when it comes to the misuse of artificial intelligence for deepfakes. Referring to the viral video of him, PM Modi called it "very real" and added that he has not played garba since he was young.

(News Agency)-Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently spoke about the dangers posed by deepfakes, and referred to a widely shared video of him playing garba with a group of women. Now, the man who actually featured in the video has issued

## Israel-Hamas war should not 'spillover' to region: PM Modi at G20 virtual summit

**PM Modi's comments on the Israel-Hamas war came as the two sides agreed a ceasefire in Gaza for at least four days, to let in aid and release at least 50 hostages captured by militants in exchange for at least 150 Palestinians jailed in Israel.**

(News Agency)-India on Wednesday held its last G20 Leaders' Summit in a virtual format where most leaders spoke about the current Israel-Hamas war.

While they condemned the October 7 attack by Hamas, the emphasis was put on the release of hostages, a humanitarian pause to the violence that has claimed scores of civilian lives in the Gaza Strip and the need for "immediate", "effective" humanitarian assistance to the war-torn Palestinian enclave. In his opening remarks at the Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "The insecurity and instability in the West Asia region, concerns us all. Our coming together today is a sign that we are sensitive to all these issues and stand together to resolve them."

"We believe that terrorism is unacceptable to all of us. The death of civilians, wherever they may be, is condemnable. We welcome the news of the release of hostages today, and hope for the swift release of all hostages," he added. PM Modi's comments on the Israel-Hamas war came as the two sides agreed a ceasefire in Gaza for at least four days, to let in aid



and release at least 50 hostages captured by militants in exchange for at least 150 Palestinians jailed in Israel. He also called upon world leaders to ensure that the Israel-Hamas war does not turn into a regional conflict.

"Ensuring the timely and continuous delivery of humanitarian aid is imperative. It is also crucial to ensure that the conflict between Israel and Hamas does not take on any kind of regional form," he said.

Egypt, an important neighbouring nation to the Gaza Strip (Palestine), made a strong pitch for the protection of

civilians.

Speaking at the virtual summit, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said that despite the rising international warnings, the war continues unabated. He spoke about the need for civilians to be protected.

He said that international laws needed to be respected and a political solution was the need of the hour.

Russia, which recently hosted an Arab-Muslim delegation of foreign ministers to discuss the situation in Palestine, focused on the need for collective, consensus

decisions.

Comparing the international community's reaction to the Russia-Ukraine war as opposed to the Israel-Hamas war and referring to the conflict in Ukraine as provoked by the West, Russian President Vladimir Putin asked, "I understand that this war and the loss of life cannot but shock. Isn't the bloody coup in Ukraine in 2014, followed by the war of the Kyiv regime against its people in Donbass, shocking? Isn't the extermination of the civilian population in Palestine, in

the Gaza Strip, shocking today? Isn't it shocking that doctors have to perform operations on children, abdominal surgeries, and use a scalpel on a child's body without anaesthesia? Isn't it shocking that the Secretary-General of the United Nations said that Gaza has turned into a huge children's cemetery?" India, however, focused on the fact that the war should not "spillover" to the region.

Responding to a question during a briefing after the summit, External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar said, "The Prime Minister's (Narendra Modi) position is known. You heard it. Most leaders discussed the crisis... there was a broad overlap of views. While there was no specific proposal made by India, we welcomed the understanding reached after meditation by Qatar, Egypt and the US... The focus is to ensure it does not spillover."

Notably, the Wednesday's summit was attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Japan's Fumio Kishida, Turkey's Tayyip Erdogan, Canada's Justin Trudeau, Australia's Anthony Albanese and Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, among others.



# Punjab cop killed in firing as 2 Nihang Sikh groups clash over gurdwara



(News Agency)-One police personnel was killed, while three others were injured following a clash between Nihang Sikhs and cops in Punjab's Kapurthala. According to the details, the incident happened after nearly three dozen Nihangs stepped inside the Gurdwara Akalpur Bunga and attempted to seize the premises. Two rival Nihang groups have staked claims over the gurdwara's ownership, thus

leading to tension in the area. Nihang is an order of Sikh warriors that traces its origin to the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. They are distinguished by their blue robes and decorated turbans, and are often seen carrying weapons like swords and spears. In 2020, Nihang protesters chopped off the hand of a police officer in Patiala when he was trying to impose a Covid lockdown.

## Delhi murder: Teen stabbed multiple times, 16-year-old dances at



(News Agency)- On Tuesday night in northeast Delhi's Welcome area, a horrifying incident unfolded as an 18-year-old was stabbed multiple times by a younger boy, captured in deeply disturbing security footage showing the assailant dancing beside the lifeless body.

Allegedly triggered by a dispute over Rs 350, the brutal murder shocked the neighborhood. CCTV footage revealed the assailant repeatedly stabbing the victim in a frenzied attack, reportedly more than 60 times, following a robbery attempt. The motive behind this horrendous act was

believed to be theft.

The distressing video displayed the accused, a 16-year-old, dragging the victim's body into a narrow alleyway and mercilessly attacking him to ensure his demise. Subsequently, he resorted to an appalling act, kicking the victim's head before performing a macabre dance beside the corpse.

Police officials stated that the victim, aged around 18, was initially strangled, rendering him unconscious, before being fatally stabbed. The perpetrator, whose identity remains undisclosed, was swiftly apprehended after the incident.

## 'Like we're knocking on front door': Uttarkashi op to save 41 men in final stage



(News Agency)The rescue operation at the Uttarkashi tunnel has reached its final stage, with efforts underway to reach the 41 trapped workers shortly. Ambulances are currently waiting outside the tunnel and a team of seven experts from Delhi has reached the site to help speed up the operation.

The first 6-metre pipe has already been injected, while welding work is underway for the drilling of the next pipe of the same length, NDRF DG, Atul Karwal said. He further said that the American-auger drilling machine, which was set aside to be allowed to cool down, has

begun working again.

Earlier in the day, Bhaskar Khulbe, former Advisor to the Prime Minister's Office told India Today the steel structures that posed a hurdle in the rescue work on Wednesday night have now been cleared. "Experts from Roorkee have been called to monitor the vibrations in the (augur) machine," he told India Today.

The obstacle was discovered on Wednesday after 6 pm when an escape pipe of up to 44 metres was inserted into the debris via horizontal drilling. Rescue officer Harpal Singh told news agency ANI that the drilling machine failed

to cut the structures, adding that NDRF personnel will cut those, after which the machine will be used again. International tunnelling expert Arnold Dix, who reached the tunnel site this morning, said that the final stage is like being at the "front door and ... knocking on it". "We know that the guys are there on the other side. I am going to have a look and see what is happening...", he told ANI.

An attempt to cut the iron structures with gas cutters was made on Wednesday night as the drilling machine was given time to cool down.

Earlier, officials said the American-made auger machine had to drill through a 57-metre stretch of debris to reach the 41 trapped workers, who have been stuck inside the tunnel since November 12. The rescue team could now reach the trapped workers and get them out shortly.

Here are the key developments in the final stage of the Uttarkashi tunnel rescue

A hospital of 41 beds has been set up at the Community Health

Centre in Chinyalisaur, Uttarakhand, for the medical examination and treatment of the trapped workers after they are rescued from the Uttarkashi tunnel. The workers have been stuck inside the tunnel for more than 200 hours. Two more pipes of six metres each are to be laid through the rubble to complete the escape passage, project head of Jozila Tunnel, who is lending a helping hand in the rescue operations in Silkyara, told PTI on Wednesday.

A machine was brought to the rescue operation site outside the Uttarkashi tunnel by helicopter to fix the auger drilling machine. The NDRF personnel are now installing bearings and wheels on stretchers so that the trapped workers can be pulled out on those, and not crawl out through the long pipes.

On Wednesday, NDRF personnel entered the tunnel, a statement by the Uttarakhand Chief Minister's Office said. Besides ambulances, a team of doctors has been put on stand-by for health check-ups of the

trapped workers. The NDRF personnel carried oxygen cylinders with them at the Uttarkashi tunnel site to assist in the ongoing rescue operation. Uttarkashi District Magistrate Abhishek Ruhela arrived at the site this morning as the final stage of the mission continues. On Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami to take stock of the ongoing rescue work. The Prime Minister enquired about essential items, including food and medicines provided to the trapped workers via a new and wider piper laid for the purpose. This pipeline was used on Tuesday (November 21) to send an endoscopic flexi camera beyond the debris, which gave the first visuals of the 41 trapped workers. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and Union Minister General VK Singh (Retd) have reached the tunnel site. Dhami said that he spoke with PM Modi this morning, who sought an update on the rescue operation.



# 'Countries to decide...': S Jaishankar on Xi Jinping's absence at G20 Summit

Speaking over Chinese President Xi Jinping's absence from the virtual G20 Summit, EAM S Jaishankar has said it is up to each country to decide its representative.



(News Agency)- Chinese President Xi Jinping's country to decide who represents it. "It's for a country to decide who represents them, Minister said, during the G20 closing presser on Wednesday. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, speaking about Summit, has said it is for the to decide who represents them, G20 members on the whole

and Prime Minister Li Qiang had represented them at the G20 New Delhi Summit as well, so they chose to continue with that," the External Affairs Minister said, during the G20 closing presser on Wednesday. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, speaking about Chinese President Xi Jinping's absence from the virtual G20 Summit, has said it is for the country to decide who represents it. "It's for a country to decide who represents them, and Prime Minister Li Qiang had represented them at the G20 New Delhi Summit as well, so they chose to continue with that," the External Affairs Minister said, during the G20 closing presser on Wednesday. G20 members on the whole welcome the understanding that has been reached on the release of hostages, the flow of relief material to Gaza and some pause in the fighting." "So overall, there was a strong sentiment expressed by the leaders to ensure implementation of the commitments that were agreed to," the External Affairs Minister added. The virtual G20 Summit was held in New Delhi on September 9 and 10, under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It saw the unanimous adoption of the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, which demonstrated the commitment of the G20 leaders to address global challenges in an inclusive, decisive and action-oriented manner.

# 'India surprised, concerned when...': US on 'foiled plot' to kill Khalistani terrorist

India expressed "surprise and concern" after learning about its alleged involvement in a plot to kill Khalistani terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, White House spokesperson Adrienne Watson said. India stated that activity of "this nature was not their policy", Reuters reported, quoting Watson.

"We understand the Indian government is further investigating this issue and will have more to say about it in the coming days. We have conveyed our expectation that anyone deemed responsible should be held accountable," Watson said. The US government has raised the matter with the Indian government at the senior-most level, and it is being treated with "utmost seriousness", the White House spokesperson further said.

This development came after the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday said that it had received "some inputs" from the US during a recent discussion on security matters about a



"nexus" between among organised criminals, terrorists and others. The statement by MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi, however, did not mention where the nexus operated. India's statement was in response to UK-based newspaper the Financial Times's report that claimed the US "thwarted a conspiracy to assassinate" Khalistani separatist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun on American soil.

A leader of the US-based Sikhs for Justice, Pannun holds dual US-Canadian citizenship. India has designated Sikhs for Justice as a terrorist outfit.

In its statement, MEA said, "During the course of recent discussions on India-US security cooperation, the US side shared some inputs pertaining to nexus between organised criminals, gun runners, terrorists and others.

The inputs are a cause of concern for both countries, and they decided to take the necessary follow-up action."

He added that India takes such inputs seriously since it impinges on the country's national security interests too. "Issues in the context of US inputs are already being examined by relevant departments," Bagchi added.

The Financial Times report also claimed that US federal

prosecutors had filed a sealed indictment (formal accusation in court, contents not made public) against at least one suspect in the alleged assassination attempt against Pannun in a New York district court. The report comes after Pannun recently asked Sikhs not to fly on Air India planes on and after November 19, claiming there was a threat to their lives. He also threatened that Air India would not be allowed to run globally. He, however, told Reuters on Tuesday (November 21) that his message was to "boycott Air India not bomb". He added that he would allow the US government to respond to threats "to my life on the American soil from Indian operatives". Pannun's message comes against the historical backdrop of the 1985 bombing of an India-bound Air India flight that was flying from Canada. As many as 329 people on board the aircraft were killed, and Sikh militants were blamed for the attack.

## aught between Israel-Hamas Conflict: How Cognitively Resilient is India?

As the tensions in the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict continue, India has formed a crucial part of the discourse. How has India responded? Who does India support? What has India got to gain from its stance? Are the government and people of India on the same page? Has Indian foreign policy experienced a shift? A number of questions have been addressed and the discourse has been unending, and apparently agenda-driven.

Two events in the past week and their coverage in the international media need to be examined in this context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the terror attacks by Hamas and the deaths of civilians in Gaza as part of his inaugural speech at the Voice of Global South Summit on November 18. The following day, on November 19, another batch of Indian aid to Gaza was dispatched. This was the second batch of humanitarian aid dispatched from India since the conflict began after the October 7 attacks by Hamas.

It is interesting to note that media coverage that has elaborately touched every aspect of the Indian response, these two recent, defining events, caught little discussion outside of national media. This is both surprising and not surprising, depending on how we choose to interpret the same. This heightened activity in the cognitive domain has a deep connection with the country's cognitive resilience.

International media discourses regarding the conflict have consistently covered India, ranging from its unequivocal support to Israel against terrorism, India's abstention to vote on the recent UN Resolution, mass protest rallies (both pro-Palestine and pro-Israel) inside the country, to even Kolkata's synagogues being protected by local Muslim caretakers as a generational legacy. This seems fairly contrary to the amount of coverage received by the two recent events, just as important and vocal representations of India's current foreign policy that has been a focus point in most discussions surrounding the conflict.

While this reflects the influence India holds in the regional dynamics of West Asia, the nature of reportage has been rather interesting. A repetitive rhetoric has been connecting the current government's "Hindu nationalism" with its support to Israel. This is often backed by the increased India-Israel relationship in terms of economics and defence, as well as the historic 2017 visit of Prime Minister Modi to Tel Aviv that made him the first Indian prime minister to visit Israel. While relations have warmed up since 2014, a number of simultaneous facts have been comfortably overlooked.

The India-Israel relationship has been on the rise since formal diplomatic relations were established in 1992. Moreover, Israel was one of the very few countries that supported India against Pakistan in the wars of 1971 and 1999, events that found India almost isolated even within the Non-Aligned Movement that India proudly led. Having said that,

apart from being the first Prime Minister to visit Tel Aviv, Modi also became the first to visit Ramallah the following year. While the foundational foreign policy principles have continued to remain the same, what indeed changed under the ruling government was a conscious de-hyphenation of India's relationship with actors in the region. This included warmer ties with each of the three power centres in the region — Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel — hence, also consequently, with Israel and Palestine. However, this is just one part of the ongoing rhetoric.

The next most discussed aspect is India's abstention to vote on the UN Resolution on Gaza. Mass protests, both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine have been covered against the background of India "supporting Israel and abstaining from a ceasefire in Gaza". Clarifications on the same have been officially given but with limited coverage. While India favoured an "immediate, durable, sustainable humanitarian truce", supporting an amendment authored by Canada, India called for a simultaneous explicit condemnation of terrorist attacks on October 7. Abstention came about as a protest to the exclusion of the proposed amendment, where India did not vote "for" the exclusion of an explicit condemnation of terrorism and did not vote "against" a much-needed halt to the ongoing humanitarian crisis, where India itself has sent over two batches of aid and relief material.

Having noted that, this becomes important to discuss because narrative-laden information floating amidst the conflict not only attempts to impact India's international image, but also seems to challenge the cognitive resilience within the country. Against this background, it is interesting how the current narratives cater to different sections of popular sentiments within the country, touching on themes across the spectrum: deprivation; communalism; identity crisis; and liberal values. It carefully exploits each of the pre-existing faultlines, thereby creating a wedge between various segments of the masses, eventually attempting to delegitimise the government's credibility to represent the "people of India".

This reminds us of Kautilya's depiction of four kinds of "seducible parties" while referring to vulnerable sections of the population: roughly translating as the enraged, the deprived, the frightened, and the proud. If the state is unable to identify and tend to them, they being targeted and turned against the stability of the state is a critical threat.

A mass rally virtually hosting a former Hamas member in Kerala last month, or disinformation drives running wild on social media are only tips of the iceberg that awaits us.

Given that India is a vibrant democracy that is home to a diverse demography, we must acknowledge that these 2 billion people are our biggest strength as well as our critical vulnerability.

## Assembly Elections In Five States Can Be Seen As Straw Vote For 2024 Lok Sabha Polls

What do the ongoing assembly elections in five states offer to the Indian electorate? We may like or dislike politics, but we always await the outcome of elections for many reasons. These elections can be seen as a straw poll for the mighty Lok Sabha elections in 2024. These elections can defy or give credence to the anti-incumbency argument. These elections will show whether leaders' popularity takes precedence over issues that concern the people.

Our reporters travelled to the five states to gauge the mood of the people. In Madhya Pradesh, it could be a neck-to-neck fight between the BJP—Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is the longest-serving CM of the state—and the Congress. Here, even a one per cent swing in the vote share can decide the winner and the loser. That's why Congress' Kamal Nath's much-touted popularity will be tested. In Naxal-infested Bastar, tribals who adopted Christianity face the threat of violence, and there is a concerted effort by right-wing-led organisations to bring tribals into the 'Hindu fold'.

In Rajasthan, political parties are trying to garner the support of the crucial Adivasi vote bank—experts believe that there have been consistent efforts to divide the community on religious lines. There has been a gradual rise of identity politics and there is also a

demand for a tribal state, 'Bhil Pradesh' by tribal leaders. But tribal people are more concerned whether their basic needs, such as water and land rights, will be addressed.

In Chhattisgarh, it is going to be a dead heat race between the ruling Congress and the BJP. In this state, too, political parties are trying to win the support of the Adivasis. New outfits campaigning for tribal interests have emerged. But here too the Adivasis have realised that the fight is between roti kapda makan and jal jangal jameen. Caste politics is playing a major role in Telangana, where Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has introduced a slew of a number of welfare schemes for marginalised communities. But there communities have not been able to tap into the benefits of these welfare measures. We will only know who has the electorate's pulse on December 3, the counting day. Our other focus on this issue is the unending war in Gaza, where Israel has killed more than 11,078 Palestinians, many of them children, women and the elderly. Despite losing their families, friends and homes, Palestinians have not lost hope. They say they will fight for their dignity and freedom till the end. But the Israeli military is hell-bent on exterminating Hamas and all the innocent civilians who come in their way. When will there be a ceasefire?



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# India-Pakistan can become Israel-Hamas. Lesson is not to fight terrorism by force alone

***The ball is now in the court of the US and the Arab States. Their combined effort can stop Israel's rampage in Gaza.***

By **LT GENERAL PRAKASH MENON**

The Hamas-Israel war has entered its fifth week and deaths of innocent civilians remain the hub of its politico-strategic landscape. The cycle of violence initiated by Hamas on 7 October resulted in nearly 1,200 deaths and the kidnapping of over 200 hostages including children. This invited the Israeli invasion of northern Gaza, which continues to progressively enlarge the boundaries of humanitarian tragedy in Palestine. This article aims to explore the action-reaction cycle in the framework of 'just war' tradition, which categorises the moral criteria guiding two types of judgements under the captions of *jus ad bellum* (right to war) and *jus in bello* (right in war). It also touches upon the relevance of the issue in the context of India's approach to Pakistan's use of terrorism as a foreign policy tool. For *jus ad bellum*, the most widely accepted normative criteria in academia for adopting a warpath are: just cause, legitimate authority, proportionality and last resort. *Jus in bello* relates to whether the means used to apply violence are



justified; it is the proportionality of means and discrimination.

Just war

The impact of judgements, even of the International Court of Justice regarding violations of the just war tradition, could be expected to ensnare only the losers and the weak.

Thucydides' description of the anarchic inter-state system in the 3rd century BC still holds—"Right as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."

What is perhaps changing somewhat is that conflicting parties now have to perform simultaneously at many amphitheatres hosted on several media platforms. The

means employed are being projected mostly in real-time, creating a parallel narrative battle aiming to influence the belief systems of the audience through an appeal to ethical considerations.

State and non-state actors are not moral persons. Ultimately, the practice of statecraft and strategy is not an exercise in applied morality. Of course, leaders acting on behalf of their polities project themselves as legitimate and just for domestic and foreign audiences. But the facade is often far too easily discernible and twisting the truth is par for the course.

*Jus ad bellum*

In terms of the 'just cause' criterion, perhaps both Hamas and the Israeli

government have a strong case. For Hamas, which sees itself as leading a resistance movement, the withering of the Arab support and the movement toward an Arab-Israel rapprochement were viewed as perpetual condemnation, imprisoning them in Gaza that has fitted the description of being an open-air prison for nearly two decades. For Israel, the 7 October Hamas assault on innocent civilians and kidnapping of hostages was intolerable. It has unleashed demons of hate and revenge that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his supporters argue can only be assuaged by exterminating Hamas as an organisation.

In terms of legitimate authority, Hamas has ruled Gaza since 2007 as a de facto autocratic and one-party quasi-state. The internationally recognised Palestinian authority is the government located in the West Bank and headed by Mahmoud Abbas. Most Western blocs and its supporting states like the United States of America, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Israel, Japan, and Australia have designated Hamas

as a terrorist entity. Hamas draws its main support from Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon while Qatar provides financial support and also acts as a conduit for international assistance by the agencies of the United Nations. Israel, on the other hand, enjoys legitimate recognition in the international system. The proportionality criterion declares that although a state may be endowed with a just cause, the war will not be just unless it is proportional to the wrong it seeks to remedy. Hamas, which has been subjected to Israel's occupation without any relief in sight, has a strong case on this score, but so does Israel after Hamas' 7 October attack. Similarly, the 'last resort' criterion also makes a strong case for both sides. Hamas has been abandoned by the international community and thus it has no other option against Israeli occupation. Israel perceives that unless Hamas as an organisation is physically exterminated, the security of its people cannot be ensured. The ongoing invasion of Gaza is, therefore, its last option.

## The Supreme Court Never Fails to Disappoint

In comments of some cases, the top court has appeared to favour the petitioners' cause. But it does not go against the government in its orders.

By **Avay Shukla**

If you've been a keen observer of the public discourse in India, you are probably immune to the bizarre and outlandish statements made by the worthies holding public office. Like the Scowling Sherpa's revelation that "there is too much democracy" in India, or a minister in Davos claiming that high unemployment indicates self-employment, or the Supreme Leader's assertion that not an inch of Indian land has been occupied by the Chinese, or a Minister for Human Resources in NDA I debunking Darwin's theory by maintaining that none of his ancestors ever saw an ape turning

into Homo sapiens. We are, of course, the swine who should be grateful for such pearls of wisdom, but two recent pearls, cultured in our very own fascist laboratory, have taken even my post-Diwali asthmatic breath away.

Arguing for the government in the Supreme Court, the Attorney General made two astounding averments: one, that the voter does not have any right to know how his vote has been recorded or counted, and two, that the public does not have the right to know who has contributed how much to which political party.

The first statement was intended to counter the very legitimate

demand for a more extensive VVPAT verification of the votes cast in the EVMs, the second was in response to the challenge to the electoral bonds, which have effectively become the BJP's private ATM.

We have never been in doubt that these statements are a faithful expression of the BJP's private views, but the sheer brazenness of declaring it openly? and in court! is mind-blowing. It is beyond arrogance and hubris, it shows utter contempt for the public, the constitution and (dare I say it?) even for the highest court. Translated into language which we porkers can understand, the government is actually saying:



we will have our way, we don't give a tinker's cuss for what the citizenry thinks or what the court decides; we have the majority in Parliament (even if Mahua Moitra and her Louis Vuitton bags are not expelled) and can pass any ordinance or Bill we are inclined to. Misplaced confidence and hubris, did you say? You would be wrong, dear reader, because

past events have proved that they are right. The judiciary has never been an obstacle to the ruling party's rampaging depredation of our social, constitutional, legal and institutional landscape. One cannot help feeling that the government's impudence is due in no small measure to the court's accommodating and obliging behaviour.



# No one needed another Napoleon movie, but this one has something unexpected to say

By Noah Berlatsky

This is not the best historical moment for a hagiography of an overweening authoritarian populist. To his credit, director Ridley Scott appears to recognize the dangers. His new 158-minute epic "Napoleon" is about how the French leader's vast and relentless ambition poisons his life, his country and ultimately all of Europe. And yet, even as Scott deplores Napoleon's grotesque hubris, he's also clearly fascinated by it, and enjoys the opportunity it gives him for sweeping spectacle and Hollywood mythmaking. The movie is both a warning about our own populist gasbags and an object lesson in our media culture's feckless enthusiasm for "big characters."

Scott begins his story with the French Revolution in the late 18th century and the terror. Napoleon, played by Academy Award-winning actor Joaquin Phoenix, is a talented young officer whose military victories quickly vault him into influence and power. Early in the film, his stoic mien, boundless self-confidence and sweeping success, not to mention his personal bravery in battle, give him the glamour of a standard Hollywood action hero. You could be watching "Top Gun" or "Die Hard" with their dashing, mavericky, righteous protagonists fighting onward toward the inevitable raffish grin of victory.

Those early scenes glamorize Napoleon and are meant to show you the populist appeal that vaulted him to the leadership of the French. But Scott slowly reveals another, less attractive Napoleon, as Phoenix's flinty features start to shift and pull and reveal themselves as the mask of a stuck-up man who likes to think of himself as having flinty features.

Napoleon sententiously insists he's above "petty insecurities," but his actions belie him. His relationship with his first wife Josephine, played by Vanessa Kirby, is shot through with jealousy and farce. He's too self-absorbed to be a sensitive lover; their bedroom scenes, with him grunting away while she looks indulgent but bored, are some of the movie's funniest and most uncomfortable. Eventually, Napoleon casts his



beloved Josephine aside because she can't get pregnant. As self-crowned emperor, his vaunting sense of his own destiny demands an heir, even if that decision makes both him and Josephine miserable, without, ultimately, ensuring his dynasty.

The private Napoleon is ridiculous; the public one, it's eventually clear, is a monster. His genius as a general is real - or at least it is until he starts

That's a lot of death and misery to satisfy the ego of one silly man. Again, Scott knows as much, which is why he provides the audience with the death toll. But, at the same time, the movie wouldn't exist if Scott weren't fascinated with the silly man, and not least with the ego and the death.

Scott's a filmmaker who loves dramatic visuals, and the scenes of battle are lush, gothic set pieces. The images of the 1805



to believe in it a little too fervently. In the latter half of his career, he consistently underestimates his opponents and leads his men to disaster because he won't acknowledge setbacks or call for strategic retreats. Hundreds of thousands of his soldiers froze to death in the terrible Russian winter campaign of 1812. Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba, and made one more grasp at power before being defeated once and for all by the British at the Battle of Waterloo. The film concludes with a final text screen that says that 3 million people died in Napoleon's wars.

Battle of Austerlitz are particularly vivid; Napoleon lures the rival armies onto a frozen lake, which he then bombards, allowing Scott to show men and horses and blood sinking in slow motion beneath the frigid waters. Other sequences in the film show Napoleon simply nodding his head slightly to unleash a cavalry charge or a volley of cannon shot; the movie invites you to contemplate his power not as a cautionary tale, but as a nifty movie spectacle.

Even when Scott presents Napoleon as a dope, he's a film-worthy dope. The coup against the Second Directory in 1799, which ended the last remnant of

the Republic and elevated Napoleon to control of France, is portrayed as a barely competent exercise in slapstick. Napoleon ends up rolling around on the floor as he is attacked by middle-aged politicians, all the while bellowing with boisterous cowardice that they are trying to kill him. It's not a portrait of a great leader. But it is entertaining and even charming.

A great man isn't less great if he has feet of clay; the laughable moments and the failures are in many ways what make Napoleon in the film likable and watchable. A stoic, perfect Napoleon would be hard to take for two-and-a-half hours. Bumbling Napoleon who is bad at sex is a lot more fun. The fact that Napoleon can't live up to his own larger-than-life image is part of what makes Napoleon larger than life. That's a dynamic that also benefits former President Donald Trump, our own would-be Napoleon.

There are obvious differences between Trump and Napoleon - Trump avoided the draft and was not a successful general; Napoleon was never elected and conquered large parts of Europe; Trump's coup attempt was unsuccessful. Still, there are some recognizable similarities in populist leaders across the ages. Like Scott's Napoleon, Trump's endless self-puffery and self-regard make him a caricature of himself. But that doesn't undercut his appeal. It magnifies it. Trump has a weirdly orange complexion, writes social media posts in all

caps and says ludicrous, outrageous things all the time in a way that's so hyperbolic the media wants to turn it into a joke or a bit. On Veteran's Day, for example, Trump echoed Nazi rhetoric in a ranting speech where he called his enemies "vermin." The New York Times headline portrayed the incident as if it were a cute, funny blooper: "Trump Takes Veterans Day Speech in a Very Different Direction." (The headline was quietly changed after criticism.)

Trump has benefited throughout his political career from the media's fascination. In 2016, in his first campaign for president, according to data collected by mediaQuant, he received some \$5.6 billion in earned media, as news channels covered his every speech and inane utterance, giving him a huge advantage in the Republican primary. Earlier this year, CNN hosted a town hall with the former president in which he lied constantly and slandered a woman that a jury found in a civil verdict that he had sexually abused (which Trump denies). The debacle drew the network's largest primetime audience in almost a year.

Trump is currently the leading Republican presidential contender, so he's of course going to be in the news. The voyeuristic, edge-of-the-seat, horserace tenor of much of the coverage, though, is a choice. "Napoleon" suggests that our fascination with grotesque populist windbags is itself a source of their power. We love stories of flawed giants whose fascinating flaw is that they think they're bigger than they are. If you wanted to really show Napoleon's evil, you'd need to tell the story from the perspective of one of those poor soldiers he dragged across Europe to a shallow grave. If you wanted to show Napoleon's emptiness and selfishness, you'd have to make a film called "Josephine." But as long as you're looking at the emperor - even if you're ambivalently mocking the emperor - you're honoring the emperor. Napoleon might not love this movie, but he'd surely enjoy seeing his face blown up there on the big screen.





By Pankaj Mishra

Amid the whirlwind of ambition, controversy, and human drama,

OpenAI's story underscores that the path to artificial intelligence's (AI) future is not just written in code but also in the very human narratives of those who wield it.

The Silicon Valley Thriller Unfolds In a twist befitting a Silicon Valley thriller, the boardroom of OpenAI became the stage for a dramatic coup. The board's decision to oust Sam Altman was not just sudden but shrouded in secrecy and intrigue.

The details are striking: Altman received a text from Ilya Sutskever, OpenAI's chief scientist, for a meeting that would abruptly end his tenure. Greg Brockman, co-founder and board chairman, learned of his removal from the board in a similarly abrupt manner.

The details of Altman's departure read like a plot twist in a high-stakes drama.

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A video call on Google Meet - the irony of using a competitor's platform not lost on the tech community - served as the stage for this unexpected turn. In her tweets, Kara Swisher captured the shock and confusion rippled through the industry: "The board members who voted against Altman felt he was manipulative and headstrong... This might not be a typical SV (Silicon Valley) company."

The man who had become the face of AI's most audacious dreams was unceremoniously fired, setting off a chain reaction that would shake the very foundations of OpenAI. This company promised to democratise AI and harness its potential for the greater good. Yet, here we were, witnessing a boardroom coup that felt more like a scene from a high-stakes thriller than the day-to-day operations of a tech firm.

What happens when the guardians of the future become entangled in their own human dramas? The story of OpenAI is not just about technology; it's about the people behind it, their dreams, their conflicts, and the consequences of their actions in a world increasingly shaped by the AI they create.

A Narrative Not Penned By AI

At a time when AI scripts narratives, churns out prose, and even crafts poetry, the story at OpenAI reminds us of human nature's complexity and unpredictability.

The irony is palpable. OpenAI, a company at the forefront of developing AI that can mimic human creativity, is embroiled in a saga that no machine could have concocted (or perhaps they will, in a not-so-near-future). It's all about ambition, betrayal, and controversy - quintessentially human elements. The Shift From Idealism To Realism OpenAI's journey from a non-profit organisation to a for-profit entity reflects a significant shift in the AI landscape. The company was at the centre of a corporate AI land grab following Microsoft's multi-billion-dollar investment.

This shift raises critical questions about the balance between innovation and AI ethics, profit and purpose, mirroring the broader tech industry's struggle to reconcile its ideals with market realities.

The transformation was gradual but significant. The partnership with

Microsoft provided financial backing and access to critical resources and infrastructure, further entrenching OpenAI in the corporate sphere.

As OpenAI navigated this new terrain, its original ethos of openness and transparency began to wane. The company, which once championed sharing its research and developments, started adopting a more guarded approach.

This change was evident in its handling of the GPT-2 language model. Initially hesitant to release the model due to concerns over its potential misuse, OpenAI eventually made it available on GitHub, albeit with reservations.

As Vice wrote in February earlier this year, Open AI's transition marked a retreat from the open-source ideals, raising critical questions about the future trajectory of AI development and the ethical considerations that come with it.

Unearthing The Past

Meanwhile, past incidents and allegations resurfaced, casting a shadow over the company's dramatic narrative. These revelations, emerging from various sources, added layers of complexity and intrigue to the unfolding story.

One of the most striking elements was the resurfacing of tweets from Annie Altman,

dated November 14, 2021.

In her messages on X, formerly known as Twitter, she accused her biological siblings, primarily Sam Altman and, to some extent, Jack Altman, of various forms of abuse. Her call for legal justice and group healing, as she sought others who might have suffered similarly, painted a starkly different picture of the Altman family, contrasting sharply with their public personas.

Mystery Deepens

TechCrunch's latest article, "WTF is going on at OpenAI?" by Devin Coldewey, dives into the perplexing circumstances of Sam Altman's abrupt departure from his CEO role.

The board's cryptic statement about Altman's "departure following a deliberative review process" only fuels the fire of speculation.

Was Altman maneuvering behind the scenes in a major deal, possibly entangled with Microsoft's interests? Or did a clash over the company's long-term strategy and financial sustainability lead to this dramatic climax? The plot thickens with suggestions of a grave security breach or a rift in AI ethics and philosophy. Intellectual property and legal liabilities also loom as potential culprits in this unfolding drama. Amidst this maelstrom, Coldewey doesn't shy away from the more personal angles - could unprofessional conduct or private matters have played a part?

The truth remains elusive, at least for now.

In the latest twist at the OpenAI, investors are rallying to reinstate Sam Altman as CEO, as The Wall Street Journal reported.

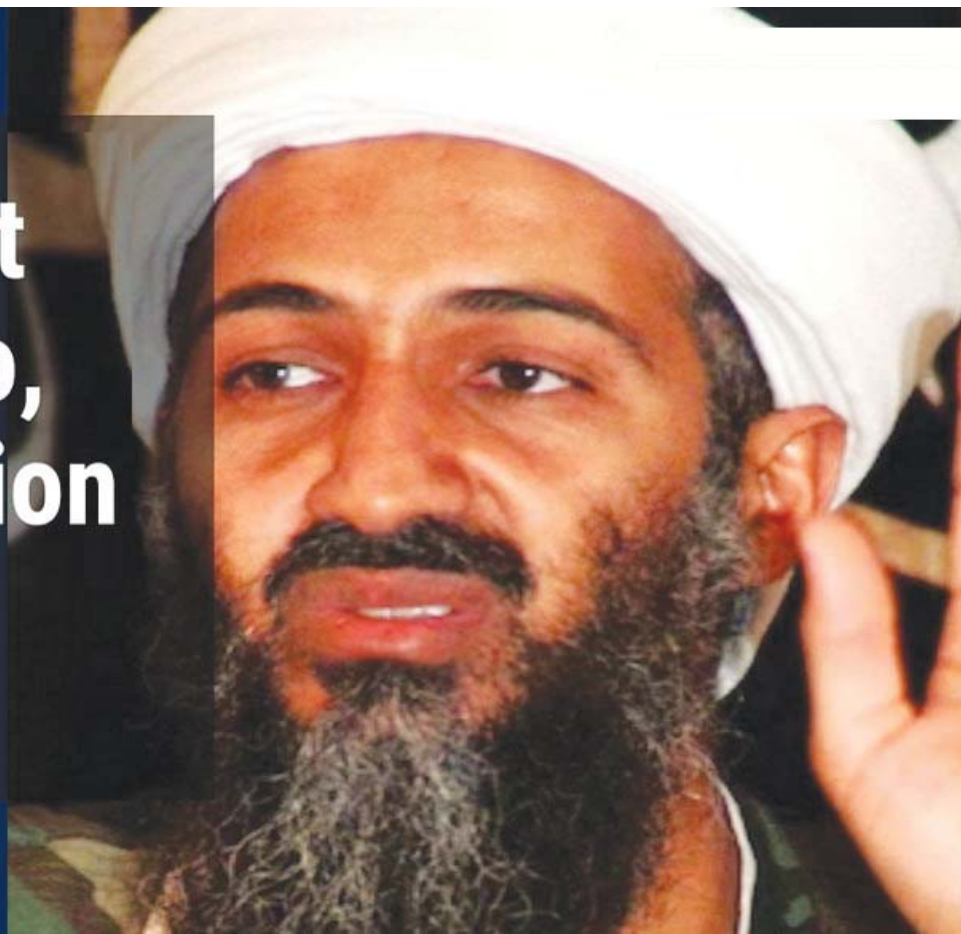
Following his abrupt dismissal, Altman is weighing the option of returning under the condition of forming a new board. Alternatively, he contemplates starting a new venture, potentially attracting former OpenAI employees.

This development comes amidst a backdrop of internal turmoil, with the board's decision to part ways with Altman over alleged communication issues and concerns about the company's rapid commercial expansion straying from its original safe AI development mission.

Key stakeholders, including Microsoft and Thrive Capital, are actively involved in the discussions, reflecting the high stakes and complex dynamics in this unfolding drama at one of the AI industry's most prominent companies.



# Osama, the Latest Left-‘Liberal’ Hero, and the Flawed Notion of Islamic Land



**By: Utpal Kumar**

Amid the raging war in Gaza, Osama bin Laden has suddenly become a hero of the pro-Palestine lobby in the US, with several young Americans posting videos sympathising with the orchestrator of 9/11. A letter that the Al Qaeda leader had written to the "American people" went viral on TikTok wherein he had criticised the US' support to Israel and threatened that the "United States shall pay for its arrogance with the blood of Christians and their funds".

The 2002 letter read thus, "Palestine has been under occupation for decades, and none of your presidents talked about it until after September 11 when Bush realised that your oppression and the tyranny against us were part of the reason for the attack. You have to implement a roadmap that returns the Palestine land [sic] to us, all of it, from the sea to the river; it is an Islamic land not subject to being traded or granted to any party."

Two disquieting thoughts emerge from Osama's letter: One, the war in the Middle East will end only when Israel ceases to exist, as the Jewish nation purportedly exists on the "Islamic land". Two, the Al Qaeda terrorist has, in two decades since unleashing terror through the skies in New York, has become a hero for a section of people living in peace and material comforts of the West.

The concept of the "Islamic land" is quite a fascinating phenomenon. The closest one gets to it in India is the Waqf land. As per a report, 77 per cent of Delhi is on Waqf land. This includes the Delhi High Court, Central Vista, and Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, among others. Waqf's claim on a land or a property is for all time to come. And its claims can travel across time too: The Manendiyavalli Chandrashekhara Swami temple in Tamil Nadu, for instance, may be 1,500 years old but it is today claimed to be a Waqf property, even when

Islam per se came into existence 1,300 years ago!

Just like Waqf, the nature of an "Islamic land" remains unalterable for perpetuity. This is the case even when the said land is currently occupied/controlled by the followers of other religions. The Islamic claim to a land is irrevocable, though the same courtesy is not given to other faiths. For instance, the Muslim world is almost unanimous in saying that Israel has been created on Palestinian territory. But the same logic works for Jews too, who were the original inhabitants of the region. Their claim to Palestine predates the birth of Islam. Similarly, in India, the Hindu claim to Kashmir is much stronger than that of the Islamic, given the fact that it was the seat of Shaiva-Shakti and Buddhist traditions in ancient times. This also is the case with thousands of temples destroyed by Muslim rulers: While these destroyed temples cannot return to their old pristine form, the Islamic claim to mosques remains incessant and operative. Once an Islamic land, always an Islamic land, after all! Just like "Islamic land", one hears the term "Muslim area" in India, especially at a time when a Hindu religious procession takes place. One, in fact, regularly witnesses communal violence post such a procession, forcing the bleeding-heart 'liberals' to come out in the open with their prescriptions to safeguard India's 'secular' fabric. As an antidote to growing polarisation in the country, they suggest the "law-abiding citizens of India" (meaning Hindus) should avoid going to "Muslim areas" to celebrate their festivals. In other words, these saner minds want Hindus to celebrate their festivals in "Hindu areas"! Nothing can be more sinister than this 'liberal' advice. For, it not only legitimises the ghettoisation of certain areas, but also gives them a bad name for all times to come. However, the moment a Hindu turns back and asks if this means the entry of

Muslims in "Hindu areas", during "Hindu festivals", would also be restricted, the cat is out of the 'liberal' bag. The sane 'liberal' voice suddenly becomes shriller, coarser. India's democracy and secularism become imperilled. The very people who call for a barrier on the entry of Hindus in "Muslim areas" hail the presence of Muslim food vendors in Durga Puja and Navaratri pandals as a symbol of India's syncretic culture!

Coming back to the idea of "Islamic land", it has an uncanny similarity with Communist China's hegemonistic streak. Eminent historian RC Majumdar wrote in an article in 1965: "It is characteristic of China that if a region once acknowledged her nominal suzerainty even for a short period, she would regard it as a part of her empire forever and would automatically revive her claim over it even after a thousand years whenever there was a chance of enforcing it."

Though Majumdar believed this to be a unique Chinese character, going across centuries, this phenomenon was most pervasively and mischievously used during the communist rule in China. What also brings the Godless communist and God-fearing Islamists together is what Erich Fromm calls "authoritarian ethics". In *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*, Fromm writes, "In authoritarian ethics, an authority states what is good for man and lays down laws and norms of conduct."

Both Islamists and communists, in their own distinct ways, do the same. And this explains why they invariably find themselves, often in unison, against the "humanistic ethics" of the democratic West and civilisational India. In humanistic ethics, as per Fromm, "man himself is both the norm giver and the subject of the norms, their formal source or regulative agency and their subject matter". So, unlike authoritarian ethics, this one

doesn't deny "man's capacity to know what is good or bad". He is not in "awe of the authority".

Maybe it is this imperialist, authoritarian commonality between Islamist and communist worldviews that explains why they invariably partner with each other against common enemies, but when any of the two come to power, the first thing they do is to put the other to the sword. Remember Iran post-Islamic Revolution in 1979!

This Leftist-Islamist camaraderie is currently being witnessed in the West amid the Gaza warfare. The cases of anti-Semitism are fast rising, and Jewish students are being harassed on American campuses. Ironically, even the terms that were used by terrorists have liberal takers. For instance, in the recent rallies in the West, from Beirut and Tunis to London and Rome, the calls for a ceasefire interspersed with the slogan: "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." Now this is the slogan Osama used in his 2002 letter. It seems Osama has found a new voice-and respectability-in the liberal West.

It is these Leftist-Islamist Trojan Horses in the West that make the war against terrorism a never-ending battle with a clear and categorical edge for the jihadi elements. As Umberto Eco writes in *Turning Back the Clock: Hot Wars and Media Populism*, in this era, the "enemy not only lives in your own country but also has the right to national health insurance". This makes the case for a war "based so much on the principles of maximum happiness and minimum sacrifice"; Eco calls it "neo-war" as he elaborates how during World War II, "even the highly liberal Americans, albeit most humanely, put all their Italian and Japanese residents into concentration camps, even those born in the United States".



# The BJP may decide who wins Telangana - BRS or Congress

**The BJP is also holding the balance of power this time because the Muslim vote outside Hyderabad is seen to be shifting from the BRS to the Congress this time, unlike in 2018 when the minorities largely voted for the BRS (then TRS).**

By TS Sudhir

Less than ten days to go for the assembly elections in Telangana, and all eyes are now on the BJP. The party polled 6.98 per cent of the vote in the 2018 assembly polls but jumped to 19.65 per cent four months later in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Its seat tally too shot up - from a single seat in the Telangana assembly to four Lok Sabha seats. It is certain that if the BJP gets into double digits this time, it could upset many calculations and pretty much decide who wins the contest. Political parties estimate that the BJP is in the contest seriously in about 30 seats out of 119 assembly seats. The BJP considers half of these constituencies as Category A seats where either the BRS or the Congress is not in the fight and the BJP has emerged as the principal adversary. These include seats like Mudhole, Nirmal, Koratla, Nizamabad Urban, Huzurabad, Goshamahall, Karimnagar. Most of these seats are in north Telangana districts and the BJP believes it stands a good chance of winning these seats. If nothing else, it will put



up a very stiff fight.

There are another 15 in Category B which are triangular fights where the BJP is giving a good fight to the BRS and the Congress. This list includes seats like Musheerabad in Hyderabad and Kamareddy where the BJP candidate Venkataramana Reddy is being pitched as a local against 'outsiders' chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao of BRS and PCC president Revanth Reddy of the Congress. The remaining 89 seats are seen as a straight fight between the BRS and the Congress, where the BJP or its ally, the Jana Sena, is

present only to mark attendance on the EVM.

This is the reason the BJP campaign strategy is to sharply zoom in on these specific seats. The idea is not to spread itself thin but to make the most of the remaining days of power play. It is focusing all its energies on the seats where it thinks it has a reasonable chance of either winning or influencing the contest to get to a close second position. The belief in the party is that if it can win around 15 seats, it can either be kingmaker or a powerful opposition party, enabling it to be in a good position for 2024. At an

internal meeting of the BJP three months ago, senior leader BL Santosh is reported to have predicted that the BJP would be in a position of power in Telangana. The party is also focusing on the seats in Hyderabad, hoping to build on its strength of 48 corporators in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. This is the reason why Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have addressed many public meetings in the state capital. There is also targeted campaigning. For example, keeping in mind the Tamilian

population in a constituency like Malkajgiri, star campaigners like Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, BJP Tamil Nadu president K Annamalai and actor-politician Khushbu are making their presence felt. It is not just the BJP that is looking at these seats. The BRS is looking at them very closely too, because an upswing in the BJP vote would cut into the anti-incumbency vote and thereby directly benefit the ruling party. The BJP lost its deposit in close to 100 seats in 2018. The estimate is that it won't do as badly this time round. The reason for that is the decision to field three of its four sitting MPs. What it has done is to influence all the seven segments under their Lok Sabha constituency. For example, Dharmapuri Arvind who is MP from Nizamabad is contesting from Koratla which is one of the assembly seats in his Lok Sabha constituency. His presence is having a positive impact on the other six seats, like Jagtial and Nizamabad Urban. The same goes for Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay who is contesting from Karimnagar assembly seat.

## No loyalty in royalty - How Priyanka Gandhi and Jyotiraditya Scindia burnt bridges

**Hours before campaigning was to end in Madhya Pradesh on November 16, Priyanka Gandhi launched a no-holds-barred attack on Jyotiraditya Scindia and his erstwhile royal family while addressing a rally in Datia.**

It has taken more than three and a half years for the current generation of the Gandhi and Scindia families to publicly name and shame each other after the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh was brought down by a rebellion orchestrated by Jyotiraditya Scindia in early 2020.

Hours before campaigning was to end in Madhya Pradesh on November 16, Priyanka Gandhi launched a no-holds-barred attack on Jyotiraditya and his erstwhile royal family while addressing a rally in Datia, and got repaid in the same coin. In going for the jugular, the two leaders delved deep into history but used contemporary idioms.

J'accuse!

In Datia, Priyanka accused Jyotiraditya of stabbing the people of the Gwalior-Chambal region, in the back by toppling a government elected by them. She then turned the tables. What is a little ironic though is that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tried to target the same reverence in its campaign theme in 2018. "Maaf karo maharaj, hamara neta Shivraj" was meant to contrast Jyotiraditya's royal

background with the modest upbringing of Shivraj Singh Chouhan, even though he was already Chief Minister for nearly 13 years by then.

It wasn't always so

It had taken lesser mortals in the Congress months to muster the courage to accuse Jyotiraditya of treachery for felling the Kamal Nath government that was formed after 15 long years in the Opposition. When by-elections necessitated by the resignations of the defectors were held in late 2020, the Congress party had made treachery its theme.

But neither Priyanka nor Rahul Gandhi had used harsh language against their former party colleague who once rubbed shoulders with them, even though Rahul Gandhi was always first among equals. Priyanka and Jyotiraditya even shared responsibility in the Uttar Pradesh elections, though the partnership yielded little electoral benefits.

While launching her party's campaign in Madhya Pradesh in July, Priyanka visited Rani Laxmibai's samadhi in Gwalior. Obviously, she wanted to remind

the voters of the Scindia family's alleged treachery with the legendary queen but did not utter a word about it or her former colleague in her speech given minutes later. Even Rahul Gandhi has only used mild language so far against Jyotiraditya, who was a minister in the Manmohan Singh government and is now a minister in the Narendra Modi government. The former Congress president has only accused Jyotiraditya of compromising his secular ideology for power. In comparison, the Gandhi siblings have never been soft with PM Modi or his other ministerial or parliamentary colleagues. But Rahul has always spared Jyotiraditya. The two studied together and at least pretended to be friends in public.

When the Congress formed the government in 2018, the party chose Kamal Nath as the chief minister even though Jyotiraditya fancied his chances for the top post. But he never criticised the Gandhis in public for ignoring him. Even in the run-up to his exit from the Congress and after, he targeted the Gandhis only indirectly.



# What's Iran's real plan in its proxy battle against Israel?

by Peter Bergen

Henry Kissinger once observed that Iranian leaders must decide if Iran is a cause or a nation.

Iran seems to have decided that it's both, exporting its militant Shia ideology to countries across the Middle East from Lebanon in the north, arming the Houthis 1,500 miles to the south in Yemen, supporting Iranian-backed militias in Iraq, propping up the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, and supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

Hamas receives funding for weapons from Iran, but Hezbollah is more like an arm of the Iranian government and has a much greater military capacity than Hamas. It has 150,000 rockets and is more militarily capable than the Lebanese army.

But neither Iran nor Hezbollah seems to have had a plan for what to do following Hamas's massacres last month in Israel. It's possible they had an inkling that Hamas was planning something without knowing the scale and ferocity of what the world saw on October 7.

Indeed, US intelligence sources say that senior Iranian officials appeared surprised by Hamas's



attacks.

On Friday, Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah in Lebanon, spoke publicly for the first time about the war in Gaza. Nasrallah was at pains to say that Hamas' October 7 attacks in Israel were "100 percent" a Palestinian operation, publicly discounting that Hezbollah and Iran had anything to do with the operation, as some reports have suggested.

Nasrallah also said that "All options are on the table" when it came to Hezbollah's possible military response against Israel - the kind of threat that may not mean very much at all.

Nasrallah became a "new icon" across the Arab world during the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war after Hezbollah abducted two Israeli soldiers, which triggered a 34-

day war that ended in something of a stalemate. The conflict killed more than 1,100 Lebanese and 158 Israelis.

Hezbollah is a potent military force, but it is also a political movement. Following last year's election in Lebanon, 58 out of 128 seats in the Lebanese parliament are in the pro-Hezbollah bloc, so Hezbollah must be somewhat responsive to Lebanese popular opinion. Given Lebanon's ruined economy, the Lebanese people are unlikely to be eager for a repeat of the 2006 war, which caused billions of dollars of damage to their country.

Also, any decision by Hezbollah to widen the war would likely have to be cleared by Tehran, and right now, Tehran and its proxy forces in Iraq, Lebanon,

Syria and Yemen seem to want to keep up pressure on Israel and US forces in the region with harassing attacks, but not to instigate a wider war. Iran itself appears to be doing nothing visible to foment further conflict, while letting its proxies do the work for it. The Houthis, who control much of Yemen and are supported and supplied by Iran, have fired missiles, which were intercepted, at Israeli targets in recent days. For the moment, both Hezbollah and Israel are exchanging tit-for-tat fire along Israel's northern border that falls short of anything close to a full-blown war.

Meanwhile, in Iraq and Syria, US and partner military forces have come under fire from rockets and drones at least 28 times since October 17. Iranian proxies almost certainly launched those attacks. Twenty one US service members have been treated for minor injuries, according to the Pentagon. Iran's ayatollahs may, at least rhetorically, seek the destruction of the state of Israel because the third holiest site in Islam, the Al Aqsa Mosque compound is in Jerusalem - which is also the holiest site in Judaism known as the Temple Mount. They also know that

Israel is their most powerful military foe in the region.

But Iran is unlikely to instigate a full-scale regional war with Israel, which might well also draw in the United States, which has recently moved two aircraft carrier groups to the Middle East. Also, the leaders of Iran's theocratic regime have faced a significant domestic protest movement over the past year largely led by women fed up with regulations requiring wearing the hijab in public, while they also have an economy that is hamstrung by significant sanctions imposed by the US and its allies. The Iranian rial has halved in value against the dollar since the protest movement began a little over a year ago, while the Iranian inflation rate is around 40 %.

The Iranians, in short, have enough problems of their own not to start a shooting war with Israel backed by its American ally. They prefer to act through their proxies in the region, keeping up some heat on Israel and the United States, but certainly not by dialing that heat up to 11.

This article has been updated with more recent numbers about attacks on US military and partner forces.

# Team India Lost World Cup Final Even Before Losing Toss

By Nishtha Gautam

I may or may not have unleashed the drunk sailor in me on Sunday. I'm not proud of it but blame it on my accident of birth. I'm an Indian and I cannot keep calm. Especially when there is a cricket match on. World Cup (men's) finals at that. Let me admit, I may be the problem. And everyone like me is part of the problem India seems to be grappling with for decades, or even centuries.

Our inability to chill.

With the wisdom of hindsight, it can be easily surmised that the Indian cricket team lost the match even before the toss was lost. That's what makes this loss even more biting. How does the most formidable team India has ever seen collapse like this on the most important day of their sporting lives? How did the collective skillset of Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah & Co and the wall-like leadership of Rohit Sharma and Rahul Dravid fall flat? We



were soaring high throughout the tournament, our dominance absolute and unchallenged. And then we lost, and lost badly. Was it just a bad day or something deeper than that?

I propose that the Men in Blue were afflicted by a pervasive, oppressive sense of neediness.

We are a needy people. We need. Even when we have plenty. We may be teaching the world the principle of 'simple living, high thinking' but we are a desperately needy lot. And what we need the most is validation. Our sense of being needs to be reassured all the time. We can't savour victory

without reassurances about our greatness. We are always out there to prove a point. Even after we have made that point. We are never sure of our most tangible achievements. It's as if our achievements and glories are tenuous as tendrils that even the mildest draft threatens to shake

away. Not just our unseemly bellies, but even our psychological make-up seems to be still defined by our ancestral feast-and-famine cycles. Even while feasting, we cannot savour anything because we are scared of being famished the next moment. We are also prickly about being reminded of our famished days. We are nervous. What kind of civilisational superiority can we claim if our insecurity overshadows our feats? The Australians, on the other hand, brought the ease of Bondi Beach to the finals. We can call them the denizens of the 'convict colony' pejoratively to ease our sourness but that doesn't change the fact that the real differential was the attitude, not the game. The Aussies owned the ground. Pat Cummins was able to keep his 'big crowd go silent' promise because he discovered our raw nerve. Neither the team nor the spectators wanted or even expected Australia to put up a fight.



# Biden is making more foreign policy messes than he's fixing

By Christopher McCallion

America currently finds itself embroiled in three major geopolitical crises, in three distant parts of the world, pitting it against three consequential powers, on behalf of three countries that are not treaty allies of the United States. Notwithstanding the temporary truce and hostage deal announced Tuesday, US forces are still on hand in the Middle East to deter Iran and Hezbollah from intervening against Israel in its war with Hamas, putting American troops at risk and threatening to pull the US into another major war in the region. American troops have already been targeted by dozens of drone and missile attacks from Iranian-backed forces in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and have conducted retaliatory strikes in response. In Eastern Europe, the US is essentially engaged in a proxy war with Russia over the latter's invasion of Ukraine. In East Asia, the US risks a catastrophic showdown with China over the political status of Taiwan. During his Oval Office address last month, President Joe Biden argued that all these flashpoints are interconnected fronts in what the administration has previously



framed as a global struggle between democracy and autocracy. Biden referenced former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's quote that America is "the indispensable nation," adding that "American leadership is what holds the world together." Biden further asserted that "making sure Israel and Ukraine succeed is vital for America's national security." In a Washington Post op-ed this weekend, he reiterated that the US is "the essential nation." These claims do not stand up to

scrutiny. America's entanglement in these crises is only further overstressing its capabilities, courting unnecessary risks, inflaming local enmities and depriving the American people of resources better used at home. Indeed, the American people are increasingly reluctant to foot the bill indefinitely for military aid to conflicts abroad, with recent polls showing declining support among both Democrats and Republicans for both Israel and Ukraine.

The decades-long US policy of maintaining permanent friends

and enemies in the Middle East has been counterproductive to its stated interest in regional stability. The US in recent years antagonized Iran by imposing a "maximum pressure" campaign of economic sanctions while assassinating key Iranian military figure, Qasem Soleimani. Meanwhile, the US has inadvertently boosted Tehran's regional influence by overthrowing Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq and later by contributing arms to anti-Assad forces during the Syrian Civil War, which

ultimately empowered Iran-backed militias in the fight against both ISIS and US-supported Sunni rebels. Nor has regional stability been advanced by the United States' partners, whose bad behavior has been enabled by unconditioned support from Washington. The US has consistently backed Israel despite its continued settlement-building in the occupied West Bank and long-standing blockade of Gaza, feeding the underlying Israeli-Palestinian conflict that now threatens to engulf the region. And despite its "democracy versus autocracy" rhetoric, the US supported Saudi Arabia's gruesome war against Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen, which produced what the United Nations called "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world," with some 377,000 people killed and approximately 80% of the country in need of humanitarian aid. The Biden administration has since doubled down on its security relationship with the Saudis. Contrary to the goal of avoiding a broader conflict in the Middle East or Ukraine, the president's Oval Office address last month instead sought to frame these crises in global terms.

## Israel's Palestinian strategy was a grave miscalculation

By Hussein Ibish

The most important factor in determining the political outcome of Israel's current war will not take place in Gaza - but will instead unfold in the West Bank. That's because if Israel really wants to deliver a serious long-term blow to Hamas as a potent political movement among the Palestinian people, it's going to be essential to seriously rethink its attitude towards the Islamist extremist group's archrivals: the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on the international stage.

Without strengthening these Palestinian groups, which still represent the mainstream of the national movement, Hamas and even more extreme groups will almost certainly continue to grow and thrive among the Palestinian people.

If Israel is now serious about decimating Hamas's military and political power, that cannot be done only or even mainly by killing the group's leaders and members and blowing up its equipment and infrastructure. New people can and will fill the void and insurgencies can successfully operate on a shoestring and under extremely onerous conditions.

Because the Palestinian people, their cause and their national movement are not going to disappear, the only way to really marginalize Hamas in the long run is to abandon the policy of simultaneously strengthening and weakening both Palestinian factions to keep them at

odds with each other and therefore ineffective as a national movement.

Hamas, the early years

In one of the most reckless and self-defeating policies in its young history, Israel, from the outset, sought to bolster and use Hamas to split and thereby cripple the Palestinian national movement.



Hamas was formed by the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza during the firmament of the first Palestinian intifada (uprising) against Israeli occupation in 1987. Israeli occupation authorities immediately believed they had stumbled upon a marvelous opportunity to divide Palestinians between secular nationalists and Islamists just as they began to rise up on the ground in the occupied territories.

Hamas was given considerable leeway to organize and form itself, with Israel turning a blind eye to the organization's early efforts to structure and found itself - activities that would have been ruthlessly suppressed if pursued by either Fatah-dominated organizations or the local grassroots committees that led the first uprising in its initial months.

For a brief period during the Oslo negotiations and the initial implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements that led to the formation of the small self-administered Palestinian enclaves in the West Bank and most of Gaza in the 1990s, this deeply misguided strategy of divide and rule was essentially set aside in favor of serious negotiations with the PLO and a significant degree of cooperation with the PA.

However, after the failure of the Camp David summit in 2000 and the subsequent outbreak of the far more violent second intifada in the fall of that year, the Israeli right resumed power. Under Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli right has dominated national politics for the vast majority of subsequent years, and it eagerly resumed a divide and rule approach.

This seemed to reach a successful crescendo in 2007, when a year of divided government among Palestinians - with a Fatah presidency under Mahmoud Abbas and a Hamas-dominated legislature - collapsed into open conflict and Hamas violently expelled Fatah and the PA from Gaza.



# Probe Agency Seizes Assets Worth ? 752 Crore Of Company Linked To Gandhis

Property worth ? 90 crore belonging to Young Indian -- the company linked to Congress's Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi -- has been attached by the Enforcement Directorate in connection to its investigation into the National Herald case. The attached property includes the National Herald Houses in Delhi and Mumbai and Nehru Bhavan in Lucknow. Sources said the overall value of properties seized belonging to Associated Journals is 752 crore.

The Central agency is investigating an alleged money laundering case linked to the National Herald newspaper. The case involves allegations of cheating, conspiracy, and criminal breach of trust in the acquisition of the Associated Journals Limited -- which ran the newspaper -- by Young Indian Pvt Ltd.

The agency has already questioned Sonia and Rahul Gandhi and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge in this connection.

ED has issued an order to provisionally attach properties



worth ? 751.9 Crore in a money-laundering case investigated under the PMLA, 2002," the ED said today in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

"Investigation revealed that M/s. Associated Journals Ltd. (AJL) is in possession of proceeds of crime in the form of immovable properties spread across many cities of India such as Delhi, Mumbai and

Lucknow to the tune of ? 661.69 Crore and M/s. Young Indian (YI) is in possession of proceeds of crime to the tune of ? 90.21 Crore in the form of investment in equity shares of AJL," the post read.

Mr Kharge, in a post on X, said reports of attachment of AJL's properties by the Enforcement Directorate "are a clear indication of the BJP's panic in the ongoing

elections". "Reports of attachment of AJL properties by ED reflects their desperation to divert attention from certain defeat in the ongoing elections in each state," posted Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi on X. "An assignment of loan without transfer of any immovable property or movement of money is being dressed up to justify attachment & freezing of assets of a company which runs an iconic voice of Indian

independence mvmnt (sic) -- National Herald -- only cz its linked to INC & its legacy," read another of his posts. These petty vendetta tactics shall not cow down the Congress or the opposition," read a third. The Congress has always accused the Centre of misusing central probe agencies for political vendetta, insisting that there is no evidence of money laundering or any monetary exchange.



## 'Will fine Rs 1 crore if...': Supreme Court's warning to Patanjali on medicine ads



**PATANJALI**

A Supreme Court bench warned Patanjali that a penalty of Rs 1 crore would be imposed if the misleading advertisements are not

stopped.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday came down heavily on Patanjali Ayurved for publishing misleading advertisements

targeting allopathic medicines.

A bench of Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Prashant Kumar Mishra warned Patanjali that it would be fined Rs 1 crore if a



false claim is made that its products can "cure" certain diseases. The court directed Patanjali Ayurved to stop publishing any such misleading advertisements in the future. The court said that Patanjali must ensure that it refrains from making casual statements in the press.

The direction came during the court's consideration of a petition filed by the Indian Medical Association. The

petition alleges that Patanjali's misleading advertisements disparage allopathy and make false claims about curing certain diseases. The direction came during the court's consideration of a petition filed by the Indian Medical Association. The



# Joe Biden once embraced Eric Adams. Don't expect that anytime soon.

**Joe Biden and Eric Adams, once a perfect political match, haven't spoken in nearly a year - and nobody expects that to change anytime soon.**

The icy relationship - emerging amid Adams' criticism of the president's handling of the migrant crisis - has evolved into a deep freeze with the New York mayor now embroiled in a federal investigation over whether his campaign colluded with foreign interests.

An FBI raid on his chief fundraiser's home earlier this month led Adams to abruptly cancel high-level Washington meetings on migrant funding and jet back to New York.

Earlier ethical yellow flags in the mayor's career - an alleged bid-rigging scandal and a self-promotional nonprofit - weren't enough to stop Biden from embracing the Black, politically moderate former cop who fit well with the president's own political persona. But now, Biden's advisers are glad the growing gulf exists and argue that it should insulate the Democratic president from any political fallout.

Two White House officials not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations said there had long been rumors in New York about Adams and his inner circle, but they are not aware of any heads-up to Biden about the mayor's latest string of legal troubles. Adams' recent comments underscore the sour mood.

"I kid myself by calling myself the Biden of Brooklyn," he told reporters.

He remains unapologetic about his call for the president to do more to alleviate the migrant crisis as the city stares down a fiscal cliff.

"D.C. has abandoned us, and they need to be paying their cost to this national problem," the mayor said. "Don't yell at me, yell at D.C."

The silence between Biden and Adams has left the two top Democrats increasingly reliant on intermediaries to discuss federal funding to support the surge of migrants overwhelming big cities.

The president hasn't discussed Adams publicly or privately as of late, the two White House officials said.

Several Democratic leaders say those in Biden's orbit must have known about Adams' past probes.

"They read the same press stories everybody else reads," said a national Democratic operative who was granted anonymity to discuss the relationship. "Fair or not fair, they're out there. This is not a secret kept in New York."

One longtime Democratic aide, who was also granted anonymity to discuss the circumstances, said of the federal investigation, "I'm surprised it took this long." The New York mayor has neither been charged nor accused of wrongdoing.

The FBI stopped him and seized his



electronic devices on Nov. 6, four days after agents removed campaign documents from his fundraiser's home. Adams' attorney says he is fully cooperating with the probe and even outed an individual on his campaign accused of unspecified wrongdoing.

The feds are looking into whether the Adams campaign conspired with the Turkish government to accept illegal foreign contributions in exchange for favors for Turkish officials, according to The New York Times.

It's not the first time Adams has been under investigation.

The state inspector general examined alleged favoritism that Adams showed for a gaming operator making a bid for a contract at Aqueduct Racetrack in Queens. The operator had donated to him.

Then, both the federal government and the New York City Department of Investigation looked at the fundraising he did as Brooklyn borough president for his One Brooklyn nonprofit, which operated in a gray area for charity and to boost his profile, according to the New York Post.

Adams was charged in neither and went on to decisively win the race for mayor in 2021, but his political career has additionally been dogged by questions raised in POLITICO stories about his secret office and where he makes his home.

And currently, the federal examination of whether his campaign for mayor used so-called straw donors to leverage public matching funds comes in addition to the Manhattan district attorney indicting six Adams supporters for allegedly bundling illegal donations and charging his former buildings commissioner with alleged bribery.

The mayor's supporters argue that Black and Latino elected officials face greater

scrutiny than white ones.

Other defenders, especially Republicans, say without any evidence that Biden's Department of Justice is targeting Adams because he has been critical of the president.

Another person with the White House granted anonymity said officials there received a last-minute cancellation of meetings without an explanation on Nov. 2, the day Adams left Washington, D.C., almost as soon as he'd arrived.

The mayor has sought to quash any notion that Biden aides directed him to return to New York because of the federal investigation.

"The White House didn't do that," Adams told reporters earlier this month. "That is just not true. And keep in mind, I did not call for the meeting in D.C. Another coalition partner called for it, the mayor

of Denver."

Though Adams has said he would reschedule the meetings he missed, including with White House chief of staff Jeff Zients and Biden senior adviser Tom Perez, the mayor's spokesperson would not confirm whether he had yet done so, saying such information is released only with his daily public schedule.

The president and mayor last spoke - doing so only briefly - in January at an event in New York City. Adams was dropped in May from the president's National Advisory Board. And the two didn't meet when Biden was in town in September for the United Nations General Assembly.

It's a long fall from February 2022, when Biden visited New York City and commended Adams at an event on gun violence strategies.

## Illegal Indians in America-Now rank 3rd after Mexico and El Salvador

The United States witnessed the largest influx of illegal migrants from neighbouring Mexico, followed by El Salvador (800,000) and India during 2017-2021. India saw an increase in the number of illegal migrants since 2017. In total, the unauthorised immigrant population in the United States reached 10.5 million in 2021, remaining below the peak of 12.2 million in 2007, the study stated.

"There were increases in unauthorised immigrants from nearly every other region of the world - Central America, the Caribbean, South America, Asia, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa," the researchers noted.

Other countries contributing illegal migrants to the US include Venezuela, Brazil, Canada, former Soviet Union

countries, China, and the Dominican Republic, among others. The states with the maximum number of unauthorised immigrants are California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois. While Florida and Washington saw increases in the illegal immigrant populations, California and Nevada saw a decline. All other states remained unchanged, according to the Pew study.

At least 4.6 per cent of the US workforce in 2021 consists of unauthorised immigrants. The lawful immigrant population also grew by more than 8 million, a 29 per cent increase, during 2017-2021. In total, the foreign-born population, including authorised individuals, was 14.1 per cent of the US population in 2021, slightly higher than in the last five years.





# In Italy's biggest mafia trial, 207 accused sentenced to 2,100 years in jail

An Italian tribunal on Monday convicted 207 people and sentenced them to a combined 2,100 years in prison on charges related to their membership in Italy's 'ndrangheta organized crime syndicate, one of the world's most powerful, extensive and wealthy drug-trafficking groups.

It took over an hour and 40 minutes to read aloud the court's lengthy verdict, including the acquittal of 131 other defendants. The drama unfolded in a bunker-stye courtroom in the southern Calabria region, where the mob organization was originally based.

The 'ndrangheta has quietly amassed power in Italy and abroad as the Sicilian Mafia lost influence and now holds almost a monopoly on cocaine importation in Europe, according to anti-mafia prosecutors who led the investigation in southern Italy. The organization also has bases in North and South America and is active in Africa, Italian prosecutors maintain, and 'ndrangheta figures have been arrested in recent years around Europe and in Brazil and Lebanon.

The defendants had been charged with crimes that include drug and arms trafficking, extortion and mafia association, a term in Italy's penal code for members of organized crime groups. Others were charged with acting in complicity with the 'ndrangheta without actually being a member.

The charges grew out of an investigation

of 12 clans linked to a convicted 'ndrangheta boss. The central figure, Luigi Mancuso, served 19 years in an Italian prison for his role in leading what investigators allege is one of the 'ndrangheta's most powerful crime families, based in the town of Vibo Valentia.



Vincenzo Capomolla, deputy chief prosecutor of Catanzaro, said prosecutors' overall case held up with the convictions and confirmed the stranglehold the 'ndrangheta held on Vibo Valentia.

"The infiltration of the criminal organization in the province of Vibo Valentia was so deep-rooted and so widespread, so alarming, so disturbing that I think it can be noted that there was no aspect of the life of the social economic fabric of the province that was not conditioned by the

capacity of the force of intimidation of this so dangerous criminal organization," he said.

Giuseppe Di Renzo, defense attorney for several of the defendants, however noted that more than a third of the original defendants were fully acquitted, while

others were found not guilty of some charges.

He criticized the disparate and large number of defendants, saying they showed there was no cohesive thread to the prosecutors' case. But Catanzaro's former chief prosecutor who launched the investigation, Nicola Gratteri, said mafia trials often have to cast wide nets because of the very nature of how the criminal syndicates operate, infiltrating across wide swaths of society.

The trial took place in a specially constructed high-security bunker. Part of an industrial park in Lamezia Terme, the bunker is so vast that video screens were anchored to the ceiling so participants could view the proceedings.

Based almost entirely on blood ties, the 'ndrangheta was substantially immune to turncoats for decades, but the ranks of those turning state's evidence are becoming more substantial. In the current trial, they included a relative of Mancuso's. Several dozen informants in the case came from the 'ndrangheta, while others formerly belonged to Sicily's Cosa Nostra. Despite the large number of defendants, the trial wasn't Italy's biggest one involving alleged mobsters. In 1986, 475 alleged members of the Sicilian Mafia went on trial in a similarly constructed bunker in Palermo. The proceedings resulted in more than 300 convictions and 19 life sentences. That trial helped reveal many of the brutal methods and murderous strategies of the island's top mob bosses, including sensational killings that bloodied the Palermo area during years of power struggles. In contrast, the trial involving the 'ndrangheta was aimed at securing convictions and sentences based on alleged acts of collusion among mobsters and local politicians, public officials, businessmen and members of secret lodges to show how deeply rooted the syndicate is in Calabria.



# Maldives' pro-China president wants India 'out'. What does it mean for New Delhi?

*Maldives' new pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu, who was sworn in just a few days ago, has already started making bold decisions, fanning speculations and questions in New Delhi. Read on for a clear picture of the issue.*

(News Agency)-With the election of pro-China Mohamed Muizzu as the new Maldives president, Indian diplomats have a tough job at hand. According to his election promise, Muizzu wants Indian troops (77 in number) to withdraw from the scenic archipelago, and has announced a review of more than 100 agreements with India. His bold moves have prompted questions in New Delhi: Will his elevation harm Indian interests? Can he resist Chinese pressure for defence cooperation? The new president was quick to formally "request" visiting Indian minister Kiren Rijiju for the withdrawal of Indian servicemen, who are in the Maldives to maintain and operate two helicopters and a Dornier 228 aircraft gifted by New Delhi for humanitarian relief, search and rescue missions, and civilian missions.

At a press conference, Mohamed Firuzul Abdul Khaleel, undersecretary for public policy of the presidential office, said that the Indian choppers and aircraft carried out 661 medical evacuations, 220 surveillance



operations, and 100 search and defence training missions apart from Covid sample collection and transportation, VIP services, and aircrew transfers in the last five years.

People close to the new Maldivian administration have said that "the presence of foreign soldiers is not in line with the wishes of Maldivian citizens." Before taking oath, Muizzu said in an interview that Maldives' "major foreign relations issues" were linked to India, arguing that those issues stem from bilateral agreements. India has said that its assistance and platforms have significantly contributed to people's welfare, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and combating

illegal maritime activities.

Many fear that the new Maldivian government can give preferential treatment to Chinese companies over the Indian firms already engaged in development projects. However, experts caution that such moves will only harm the Maldives. "Any decision to put any of the big-ticket Indian projects on hold or backburner would only harm their national interests," said former diplomat Achal Malhotra, who has served as the deputy permanent representative of India to the United Nations.

Speaking to India Today, former ambassador to Italy Rajiv Dogra invoked the role of Indian soldiers in thwarting a coup

attempt in 1988 to emphasize India's steady and generous friendship with the Maldives. "History shows that he has to be careful in the decisions he makes. Otherwise, results may not be to his liking over time," he said.

India's defence ties with Maldives For decades, India has been a net security provider for the Maldives. Its defence relations with Male have been characterized by a series of agreements and on-ground support. Since the thwarting of the 1988 coup attempt, India has maintained a steady presence in the region, providing defence training, equipment, and assistance under a comprehensive Action Plan for Defence signed in 2016.

Notable initiatives include the supply of a replacement ship for CGS (coast guard ship) Huravee, a second Landing Craft Assault (LCA), and 24 utility vehicles to the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF). Additionally, the development of the Ekatha Harbour in Uthuru Thila Falhu atoll underlines India's

commitment to strengthening Maldivian defence capabilities. According to the Ministry of External Affairs' latest factsheet, around 70 per cent of Maldives' defence training requirements are fulfilled by India. It has trained over 1500 MNDF trainees over the past 10 years. "MNDF has also been participating in mil-to-mil activities such as joint EEZ patrols, anti-narcotic ops, SAR, sea-rider programme, HADR exercises, adventure camps, sailing regatta, etc. The Indian Navy has also provided MNDF with air assets for air surveillance, MEDEVAC, SAR, Helo-borne vertical insertion capability," it reads.

Major civilian initiatives in Maldives

Beyond defence, India has been instrumental in the socio-economic development of the Maldives. By the Muizzu government's assessment, India extended a \$1.8 billion line of credit for various projects at an interest rate below 2 per cent payable over a period of 20 years with a grace period of further five years.

## Pakistan applies for BRICS membership, hopes for 2024 entry with Russian support

(News Agency)-Pakistan has formally applied for membership in the multinational forum BRICS, as reported by the Russian news agency TASS. Islamabad has filed the application to join the body and has sought Russia's support, quoting Pakistan's envoy to Russia, Muhammad Khalid Jamali, the agency reported. Pakistan is looking forward to joining the group of developing nations under Russia's presidency in 2024.

"Pakistan would like to be part of this important organisation, and we are in the process of contacting member countries to extend support to Pakistan's membership in general and the Russian Federation in particular," Ambassador Jamali said.

The bloc currently includes China, the world's second-largest

economy, as well as Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa. Six new members --Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina, and the United Arab Emirates--



will be added to the bloc in January 2023. Pakistan is hopeful about joining BRICS with these countries.

Quoting Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov, the

state-owned news agency also mentioned that BRICS is planning to agree on a list of candidates for partner-state status ahead of the upcoming summit in Kazan in 2024.

Earlier, China had also hinted at a favourable position towards granting membership to Pakistan.

India, meanwhile, has stated that it "fully supports the expansion" of the BRICS group. However, New Delhi has not specifically commented on Pakistan's bid to join the bloc. During a summit hosted by China last year, Pakistan alleged that "one member" of the BRICS grouping blocked its participation. The Pakistan Foreign Office expressed the hope that future decisions of the group would be based on "inclusivity."

## Pakistan's Supreme Court accepts Imran Khan's bail plea: What you need to know

(News Agency)-Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan's bail application in the cipher case has been accepted by Pakistan's top court, as announced by Khan's lawyer, Naeem Panjutha, on the micro-blogging website X (formerly Twitter) on Wednesday afternoon. This development follows a previous court ruling that declared the trial in the cipher case, which was ongoing in Adiala jail in Rawalpindi, as illegal, just a day prior.

Statements from Khan's lawyer Naeem Panjutha, also the official legal spokesperson of Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaf (PTI), stated that while the bail application has been accepted and the court has issued a notice, a date for the hearing has yet to be decided.

"A decision will come in the next hearing after arguments from both sides," Naeem shared on his X

account.

The Supreme Court is expected to seek input from the government regarding the application.

Khan's urgency before general elections

"Imran Khan is seeking release from jail before Pakistan's general elections on February 8, 2024.

"The 71-year-old leader faces a three-year jail sentence in the Toshakhana case, accused of selling state gifts during his tenure as PM.

"Since his ousting from office in April 2022, Khan has been involved in multiple legal cases. Return of Nawaz Sharif

"Imran Khan's potential release might influence the general elections, especially after former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan last month, ending four years of self-imposed exile.



# US thwarted a plot to kill Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, warned India: Report

**US authorities thwarted an alleged attempt to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, the New York-based Khalistani terrorist. The reported plot on American soil prompted a warning from the US to the Indian government.**

(News Agency)-Pannun has been in the headlines for multiple inflammatory threats against India.

Diplomatic warning

" According to a Financial Times report citing anonymous sources familiar with the case, the protest was issued by the US after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-profile state visit to Washington in June.

" The intended target, Pannun, is the general counsel for Sikhs for Justice, a US-based Khalistan group.

" Sikhs for Justice is designated as a terrorist group in India.

" The report added that it remains unclear whether the warning led the plotters to abandon their plan or if the FBI intervened to foil an ongoing scheme.

Investigation

" In a discreet move, US federal prosecutors reportedly filed a sealed indictment against at least one alleged perpetrator in a New York district court, as



per the Financial Times.

" The US Justice Department is reportedly deliberating on whether to make the details public or await the conclusion of Canada's investigation into the murder of another Sikh terrorist, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in Vancouver.

" Following Nijjar's murder, the US shared Pannun case details with allies, and

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau previously hinted at "credible allegations" linking New Delhi to Nijjar's fatal shooting. India has consistently rejected claims of its involvement in Nijjar's murder as "absurd."

Pannun and India

" Since the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June 2023, Pannun has repeatedly

threatened terrorist attacks against India. Canadian PM Justin Trudeau made allegations of Indian involvement in Nijjar's killing.

" In September, after Nijjar's murder, Pannun, via a video message, gave an ultimatum to Indo-Canadian Hindus to leave Canada, stating, "Indo-Canadian Hindus, you have repudiated your allegiance to Canada and the Canadian Constitution. Your destination is India. Leave Canada, go to India."

NIA books Pannun

" Following the November 19 threat, the National Investigation Agency registered a case against him on November 20.

" As per the charge sheet, Pannun was booked under sections 120B (criminal conspiracy), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups based on religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc.), and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC. Several sections of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act were also imposed on Pannun.

## India resumes e-visas for Canadians after a two-month pause



(News Agency)-India resumed e-visa services for Canadian nationals on Wednesday, November 22, after nearly two months of suspension. The halt began on September 21 following accusations by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, alleging India's involvement in the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, British Columbia, in June.

India resumes e-visa services to Canadian nationals: Sources [pic.twitter.com/CyMY0AlaMC](https://pic.twitter.com/CyMY0AlaMC)

-ANI (@ANI) November 22, 2023

This development comes after, India, on October 26 allowed Canadians to apply for Indian visas in some categories, including, Entry Visa, Business Visa, Medical Visa and Conference Visa.

What happened? Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, based on intelligence reports, made allegations of Indian government involvement in Nijjar's killing. India firmly denied any role, labelling the

allegations as "absurd" and politically motivated.

" In response to Canada's accusations, India took several retaliatory measures, including expelling intelligence officers, reducing diplomatic staff, and issuing travel advisories.

" Notably, visa services for Canadians were suspended in September, seen as a direct reaction to Canada's claims.

" After the withdrawal of Canadian diplomats from India, thousands of cases for Canadian visas had also piled up in Canadian Consulates at Chandigarh, Bengaluru and Mumbai.

A positive step

" The recent decision to resume e-visa services is a significant move towards rebuilding diplomatic ties and easing.

"External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, on October 22 had indicated India's willingness to relax measures, while acknowledging the current "difficult phase" in bilateral relations.

## After Xinjiang, China targets mosques in other provinces, says report

The Chinese government's campaign of mosque closures, previously reported in Xinjiang (autonomous northwest territory), has spread to other regions, as stated in a Human Rights Watch report. Released on Wednesday, November 22, the report supported these claims with public documents, satellite imagery, and witness testimonies from the northern Ningxia region and Gansu province, where the Hui Muslim population resides.

Consolidation process

" The mosque closures are part of a process officially termed "consolidation," a practice that has raised concerns about religious freedom.

" The report highlights the removal of architectural features like domes and minarets from mosques to align them more closely with Chinese aesthetics.

" The process reflects the Chinese Communist Party Government's broader agenda of "Sinicization."

" President Xi Jinping's 2016 call for the "Sinicization" of religions, a directive that initially targeted Xinjiang.

" The crackdown, initially concentrated on Uyghur and other Muslim minorities, has now expanded to regions with sizable Hui Muslim populations.

" The report says that the Chinese government's actions violate religious freedom, contrary to the Chinese claim of merely "consolidating" them.

" Maya Wang, acting China director at Human Rights Watch, said, "The Chinese government's closure, destruction and repurposing of mosques is part of a systematic effort to curb the practice of Islam in China."

" In Ningxia's Liaoqiao and Chuankou villages, authorities reportedly dismantled the domes and minarets of seven mosques and razed the main buildings of three between 2019 and 2021.

" The report also includes videos and pictures posted online, along with satellite imagery, to corroborate these claims.

As per the 2010 census, China has a population of around 10.5 million Hui Muslims.

Crimes against humanity in Xinjiang

" A United Nations report from 2022 suggested that China may have committed "crimes against humanity" in Xinjiang, including the construction of internment camps holding over a million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities.

" The leaked "Xinjiang Papers," indicated that the Chinese government issued instructions in 2018 to strengthen the standardised management of Islamic religious places of worship.



# Zhao's resignation and \$4.3 billion settlement: What you need to know about the trouble at Binance

Binance, the largest global cryptocurrency exchange, encountered a significant setback from the US government.

The company's CEO, Changpeng Zhao (CZ), admitted to not preventing money laundering, according to AP.

What

" Changpeng Zhao (CZ), CEO of Binance, resigned and pleaded guilty for breaching US anti-money laundering laws on Tuesday.

" This marks part of a \$4.3 billion settlement, concluding a comprehensive investigation into the world's leading cryptocurrency exchange.

" CZ is required to personally pay \$50 million as part of the settlement, according to Reuters.

" This development follows a string of legal challenges in the cryptocurrency industry.

" Notably, FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried recently faced a fraud conviction.

Legal experts view the outcome favorably for Zhao, enabling him to retain his substantial wealth and stake in Binance. The company mentioned that the resolutions acknowledge Binance's responsibility for past compliance breaches, allowing the company to move forward.

Regarding the financial penalty imposed on Binance, legal experts suggest that while it's a substantial amount, the company could manage it.



Despite serious violations, Zhao, retaining his stake in Binance, may continue to exert influence, even with new leadership. Zhao's estimated worth stands at \$10.2 billion, and despite the grave violations, he appears to have fared relatively well, retaining ownership in a company that has resolved significant legal issues.

The settlement is viewed as a means for Binance to continue its operations while addressing legal challenges.

Details

" Binance violated US laws by failing to ad-

here to regulations against money laundering and sanctions.

" The company did not report over 100,000 suspicious transactions involving groups such as Hamas and al Qaeda, recognised as terrorist organisations.

" Binance also omitted reporting transactions related to child sexual abuse materials and received significant funds from ransomware attacks.

The Justice Department, in conjunction with other agencies, reached a settlement with Binance.

Founder Changpeng Zhao admitted guilt and may face an 18-month prison term.

As per Reuters, the company is set to pay \$1.81 billion within 15 months and an additional \$2.51 billion as part of the deal.

"After today, I have resigned as CEO of Binance," Zhao announced on social media after the settlement was revealed. "Undoubtedly, it was emotionally challenging to let go. Yet, it is the right course of action. I have made errors and must take accountability. This decision is beneficial for our community, Binance, and myself."

Today, I stepped down as CEO of Binance. Admittedly, it was not easy to let go emotionally. But I know it is the right thing to do. I made mistakes, and I must take responsibility. This is best for our community, for Binance, and for myself.

## Sam Altman to return as OpenAI CEO after an agreement



Sam Altman, the former CEO ousted by OpenAI, has agreed to return to the company in his previous role as CEO after discussions with board members Bret Taylor (Chair), Larry Summers, and Adam D'Angelo.

OpenAI, renowned for ChatGPT, terminated its CEO, Sam Altman, on November 17, following which he accepted a position at Microsoft.

We have reached an agreement in principle for Sam Altman to return to OpenAI as CEO with a new initial board of Bret Taylor (Chair), Larry Summers, and Adam D'Angelo.

We are collaborating to figure out the details. Thank you so much for your patience through this.

Satya Nadella, Microsoft's CEO, expressed encouragement for the changes

in the OpenAI board, considering it a crucial step towards stable and effective governance. What

" On November 17, OpenAI announced the removal of CEO Sam Altman from his position.

" This decision followed a review that highlighted inconsistencies in his communications with the board, leading to a loss of trust in his leadership abilities at OpenAI.

" Concurrently, Greg Brockman, a co-founder, resigned from his role as President on the same day.

Greg Brockman also confirmed his return on X. The aftermath

" After Sam Altman was unexpectedly removed, many OpenAI staff became upset, and most said they would leave unless Altman and co-founder Greg

Brockman were brought back.

" Microsoft's CEO, Satya Nadella showed commitment to OpenAI and Altman regardless of the situation.

" Emmett Shear, the temporary leader of OpenAI, was reportedly part of the talks.

" The board's choice to remove Altman, which resulted in Brockman's resignation, led to significant upheaval.

" The decision was made by three board members-Adam D'Angelo, Tasha McCauley, and Helen Toner-alongside co-

founder Ilya Sutskever.

" Previously, OpenAI had a six-member board before recent developments.

" In response to widespread discontent, 743 out of 770 employees signed a letter demanding the board's resignation, issuing a threat of mass departures if their demands were not heeded.

" Ongoing negotiations are underway to address the concerns within the company.

## Raymond boss' estranged wife demands 75% of his fortune as settlement: Report

Nawaz Modi Singhania, the estranged wife of billionaire industrialist Gautam Singhania, has demanded 75 per cent of his estimated \$1.4 billion net worth as part of the divorce settlement, reported The Economic Times.

Her demand, aimed at securing the financial well-being of their two daughters, Niharika and Nisa, has sparked already discussions about the future distribution of the family's wealth.

While Gautam Singhania is believed to have shown a willingness to consider Nawaz's request, he has proposed the establishment of a family trust to manage and transfer the family's assets, as per the ET report.

Under his proposal, he would act as the

sole managing trustee, and family members would be allowed to inherit the assets after his demise. However, Nawaz reportedly finds this arrangement unacceptable.

Trust laws typically involve three main parties: a settler, who contributes assets to the trust; a trustee, responsible for administration; and a beneficiary. In Gautam's proposed family trust, he would occupy the role of both settler and trustee. While such a structure is legally permissible, it has generated contention in the ongoing negotiations.

Sources cited in the ET report indicated that legal advisors have been engaged by both parties to navigate the complexities of the divorce settlement.



# 4 simple recipes you can try using kimchi



We bring you four easy recipes that you can try at home using kimchi as an ingredient.

Kimchi, a Korean fermented side dish made from fermented cabbage, has become a beloved ingredient across the world. Bursting with a unique mix of tanginess and spiciness, kimchi has the prowess to add a flavoursome punch to various dishes.

Additionally, it can be a healthy addition to one's diet for how it supports gut health. The fermentation process produces probiotics, beneficial live bacteria and yeasts that support gut

health and are also beneficial for the skin. Margot Robbie, let us tell you, also included this fermented delicacy to her diet while preparing for the role of Barbie to get that skin glowing.

How about we tell you that you can also relish Kimchi and add it to your regular meals without being a culinary expert in Korean cuisine? We bring you three easy recipes with kimchi as an ingredient:

## Kimchi Fried Rice

### Ingredients:

2 cups cooked rice (preferably day-old rice), 1 cup kimchi, 1 small onion (finely chopped), 2

cloves garlic (minced), 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, 1 tablespoon soy sauce, 1 teaspoon sesame oil, salt and pepper and spring onions (chopped)

### Instructions:

Heat vegetable oil in a pan over medium heat. Add chopped onions and garlic, saute until fragrant. Add chopped kimchi and stir-fry for 2-3 minutes. Add cooked rice, soy sauce, sesame oil (if using), salt, and pepper. Stir-fry for another 5-7 minutes until the rice is heated through and well combined with the kimchi mixture. Garnish with chopped spring onions and serve

hot.

## Spicy Scrambled Eggs with Kimchi

### Ingredients:

4 eggs, 1 cup kimchi, 1 small onion (finely chopped), 1 green chili, finely chopped (optional), 1 tablespoon oil, salt and pepper, fresh coriander leaves (chopped)

### Instructions:

Heat oil in a pan over medium heat. Add chopped onions and green chili, saute until onions turn translucent. Add kimchi and cook for 2-3 minutes. Beat the eggs in a bowl, then pour them into the pan with the kimchi mixture. Stir continuously until the eggs are scrambled and cooked to your desired consistency.

Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with chopped cilantro leaves and serve hot with bread or rice.

## Kimchi Stir-fried Vegetables

### Ingredients:

Julienned vegetables (bell peppers, broccoli, carrots, bok choy leaves, spring onion, and mushrooms), 1 cup kimchi, 2 garlic cloves (minced), 1 tablespoon soy sauce, 1 tablespoon oil, salt and pepper and sesame seeds for garnish

### Instructions:

Heat oil in a pan over medium-high heat. Add minced garlic and

stir-fry for a few seconds until fragrant. Add the vegetables and stir-fry for 3-4 minutes until they are slightly tender but still crisp.

Add chopped kimchi and soy sauce. Stir-fry for an additional 2-3 minutes until the flavors combine.

Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with sesame seeds if desired. Serve as a side dish with rice or noodles.

## Kimchi Grilled Cheese Sandwich

### Ingredients:

4 slices of bread, kimchi (chopped), 1 cup shredded cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, or your choice), butter or oil for grilling

### Instructions:

Spread butter or oil on one side of each bread slice. Place one slice, buttered side down, on a heated skillet or griddle over medium heat. Sprinkle half of the shredded cheese on top of the bread slice. Add a layer of chopped kimchi on the cheese. Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the kimchi and top it with another bread slice, buttered side up. Grill the sandwich for a few minutes on each side until the bread is golden brown and the cheese has melted. Remove from heat, slice, and serve hot.

# Chicken Hawaiian Salad Recipe



1/4 teaspoon paprika powder  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1 large chicken breasts  
1/2 cup pineapple  
1/2 avocados  
1/2 cup cherry tomatoes  
1 cup rice  
2 1/2 tablespoon virgin olive oil  
1/2 teaspoon honey  
black pepper as required  
1/4 cup pineapple juice  
1 tablespoon soy sauce  
2 cloves garlic  
1/4 teaspoon cumin powder  
1/4 teaspoon ginger powder  
1/2 tablespoon virgin olive oil  
1/2 cup corn  
4 cup lettuce leaf  
1/2 red onion  
1 carrot

How to make Chicken Hawaiian Salad

Step 1 Marinate chicken  
Take a large bowl and mix together coconut milk, pineapple juice, tomato sauce, soy sauce, lime zest, garlic, onion

powder, cumin, paprika, ginger powder and salt. Marinate chicken for minimum 3 hours, preferably overnight.

Chicken Hawaiian Salad is a delicious recipe of Hawaiian cuisine and the best part is that you can make this recipe at home in just a few steps. It requires many ingredients to prepare the chicken marinade, dressing and the salad as a whole recipe. It is full of delicious flavours that it gets from the melange of spices and sauces used to prepare this salad. It is healthy and fulfilling, and perfect for a fancy meal for your guests. Make it on special occasions like kitty party, birthday, anniversary, buffet, and game night by following the simple steps. Enjoy it with your loved ones.

## 4 Servings

1/3 cup coconut milk  
1 tablespoon tomato ketchup

1 teaspoon lime zest  
1/4 teaspoon onion powder  
1/4 teaspoon paprika powder  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1 large chicken breasts  
1/2 cup pineapple  
1/2 avocados  
1/2 cup cherry tomatoes  
1 cup rice  
2 1/2 tablespoon virgin olive oil  
1/2 teaspoon honey  
black pepper as required  
1/4 cup pineapple juice  
1 tablespoon soy sauce  
2 cloves garlic  
1/4 teaspoon cumin powder  
1/4 teaspoon ginger powder  
1/2 tablespoon virgin olive oil  
1/2 cup corn  
4 cup lettuce leaf  
1/2 red onion  
1 carrot  
1 1/2 tablespoon lime juice  
2 tablespoon cilantro  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
How to make Chicken Hawaiian Salad

Chicken Hawaiian Salad is a delicious recipe of Hawaiian cuisine and the best part is that you can make this recipe at home in just a few steps. It requires many ingredients to prepare the chicken marinade, dressing and the salad as a whole recipe. It is full of delicious flavours that it gets from the melange of spices and sauces used to prepare this salad. It is healthy and fulfill-

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## Ingredients of Chicken Hawaiian Salad

1/3 cup coconut milk  
1 tablespoon tomato ketchup  
1 teaspoon lime zest  
1/4 teaspoon onion powder



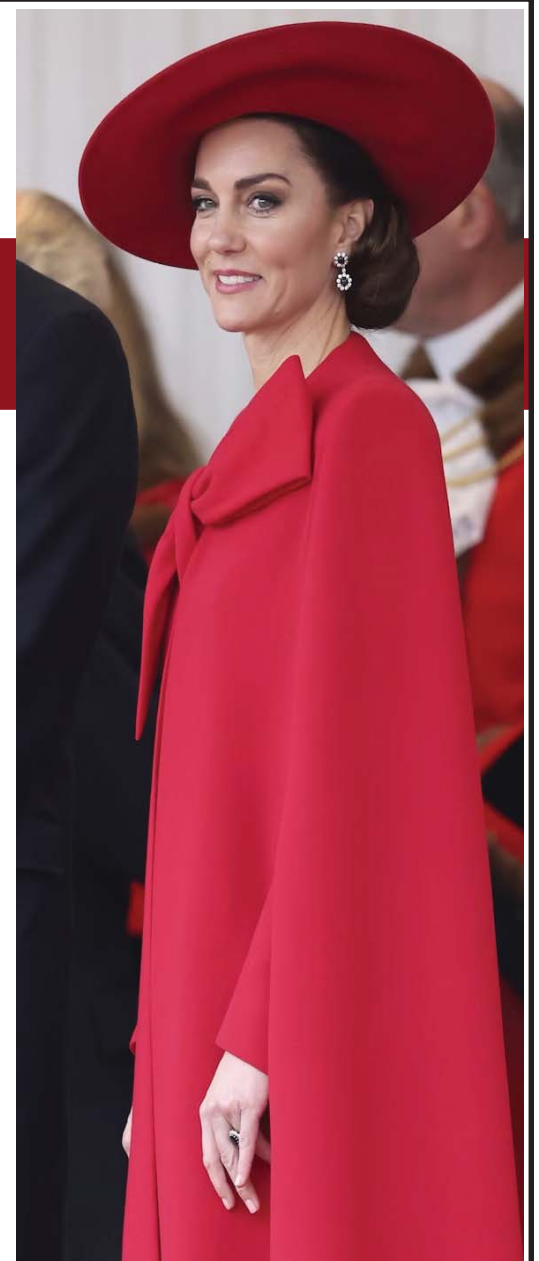
# Kate Middleton channels red hot glam with Princess Diana's jewels for state visit

**Kate Middleton looked radiant as ever as she rocked an all-red ensemble for the ceremonial welcome of South Korean President and his wife at Buckingham Palace.**

Kate Middleton looked her fashionable best for the ceremonial welcome of South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol and his wife Kim Keon Hee at Buckingham Palace upon their formal state visit to the United Kingdom. Putting an immaculate display of royal fashion, Kate Middleton wore her Catherine Walker coat that she first wore for

her first Together at Christmas Carole Concert in 2021. She added a new bespoke cape in a stylish move. The princess, known for her elegant and sharp fashion choices, kept the monotone vibe intact as she teamed the red separates with red heels and a clutch. Her decision to wear a red ensemble resonated with her tradi-

tion of flag dressing — wearing the colors of the country she's visiting or hosting. Furthermore, she wore a pair of sapphire and diamond drop earrings in a nod to the blue on South Korea's flag. The earrings she wore previously belonged to her late mother-in-law Princess Diana. Kate Middleton also wore these earrings to Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022. Kate Middleton is one of the biggest pioneers of re-wearing clothes and is often lauded for her sustainable approach to royal fashion. As for the ceremonial welcome of the South Korean President and his wife, King Charles and Queen Camilla were joined by 170 guests including royal family members, K-Pop band BLACKPINK members, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty.



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# Celebs arrive in style for International Emmy Awards 2023

Celebrities put their best fashion foot forward as they attended the International Emmy Awards 2023 in New York.



The red carpet of the event saw stars putting their best fashion foot forward in dazzling dresses. From classic black dresses to glimmering gowns, take a look at some of the best fashion moments at International Emmys 2023. Turkish actress Pinar Deniz wowed in a classic bodycon black dress featuring a plunging neckline and strappy sleeves. She carried a statement mini black bag with a metallic handle to complete the look.

South Korean actress Han Hyo-joo wore a stunning black gown with glimmering feathered sleeves to the International Emmys red carpet. She rounded off her look with a pair of statement heels and also carried a voguish micro bag.

South Korean actress Park Eunbin glittered in a beige gown featuring floral as well as sequin accents.

Actress Shefali Shah made a stellar fashion statement as she attended the event in a traditional red saree. She wore a custom-designed number from the label Torani. It was accentuated with a sleek golden border.

Jeanne Goursoud went bold with her fashion choice for the awards ceremony. She wore a sparkling black skirt with a bandeau blouse.

Brazilian actress Carolina

Dieckmann flaunted an aztec printed figure-hugging dress. Jim Sarbh and Vir Das too looked dapper in crisp ensembles for the International Emmy Awards. While Jim rocked a classic black suit with a white shirt and a bow tie, Vir Das wore a traditional embellished ensemble. Shefali Shah, meanwhile, lost the International Emmy Award for Best Performance by an Actress to Karla Souza.

## BLACKPINK members steal the show in glam gowns at Buckingham Palace



BLACKPINK members Jennie, Jisoo, Lisa and Rose wore stunning gown as they attended state banquet hosted by King Charles at Buckingham Palace. South Korean girl group

BLACKPINK members arrived at Buckingham Palace on Wednesday. Jennie, Jisoo, Lisa and Rose attended the state banquet hosted by King Charles during South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's two-day visit to the UK.

The divas, we must add, stole the show with their fashion game in glorious gowns.

Jisoo wore a simplistic black gown featuring dramatic accents in the form of puffed sleeves and crinkled detail all over the expanse. She accessorised the look with a black bag. Rose also wore a black gown to the state banquet at Buckingham Palace. Hers was a rather sharp silhouette, however. She wore a strapless mono-

tone number boasting of a bodycon fit.

Lisa took the maximalist route with her look as she slipped into a dreamy embellished blue gown featuring flowing capes. A delicate necklace perfectly completed her look.

Jennie too took the monotone route and exuded elegance in a form-fitting white gown. The floor-sweeping gown boasted of an off-shoulder detail. A sparkling silver clutch was her pick to complete the ensemble. As for the ceremonial welcome of the South Korean President and his wife, King Charles and Queen Camilla were joined by 170 guests including royal family members UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty.





**Shah Rukh Khan, a decade younger to Anil Kapoor, brought the Bollywood Daddy trend to centre stage with Jawaan—the badass father smoking a cigar, throttling a bike, and beating up bad guys.**

## Bollywood daddies are suddenly looking hotter. Why Bobby Deol, Madhavan are not done yet

In the two-minute second teaser of Sandeep Reddy Vanga's *Animal*, what stands out the most is not Ranbir Kapoor, or even the visceral violence. It is the jaw-dropping transformation of Bobby Deol. His rebirth has left everyone stunned. Deol is part of a growing cohort of older actors who were written off in the 2000s but are returning to the screen better than ever. It's the age of Bollywood Daddies—and nobody is complaining. The term 'daddy' is now being used on social media to define older stars—whose careers seemed to be over or never really took off, but have now gotten a second wind. Deol has joined R Madhavan, Suniel Shetty, and Milind Soman among others in reminding a new generation of

Indians that they are still in the game. Barring actors like Anil Kapoor whose body of work has defined every decade since the 1980s, Bollywood is rarely kind to its ageing stars. Women face the worst of it, but even male stars do not find space in the 'sexiest men alive' surveys and other such lists. But the Bollywood Daddies are bucking this trend.

They wear their greys proudly but without the potbellies. They sport salt-and-pepper hair instead of dyeing them jet black. They focus on their fitness regime, and hone their physiques. Shah Rukh Khan is about a decade younger to Kapoor, but it was his role as a father in *Jawaan* (2023) that brought this trend to centre

stage. He's the badass father smoking his cigar and throttling a bike, and beating up bad guys.

Rebirth as the daddy



This trend probably started in 2017, when R Madhavan shared a selfie of himself, topless, with a hint of salt and pepper in his beard, and a jawline that's sharper than laser. It went viral.

It was as if we finally got our own George Clooney, and ageing didn't just become 'normal' but also sexy.

Bobby Deol or even Madhavan's

viral selfies are not the only markers of this 'daddy' movement. Suniel Shetty, whose Amazon Mini TV show *Hunterrr* got 2.5 million views despite a sketchy storyline, shows the power of his appeal. Shetty's last noteworthy appearance was as the

antagonist Raghavan Dutta in *Main Hoon Na* (2004). He reprised his role as Shyam in *Phir Hera Pheri* (2006). None of these roles, however, did much to revive his career, or image.

It was much later, in 2019, with the remake of *Sheher ki ladki* song from his and Raveena Tandon's 1996 film *Rakshak* that sort of reintroduced Shetty. *Badshah*'s remake of the song has 255 million views, and a lot is from watching Shetty in a suave, sleek, 'daddy' avatar.

Since then, he has only set pulses racing and hearts palpitating. From social media to public appearances, including at his daughter Athiya Shetty's wedding with cricketer KL Rahul, everyone is sitting up and taking note of the 'new' Suniel Shetty.

People collectively went into a trance when he walked the ramp with Athiya at the opening of Jio World Plaza. No need for Hollywood

There are, of course, actors who have never gone out of fashion. Top on this list is Anil Kapoor, whose career has been a steady dishing out of popular movies. He, too, has been labeled the universal 'daddy' figure, a role he cheekily embraced in *Thank You for Coming* (2023) by playing the older love interest, Professor, of Kanika (Bhumi Pednekar).

The other consistent 'sex symbol' of sorts in India has been model-actor Milind Soman, whose 1995 video with Alisha Chinoy for *Made in India* song can probably still make people, irrespective of gender or age, swoon.

Over the years, he has also embraced his greying hair and changing body, and remained people of the most popular symbols of fitness, especially with his win in the toughest triathlon in the world. Soman won the Ironman Triathlon in 2015, and showed all young guns how it's done. He also enacted the role of the sexy, older, more sorted lover, Dr Aamir Warsi, in Amazon Prime Video's *Four More Shots Please* (2019-23) opposite Sayani Gupta.







# Israel-Hamas war:

## Why has the Islamic world flocked to China?

Amidst the ongoing and escalating war between Israel and Hamas, top foreign policy officials from the Palestinian Authority and several Muslim-majority countries are visiting China on November 20 and 21.

The coordinated visit is part of a diplomatic effort to address the impacts of the war in West Asia and seek a just and swift resolution to the Palestinian issue.

Who all are visiting?

" The delegation includes foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Indonesia, and Palestine, along with the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), reported by AFP.

China's role

" China, of late, has positioned itself as a key player in mediating the Israel-Palestine conflict, offering a

platform for in-depth communication and coordination with the visiting delegation.

" The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said that the goal is to "promote a de-escalation of the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict, protecting civilians, and justly resolving the Palestinian issue."

" China's historic sympathy for the Palestinian cause, its support for a two-state solution, and an anti-American

stance have shaped its current diplomatic stance.

" Foreign Minister Wang Yi, underlining China's support for the Palestinian side, on Monday, November 20, said that Beijing "deeply expresses its sympathy with the Palestinian side."

" China has consistently called for an immediate ceasefire and a "cooling down" of the situation since the Israelis launched one of the most devastating counter-offensives filling the Hamas surprise attack on Israel.

China's presence in West Asia

" China's diplomatic presence in the Middle East has expanded in recent years as it aims to play a peacemaking role in longstanding regional disputes.

" Its efforts resulted in brokering a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran to restore ties and reopen embassies in March 2023.

" The visit of Islamic and Arab ministers adds another dimension and establishes China's involvement in the region.

" China has openly criticized US support for Israel and denounced the US veto of a UN Security Council resolution, which aimed to acknowledge Israel's right to defend itself. Beijing's growing influence in the region has prompted it to challenge traditional power dynamics and advocate for a more balanced approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

## Why does Elon Musk keep getting accused of being anti-Semitic?

X's (formerly Twitter) owner, Elon Musk, is refuting accusations of anti-Semitism, labeling them as "bogus" after his recent backing of controversial content on the platform.

This endorsement triggered outrage, leading major advertisers like Apple, IBM, and Disney to distance themselves from the platform.

This past week, there were hundreds of bogus media stories claiming that I am antisemitic.

Nothing could be further from the truth. I wish only the best for humanity and a prosperous and exciting future for all.

- Elon Musk (@elonmusk) November 19, 2023

What

" The uproar began when Musk agreed with a post suggesting that Jewish people harbor a "dialectical hatred" toward white individuals, a perspective associated with white supremacist conspiracy theories. Musk responded to this tweet emphatically, stating, "You have spoken the actual truth."

" Musk's remarks surfaced amidst escalating tensions surrounding anti-

Semitism and Islamophobia in the US, notably during the Israel-Gaza conflict.

" His endorsement encountered criticism from diverse sources, including the White House and dissatisfied Tesla



investors.

" Additionally, corporate giants such as the Walt Disney Company reportedly pulled their advertisements from X in response, as per AP report.

Why he keeps getting accused of anti-Semitism

" Musk getting involved in controversies isn't new. He had previously accused the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of causing a decrease in ad revenue at X without evidence. ADL is an international Jewish non-governmental organization and advocacy group that specializes in civil rights law and combats antisemitism and extremism.

" Media Matters for America, a left-leaning watchdog, reported instances where ads from IBM, Apple, Oracle, and Comcast's Xfinity appeared alongside content containing Hitler quotes, Nazi praise, and Holocaust denial

" People have accused Musk of not doing enough to stop the spread of misinformation and anti-Semitic content. It has led to reputational damage for Musk.

" Later on, he stepped up by removing numerous Hamas-related accounts.

" Musk has also been intensifying his criticism of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) during a social media campaign against the group.

He said that they are "ironically the biggest generators of anti-Semitism on this

platform!" This response was prompted by a video clip where conspiracy theorist Alex Jones labeled the ADL as "pro-Hitler."

" When the hashtag #BanTheADL gained traction on X, Musk joined the campaign by expressing support.

" A tweet from @keithwoodsyt, a pseudonym for far-right Irish activist Keith O'Brien, claimed that Musk liked the call to #BanTheADL, suggesting alignment with those advocating for free speech.

" Musk responded with laughing emojis to a tweet from Andrew Torba, the CEO of a far-right social media platform known for promoting antisemitic views.

" Torba has a history of making discriminatory statements against Jews, including claiming that the US is a Christian nation and making derogatory remarks about the Jewish population.

" Musk's reaction to such content raises concerns about his stance on antisemitism.

" Musk responded to an antisemitic tweet linking President Joe Biden and actor-director Mel Gibson, known for making offensive statements about Jews.





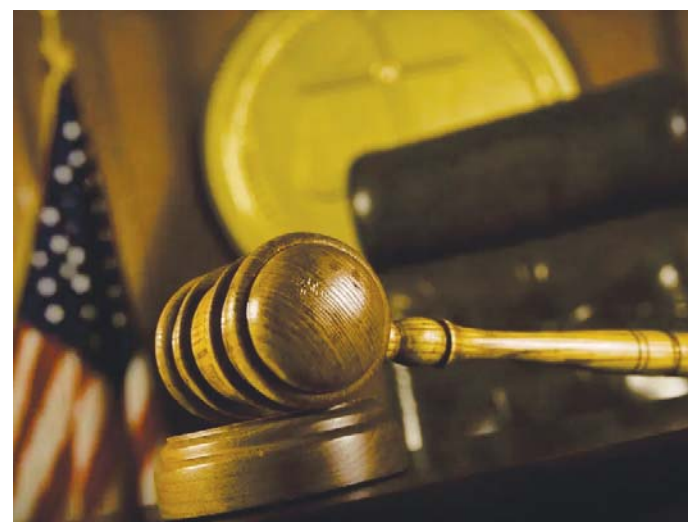
## California Skilled Nursing Facilities, Owner and Management Company Agree to \$45.6 Million Consent Judgement to Settle Allegations of Kickbacks to Referring Physicians

Prema Thekkek, her management company, Paksn Inc., and six skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) owned by Thekkek and/or operated by Paksn have agreed to enter into a \$45.6 million consent judgment to resolve allegations that they submitted or caused the submission of false claims to Medicare by paying kickbacks to physicians to induce patient referrals. The six settling SNFs are Kayal Inc. (doing business as Bay Point Healthcare Center), Nadhi Inc. (doing business as Gateway Care & Rehabilitation Center), Oakrheem Inc. (doing business as Hayward Convalescent Hospital), Bayview Care Inc. (doing business as Hilltop Care and Rehabilitation Center), Aakash Inc. (doing business as Park Central Care & Rehabilitation Center) and Nasaky Inc. (doing business as Yuba Skilled Nursing Center) (collectively the SNF Defendants).

The Anti Kickback Statute prohibits offering or paying remuneration to induce the referral of items or services covered by Medicare, Medicaid and other federally funded health care programs. It is intended to ensure that medical decision-making is based on the best interests of patients and not compromised by improper financial incentives to providers.

From 2009 to 2021, the SNF Defendants, under the direction and control of Thekkek and Paksn, systematically entered into medical directorship agreements with physicians that purported to provide compensation for administrative services, but in reality were vehicles for the payment of kickbacks to induce the physicians to refer patients to the six SNFs. Specifically,

the defendants hired physicians who promised in advance to refer a large number of patients to the SNFs, paid physicians in proportion to the number of their expected referrals and terminated physicians who did not refer



enough patients. On one occasion, a Paksn employee told Thekkek that two physicians were being hired because "they are promising at least 10 patients for \$2000 per month," to which Thekkek responded, "good job. Make sure they give you patients everyday. [W]e can also expand to other buildings with them, if possible." On another occasion, an employee informed Thekkek that the defendants previously had paid a certain doctor "\$1500 each month and he only send [sic] us 2 patients[,] so we didn't pay him anything from Jan[uary] onwards." On a third occasion, Thekkek rejected a proposed stipend for a new medical director, explaining that the defendants had paid the previous

medical director that amount because "we were getting admission[s] from him," whereas she did not expect the new medical director to refer many patients. More generally, Thekkek complained that if her employees did not pay medical

directors promptly every month, "[t]hese doctors will not give us patients." "Kickbacks can impair the independence of physician decision-making and waste taxpayer dollars," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Brian M. Boynton, head of the Justice

Department's Civil Division. "The department is committed to preventing illegal financial relationships that undermine the integrity of our public health care programs."

"The administrators and beneficiaries of the Medicare Program expect that providers will make decisions based on sound medical judgment, not their personal self-interest" said U.S. Attorney Martin Estrada for the Central District of California. "As this case demonstrates, our office will take decisive action to address allegations that medical providers are paying or receiving improper financial benefits that could impact care provided to patients." "Kickbacks impose hidden costs on the health care system

and compromise medical decision-making," said Special Agent in Charge Timothy B. DeFrancesca of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General (HHS-OIG). "Working tirelessly with our law enforcement partners, HHS-OIG will continue to combat the waste of valuable taxpayer dollars and protect the integrity of federal health care programs."

Under the settlement announced today, in addition to entering into a \$45,645,327.25 consent judgment, the defendants will make scheduled payments to the United States of at least \$385,000 over the next five years. That payment schedule was negotiated based on the defendants' lack of ability to pay.

The settlement stems from a whistleblower complaint filed in 2015 by Paksn's former Vice President of Operations and Chief Operating Officer, Trilochan Singh, pursuant to the qui tam provisions of the False Claims Act, which permit private persons to bring a lawsuit on behalf of the government and to share in the proceeds of the suit. The Act also permits the government to intervene and take over the lawsuit, as it did in this case as to some of Singh's allegations. In addition to resolving their False Claims Act liability, the defendants have entered into a five-year corporate integrity agreement with the HHS-OIG which requires, among other compliance obligations, an Independent Review Organization's review of their physician relationships.



# ASK NACPA

**<Q1> Why do I need to check my Medicare plan every year during the Open Enrollment Period and how do I check my plan?**

If you don't take any action, your existing plan will be renewed for 2024. But that could come with cost and benefit changes. Your plans' coverage may change, and your health care needs may have changed, too. This is why it's important to check-up on your current plan during the period even if you're happy with your current plan. Your plan will send you a "Plan Annual Notice of Change" (ANOC) each fall. If you don't get this important document, contact your plan. The ANOC includes any changes in coverage, costs, and more that will be effective in January. Review any coverage changes including drug formulary. Think about any changes to your healthcare and/or prescription drug needs, and healthcare expenses to decide whether the plan will continue to meet your needs in the next year. Just remember to do so before Medicare Open Enrollment ends on December 7.

**<Q2> I signed up for a Medicare Advantage plan during my Initial**

**Enrollment Period (IEP) this year, but I would like to change it to Original Medicare because I plan to travel to different states throughout the next year. How can I switch from Medicare Advantage to Original Medicare?**

You should contact your current plan to cancel your enrollment and call

MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) during the Medicare Open Enrollment period. The change will take effect on January 1 of the following year. Original Medicare does not provide any additional benefits such as drug coverage, dental, or vision you may have with your Medicare Advantage plan. If you make this switch and you want drug coverage, be sure to sign up for a Medicare stand-alone prescription drug plan (PDP). If you do not, and you decide to sign up for Part D coverage later,

you may need to wait for another year until the next Open Enrollment Period and face a penalty for late enrollment. You may also want to consider purchasing a Medicare supplemental insurance policy, known as Medigap, that helps to pay your cost-sharing requirements under Original Medicare. You also can switch from

Medicare Advantage to Original Medicare during the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period (January 1 to March 31).

**<Q3> If I make a mistake when I change my coverage during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period, what can I do to fix it?**

If the Medicare OEP is ongoing: you can simply pick a different plan instead (by the December 7 deadline) and the new choice will take effect on January 1.

If the Medicare OEP has ended: you can use the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period (MAOEP, Jan 1~Mar 31) to pick a different Advantage plan or switch to Original Medicare and a Part D plan. If you've enrolled in a stand-alone Part D plan that doesn't fit your needs, your options are more limited. Changes to these plans can generally only be made during the fall Medicare OEP.

**<Q4> I have already received COVID-19 vaccines and the last vaccination was in January 2023. Do I still need to get another COVID-19 vaccine?**

Like Flu virus, the virus that causes COVID-19 has changed over time. A new vaccine has been developed and was approved by the FDA on September 11, 2023. The new vaccine provides better protection against the currently prevalent COVID-19 variant and is available for administration starting from late September 2023. If your last vaccine was before September 2023, please get this new vaccine. You can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including a Flu vaccine, at the same visit. Possible side effects after getting vaccinated are generally the same when given alone or with other vaccines.



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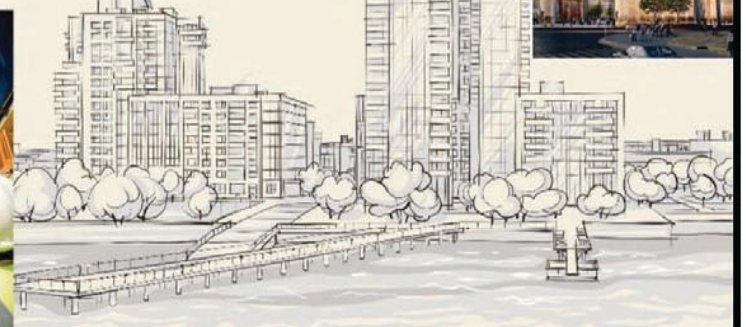
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# Five Men Plead Guilty to Roles in Multimillion-Dollar COVID-19 Relief Fraud Conspiracy

Five Texas men pleaded guilty today to their participation in a scheme to fraudulently obtain and launder millions of dollars in forgivable Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans that the Small Business Administration (SBA) guaranteed under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

According to court documents, Muhammad Anis, 55, Nishant Patel, 41, Harjeet Singh, 49, all of Houston, and Arham Uddin, 27, and Ammas Uddin, 30, both of Richmond, engaged in a conspiracy to defraud the SBA and certain SBA-approved PPP lenders by submitting false and fraudulent PPP loan applications. All five defendants also assisted in laundering the fraudulently obtained PPP loan funds by supplying co-conspirators with blank, endorsed checks, which were made payable to people posing as employees of the companies that received the PPP loan, but who were in fact not employees. These fake paychecks were then cashed at check cashing stores that other members of the conspiracy controlled.

As part of the scheme, Anis obtained a false and fraudulent PPP loan in the amount of approximately \$483,333; Patel obtained a false and fraudulent PPP loan



in the amount of approximately \$474,993; Singh obtained two false and fraudulent PPP loans for a total of approximately \$937,379; Arham Uddin obtained a false and fraudulent PPP loan in the amount of approximately \$491,664; and Ammas Uddin obtained a false and fraudulent PPP loan in the amount of approximately \$498,415.

Anis, Patel, Singh, Arham Uddin, and Ammas Uddin each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. They are scheduled to be sentenced on Jan. 4, 2024, and each face a total maximum penalty of five years in prison.

A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

In addition to these five defendants, one other individual was convicted at trial for his involvement in the scheme, and 15 other individuals have pleaded guilty to their involvement in the loan fraud scheme.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Alamdor S. Hamdani for the Southern District of Texas, Special Agent in Charge Brady

Ipock of the SBA Office of Inspector General (SBA-OIG) Central Region, Special Agent in Charge Catherine Huber of the Federal Housing Finance Agency Office of Inspector General (FHFA-OIG), Special Agent in Charge Mark B. Dawson of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Houston, Special Agent in Charge Anand Ramlall of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Office of Inspector General (FDIC-OIG) Dallas Region, and Special Agent in Charge Gary Smith of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) made the announcement.

The SBA-OIG, FHFA-OIG, HSI, FDIC-OIG, and TIGTA are investigating the case. Trial Attorneys Louis Manzo, Della Sentilles, Kate McCarthy, and Spencer Ryan of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Rodolfo Ramirez and Kristine Rollinson for the Southern District of Texas are prosecuting the cases.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at [www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form](http://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form).

## Pelham Manor Man Charged With Health Care Fraud And Kickback Scheme

Scheme Caused Medicare to Pay at Least \$10 Million on Fraudulent Claims

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Naomi Gruchacz, the Special Agent in Charge of the New York Office of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General ("HHS-OIG"), announced the unsealing of a five-count Indictment charging MANISHKUMAR PATEL in connection with a health care fraud and kickback scheme involving the sale of fraudulent prescriptions. PATEL was arrested this morning in Pelham Manor, New York, and was presented this afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Gary Stein. The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge Schofield.

HHS-OIG Special Agent in Charge Naomi Gruchacz said: "Certain violations of the Anti-Kickback Statute can result in the inducement of medically unnecessary durable medical equipment, medications, and laboratory tests, which can affect the availability of services for others and drive up the cost of health care for everyone. Individuals and entities that participate in the federal health care system are required

to obey the laws meant to preserve the integrity of program funds and the provision of appropriate, quality services to patients."

As alleged in the Indictment:[1] Between 2019 and 2022, PATEL and a coconspirator ("CC-1") fraudulently sold prescriptions and doctors' orders for



durable medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and laboratory tests (collectively, "scripts") to durable medical equipment suppliers, pharmacies, and laboratories (collectively, the "Medicare Providers").

PATEL obtained the scripts from call centers that called Medicare beneficiaries and asked them perfunctory

questions designed to justify a script that would be reimbursed by Medicare. PATEL turned the information from those calls into scripts by, variously: (i) arranging cursory telemedicine appointments with the beneficiaries; (ii) a practice called "doctor chasing," in which the information was sent to a doctor

who signed the script without seeing the patient and who was frequently unaware of what they were signing; and (iii) obtaining forged scripts. PATEL then sold the scripts to Medicare Providers, which filled the orders and billed Medicare.

Because the scripts were fraudulently obtained, many beneficiaries rejected the items they were sent by the Medicare Providers, many doctors threatened to report PATEL for fraud, and Medicare frequently refused to pay for the scripts. The Medicare Providers made payments to PATEL for the scripts in violation of

the Anti-Kickback Statute. PATEL and the Medicare Providers entered into sham contracts for generic marketing services at flat rates in an attempt to conceal their illegal kickback scheme.

PATEL, 44, of Pelham Manor, New York, is charged with (i) conspiracy to commit health care fraud and wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; (ii) health care fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; (iii) wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; (iv) conspiracy to violate the Anti-Kickback Statute, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison; and (v) violation of the Anti-Kickback Statute, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison. The maximum potential sentences are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by a judge.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding work of HHS-OIG. The case is being prosecuted by the Office's Complex Frauds and Cybercrime Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Mead is in charge of the prosecution.



# British Reinsurance Brokers Resolve Bribery Investigations

Tysers Insurance Brokers Limited (Tysers) and H.W. Wood Limited (H.W. Wood), two U.K.-based reinsurance brokers, have agreed to resolve investigations by the Justice Department into violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) arising from Tysers' and H.W. Wood's participation in a corrupt scheme to pay bribes to Ecuadorian government officials.

Tysers and H.W. Wood each entered into a three-year deferred prosecution agreement (DPA) with the department in connection with a criminal information filed in the Southern District of Florida charging both companies with conspiracy to violate the anti-bribery provisions of the FCPA.

"Tysers and H.W. Wood have admitted to engaging in a scheme to bribe multiple Ecuadorian government officials to earn tens of millions of dollars in illicit profits for themselves and their co-conspirators," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri of the Justice Department's Criminal Division. "Today's resolutions, along with the numerous related individual cases, demonstrate the department's steadfast commitment to hold both corporate and individual wrongdoers accountable for their crimes."

According to court documents, between 2013 and 2017, Tysers (known and doing business during the relevant period as Integro Insurance Brokers Limited) and H.W. Wood, through their employees and third-party agents, agreed to pay bribes totaling approximately \$2.8 million to the then-chairman of two Ecuadorian state-owned insurance companies, Seguros Sucre S.A. and Seguros Rocafuerte S.A., and three other Ecuadorian officials to secure improper advantages in order to obtain and retain reinsurance business with the state-owned insurance companies. The bribes were paid to accounts held in Florida and elsewhere and effectuated through, among other things, emails sent from and meetings held in Florida. In furtherance of the scheme, Tysers paid approximately \$20.3 million in commissions and H.W. Wood paid approximately \$7.9



million in commissions and premium payments to the intermediary company that paid the bribes. Tysers retained commissions of approximately \$10.5 million and H.W. Wood retained commissions of approximately \$2.3 million.

"Not only have Tysers and H.W. Wood broken any trust held in them by their clients and the market, they have eroded the process of fair and open competition when they paid bribes to foreign officials in exchange for securing lucrative contracts, and kickback for themselves," said Chief Jim Lee of IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI). "We will continue to work with our partners to investigate FCPA violations to ensure honest corporations that playing by the rules pays better in the end." "The defendants engaged in a multimillion-dollar bribery scheme to influence Ecuadorian government officials into doing business with their companies," said Assistant Director Luis Quesada of FBI's Criminal Investigative Division. "Today's resolution shows the FBI will seek justice for violations of the FCPA to keep marketplaces and governments free from corruption worldwide." Pursuant to the DPAs, Tysers and H.W. Wood have each agreed to continue to cooperate with the department in any ongoing or future criminal investigations relating to this conduct. In addition, Tysers and H.W. Wood have each agreed to continue to enhance their compliance programs and provide reports to the department regarding remediation and the implementation of compliance measures for the three-year term of the DPAs.

Tysers

Pursuant to its DPA, Tysers will pay a \$36 million criminal penalty

and administrative forfeiture of approximately \$10.5 million. The department reached this resolution with Tysers based on a number of factors, including, among others, the nature and seriousness of the offense. Tysers received credit for its cooperation with the department's investigation, which included (i) meeting the government's requests promptly; (ii) making foreign-based employees available for interviews; (iii) collecting and producing voluminous relevant documents to the government, including documents located outside the



United States; (iv) making several detailed factual presentations to the government and conducting and producing financial analyses of voluminous transactions; and (v) timely accepting responsibility and reaching a prompt resolution.

Tysers engaged in timely remedial measures, which included, among other things, (i) placing employees involved in the misconduct on paid administrative leave; (ii) terminating all business and affiliations with the intermediary company involved in the misconduct; and (iii) comprehensively reviewing and enhancing its compliance program, including engaging additional resources with appropriate expertise to assist in

evaluating and strengthening its compliance program, making enhancements to the governance and oversight of its compliance program, adding new compliance resources and personnel, updating and enhancing its antibribery and anticorruption policies, enhancing procedures related to onboarding and making payments to third-parties, and enhancing training programs. In light of these considerations, Tysers' criminal penalty calculated under the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines reflects a 25% reduction off the bottom of the applicable guidelines fine range. H.W. Wood- Pursuant to its DPA, H.W. Wood agreed, based on the application of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, that the appropriate criminal penalty is \$22.5 million and approximately \$2.3 million is forfeitable to the United States. However, due to H.W. Wood's financial condition and demonstrated inability to pay the penalty calculated under the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, H.W. Wood and the department agreed,

the government, including documents located outside the United States; (iv) making several detailed factual presentations to the government and conducting and producing financial analyses of voluminous transactions; and (v) timely accepting responsibility and reaching a prompt resolution.

H.W. Wood engaged in timely remedial measures, which included, among other things, (i) terminating an employee involved in the misconduct; and (ii) enhancing its compliance program, including creating new compliance positions and compliance control improvements, implementing a process to ensure continuous monitoring and review of third-party relationships, and updating and enhancing its policies and procedures, as well as its compliance training and communications. In light of these considerations, H.W. Wood's criminal penalty calculated under the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines reflects a 25% reduction off the bottom of the applicable guidelines fine range. The department has, to date, charged eight individuals in related matters: " J u a n Ribas Domenech, the former chairman of Seguros Sucre and Seguros Rocafuerte, pleaded guilty in the Southern District of Florida on Sept. 16, 2020, to money laundering conspiracy for his role in this and another scheme.

" Fernando Martinez Gomez, a financial advisor, pleaded guilty in the Eastern District of New York on March 24, 2022, to two counts, including conspiracy to commit money laundering for on his role in this and another scheme.

" Esteban Merlo Hidalgo, a co-conspirator and agent of Tysers and H.W. Wood, pleaded guilty in the Southern District of Florida on March 28 to four counts of engaging in transactions in criminally derived property obtained through his participation in this scheme.

" A federal grand jury in the Southern District of Florida returned a seven-count indictment against two other defendants, Cristian Patricio Pintado Garcia and Luis Lenin Maldonado Matute, both of whom remain fugitives, on July 14, 2022, for their alleged roles in this scheme.

consistent with the department's inability to pay guidance, that the appropriate criminal penalty is \$508,000 and that H.W. Wood is unable to pay the forfeiture amount. The department reached this resolution with H.W. Wood based on a number of factors, including, among others, the nature and seriousness of the offense. H.W. Wood received credit for its cooperation with the department's investigation, which included (i) meeting the government's requests promptly; (ii) endeavoring to make foreign-based employees available for interviews; (iii) collecting and producing voluminous relevant documents to



# Pharmacy Owners and Doctor Convicted for \$145M Health Care Fraud, Money Laundering, and Tax Evasion Scheme

A federal jury convicted three Texas men yesterday for a \$145 million scheme to defraud the Department of Labor through the submission of fraudulent claims for prescription compound creams.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Dehshid "David" Nourian, 59, of Plano; and Christopher Rydberg, 47, of Fort Worth, and others conspired to pay Dr. Michael Taba, 59, of McKinney, and other doctors to prescribe medically unnecessary compound creams to injured federal workers. Nourian and Rydberg owned and/or operated three pharmacies located in Fort Worth and Arlington. They paid Taba for referring expensive compound medications to be filled by those pharmacies. In less than three years, between May 2014 and March 2017, the pharmacies billed the Department of Labor Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (DOL-OWCP) and Blue Cross Blue Shield more than \$145 million and were paid more than \$90 million for unnecessary prescriptions referred by Taba and other providers in exchange for bribes and kickbacks. Nourian, Rydberg, and others then attempted to conceal their ill-gotten gains by laundering the money through purported holding companies and attempted to evade paying federal income



taxes on the illicit proceeds.

Nourian, Rydberg, and Taba were convicted of one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud; and eight (Nourian) and three (Taba) counts of health care fraud, respectively, each count carrying a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. Nourian and Rydberg were also convicted of one count of conspiracy to launder money and five and six counts of money laundering, respectively, each count carrying a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, and one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States, which carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison. All of the defendants are scheduled to

be sentenced at a later date. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Ulrich of the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (USPS-OIG), Southern Area Field Office; Acting Special Agent in Charge Casey Howard of the Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General (DOL-OIG), Dallas Regional Office; Special Agent in Charge Kris Raper of the Department of Veterans

Affairs Office of the Inspector General (VA-OIG), South Central Field Office; and Special Agent in Charge Ramsey Covington of the IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) Houston Field Office made the announcement.

The USPS-OIG, DOL-OIG, VA-OIG, and IRS-CI investigated the case.

Trial Attorneys Alexander Thor Pogozelski, Ethan Womble, and Edward Emokpae of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section are prosecuting the case, with significant assistance from Acting Assistant Chief Catherine Wagner.

The Fraud Section leads the Criminal Division's efforts to combat health care fraud through the Health Care Fraud Strike Force Program. Since March 2007, this program, currently comprised of nine strike forces operating in 27 federal districts, has charged more than 5,400 defendants who collectively have billed federal health care programs and private insurers more than \$27 billion. In addition, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, working in conjunction with the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services, are taking steps to hold providers accountable for their involvement in health care fraud schemes. More information can be found at [www.justice.gov/criminal-fraud/health-care-fraud-unit](http://www.justice.gov/criminal-fraud/health-care-fraud-unit).

## Backpage Principals Convicted of \$500M Prostitution Promotion Scheme

A federal jury in Phoenix convicted three former owners of Backpage.com yesterday of multiple counts of promoting prostitution business enterprises and multiple counts of money laundering, including conspiracy offenses.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Michael Lacey, 75, of Paradise Valley, Arizona; Scott Spear, 72, of Phoenix; and John "Jed" Brunst, 71, of Phoenix, owned Backpage.com, which was the internet's leading forum for prostitution ads from September 2010, when Craigslist shut down its prostitution ad section, until April 2018, when the United States seized Backpage.com. Evidence at trial showed that the conspirators knowingly promoted prostitution via various marketing strategies. For example, the conspirators engaged in a reciprocal link program with an independent web forum that permitted "johns" to post reviews of prostitution acts with specific women. Additionally, the conspirators used an automated filter and human moderators to remove terms known to indicate sex-for-money, while still allowing the ads to be posted. Through this attempt to sanitize the ads, the conspirators sought "plausible deniability" for what the conspirators knew to be ads promoting prostitution. Over the life of the conspiracy, the conspirators earned more than \$500 million. In an



effort to preserve the money earned, Lacey, Spear, and Brunst laundered the money through numerous shell companies they created in multiple foreign countries. In March 2018, a grand jury in Phoenix charged the conspirators in an indictment with conspiracy to facilitate prostitution using a facility in interstate or foreign commerce, facilitating prostitution using a facility in interstate or foreign commerce, conspiracy to commit money laundering, concealment money laundering, international promotional money laundering, and transactional money laundering. In April 2018, Carl Ferrer, 57, of Frisco, Texas, who was Backpage's co-founder and CEO, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to

facilitate prostitution using a facility in interstate or foreign commerce and to engage in money laundering. In August 2018, Dan Hyer, 54, of Dallas, who was Backpage's Sales & Marketing Director, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to facilitate prostitution using a facility in interstate or foreign commerce. Additionally, several Backpage-related corporate entities, including Backpage.com LLC, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to engage in money laundering.

Co-conspirator James Larkin, 73, died on July 31 before trial began. Lacey, Spear, and Brunst each face a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison on each money laundering count. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Gary M. Restaino for the District of Arizona, Special Agent in Charge Albert Childress of the IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) Phoenix Field Office, Assistant Director Luis Quesada of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division, Special Agent in Charge Akil Davis of the FBI Phoenix Division, and Inspector in Charge Carroll Harris of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Los Angeles Division made the announcement.



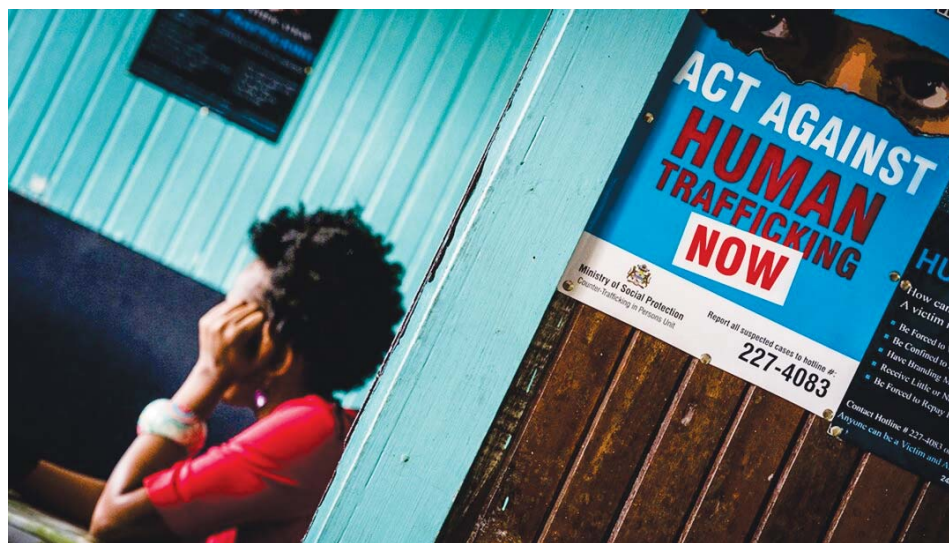
# Indian National Sentenced to 60 Months for His Leadership Role in Dangerous Human Smuggling Conspiracy

An Indian national was sentenced today for his leadership role in a complex, transnational conspiracy to smuggle aliens from India to the United States for profit, which claimed at least one life and endangered many others.

Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division and Special Agent in Charge Ivan Arvelo of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Puerto Rico made the announcement.

Yadvinder Singh Sandhu, 61, an Indian national, was sentenced to 60 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release. On Jan. 18, 2019, Sandhu pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy and 15 counts of smuggling aliens to the United States for profit before U.S. Magistrate Judge Silvia Carreño-Coll of the District of Puerto Rico. District Judge Carmen C. Cerezo accepted the guilty plea and sentenced the defendant. Sandhu was charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury in the District of Puerto Rico on March 15, 2017. Sandhu has also used the names "Yadvinder Singh Bhamba," "Bhupinder Kumar," "Rajinder Singh," "Robert Howard Scott" and "Atkins Lawson Howard."

According to admissions in Sandhu's plea agreement, since 2013, Sandhu had a leadership role in a human smuggling conspiracy operating out of the



Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, India and elsewhere. Sandhu admitted he personally assisted around 400 aliens to unlawfully enter the United States between 2013 and 2015 as part of the conspiracy. He also oversaw and directed co-conspirators operating out of the Caribbean.

Sandhu and other members of the conspiracy made flight arrangements for aliens to travel from India through other countries - including Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Iran, Panama, Venezuela, Belize and Haiti - to the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic was used as a staging area, where aliens were housed before being transported to the United States. The organization brought groups of aliens from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico or Florida by boat. Once the aliens

reached Puerto Rico or Florida, they were picked up by co-conspirators and taken to stash houses until flights could be arranged to California, New York, or elsewhere in the United States. Sandhu and others arranged for fraudulent identifications for some aliens to use in the United States.

The boat trips organized by Sandhu and his co-conspirators to transport aliens from the Dominican Republic to the United States were perilous. Boat captains used old, damaged, cracked, unlicensed, overcrowded and unsafe boats to make the journey. In at least one instance, an alien died in a boat on his way to the United States.

At times, the smugglers would take passports from the aliens during their journeys, physically assault them and threaten their families to collect money.

Aliens paid between \$30,000 and \$85,000 to be smuggled from India to the United States. From at least 2013 to 2016, human smuggling was Sandhu's primary source of income.

Members of the conspiracy, including Sandhu, would use false names or nicknames to communicate with the aliens and with each other. Sandhu, whom fellow smugglers and aliens knew as "Ruby," also instructed others to use false names or nicknames to avoid detection. Sandhu used fraudulent Indian, Dominican and Jamaican identifications for travel and financial transactions related to the conspiracy.

As part of the conspiracy, Sandhu directed associates to unlawfully smuggle 15 aliens to Puerto Rico in July 2016. Sandhu personally met the 15 aliens in various countries along their journeys, including in Dubai, Thailand, Iran, and the Dominican Republic, and he communicated with them throughout their journeys, which began approximately in January 2016. In some instances, Sandhu created and provided to authorities false employment documents on behalf of the aliens to obtain foreign visas. Sandhu also instructed aliens traveling through foreign airports how to find, and in some instances, pay cash to, corrupt immigration officials, passport control officers, or airport employees in order to bypass regular immigration and passport control procedures.

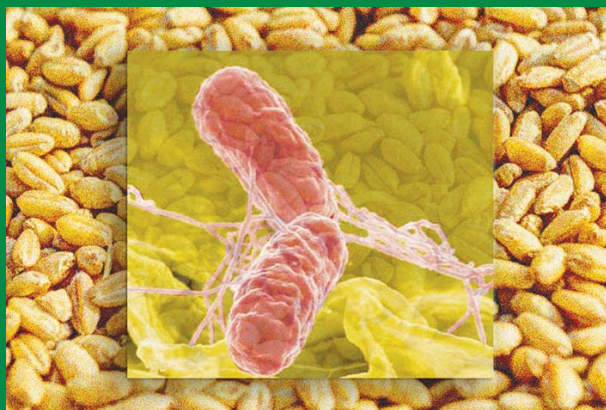
## Former Kerry Inc. Manager Pleads Guilty in Connection with Insanitary Plant Conditions Linked to 2018 Salmonella Poisoning Outbreak

A former quality assurance director for food manufacturer Kerry Inc. pleaded guilty today to charges related to the manufacture of a breakfast cereal linked to a 2018 outbreak of salmonellosis, or Salmonella poisoning.

Ravi Kumar Chermala, 47, pleaded guilty to three misdemeanor counts of causing the introduction of adulterated food into interstate commerce. Chermala, Kerry's Director of Quality Assurance until September 2018, oversaw the sanitation programs at various Kerry manufacturing plants, including a facility in Gridley, Illinois, that manufactured Kellogg's Honey Smacks breakfast cereal for Kerry's customer, the Kellogg Company. In pleading guilty, Chermala admitted that between June 2016 and June 2018, he directed subordinates to not report certain information to Kellogg's about conditions at the Gridley facility. In addition, Chermala admitted that he directed subordinates at the Gridley facility to alter the plant's program for monitoring for the presence of pathogens in the plant, limiting the facility's ability to accurately detect insanitary conditions.

"Food safety professionals cannot conceal potentially dangerous problems from customers or government regulators," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney

General Brian M. Boynton, head of the Justice Department's Civil Division. "The department will continue to work with its law enforcement partners to hold accountable those who engage in such conduct."



"Today's announcement reinforces that if an individual violates food safety rules or conceals relevant information, we will seek to hold them accountable," said Special Agent in Charge Lynda M. Burdelik, FDA Office of Criminal Investigations Chicago Field Office.

"The health of American consumers and the safety of our food are too important to be thwarted by the criminal acts of any individual or company."

In June 2018, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that an ongoing outbreak of salmonellosis cases in the United States could be traced to Kellogg's Honey Smacks cereal produced at Kerry's Gridley facility. In response, Kellogg's voluntarily recalled all Honey Smacks manufactured at the plant since June 2017. The CDC eventually identified more than 130 cases of salmonellosis linked to the outbreak, with illness onset dates beginning in March 2018. The CDC did not identify any deaths related to the outbreak.

Salmonellosis can cause symptoms such as diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps that last several days in healthy adults. Absent prompt treatment, salmonellosis can cause severe dehydration and even death in infants, young children, the elderly, transplant recipients, pregnant women, and individuals with weakened immune systems.

Chermala pleaded guilty before Magistrate Judge Jonathan E. Hawley in Peoria, Illinois. The sentencing date is scheduled for Jan. 30, 2023. Further information about the case will be posted to the department's Information for Victims in Large Cases website at <https://www.justice.gov/largecases>.