



The South Asian



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## Quad Summit Day 2: PM Modi discusses Indo-Pacific, China, Ukraine war, Covid-19



**Full Story  
on Page 30**

## UK PM Boris Johnson prepares for partygate report release

As well as his appearance in the House of Commons, Boris Johnson is also set to face a tough meeting of the powerful Tory backbench 1922 committee



(SAI Bureau) London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is on Wednesday preparing for the release of the long-anticipated partygate report into law-breaking parties at Downing Street, compiled by senior civil servant Sue Gray. Gray's interim report, critical of leadership failures, had triggered a police investigation under Scotland Yard's Operation Hillman. (Contd on page 29)

## Climate change: Are we doing our bit for environment?



(SAI Bureau) Climate change is real. Our Earth is dying a slow death. Whether one likes it or not, we are responsible for it in one way or the other. Unless we make right amends, nothing is going to change. It is not just about holding marches, discussions or coming up with innovative slogans or getting popular in the world by raising the voice. It is all about actually taking some corrective measures as if things go the way they are currently, we may be the reason for our own downfall. But yes, there is still time to make things right. For years, the world has been using fossil fuels excessively, resorting to deforestation, killing animals for sport, harming ocean life as we please, etc.

(Contd. on page 31)

## Russia-Ukraine conflict may be beginning of third world war; Putin told Jinping of special military ops: George Soros

Billionaire investor George Soros said that Xi approved of a special military operation of Ukraine by Russia, but asked Putin to wait until the conclusion of the Beijing Winter Olympics

(SAI Bureau) Davos: Billionaire investor George Soros has warned that Russia's invasion of Ukraine may be the beginning of the third world war and that the civilisation may not survive this war. He also said that China's President Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin are tied together in an alliance that has no limits. In his annual speech in Davos on Tuesday, Soros said the world must mobilise all resources to bring the war to an early end and the best and perhaps only way to preserve the civilisation is to defeat Putin as soon as possible.

(Contd. on page 31)



## World Bank rules out bridge financing or new loan commitments to crisis-hit Sri Lanka

The World Bank said that they are reshuffling the already allocated resources to provide essential medicines and other cash assistance to the vulnerable

(SAI Bureau) Colombo: The World Bank has ruled out bridge financing or new loan commitments to crisis-hit Sri Lanka until the island nation's economy sets up an adequate macroeconomic policy framework, the global lender has said. The statement by the World Bank came on Tuesday following reports that the Washington-based institution

(Contd. on page 31)



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# Indian-Origin Man Elected As Mayor In UK For Second Time

**Indian-Origin Man Elected As Mayor: Sunil Chopra was the mayor of the London Borough of Southwark in 2014-2015, and deputy mayor in 2013-2014, the first Indian-origin person to hold the prestigious office in the Borough**



(SAI Bureau) London: Indian-origin businessman Sunil Chopra has been elected as the mayor of London Borough of Southwark for the second time.

Delhi-born Sunil Chopra took the oath on Saturday at Southwark Cathedral, Montague Close in Central London. Chopra was the mayor of the London Borough of

Southwark in 2014-2015, and deputy mayor in 2013-2014, the first Indian-origin person to hold the prestigious office in the Borough. UK's Labour Party has gained victory over the Liberal Democrats in London Bridge and West Bermondsey seats under Mr Chopra's leadership. These seats were held by the opposition party for decades. This victory is important as the London Borough of Southwark Council has only 2 per cent Indian-origin people.

Mr Chopra entered UK politics in 2010 and was elected as the mayor of the London Borough of Southwark for the first time in

2014. He has also served as the Deputy mayor three times. His political journey started long before that in the 1970s in Delhi. He became the first president of the College of Vocational Studies, Delhi University in 1972. While pursuing LL.B. in 1973-74, he held the position of Supreme Councillor at Delhi University. Later, he also became NSUI (National Students Union of India) president for New Delhi. Mr Chopra has been living in London for over four decades and is actively involved in local community work. In 1979, after moving to the UK, Chopra started

a retail enterprise shop that grew into a wholesale business of children's garments and baby products.

Alongside, he took the opportunity to promote Indian culture by organising cultural events and community work. He co-founded an organisation, the Southwark Hindu Centre, for the Indian Community in the area. Mr Chopra also envisions the strengthening of economic and cultural ties between the UK and India. He is keen to promote Southwark locally and globally, and is passionate to bring diverse communities together.

## Jamaica Expressed Interest In Hosting Indian Institutes of Technology: President Ram Nath Kovind

**President Ram Nath Kovind said India is planning to start new Indian Institutes of Technology abroad and Jamaica is the first country that has expressed interest in hosting it.**



(SAI Bureau) India is planning to start new Indian Institutes of Technology abroad and Jamaica is the first country that has expressed interest in hosting it, President Ram Nath Kovind has

said. Kovind, the first Indian President to visit the island nation, on Tuesday said: "India is poised to become a knowledge economy that creates, disseminates and utilises knowledge to promote growth and development." He praised India's education sector, particularly its world-renowned institutes of excellence, with many of the alumni of the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) heading the largest businesses and technology companies in the world. "Under

our National Education Policy released in 2020, India is planning to start new Indian Institutes of Technology abroad. I am happy that Jamaica is one of the first countries to express interest in hosting an Indian Institute of Technology here," he said in his address to the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament of Jamaica. He said India's National Education Policy has also opened up specialised technical courses in premier Indian colleges and universities for foreign students. "Jamaican students should take advantage of this

opportunity of studying at some of the best institutions respected globally, charging only a fraction of the cost compared to western institutions," he said. Today, India and Indians are taking the lead in research and development on cutting-edge technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Meta-verse that form the basis of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, he said. "India is also the hub of start-ups and innovative technologies and is among the top three countries having the largest number of Unicorns," the president added.

## "First Time Kannada Spoken In Any Parliament": Canadian MP's Viral Video

**Chandra Arya represents the electoral district of Nepean, Ontario, in the House of Commons, the lower house of Canada**

(SAI Bureau) Chandra Arya, an Indian-born Canadian lawmaker, spoke in his mother tongue Kannada in the Canadian Parliament on Thursday and said that it's the first time the language was spoken in any parliament in the world outside India. A video of his address has gone viral.

Mr Arya, who represents the electoral district of Nepean, Ontario, in the House of Commons, the lower house of Canada, tweeted a video of his address, saying Kannada is a beautiful language spoken by about five crore people.

"I spoke in my mother tongue (first language) Kannada in the

Canadian parliament. This beautiful language has a long history and is spoken by about 50 million people. This is the first time Kannada is spoken in any parliament in the world outside of India," said Mr Arya.

"I am happy that I have got the opportunity to speak in my mother tongue Kannada. It is a matter of pride for 5 crore Kannadigas that someone who comes from Sira Taluka in Tumukuru district is speaking in Kannada after getting elected to the Canadian Parliament," he said in Kannada. His colleagues in the house greeted him with a big round of applause once he

finished. Mr Arya is from Tumkur district, about 70 kilometres from Karnataka capital Bengaluru. He was elected to the parliament as a Liberal party candidate in the 2019 general election. After finishing his master's degree in Business Administration from Dharwad in Karnataka, Mr Arya worked in the high-technology sector.

Several people have praised Mr Arya for speaking in his mother tongue in the Canadian parliament.

"Beautiful, this inspires me to learn Kannada," said one user. "This is how you wear your cultural and linguistic legacy



upon your sleeve. Also, it is the beauty of Canada which not tolerates but accepts such diversity," said another user. Mr Arya has held the vice

presidency of the Ottawa Community Immigrants Services Organization. He is now the Chair of the Indo-Canada Ottawa Business Chamber.





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# In A First, White House Officials Meet Indian-American Documented 'Dreamers'

The so-called documented dreamers, who are estimated to be about 250,000, grew up legally in the US but risk deportation when they turn 21

(SAI Bureau) Washington: For the first time, White House officials met a representative group of documented 'dreamers', mostly Indian-Americans, giving a patient hearing to their concerns regarding aging out and indicating that there may be positive moves so that they don't have to leave the country where they have spent almost their entire life.

The so-called documented dreamers, who are estimated to be about 250,000, grew up legally in the US but risk deportation when they turn 21.

"We look forward to seeing positive policy change, both administrative and legislative, to end aging out," said Improve the Dream, a youth-led grassroots organization that is fighting for the cause of the documented dreamers.

Early this week, a large representative group of Improve the Dream met Betsy Lawrence, Deputy Assistant to the President for Immigration, and Erika L. Moritsugu, Deputy Assistant to the President and Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander. Though these children have been coming to Washington DC for the past few years, this is for the first time that senior White House officials have met them.

"I really appreciated meeting the White House officials who took time out of their day to come and listen to our stories and were willing to help us. I enjoyed meeting them and would like to thank them for all they have done to help us. As the first group in our situation to meet White House officials at the White house, it was a surreal experience and one that I will not forget," said Sri Harini Kundu.

Mr Harini came to America when he was seven years old and since then has lived in three US states of Texas, New Jersey and currently in North Carolina.

He will turn 23 in September this year. "I am currently in a F1 student visa status and will have to self-deport once I finish my education. I am about to graduate in Fall 2022 with a bachelors in psychology from the University of North."



Eti and her twin sister Eva, who are now 25, were brought to the US at age seven when their father started his PhD. When they were in middle school, their father's employer sponsored their father and dependents for a green card. After aging out of their parents' visa and green card application, Eva and Eti hopped from temporary visa to temporary visa.

Eti told PTI, "For years, I felt like I was forgotten by the government. Because I was able to share my experiences of being a documented

dreamer who aged out and having my family separated, I finally felt like I was being heard. The Biden administration seems to be very empathetic to the hardships that thousands of us face every year. I feel more confident that some of the injustices will be resolved soon."

Eva was lucky enough to find an employer to sponsor her for a work visa and is about to enter the back of the 150-year-long green-card line, while Eti is on an international student visa to

complete her PhD and is currently in no line. Chandana Karumanchi said after years of feeling like she was alone and that her situation was out of control, the act of speaking to these government officials about her experience was truly an unforgettable moment. "The senior officials acknowledging our issues as real and in need of immediate response concerted the idea that documented dreamers have a place in American society. It really allowed me to feel like I belong here. By giving us an opportunity

to actively participate in our democracy, the senior White House officials have also let me to feel like I and everyone else that is apart of Improve the Dream could make a difference in our situation," she said. These children also attended a news conference hosted by influential lawmakers at the US Congress. "Attending the press conference yesterday and having a chance to speak my testimony with Representative Ross allowed for me to represent and fight for a change, not only for myself but for all 200,000 documented dreamers who struggle to pursue their dreams and careers with a constant fear and ticking clock of self deportation. It was an honour to be heard and now we have to put our words into action," said Fedora Castellino, who is 18 years old.

"I came to the US with my parents when I was seven years old, and have had a lifelong dream to serve in our nation's Armed Forces. Throughout high school, I pursued engineering with the hopes of one day joining an ROTC programme in college and having a future in the US Army Corps of Engineers. This, however, was not possible due to my limitations on an H-4 visa," he said.

## Indian-Origin Man Faces 21 Cheating Charges In Singapore

**The man is alleged to have cheated Chinese-origin Ooi Phaik Cheng and Indian-origin Marimuthu Therumalai in the timeshare recovery fraud**

(News Agency) Singapore: An Indian-origin man was charged in a Singapore court on Thursday for cheating two people of SGD 1.6 million under a timeshare recovery scheme that was linked to a payout agency in Bangalore.

Murlidharan Muhundan, 45, faces 21 charges of cheating, two charges of abetting cheating and another two charges of attempted cheating, according to a report by The Straits Times. He is alleged to have cheated Chinese-origin Ooi Phaik Cheng and Indian-origin Marimuthu Therumalai in the timeshare recovery fraud.

Mr Murlidharan deceived Ooi on 13 occasions into believing that "Bhagyam Agencies Bangalore" would provide a payout for her timeshare agreement, the broadsheet reported, citing court documents. She was duped

into paying Mr Murlidharan sums ranging from SGD 5,000 to SGD 100,000 between July 2020 and January last year. Mr Murlidharan also allegedly deceived Mr Marimuthu on 12 occasions, including making him believe that he had to pay a fine of SGD250,000 for taking photos at an office in Collyer Quay in November last year. Mr Marimuthu was also deceived into paying between SGD20,000 and SGD150,000 to Mr Murlidharan between July and November last year to receive payouts from his timeshare agreement, according to the Singapore daily report. Those convicted of any of these offences face an imprisonment term of up to 10 years and a fine. On Thursday, the police urged members of the public to be vigilant when receiving unsolicited calls from companies or individuals purporting to help them

recover monies from their timeshare memberships. Individuals are advised to be wary when someone calls them regarding their timeshare membership. They should refrain from providing any personal information or details on their timeshare membership to the caller. They are also urged to conduct back ground checks on the company's track record before engaging its services and request a copy of the documentation on its proposals, representations, contracts and agreements. The police also advised the public to be wary if the company is reluctant to provide documentation. They should check with the timeshare developer if the company had dealt with the former in the recovery of timeshare membership fees, and exercise extra caution if asked to make upfront payments.



# Telangana attracts huge investments on Day 1 of World Economic Forum Summit

On Day 1 of the World Economic Forum Summit in Davos, Telangana attracted an investment of Rs 500 crore from the Lulu Group, which will initially set up a food processing unit. Swiss Re, the world's oldest insurance company, will also set up an office in Hyderabad by August 2022



Ali for setting up the food processing sector and an processing units soon. The processing unit. Yusuf Ali said official announcement will be company's unit would export that besides this investment, made soon in this regard. He food processing products from they also have plans to set said they will be laying the Telangana to foreign countries in up another unit in the food foundation stone for their food Europe.

## Bribes for visas case: Truth shall prevail, says Karti Chidambaram ahead of CBI date

(News Agency) Congress MP Karti Chidambaram is likely to appear before the CBI on Wednesday to join investigation into an alleged scam pertaining to issuance of visa to 263 Chinese nationals in 2011 when his father P Chidambaram was the home minister, officials said. Karti, who has gone on a trip to the UK and Europe with the permission of the Supreme Court and a special CBI court, is scheduled to return on Tuesday. According to the special CBI court's order, he has to join the CBI investigation within 16 hours of his return. The case pertains to allegations of Rs 50 lakh being paid as bribe to Karti and his close associate S Bhaskararaman by a top executive of Vedanta group company Talwandi Sabo Power Ltd. (TSPL), which was setting a power plant in Punjab, the CBI FIR said. According to the CBI, the work for setting up the power project was being executed by a Chinese company and was running behind schedule. A

TSPL executive had sought re-issuance of project visa for 263 Chinese workers for which Rs 50 lakh allegedly exchanged hands, according to the CBI FIR. Karti Chidambaram has denied all allegations and said "if this is not harassment, not a witch hunt, then what is." In a statement issued on Tuesday, he said, "I am heading back home today, as was planned when I left 2 weeks ago for a work/family-visit trip to UK and Europe. It does not intimidate me that the central government is once again using its agencies to accuse me of a malicious and completely fabricated charge." "Previously, the agencies have gone after me based on the statement of an undertrial murder suspect. Now, they are basing their bogus charges on the alleged actions of a deceased person, whom I have never met. I intend to continue to fight every one of their motivated attempts to target my father through me," he said.

(News Agency) On the first day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Telangana IT and Industries Minister KT Rama Rao (KTR) held a series of meetings with various industry leaders at the Telangana pavilion. Huge investments have been announced for Telangana on day one. Many companies have come forward to invest in Telangana after their meetings with KTR, who is leading the Telangana delegation at the WEF 2022. Among others, the Lulu Group has come forward to invest Rs 500 crore in Telangana. The investment was announced during a meeting between minister KTR and the company head, Yusuf Ali, in Davos. Lulu Group will start their operations in the food processing sector in Telangana with a huge investment of Rs 500 Crore. On behalf of the Telangana government, minister KTR handed over the necessary permission documents to Yusuf



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# India-Turkey ties go back to Vedic ages, says Turkish envoy Firat Sunel



(News Agency) The Turkish Ambassador to India, Firat Sunel, has said that the ties between India and Turkey go "back to Vedic ages" as he emphasised on promoting more economic engagement. His comments come as both the countries are celebrating 75 years of the establishment of

their diplomatic relations. Speaking at the celebration of ties in Delhi on Saturday, ambassador Sunel said, "Turkey and India share deep-rooted historical and cultural linkages. The aspect of economic and cultural relations between ancient India and Anatolia dates back to the Vedic ages." Turkey and India established formal diplomatic ties in 1948 even though both sides have engaged in the past. A pre-independent India had extended support to the

Ottoman Empire after it was sanctioned following its defeat in World War One.

The ambassador, who is also a well-known author, explained, "India's rapid progress in different areas and ever-growing importance in the global economy and international politics since the 1990s has led Türkiye (Turkey) to develop a strategy that gives India high attention in the domain of South Asian politics." Bilateral trade between India and Turkey grew

to US\$ 9.3 billion last year. Noting the robust trade ties, the ambassador said, "Economic and commercial cooperation constitutes an important dimension of our relations. The trend in the first four months of this year indicates that we will easily exceed the 10-billion threshold in 2022." As the Covid crisis abates, the focus will be on re-establishing people-to-people links, Sunel said, hoping that "more than 1 million Indian tourists visit Türkiye annually."

## J&K Lt Guv Manoj Sinha assures security to protesting Kashmiri Pandit employees

**Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha met protesting Kashmiri Pandit employees and said all necessary security arrangements will be provided**



Governor Sinha paid a visit to protesting Kashmiri Pandit employees at Sheikhpura transit colony in Central Kashmir's Budgam district to appraise them of the actions being taken by the administration. He claimed that Kashmiri Pandit employees would be shifted to safer locations.

However, the minority community members have demanded the rehabilitation of all Kashmiri Pandit employees and Rs four crore ex-gratia for the family of deceased Bhat. They demanded all

Kashmiri Pandits be rehabilitated to safer locations as they don't feel safe in the Kashmir valley.

"If the demand of our relocation is not heeded upon, we are geared up for mass resignation as our last hope to save our families and prevent our children from getting orphaned," they said in a statement.

"We will not join our services till government deliberates upon our demands and comes out with necessary framework as the security scenario has totally failed to protect our lives," they

added, refusing to back down from the protests. Kashmiri Pandit Rahul Bhat, a government employee, was shot down by terrorists at the Tehsildar office in Chadoora on Thursday, May 14.

The very next day, Constable Riyaz Ahmad Thokar was shot in Gudoora in the same district. He succumbed to his injuries.

Two days after the killing of Rahul Bhat, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said that the shooting was targeted and that the SIT is probing the case from all angles.

(News Agency) Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday met protesting Kashmiri Pandit employees and assured security following the targeted killing of government employee Rahul Bhat by militants in the valley. Lt

## Quad Summit 2022: Action-packed schedule for PM Modi in Japan

(News Agency) When the Prime Minister of a country visits another country, it's usually fascinating to see how the local press covers his visit. We Indians are likewise more interested in hearing what the Japanese press and editorial boards have to say about our country and Prime Minister. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a jam-packed schedule for his visit to Japan.

On Narendra Modi's visit, the Japan Times carried a two-page piece headlined "Indian Prime Minister's Special Visits." He has several engagements planned for the day in Japan. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who arrived in Tokyo to participate in Quad summit, said that he sees Japan as an indispensable partner in India's



continuing transformation, asserting that New Delhi's speed and scale combined with ease of doing business, attractive incentives, bold reforms and ambitious plans create unmatched opportunities for Japanese businesses. This comes ahead of a bilateral meeting of PM Modi with his Japanese counterpart Fumio

Kishida. This will be their second meeting in two months.

The Quad summit will focus on strengthening collaboration among the important grouping's members and discussing developments in the Indo-Pacific region.

When he arrived in Tokyo, PM Modi was greeted warmly by the Indian diaspora at the hotel where he would be staying during his visit. The prime minister had meetings with Nobuhiro Endo, Chairman of NEC Corporation; Tadashi Yanai, President and CEO of UNIQLO; Osamu Suzuki, Adviser of Suzuki Motor Corporation, and Masayoshi Son, Board Director of Softbank Group Corporation on that day.



# Brother of Arjun Rampal's partner moves court over detention in drug cases

**Brother of Arjun Rampal's partner, Agisilaos Demetriades, has challenged his preventive detention by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in the Bombay High Court**



(News Agency) Brother of Court challenging his preventive Bollywood actor Arjun Rampal's detention by the Narcotic Control partner, South African citizen Bureau (NCB). The order of Agisilaos Demetriades, has preventive detention against him approached the Bombay High was passed on September 21,

2021, by the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PITNDPS) unit at the department of revenue at the Union ministry of finance.

The order was issued by Ravi Pratap Singh, the joint secretary to the Union ministry of finance's department of revenue, under Section 3(1) of the PITNDPS Act to prevent him from engaging in the illicit trafficking of drugs and psychotropic substances.

Demetriades is accused in two cases by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) which arrested him in the first case on October

18, 2020.

A day before he managed to get bail in that case, on November 6, 2020, the agency took his custody in the second case and arrested him on November 5. On December 15, 2020, Demetriades managed to get bail in the second case.

On September 24, 2021, the detention order was served to Demetriades at Goa, where he had been putting up after his bail. On April 20, 2022, Demetriades was picked up by the NCB sleuths again and brought to the Arthur Road prison in Mumbai, where he has been

lodged since. On April 23, he got the documents that showed the grounds for his detention.

While seeking an early hearing, Demetriades's lawyer Kunal Bilaney told a vacation bench of Bombay High Court on Monday that it's a matter of preventive detention and the petition challenges the order.

Seeking admission and issuance of the rule, advocate Shreeram Shirsat representing the NCB was also present in court.

The bench of Justices PD Naik and Abhay Ahuja agreed to hear Demetriades's plea on Friday.

## Shaivite seers demand action against YouTuber for derogatory remarks on Lord Nataraja

**Shaivite seers staged a protest in Tamil Nadu's Chidambaram demanding action against a YouTuber for his alleged derogatory remarks on Lord Nataraja**

(News Agency) Hundreds of devotees gathered in Tamil Nadu's Chidambaram to join a protest led by Shaivite seers demanding action against a YouTuber for his alleged derogatory remarks on Lord Nataraja.

The YouTuber 'Minor' Vijay had reportedly uploaded a video mocking Thillai Nataraja, the Hindu deity, in a derogatory manner on his YouTube channel 'U2 Brutus'. Vijay had allegedly mocked Lord Nataraja and Lord Kali's

cosmic dance about which several complaints were filed against him. As no action was taken, Sivanadiyar, a group of Shaivite monks, held a protest on Monday.

Damodara Swamigal, President of Sivanadiyar



Coordination Committee, criticised the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government for not taking action against Vijay.

"For the first time, we've come to the street to protest. 'Minor' Vijay who doesn't realise the Thandalam of Thillai Natarajar, has mocked it in a derogatory manner. This protest is not just against him but also for those who think like him and for the Dravidar Kazhagam men who refuse to believe in God," Swamigal said.

Hundreds of devotees gathered in Tamil Nadu's Chidambaram to join a protest led by Shaivite seers demanding action against a YouTuber for his alleged derogatory remarks on Lord Nataraja. The YouTuber 'Minor' Vijay had reportedly uploaded a video mocking Thillai Nataraja, the Hindu deity, in a

derogatory manner on his YouTube channel 'U2 Brutus'. Vijay had allegedly mocked Lord Nataraja and Lord Kali's cosmic dance about which several complaints were filed against him. As no action was taken, Sivanadiyar, a group of Shaivite monks, held a protest on Monday.

Damodara Swamigal, President of Sivanadiyar Coordination Committee, criticised the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government for not taking action against Vijay. "For the first time, we've come to the street to protest. 'Minor' Vijay who doesn't realise the Thandalam of Thillai Natarajar, has mocked it in a derogatory manner. This protest is not just against him but also for those who think like him and for the Dravidar Kazhagam men who refuse to believe in God," Swamigal said.

## Karnataka MLA urges BJP to bet on fresh faces amid cabinet expansion buzz

**Karnataka BJP MLA Renukacharya has urged the party to give opportunities to fresh faces in the cabinet**

(News Agency) Karnataka BJP MLA Renukacharya has urged the party to give an opportunity to fresh faces amid talks of cabinet expansion. He said that many state leaders keep getting opportunities, while others are overlooked. The political secretary to Chief Minister



Bommai has also expressed dismay over the party's decision not to give opportunities to new faces during previous cabinet rejigs.

Renukacharya said, "It is their decision and not my personal choice. I've met all our MLAs together and I've personally asked them to give me an opportunity as I've served as a three-time legislator. I've asked them frankly, I have worked

as an MLA in the past. I've experience, talent and I work in a manner that brings credit to both the organisation and the government. They should give priority to new faces because they are young." "Now, if you see, many people are getting chances repeatedly. In 2004, 2008 and 2018 they were there. Shouldn't others

also get priority in the party? Only they are competitive? Why don't they provide an opportunity? They should and I've discussed this with our leaders like Yediyurappa, CM Bommai and even BL Santosh," he added. There are currently 29 ministers in the state cabinet, including the chief minister, as against the sanctioned strength of 34.



# Why Maharashtra reducing Value Added Tax on fuel won't bring relief

**Consumers and dealerships were under the impression that the reduction in VAT was over and above the central government's announcement. However, that is not true**



(News Agency) After the central government cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 8 and Rs 6 respectively, the Maharashtra government issued a press note on Sunday saying that the state government has reduced Value Added Tax (VAT) by Rs 2.08 and Rs 1.44 per litre of petrol and diesel, respectively. Consumers and dealerships were under the impression that the reduction in VAT was over and above the central government's announcement. However, that is not true.

After the announcement by the Centre, VAT is automatically reduced since it's levied on an ad valorem (according to value) basis. The state charges VAT in percentage. The state is still charging the same amount of VAT on petrol and diesel. A reduction in petrol prices automatically lowers the VAT. Hence, it's a cascading-effect reduction in excise duty by the central government.

For states, this cut by the Centre will lead to an estimated loss of around Rs 2,500 crore a year. The reduction in VAT will bring down the state's revenue by Rs 80 crore per month in the

case of petrol and Rs 125 crore a month for diesel. The rate of petrol in Mumbai on Monday morning was Rs 110.43/litre and diesel was being sold at Rs 97.31. It's not true that the state government has given any relief to citizens, the former chief of the Federation of Petroleum Dealers Association (FAMPEDA), Ravi Shinde, told India Today TV. "The state will have to reduce the rate of VAT to reduce prices further."

The timing of the Centre's announcement caused losses to dealers, he added. "The announcement came on Saturday. Everybody knows that as supplies are shut on Sunday,

dealers buy double stock on Saturday so that there is no shortage on Sunday. It's sadistic to reduce prices by Rs 8 and Rs 6 on a Saturday. Dealers have suffered losses in the billions," he said.

The Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis, tweeted that the state is taking the credit away from the Centre. "In Maharashtra, a reduction of Rs 2.08 on petrol and Rs 1.44 on diesel is the effect of road and infrastructure cess reduction by Govt. Very surprising and serious that MVA Govt is taking credit of mere natural effects of Centre's decision and doing nothing to give relief to Maharashtraans," he wrote

## Focus on development, says Congress after Goa CM proposes renovation of temples

**Goa Congress has asked CM Sawant to focus on development instead as the state government pushes forward with the idea of renovating temples 'destroyed' by the Portuguese**

(News Agency) Goa Congress on Monday asked Chief Minister Pramod Sawant to focus on development as the ruling BJP proposed reconstruction and renovation of temples 'destroyed' by the Portuguese in the coastal state. Speaking to India Today, Leader of Opposition (LoP) Michael Lobo said he didn't have any opposition to the chief minister's move and that the party respected all religions, but added that the focus of the state government has to be on development. He added that there weren't any temples destroyed by the Portuguese in the state. "There aren't any destroyed



## CBI takes custody of 4 Dawood gang members wanted in 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case

**The CBI on Saturday took transit remand of four members of the Dawood Ibrahim gang wanted in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case**

(News Agency) The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday took transit remand of four alleged aides of fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim, wanted in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case. The four were nabbed by Gujarat ATS on May 17. The four accused in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case are identified as Abu Bakar, Yusuf Batla, Shoeb Baba and Sayyed Qureshi. They were arrested by Gujarat ATS while they were trying to use forged passports at Ahmedabad Airport. The accused were wanted for the past 29 years after 12 serial bomb blasts rocked the financial capital of India on March 12, 1993, killing 257 people and injuring 713. All four are said to be part of the Arjun gangs controlled by Dawood Ibrahim underling Mustafa Dossa, now deceased.



According to sources, the four participated in smuggling and transporting the RDX and explosives used in the blasts, and also moved AK-56 rifles, bomb triggers and other weapons in Mumbai. They had also attended meeting to plan the serial blasts at Dawood's home in the UAE. Sources said that the four accused, including Abu Bakar, had been shuffling between Pakistan and UAE on fake

identities and documents for past several years. Earlier in February, Abu Bakar was apprehended by Dubai police after a tip-off from Indian agencies. The CBI STF (Special Task Force) is investigating the 1993 serial blasts case. On Monday, the accused were produced in TADA (Terrorist Activities and Disruptive Activities Act) court which remanded them to seven days CBI custody.

temples. There were temples that were shifted from one place to another and they have been rebuilt. If temples are being rebuilt, then I would say we respect all religions. If the chief minister wants to work on some temples, then it is OK. But the focus must be on developing the state," Lobo said. Chief Minister Sawant, who till now has been stressing the need for making Goa an international tourist hub, is also laying emphasis on promoting temple tourism in the coastal state. He said discovery of rich cultural heritage needs to be done in villages and people need to be taken from the beach to the temples. Sawant has said that it is the duty of the state

government to bring tourists to the temples and also added that the budget for the same has already been allocated by the state government. Speaking on 'spiritual tourism' in Goa, the CM said, "Sun, sand and sea will also be the tourism factor in Goa, but apart from this, we will focus on the cultural aspects as well and that's why we have said that the government will help rebuild all the temples that were destroyed." The chief minister also claimed that during Portuguese rule many people were converted and many temples were destroyed and he saw nothing wrong in rejuvenating all of them



# Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay lands in trouble for 'provocative' speech at Hindu Ekta Rally in Karimnagar

**Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay said that all mosques in the state should be dug up and called for abolishing the 4% reservation for Muslims in the state. A minority group approached the Hyderabad Police demanding an FIR be filed against him over the provocative speech**



that Telangana BJP President Bandi Sanjay Kumar addressed a public meeting in Karimnagar on May 25 on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanthi. He delivered a highly provocative speech to create communal hatred among Hindus and Muslims. He used harsh and derogatory language against Islam and Muslims. He called for the digging of all mosques in Telangana while

alleging that they were built on temples."In his speech, Bandi Sanjay also called for ending the 4% reservation for Muslims in Telangana.

The letter also stated that Bandi Sanjay used highly derogatory words against the Urdu language and Urdu-speaking people.

"Bandi Sanjay's speech was full of hatred and aimed at

inciting violence. Therefore, we request you to kindly register a case against Bandi Sanjay under the relevant sections of the IPC and take necessary action. Lack of action or delay in registering a case might lead to deterioration of the law & order situation in Telangana as the minority community members are planning a huge protest against this

provocative speech by the BJP leader," said the letter.

The letter also said that inaction could encourage other leaders from both communities to deliver such hate speeches without the fear of the law. The Telangana Congress's minority department has also decided to lodge a complaint against BJP MP Bandi Sanjay in all 33 districts.

## IAS officer who vacated Delhi stadium to walk his dog transferred to Ladakh, wife to Arunachal

**Hours after media reports revealed gross misuse of the Thyagraj Stadium by Delhi's Principal Secretary (Revenue) Sanjeev Khirwar and his wife Rinku Dugga, the two IAS officers were transferred out of Delhi to Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, respectively**

(News Agency) A day after Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay demanded that all mosques in Telangana must be dug up to look for evidence of temples, the Majlis Bachao Tehreek (MBT) approached the Hyderabad Police and asked them to file an FIR against the BJP MP.

The MBT has also warned of huge protests if there was a delay in filing the FIR. The MBT approached the Hyderabad police and asked them to register a case against Bandi Sanjay Kumar for delivering a provocative speech to incite communal hatred and violence.

MBT leader, Amjadullah Khan, in his complaint to Dabeerpura police said, "This is to inform you

(News Agency) Sanjeev Khirwar, the bureaucrat who allegedly cleared a Delhi stadium to walk his dog, has been transferred to Ladakh amid outrage over his actions. His wife, Rinku Dugga, also a bureaucrat, has been transferred to Arunachal Pradesh. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) order came hours after media reports of the Indian Administrative Services' officer vacating Delhi's Thyagraj stadium so that he

could walk his dog. India Today has exclusively learnt that the MHA had sought a report from Delhi's Chief Secretary on the news report regarding the misuse of facilities at Thyagraj Stadium by Sanjeev Khirwar and his wife Rinku Dugga. The Chief Secretary submitted a report later in the evening on the factual position of MHA. "In the meanwhile, Sanjeev Khirwar has been transferred by MHA to Ladakh and Rinku Dhugga to Arunachal Pradesh.

Necessary action will be initiated based on the report," sources told India Today. Athletes and coaches training at the stadium were asked to wrap up training by 7 pm, earlier than usual. However, the stadium administrator, Ajit Chaudhary, denied the allegations made by the athletes. The

official time for athletes to train is till 7 pm, and after that, the coaches and athletes leave, he said. After a massive internet furore over the IAS officer's actions, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal ordered all stadiums in the national capital to remain open for players and their trainers till 10 pm.

## CBI raids 16 locations in Jharkhand 34th national games scam case

**The CBI raided 16 locations in Jharkhand, Bihar, and Delhi in connection with the 34th national games scam in Jharkhand**

(News Agency) The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday conducted searches at 16 places including Ranchi, Dhanbad, Bokaro, Godda, Dumka districts of Jharkhand, Bihar's Patna and in Delhi at the premises of the accused in the 34th national games scam case. A case

was filed to investigate alleged irregularities in the purchase of sports items, equipment and allied services during the 34th National Games, which was held in Ranchi in February 2011. The raids were conducted after an FIR was registered into the matter on the orders of the High Court.



which are being scrutinised." The other accused include PC Mishra, the then Director (Sports), Govt. of Jharkhand; SM Hashmi, the then Organising Secretary, National Games Organising Committee & Madhukant Pathak, the then Treasurer, Jharkhand Olympic Association.

## Two Lashkar terrorists killed in Srinagar; guns, incriminating materials recovered



(News Agency) Two terrorists, who were part of Lashkar-e-Taiba, were killed in an encounter by Kashmir Police in Srinagar's Soura. They have been identified as Shakir Ahmed Waza and Afreen Aftab Malik. Two terrorists were killed in Kashmir's capital, Srinagar, in the early hours of Friday, May 27. Kashmir Police killed the two terrorists in an encounter in Srinagar's Soura area. They were members of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). The two killed LeT terrorists have been identified as Shakir Ahmed Waza

& Afreen Aftab Malik, both residents of Trenz Shopian village. The two terrorists were in the 'C' category of terrorists. Police also found incriminating materials and arms & ammunition from them. One AK-47 and a pistol were recovered, reported ANI. Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, said that a total of 10 terrorists have been killed in encounters in the last three days. Seven of them belonged to LeT, while three belonged to Jaish-e-Mohammed. Further details are awaited.



# Held for post on Sharad Pawar, actor Ketaki Chitale's bail order on May 26

**A Magistrate court in Thane has reserved its order on the bail plea of Marathi actor Ketki Chitale, who was arrested for allegedly making an objectionable post about NCP chief Sharad Pawar**



(News Agency) A Magistrate court in Thane has reserved its order on the bail plea of Marathi actor Ketki Chitale, who was arrested on May 14 for allegedly making a disparaging post about NCP chief Sharad Pawar on social media. During the

hearing before the court of Magistrate Bhavika Parmar, the prosecution vehemently opposed Chitale's bail plea, stating there could be a law and order problem and that she may tamper with evidence if granted bail.

Advocate Ghanshyam Upadhyay, appearing for Chitale, argued that the entire case was politically motivated and was filed only to ensure that no one raises their voice against the government.

Upadhyay also pointed out, "Police had no authority to

arrest Chitale without complying with issuance of notice under Section 41A of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Chitale should not have been arrested under Section 500 (Defamation) of the IPC which is a non-cognizable offence.

After listening to arguments by both sides, the court posted bail order for May 26. Chitale had uploaded a poem about a "Pawar" which led to several FIRs being registered against her. After the actor was arrested by Thane Police and sent to judicial custody for 14 days,

Goregaon Police too sought custody as a similar case about the poem was lodged in the western suburbs of Mumbai. However, Upadhyay said the Goregaon Police never took her custody. Later on, an old case from Rabale police station in Navi Mumbai, registered in 2020, was raked up. The Rabale Police got five days' custody of Chitale on May 20 in the case registered under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act for allegedly posting derogatory comments about Buddhism

## J&K: Sheikh Abdullah's picture replaced with National Emblem of India on police gallantry medal

**On Monday, the J&K administration ordered replacement of 'Sher-i-Kashmir (Sheikh Mohd Abdullah)' on police medal for Gallantry and meritorious service. The authorities have asked the National Emblem of India to be embossed on the medal**

(News Agency) The Jammu and Kashmir administration has ordered replacing Sher-i-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah embossed on one side of the police gallantry medal with the National Emblem of India. An order by RK Goyal, principal secretary in home department, read, "It is hereby ordered that in modification to the Para 4 of the Jammu and Kashmir Police Medal Scheme, the Sher-i-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah embossed on one side of the medal shall be replaced with 'The National Emblem of Government of India'." "The other side inscribed with the J&K State Emblem shall be inscribed as 'Jammu and Kashmir Police Medal for Gallantry' and 'Jammu and Kashmir Police Medal for Meritorious Service' in case of Gallantry/Meritorious Medal, as

the case may be," the statement adds. It is important to mention here that earlier, in January 2020, the J&K administration had changed the nomenclature of police medal

reference to National Conference founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. It was dropped from the title of the J&K police medal months after the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A in August 2019.

for gallantry and police medal for meritorious service by dropping the word 'Sher-i-Kashmir' from the titles of the awards. 'Sher-i-Kashmir' was a reference to National

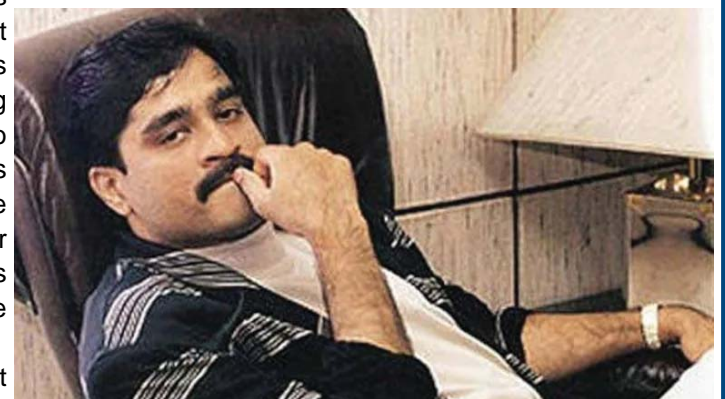
## Dawood Ibrahim is in Karachi: Gangster's nephew to Enforcement Directorate

**Dawood Ibrahim had left India around 1986, his nephew has told the financial probe agency**

(News Agency) India's most-wanted fugitive gangster, Dawood Ibrahim, is in Karachi, his nephew Alishah Parkar has revealed before the Enforcement Directorate, strengthening India's case that the neighbouring country harbours terrorists who have killed hundreds of Indians and caused havoc in the country. Alishah Parkar further said that his family also greets Dawood's wife during festive occasions.

Dawood Ibrahim had left India around 1986, Parkar has told the financial probe agency. Dawood Ibrahim is also a UN-designated global terror financier. "Dawood Ibrahim is my maternal uncle and he used to live on the fourth floor of the Dambarwala building in south Mumbai till 1986. I have heard from various sources and relatives that Dawood

Ibrahim is in Karachi," Parkar said in his statement.



"I was not born when he moved to Karachi and neither I nor my family members are in touch with him. Occasionally, on Eid, Diwali and other festive occasions, Mrs Mehjabeen Dawood Ibrahim - my aunt and my maternal uncle get in touch with my wife Ayesha and my sisters," he added.

## Baljeet Kaur becomes first Indian climber to scale four 8,000-metre peaks in less than one month

**Himachal's Baljeet Kaur has become the first Indian climber to scale four 8,000-metre peaks in less than one month**

(News Agency) Baljeet Kaur has become the first Indian mountaineer to scale four 8,000-metre peaks in less than a month after she successfully climbed Mount Lhotse, the fourth highest mountain in the world.

Kaur, the 27-year-old climber from Himachal Pradesh, scaled Mt Lhotse on Sunday and became the first Indian climber to have climbed four 8000-meter peaks in a single season, said Pasang Sherpa, Director at Peak Promotion Pvt Ltd. She successfully scaled the world's fourth-highest peak with her guide Mingma Sherpa, he said, adding that it was Kaur's fourth successful climb this spring season.

Baljeet and Mingma submitted Mt Annapurna I (8,091-metre) on April 28, Mt Kanchenjunga (8,586-metre) on May 12. On May 21, they scaled Mt Everest (8,849 metre), Pasang said.



# Sena may field Kolhapur leader in Rajya Sabha polls amid impasse with Sambhajiraje

According to party sources, if talks fail with Chhatrapati Sambhajiraje, the Sena will field Sanjay Pawar, its Kolhapur district head



(News Agency) Shiv Sena has an alternate name lined up to be fielded as the party's second candidate in the upcoming Rajya Sabha election as talks with the Sena will field Sanjay Pawar,

its Kolhapur district head. Earlier today, Chhatrapati Sambhajiraje, while speaking to the media in Kolhapur, said that he had a detailed conversation with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. "Everything will be done as discussed," Raje said before leaving for Mumbai for further discussions. Meanwhile, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut reiterated that only Shiv Sainiks - the nomenclature for party workers - will be fielded as the party's second candidate and Sanjay Pawar from Kolhapur has been shortlisted. The process of scrutinising his documents is

underway at the party office. "Uddhav Thackeray will soon officially announce the name of the candidate for our second Rajya Sabha seat," he said. Sanjay Pawar also confirmed to India Today that he has been asked to keep his documents ready in case the party asks him to file a nomination. "We all respect Chhatrapati Sambhajiraje as the scion of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. But the word of my party supremo will be the last for me," he said. However, Shiv Sena had invited Chhatrapati Sambhajiraje to join Shiv Sena on Monday. But Raje

declined the offer and remained firm on contesting as an Independent candidate with the support of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. The Rajya Sabha election is slated to be held on June 10. The window for filing nominations will be between May 24 and May 31. Of the six seats from Maharashtra, the BJP could win two seats. The three parties of the MVA coalition - the Shiv Sena, the Nationalist Congress party (NCP) and the Congress - can win one seat each. The suspense around the candidature for the sixth seat still looms.

## RCP Singh leaves Patna as nomination for RS polls begins, suspense over his candidature continues

**Rajya Sabha MP RCP Singh left Patna amid speculation that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was not in favour of nominating him for a third term in the Upper House**

(News Agency) Even as the Rajya Sabha polls, slated to be held on June 10. RCP Singh's return to Delhi on the Tuesday, Union Steel Minister and MP RCP Singh left Patna amid speculation that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was not in favour of nominating him for a third term in the Upper House. Senior JD(U) leaders and legislators have authorised last few days. The Bihar CM Nitish Kumar to take the final decision regarding selection of the party's lone candidate for

Sabha MP left for Delhi. RCP also did not respond to media queries at Patna airport while returning to the national capital.

Amid suspense over RCP's fate, the Union Minister's Twitter bio has sent rumour mills churning. In his Twitter bio, RCP Singh mentions that he is the Union Steel Minister, a Rajya Sabha MP, a 1984 batch IAS officer, a 1982 batch IRS officer and an alumnus of



JNU. He has omitted the fact that he is a JD(U) leader. What's more, the cover picture in RCP's Twitter account is of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which has again got

tongues wagging. Amid intense speculation over RCP's Rajya Sabha candidature, all JD(U) functionaries remained tight-lipped and only said that the final decision rests with Nitish Kumar.

## Artificial Intelligence to make roads in India safer to drive

(News Agency) Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered solutions may soon make roads in India a safer place to drive. The Indian government on Tuesday announced that a technology-fueled by AI could reduce the risk of road accidents in the country, which killed over one lakh people in 2020.

In a bid to prevent this from happening, the Indian government said that the AI approach will use a first of its kind dataset consisting of 10,000 images. It said that this dataset is finely annotated with 34 classes collected from 182 drive sequences on Indian roads obtained from a front-facing camera attached to a car driven around the cities of

Hyderabad, Bangalore, and their outskirts.

India's Ministry of Science and Technology said that this unique approach uses the predictive power of AI to identify risks on the road, and a collision alert system to communicate timely alerts to drivers, to make several improvements related to road safety. It is being implemented in Nagpur, Maharashtra and the government aims to spread it across India.

The project aims to reduce road accidents. According to WHO, road accidents kill as many as 1.35 million people across the world each year.

"The project 'Intelligent Solutions for

Road Safety through Technology and Engineering' (iRASTE) at Nagpur will identify potential accident-causing scenarios while driving a vehicle and alert drivers about the same with the help of the Advance Driver Assistance System (ADAS).

"The project will identify 'grey spots', i.e., by data analysis and mobility analysis by continuously monitoring dynamic risks on the entire road network," the Indian government said.

Grey spots are locations on roads, left unaddressed could become blackspots (locations with fatal accidents).

The system also conducts continuous monitoring of roads and

designs engineering fixes to correct existing road blackspots for preventive maintenance and improved road infrastructure, government officials said. The iRASTE project is under the I-Hub Foundation, IIIT Hyderabad, a Technology Innovation Hub set up in the technology vertical- Data Banks and Data Services, supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST). I-Hub Foundation has used techniques ranging from machine learning, computer vision and computational sensing for several other data-driven technological solutions in the mobility sector.



# Tigers are mysteriously disappearing from one of India's most important national parks



surrounding areas. It is not possible to say anything right now. We are taking the help of villagers to try and locate the missing tiger," said Sariska's field director RN Meena. Meanwhile, State Forest department official Aridam Tomar said, "Tigers have died in the country and our state. A campaign is run by the department to curb the poaching of tigers." According to a report published in 'The Independent', ST-13 fathered dozens of cubs and descended from tiger royalty but his disappearance has brought back the spectre of poaching

and rumblings of a cover-up to Tiger Point in Sariska Tiger Reserve. This semi-arid region of western India's Aravalli Hill Range was once the tiger's ideal habitat, where it could stalk its plentiful supply of prey, chital, sambar, and wild pig, across Sariska's 880 square km (340 square miles) of scrubland, forests, and ravines. But it now lies virtually empty after losing its main attraction. Forest officials say the annual number of visitors to the reserve has halved to 30,000 since the tigers disappeared. According to wildlife groups, people living inside the forests pose a threat

to the tigers as they are often hired by organized poachers to kill the tigers.

The villagers also resort to felling trees for fuel wood, as well as keeping herds of cattle which compete for grazing pastures with the tiger's prey.

Authorities plan to relocate the villages in the core area of the reserve but so far only two of the 11 villages have agreed to relocate for a compensation package that includes 100,000 rupees (\$2,440) per family.

If the relocation of the two villages is successful, it will convince other villages to follow, say officials.

(News Agency) Tigers are mysteriously disappearing from the Ranthambore National Park and the Sariska Tiger Reserve in India. According to forest officials, over a dozen tigers have gone missing. This has raised concerns about the effectiveness of the claims made by forest reserves in Rajasthan. "We are looking for the tiger in

# India looking to host G20 summit in October or November 2023

(News Agency) India is gearing up to host the G20 summit in October or November of 2023. Preparation is in full swing including the construction of a mega state-of-the-art summit venue at Delhi's Pragati Maidan. In addition to the summit, India will be hosting 190 meetings across the country under its yearlong presidency starting first December this year. Indian govt could, as part of its discretion invite other countries to take part in the summit, something that previous G20 Presidency have been doing. New Delhi is already in the G20 governance structure called the troika which consists of

Indonesia, Italy, and India - the current, previous, and incoming G20 Presidencies, respectively. It will be for the first time it hosts the summit of the grouping since it was formed after the 2008 financial crisis.

Indonesia is the current chair of the group. It hosts the summit in November, in Bali. One of the key issues dominating the agenda is the participation of Russian President Putin which many western members of the group do not want. Over the weekend, Indian external affairs minister Dr S Jaishankar & Indonesia's Foreign Retno Marsudi held talks, with a key focus on G20.



In a tweet statement, EAM said, 'exchanged views on G20 developments and progress. India is fully supportive of the Indonesian Presidency.' The grouping was formed after 2008 financial crisis but increasingly taking other roles

as well, as United Nations is found missing to take collective action. Amid the covid crisis, grouping under Saudi leadership in 2020 had emergency meeting to deal with the pandemic including injecting financial support. India

is among the founder member of the grouping which basically includes the top 20 economies of the world. G20 has taken collective action against issues like tax avoidance, debt time wavier to developing countries etc.

# Power thefts costing Punjab Rs 1200 crore annually

While the urban areas account for Rs 700 crore power theft, pilferage worth Rs 500 crore has been reported in the rural areas

(News Agency) Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) is struggling to stop pilferage of power. According to an estimate, power thefts are costing the state of Punjab Rs 1200 crore annually. While the urban areas account for Rs 700 crore power theft, pilferage worth Rs 500 crore has been reported in the rural areas.

Border areas including the Bhikhiwind, Patti and Zira sub divisions of PSPCL were the top defaulters and account for 44 per cent of the losses, which have been estimated at around Rs 552 crore.

The PSPCL has now launched a crackdown on those who have been

stealing power and causing losses to the state exchequer. Besides the domestic, commercial consumers, many police officials and police stations, besides the Deras, have also been found stealing power.

Besides three dozen police stations in various parts of the state, 23 out of a total 124 police staff quarters in Punjab Armed Police complex have been found stealing power.

PSPCL officials have imposed a fine of Rs 6.50 lakh on the cops who were found stealing power in Jalandhar



used magnets to stop the power metres, some were found stealing power directly from the supply line. Recovering the pending power bill payments and taking action against

the people found guilty of power theft is not that easy. A PSPCL team was roughed up by the locals in a Ferozepur village when the officials tried to recover the unpaid amount. Not only the domestic and commercial consumers but the state government departments have also defaulted power bill payments. Various government departments are yet to pay pending power bills worth Rs 2,669 crore. The state government has yet to pay a power subsidy bill of Rs 9,020 crore for the year 2021-22 on account of free power to the farmers and other beneficiaries. The state government owes a total Rs 11,699 crore to PSPCL.



## A short history of Pakistan's many long marches

Imran Khan disbanded a protest march by his supporters on Thursday (May 26) after clashes with police outside Pakistan's Parliament, but threatened to "return" to Islamabad with the "entire nation" unless the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called an election within six days.

On Thursday morning, workers and supporters of Imran's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) entered Islamabad's Red Zone where they were being stopped by police, the Pakistan Rangers, and other law enforcers with "patience", Dawn reported, quoting a police spokesperson. The Red Zone contains important government buildings such as Pakistan's Parliament, Supreme Court, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Secretariat. Earlier on Wednesday, the Pakistani government had blockaded all major roads leading to the capital, after the former Prime Minister issued a clarion call to his supporters to march to Islamabad.

Imran's own convoy had entered Punjab from Attock on Wednesday evening, after his supporters removed barricades placed by the government on the Attock bridge, media reports from the country said.

Imran had announced his long march on Sunday (May 22) to demand the immediate dissolution of the National Assembly and a date for new general elections. Since he was ousted by a parliamentary vote of no-confidence in April, Imran has sought to put pressure on the Sharif regime by holding rallies across the country that have drawn massive crowds.

Street power has played an important role in Pakistan's political history, with political opponents, civil society groups, and at times the country's masses as a whole occupying key cities like Islamabad. Long marches, particularly over the past two decades, have come to be the catalyst that has led to change in the government.

Underlying this tradition is the belief that changing political representatives can lead to some kind of overall political transformation. Ironically, however, the leaders who have been at the forefront of the street movements have often ended up facing such movements themselves.

Here's a look at some significant "long marches" in Pakistan's history.

\* Popular protests and demonstrations are not a new phenomenon in Pakistan. In 1968, one of the first mass uprisings — which included 10-15 million students and workers — erupted against the regime of the military dictator Ayub Khan. Facing immense pressure, Ayub Khan was forced to resign in 1969.

\* In 1977, an important demonstration was launched by the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), which sought the removal of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. It eventually resulted in the removal of Bhutto by a military coup, under the orders of

General Zia ul-Haq.

\* The first major protest in Islamabad took place in July 1980. Dawn reported that demonstrators from Pakistan's minority Shia community, led by Mufti Jaafar Hussain, besieged the federal secretariat in response to the implementation of the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance by Zia's government.

They were protesting against the "enforced deduction" of zakat (religious charity/ tax), and eventually the dictator succumbed to their demands and excluded Shias from the tax.

In 9 March 2007, General Pervez Musharraf unconstitutionally suspended the Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. This resulted in the first long march to Islamabad, with Justice Chaudhry and lawyer leaders demanding his reinstatement.

Chaudhry's suspension led to fierce opposition from the lawyer community who organized the Adliya Bachao Tehreek (Save the Judiciary Movement), with around 80,000 lawyers joining hands to demand the reinstatement of Chaudhry and the restoration of judicial independence.

While Chaudhry was reinstated following the protests, in November 2007 Musharraf imposed an emergency in the country and the Chief Justice was removed once more, along with 60 other judges.

This was not the end of the movement. In June 2008, the lawyer community once again hit the road in a long march to Islamabad. The purpose of the four-day march was to demand the resignation of Musharraf and the reinstatement of the 60 other judges who were deposed during the 2007 Emergency rule. The lawyers were joined by political activists and civil society organisations; an estimated 500,000 people took part in the movement. The movement also shaped the political landscape of Pakistan. The 2008 elections saw the resurgence of the two major parties, the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). In the wake of mass discontent, Musharraf resigned the following year. The new government led by the PPP, and with Asif Ali Zardari as President, did not reinstate the judges, however. The lawyers started their protest again in 2009, culminating in a nationwide long march to Islamabad. This protest was led by Nawaz Sharif, whose party, the PML-N had withdrawn from the government. The march ended in Gujranwala, before it could reach the capital, after Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani announced that Chaudhry and the 60 other judges would be reinstated in their positions. On August 14, Pakistan's 67th Independence Day, Imran Khan's PTI launched the Azadi March. The massive rallies that began from Lahore and ended in Islamabad were driven by accusations that the PML(N) had rigged the general election in May 2013.

## US launches Indo-Pacific trade treaty with 12 nations together with India

By Susmita Ghosh

US President Joe Biden, announced the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) on a massive development. Twelve countries have joined the US in a trade agreement to boost their economies and to stay prepared for the future fluctuation of wealth as well. President Biden contradicted the predictability of recession in the US with this development. The trade deal will be a boon to the participating countries like the United States. Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam who have joined the US in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. The Indo-Pacific trade deal will focus on strengthening long-term ties with India and promote healthy relations in the future. This will help to improve the economies and employment of both India and America. It will also allow the development of new industries in remote locations and promote overseas trade. Besides, this will enhance the import and export of raw and finished goods across both the parties, hence improve the economy over time. After the disruptions caused by the pandemic and the Russian-Ukraine conflict, most of the nations are seeing a massive economic decline. Consequently, the joint venture between India and America will help to recover the losses generated in the economy for the past few years. The Indo-Pacific framework will enable the US and Asian economies, including India to collaborate more closely on the problems like

supply chains, digital trade, clean energy, worker protections and anti-corruption operations. Besides, it will also allow India to embrace itself in sudden recession and to the best precautions on time. The trade deal will also help to improve the security at the

frontiers for both India and America and lead to the development of the transport sector. Both India and America will be relying on Air and seaways to

exchange goods and promote trade. This will lead to the expansion of multiple ports and airports across various locations in both the countries. Besides, Biden administration stated that the most advanced technologies will be used in the transport sector, help allow hassle-free exchange of goods between both the nations. This trade deal will help to improve the relationship between the southeast nations and allow their interest to improve trade stability. Among them, India will find a new way to improve its economy and implement new technologies in the services sector. This will allow more foreign investments in India and lead to the development of foreign industries. Accordingly, there is a high scope of employment among the people in India in the forthcoming years. In all, the Indo-Pacific Economic framework is a great option to prevent recession and improve the trade activities in the future. This will also lead to the development of new technologies and prevent any kind of recession. It will also allow the nations to cope up with the losses that were being generated for the past two years due to the pandemic.

**The Indo-Pacific framework will enable the US and Asian economies, including India to collaborate more closely on the problems like supply chains, digital trade, clean energy, worker protections and anti-corruption operations. Besides, it will also allow India to embrace itself in sudden recession and to the best precautions on time**

**Imran Khan has given the government of Shehbaz Sharif 6 days to call fresh elections, failing which he will bring the 'entire nation' to Pakistan. Street power has long played an important role in Pakistan's political history, with thousands of protesters coordinating to periodically lay siege to Islamabad**

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# The underappreciated honesty of Karan Johar

KJo is 50. It's easy to think his cinema is just cliché wrapped in consumerism that hasn't evolved. But there's skill and honesty in his work



Johar film work — skill and honesty. Even in 2001 — when he was barely a teenager — my friend hated Karan Johar and Shah Rukh Khan. Back then, the issues he had with the young director were not the same as those he has today: How Johar's films are cliché, a sort of cultural junk food that makes it all the more difficult to appreciate things with more depth and subtlety.

And, of course, the fact he is responsible for the revival and spread of multiple regressive notions, from Karva Chauth to blatant consumerism, from the untethered nationalism of the NRI to the celebration of the patriarchal notions of authority within families. In 2001, he just hated Johar-Shah Rukh because they made soppy films that had no action. They weren't the right kind — unlike Sunny Deol or Salman Khan flicks — of mass entertainers. And all of them basically had the Betty-Veronica Archie comics dichotomy.

Karan Johar just turned 50. Apart from some thoughtful and sensitive — though not groundbreaking by any measure — short films in anthologies like Bombay Talkies, it is easy to argue that he has simply not

evolved as a filmmaker in almost 25 years. The “ek tarfa pyaar” in Ae Dil Hai Mushkil (2016) is, in essence, the same as Anjali's pining for Rahul in Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998). As a director, he has not broken the mould with visual or technical creativity. He has worked, more often than not, with stars that can be seen as carrying the film. These criticisms are well taken. But they elide exactly what makes a Johar film work — skill and honesty.

The melodrama is a legitimate form of entertainment and pulling it off requires skill. Johar, more than a director, is a great writer. He can manipulate the audience — make no mistake, every filmmaker tries to — into laughing, crying and perhaps even cringe-worthy feelings of soppy patriotism (remember the kid in K3G singing the national anthem in the worst angrez accent?). He knows how a plot turns and he manages to place archetypes (unrequited love, filial conflict, romantic triangles) and place them in the consumerist ethic that has come to define aspiration in post-liberalisation India.

Johar is criticised, as one colleague put it, “for the films he

has not made”. In his entertainers, the conflict is limited to emotion, not to the circumstances of his characters. There is never a battle of ideas, only of feelings. But that is not his aim, those are not the stories he wants to tell. In the ones he does, there is an honesty of purpose. Unlike, say, what is done in a film like Luck By Chance (directed by Zoya Akhtar), he is a Bollywood insider who does not cynically decry the industry in which he grew up. Most important of all, he appears to believe in his characters, and while they may be a bit over-the-top, he is genuine in the way writes of their joy and pathos. Johar, the director, is in his own way as successful as Johar the talk-show host. He doesn't pretend to be a journalist or a chronicler of conflict and suffering in either role. And in both formats, his content is the guilty pleasure for many a “serious” viewer. Even my friend, the Johar-hater, was weeping during the climax of K3G. “Yaar, Amitabh did love Shah Rukh”. The characters did not matter. But even he couldn't escape the skill of Johar's cinematic manipulation.

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## The Indian consumer will have to spend more for a little longer

Pressure on prices of agricultural commodities will take time to soften. This should be after the Russia-Ukraine conflict de-escalates and the impact gradually fades away



The drivers of current inflation are exogenous, but their second-round effects, as domestic demand improves and feeds into inflation expectations, are becoming a source of concern. Research has shown that the frequency of purchase, rather than the

share of expenditure, shapes inflation-related expectations of consumers.

Take food, for example. Not only is around 40 per cent of overall consumer spending on food, its purchase frequency is also higher. Thus rising prices have a stickier impact on inflation

expectations.

Already, food inflation, at 6 per cent on average in the past three years, is significantly higher than the pre-pandemic five-year average of 3.5 per cent. It has risen in recent months, making it difficult for monetary policy to anchor inflation expectations. So

why is food inflation surging? There are three reasons: One, a surge in transportation costs; two, rising cost of production; and three, elevated global food prices. The first two are already being passed on to retail prices. The Russia-Ukraine war is affecting everything, even food

prices in a nation where most of what is consumed is produced locally. In April, the consumer price index-based inflation for food had reached 8.4 per cent. While that's the headline, inflation is also broad-based within the category. Initially, it started picking up for imported commodities — global food prices have been surging since the war began, with edible oils and cereals rising the most. But now, domestically produced items are getting caught in the price fire. Crucially, there is little monetary and fiscal policies can do to soften the primary exogenous blow in the short-term.

For instance, a sharp rise in transportation costs has pushed up retail prices of agricultural commodities.

(Contd. on page 32)



# With China Back on USA's Radar, the Quad is on Track With Renewed Vigour

The Quad has come a long way since its revival in 2017. Its leading faces have changed as well in the last five years, with one exception— Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, and with that India's style of engagement with the Quad is also seeing a transition marked by girded realism. As former US President Donald Trump, former Japanese Prime Minister and chief architect of the Quad Shinzo Abe, and former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison go missing from the dais— a new set of world leaders have inherited the Quad in the last sixteen months while PM Modi brings an element of continuity.



The world has also changed in the last five years— the Covid pandemic, a new US leadership, a Taliban-led Afghanistan, Russia's war on Ukraine and rising global inflation collectively slowed down the Quad's initial zeal to pull the rug from under China's feet. However, in recent months the Quad question revolved around the possibility of being derailed, the meeting in Tokyo this week has given a much-needed impetus to its agenda and restored hope in the Quad's potential in the coming years.

Most notable in this Tokyo

summit was the Quad's infrastructural push of \$50 billion which signals a joint effort by the four nations in countering China's Belt and Road presence in the Indo-Pacific. In the backdrop of the Sri Lankan crisis, a Quad Debt Management Resource Portal has been unveiled to counter China's debt-trap diplomacy. The announcement of a "US-led" IPEF and an initiative against Chinese maritime militia also significantly bolster the Quad's standing. The rapport between President Biden and PM Modi also reflected an uptick as President Biden

acknowledged the Indian democracy's success in delivering, especially in its tackling of the Covid outbreak and its remarkable vaccination programme.

## STICKING TO THE CORE AGENDA

The bone of contention arising from Russia's war on Ukraine and India's stern refusal to pick sides also fell flat as fellow Quad leaders see it wise to not repeatedly annoy India and put a pause to the argument. While Russia was explicitly mentioned in the public statements of President Biden and Prime

Minister Kishida, the joint statement stopped shy of naming Russia with notably no change in India's position, driving home India's long-held view that the Quad's agenda should not be diluted. On China, however, the message was sharp. The joint statement said, "The Quad is committed to cooperation with partners in the region who share the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.... We will champion adherence to international law, particularly as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the maintenance of freedom of

navigation and overflight, to meet challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including in the East and South China Seas." In reference to China's belligerence in the seas, it also said that the Quad strongly opposes "any coercive, provocative or unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo and increase tensions in the area, such as the militarization of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities."

In what can be considered a mark of India's continued diplomatic success, its Quad peers also condemned terrorist attacks in India including 26/11 Mumbai and Pathankot attacks. "We reaffirm that in our fight against global terrorism, we will take concerted action against all terrorist groups, including those individuals and entities designated pursuant to the UNSC Resolution 1267(1999)," said the joint statement highlighting the resolution under which Pakistan-based terror groups Laskar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad are listed.

(Contd. on page 32)

## What wins votes today is 'trust capital'

Unlike charisma, which denotes the magical pull of a political leader, trust capital is acquired slowly by building connections and delivering on promises

The most valuable asset in the political arena today is "trust capital". It has emerged as the key factor in ensuring the winnability in elections. This trust is acquired as a result of the intricate weaving of three elements — commitment (mansa), words (vachashabd) and action (karm).

Interestingly, the word "charisma" — used to understand the performance of candidates and parties in elections before the 1990s — is rarely used today, even for leaders who have a deep influence on a large section of the Indian people. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the most prominent example of this.

To analyse the charismatic effects of such political leaders, analysts are increasingly using phrases like trust capital. The term bears, on the one hand, impressions of market-driven terminology that became dominant post the 1990s and on the other hand, they speak of a political reality: Politicians

need to forge trustworthiness by responding to people's aspirations.

Unlike charisma, which denotes the magical pull of a leader, trust capital is acquired slowly by building connections and delivering on promises. (Express File Photo/Jasbit Malhi)

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Trust capital is not the same as the phrase, "vishwas ki punji", used by common people in their everyday lives in northern India. This new term is, however, rooted in the social values related to vishwas (trust). It acquires new meaning after getting intertwined with practices related to image building, effective messaging and aggressive advertising of the initiatives and achievements of leaders and parties. Political entities that succeed in gaining the trust of the public as a result of varied engagements with the people through oral, written and visual communications

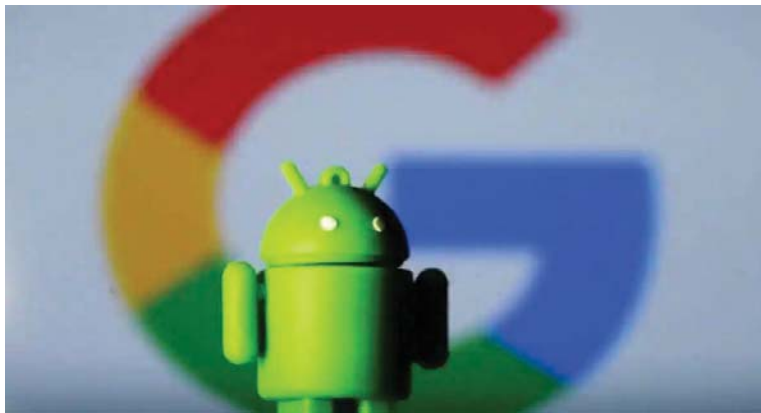
gain success in electoral politics.

Unlike charisma, which denotes the magical pull of a leader, trust capital is acquired slowly by building connections and delivering on promises. It's also linked to the reception given by people to the performances of politicians. An appropriate political agenda, proper distribution of resources, successful delivery and positive impacts of welfare programmes contribute towards enhancing trust capital. Primordial identities such as caste and religion as well as the social and moral standing of leaders and parties help them to consolidate this hard-earned public trust. No one can deny that PM Modi has the greatest amount of trust capital in Indian politics today. People trust him, despite the criticism circulating in a section of social media. That is one of the reasons for the BJP's victory in the recent state elections — and in past elections as well.

(Contd. on page 32)



# Google's warning: New Predator spyware targeting Android phones| What is it ?



## spyware?

According to Google, the spyware has reportedly been developed by a company named Cytrox. The University of Toronto had described Cytrox as a North Macedonian startup. The report noted that "Cytrox appears to have a corporate presence in Israel and Hungary." "Cytrox's Israeli companies were founded in 2017 as Cytrox EMEA Ltd," the researchers at Toronto said. The researchers revealed Cytrox is part of "Intellexa alliance" which is apparently a marketing label for mercenary surveillance vendors. TAG said it has been tracking 30 surveillance vendors.

"We assess with high confidence that these exploits were packaged by a single commercial surveillance company, Cytrox, and sold to different government-backed actors who used them in at least the three campaigns," Google said in its blog.

## Where have the strikes been confirmed?

Google's TAG team in a blog said: "Consistent with findings from CitizenLab, we assess likely government-backed actors purchasing these exploits are operating (at least) in Egypt, Armenia, Greece, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Serbia, Spain and Indonesia."

The blog informed that the hacking took the form of one-time links mimicking URL shortener services to the targeted Android users via email. "We assess that these campaigns delivered ALIEN, a simple Android malware in charge of loading Predator, an Android implant described by CitizenLab in December 2021." Google said tracking the commercial surveillance industry would require a "robust" approach which can be done through intelligence teams, network defenders, academic researchers and technology platforms.

According to Google's Threat Analysis Group (TAG), spyware named Predator has been targeting Android devices. The University of Toronto along with Citizen lab had earlier published a report saying Egyptian exiled politician Ayman Nour's phone was infected with both Cytrox's Predator and NSO Group's Pegasus spyware which was operated by "two different government clients."

## What is the Predator

# Trump-Endorsed Republicans Falter in Georgia Primaries

Republican incumbents who earned the ire of Trump after the 2020 election not only prevailed but had massive margins over Trump-endorsed candidates

Former President Donald Trump has had a series of successes – and some losses – since the midterm primary season ramped up in May. But in Tuesday's primaries in Georgia, most statewide candidates endorsed by Trump suffered major defeats, hurting his political clout. The Republican incumbents who earned the ire of Trump not only prevailed but had massive margins over Trump-endorsed candidates and avoided being forced into a runoff election. The former president has made dozens of endorsements in 2022 races, but he was most invested in taking out political foes in Georgia and made the rare move of using his own resources. The most notable of those races was Georgia's gubernatorial race, where incumbent Brian Kemp trounced former Sen. David Perdue by a margin of more than 50 percentage points. Trump went in big for Perdue, who lost his reelection for Senate in 2020 and frequently amplified the former president's unsubstantiated claims about fraud in the presidential race.

But Kemp easily won with more than 70% of the vote and will now square off in a high-profile rematch with Democratic nominee Stacey Abrams

in the fall. It'll be one of the most watched races in the country as Georgia tests whether it'll remain a swing state or turn red again.

In other major races, Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger also easily defeated Rep. Jody Hice. Raffensperger was a huge target for Trump after 2020, when the top election official upheld President Joe Biden's narrow victory in Georgia. Trump-endorsed candidates also lost in the primaries for state attorney general and insurance commissioner. The string of losses comes after Trump has seen some electoral success in other primaries earlier this month. In Ohio, J.D. Vance captured the GOP Senate nomination in a crowded field that didn't have a breakout candidate for most of the race. Trump's preferred candidate prevailed in a member vs.

member House primary in West Virginia.

But Trump has had mixed success in other states. Last week in Pennsylvania, state Sen. Doug Mastriano, who ran far to the right, won the gubernatorial primary



following an 11th-hour endorsement from Trump. But in the expensive and bitter Senate race, Trump-endorsed Mehmet Oz is locked in a tight race with David McCormick that could be headed to a recount.

And Trump had some expected wins in Georgia and beyond in Tuesday's primaries.

His former White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders prevailed in the Arkansas governor's

race for the GOP nomination.

And in Georgia, Herschel Walker, a former professional football star, easily won the Republican primary to take on Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock in November. Walker won in a six-person race with more than 68% of the vote.

Georgia's Senate race will be one of the most competitive of the midterm cycle and could help determine which party takes the majority. Warnock is seen as one of the most vulnerable Democratic incumbents of the cycle because of an expected turbulent political environment for the party, which controls the White House and both chambers of Congress. But Republicans worry that if Walker doesn't address his past, including allegations of domestic violence, which he has denied, and clarifications about his business record, he could face a much harder challenge in flipping the seat for his party. "It's up to Herschel Walker to close that gap in the general election," Georgia Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan said Tuesday in an MSNBC interview. "If he's going to beat Raphael Warnock, he's going to have to close the gap on the issues. He's going to have to talk about his past."



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# Gyanvapi mosque: Why Supreme Court's transfer of case to district judge sends the wrong signal

**Supreme Court order inadvertently casts aspersions on competence of subordinate judiciary. District court should not be weighed down by SC observation**



The Supreme Court order of May 20, transferring the suit on the Gyanvapi Masjid dispute from the civil judge (senior division) Varanasi to the district judge casts aspersion, though unintended, on the competence of civil judges in general. The matter had reached the Supreme Court on a petition filed by the Mosque Management Committee, which challenged the civil judge's orders. The order permitted inspection, survey, and videography of the mosque's complex to collect evidence about the alleged existence of idols of Hindu deities inside the

mosque, which is adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple. After the survey, the lawyers representing the Hindu side claimed that a shivling was found at the mosque premises. They filed an application for the protection of the shivling, whereupon the civil judge directed the district magistrate, Varanasi, to seal the area where the shivling was sighted. It also directed the deployment of the CRPF to protect the sealed area and prohibited people from entering it. The Mosque Management Committee had filed an application before the civil

judge seeking the rejection of the plaint on the ground that it was barred by the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 – it prohibits individuals and groups of people from converting, in full or in part, a place of worship of any religious denomination into a place of worship of a different religious denomination, or even a different segment of the same religious denomination. It was argued before the SC that given the said Act, the suit was liable to be rejected at the threshold as the civil judge had no jurisdiction to entertain the same, much less to pass the

aforesaid interim orders. It was further argued that not only did the civil judge proceed with the suit but also passed interim orders that are coming in the way of Muslims offering namaz — they are not being allowed to use the pond close to the protected site for performing wuzu, which is an essential part of their prayers. It was thus alleged that the religious character of the mosque is being sought to be changed. The Committee prayed for the stay of the proceedings before the civil court.

The SC has not found any fault with the order of the civil judge, though there is also a view that it was mandatory on the part of the civil judge to have first passed an order on whether he had the jurisdiction to entertain the suit. And only after holding so, he should have proceeded to pass the interim orders. However, it appears that in the SC's view, this was not a serious infraction. Had it been so, it would have set

the order aside or changed it or stayed the proceedings.

So, in a way, the SC has affirmed the orders of the civil judge. Significantly, though a legal challenge was made to the orders passed by the civil judge, no one alleged that he was biased, or not competent, nor did anyone ask for the transfer of the case from him. The civil court had territorial and pecuniary jurisdiction to deal with the matter. Why, then, has the Supreme Court transferred the matter to the court of the district judge? The only ground in its order pertains to the complexity of the issues involved and their sensitivity. Therefore, according to the apex court, the matter needs to be dealt with by a senior and experienced judicial officer. Does this mean that the civil judge is not competent to decide a complex matter? Is the SC not passing an adverse observation about the competence of all civil judges?

(Contd. on page 31)

# City forests can secure Delhi's future

**Delhi's administrative boundaries are limited and the space allocated for forests is also limited, yet every year the government sets an ambitious target of increasing the green cover**

The Delhi government has planned three major initiatives to increase natural community spaces in the city. These encompass transforming city parks, reclaiming water bodies and wetlands, and transformation of city forests.

Delhi has 17 city forests spread over more than 3,000 acres. However, most of the residents are unaware of these hidden jewels. The Delhi government has taken up a unique initiative to transform these city forests. Under this project, the government will not only open the doors of the city's ecological heritage to its people but also revamp them with state-of-the-art but sustainable facilities. Rejuvenating these city forests and making them more accessible would also help reduce per capita carbon footprint by reducing the number of trips people take to far-flung locations outside Delhi for eco-tourism activities.

Delhi is one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas of the world. Being the national capital, it attracts people looking for jobs as well as students from all over

the country. There is intense competition for space, and planners and policymakers have a tough job of juggling priorities — for instance, planning a metro route without large scale felling of trees. A unique problem of Delhi is the distribution of green spaces. The forested ridge runs through Central and South Delhi. East and Northwest Delhi do not have much forest cover to boast of. While it is important to provide world-class infrastructure for the capital city, it is equally important to ensure green spaces.

Delhi's administrative boundaries are limited and the space allocated for forests is also limited, yet every year the government sets an ambitious target of increasing the green cover. These urban green spaces — parks, city forests, wildlife sanctuary — collectively act as green lungs for the city. As temperatures soar, it is these green spaces that counter the urban heat island effect to cool the microclimate. They also prevent stormwater flooding by retaining

percolating surfaces amidst concretised landscapes. The government, over the years, has successfully raised plantations on Gram Sabha and government lands, for conversion into city forests in accordance with the Indian Forest Act 1927 and Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The vision for the city forests is to provide an ecologically benchmarked global standard that provides environmental, economic, and social benefits to the citizens of Delhi. The development of these forests also holds the potential of addressing the inaccessibility of green spaces in low-income neighbourhoods. Dialogue and community involvement would be a crucial part of the process. This would ensure that the resources being utilised for the creation of the green infrastructure in city forests responds to the needs of Delhi citizens. In order to achieve this, the government will not only invest in the development and ecological regeneration of these forests, but also develop innovative funding models that could further intensify the efforts to

rejuvenate the landscape, enhance biodiversity as well as build local resilience against the effects of climate change. While every Delhi citizen can benefit from the development of these urban forests, it is often the most disadvantaged communities and socio-economically vulnerable groups that have the least access to high-quality green infrastructure. Rejuvenation of these 17 city forests, which vary in size from 4 acres to 90 acres, form a pillar of the effort towards strategic greening in order to prioritise mitigation and climate adaptation strategies for vulnerable communities. Another aspect of developing these city forests is that they can generate jobs. Development plans for city forests have a big component of ecotourism and many jobs would be created for naturalists, guides, birders, and other maintenance and protection works. These alternative livelihood opportunities would be first offered to people who live in proximity to these city forests.

(Contd. on page 29)



# Why are tribals of Rajasthan and Gujarat demanding a separate state of Bhil Pradesh?

**The Bharatiya Tribal Party (BTP), a political party based in Gujarat, envisions Bhil Pradesh as a separate state carved out of 39 districts spread over four states: 16 in Gujarat, 10 in Rajasthan, seven in Madhya Pradesh, and six in Maharashtra**

The demands for a “Bhil Pradesh”, a separate state for tribal people in western India, have of late begun to be raised again. What is the basis of the demand, and who is raising them?

## What is ‘Bhil Pradesh’?

The Bharatiya Tribal Party (BTP), a political party based in Gujarat, envisions Bhil Pradesh as a separate state carved out of 39 districts spread over four states: 16 in Gujarat, 10 in Rajasthan, seven in Madhya Pradesh, and six in Maharashtra.

BTP Rajasthan president Dr Velaram Ghogra said that Bhil social reformer and spiritual leader Govind Guru first raised the demand for a separate state for tribals back in 1913 after the Mangarh massacre. The massacre, which took place six years before Jallianwalla Bagh and is sometimes referred to as



the “Adivasi Jallianwala”, saw hundreds of Bhil tribals being killed by British forces on November 17, 1913 in the hills of

Mangarh on the border of Rajasthan and Gujarat. “Post-Independence, the demand for Bhil Pradesh was raised

repeatedly,” Ghogra said. Over the decades, the demand was raised and amplified by, among others, the multi-term Congress

MP from Dahod Somjibhai Damor; former Ratlam MP Dileep Singh Bhuria, also of the Congress; and the former CPI member of the Rajasthan Assembly, Meghraj Tawar.

## But why do the tribals want a separate state of their own?

Ghogra said, “Earlier, the Dungarpur, Banswara, Udaipur region in Rajasthan and Gujarat, MP, etc. was part of a single entity. But post-Independence, the tribal majority regions were divided by the political parties, so that the tribals don’t organise and unite.” According to Ghogra, over the decades, several Union governments brought various “laws, benefits, schemes, and committee reports” on tribals, but went slow on their execution and implementation.

(Contd. on page 29)

# Why do many in the US resist stricter gun laws?

**Texas school shooting: Despite a high rate of gun violence, here's why politicians and voters in the United States continue resisting changes to their gun laws**

A shooting at a Texas elementary school that killed 19 children and two adults Tuesday was the 27th school shooting in the US this year. It has also been 10 years since the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in which 20 children had died. But despite a high rate of gun violence, the country’s politicians and voters continue resisting changes to their gun laws.

## Political divide

Since Sandy Hook, 13 states — all controlled by Democrats, have enacted or expanded background checks for new gun purchases, a New York Times report points out. On the flip side, 14 states controlled by Republicans, have passed laws allowing their citizens to carry guns with no permit process at all. The political divisions on gun laws remain sharp. As of 2021, as per a survey by the Pew

Research Center, Republicans remain staunchly opposed to new gun regulations, arguing that the Second Amendment is sacrosanct and should not be infringed by virtually any legislation.

The Second Amendment of the US Constitution reads: “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” The First Amendment is freedom of speech.

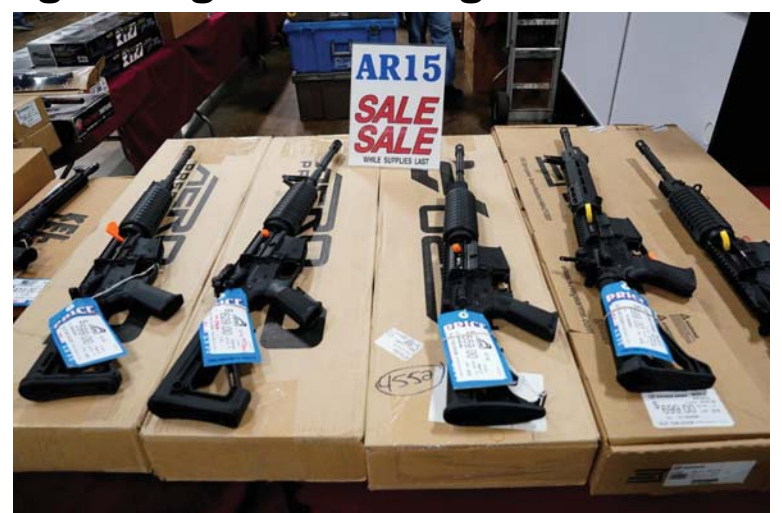
## Idea of freedom

According to the Pew Research Center report, one of the key and defining characteristics of gun owners is that they associate the right to own guns with their personal sense of freedom. Around 74% of gun owners say this is essential. The other main reason cited by gun owners is for personal protection. In

previous surveys too, American gun owners have often stated that owning a gun is integral to their personal identity.

## The powerful NRA

Some of the strongest opposition to gun control comes from the powerful and influential National Rifle Association (NRA). After Sandy Hook, the association’s CEO Wayne LaPierre said that gun bans wouldn’t protect Americans, but gun-free school zones in fact attract killers. This ties in with the guns-for-protection idea, in which increasing gun sales, rather than restricting them, is seen as beneficial in countering mass shooters. He said that the NRA would help create a National School Shield Emergency Response Program to help. Interestingly, 77% of NRA members who own guns are Republicans or lean Republican (Pew Research



Center).

## No background checks

In December 2021, Republican Chuck Grassley blocked a request to proceed on gun legislation that would prohibit firearms from being transferred among individuals unless a licensed dealer or manufacturer carried out a background check. Grassley condemned it as “hostile towards lawful gun

owners and lawful firearm transactions”. He also said that the background checks will not prevent crime and “will turn otherwise law-abiding citizens into criminals”. The US had 390 million guns in circulation in 2018 as per the Small Arms Survey. Also, three out of every ten US adults own a gun (Pew Research Center).

(Contd on page 29)



# Japan says China, Russia jets flew nearby as Quad met

**Chinese and Russian fighter jets flew together near Japan on Tuesday as Quad leaders met in Tokyo, said Japan's defence minister**

(SAI Bureau) Chinese and Russian fighter jets carried out joint flights near Japan on Tuesday as leaders of the Quad bloc met in Tokyo, the Japanese defence minister said. Nobuo Kishi said the government had expressed "grave concerns" to Russia and China over the flights, which took place while leaders from the United States, India, Australia and Japan held talks on regional security.

The planes did not breach territorial airspace, the defence ministry told AFP, and it is the fourth time since November that long-distance joint flights by Russia and China have been

spotted near Japan. "Two Chinese bombers joined two Russian bombers in the Sea of Japan and made a joint flight to the East China Sea," Kishi told reporters.

"After that, a total of four aircraft, two presumed (new) Chinese bombers -- which replaced the two Chinese bombers -- and two Russian bombers, conducted a joint flight from the East China Sea to the Pacific Ocean." He said a Russian intelligence-gathering aircraft also flew off northern Hokkaido to the Noto Peninsula in central Japan on Tuesday, calling the moves especially "provocative" given the

summit in Tokyo. The Quad leaders on Tuesday warned against attempts to "change the status quo by force", although they avoided direct references to Russia or China in a joint statement. Their statement referred to the war in Ukraine, however, and listed a range of activities that Beijing has regularly been accused of in the region.

Kishi said Japan had "communicated through diplomatic routes our grave concerns from the perspective of our country's and the region's security".

"As the international community responds to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the fact that China

took such action in collaboration with Russia, which is the aggressor, is cause for concern. It cannot be overlooked."

Japan, which has volatile ties and border disputes with its neighbours China, Russia and South Korea, routinely sends jets to defend its air borders.

The country scrambled military jets 1,004 times in the past year to March, the second highest on record, according to the defence ministry.

Most were to counter approaching Chinese aircraft, although many of the rest involved Russian aircraft.

## Hacked police files reveal Uyghur detention camps in China

(SAI Bureau) As the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet visits Xinjiang, a report claims data hacked from Xinjiang police shows photographs of the incarceration programme being conducted by the Chinese government. The hacked data known as Xinjiang police files reportedly shows the internment of Uyghurs.

The data was sent to the BBC and it reportedly showed China's mass detention of Uyghurs including the so

called "re-education" camps. The BBC report says the hacked files contain over 5,000 photographs taken by the police of Uyghurs with over 2,000 who were reportedly detained with guards armed with batons standing on the side. China has repeatedly denied it conducts detention camps in Xinjiang. As the files were released Germany called for an investigation as foreign minister Annalena Baerbock spoke to Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi relaying "the shocking reports and new

evidence of very serious human rights violations in Xinjiang".

The report claimed the youngest member in the group was 15 at the time of detention with the oldest being a 73-year-old woman. The report said some were detained due to their Islamic faith and for visiting Muslim majority countries. The BBC report claimed there were "tens and thousands of images and documents" along with "classified speeches by senior officials and internal police manuals and

personal information".

The files were reportedly hacked and decrypted from police servers in Xinjiang and handed over to Adrian Zenz who was earlier sanctioned by the Chinese government for research on Xinjiang. The hacked data belongs to 2018, the BBC report claimed.

The files details shoot-to-kill policy for those trying to escape including handcuffs and shackles for those being transferred between facilities who are categorised as "students".

## China and Russia veto new UN sanctions on North Korea

**China and Russia vetoed a UN resolution that would have imposed new sanctions on North Korea**

(SAI Bureau) China and Russia vetoed a UN resolution sponsored by the United States on Thursday that would have imposed tough new sanctions on North Korea for its spate of intercontinental ballistic missile launches that can be used to deliver nuclear weapons.

The vote in the 15-member Security Council was 13-2 and marked a first serious division among the five veto-wielding permanent members of the UN's most powerful body on a North Korea sanctions resolution.

A united Security Council imposed sanctions after North Korea's first nuclear test explosion in 2006 and tightened them over the years in a total of 10 resolutions seeking -- so far unsuccessfully -- to rein in its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and cut off funding.

But China and Russia told the Security Council after the vote that they oppose more sanctions, stressing that what's needed now is renewed dialogue between North Korea and the United States.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield expressed disappointment but not surprise at the vote, calling North Korea's 23 ballistic missile launches this year, including six ICBMs after a five-year suspension,



"a grave threat to international peace and security."

"The world faces a clear and present danger from the DPRK," she said, using the initials of the country's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and citing its continued pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. In the last sanctions resolution adopted by the council in December 2017, members committed to further restricting petroleum exports to North Korea if it conducted a ballistic missile launch capable of reaching intercontinental ranges.

Before the vote, Thomas-Greenfield

urged the council to fulfill its commitment and act against the North's ICBM launches and its escalating nuclear program.

China's UN Ambassador Zhang Jun blamed the United States for not reciprocating North Korea's "positive initiatives" during talks with the Trump administration in 2018 and 2019.

He said it's the US' responsibility now to resume its dialogue with Pyongyang and find a political solution to the situation on the Korean Peninsula, where the 1950-53 war between North Korea and South Korea

stopped with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

"The situation and peninsula has developed to what it is today thanks primarily to the flip-flop of US policies and failure to uphold the results of previous dialogues," he said.

Faced with "persistent tension" on the Korean peninsula, Zhang said, "China has been calling on all parties to exercise calm and restraint and to desist from actions that could increase tension and lead to miscalculations." He said North Korea faces the harshest sanctions regime and instead of imposing new sanctions China and Russia have proposed lifting some sanctions to improve the dire humanitarian situation of North Koreans.

Earlier, Zhang alluded to the US "pivot to Asia" aimed at countering the rise of China as an economic and military power and America's most significant competitor.

"We do not want to see anyone make use of the DPRK situation or the Korean Peninsula situation as a card for their strategic or geopolitical agenda," he said. "We are completely against any attempt to make northeastern Asia a battlefield or to create confrontations or tensions there."



# China-Pak FMs say 'critical to resolve outstanding disputes' in South Asia

**Pakistan's FM Bilawal Bhutto Zardari held talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi and emphasised that it is critical to resolve all outstanding disputes in South Asia**

(SAI Bureau) Pakistan's newly-appointed Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari held talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Sunday in Guangzhou city and emphasised that "it is critical to resolve all outstanding disputes in South Asia in view of the challenges faced by the people due to the pandemic, soaring commodity prices, climate change and poverty. This is Bilawal's maiden visit to China after he took over as foreign minister following the fall of the Imran Khan-led government last month. While reaffirming their strong support for each other's "core interests", both sides reiterated that a peaceful and prosperous South Asia was in the common interest of all parties, said a joint statement issued at the end of their meeting held in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou as Beijing is currently under semi-lockdown to contain the fast-spreading Omicron variant of the COVID-19.

"Given the challenges faced by the peoples of the region, due to global pandemic, soaring commodity prices,

climate change and poverty, it is critical to resolve all outstanding disputes to promote regional cooperation and advance the goals of lasting peace, stability and shared prosperity," Pakistan state-run APP news agency quoted the joint statement as saying. While it said Bilawal has "briefed the Chinese side about the latest developments in Jammu and Kashmir", the reference to all "outstanding disputes raised speculation whether it also alluded to the border dispute between India and China, especially the current over two year long military standoff at Eastern Ladakh.

"The two sides underlined the importance of the peaceful resolution of the dispute based on the UN Charter, relevant Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements," it said, apparently referring to the Kashmir issue.

The two sides discussed the latest developments in Afghanistan and agreed that peace and stability in Afghanistan was vital for regional development and prosperity, it said.

"The two sides call upon the Afghan interim government to develop a broad-based and inclusive political structure, adopt moderate and sound internal and external policies, and protect the rights of women and children and ensure that the Afghan soil was not used against any of its neighbours," it said.

Pakistan and China have reaffirmed their strong support for each other's core interests and major concerns and commitment to deepening strategic communication including at the highest political level and practical cooperation, the APP report on the talks said.

Bilawal's visit coincided with the 71st anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Pakistan. On May 21, 1951, Pakistan and China established diplomatic ties almost a year after India.

During the visit the two ministers held in-depth discussions on the entire gamut of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of shared interest.

A press release issued by China's Foreign Ministry said Chinese and Pakistan Foreign Ministers have agreed to issue an "enhanced version" of security protocol to protect thousands of Chinese personnel working in Pakistan in view of the recurring terrorist attacks against them, especially the recent suicide attack by a woman suicide bomber of the Balochistan Liberation Army in Karachi university that killed three Chinese nationals.

The two ministers have "agreed that any terrorist attack against Chinese citizens in Pakistan is unacceptable, any despicable attempt to undermine China-Pakistan friendship will not succeed, and incidents such as the terrorist attack on the Confucius Institute in Karachi must never be repeated, the press release said.

"The two sides agreed to issue an "enhanced version" for safeguarding the safety of Chinese personnel, institutions and projects in Pakistan, and will formulate specific plans for implementation as soon as possible," it said.

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# Imran Khan Demands US Assistant Secretary Of State Be Sacked: Report



**Imran Khan accused US Assistant Secretary of State for Central and South Asia Donald Lu of threatening Pakistan's former ambassador to the US, Asad Majeed, that a failure to remove Imran Khan through a no-confidence vote would herald "consequences" for Pakistan and vice versa**

(SAI Bureau) Islamabad: Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan has called for the sacking of US Assistant Secretary of State for Central and South Asia Donald Lu for his "sheer arrogance and bad manners", according to a media report. Mr Lu is the central figure in Imran Khan's claims about a US-backed regime-change conspiracy that toppled his government last month through a no-confidence motion. He accused Mr Lu of threatening Pakistan's former ambassador to the US, Asad Majeed, that a failure to remove Imran Khan through a no-confidence vote would herald "consequences" for Pakistan and vice versa.

Imran Khan, Chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, also alleges that the threat was made even before the no-confidence motion was tabled and it subsequently started a chain of events that resulted in his ouster as local abettors and conspirators joined with the claimed conspiracy. Pakistan's Dawn newspaper reported that Imran Khan repeated his claims in an exclusive interview on CNN programme Connect the World on Monday, and lashed out at Donald Lu while calling for his sacking. "Imagine telling the ambassador

of a country of 220 million people that you get rid of your Prime Minister," he said. Questioned on why he had neglected to make his claims public earlier when he was so "specific" about their details, the cricketer-turned-politician said he had placed the cypher - containing details of the meeting between Mr Lu and Pakistan's ambassador - before his Cabinet which was later presented in a meeting of the National Security Council (NSC). A cypher is a coded message sent by embassies to their country. Host Becky Anderson pushed back against Imran Khan and asked him if he had contacted the US president (Joe Biden) or state secretary (Antony Blinken) regarding the matter.

Imran Khan did not provide an answer, instead saying that the NSC meeting had decided to issue a demarche and a protest was registered to the US in Pakistan and Washington.

To a question about Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's stance on Pak-US relations and whether Mr Khan believed that a good bilateral relationship was in Pakistan's interest, he responded: "I had a perfectly good relationship with the Trump administration. It's only when the Biden administration came, that it coincided with what was happening in Afghanistan and for some reason - which I still don't know - they never got in touch with me." Becky Anderson said the US had "rubbished" the notion that it was involved in a regime change in Pakistan and asked Imran Khan if he "genuinely" believed his claim of there being a foreign conspiracy to topple his government. Imran Khan responded by saying that the US embassy was calling and meeting disgruntled party members even before the meeting between Lu and Pakistan's then-ambassador to the US. "What were they meeting (US officials) for? They were the first ones to

jump ship and they were the ones who then offered millions of dollars each to buy my other Members of the National Assembly who jumped ship later on... Why would the US embassy be interested in our party backbenchers?" Mr Khan said. Referring to prior examples of alleged US-backed regime changes in Iran and South American countries, Khan said resentment increased against the US when unpopular governments were brought to power. "Unfortunately, yes, there is anti-Americanism right now," he added. Becky Anderson closed the interview with a question on whether Imran Khan would run as a prime minister again, to which he predicted that his party would become the "biggest party in Pakistan's history because people are so incensed and feel insulted that these criminals have been foisted over us ... there is anger in Pakistan ... there is anti-Americanism".

## Afghan female TV presenters cover faces after new Taliban rule

(SAI Bureau) Female TV presenters in Afghanistan appeared with a cover on their faces on-air while reading news on Sunday (May 22) after a recent Taliban ruling ordered them to do so.

As per a report by Reuters, the Taliban authorities on Thursday ordered the female TV presenters to cover their faces while on-air. Akif Muajer, the spokesman for the Taliban's Ministry of Vice and Virtue, said: "Yesterday we met with media officials... they accepted our advice very happily." However, the female TV presenters were apparently frustrated as one of them said that she "wasn't feeling good at all." As quoted by Reuters, TOLO TV presenter Sonia Niazi said, "A presenter must feel totally calm and relaxed during the (news) presentation to convey the truth to the people."

...(but) today for the first time I experienced a moment where I had to present my program wearing a mask and I wasn't feeling good at all," Niazi added. Muajer had also said that the move would be received well by Afghans. He added: "The last date for face covering for TV presenters is May 21," referring to when compliance with the new requirement should begin. He apparently said that the female presenters could wear a medical face mask, which was been widely used during the coronavirus pandemic. Several times, the Taliban claimed that it has changed since its last rule, especially regarding women's rights. However, the recent policy changes show otherwise. Taliban have limited women's movement without a male chaperone and also older girls are also yet to be allowed back to schools and colleges.

## Millions stranded, dozens dead as flooding hits Bangladesh and India

(SAI Bureau) Heavy rains have caused widespread flooding in parts of Bangladesh and India, leaving millions stranded and at least 57 dead, officials said Saturday. In Bangladesh, about two million people have been marooned by the worst floods in the country's northeast for nearly two decades. At least 100 villages at Zakiganj were inundated after floodwater rushing from India's northeast breached a major embankment on the Barak River, said Mosharraf Hossain, the chief government administrator of the Sylhet region.

"Some two million people have been stranded by floods so far," he told AFP, adding that at least 10 people have been killed this week. Many parts of Bangladesh and neighbouring regions in India are prone to flooding, and experts say that climate change is increasing the likelihood of extreme weather events around the world. Every extra degree of global warming increases the amount of water in the atmosphere by about seven percent, with inevitable effects on rainfall.

At least 47 people have been killed in India this week in days of flooding, landslides and thunderstorms,

according to local disaster management authorities. In Assam state, which borders Bangladesh, at least 14 people have died in landslides and floods.

Assam authorities said



Saturday more than 850,000 people in about 3,200 villages have been affected by the floods, triggered by torrential rains that submerged swathes of farmland and damaged thousands of homes. Nearly 90,000 people have been moved to state-run relief shelters as water levels in rivers run high and large swathes of land remain submerged in most districts.

West of Assam, at least 33 people were killed in Bihar state in thunderstorms on Thursday. More than three dozen people were injured in the unseasonal weather events that damaged hundreds of hectares of standing crops and thousands of fruit trees. Bihar has also suffered

an intense heatwave this week, with temperatures reaching 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). 'Blessing and curse' In Bangladesh's Zakiganj, people were seen fishing on submerged roads and some residents took their cattle to flood shelters.

Bus driver Shamim Ahmed, 50, told AFP: "My house is under waist deep water. There is no drinking water, we are harvesting rain water. "Rain is simultaneously a blessing and a curse for us now." All the furniture in widow Lalila Begum's home was ruined, she said, but she and her two daughters were staying put,

hoping the waters would recede within a day or two. "My two daughters and I put one bed on another and are living on top of it," she said. "There's scarcity of food. We're sharing one person's food and one meal a day." Floodwater has entered many parts of Sylhet city, the largest in the northeast, where another official told AFP about 50,000 families had been without power for days. Hossain, the chief administrator, said the flooding was driven by both rains and the onrush of water from across the border in Assam. But officials said the broken embankment on the border at Zakiganj could only be fixed once the water level dropped.



# Sri Lanka hikes fuel prices, hires financial and legal advisers

Price increase comes as Sri Lanka hires heavyweight financial, legal advisers Lazard and Clifford Chance



(SAI Bureau) Sri Lanka has prices, a long-flagged move to increased fuel and transport combat its debilitating

economic crisis, but the hikes are bound to exacerbate galloping inflation, at least in the short term.

Power and energy minister Kanchana Wijesekera said in a message on Twitter on Tuesday that petrol prices would increase by 20-24 percent while diesel prices would rise by 35-38 percent with immediate effect. "Cabinet also approved the revision of transportation and other service charges accordingly," he said. Wijesekera said also that people would be encouraged to work from home "to minimize the use of fuel and to manage the energy crisis" and that public sector officials would work from office only when instructed by the head of the institution. Annual inflation in the island nation rose to a record 33.8 percent in April compared with 21.5

percent in March, according to government data released on Monday.

Sri Lanka is in the throes of its worst economic crisis since independence, as a dire shortage of foreign exchange has stalled imports and left the country short of fuel, medicines and hit by rolling power cuts. The financial trouble has come from the confluence of the COVID-19 pandemic battering the tourism-reliant economy, rising oil prices and populist tax cuts by the government of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother, Mahinda, who resigned as prime minister this month. Economists have said fuel and power price hikes will be necessary to plug a massive gap in government revenues, but agree that it will lead to short-term pain.

Dhananath Fernando, an analyst for Colombo based think-tank Advocata Institute, said prices of petrol have soared 259 percent since October last year and diesel by 231 percent. Prices of food and other essential goods have surged, he said. "Poor people will be the most affected by this. The solution is to establish a cash transfer system to support the poor and increase efficiency as much as possible." Prime Minister

Ranil Wickremesinghe, appointed in place of Mahinda Rajapaksa earlier this month after violence broke out between government supporters and protesters, said last week: "In the short term we will have to face an even more difficult time period. There is a possibility that inflation will increase further."

## Exiled Afghan warlord organising group in Turkey against Taliban

(SAI Bureau) On Thursday, exiled rule by acts of force and Afghan warlords and politicians pressure," according to the announced the formation of a council.

High Council of National Resistance against the Taliban, Atta Mohammad Noor, Shia Hazara community leader Mohammad Mohaqiq, and Ahmad Wali Massoud of the

Since the Taliban reclaimed power last year following a quick pullout of US soldiers, there have been only intermittent attempts to defy their rule. However, on the invitation of former Afghan vice-president and warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, who sought asylum in Turkey when Kabul fell in August, 40 political players convened in Ankara on Tuesday.

Participants said their council should pave the path for Afghanistan's "liberation," rule alone," otherwise according to a statement released to AFP on Thursday. "We urge that the Taliban stop their damage and begin discussions to find answers to Afghanistan's current challenges," they added.

The Taliban should "learn from citizens, tribal leaders and history's lessons" that "no organisation can create a stable

topic of "national unity."

Former Balkh province governor, the primary group now waging an armed insurgency against the government, are among the council's founding members. Long-time Taliban opponent and warlord Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf is also a signatory. The council's aim is "to try to solve the problems of Afghanistan through talks," a spokesman for Dostum told AFP.

"The Taliban should accept that they can't run the government or rule alone," otherwise "Afghanistan will experience civil war once again," he said. At the beginning of the week, the Taliban announced the creation of a commission that would contact politicians in exile. Taliban officials have said they hope to convene an assembly of

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## 'Honour' killing: Pakistani-origin Spanish sister duo murdered, 6 including husbands arrested for murder

(SAI Bureau) In Pakistan six people have been arrested in yet another case of "honour" killing, a brutal patriarchal practise still prevalent in the country. Two sisters, 24-year-old Arooj Abbas and 21-year-old Aneesa Abbas who were Spanish citizens with Pakistani origins were allegedly tortured and killed by gunshot. This was because they refused to take their husbands to Spain with them. The sisters have been murdered by their husbands, uncle and brother along with two other people. As per the eastern city of Gujrat's District Police Officer (DPO) Ataur-Rehman, last year the sisters were forcefully married within the family to their cousins.

The two sisters who were Spanish residents were made to return to Pakistan on May 19th along with their mother Azra Bibi. On arrival, they were pressured to help their husbands apply for spouse visas to Spain.

However, the Abbas sisters refused as they wanted to divorce their husbands and remarry in Spain. Following this

on the night of May 20, they were shot dead in what is believed to be a case of "honour" killing. They were murdered in their maternal uncle Muhammad Hanif's house.

Their brother Shehryar, uncle Muhammad Hanif, and four other people including their respective husbands were among those arrested. As per a report by The Express Tribune newspaper, Gujarat police spokesperson ASI Nauman Hassan said that the family created a false story to lure them to Pakistan for a couple of days.

He also said that "Preliminary investigations show this is a case of honour killing, but it is still developing and the investigation is ongoing." Sadly this is only the latest case of "honour" killing in Pakistan, a nation with a deeply patriarchal society and an overlapping legal system.

More than 470 cases of "honour" killing were reported in Pakistan in 2021, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP).

## As Afghanistan eyes international flights, Taliban and UAE firm inks airport deal

(SAI Bureau) As Afghanistan looks forward to resuming international transit, a contract has been signed between the Taliban authorities and a United Arab Emirates (UAE) company, to provide ground handling services at three airports in the country, officials said.

As reported by TOLO News, the country's first deputy PM Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar said in an address that security is good in the country. He added that the Islamic Emirate is ready to cooperate with investing countries. Baradar spoke at the signing of a contract with UAE company

GAAC to run ground operations at three Afghan airports. He also told reporters in Kabul that his administration was renewing an airport ground handling agreement with the UAE. "Afghanistan has been affected by wars and extreme poverty, and now we are rebuilding it. We seek good relations with all countries and urge them to invest in Afghanistan to help its strife-torn people," Baradar said. During the troops' withdrawal

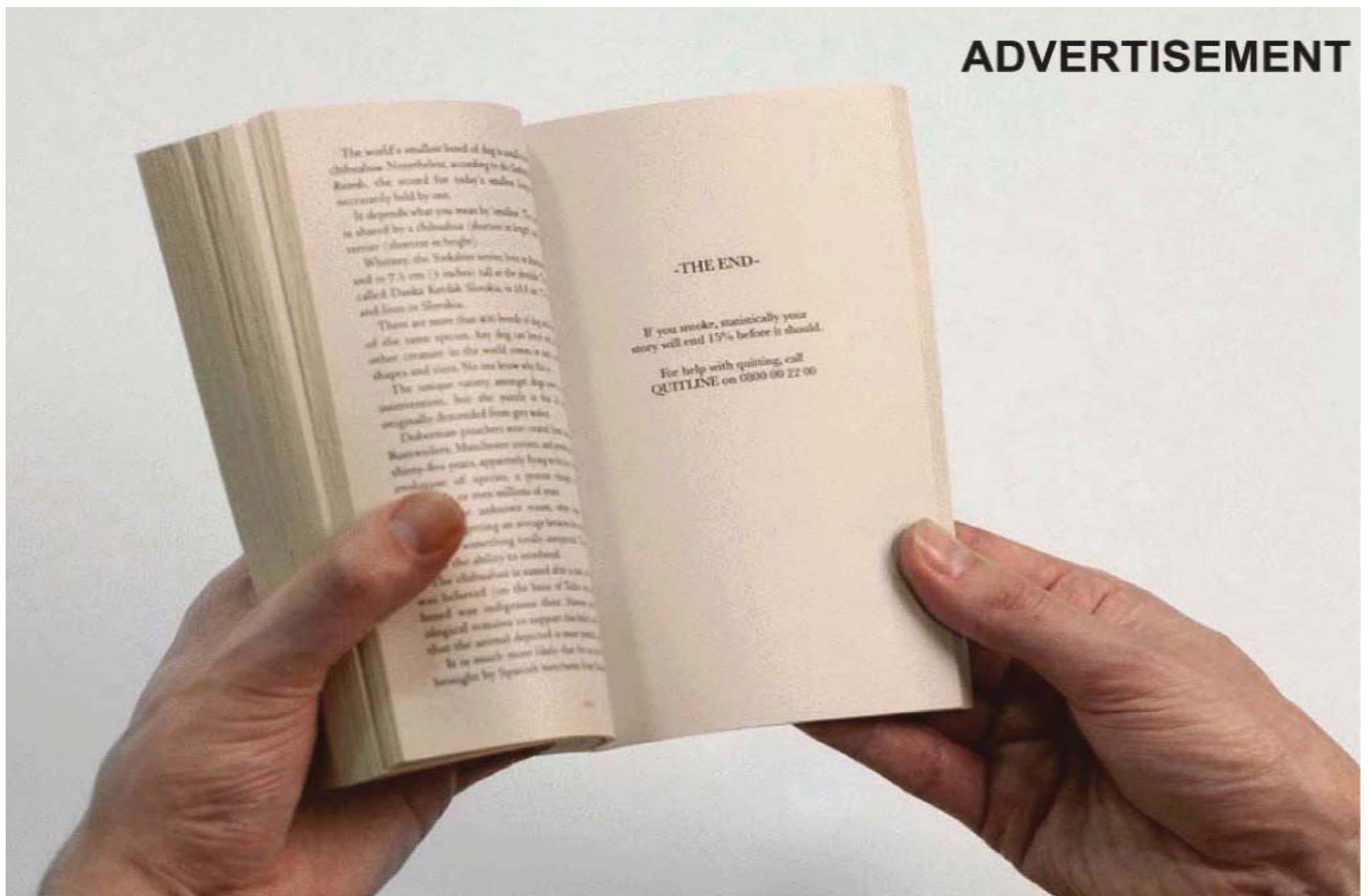
by the US from Afghanistan last year in August, the airport in the capital Kabul was trashed. At that time, tens of thousands of people also evacuated. Some domestic and international flights are still operating out of the facility.

UAE firm GAAC signed a new 18-month



contract covering three airports: Kabul, Kandahar and Herat. GAAC has provided these services at Kabul airport since November 2020. Ibrahim Morafi, regional director of GAAC, told AFP that we "are not a new face here". He added, "But GAAC signing the new contract will give confidence to international airlines to resume flights to Afghanistan." Although, he didn't reveal when such flights were expected to resume.

## ADVERTISEMENT





# With China Back on USA's Radar, the Quad is on Track With Renewed Vigour

(SAI Bureau) The Quad has come a long way since its revival in 2017. Its leading faces have changed as well in the last five years, with one exception— Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, and with that India's style of engagement with the Quad is also seeing a transition marked by girded realism. As former US President Donald Trump, former Japanese Prime Minister and chief architect of the Quad Shinzo Abe, and former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison go missing from the dais—a new set of world leaders have inherited the Quad in the last sixteen months while PM Modi brings an element of continuity. The world has also changed in the last five years—the Covid pandemic, a new US leadership, a Taliban-led Afghanistan, Russia's war on Ukraine and rising global inflation collectively slowed down the Quad's initial zeal to pull the rug from under China's feet. However, if in recent months the Quad question revolved around the possibility of being derailed, the meeting in Tokyo this week has given a much-needed impetus to its agenda and restored hope in the Quad's potential in the coming years.

Most notable in this Tokyo summit was the Quad's infrastructural push of \$50 billion which signals a joint effort by the

four nations in countering China's Belt and Road presence in the Indo-Pacific. In the backdrop of the Sri Lankan crisis, a Quad Debt Management Resource Portal has been unveiled to counter China's debt-trap diplomacy. The announcement of a "US-led" IPEF and an initiative against Chinese maritime militia also significantly bolster the Quad's standing. The rapport between President Biden and PM Modi also reflected an uptick as President Biden acknowledged the Indian democracy's success in delivering, especially in its tackling of the Covid outbreak and its remarkable vaccination programme.

## STICKING TO THE CORE AGENDA

The bone of contention arising from Russia's war on Ukraine and India's stern refusal to pick sides also fell flat as fellow Quad leaders see it wise to not repeatedly annoy India and put a pause to the argument. While Russia was explicitly mentioned in the public statements of President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida, the joint statement stopped shy of naming Russia with notably no change in India's position, driving home India's long-held view that the Quad's agenda should not be diluted.

On China, however, the message was sharp. The joint statement said, "The

Quad is committed to cooperation with partners in the region who share the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. ... We will champion adherence to international law, particularly as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the maintenance of freedom of navigation and overflight, to meet challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including in the East and South China Seas." In reference to China's belligerence in the seas, it also said that the Quad strongly opposes "any coercive, provocative or unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo and increase tensions in the area, such as the militarization of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities."

In what can be considered a mark of India's continued diplomatic success, its Quad peers also condemned terrorist attacks in India including 26/11 Mumbai and Pathankot attacks. "We reaffirm that in our fight against global terrorism, we will take concerted action against all terrorist groups, including those individuals and entities designated pursuant to the UNSC Resolution 1267(1999)," said the

joint statement highlighting the resolution under which Pakistan-based terror groups Laskar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad are listed.

## ANOTHER CHANCE WITH ASEAN

The Quad also announced a maritime initiative called Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness aimed at addressing "dark-shipping" and protecting fisheries—a sweep at China, which has been using armed vessels to snatch fishing grounds in and around the East and South China Seas at the expense of smaller nations. This initiative, paired with the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), reflects the Quad's commitment towards ASEAN and alleviates some of ASEAN's apprehensions of being sidelined in the region.

The IPEF, while not being a traditional free trade deal, allows the Quad, especially India and the US which are not part of the RCEP or the CPTPP, to showcase an economic agenda, not just one of security, to get ASEAN nations on board. With 13 member states, the group accounts for 40% of the world's GDP. It would be a long shot, however, to suggest that it could serve as a counter to the China-led RCEP.

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



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# Trump-Endorsed Republicans Falter in Georgia Primaries

**Republican incumbents who earned the ire of Trump after the 2020 election not only prevailed but had massive margins over Trump-endorsed candidates**

(SAI Bureau) Former President Donald Trump has had a series of successes – and some losses – since the midterm primary season ramped up in May. But in Tuesday's primaries in Georgia, most statewide candidates endorsed by Trump suffered major defeats, hurting his political clout. The Republican incumbents who earned the ire of Trump not only prevailed but had massive margins over Trump-endorsed candidates and avoided being forced into a runoff election. The former president has made dozens of endorsements in 2022 races, but he was most invested in taking out political foes in Georgia and made the rare move of using his own resources. The Republican incumbents who earned the ire of Trump not only prevailed but had massive margins over Trump-endorsed candidates and avoided being forced into a runoff election. The former president has made dozens of endorsements in 2022 races, but he was most invested

in taking out political foes in Georgia and made the rare move of using his own resources.

But Kemp easily won with more than 70% of the vote and will now square off in a high-profile rematch with Democratic nominee Stacey Abrams in the fall. It'll be one of the most watched races in the country as Georgia tests whether it'll remain a swing state or turn red again.

In other major races, Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger also easily defeated Rep. Jody Hice. Raffensperger was a huge target for Trump after 2020, when the top election official upheld President Joe Biden's narrow victory in Georgia. Trump-endorsed candidates also lost in the primaries for state attorney general and insurance commissioner.

The string of losses comes after Trump has seen some electoral success in other primaries earlier this month. In Ohio, J.D. Vance captured the GOP Senate nomination in a crowded field that

didn't have a breakout candidate for most of the race. Trump's preferred candidate prevailed in a member vs. member House primary in West Virginia.

But Trump has had mixed success in other states. Last week in Pennsylvania, state Sen. Doug Mastriano, who ran far to the right, won the gubernatorial primary following an 11th-hour endorsement from Trump. But in the expensive and bitter Senate race, Trump-endorsed Mehmet Oz is locked in a tight race with David McCormick that could be headed to a recount. And Trump had some expected wins in Georgia and beyond in Tuesday's primaries.

His former White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders prevailed in the Arkansas governor's race for the GOP nomination.

And in Georgia, Herschel Walker, a former professional football star, easily won the Republican primary to take on Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock in November.



Walker won in a six-person race with more than 68% of the vote. Georgia's Senate race will be one of the most competitive of the midterm cycle and could help determine which party takes the majority. Warnock is seen as one of the most vulnerable Democratic incumbents of the cycle because of an expected turbulent political environment for the party, which controls the White House and both chambers of Congress.

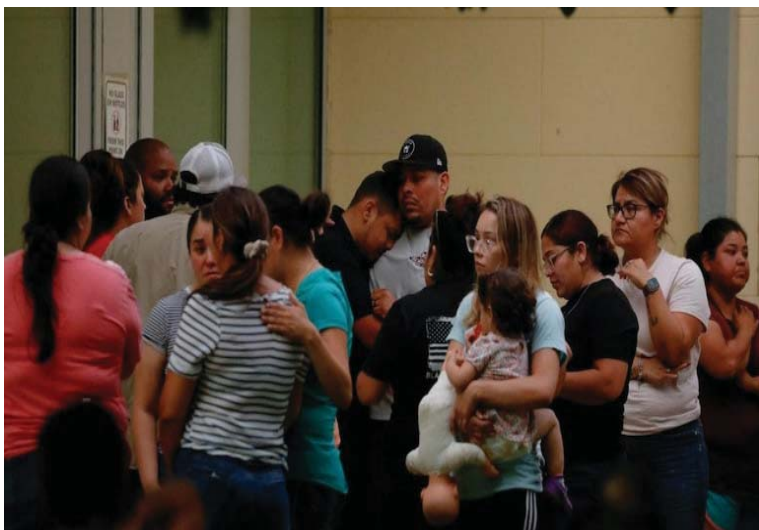
But Republicans worry that if

Walker doesn't address his past, including allegations of domestic violence, which he has denied, and clarifications about his business record, he could face a much harder challenge in flipping the seat for his party.

"It's up to Herschel Walker to close that gap in the general election," Georgia Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan said Tuesday in an MSNBC interview. "If he's going to beat Raphael Warnock, he's going to have to close the gap on the issues. He's going to have to talk about his past."

## Texas shooter entered school, shot whoever was in his way, says govt official

The gunman who killed 21 people at a school in Texas, US on Tuesday entered the school and shot "whoever was in his way", according to a state government official



(SAI Bureau) Nineteen students and two teachers lost their lives in a school shooting in Texas, US on Tuesday. According to a government official, the shooter, an 18-year-old who was shot dead on site by responding officers, entered the school and shot at whoever was in his way. "As soon as the suspect made entry into the school, he started shooting children, teachers - whoever's in his way,"

said Christopher Olivarez of the Texas Department of Public Safety, as quoted in a report by The Independent.

The shooter, identified as Salvador Ramos, is believed to have abandoned his car outside the school and entered the school grounds with a handgun and possibly a rifle, as per the police. The police added that he was wearing body armour at the time.

## Two years after George Floyd's murder, Joe Biden to sign executive order on police reform

**The White House called the move 'historic' in a press release, but the new executive order does not go as far as the major police reform Biden promised during his election campaign**

(SAI Bureau) Washington: Two years after African American George Floyd was murdered by a white police officer in a Minneapolis street, President Joe Biden will on Wednesday sign an executive order further regulating federal law enforcement.

The White House called the move "historic" in a press release, but the new executive order does not go as far as the major police reform Biden promised during his election campaign. The text provides

for the creation of a national register to list all reports, disciplinary procedures and complaints concerning members of federal law enforcement agencies, the administration said. US states and local authorities, which are endowed with extensive powers in matters of law enforcement, will be "encouraged" to also join the register, and will be able to consult it. The order also prohibits the use, again at the federal level, of carotid artery strangulation or compression techniques, except in exceptional situations. It also limits law enforcement's ability to enter a property without due warning, a controversial policy known as "no knock." The Biden administration



will also ask federal law enforcement agencies to expand the use of body cameras during arrests and searches, and to release the images quickly in the event of a fatality. The decree also states that lethal force should only be used when "necessary," and restricts the use of military equipment during police operations.

The date of the signing is highly symbolic, coming exactly two years after Floyd's death, which triggered huge nationwide demonstrations against racism and police brutality.

Biden will sign the executive order in the presence of members of Floyd's family, families of other victims of police brutality and law enforcement officials, a senior White House official said. Floyd died of asphyxiation after a police officer pressed his knee into his neck for more than nine minutes. Biden had promised profound police reform on the campaign trail. While the executive order allows him to bypass the problem of working a bill through Congress, where his Democratic party lacks a sufficient majority, it has a more limited scope and will only apply on the federal level, to the dismay of groups battling racism and police violence.



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# What is One China Policy, US's delicate balancing act on the dispute between China and Taiwan?

'One China' is a longstanding US policy that forms the bedrock of its relationship with Beijing. Under the policy, the US snapped formal diplomatic ties with the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan, and established ties with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Beijing in 1979

Soon after President Joe Biden said on Monday (May 23) that the United States would intervene militarily if China invaded Taiwan, the White House sought to clarify that he did not mean America's policy towards the dispute had changed.

In a statement sent to reporters, the White House said that Biden had “reiterated our One China Policy and our commitment to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait”, while also reiterating “our commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act to provide Taiwan with the military means to defend itself”.

## What is One China Policy of the United States?

'One China' is a longstanding US policy that forms the bedrock of its relationship with Beijing. Under the policy, the US snapped formal diplomatic ties with the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan, and established ties with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Beijing in 1979.

The contours of the policy were explained in the US-PRC joint communique of December, 1978, which said: "The

People's Republic of China and the United States of America have agreed to recognise each other and to establish diplomatic relations as of January 1, 1979. The United States of America recognises the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government of China. Within this context, the people of the United States will maintain cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan."

It added: "The Government of the United States of America acknowledges the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China."

In operational terms, the One China Policy is a balancing act wherein the US maintains an official relationship with China, and an unofficial one with Taiwan.

## How did the US preserve its Taiwan ties?

In 1979, around the time PRC and the United States posted Ambassadors in each other's capitals, the US Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). The Act made it clear that "the United States decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China rests upon the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means".

It committed to providing Taiwan “with arms of a defensive character” and “to

maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan”.

The Act established the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), as a private, nongovernmental organisation to maintain the facade of unofficialness in the ties. The AIT is the de facto US Embassy in Taiwan. **So was there ever a “two Chinas” situation?**

After the communist forces won the Chinese civil war in 1949 after over two decades, the Republic of China moved its

capital to Taipei, Taiwan. The People's Republic of China was established with Beijing as its capital. Both governments made competing claims to represent all of China, but only a few recognised the PRC at that time. It was much later in 1971 that the PRC managed to enter the UN through Resolution 2758, which unseated ROC as the official representative of "China". The US did not recognise the PRC till 1979.

### So how did the US policy shift come about?

It began with the “ping-pong diplomacy” of 1971. In April that year, American table tennis players crossed into the mainland and became a medium for both sides to move towards a thaw in relations.

The UN nod came later that year, and in 1972, President Richard Nixon made a trip to China. This is the trip that brought about the Shanghai Communique that can be seen as a major milestone in the birth of the US's 'One China' policy.

It said: "The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position."

Subsequent US administrations, including the present one, have reiterated their commitment to the One China Policy.

## Is the US One China Policy different from the “One China” principle stressed by Beijing?

The One China Policy of the United States is not the same as the “One China” principle of the PRC, according to a One China Policy Primer published by the Brookings Institution.

"The One China Policy contains more elements, such as the US interest in a peaceful process of cross-strait dispute resolution, and its differing interpretation of Taiwan's legal status as compared to Beijing's interpretation," it says.

It states that in the 1980s, the US shifted to using “policy” in place of “principle” in order to differentiate between the US approach and China’s version.



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## ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

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## ਸੱਜਣ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਚਾ-ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ

ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ: ਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਮਕ ਸ਼ਖਸੀਅਤ ਨੂੰ ਸੱਜਣ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੇ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਚਾ-ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ। ਸੱਜਣ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੇ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਚਾ-ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ।

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# Why are tribals of Rajasthan and Gujarat demanding a separate state of Bhil Pradesh?

"There were various measures such as the protection of tribal interests through the Fifth Schedule under Article 244(1) of the Constitution, but most of these were mere assurances by the ruling party, whether it was the Congress or the BJP," he said.

Ghogra cited the example of The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996. "The law was enacted in 1996. The Rajasthan government adopted the law in 1999, and came out with its Rules in 2011. But even in my village Paldeval in Dungarpur, 25 years on, people don't even know about the law. Even the MLAs and ministers of the BJP and Congress don't have proper

knowledge about the law."

Ghogra recalled that during the Congress's recent Chintan Shivir in Udaipur, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had said, "Next time, the Congress will leave no stone unturned in fulfilling the demands of the tribals." But it was always "the next time", Ghogra said — "Seventy-five years have passed and it's still the next time. Ever since Independence, parties haven't seen tribals beyond vote bank politics." The nervousness of the Congress and BJP about the BTP can be gauged from the Rajasthan Zila Parishad election results in December 2020. The ZP members of the ruling Congress and Opposition BJP joined forces to defeat a Zila Pramukh

candidate supported by the BTP at Dungarpur in Rajasthan; BTP-backed Independents had won 13 out of the 27 seats in the Dungarpur Zila Parishad, while the BJP and Congress had won 8 and 6 seats respectively.

## Is the demand for Bhil Pradesh gaining ground?

The creation of a separate Bhil Pradesh is one of the main objectives of the BTP, which was formed in 2017 in Gujarat. Ghogra said that he had been directly involved with the demand for over a decade. Meetings and gatherings are routinely held to mobilise tribals and spread awareness.

"Tribal youths have lost confidence in both

the Congress and BJP," Ghogra said. "With the spread of social media, you can read up and verify things for yourself now," he said. "Seeing how we have fared in 75 years, there is no other way but to have our own separate Bhil Pradesh." Ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections, the BTP's immediate demand is that the Congress should send a tribal to the Upper House. "The last tribal from our region to be sent to the Rajya Sabha by Congress was decades ago: Dhuleshwar Meena," Ghogra said.

The BJP has had a Rajya Sabha MP from the tribal belt in Kanakmal Katara, who is currently the Lok Sabha MP from Banswara.

## UK PM Boris Johnson prepares for partygate report release

That investigation concluded last week with 83 fines being issued for breach of coronavirus lockdown rules within UK government quarters, including one each for Johnson, wife Carrie and UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak.

It cleared the decks for the original Sue Gray report to be published in full, which is expected to be first handed over to Downing Street before Johnson addresses Parliament over its findings. "It's not just the optics, it's understandable that people will feel anger because there were instances where people couldn't attend funerals of close friends, couldn't visit loved ones," UK Environment Secretary George Eustice told the BBC, with reference to the breaches. As well as his appearance in the House of Commons, Boris Johnson is also set to face a tough meeting of the powerful Tory backbench 1922 committee. After an initial uproar over partygate, most of his party MPs have fallen behind the party line against the backdrop of a soaring cost of living crisis and Russia-Ukraine conflict. However, the issue has been reignited as the BBC's Panorama' programme aired footage

of Downing Street insiders speaking anonymously of a boozy culture throughout the lockdown.

Three insiders told the documentary of chaotic, crowded gatherings at the heart of government in which people sat on others' laps in complete disregard of the social distancing rules and rooms were left strewn with bottles of alcohol. One of the BBC's sources said they felt such "parties" were licensed by the UK PM as he was there and did not demand it be shut down. London Mayor Sadiq Khan is among Opposition Labour leaders calling for an explanation from the Metropolitan Police why the UK Prime Minister was only fined for a birthday party in June 2020 and not handed a second fine for another party after pictures emerged of him holding up a glass at a farewell drinks party on November 13, 2020. The rules in force at the time banned indoor gatherings of two or more people, except if "reasonably necessary" for work purposes. Downing Street has said that Johnson would address Parliament "in full" after Gray published her report into the gatherings.

## City forests can secure Delhi's future

Long-term scientific studies and monitoring within these city forests by experts would provide insight into urban forest dynamics — species composition, soil dynamics, carbon sequestration potential, and the costs of afforestation and managing designed spaces. The development

of green patches in an ever-growing city like Delhi is no joke, it takes grit and determination to achieve it. But it is a worthwhile effort that has the potential to create a natural resource that will be an abode of recreation for not just the present but also the future citizens of Delhi.

## Why do many in the US resist stricter gun laws?

### Mental illness

Critics of gun control laws have often framed mass shootings as a symptom and not the disease, citing mental health illnesses as the root cause that needs to be treated. Following two mass shootings in Texas and Ohio in less than 24 hours in 2019, former US President Donald Trump had said, "This is also a mental illness problem. These are people that are very, very seriously mentally ill." However, there is research, such as that by forensic psychiatrist Dr Michael Stone at

Columbia University, which suggests that many mass shooters are not mentally ill. According to Dr Stone, 65% of mass shooters are not mentally ill. In March 2021, Republican Senators framed gun control laws as part of the country's history of racism during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on gun violence. Their argument, tapping into the history of firearms ownership and the restrictions placed by Whites on African Americans, was that gun control acts impinge on the rights of minority communities.

## FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

### BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

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



Photograph taken April 2015

#### DESCRIPTION

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

#### REWARD

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

#### REMARKS

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

#### CAUTION

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

#### SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Baltimore



# Quad Summit Day 2: PM Modi discusses Indo-Pacific, China, Ukraine war, Covid-19

(SAI Bureau) Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on his way back to India after several 'fruitful' high-profile meetings with members of the Quad in Japan, the venue for this year's summit.

The prime minister had a series of bilateral meetings with the Quad leaders on the sidelines of the summit to boost cooperation among the member nations of the influential grouping, including with US President Joe Biden, who contrasted "India's success with China's failure" in handling of the coronavirus pandemic at a closed-door session today.

"Leaving Japan after a fruitful visit in which I attended various bilateral and multilateral programmes. Glad to see the Quad emerge as a vibrant forum to further global good. Also had excellent bilateral meetings with all the Quad leaders. I had excellent discussions with the business leaders of Japan, and an engaging interaction with the vibrant Indian community in Japan. I thank the Government and the people of Japan for the warm hospitality," PM Modi tweeted right before taking off.

## WHAT HAPPENED AT THE QUAD MEET?

The four-nation grouping, Quad, today agreed to deepen cooperation on infrastructure that is critical to driving productivity and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, and share a commitment to addressing debt issues, which have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic in many countries. The deadly coronavirus pandemic, which claimed millions of lives globally and infected even more, was one of the main points of discussion at the meeting. The leaders committed to getting ahead of the virus by strengthening the global health infrastructure, including enhancing finance and bolstering ongoing science and technology cooperation, news agency PTI reported. The Quad leaders, in a clear message to China, expressed their firm opposition to "any provocative or unilateral attempt" to change the status quo and called for peaceful settlement of disputes without resorting to threat or use of force. "We strongly oppose any coercive, provocative or unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo and increase tensions in the area, such as the militarisation of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities," a joint statement read. In the statement, the four leaders said that the Quad will champion adherence to international law, particularly as reflected in the UN Convention on the



Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the maintenance of freedom of navigation and overflight, to meet challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including in the East and South China Seas.

The Quad leaders also discussed their respective responses to the war in Ukraine and the ongoing humanitarian crisis, and assessed its implications for the Indo-Pacific. "We underscore unequivocally that the centerpiece of the international order is international law, including the UN Charter, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. We also emphasised that all countries must seek peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law," the joint statement said. "We reaffirm our unwavering support for ASEAN unity and centrality and for the practical implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. We welcome the EU's Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific which was announced in September 2021 and increased European engagement in the Indo-Pacific region," it said. The leaders condemned North Korea's "destabilizing" ballistic missile development and voiced their concerns over the crisis in Myanmar. They called for the immediate end to violence in the country and the release of all political detainees. They also condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all forms and manifestations, saying that there can be no justification for acts of terror.

## INDIA-US TALKS

India and the US today announced a

major partnership to boost cooperation in critical and emerging technologies between their National Security Councils after PM Modi and President Biden vowed to work together for a more prosperous, free, connected, and secure world. PM Modi described India-US ties as truly a "partnership of trust" and said that he is confident that the

**PM Modi had a series of bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the Quad Summit, including with US President Joe Biden, who contrasted "India's success with China's failure" in handling of the coronavirus pandemic at a closed-door session today**

friendship will continue to be a "force for good" for global peace and stability and the well-being of mankind. Biden said that he is committed to making America's partnership with India among the closest on earth, adding that there is so much that the two countries "can and will do together". The meeting "resulted in substantive outcomes" which will "add depth and momentum" to the bilateral partnership between the two countries, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. The Covid-19 pandemic was a crucial point of discussion between the two tall leaders as the countries extended the longstanding Vaccine Action Programme (VAP) until 2027. Separately, the White House announced that India is joining the Combined Military Forces-Bahrain as an associate member. At a closed-door session of the Quad summit, US President Joe Biden lauded the prime minister for his handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country of billions. PM Modi's

success has shown the world that democracies can deliver, and busted the myth that "autocracies" like China and Russia can handle the rapidly changing world better because their leadership can take and implement decisions without going through lengthy democratic processes, Biden was quoted as saying by an official.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told news agency PTI that Biden lauded PM Modi for dealing with the pandemic "successfully in a democratic manner" and contrasted India's success with China's failure to handle it, even though the two countries are of comparable size. PM Modi said that the two countries share the same vision for the Indo-Pacific region and are working to safeguard the shared values and common interests not only at the bilateral level but also with other like-minded countries.

## INDIA-JAPAN TALKS

On the sidelines of the Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met former prime ministers of Japan - Yoshihide Suga, Yoshiro Mori and Shinzo Abe, and exchanged views on further strengthening the special strategic and global partnership between the two countries. PM Modi appreciated the significant contributions made by the Japan-India Association under the leadership of Yoshiro Mori in promoting exchanges between the countries in political, economic and cultural fields, the MEA said in a statement. Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida appreciated India's contribution to help the world deal with the pandemic better and recalled the deliveries of the Indian-made vaccines under the Quad Vaccine Initiative to Thailand and Cambodia recently, the official said. In Cambodia, Prime Minister Hun Sen attended the handing over ceremony, PM Kishida said.

## INDIA-AUSTRALIA TALKS

For Australia's new PM, this was his first big engagement right after his election win just days ago. PM Anthony Albanese said that vaccines against Covid-19 supplied by India to other countries have made a difference on the ground and that such successes are more valuable than just winning a theoretical debate of ideas, the official added. PM Modi complimented Albanese, saying his presence at the summit 24 hours after taking the oath showed his commitment to Quad. Australia will host next year's Summit. The Quad, or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, comprises India, the US, Japan and Australia.



# Gyanvapi mosque: Why Supreme Court's transfer of case to district judge sends the wrong signal

The SC, with the stroke of a pen – and without finding any fault with the order of the civil judge — has seemingly declared civil judges to be not competent to decide a matter alleged to be complex. Who will decide whether a matter is complex enough to be taken up by a superior judge? When the Civil Procedure Code, the High Court Rules and Orders invest a civil judge with jurisdiction, why take it away merely on the plea that the matter is complex? Almost every day, we hear of Hindu groups laying claims to mosques on the ground that they were built by razing temples to the ground by Muslim rulers. Today, it is the Gyanvapi Masjid tomorrow it will be Shahi Idgah Mosque in Mathura, and on another day it will be Jama Masjid, Bhopal. All such cases will be no different from Gyanvapi Masjid. They would be equally complex and sensitive. Nobody knows when this madness, which is threatening to rip apart the social fabric of our country, will come to an end. And who knows when such matters may land before the SC again. With the greatest respect to the apex court, will it transfer all such cases to the district judges? If yes, then why have civil judges at all? If not, then the transfer of the case to the district judge has set an unhealthy precedent and will have a demoralising effect on the subordinate judiciary. Besides, it will also take away one step in the right to appeal of the aggrieved party.

In the recent past, many lower-level judicial officers have passed outstanding orders in matters concerning the liberties of the citizens, which are under threat as never before. Let us, therefore, not under-rate their competence. The subordinate judiciary provides the foundation of our judicial system. Do not shake it.

During the hearing in the Supreme Court, on the question of whether The Places of Worship Act, 1991, debars filling of any suit relating to the places of worship as they stood on August 15, 1947, one of the

judges is reported to have remarked that the ascertainment of the religious character of a place may not necessarily fall foul of Section 3 of the Act. Any word

written or spoken by the Supreme Court carries its own weight. Hence, with all respect, such a comment should be avoided, especially, when the matter is still

to be decided by a subordinate court. It is hoped that the district judge to whom the case has now been entrusted will not get weighed down by the aforesaid remark.

## World Bank rules out bridge financing or new loan commitments to crisis-hit Sri Lanka

was planning to support Sri Lanka to overcome the financial crisis in the form of a bridge loan or new loan commitments. However, the Bank has said that they are reshuffling the already allocated resources to provide essential medicines and other cash assistance to the vulnerable. Recent media reports have inaccurately stated that the World Bank is planning support for Sri Lanka in the form of a bridge loan or new loan commitments, among other incorrect assertions, the Bank said in a statement.

We are concerned for the people of Sri Lanka and are working in coordination with the IMF and other development partners in advising on appropriate policies to restore economic stability and broad-based growth. Until an adequate macroeconomic policy framework is in place, the World Bank does not plan to offer new financing to Sri Lanka, it said. It expressed hope that Sri Lanka is making continuous efforts towards economic stability. We are currently repurposing resources from previously approved projects to help the government with some essential medicines, temporary cash transfers for poor and vulnerable households, school meals for children of vulnerable families, and support for farmers and small businesses, the statement said. Sri Lanka is near

bankruptcy and has severe shortages of essentials from food, fuel, medicines and cooking gas to toilet paper and matchsticks. For months, people have been forced to stay in long lines to buy the limited stocks.

Sri Lanka has suspended repayment of about USD 7 billion in foreign loans due this year out of USD 25 billion to be repaid by 2026. The country's total foreign debt is USD 51 billion. Sri Lanka in the midst of its worst economic crisis has started a negotiating program with the IMF. The island however is in need of \$4-5 billion bridging finance to arrest the crisis where shortages of essentials had led to street rioting.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis has created political unrest with a protest occupying the entrance to the president's office demanding his resignation continuing for the past 40 days. The crisis has already forced prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, the elder brother of the president, to resign on May 9.

An inflation rate spiralling towards 40 per cent, shortages of food, fuel and medicines and rolling power blackouts have led to nationwide protests and a plunging currency, with the government short of the foreign currency reserves it needed to pay for imports.

## Russia-Ukraine conflict may be beginning of third world war; Putin told Jinping of special military ops: George Soros

"The invasion may have been the beginning of the third world war and our civilisation may not survive it," he said. He also said that the invasion of Ukraine didn't come out of the blue and Putin had informed Xi about it well in advance. Soros noted that Putin and Xi met on 4 February at the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics and issued a long statement announcing that the cooperation between them has "no limits". Putin informed Xi of a special

military operation in Ukraine, but it is unclear whether he told Xi that he had a full-scale attack on Ukraine in mind, Soros said. "US and UK military experts certainly told their Chinese counterparts what was in store. Xi approved, but asked Putin to wait until the conclusion of the winter Olympics," he said. "For his part, Xi resolved to hold the Olympics in spite of the Omicron variant that was just beginning to spread in China. The organisers went to great lengths to create an airtight bubble for the competitors and the Olympics concluded without a hitch," he said. Xi harbours a guilty secret. He never told the Chinese people that they had been inoculated with a vaccine that was designed for the original Wuhan variant and offers very little protection against new variants, Soros claimed. In the meantime, Soros said Putin's so-called "special military operation" didn't unfold according to plan. He expected his army to be welcomed by the Russian speaking population of Ukraine as liberators. His soldiers carried with them their dress uniforms for a victory parade but that is not what happened, he added. He said Putin and Xi also have a lot in common, they rule by intimidation, and as a consequence they make mind-boggling mistakes. "Putin expected to be welcomed in Ukraine as a liberator; Xi

Jinping is sticking to a Zero Covid policy that can't possibly be sustained," he added.

While Putin seems to have recognised that he made a terrible mistake when he invaded Ukraine and he is now preparing the ground for negotiating a cease fire, the ceasefire is unattainable because he cannot be trusted, Soros claimed. Further, Soros said that Putin would have to start peace negotiations which he will never do because it would be equivalent to resigning. Soros also said Xi Jinping is bound to fail as giving Putin permission to launch an unsuccessful attack against Ukraine didn't serve China's best interests. "China ought to be the senior partner in the alliance with Russia but Xi Jinping's lack of assertiveness allowed Putin to usurp that position. But Xi's worst mistake was to double down on his zero Covid policy," he said. "Contrary to general expectations, Xi Jinping may not get his coveted third term because of the mistakes he has made. But even if he does, the Politburo may not give him a free hand to select the members of the next Politburo. That would greatly reduce his power and influence and make it less likely that he will become ruler for life," he added.

## Climate change: Are we doing our bit for environment?

In all of these actions, hardly any consideration has been given to any of the ill-effects of these activities. Due to this, the world is at a stage where the temperature is going to rise above 1.5C soon, glaciers are melting around the world, sea level is rising, deforestation is still continuing, use of fossil fuel is rising, etc. The scientists have already warned the world to make changes or face catastrophe at the end. But we are busy putting in all the resources in fighting our 'so-called' enemies. It seems to be high time to realise who is the real enemy. Nowadays, the world talks about saving Earth in climate change

conferences, Earth Day rallies and so on. Only a little is being done on the ground. If we don't act now, saving our planet will become impossible. To actually make any climate change initiative successful, the contribution of every person counts. It can be as small as planting a tree to using solar power at home. Even big steps like shunning the use of fossil fuels can help. You can go for electric vehicles or take up clean energy for various things. Anything is achievable if we come together and stay on the right course. So, let's do our bit for the environment before it bids us final goodbye.



# With China Back on USA's Radar, the Quad is on Track With Renewed Vigour

## ANOTHER CHANCE WITH ASEAN

The Quad also announced a maritime initiative called Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness aimed at addressing "dark-shipping" and protecting fisheries—a sweep at China, which has been using armed vessels to snatch fishing grounds in and around the East and South China Seas at the expense of smaller nations. This initiative, paired with the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), reflects the Quad's commitment towards ASEAN and alleviates some of ASEAN's apprehensions of being sidelined in the region.

The IPEF, while not being a traditional free trade deal, allows the Quad, especially India and the US which are not part of the RCEP or the CPTPP, to showcase an economic agenda, not just one of security, to get ASEAN nations on board. With 13 member states, the

group accounts for 40% of the world's GDP. It would be a long shot, however, to suggest that it could serve as a counter to the China-led RCEP. The IPEF does not involve negotiating tariffs or widening market access, and is more of a middle path for the US owing to domestic and political compulsions. It remains to be seen whether the unconventional grouping can reap success in restructuring supply chains and is not just a bleak attempt by the US to rescue its waning global leadership.

## ALBANESE'S GRAND ENTRANCE

In Australia, the change of guard was followed by slight anxiety about the new government's China policy. Back in 2008, Albanese was a minister in Kevin Rudd's government, which backed out of the Quad and cozied up to China. His party, including his minister of foreign

affairs have been expected to go soft on China, as opposed to Morrison's hawkish posturing. Just two days into the job, however, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese rushed to Tokyo in a sign of continuity in Australian foreign policy. This is all the more relieving as China's recent gains in the Solomon Islands, particularly a military pact, require a joint effort from the Quad to keep Pacific islands out of Beijing's reach.

All in all, for India, the Quad has changed considerably but has not lost its potential. Instead, it continues to grow and enhance its regional impact. Chinese and Russian jets hovering near Japan's airspace just as the Quad leaders were meeting bears testament to this. Clearly, China is cashing in on its favours to Russia as its Quad headache persists. As Joe Biden said, the Quad is not just a passing fad, it means business.

# What wins votes today is 'trust capital'

Despite all its efforts, the Congress has not been able to regain the trust capital that it lost due to multiple reasons. The Congress, which used to over-rely on the charismatic power of the Nehru family, has not been able to understand that the notion of charisma is redundant today. The party and its leaders need to accumulate trust capital through appropriate political messaging and by convincing people about their capacity to deliver on commitments. The Aam Aadmi Party and

its leader Arvind Kejriwal seem to be doing well on this count. Kejriwal has been trying to project the AAP as a party committed to pro-poor social welfare programmes that deliver on its promises. He has also showcased his politics as corruption-free. Since the AAP is a new party, it has no baggage, so the youth in a number of states see a political career in the party. Their respective cadres trust the BJP and AAP because these parties have no dynastic lineage. However, the

allegations that the AAP is dominated by a group close to Kejriwal could weaken the democratic fervour in favour of the party. In the coming Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh assembly elections, the BJP, Congress and AAP are going to contest with their accumulated trust capital and also make efforts to enhance it. PM Modi, Rahul Gandhi and Kejriwal may well use their trust capital to influence the electorate of these states. However, trust capital is dynamic — it can increase or

decrease. Political groups need to constantly enhance it by linking their words with actions. Trust capital works silently. At times, we are unduly impressed by crowds in rallies. In the coming elections, we should not make the mistakes that many of us made during the UP assembly elections: Listening to those who speak and assert but failing to listen to silence. So let's keep our ears open to the silent support produced by trust capital in the coming elections.

# The Indian consumer will have to spend more for a little longer

Vegetable inflation surged the most in April, led by both a high base and sequential increase in prices. Higher freight rates for transport would have a huge role to play in driving up retail prices. As per CRISIL Research's CRISFrex index, freight costs for agricultural products rose more than 20 per cent on-year as of April, suggesting transporters have been passing on higher diesel prices by raising freight rates.

Similarly, other than vegetables, inflation has also been firming up in other domestically produced commodities such as wheat and products, coarse cereals, and meat. Apart from a low base, there is a sequential price rise in these components. In many of these, food production costs have risen, driven by higher diesel, fertiliser, pesticides and also animal feed prices.

Recent months have also seen a narrowing of the gap between wholesale and retail food inflation, suggesting a higher pass-through of input costs. The heat wave has only added to the woes. Rising food inflation hurts consumers a lot more than inflation in other commodities since households do not have much discretion in altering food consumption. The consequences are more adverse for certain consumer segments. The rural population spends

a higher share (around 47 per cent) than the urban (roughly 30 per cent) on food. Similarly, the bottom 20 per cent shell out a higher share (60 per cent) on food consumption. It is these segments that are facing the brunt of high food inflation for the past three years. Hence, policy will have to relieve the pressure on food inflation wherever possible.

The process has started. Monetary policy made the first move by hiking the

repo rate, the cash reserve ratio and gradually winding down the easy liquidity situation. We expect the RBI to raise repo rates by another 75-100 basis points in the rest of this fiscal. More recently, fiscal policy, too, has stepped up efforts to alleviate the burden of consumers. This involves a reduction in excise duties on petrol and diesel, an increase in fertiliser and cooking gas subsidies, and allowing duty-free

imports of edible oils. Additional steps such as an extension of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana beyond September may be needed. The pressure on prices of agricultural commodities will take time to soften. This should be after the Russia-Ukraine conflict de-escalates and the impact gradually fades away. Until then, the Indian consumer will have to shell out more.



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# Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: China's Confused India Policy a Reason for LAC Standoff

It's been more than two years since tensions erupted on the India-China border leading to multiple standoffs across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. The border also witnessed violent physical clashes leading to the death of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four PLA soldiers at Galwan Valley on June 15, 2020. This was the first death on the disputed border since 1975. Since then, both sides have moved over two and a half divisions of armed forces in advanced positions and alert posture across the LAC – with the tripwire waiting to trigger at the sub-zero temperatures.

The two sides have conducted multiple Corps Commander-level meetings, Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination meetings, and foreign minister-level meetings to achieve de-escalation in the past two years. But the border crisis is still far from over. The problems had erupted in five-six places on the LAC – Galwan Valley, Pangong Lake, Charding Nullah junction in Demchok, Depsang, Hot Springs and Gogra in 2020. Since then, the two sides have managed to achieve disengagement at three points – Galwan Valley, Gogra, Pangong north and south banks. However, forces are still engaged in other areas and on alert posture across the entire LAC. India claims that the border problems and normal relations cannot go hand-in-hand, and since China initiated and escalated the crisis, the onus of achieving the April 2020 status quo ante is on the People's Republic of China

(PRC). In contrast, China claims that the border dispute and bilateral relations should be viewed separately, and the former shouldn't disturb or impact the latter.

In recent years, China's policy approach toward India has looked confused. This confusion stems from China's genuine desire to maintain stable relations with India – in order to maintain peace and stability in its primary strategic military direction (Taiwan and the US), benefit from bilateral trade, and gain access to India's market. But there is also rising hostility with India due to its increasing closeness to the United States – which China believes is a part of the US strategy of containment. These contradictory beliefs have pulled China's India policy in opposite directions, making it look confusing.

For instance, a border crisis erupted in Chumar, the southern-most portion of Ladakh's boundary with Tibet, in September 2014 during the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping's maiden visit to India. Earlier, in October 2013, China and India signed a border defence cooperation agreement setting a positive tone for future talks between the two sides. However, just a few months before signing this agreement, during the negotiation period, a platoon-sized PLA contingent intruded deep inside the Depsang Plateau and pitched tents in the Indian territory violating confidence-building measures. This pattern had repeated itself throughout the decade when every major

diplomatic milestone between India and China was either preceded or followed by Chinese intrusion leading to military standoffs on the border. The latest one is the ongoing border crisis, which was after two years of peace and informal summits at the highest level in 2018 and 2019.

Scholars have described this behaviour as a trick out of the Chinese playbook where they attempt "two steps forward, one step back" – leaving them with the net gain of one step. But rather than being a well-thought policy approach, Chinese behaviour emerges from policy confusion while dealing with India. That's because, like every other rational actor, China would want to avoid a two-front escalation. Its primary military-strategic direction since 1993 is Taiwan and the possible conflict with the US over the Cross-Strait crisis. Naturally, it would want to averse a conflict on the western border with India. And thus, India and China witnessed a relative period of peace between 1993 and the early 2010s, when the two countries signed six border agreements.

However, the emerging strategic competition between the US and China, which is due to a combination of structural and domestic factors, like the US pivot to Asia, changes brought due technological evolution, China's change of approach to foreign and security policy under former General Secretary Hu Jintao and organisational reforms to military and foreign policy structures under Xi, has widened the strategic fault line in the Indo-Pacific region. India and China are on the opposite ends of this divide, with

China worried about India's political and military alignment with the US – despite India maintaining that it follows the policy of "strategic autonomy".

The convergences of interests are challenging since India demands material concessions like border settlement. It can only give strategic autonomy in return – which can be reversed anytime. Thus, the Chinese security and foreign policy apparatus looks like it's confused about whether to alienate India for territorial gains or to appease it for intangible and reversible promises. This theme also emerges from its discussion leading up to the ongoing border standoff, which Antara Ghosal Singh, a research fellow with Strategic Studies Programme at Observer Research Foundation, captures in her meticulously researched paper on China's evolving strategic discourse on India. Her paper highlights China's domestic debates and discussions on India in the years preceding the Galwan clash and thereafter, and provides a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances that might have led to the border crisis by situating it within the overarching framework of Chinese foreign policy and global strategy and decision-making. This confusion is also one of the broad drivers for the ongoing military standoff besides primary factors and immediate triggers like improving border infrastructure on both sides and possibly reversal of special status to Jammu and Kashmir, which included Ladakh – the ground zero for the ongoing crisis.

## US Economy Shrank by 1.5% in Q1 but Consumers Kept Spending

The US economy shrank in the first three months of the year even though consumers and businesses kept spending at a solid pace, the government reported Thursday in a slight downgrade of its previous estimate for the January-March quarter. Last quarter's drop in the US gross domestic product the broadest gauge of economic output does not likely signal the start of a recession. The contraction was caused, in part, by a wider trade gap: The nation spent more on imports than other countries did on US exports.

Also contributing to the weakness was a slower restocking of goods in stores and warehouses, which had built up their inventories in the previous quarter for the 2021 holiday shopping season. Analysts say the economy has likely resumed growing in the current April-June quarter.

The Commerce Department estimated that the economy contracted at a 1.5%



annual pace from January through March, a slight downward revision from its first estimate of 1.4%, which it issued

last month. It was the first drop in GDP since the second quarter of 2020 in the depths of the COVID-19 recession and

followed a robust 6.9% expansion in the final three months of 2021.

The nation remains stuck in the painful grip of high inflation, which has caused particularly severe hardships for lower-income households, many of them people of color. Though many US workers have been receiving sizable pay raises, their wages in most cases haven't kept pace with inflation. In April, consumer prices jumped 8.3% from a year earlier, just below the fastest such rise in four decades, set one month earlier.

High inflation is also posing a political threat to President Joe Biden and Democrats in Congress as midterm elections draw near. A poll this month by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Research found that Bidens approval rating has reached the lowest point of his presidency just 39% of adults approve of his performance with inflation a frequently cited contributing factor.



# Blinken Says Global Order Must Survive China But No 'Cold War'

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Thursday for vigorous competition with China to preserve the existing global order but said the United States did not seek a "Cold War." In a long-awaited speech billed as the most comprehensive statement to date on China by President Joe Biden's administration, Blinken said that Beijing posed "the most serious long-term challenge to the international order" despite months of US focus on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"China is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order — and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to do it," Blinken said at George Washington University.

"Beijing's vision would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world's progress over the past 75 years," he said. "President Biden believes this decade will be decisive. The actions

that we take at home and with countries worldwide will determine whether our shared vision of the future will be realized." The Biden administration recently launched a loose new trade framework across Asia and has set up a forum with the European Union to set technological standards, efforts aimed at uniting like-minded nations as China dominates new fields such as artificial intelligence. Blinken acknowledged a growing consensus that other nations cannot change the trajectory of China, saying that under President Xi Jinping it has become "more repressive at home, more aggressive abroad." "There is growing convergence about the need to approach relations with Beijing with more realism," he said.

## 'NO COLD WAR'

With no rhetorical bombast or surprises, Blinken drew an implicit contrast to the approach of the previous administration of Donald Trump which

spoke in stark terms of an all-out global conflict with China.

On trips to Africa and Latin America, where China has invested billions of dollars on infrastructure, Blinken has downplayed the competition and not asked nations to take sides. "We are not looking for conflict or a new Cold War. To the contrary, we're determined to avoid both," Blinken said in his speech. "We don't seek to block China from its role as a major power, nor to stop China — or any other country for that matter — from growing their economy or advancing the interests of their people," he said. But he said that defending the global order, including international law and agreements, would "make it possible for all countries — including the United States and China — to coexist and cooperate." He pointed to climate change, saying that the United States and China — the world's two largest emitters — worked together to make progress at last year's summit in Glasgow and that a healthy competition on clean energy would have global benefits. His willingness to cooperate comes even as he charged again that Beijing is carrying out genocide against its Uyghur minority and also denounced its "brutal campaign" in Tibet and crackdown in Hong Kong.

## REFOCUSING ON ASIA

Saying that China will "test American diplomacy like nothing we've seen before," Blinken announced the formation of a "China House" inside the State Department to coordinate policy across regions. Blinken's speech — delayed from earlier this month after he tested positive for Covid-19 — was the latest attempt by the Biden administration to show its eyes are on Asia despite the Ukraine war.

Biden this month visited allies Japan and South Korea and invited leaders from Southeast Asia for a first-of-a-kind summit in Washington.

Blinken pledged to support US allies including by promoting freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, where Beijing has been increasingly assertive on its myriad territorial claims. The speech comes days after Biden made waves at a Tokyo news conference by giving the most explicit commitment in decades that the United States would militarily defend Taiwan in an invasion by Beijing, which claims the self-governing democracy. Blinken again insisted that the United States was not deviating from its longstanding stance and said Beijing had raised tensions including with its nearly daily military flights near the island. "While our policy has not changed, what has changed is Beijing's growing coercion," Blinken said.

## Five Big Trends That Show New India's All-Encompassing Civilisational Revival

Just 10 years ago, if you had told anybody any of this, she would give you an incredulous smile.

And yet, much of what was unthinkable back then is becoming a reality in today's India. We are still very far away from the ideals of removing desperate poverty, raising per capita income to the point of dignified living, or ensuring justice or at least a legal level playing ground for the poor and underprivileged. But five recent trends have been unexpected, heartening, and harbingers of a fast-changing nation. Let us examine five such trends which were inconceivable even a decade or two ago.

Trend one: India now has more women than men. According to the fifth National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) carried out by the government between 2019 and 2021, India has 1,020 women for every 1,000 men. In 2011, that figure was 943 females per 1,000 men and in 1991, it was 927 females per 1,000 men.

Governments and non-government agencies worked in rare cohesion on this. From awareness campaigns to crackdowns on sex determination clinics, the message was drilled into the psyche of the nation.

Trend two: There are more internet users in Indian villages than in the cities. Rural India has 20 percent more internet users than urban areas, according to a recent study by data and market measurement firm Nielsen.

The study titled Bharat 2.0 internet

study shows that out of India's 646 million active internet users aged two years and above as of December 2021, rural users have grown at 45 percent compared with urban users' growth of 28 percent over 2019. The Internet user base for 12 years and above has grown by 37 percent in that period.

Trend three: India has seen a sharp decline in the fertility rate among women. The recent National Family Health Survey has shown that India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR, or average number of children a woman would bear) is 2.0, down from 2.2 in the 2015-2016 survey.

Fertility among Muslim has shown the sharpest dip at 2.36, while it is still much higher than that of Hindus and Christians at 1.94 and 1.88 respectively. Trend four: India has surpassed every nation, including China and the US, in digital financial transactions. For a country which was so cash-reliant till just six years ago, this is extraordinary.

India had the highest real-time payments among businesses around the world, with over 40 percent of such payments worldwide in 2021 being done here. A report by payment solutions provider ACI Worldwide, data analytics firm GlobalData, and the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) shows that India made 48.6 billion real-time payments through 2021, more than 2.6 times higher than China, which is at the second place with 18.5 billion real-time transactions.

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# Go on the Ramayana Circuit by train-here's all you need to know



The 14-coach train, to be run by IRCTC, will have 11 air conditioned three-tier coaches for tourists, along with a pantry car, a restaurant car, and a separate coach for use by the train staff.

On June 21, when the first Bharat Gaurav Tourist Train starts on its maiden journey, it will breach a new frontier — becoming the first tourist train from India to cross the international border into Nepal.

The train will run on the Ramayana Circuit identified under the Ministry of Tourism's Swadesh Darshan scheme, covering prominent places associated with the life of Lord Ram. A visit to the Ram Janaki temple in Janakpur in Nepal will be part of the tour itinerary, senior officials from the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) said. The 14-coach train, to be run by IRCTC, will have 11 air conditioned three-tier coaches for tourists, along with a pantry car, a restaurant car, and a separate coach for use

by the train staff. "The tourists will be offered strict vegetarian meals, freshly cooked on board. The train will have an infotainment system, and CCTV cameras and guards will ensure security on board," an IRCTC official said.

The train can accommodate up to 600 tourists, and IRCTC officials said 293 individuals — almost half the capacity — had booked themselves on it by May 26.

The 18-day tour will start from Delhi's Safdarjung Railway Station. Tickets start from Rs 62,370 per person for the all-inclusive package. A final certificate of Covid-19 vaccination is mandatory to get on board.

**Stops on the tour**

Ayodhya will be the Bharat Gaurav Train's first stop, where tourists will visit the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple and the Hanuman temple, besides Bharat Mandir at Nandigram.

The train will then head to Buxar in Bihar, where tourists will visit

the hermitage of Vishwamitra and Ramrekha Ghat on the Ganga.

The visit to Janakpur in Nepal via Jainagar in Bihar's Madhubani district will follow. Tourists will stay overnight at hotels in Janakpur, and visit the Ram-Janaki Temple in the town.

From Janakpur, the train will cross back into India and proceed to Sitamarhi in Bihar, which is believed to have been the birthplace of Sita.

The next stop is Varanasi. Tourists will visit the various temples in the ancient city, and will go to Shringverpur, the place where Ram, Sita and Laxman are believed to have crossed the Ganga, and Chitrakoot by road. The train will then move west and south — to Nasik for visits to the Trayambakeshwar temple and Panchvati, and then to Krishkindha, Hampi, which is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Hanuman.

The next destination will be Rameshwaram, for visits to the Ramanathaswamy temple and

## EPIC JOURNEY ON WHEELS

The RCTC's 'Shri Ramayana Yatra' will begin on June 21, taking pilgrims on a train to places associated with the life of Lord Ram

• ₹62,370 per passenger

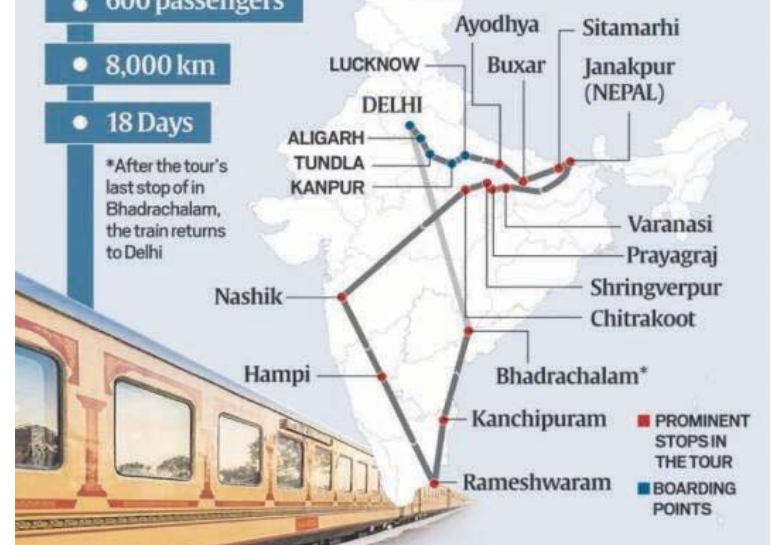
• 600 passengers

• 8,000 km

• 18 Days

\*After the tour's last stop of in Bhadrachalam, the train returns to Delhi

The journey along the Ramayana circuit will be undertaken in a  **BHARAT GAURAV TOURIST TRAIN**



Dhanushkodi. The train will then head to Kanchipuram for a day's excursion to the Shiv Kanchi, Vishnu Kanchi, and Kamakshi temples. The train will then head to Bhadrachalam in Telangana, also referred to as the Ayodhya of the South, and end its 8,000-km journey in Delhi.

To Nepal for first time

In the previous Ramayana Circuit tours covered by tourist trains from India, Janakpur was covered from Sitamarhi station. But now, the Indian Railways, with support from Nepal Railway, has extended the track from Jainagar station in India to Janakpur in Nepal, IRCTC officials said. Recently, during his visit to Lumbini, Prime

Minister Narendra Modi had remarked: "I had said in Janakpur that 'without Nepal, our Lord Ram is also incomplete'. I am aware that the people of Nepal are feeling equally happy as an elegant temple for Lord Shri Ram is being built in India." After the Ramayana Circuit, other itineraries too will be drawn up, officials said. The Indian Railways launched the Bharat Gaurav trains last year, to be operated by private players on theme-based circuits. According to the Bharat Gaurav policy, any operator or service provider can lease a train to run on a theme-based circuit as a special tourism package.

## China claims it has 'no intention' to build military base in Solomon Islands

There have been a lot of chatter about China building a military base in the Solomon Islands, but foreign minister Wang Yi has made it clear that they have no such intention. The Chinese minister, who is currently on a tour of the Pacific islands, dismissed all the speculations which were born out of their recent security pact with the island nation. The rumours started when a leaked copy of the agreement showed that it contained a provision that allowed China to deploy their navy as part of the new agreement. However, China said that it was "above board, with honesty and integrity".

"It is not imposed on anyone, nor is it targeted at any third party. There is no intention at all to establish a military base," Wang told a news conference according to an AFP report.

The leaked document created tensions in Australia — a nation

which is quite close to the Solomon Islands — but Wang said that the fears



were completely baseless at the

moment. "China's cooperation with Pacific Island countries does not target

any country and should not be interfered or disrupted by any other country," he added in the press conference.

The foreign minister also took a shot on Australia for saying the islands were "in their backyard". "They are not the backyard of anyone. All the Pacific Island countries are entitled to make their own choice instead of being just mere followers of others," the foreign minister said through a translator.

"Any smears and attacks on the normal security cooperation between China and Solomon Islands are not above the board and any such disruption will not get anywhere," he concluded.



# Particular memories can be erased, Scientists have found a way



(Insider Bureau) Particular memories can be erased, Scientists have found a way. A new study suggests that memories that trigger anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) could be erased without affecting other important memories of past by isolating molecules related to memory and selectively blocking their function. While there are many ways to boost your memory, there are certain incidents that you would rather forget. The finding could help develop drugs that can treat anxiety without affecting the patient's normal memory, sources said. Brains create long-term memories by increasing the strength of connections between neurons and maintaining those connections over time. By measuring the strength of each connection, the researchers found that the increase in the strength of each connection produced by the different stimuli was maintained by a different form of a Protein Kinase M (PKM) molecule (PKM Apl III for associative synaptic memory and PKM Apl I for non-associative).

## Cool beard styles for this hot summer



The three styles that are doing the rounds in summer are:

### Bald with beard

A shaved head complimenting a full beard or a neatly trimmed beard is quite the classic combination that always works. The secret to making it work into a well-groomed look is some brow maintenance as well.

### Carved beard

This fashionable and trendy beard style for dusky men often highlights unique facial hair contouring on a prominent jaw line. Cool beard styles Full beard with a man bun The full beard look with a man bun has become quite the rage and a look that gives casuals a whole new expression.

(Insider Bureau) Cool beard styles for this hot summer as a fashion statement. Beard these days have become a signature of fashion for men.

Rohit Jaiswal from Bombay Shaving Company and Karan Chadha, Founder, Gangs of Beard, point out

that men are not "price sensitive and will spend on products they relate to". They also added that men "are getting more adventurous in expressing themselves – whether it is growing a beard, being covered with tattoos or even sporting a shaved dome".

## Your job could be a reason for high risk of Vitamin D deficiency



(Insider Bureau) Your job could be a reason for high risk of Vitamin D deficiency. Stuck behind your office desk for most part of the day? Your nine-to-five job could be a major factor that puts you at high risk of Vitamin D deficiency.

Shift workers, healthcare workers and indoor workers in particular are at high risk of vitamin D deficiency, researchers at the University of Alberta, Canada suggest. Understanding the prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in different professions could improve public health interventions and prevention efforts. Dr. Sebastian Straube, the corresponding author said: "Our results suggest that occupation is a major factor that may contribute to suboptimal vitamin D levels. Regular

screening of vitamin D levels in at-risk groups should be considered for future clinical practice guidelines and public health initiatives. Workplace wellness programs could include education about the importance of adequate vitamin D levels. This could help prevent adverse health outcomes linked to vitamin D deficiency, such as metabolic disorders, psychiatric and cardiovascular disorders, and cancer." The researchers found that prevalence of vitamin D deficiency was highest among shift workers (80% of individuals), followed by indoor workers (77%) and healthcare students (72%).

Among healthcare workers, rates of vitamin D deficiency varied depending on whether they were students, medical residents (65%),

practicing physicians (46%), nurses (43%) or other healthcare professionals (43%).

Dr. Straube said: "Vitamin D production by the body is reliant on sunshine and UV exposure so any activity that reduces exposure tends to reduce vitamin D levels. Sunlight deprivation in young medical professionals, who may have particularly long working hours, and other indoor workers, puts them at higher risk of both vitamin D insufficiency and deficiency."

A high percentage of indoor workers (91%) were also found to have insufficient vitamin D, which means that their levels of vitamin D weren't necessarily as low as those found in vitamin D deficient individuals, but lower than levels recommended for health. By comparison, 48% of outdoor workers had vitamin D deficiency, while 75% had vitamin D insufficiency. In order to evaluate vitamin D levels, deficiency and insufficiency in different occupations and to identify at-risk groups of workers, the authors conducted a systematic review of 71 peer-reviewed journal articles which involved 53,425 individuals in total and spanned a range of latitudes in both the Northern and Southern hemisphere.

## Love playing video games?

*It might make your brain more efficient*



(News Agencies) Carried out by researchers from the Cognitive NeuroLab, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain, and the Laboratory for Neuropsychiatry and Neuromodulation, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, USA, the team looked at 116 scientific studies to see if any trends arose from recent research on how video games affect brain structure and behaviour. Previous studies have shown that it improves skills required for higher education and it can even be used to treat depression. "Games have sometimes been praised or demonized, often without real data backing up those claims. Moreover, gaming is a popular activity, so everyone seems to have strong opinions on the topic," says Marc Palaus, first author on the review. From their analysis, which included looking at 22 studies on the structural changes in the brain and 100 on changes in brain functionality and/or behaviour, the team found that playing video games can change both how our brains perform and its structure. Some of the studies suggested that playing videos games can improve several types of attention, including sustained attention or selective attention, with the brain regions involved in attention appearing to be more efficient in gamers and requiring less activation. The studies also showed evidence that video games can increase the size and efficiency of brain regions related to visuospatial skills, with the team finding that the right hippocampus was enlarged in both long-term gamers and volunteers following a video game training program.



# After Centre slashes fuel rates, more tax cut in these states

After the Central government's decision to cut excise duty, several state governments announced a reduction in petrol and diesel prices



(SAI Bureau) A day after the Centre reduced excise duty on fuel, several state governments reduced the Value Added Tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel. On Saturday, the Centre had cut excise duty on petrol by Rs 8 per litre and on diesel by Rs 6 per litre to give relief to consumers battered by high fuel

prices that have also pushed inflation to a multi-year high. The excise duty cut would translate into a reduction of Rs 9.5 a litre on petrol and Rs 7 a litre on diesel after taking into account its impact on other levies.

After the Central government's decision to cut excise duty,

several state governments slashed VAT on petrol and diesel.

## KERALA

The Kerala government announced a reduction in taxes on petrol and diesel prices. On Saturday, the Kerala government announced a cut in tax on the prices of petrol and diesel by Rs 2.41 and Rs 1.36 per

litre respectively. Announcing the cut on state tax, Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal said, "The Union government has partially reduced the huge tax on petrol and diesel. Kerala government welcomes this decision."

"...state government will reduce state tax on the price of petrol

and diesel by Rs 2.41 and Rs 1.36 per litre respectively," he said.

## RAJASTHAN

The Rajasthan government reduced VAT on petrol by Rs 2.48 per litre and diesel by Rs 1.16 per litre, following the reduction of excise duty by the Centre.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot tweeted, "Due to the reduction in the prices of petrol and diesel by the central government, the state government will reduce VAT by Rs 2.48 per litre on petrol and Rs 1.16 per litre on diesel. With this, petrol will be cheaper by Rs 10.48 and diesel by Rs 7.16 per liter in the state."

## MAHARASHTRA

On Sunday, the Shiv Sena-led

Maharashtra government reduced the Value Added Tax (VAT) on per litre petrol by Rs 2.08 and diesel by Rs 1.44.

## ODISHA

The Odisha government also reduced taxes on petrol and diesel by Rs 2.23 and Rs 1.36 a litre respectively.

The new petrol and diesel prices from 6 AM of Sunday in Odisha were Rs 102.25 and Rs 94.86 respectively.

## BIHAR

While the Bihar government is yet to announce any cut in fuel prices, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday lauded the Centre for the reduction in excise duty on petrol and diesel and hinted that his government might do its bit after due deliberations.

# Indonesia lifts ban on palm oil exports but shipments unlikely now

Indonesia President Joko Widodo announced the lifting of the ban on exports of crude palm oil and some derivative products



(SAI Bureau) Indonesia allowed a resumption of palm oil exports from Monday after a three-week ban, but shipments were not expected to get underway until details emerge on new rules aimed at securing domestic supplies of the edible oil.

The Southeast Asian country, the world's biggest palm oil producer, halted exports of palm oil from April 28 in an attempt to bring down soaring local prices of cooking oil, rattling global edible oil markets already struggling with sunflower oil supply shortages due to the war in Ukraine.

## PALM OIL EXPORT BAN

President Joko Widodo announced the lifting of the ban on exports of crude palm oil and some derivative products last week, expressing confidence that bulk cooking oil prices were

heading towards a target level of 14,000 rupiah (\$0.9546) per litre, even if they were currently higher in some areas.

Palm oil, used in everything from margarine to shampoo, comprises a third of the world's vegetable oil market, with Indonesia accounting for about 60 per cent of supply.

## REASON

To ensure supply security, Indonesia said it will impose a so-called Domestic Market Obligation (DMO) policy, whereby producers are required to sell a portion of their products locally at a certain price level.

Indonesia plans to retain 10 million tonnes of cooking oil supplies at home under the DMO rules, Chief Economics Minister Airlangga Hartarto said, adding their implementation will be regulated by the Trade

Ministry. Traders were on Monday waiting for details on the DMO and other rules to be made public. "Sellers are first trying to clear pending quantity that was stuck because of the ban. They are accepting new orders as well, but demand is not great," said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading house.

"They are also not too keen to sell a lot before understanding DMO rules," added the trader. A Jakarta-based company, which did not want to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter, said it was also waiting for details of the rules

before embarking on shipments.

A senior trade ministry official did not respond when contacted by Reuters seeking details.

Partially reflecting the Indonesia policy uncertainty, palm oil futures from rival supplier Malaysia climbed 1.67% on Monday.

Asked whether palm oil producer Musim Mas had resumed exports, spokesperson Carolyn Lim said the company was still focused on "flooding the domestic markets with cooking oil to hopefully reach the target retail price", noting the Indonesian

government was still concerned about the high retail prices.

As of Friday, the average price of bulk cooking oil was at 17,000 rupiah per litre, Trade Ministry data showed.

Some farmers, though, cheered the ending of the export ban.

Last week, farmers staged rallies across Indonesia to protest a 70% drop in prices of palm fruit as refiners stopped accepting supplies because palm oil storage filled up.

"There are no more long lines at palm oil mills," said palm oil farmer Irfan, who said palm fruit prices in his area of West Sulawesi had started to stabilise.

# Rupee rises against US dollar

On the interbank forex market on Monday, the rupee opened at 77.66 against the US dollar, marking a rise of 4 paise in early trade

(SAI Bureau) The rupee rose against the US dollar in early trade on Monday. This is a positive sign after the rupee had slipped 7 paise to close at an all-time low of 77.63 against the American currency on Friday, weighed down by unabated foreign fund outflows and elevated crude oil prices. On the interbank forex market on Monday, the rupee opened at 77.66 against the US dollar, marking a rise of 4 paise in early trade.

On Friday, the rupee closed at 77.63, down 7 paise over its previous close of 77.56 on Thursday. Last week, the dollar

index marked the first weekly decline after six weeks of upward movement, driven by position liquidation and preference for other currencies to emerge at a lower level.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex was up by 133.14 points or 0.25 per cent to end at 54,459.53, while the broader NSE Nifty jumped 24.35 points or 0.15 per cent to 16,290.50.

Foreign institutional investors remained net sellers in the capital market on Friday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 1,265.41 crore, as per stock exchange data.



# Expert panel approves Covaxin for emergency use, waives off clinical trial condition

**A subject expert committee has approved Bharat Biotech's Covaxin for emergency use authorisation in India and removed the clinical trial mode condition on its use..**

(SAI Bureau) The subject expert committee (SEC) of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation has approved Bharat Biotech's Covaxin for emergency use authorisation in India.

Earlier the vaccine's emergency use was permitted only in the clinical trial mode. This condition has now been waived off. The decision was taken after the expert panel studied the interim

data of Covaxin's Phase-3 trial that showed 81 per cent efficacy.

Covaxin is India's first indigenous vaccine against the Covid-19 and is being developed and manufactured by Bharat Biotech.

It is among the two Covid-19 vaccines that have secure emergency use authorisation in India. The other vaccine is Covishield, which is developed

by Oxford University and AstraZeneca and is being manufactured in India by the Pune-based Serum Institute of India.

On March 3, Bharat Biotech announced results of Phase 3 clinical trials of Covaxin, saying the vaccine demonstrates interim clinical efficacy of 81 per cent.

The Phase 3 clinical trials involved 25,800 volunteers, mak-

ing it the "largest trials ever conducted in India" in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Bharat Biotech said. "Covaxin has demonstrated 81 per cent interim efficacy in preventing Covid-19 in those without prior infection

after the second dose," it said, adding that apart from demonstrating high clinical efficacy against Covid-19, the vaccine also provides "significant immunogenicity against the rapidly emerging variants" of the virus causing Covid-19.



## Biden announces plans to purchase 100 million more Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine doses



(SAI Bureau) President Joe Biden announced Wednesday that he is directing the US Department of Health and Human Services to purchase an additional 100 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine. The

administration and the pharmaceutical giant still need to negotiate when these 100 million doses will be available but it will likely happen later this year as Johnson & Johnson works to ramp up production.

"There is light at the end of this dark tunnel of this past year, but we cannot let our guard down now or assume victory is inevitable. Together we're going to get through this pandemic and usher in a healthier and more hopeful future," Biden said alongside the CEOs of Johnson & Johnson and Merck, which is helping to manufacture the Johnson & Johnson's vaccine under a deal brokered by the White House.

The New York Times first reported the announcement was expected. The White House told governors Tuesday to expect fewer than 400,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccine next week, far below what they initially expected would be avail-

able. Biden announced last week that the US would have enough Covid-19 vaccine doses for every adult American by the end of May, which was a two-month acceleration of the previous timeline his administration had laid out. This new purchase of Johnson & Johnson vaccines will not accelerate that timeline, but these doses would help build up US vaccine stock later in the year. The new goal was made possible by a rare partnership between competitors Merck and Johnson & Johnson. The White House says it is utilizing the Defense Production Act to help equip two Merck facilities to manufacture the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

When Biden first took office, his

team learned that Johnson & Johnson's one-shot coronavirus vaccine was highly effective but the company was millions of doses behind its production schedule. Jeff Zients, the White House's coronavirus czar, called Johnson & Johnson's CEO Alex Gorsky and was instrumental in brokering the deal. Having enough vaccine supply by the end of May does not mean all Americans will receive shots by the end of May. Issues with distribution and personnel mean it could take much longer for all the doses to be administered. More than 527,700 Americans have died from Covid-19 as of Wednesday morning, according to Johns Hopkins University.

## Why some people can deal with the cold



(SAI Bureau) Plunging into ice baths post-workout might be how some professional athletes choose to recover, but anyone trying to keep fit in the winter will know that the cold can be as harsh as it is rejuvenating. For Matilda Hay, a recreational swimmer, there's no choice be-

tween a heated pool or cold-water wild swimming. While the latter has been lauded for its health benefits, it's not for everyone. "When I've tried wild swimming, I can't stay in for long - I lasted maybe a few minutes before I came running out," says Hay. "My sister is able to

stay in much longer than me for some reason. I just think we handle the cold differently."

Evidence for some of the mental health benefits of cold-water swimming cited in the media is a little thin, too. It's largely based on the case study of one 24-year-old woman. So why has it proven so popular? And is Hay right; are some people just better at handling the cold than others?

The weather takes the cutting edge off our performance levels. In the cold our muscles slow, taking longer to tense and reducing our ability to both burst into action and the total amount of power generated (though this can be mitigated with a good

warm-up beforehand).

The reasons for this decrease in performance in cold weather are a little complex, not least because our tolerance of the cold depends on our genetics, subcutaneous fat levels - the fat just beneath our skin - and body size. One suggestion is that when our bodies cool the rate at which we release energy in our muscle cells decreases.

But exercising in the cold has also been linked to better cardiac health, a stronger immune system and converting white fat cells to brown, contributing to more weight loss. So, if done safely, it could bring serious health benefits.

Some of us might have an ad-

vantage when it comes to working out in cold weather. One in five people lack the muscle fibre protein  $\alpha$ -actinin-3. This mutation reveals a little bit about our evolutionary history and explains why some modern athletes succeed in the cold, while others remain frozen to the start line. Sometimes called the "gene for speed",  $\alpha$ -actinin-3 gives athletes a competitive advantage when it comes to powerful bursts of energy and muscle recovery, but it might be less useful in other situations.

All of our skeletal muscles are made up of a combination of two types of fibre: slow-twitch muscle fibres and fast-twitch muscle fibres.



# JNU researchers develop sugar candies that could treat malaria in children

**A team led by researchers from JNU have identified a naturally occurring sugar alcohol as a potent weapon to stop malaria among children below five years of age**



to do," professor Shailja Singh from JNU's Special Centre for Molecular Medicine said about her new findings.

The study published in preprint BioRxiv proposes using simple natural sugar alcohol candies in combination with existing anti-malarial drugs to give better protection against the illness. Malaria is caused by Plasmodium parasites, which are spread to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.

According to the study, Erythritol binds to and passes by the malaria parasite Aquaporin channel and inhibits the growth malaria parasite. Erythritol, which is naturally occurring, can also be made from corn using enzymes and fermentation and is a four-carbon sugar that is found

naturally in algae, fungi, and lichens. "Despite various efforts to reduce the global burden of the disease, malaria remains a major killer of children under 5 years of age. Prophylaxis and chemotherapeutics are the current approaches used to combat malaria. However, the emergence of resistant Plasmodium strains impedes the efforts and strategies for control and eradication of this disease," the paper read. Researchers said that the parasite growth in human blood leads to cerebral malaria in children below 5 years of age in tropical countries. Shailja Singh thinks that the sugar candy may be able to kill most parasites while leaving enough in the blood to help children develop resistance.

"If the candy will be

supplemented with existing artemisinin therapy, it will be more effective to treat both malaria and cerebral malaria in children," Shailja said in a statement.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), in 2020, nearly half of the world's population was at risk of malaria. Some population groups are at considerably higher risk of contracting malaria and developing the severe disease: infants, children under 5 years of age, pregnant women, and patients with HIV/AIDS, as well as people with low immunity moving to areas with intense malaria transmissions such as migrant workers, mobile populations and travelers. The new research, if it goes beyond the lab, could emerge as a major blockage to the spread of Malaria.

(SAI Bureau) An acute illness, Malaria, has been a challenge globally with researchers working to develop effective drugs and treatment. A team led by researchers from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has developed a unique medicine to treat malaria — sugar candies.

Yes, you read that right.

Natural sugar alcohol candies have been found effective against

malaria and could be used among children below five years of age. The researchers have identified Erythritol, which is commonly used, as a sweetener, and as a potent antimalarial.

Erythritol, the sugar alcohol, is an organic compound that is used as a food additive and sugar substitute. "Why bother when you could just treat malaria in children with candies? That's what we want

# India reels under heatwave: 4 easy ways to keep your eyes safe, vision protected

**While we can defend our bodies from top to bottom with clothing and sunscreen, our eyes are left vulnerable**

(SAI Bureau) The blazing heat is becoming uncomfortable as the temperature rises day by day. Many cities are experiencing heat waves, and residents are being advised to take precautions. While we can cover our body with clothing and sunscreen from head to toe, our eyes are left exposed. Not only are UV rays detrimental to the eyes, but they are also exposed to filth, pollution, and heat. This might make them itch and hurt, and it can even cause the vision to distort. For

the sake of their health, it is critical to protect the eyes from heatwaves.

India Today spoke to Dr Charu Tyagi, MBBS, DNB (Ophthalmology) MNAMS. She gave us her expert advice on how we can take care of our eyes during the scorching heat.

## 1. SUNGLASSES SAGA:

Almost all ocular structures, including the eyelid, are damaged by UV rays. Outdoor activities should be avoided between 10 am and 4 pm. When the sun is at its strongest, even on a misty day,

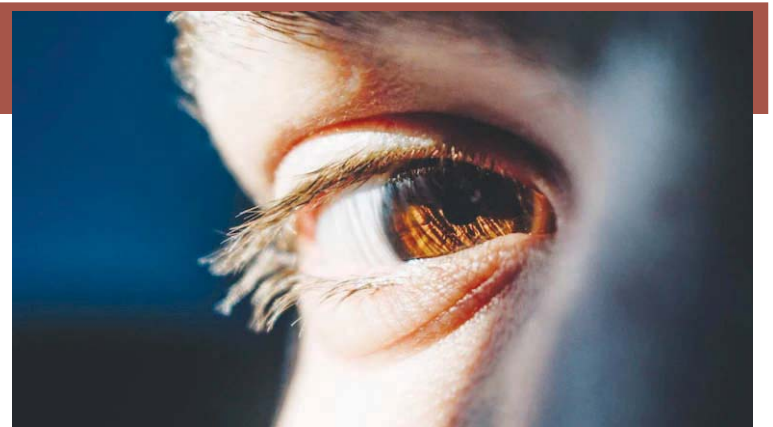
one can get sunburned. It's just as crucial to wear sunglasses with enough UV protection as it is to wear a hat with a wide brim.

Dr Tyagi said it is highly important to wear UV-protected appropriate glasses.

"Cheap glasses are acrylic, not proper CR39 and they mostly have an unclear vision which gives you eyestrain and headache, they do not provide proper UV protection," said Dr Charu Tyagi. UV rays age all of the eye's structures. Corneal damage, cataracts, and macular degeneration are all long-term impacts of UV exposure that can result in visual loss.

Direct sunlight makes your eyes more dry and prone to an eye infection. It darkens the skin with higher melanin formation through stimulation of the pineal gland", said Dr Tyagi.

She also said that direct sunlight makes you more prone to retinal damage which leads to decreased visual activity permanently.



## 3. PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE:

The skin of the eyelids is the thinnest on the entire body. Dryness, wrinkles, exaggerated skin furrows, sagging, loss of elasticity and speckled pigmentation are all symptoms of UV damage. Squamous cell carcinomas, basal cell carcinomas, and cutaneous melanoma are all linked to ultraviolet light. Squamous cell carcinoma can develop on the skin, the conjunctiva, the cornea, and the inside of the eye, necessitating the removal of the entire eye in some cases.

## 4. PROTECT YOUR EYES:

UV radiation is absorbed by the front surface of the eye in 99 per cent of cases. When UV

light is reflected off the water, such as during water sports or skiing, it can cause corneal damage.

Sunlight and UV radiation have both been linked to cataract development. This injury is permanent. Surgery is the only treatment for cataracts that interfere with daily activities.

Then there's the harm caused by individuals staring straight at the sun, whether it's during an eclipse or not. This retinal injury might result in a permanent loss of vision.

"High water content fruits and vegetables are important and avoid direct airflow to face and eyes, especially during driving. Complete and proper blinking is required," said Dr Charu Tyagi.





# Scientists neutralize pit viper venom with compound from fruits and vegetables

The finding could complement standard treatment with anti-bothropic serum, offering an emergency fix for those bitten in remote locations where immediate access to medical services is impossible



(SAI Bureau) A substance found in fruits and vegetables can neutralize the venom of a poisonous pit viper common in much of South America, Brazilian researchers have discovered. In Brazil, the Bothrops jararaca, also called "yarara," is responsible for most of the country's roughly 26,000 recorded snake bites each year, according to the online Reptile Database.

The study, conducted by Sao Paulo's Butantan Institute and published in the journal Frontiers in Pharmacology, found that a modified version of the compound rutin, the water soluble

succinyl rutin, can delay the effect of a poisonous bite. The finding could complement standard treatment with anti-bothropic serum, offering an emergency fix for those bitten in remote locations where immediate access to medical services is impossible.

Marcelo Santoro, who coordinated the research, said the serum treats the main effects of the snakebite.

"In this sense, rutin would serve as an adjuvant: not to replace the serum, but to delay the effects of poisoning, controlling bleeding and inflammation," he said.

# Artemis-I Moon rocket to return to launchpad in June for key tests

The Artemis-I rocket dubbed Space Launch System will return to the launchpad in June for another attempt at wet dress rehearsals that will declare if its fit to fly to the Moon

(SAI Bureau) Weeks after it was removed from the launch pad, the Space Launch System that will power humans' ascent to the Moon will commence another wet dress rehearsal attempt in June. The Artemis rocket will be rolled back to the launchpad 39B at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida early next month. The rocket, along with the Orion spacecraft, has been undergoing maintenance following the first attempt at wet dress rehearsals that was marked by several systemic

faults. Nasa said that engineers have successfully completed work on a number of items observed during the previous wet dress rehearsal test.

Currently, inside the Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB), engineers have worked on a liquid hydrogen system leak at the tail service mast umbilical, replacing the interim cryogenic propulsion stage (ICPS) gaseous helium system check valve and support hardware, modifying the ICPS umbilical purge boots, and

confirming there are no impacts to Orion as a result of storms and subsequent water intrusion at the launch pad.

"The team also updated software to address issues encountered during core stage tanking of liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen during previous rehearsal attempts. The purge boots are not flight hardware, but enclose an area around the ICPS umbilical the connection between the mobile launcher and the upper stage to protect it from the natural environment during propellant



loading," Nasa said in a blog update. Repairs to the gaseous nitrogen distribution system have also been completed that ensured the system is ready to support tanking operations. During wet dress rehearsal and launch, teams use gaseous nitrogen to purge the rocket

including its umbilical plates, and to support other operations.

Nasa said that the Artemis team is completing some of the forward work originally scheduled to take place in the VAB, which includes opening the Orion crew module hatch and installing some payloads, such as hardware elements for the Callisto technology demonstration, a flight kit locker, and container assemblies for a space biology experiment. Once back on the pad, the final tests will mark the safety of the system and designate if the SLS is fit for launch or not. During the wet dress rehearsal, once launch controllers reach the point just before the rocket's RS-25 engines will ignite on launch day, they will recycle back to the T-10-minute point, and then resume the countdown once more after a hold. The Artemis mission is aimed to establish a sustainable presence on the Moon to prepare for missions to Mars.

# China wants to find habitable planet near solar system

(SAI Bureau) 'Are we alone in the universe?' is a question that has puzzled humans.

But as technological advances took place, search for life was accompanied by another quest. It was to find out habitable exoplanets for possible colonisation of space.

China is now entering this fray. Chinese scientists have put forth proposal for a space project by the name Closeby Habitable Exoplanet Survey (CHES), reported CGTN news. In this project, the

Chinese space agency will survey the sky with a space-borne telescope to find a planet which may be habitable for

If China becomes successful in carrying

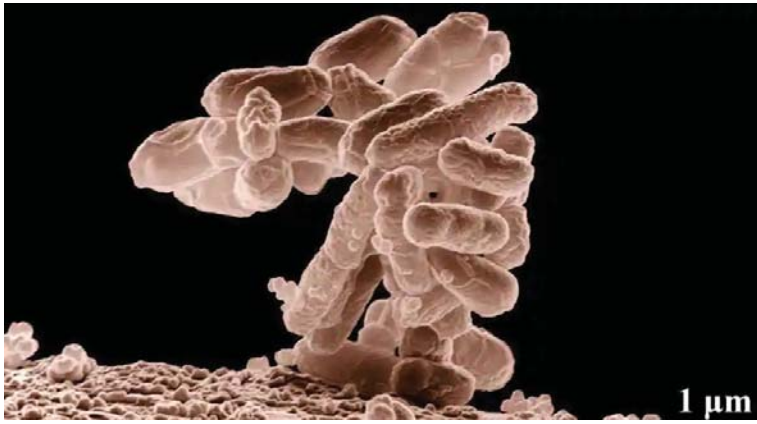


out the project, it would be the very first space mission, designed in the search for habitable Earth-like planets, about 32

light-years from Earth. The space project will offer answers to questions about the solar system, CGTN News quoted Ji Jianghui, the principal investigator of the CHES mission as saying. "These studies will ultimately answer questions such as 'Is our solar system special?' or 'Are we unique in the universe?' and provide a deeper understanding of the formation and evolution of Earth and the solar system, and a full picture of nature and origin of life, so as to better understand ourselves," said Jianghui.



# Key to study ancient life: Scientists find potentially alive 830-million-year-old microorganisms



of sedimentary rocks. The researchers were unable to determine the precise species of these microorganisms, but Live Science reported quoting the researchers that it looks a lot like *Dunaliella*, a very common salt-loving algae found in both ancient and modern salty environments.

The organisms are tiny, ranging from half a micron to 5 microns in diameter—which is smaller than human hair.

The discovery is touted to be significant as it has implications for the search for ancient life in both terrestrial

and extra-terrestrial chemical sedimentary rocks, especially on Mars where large salt deposits have been identified as evidence of ancient, large-scale liquid water reservoirs.

According to the scientists, the microorganisms lived nearly 1 billion years ago in what was either a shallow, salty marine environment or a shallow, salty lake.

The researchers discovered this ancient life by peering into the salt crystals using light microscopy, meaning they didn't disturb the fluid pockets. But it begs the

question of how these microorganisms managed to stay alive for billions of years. Explaining the mystery, the study's co-author Sara Schreder-Gomes, who conducted the research while at West Virginia University, said these salt-loving microorganisms are survivors, capable of going dormant or otherwise altering their metabolisms to stay alive during times when the water around them dries up. "The findings could be used to search for ancient aliens," she said.

(SAI Bureau) Tiny remnants of some of the microbes might still be alive. A team of geologists discovered the single-celled organisms inside tiny fluid pockets in halite, or salt, from a formation

## In a week, sky might be lit up with most powerful meteor shower in generations

(SAI Bureau) Between the night of May 30 and the early morning of May 31, the sky would be lit-up with a brief, but, intense meteor display, thanks to a comet that split apart in 1995 and is apparently still fragmenting.

According to NASA, a new meteor shower—the Tau Herculids—might erupt, perhaps ranking with the best of the annual meteor displays in a week from now.

This meteor, Tau Herculids, is fragment of the parent comet 73 P/Schwassmann-

Wachmann 3 (SW3). Two German astronomers—Arnold Schwassmann and Arno Arthur Wachmann of Hamburg Observatory—had found this comet in 1930. It orbits the sun every 5.4 years.

But being so faint, SW3 wasn't seen again until the late 1970s, seeming pretty normal until 1995, when astronomers realised the comet had become about 600 times brighter and went from a faint smudge to being visible with the naked eye during its passage. Upon further

investigation, astronomers realised that SW3 had shattered into several pieces, littering its own orbital trail with debris. By the time it passed our way again in 2006, it was in nearly 70 pieces, and has continued to fragment further since then.

And the comet will be in our evening sky again in July and August 2022. Bill Cooke, who leads NASA's Meteoroid Environment Office, said, "This is going to be an all or nothing event. If the debris from SW3 was traveling more



than 220 miles per hour (354 kph) when it separated from the comet, we might see a nice meteor shower. If the debris had slower ejection speeds, then nothing will make it to Earth and there will be no meteors from this comet."

## 'Surprisingly intact': Probe into massive undersea Tonga volcanic eruption defies expectations of scientists



(SAI Bureau) A massive underwater volcano erupted off Tonga this year in January, triggering tsunami satellite images as the

eruption sent smoke and ash into the air.

The volcanic eruption sent tsunami waves across the Pacific and caused massive damage, knocking out communications for the nation of about 105,000 people.

A New Zealand-led team studied the flanks of the seamount to analyse the impact of the eruption, which was surprisingly lesser as compared to what experts had estimated. The Hunga-Tonga Hunga-Ha'apai hasn't changed that much, researchers at New Zealand's National

Institute for Water and Atmospheric (NIWA) found.

In a tweet, NIWA noted that the "month-long research voyage investigating the undersea impacts of the massive Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai January eruption defied our scientists' expectations." The study revealed that the seafloor around the volcano is mostly barren, but with abundant pockets of life on the surrounding seamounts, giving a baseline for monitoring future recovery.

Kevin Mackay, who is the

expedition leader and NIWA marine geologist, said he was surprised to see the results. "Given the violence of the eruption on 15 January, I'd expected the edifice to either have collapsed or been blown apart, and this is not the case," he explained.

"While the volcano appeared intact, the seafloor showed some dramatic effects of the eruption. There is fine sandy mud and deep ash ripples as far as 50km away from the volcano, with gouged valleys and huge piles of sediment," he added.



# Madhuri Dixit Nene

## I am not singing just for the heck of it

**For actor Madhuri Dixit Nene, singing is not a whim or career expansion, but a way to express her emotions**

(SAI Bureau) After dancing and acting, actor Madhuri Dixit Nene is busy finding the right notes for singing. She admits that she doesn't look at it as a career expansion, but a way to express her emotions, thoughts and connect with fans. "After spending over 35 years in the industry, I am still looking for new challenges to take, and playing it to the best of my ability, like singing. To be frank, singing has always been a part of me since the beginning," Nene tells us, adding, "When I was working (in the initial years of my career), I was so busy that I didn't really get time to devote to it."

She forayed into the world of singing with Candle in 2020, and then released her second song, Tu Hai Mera, on her 55th birthday earlier this month, which she likes to call a "love letter" to her fans.

The actor, who recently starred in Fame Game, adds that exploring music is not a whim for her, and she has put in the work to get it right. "Whenever I do something, I work hard on it. I don't just do it for the heck of it. It's not something that was a lark with me thinking, 'okay, let's sing'. It was not like that. I prepared for it. I took vocal training from Ron Anderson, who has trained everyone from Whitney

Houston to Ariana Grande. We went into the studio and recorded the songs. I put a lot of thought into it," says the actor.

Opening up about it, she says, "I used to sing when I was in school. My mother is a trained classical singer. So, I used to sit with her and sing. So music was always a part of my life. In fact, my husband used to say that you have a good voice, why don't you sing? I was like 'I'm in a profession, suddenly, why should I start singing?' But soon it turned serious for me, and just like that I released my second song, which is my way of giving back to my fans who have supported me". Now, Nene is diving deep into her emotions to find the rhythms of her songs, and enjoying the process.

"To me, it is not just singing but also putting down my thoughts and what I feel. I am not singing somebody else's song. It's from my heart. I actually wrote the words. That's why it is not the singing part, the second part to all this is that, for me, it is an outlet, and another extension of me," says the actor, who made her debut in 1984 with Aabodh, going on to impress the world with her acting and dancing skills.



## Anushka Sharma shares her tanned pic as she shoots for Chakda Xpress, Samantha Ruth Prabhu reacts

**Anushka Sharma will be seen next in Indian cricketer Jhulan Goswami's biopic Chakda Xpress. On Tuesday, she shared a picture of herself**



cricketers India has ever produced. The film is slated to release in the second quarter of 2022 on Netflix. Helmed by Prosit Roy, the film marks Anushka's return to movies after a gap of four years. The actor featured last in the 2018 film Zero. "Anushka is the obvious choice purely because the story spans across 12 years,

so it needs somebody (bigger). It is a big budget film and you need a bigger actor to mount it and put it out there to justify the budget. From acting, to star value, (to) reach, there is no doubt about Anushka," film producer Karnesh Ssharma, who is also Anushka's brother had told PTI. Asked about the

criticism that Anushka received when the first look of Chakda Xpress was released where some social media users praised the actor's look while others stated that she did not look like Jhulan Goswami and her Bengali accent was not good, Karnesh said he welcomes all the reactions both good and bad.

(News Agency) Actor Anushka Sharma is working hard to get into the skin of her character for cricketer Jhulan Goswami's biopic titled Chakda Xpress. On Tuesday, she shared her picture in which she look tanned. Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu reacted to the post. Sharing the picture, Anushka wrote, "Tan' on ten." In the selfie, Anushka is seen smiling, as she posed for the camera. Samantha dropped a heart emoji in the comments section. A fan complimented her saying, "You look so beautiful." Another person wrote, "Yes! Now

you look like Jhulan Goswami. Kudos." Many fans dropped heart and flowers emojis in the comments section of her post. Anushka's film Chakda Xpress traces India's most celebrated fast bowler Jhulan Goswami's inspirational journey. Hailing from a small town in West Bengal named Chakda, Jhulan developed an affinity for cricket despite various obstacles on her way. The movie revolves around the highlights of Jhulan's career, from convincing her parents and breaking the stereotypes to her rise as one of the greatest women

## Nargis Fakhri suffers a bad fall as she films for a video while riding bicycle

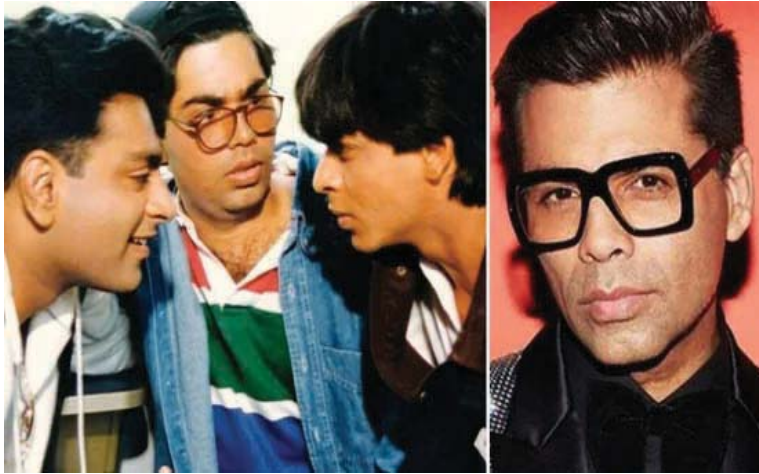
(SAI Bureau) Nargis Fakhri recently had a bad fall from her bicycle as she tried to make a video for Instagram. However, the actor picked herself up and made another video the way she wanted to. She shared both videos on Instagram along with pictures that showed her smiling even after the fall. The incident happened when Nargis was cycling with a friend in the UK countryside. She mentioned the location to be Soho Farmhouse in her Instagram post. The first picture showed Nargis laughing as she sat next to her bicycle which had crashed into a wooden fence post. The next video showed Nargis cycling at a fast speed and looking back to show her face to the camera. However, as she turned back, her bicycle skidded off the road and then crashed into the post.





# When Karan Johar's father did not want him to assist Aditya Chopra on DDLJ

**Karan Johar once shared that his father, the late Yash Johar, did not want him to work with Aditya Chopra on Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge. Karan celebrates his 50th birthday on Wednesday**



(News Agency) Karan Johar played Shah Rukh Khan's friend Rocky in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, (DDLJ). But the filmmaker also worked as an assistant director for the first time on the sets of DDLJ. Karan worked under director Aditya

Chopra, who was also directing his debut film. It's hard to believe now, but Karan was told by his father, the late Yash Johar, that he should not work with Aditya. The late film producer wanted his son to work with another filmmaker instead. The Shah

Rukh Khan and Kajol-starrer released in 1995 and went to become one of India's biggest films of all-time. In an old interview from 2001, Karan spoke about how his late father, who was a well-known film producer then, told him to not work with 'Adi', as Aditya Chopra is called by his film industry friends. He wanted Karan to work under Aditya's father, the late filmmaker Yash Chopra. In an interview to journalist Karan Thapar on his BBC show Face to Face, Karan shared how he entered films, "My father asked me... why are you assisting Aditya. Assist Yash Chopra. He's the big man. I said something makes me feel I should assist him. Just give me a year... and let me see what

happens." The filmmaker turned 50 on Wednesday. Karan also spoke about how he accidentally landed a cameo in DDLJ. He said his role as Shah Rukh's bestie was actually meant for another actor. Karan said he only got offered the part, after an actor fell sick in Mumbai, and could not join the film's crew in Switzerland on time. He shared that it was Shah Rukh and Aditya who pressured him into making his DDLJ cameo.

"There was somebody else who was to do it. We were in Switzerland. The boy who was supposed to do it, he got malaria in Bombay (Mumbai) and he could not fly down. So suddenly, Shah Rukh and Adi (Aditya Chopra) were looking very upset one day sitting in one of the chalets we were shooting in and Adi said the boy

hasn't come but somebody has to do that role... I kept trying to think who could do it. Suddenly Shah Rukh said 'I know who is going to do it. It's going to be you'... I said I cannot do it, but finally they just made me do it," said Karan. Since directing his first movie in 1998, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Karan has established himself as one of India's most well-known directors and producers. He has also dabbled in acting, and made cameos in films like Om Shanti Om, Bombay Velvet and Luck By Chance. Karan, who owns Dharma Productions, is gearing up for the release of his new film, Jugjugg Jeeyo. The film stars Varun Dhawan, Kiara Advani, Anil Kapoor and Neetu Kapoor alongside Maniesh Paul and Prajakta Koli.

## Shahid Kapoor reveals director Priyadarshan dubbed his voice in Chup Chup Ke without telling him: 'Ye kiski awaz hai?'

Shahid Kapoor has shared that Chup Chup Ke director Priyadarshan dubbed a part of his voice in the film but didn't tell. He recalled wondering whose voice it was



(News Agency) Actor Shahid Kapoor has revealed that the voice used for his character in Chup Chup Ke was dubbed and not his. Recently, while speaking with Netflix, Shahid read a comment online, "Can't believe this is the same guy who used to do 'Jabba Jabba' once." In Chup Chup Ke, Shahid essayed the role of a person who pretended to be mute. Recalling his role, the actor said that film's director Priyadarshan had dubbed his voice without letting him know. Reacting to the comment, Shahid said, "Oh I know what you're talking about." He then added, "Just FYI, in case you didn't know, that 'Jabba Jabba' voice was not my voice. I also reacted to it the same way the audience did because when I saw the film and at that time, I

was a newcomer, so, zyada importance nahi milti jab aap newcomer hote ho (you don't get much importance as a newcomer)."

The actor added, "Toh unhone mujhe bataye bina, because woh Priyadarshan ne film banayi thi, aur woh Chennai mei apni dubbing aur woh sab karte the. Toh wohin se unhone kisi ko leke woh 'Dabba Dabba' kisi aur se kara di (They dubbed my voice without telling me, Priyadarshan made the film and he used to do his dubbings in Chennai. So there itself he chose someone to dub 'Dabba Dabba')." He also said, "Jab maine film dekhi toh (When I watched the film) I was looking at the film, I was like, 'Ye kiski awaz hai (Whose voice is this)?' and everyone was like, 'Oh, he's

so funny!' and I was like 'Yeah but it's not me'. I knew because I know what my voice sounds like." Chup Chup Ke, released in 2006, is a comedy-drama film. The story is adapted from the Malayalam film Punjabi House (1998). The film also stars Kareena Kapoor, Neha Dhupia, Suniel Shetty, Paresh Rawal,

Rajpal Yadav, Shakti Kapoor, Om Puri and Anupam Kher.

Meanwhile, Shahid was last seen in Jersey, helmed by Gowtam Tinnanuri. Mrunal Thakur and Pankaj Kapur are also a part of the film, which is the Hindi remake of the Telugu film of the same name. Shahid also has his digital debut series with filmmaker

duo Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK in the pipeline. Titled Farzi, the series is co-written by Sita R Menon, Suman Kumar and Hussain Dalal. The series also features Vijay Sethupathi, Raashi Khanna, Kay Kay Menon, Regina Cassandra, Zakir Hussain, Bhuvan Arora, Amol Palekar, and Kubbra Sait.

## Ram Gopal Varma accused of cheating Hyderabad producer of 56 lakh on false claims of producing Telugu movie Disha

(News Agency) A case of cheating has been registered, in Hyderabad, against filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma. A proprietor of a production house has claimed that RGV cheated him after "borrowing" ₹56 lakh from him. Cops told news agency PTI that the case has been registered at Miyapur police station. The complainant said that he met Ram Gopal Varma through a friend in 2019 and the next year, the filmmaker borrowed ₹8 lakh, informing him it was for the production of the 2020 Telugu movie Disha. Allegedly, Ram Gopal Varma again asked for ₹20 lakh, given as loan through cheque on January 22, 2020. He had promised to repay the amount within six months. Citing exigencies in his film production, RGV asked for ₹28 lakh next month. "Believing his representation, ₹28 lakh was transferred to Varma and at that time he agreed to repay entire amount of ₹56 lakh on or before the

release of the movie Disha," a PTI report quoted from the complaint. It further said that the proprietor got to know in January 2021 that RGV was not the producer of Disha. RGV is best known for his films such as crime drama Satya, thriller film Kaun, gangster films Company and Sarkar and the horror film Bhoot. His recent outing Khatra focused on homosexual romance. Talking about the subject of his film, RGV told Hindustan Times in a recent interview, "When it comes to my film, we had to find a middle path of not having the themes imposed on the posters and stuff, and the audience discovering about it when they step into the theatre. So, the fight continues. The corporate is more sensitive to public sentiment. Nobody knows how the public will actually react, but they feel that they might feel embarrassed or distasteful."



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