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Kiara Advani, Kareena Kapoor, Suhana Khan come together for a glam night



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California moves closer to historic caste discrimination ban

US discrimination laws ban ancestry discrimination but do not explicitly ban casteism. California's legislation targets the caste system in South Asian immigrant communities.

(Sai Buearu) -California moved closer to becoming the first U.S. state to ban caste discrimination after a bill to outlaw the practice passed the California Assembly late on Monday.

US discrimination laws ban ancestry discrimination but do not explicitly ban casteism. California's legislation targets the caste system in South Asian immigrant communities by adding caste to the list of categories protected under the state's anti-discrimination laws.

The bill was introduced and authored by state Senator Aisha Wahab, an Afghan American Democrat, in March.

An earlier version of it passed the state Senate before undergoing revisions.

The bill was passed on Monday by the state Assembly with a near-unanimous



vote. The revised version will now move back for a vote to the state Senate, where it is expected to pass, before heading to the desk of California Governor Gavin

Newsom to be signed into law.

Activists opposing caste discrimination say it is no different from other forms of discrimination like racism and hence should be outlawed.

The movement to fight the caste system in North America has picked up energy in recent months.

Earlier this year, Seattle became the first US city to outlaw caste discrimination after a city council vote, and Toronto's school board became the first in Canada to recognize that caste discrimination existed in the city's schools.

The issue is particularly important to Americans of Indian descent and Hindus.

The caste system is among the world's oldest forms of rigid social stratification. It dates back thousands of years and allows many privileges to upper castes but represses lower castes. The Dalit community is on the lowest rung of the Hindu caste system; members have been treated as "untouchables."

India outlawed caste discrimination over 70 years ago, yet several studies in recent years show that bias persists. One study found people from lower castes were underrepresented in higher-paying jobs.

Dalits still face widespread abuse across India, where their attempts at upward social mobility have at times been violently put down.

Debate over the caste system in India and abroad is contentious and intertwined with religion. Some people say discrimination is now rare, especially outside India. Indian government policies reserving seats for lower-caste students at top Indian universities have helped many land tech jobs in the West in recent years.

Indian-American dentist pleads guilty to stealing \$500,000 in Covid relief money

Ranjan Rajbanshi, who ran a dental practice in California, received over USD 850,000 in Covid-19 relief money from April 2020 through February 2022.



(Sai Buearu) - A 46-year-old Indian-origin dentist in the US has pleaded guilty to stealing USD 500,000 in Covid-19 relief money for two years and using it for improper personal expenditures such as investments, an official statement said.

Ranjan Rajbanshi, who ran a dental practice in California, received over USD 850,000 in Covid-19 relief money from April 2020 through February 2022 from the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for specified business purposes such as facility costs, payroll, and protective equipment for him and his staff.

On Monday, Rajbanshi pleaded guilty to using USD 500,000 of the relief money for improper personal expenditures such as investments, the Department of Justice said in a press release.

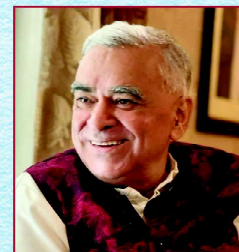
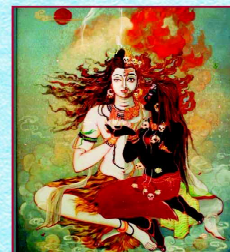
He agreed to pay that money back to the government before his sentencing.

The case came to light after the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the SBA Office of Inspector General, and HHS Office of Inspector General conducted an investigation, the press release said.

Rajbanshi faces a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and fine of USD 250,000. He is scheduled to be sentenced by a US District Judge on December 4.

Set up in 2021, the Covid-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors.

It was set up to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programmes to prevent the same.



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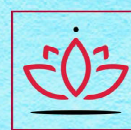
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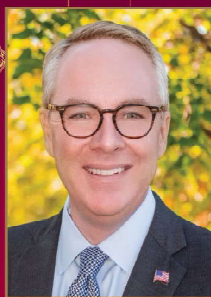
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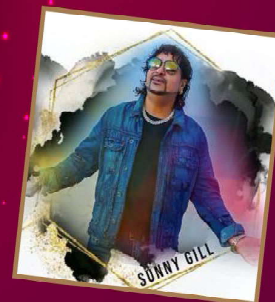
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'Situation critical': Manipur tense again as 8 killed, explosives recovered

At least eight persons were killed, while 18 others were injured in Manipur's Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts following continuous gunbattle between Kukis and Meiteis since August 29. Meanwhile, a complete shutdown was called in areas of Churachandpur on August 31.

(Sai Buearu) Violence continued in the foothills of Manipur on Thursday, officials told news agency PTI, adding, that at least eight people were killed, while 18 others were injured in Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts following continuous gunbattle between Kukis and Meiteis, since August 29. Chief Minister N Biren Singh termed the situation as "critical" and asked the general public to maintain calm. Meanwhile, fresh firing was also reported from adjoining Chingphei and Khouabung areas in the Churachandpur district.

According to the details, on August 29 erupted after a 30-year-old village volunteer was killed following heavy firing in the Khoirentak area. Another person died when a country-made gun he was using misfired and hit him on his face near Narainsena village in Bishnupur on the same day, officials said.

MANIPUR CONTINUES TO BURN - HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED

On Thursday, a series of search



operations by security personnel in vulnerable areas of Churachandpur and Imphal West districts led to the recovery of a cache of 20 explosive devices (commonly known as pipe bombs), 3 firearms, 20 rounds of ammunition and approximately 30 grams of gunpowder.

The security situation prompted the installation of 130 checkpoints and Nakas across various districts of Manipur, encompassing both hill and valley areas. As a result, law enforcement apprehended more than 1,900 individuals in connection with violations across different districts with

the state. To keep the law and order in place, the police appealed to the general public to remain cautious and not believe any rumours being circulated on social media. Police also said the citizens can verify the authenticity of any suspicious content by reaching out to the Central Control Room at 9233522822.

In the wake of continuous violence, a total shutdown, effective August 31, was called by the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) in Lonphai, Khouabung, Kangvai and Sugnu areas in Churachandpur. However, emergency

services like medical, police, water, electricity and the press were exempted from the shutdown.

Chief Minister N Biren Singh, who expressed deep concern over the present situation in the state, termed it "critical" and said that demographic imbalance due to the influx of illegal immigrants and deforestation were some of the root causes of the present crisis. He also said the state was in a critical stage and the prevailing situation compelled him to take every step in a very cautious manner. More than 160 people have been killed and several hundreds injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a "Tribal Solidarity March" was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley, while tribals, including Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mostly in the hill districts.

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Logo, coordination panel among key decisions in INDIA bloc meet today



(News Agency) The second day of the third meeting of the opposition bloc INDIA is expected to see the alliance take key decisions on the formation of a coordination committee and other matters. A logo will also be unveiled for the alliance, which was formed to take on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The third meeting aims to chalk out a campaign strategy and finalise the formal structure of the opposition bloc. The formation of the coordination committee is one of the top agendas of the meet.

According to sources, the coordination committee will be formed at two levels: central and state. Both levels will coordinate with each other to develop important strategies. The alliance partners feel that the formation of the coordination committee and other groups needs to be done soon, given the speculation of an early announcement of the parliamentary elections. Different political parties have been asked to nominate their representatives to the committee. The responsibilities of the coordination committee will be shared among all the partners of the INDIA bloc. According to sources, the alliance is also

expected to form multiple subgroups, each with different responsibilities, instead of having a single leader. The alliance will also take discussion on appointment of spokesperson. A new secretariat will also be announced during the meeting to facilitate smooth coordination between the constituents of the INDIA bloc. The secretariat is likely to be set up in the national capital. On Thursday, seat-sharing for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections took centre stage at the meeting. The alliance announced that a decision on seat-sharing would be taken on September 30.

President's nod to renaming of Nehru Memorial as Prime Minister's Museum

(News Agency) President Droupadi Murmu has approved the renaming of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) in Delhi. It will now officially be called the Prime Ministers' Museum and



Library Society, the government said in a gazette notification. In mid-June, during a special meeting of the NMML Society, it was resolved to change the institution's name to Prime Ministers' Museum and Library Society. The meeting was presided over by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, vice president of the Society. Sources told news agency Press Trust of India that some administrative processes were needed to finally put an official stamp on the new name. The name was formalised on India's 77th Independence Day. The vice-chairman of the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library's executive council had posted the update on 'X', formerly Twitter.

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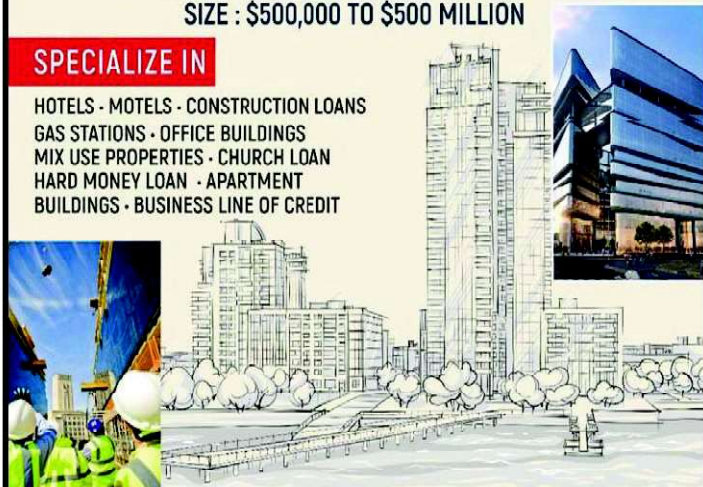
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On camera: Congress leader's son assaults student in Punjab, state chief lauds act

A viral video of Punjab cops restraining a man has triggered outrage. The victim was identified as a Panjab University student, Narveer Singh Gill, and was allegedly assaulted by Udayveer Singh Randhawa, son of the state's former Deputy Chief Minister.

(News Agency) A widely shared video on social media has sparked outrage after it showed Punjab Police personnel pinning down a person with his head down. As the video went viral, a Panjab University student, identified as Narveer Singh Gill, claimed he was the person who was being hit by Udayveer Singh Randhawa, son of former Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa. According to the First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Chandigarh Police, the cops seen in the viral video were the security personnel of the former deputy CM.

The FIR also stated the incident took place on August 23, when Narveer Singh Gill and Udayveer Singh Randhawa were present at a restaurant.



In a statement, Gill claimed the video was shot by the accused as he continued to hit him in the head.

In the video, Udayveer Singh Randhawa



could be heard saying, "You have been harassing me for three years". He continues to hit Gill even as cops asked him to stop. Following the incident, Punjab Congress chief Amarinder Singh Raja Warring stirred a controversy after he was seen telling the accused to "not worry". He was also seen patting the accused Udayveer Singh Randhawa during a public

gathering at Ferozepur.

"Where is the boy? Here he deserves applause. He is just 23. If he will not fight who will fight? Don't worry, be stronger, we will continue our fight like this," Amrinder Singh said during the rally.

Meanwhile, separate FIRs were registered by the accused and the victim in the case. While the victim claimed Udayveer held a personal grudge against him, the accused told police the victim had tossed his turban. Udayveer Singh was booked under Sections 341 and 323 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), while Narveer Singh Gill also faced charges under Section 506.

No arrests have been made in the case so far. The Akali Dal demanded the arrest of the accused, Udayveer Singh.

"He should be immediately arrested. The cops should also be booked," Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Badal told the media.

CBI Files Case Over Alleged Minority Scholarship "Scam"



(News Agency) - A case has been filed in connection with the alleged minority scholarship scam, in which 830 "fake" institutions were benefitting, causing a loss of about ₹ 144 crore to the Ministry of Minority Affairs during 2017-22, officials said on Tuesday.

The FIR is filed against unidentified persons of banks, institutions and others under IPC sections of criminal conspiracy, cheating, forgery and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, they said. "Considering various reports received on embezzlement of funds under the Scholarship Schemes, the Ministry has engaged National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) to carry out Third Party Evaluation of the Scholarship Schemes. Besides, the Ministry also carried out evaluation through National Scholarship Portal (NSP) by generating

Red Flags on doubtful Institutions/Applicants," the Ministry had said in its complaint which has now become part of the FIR.

It said a total of 1,572 institutes were identified for evaluation based on red flags generated on NSP. "Out of 1,572 institutions from 21 states, 830 institutions are found either non-operational or fake or partial fake," it said. The ministry has estimated the loss to the exchequer by counting financial implications for the year 2017-18 to 2021-22 for the institutes that are identified as fake and found a loss of ₹ 144.33 crore to the exchequer, against these 830 institutes, it said. The ministry said it was able to detect the loss for the period during which digitized data on NSP was available and the scam could be going on much prior to 2017-18.

PM Modi checks on Sonia Gandhi during brief conversation in Parliament

(News Agency) - Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress parliamentary party chairperson Sonia Gandhi engaged in a brief conversation on Thursday in the Lok Sabha chamber. The brief interaction took place just before the beginning of the

Parliament

monsoon session. Just as the House session commenced, the prime minister walked up to Sonia Gandhi and inquired about her health and well-being, to which Gandhi reportedly replied, "I am fine."

This came after a chartered plane with Sonia Gandhi and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on board, made an emergency landing at Raja Bhoj Airport in Bhopal on Tuesday evening.

According to a member of parliament, Sonia Gandhi, who was seated right next to West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury was heard telling the latter that "the only issue to discuss here is Manipur". In the all-party meeting that took place on

Wednesday, convened by the government to address their concerns ahead of the Parliament session, the Opposition demanded a discussion on Manipur violence.

Pressing concern surrounding Manipur has gained new traction after a viral

video of two women paraded naked emerged with opposition leaders have also moved suspension of Business Notice under

rule 267 in Rajya Sabha to discuss the "prime minister's silence on the ongoing violence in Manipur".

Addressing the media ahead of the Monsoon Session, PM Modi condemned the sexual atrocities in Manipur. In an interaction with the media, he said his heart was filled with anguish over the horrific video. "What happened can never be forgiven, guilty will not be spared," Modi said.

Ahead of the session, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said PM Modi has time to attend the meeting of the National Democratic Alliance but has no time to visit Manipur.



The problem isn't dynasty in parties - it's dynastic parties

By Vinay Sahasrabudhe

Most dynastic parties are expectedly angry with Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his attack on them in his Independence Day address. Indulging in pointless whataboutery, they are naming a few BJP politicians who have their next generations in the party and pointing out that this is also dynastic politics.

Make no mistake - dynasties in parties is one thing, dynastic parties are another. No party can and should deny entry to a gen-next leader just because he/she belongs to a political family. However the monopolistic control of a particular family on a party, generation after generation, makes it a dynastic party. Dynastically controlled parties can't be equated with families in parties. In BJP, the progeny of party presidents could never even dream of any dynastic succession. Hence, this Opposition whataboutery has no meaning. The PM's attack on dynastic parties is not without reason. They turn the idea of democracy upside down. Birth-based discrimination being built into the character of dynastic parties, they provide a backdoor entry to something rejected by our Constitution. Secondly, history is a witness to the fact that dynastic parties are more prone to divisions and splits, inviting political instability.

Many political dynasties like the Thackerays in Maharashtra, the Yadavs and Paswans in UP and Bihar, the NTR and YSR families in Andhra, the Chautalas in Haryana and the Badals in Punjab have faced splits in the past. The latest addition to the list is the Sharad Pawar dynasty. One can't deny that when political dynasties break, the impact isn't confined to the family. It influences the politics of the state, and the tremors at times are also felt nationally.

One can't think of a genuine democracy without party competition. Existence of multiple political parties becomes a factor while measuring the health of democracy. Parties are duly recognised as agencies that help in the processes of formation and expression of public opinion. Ideally, parties are supposed to serve as an instrument with which people can assert their enlightened opinion and meaningfully exercise their right to choose.

However, today, barring the BJP, the health of our political parties is far from what is desirable. Many parties are in the habit of splitting again and again, in multiple ways and for multiple reasons. Even after being in the business of democratic politics for several decades, most political parties have failed to graduate into credible and enduring democratic institutions.

The reasons for the fragmentation are not hidden. Dynastic parties like Congress, TDP, YSR Congress, Shiv Sena, Lok Dal,

Akali Dal, JMM, NCP and others who have faced either vertical splits or fragmentation were always lacking in ideology. As a consequence, they had no well-knit organisational base, the interpersonal relations of the decision making members were weakened, there was no mutual trust, and above all, there was absolutely no succession plan beyond the dynasty. No wonder, they faced divisions and disintegration when out of power.

Communists, once known for their ideological integrity, have also faced splits. Socialists of varying degrees of ideological purity used to be routinely ridiculed for failing to remain together. However, the difference is that rarely do deserters today convincingly cite ideology as the reason for split. While most dynastic parties have deliberately maintained ideological ambiguity, the fact remains that the majority of them are bereft of any distinct ideological identity.

Dynastic parties try to replace ideology with a commitment to the dynasty. But with no distinct ideology, dynastic parties have lost the ability to offer any credible alternative. Rarely do we see a dynastic political party coming up with a distinctive economic, foreign or even agriculture policy. Again, when political parties are built on an ideological base, idealism too plays a role. Lofty ideals help temper personal ambitions, readying individuals to compromise. The absence of both idealism and ideology finally leads politics to be divorced from purpose. And for politicians without any lofty objectives, changing parties is easy.

Over the years, the organisational character of dynastic parties has evolved into a kind of a mould. This is because often they are run by the head of the dynasty - like their family owned property. Initially, in order to keep the "resources" with the most trusted person and later to keep family control intact, the baton is invariably handed over to the next-gen dynast. Except for the son or daughter, the head of the family/party considers none in the dynasty trustworthy in the succession plan. It's no wonder that siblings or uncles and nephews fail to get along. The logical corollary of this is confrontation and a split.

Party organisations demand loyalty, integrity and commitment, but in a dynasty-controlled party, the dynasty pushes organisation to the periphery. Traditionally, supporters have an emotional investment in parties close to their heart. But when party organisations are built around a particular dynasty, splits in the dynasty destroy such an investment. As compared to ideology/idealism-centric parties, the leading teams of dynastic parties face huge threats because of not-so-healthy interpersonal relations.

Xi Jinping must not push his G20 luck too far. His worst India-US nightmares can come true

By JYOTI MALHOTRA

Russian President Vladimir Putin isn't coming to India for the G20 summit, US President Joe Biden is ignoring the East Asia Summit in favour of India and Vietnam, and China has put out a map that includes Arunachal Pradesh as well as Aksai Chin as part of its territory. Welcome to the world, it just got a bit more complicated this week.

As he winds down from his second term as prime minister, Narendra Modi is getting a feel for the games big nations play as well as the people who play them. Mapping Biden, Putin, Xi at G20

Let's start with the US president. Biden may be 80 years old, but he and his administration have decided that they will do everything in their capacity to cut China down to size - and if that means supporting India, a country one-fifth of China's economy but still the only nation with the potential to take on Beijing, then so be it. Meanwhile, Russia's Putin seems to have opted out of international fora like BRICS and G20 almost entirely - which is a reality, because if there is one country in the world that would have feted the Russian president at a time when he is consumed with more than one severe crisis, it is India. Notwithstanding Delhi's growing proximity to the US, India has been in so many trouble spots in the past decades that it understands the value of old friendships that don't disappear with the next fashion wave.

Putin's absence at the G20 also makes it easier for Delhi to resolve such weighty matters as where to seat which leader at the summit meetings as well as over lunch and dinner. So, first things first. What's the shape of the table around which the world's high and mighty are going to rest their elbows? Is it going to be square,

rectangular, or round?

None of the above. I can confirm that all formal conversations will be held around an oval table - with Modi at the head of one gentle curve. With the Russian president not coming, the protocol section of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is almost smiling - now, one only has to figure out how not to have Biden and Xi chat together for too long.

Even the photo-op becomes easier to handle. Russia's foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, probably the most astute diplomat in the world, clearly isn't as frightening - or as interesting - as Putin. With Lavrov standing in for his president, the G20 photo-op just became a breezy cake-walk.

Then there is the avuncular Xi, who agreed with Modi in South Africa less than a week ago that both leaders will order their officials to de-escalate the three-year-old face-off in Ladakh. Aha, exulted India. Xi well understands the Asian value of saving face, which means that he isn't going to rock the boat until at least India's G20 summit, which means that he and Modi can shake hands, embrace each other and laugh heartily at the cameras.

Mere days later, on Tuesday, China's ministry of natural resources published a map that showed - again - Arunachal Pradesh as part of China. Clearly, Xi believes that the Asian value of saving face only applies to big powers like China - smaller nations like India need not bother. But Xi must also know that two can play this game. Just because India has not liked to publicise the fact that Indian patrols cannot patrol large parts of Depsang anymore because they are stopped from doing so by Chinese patrols, doesn't mean that India is going to roll over and allow China to occupy even more territory than it has on the map.

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British Media and the Truth Behind UK's 'Aid' to India

Christys, while congratulating India on its monumental achievement, said, "I would like to congratulate India for landing on the dark side of the moon. I would also like to invite India to return the 2.3 billion pounds of aid money that we sent them between 2016 and 2021. We are also set to donate 57 million pounds next year. But I think the British taxpayer should keep a hold of that. As a rule, we should not be giving money to countries with space programs. India reportedly has 29 million people living in poverty. According to the UN, it is the highest anywhere in the world. India is also the fifth-largest economy in the world, with an annual GDP of 3.75 trillion dollars. Why are we paying poverty-stricken India when their government won't bother?" As for the "financial aid" from the British government, perhaps a quick session of general knowledge is in order for the British news anchor. In 2011, India's then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee, on the floor of the Rajya Sabha, categorically expressed that India didn't require any charity from the United Kingdom and said, "We do not

require the aid. It is a peanut in our total development expenditure." In fact, in the same year, the International Development Committee (IDC) of the UK Parliament published an inquiry that concluded that the UK's financial assistance could only have a marginal impact on India's development because it made up only a tiny proportion of its gross domestic product. Moreover, even the inconsequential aid was stopped in 2015, and most of the UK's funding comes from business investments. A report published in The Guardian in March 2023 explicitly said, "Since 2015, the UK has given no financial aid to the Government of India. Most of our funding now is focused on business investments, which help create new markets and jobs for the UK as well as India. UK investments are also helping tackle shared challenges such as climate change." Besides, in line with beating all expectations of economic growth, India leapfrogged the UK to become the world's fifth-largest economy by March 2022, lifting almost 135 million people out of poverty between 2014 and 2019.

Chandrayaan-3 Success

Written By: Yuvraj Pokharna
Chandrayaan-3's successful landing on the uncharted south pole of the Moon has cemented India's position in the exclusive league of global space powerhouses and etched its name in the annals of space exploration history. As the lander module descended to the Moon's lunar greyness and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) compound reverberated with collective pride and 'Vande Matram' chants, Sreedhara Panicker Somanath, the chair of

the ISRO, said, "India is on the Moon." Congratulating the ISRO team and fellow citizens, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "India's successful Moon mission is not India's alone. This is the year of India's G20 presidency. Our idea of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' is resonating across the world. This human-centric approach has been welcomed by all. Our Moon mission is also based on this principle. Our success belongs to all of humanity." India's space odyssey has swelled the hearts

of Indians with pride and excitement, and India's growing space ambitions have turned some faces green with envy. India's burning ambitions and upcoming missions, like the launch of the Aditya-L1 mission in September and the Gaganyaan missions, are sure to dovetail with a roiling, ignominious, and petulant Britain that can't savour India's triumphs, once Britain's largest colony. It would be fair to say that envy is the sincerest form of flattery. A UK news presenter, Patrick

Hate in India has gone beyond control. Even Modi, RSS can't stop it

By VIR SANGHVI

What was your first reaction when you saw (or read about) the video of a school teacher getting her students to assault one of their classmates. How did you react when you heard the audio and realised that she was actually using communal terminology and, in effect, asking the children to commit a hate crime? Did it remind you, in some way, of the railway police constable who roamed through a train shooting Muslim passengers and delivering an impassioned diatribe against the community? And did you see the news item in Wednesday's newspapers about four students in a government school in Delhi complaining that their teacher had made communal remarks to them. According to the complaints, the teacher said: "During Partition you did not go to Pakistan. You stayed in India. You have no contribution to India's freedom struggle." There was more in a similar vein. I am guessing that your first



reaction to all of these incidents was the same as mine: shock, outrage, anger, disbelief, sadness and fears about the kind of country we are becoming. And that you were as horrified as I was when the organised armies on social media posted lies to explain away the incidents. Apparently, the hate-filled teacher had not said anything communal. The video was distorted. Various glove-puppets and bots then hailed her as a martyr. Likewise, the Muslim-murdering railway police officer was not anti-Muslim, his social media

supporters said, he was just 'disturbed'. The control rooms had to junk this lie after the shooter's own superiors admitted that he had committed a hate crime, which he was then charged with. But once I began to look beyond my anger and my despair, two things worried me. Here, in no particular order, is what frightens me. Hate that's unstoppable The biggest misconception about hate is that you can control it. Politicians (from all parties and all religions) make the mistake of believing that hate is like water.

You can pour as much of it as you like. But when you are through, you can just turn off the tap. In fact, hate is the opposite of water. It is like fire. Once you light the flame, it becomes very difficult to control it. The blaze takes on a life of its own and it is almost impossible to stop it or to manage how it spreads. It is popular among people opposed to the current political dispensation to act as though the hate we see all around us emanates from the top and is the result of some careful political calculation. I don't think that is true. Every Muslim-hater is not a sangh supporter who is acting on orders from Nagpur. Like fire, hate takes on a life of its own. Nobody can tell where the next conflagration will occur, where the fire will spread or who the flames will devour. Even though the Prime Minister and his top ministers are very careful not to say anything that

could be termed communal, the hate has now reached a level where it makes no difference what they say. Even the rest of the parivar — the RSS, the VHP, the Bajrang Dal and all other liberal bogeymen and villains — lost control of the fires of hatred long ago. Nobody ordered the school teachers to target Muslims. Nobody asked the railway cop to kill Muslims. The kind of hatred we see in today's India is uncontrollable. It requires no trigger and no spark. And it is harder to fight the hatred because once the deed is done or the crime committed, an army of social media hitmen arrives to cheer on the murderers and the abusers. It is nobody's case that there was no hatred in India before the current outbreak. Independent India was created in hatred and bloodshed. But ever since then, most leaders (across political parties) and the media worked hard to heal wounds and to create social harmony.



India Should Be Prepared for More Hindenburgs and Similar Soros-ian Assaults

Written By: Utpal Kumar

The timing was perfect from an Orwellian perspective. India was literally on the moon when a news item appeared cautioning the country of another Soros-ian strike - on the lines of the Hindenburg assault on a prominent corporate house in March this year. As per a PTI report, India should be prepared for "Hindenburg 2.0" as George Soros-backed 'Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project' (OCCRP) is reportedly planning to come up with another "expose", targeting other corporate houses in the country. OCCRP is a global network of investigative journalists that "exposes crime and corruption so the public can hold power to account", says the description on its website. The body is being funded among others by Soros' Open Society Foundations (OSF), whose distaste, if not disregard, for democratic India in general and Narendra Modi in particular is not quite unfamiliar. Soros has never concealed his loathing for Modi's India. The Hungarian-born American billionaire, in fact, had defended the Hindenburg report accusing how "Modi and business tycoon Adani are close allies". He added, "Adani Enterprises tried to raise funds in the stock market but failed...Modi will have to answer on Adani in Parliament. This will significantly weaken Modi's stranglehold on India's federal government. I expect a democratic revival in India... I could be foolish, but I think democracy will flourish again."

The Soros-ian idea of democracy is Orwellian in nature: Here war is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength. And dictatorship is democracy!

Clearly, things didn't go as per the Soros-ian script despite the Hindenburg report causing ripples across the country - and abroad. On the contrary, in the past few months, India has not only come out stronger, but also it is being accepted as the only "bright spot" in the global economy, especially at a time when it gears up to host a G20 summit in New Delhi. India has never been so self-assured and sure-footed in conducting itself globally. To add insult to injury, Prime Minister Modi has declared on the floor of Parliament in the just-concluded monsoon session that in his third term, India will become the third-largest economy in the world!

Thus comes the spectre of Hindenburg 2.0. Soros, largely influenced by the American Deep State's inherent and institutionalised distrust for India, seems to be working overtime to turn this country into a failed democracy. As seen with OSF's reported involvement with anti-CAA and anti-farm law protests - and also with a senior OSF personnel participating enthusiastically in Rahul Gandhi's recent Bharat Jodo Yatra - a strategy seems to be in place to unleash chaos, violence and despair in India, on the lines of a toolkit created by communist theoretician Jan Kozák that called for exertion of pressure for radical change "from the upper levels of government and from provocateurs in the streets". Kozák termed this "pressure from above and below".

One way to exert "pressure from below", as Kozák explained, was to fill the streets with rioters, strikers and protesters. As for "pressure from above", there are reasons to believe that Soros' OSF, with its extended, hidden and dubious arms, are subverting

top global think tanks and educational institutions such as Harvard (about which Rajiv Malhotra and Vijaya Viswanathan write in detail in Snakes in the Ganga) and London School of Economics (where a top professor like Mukulika Banerjee is accused of pushing vitriolic anti-India narrative on campus), where children of the rich and powerful Indians study in a substantial number. The idea is to re-orient India's elite and push them to exert "pressure from above".

Soros is dangerous because he wears many masks. In an interview for a 1995 New Yorker profile, he conceded that the "subversive" mission of the OSF required him to wear a variety of masks. "I would say one thing in one country, and another thing in another country," he said with laughter. This two-faced nature was evident when he first denied any hands in the November 2003 uprising that toppled Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze, but a few months later he told the Los Angeles Times: "I'm delighted by what happened in Georgia, and I take great pride in having contributed to it."

Author Rachel Ehrenfeld, in The Soros Agenda (2023), accuses Soros of spending "a lot of time discussing the need for 'transparency' and 'openness' while running one of the world's most secretive and powerful investing firms". To buttress her claim, she explains how in 2016, Tranparify rated Soros' OSF as "highly opaque and the least transparent" of "200 think tanks... in 47 countries" worldwide that were ranked. "Soros once described the influence of large cash donations in politics as 'a fundamental

crisis in democratic self-government'. This, however, did not stop him from channeling his 'political philanthropy' through an intricate, multilayered web that would put to shame the elusive 'Darwin's bark spider' (Caerostris darwini), creator of the largest known orb webs," she adds.

Hypocrisy and double-standards come naturally to him. When he is accused of orchestrating the 1990s collapse of the Asian market, he first denies it, then takes refuge in what has been a common refrain for him - that it would've happened even if he wasn't there - and, finally defending his role: "I'm basically there to make money. I cannot and do not look at the social consequences of what I do." And once he makes money - a lot of money - through the hidden, dirty hands of capitalism, he questions the market system itself: "I now fear that the untrammelled intensification of laissez-faire capitalism and the spread of market values into all areas of life is endangering our open and democratic society," Soros writes in the Atlantic. "The main enemy of open society, I believe, is no longer the communist but the capitalist threat."

Now that's called having the cake and eating it too - George Soros style!

The biggest Soros-ian lie, however, has been his victimhood story vis-à-vis Nazis. Ehrenfeld writes in The Soros Agenda, "Much has been written about Soros' past as a survivor of the German occupation of Hungary during World War II and the Soviet occupation that followed. He uses those experiences as his leading credential to justify meddling in political and social affairs as he sees fit."

However, the fact is Soros was a

beneficiary of Nazi generosity. He was 14, when he had accompanied a Nazi Hungarian official at the Ministry of Agriculture named Baumbach, who was bribed by Soros' father to keep the teen at his apartment and present him as his godson. Soros accompanied Baumbach as the official identified Jewish property for confiscation by the Nazis. "I was only a spectator," Soros would defend his role in an interview with Steve Kroft on CBS's '60 Minutes' in 1994.

What makes him utterly dangerous is his illiberal, undemocratic nature. In 2020, Soros announced at the World Economic Forum in Davos his most ambitious initiative - the Open Society University Network (OSUN). He pledged \$1 billion to create what "the world really needs" - a global platform for teaching and research that existing universities all over the world would be able to join, among other things, "to fight dictators and would-be dictators." When asked how the scholars at OSUN would identify "would-be dictators", Soros was quick to retort, as quoted by Ehrenfeld: "A perfect way to tell a dictator or a would-be dictator is if he identifies me as an enemy."

The truth is that it is this megalomaniac billionaire with dubious democratic, capitalistic credentials and Nazi connections who is the biggest threat to democracy worldwide, including in India. He publicly calls out his enemies, often holding them to ransom. The world's largest democracy is on that list currently. Soros has already declared a war on India under Prime Minister Modi, calling it a sham democracy.

If You Want the Public's Trust, Broadcast the Trump Trials

Now's the time to change the court's antiquated policy of keeping federal trials in the shadows.

By ANTHONY COLEY

U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan has scheduled former President Donald Trump's federal criminal trial for his deliberate and systematic attempts to overturn the will of American voters for March 4. And if current rules remain, the American people will never see it. Instead, many will hear about it second-hand through siloed media ecosystems and from sources whose fidelity to the facts are tenuous at best.

Now is the time for this to change.

With misinformation abounding, it is clearly in the public interest to have unfiltered access to hard facts. If ever there was a moment in American history that should prompt the federal courts to change their outdated policy, surely the prosecution of a former president for attempting to overturn the will of the voters would be it. The time has come for the federal court system to catch-up with the times - many state courts already broadcast live trial proceedings.

The Judicial Conference of the United States, which sets



administrative rules and policy guidelines for federal judicial proceedings, has the power to change the rules and allow cameras in federal court rooms. When the conference convenes in September, it should decide to allow Trump's trials and related federal court proceedings to be broadcast in real-time. Notably, both Trump's lawyer and a growing number of congressional Democrats agree. I suspect my former colleagues at the Justice Department are hesitant to depart from existing norms that date back to 1946 because they have been largely effective in keeping decorum in federal court rooms and protecting witnesses, jurors

and judges. But these are extraordinary times, and extraordinary times demand extraordinary transparency. At the least, the Justice Department should inform the Judicial Conference that it does not oppose efforts to broadcast Trump's trials live.

The bright light of transparency into both of Trump's federal cases would communicate an unfiltered and unbiased accounting of trial events, and the strong evidence the government has alleged in its indictments. Equally important, it would show Americans and the world what it means to pursue justice without regard to partisan politics. We saw a glimpse of this

process play out in Fulton County, Ga., - a state case - when a grand jury there handed up its indictments earlier this month. With the 2024 presidential election in full swing, misinformation running rampant, and trust in American institutions at an all-time low, keeping the facts and evidence front and center would be in service to our democracy. Americans have already watched high-profile trials at the state and local levels for decades - from the trials of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin to the final verdict of former NFL star O.J. Simpson. Over a six-week period last year, Johnny Depp's defamation trial against his ex-wife Amber Heard amassed a total of almost 84 million hours watched by Americans. Live broadcast access to these trials encouraged a highly divided and engaged public to view evidence and facts free from editorializing, and to better accept the verdicts. Similarly, the public may be more accepting of the outcome - whatever it is - in Trump's federal trials if they are held transparently. If the

Judicial Conference fails to act, Congress should step in. There is already bipartisan legislation by Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) that would give federal judges the discretion to decide the appropriateness of recordings being broadcast live from their courtrooms. That discretion could include allowing just live audio streams of federal court proceedings.

While not as compelling as live camera footage, audio would still inform the public and could go further to help protect government witnesses, an absolute necessity given the former president's incendiary rhetoric and attacks that have already endangered the lives of elected officials and even poll-working volunteers. Notably, the Supreme Court allows live audio streams of its oral arguments. And as then-Chief Justice of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, Attorney General Merrick Garland voted in favor of allowing audio recordings of oral arguments in federal court to be published.

Decoding PM Modi's Remarks On China And Supply Chain Worries

Bharti Mishra Nath

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the B20 Summit India 2023 on Sunday and, without naming China, said, "A profitable market can be sustained when there is a balance in the interests of producers and consumers. This also applies to nations. Treating other countries only as a market will never work. It will harm even the producing countries sooner or later. Making everyone equal partners in progress is the way forward."

At the same meet, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also took a dig at China underlining its lending 'policies', which had reduced the Global South to being a consumer rather than a producer and saddled them with unviable debt that had resulted from China's "opaque initiatives". It is significant that both the PM and the Foreign Minister have raised concerns regarding China. Unfolding geopolitical events and their critical impact on trade and

business vis-a-vis China in the past years have compelled this stance.

It has been observed universally that China, led by President Xi Jinping since 2013, has shown complete disregard for international norms; an example being the protracted stand-off along the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh, Sikkim or Arunachal Pradesh. China has been muscling its way into other neighbours like Vietnam, Japan, and in the South China Sea as well, provoking strong protests and strategic re-alliance among these countries.

China has engaged India in border standoffs and a proxy war to further its policy of expansion. As China grew into a mighty economic and military power, what came to the fore was its insolence towards the rules-based international order and a shared commitment to conduct international affairs in accordance with laws, principles and

practices embodied in institutions such as the United Nations.

China continues to flout regional security arrangements, trade agreements and multilateral financial institutions at every level. India has always believed that the interests of the region are better served through a balance of forces rather than the dominance of any single force - whether it is the Americans or the Chinese. This is one of the pillars of India's Indo-Pacific vision.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has been travelling the world listening to the problems of the Global South. (Global South refers to countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, which are developing, less developed, or underdeveloped. These countries have higher levels of poverty, income inequality, and challenging living conditions compared to the wealthier nations of the Global North).

Developing nations have always struggled to find a common

agenda. Countries come together for a short-term goal or agenda but are rarely willing to coordinate and cooperate over the long term. India in its G20 presidency has gone all out to bring a perceptible change in international systems.

The PM and Foreign Minister also raised supply chain worries and called for a more balanced approach to doing business.

Supply chain problems emerged during Covid lockdowns due to shifts in demand, labour shortages and structural factors. For India, the pressure was felt when raw material imports from China were stopped. From wooden furniture to nacelle and blade of wind turbines to cells of solar panel modules, India has been dependent on China for the supply of huge volumes of raw materials, which was impacted by the disruptions due to Covid. The delay in procuring these raw materials from alternate sources had a

multiplier effect, resulting in project delays and the rise in prices of the finished products in India. The continued ramifications of the Russia-Ukraine war have exacerbated the global divide of access to resources. Countries in the Global South, India included, have been at the receiving end. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has often been seen as a project focused on benefits to China and not the countries that have provided access and infrastructure to build the road. The debt trap that many African nations have fallen into is for the entire world to see. The cost of capital has been so high that the debt trap seems perpetual. Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Zambia, Kenya, Laos, Mongolia to name a few, are the most indebted nations to China. In these countries, there are no jobs and inflation is skyrocketing, leading to waves of loan defaults and political unrest.



Putin's virtual bravado, Xi's big win, and 6 new members. Why this was a summit like no other

By Michael Bociurkiw+

The BRICS bloc of emerging nations - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - this week more than doubled its membership, extending the welcome mat to cash-rich Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, outlier Iran, as well as Argentina, Egypt and Ethiopia. The move breathes new life into a group set to rival the G7 and brings the world closer to multipolarity. Today's summits rarely wind up with seismic accomplishments - especially ones with such relatively unwieldy and uninspiring titles as "BRICS and Africa: Fostering Collaborative Growth, Sustainable Progress and Comprehensive Multilateralism."

But the relatively young and sidelined BRICS bloc - formed in 2009 and representing some 40% of the world's population and a quarter of the global GDP - was able to overcome opposition among its five members and add significant muscle to potentially challenge much-maligned western forums. The expansion appears to have been pushed by heavyweight of the bloc, China, which said it would "inject new vitality." But in whose interest?

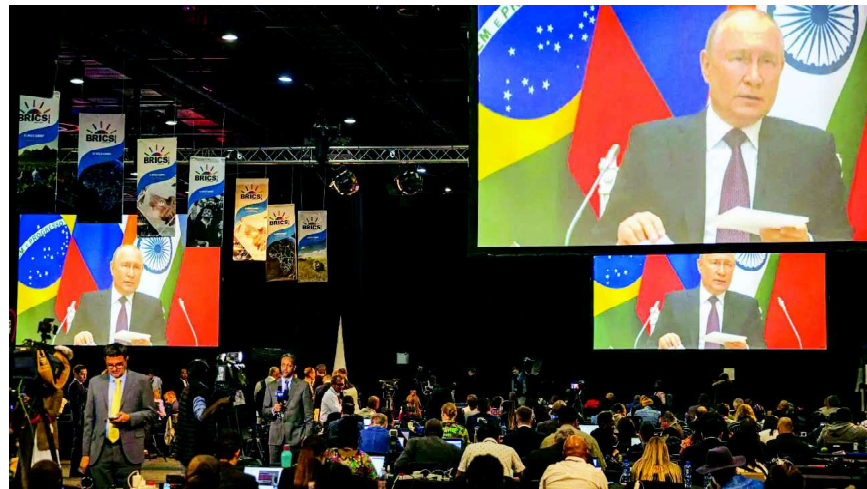
Complaints of marginalization and exploitation were a common theme in the speeches from dozens of smaller, non-member countries, on Thursday. As if to send a signal that their cries are not falling on deaf ears, Chinese President Xi Jinping told leaders that "China is a friend Africa can count on."

He boasted of his country having helped bankroll more than 6,000

kilometers of railway, over 6,000 kilometers of roads and some 80 power facilities on the continent. (Meanwhile, China's lending activities have previously been criticized by the US as leaving developing nations trapped in debt, something Beijing rejects.)

more disparate views, the bloc operates on a consensus basis, and working with such a model can be cumbersome - as I've experienced first-hand. It's hard work - I've seen it close up at the Organizations for Security and Cooperation in

sanctions. What goes up, must come down. During the three-day summit, real-world events still managed to pierce this bubble of easy camaraderie. BRICS leaders could be forgiven for not knowing whether to exhibit exuberance or



Boxing rings for tantrum diplomacy

Brazil is said to have been weary of bloc expansion on the grounds that it would make it too unwieldy. Indeed, if you've followed the western-led summits in recent years, these high-stakes talk shops appear to have degenerated into boxing rings for tantrum diplomacy - whoever screams the loudest gets their way. Final communiqués get watered down to the point where they are either meaningless or don't get issued at all. Representatives of smaller countries often go home disenchanted.

Can BRICS change all that? Even though expansion would bring

Europe (OSCE) where I worked in the past - and it can be ugly. When Russia decided it didn't want independent international observers in Ukraine's occupied Donbas region, it simply used its OSCE veto to bring it to an end. Judging from the speeches at the Johannesburg summit, there are still themes and causes which unite members: lessening reliance on the almighty dollar for international trade and commerce (though if this were to occur, it could begin to destabilize world markets), reform of the UN system (in my opinion, a good thing) and collectively standing up to, as Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro said, "unilateral coercion" in the form of western

concern on Wednesday. Around lunchtime, cheers could be heard from the Indian delegation as the successful landing of the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft onto the moon was announced, just days after Russia's failed attempt. (Summit host, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, said it should be seen as an accomplishment for the entire BRICS bloc.) Hours later, just as BRICS leaders were sitting down to dinner, news alerts started to steal the show on the crashed private jet said to be carrying Wagner Group boss Yevgeny Prigozhin. With at least four nations on the continent relying heavily on Wagner for security protection or mineral extraction

services, it, too, couldn't be ignored.

Swagger and style No summit - and I've covered many - is worth its salt without eavesdropping on the nuances of high-stakes diplomacy. Whether it was watching the confident swagger of Xi (with enough hubris to skip an opening business forum session), the signature fashion style of Modi, the grumpiness of Russian President Vladimir Putin's stand-in, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, or the populist rants and script fumbling of Brazil President Lula da Silva. Speaking of Lula, he was the only leader to speak at length about Russia's aggression in Ukraine - saying "everyone suffers from the consequences of the war."

What also set the summit apart from G7 and G20s was that the vast majority of prime real estate in the media center was given to smaller, non-English speaking outlets from the developing world. However, media access to leaders and delegates was also extremely limited - a practice more in line with authoritarian regimes.

Host South Africa just manages to pull it off. That South Africa managed to pull off hosting the summit is an accomplishment in itself. Hosting dozens of heads of state is daunting enough - but taking place against a backdrop of chronic power outages (some traffic lights, or robots as they are called here, did not function most of the time), intermittent internet connectivity (mostly due to cable damage between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon), crumbling infrastructure and a worrying crime rate, was impressive.

"It's truly heartening to see that, despite the challenges we confront, we can still demonstrate our capacity to host world-class events,"

Nontsikelelo Mdlankomo, a Johannesburg artist, told me. Many people on the ground told me the number one accomplishment of hosting BRICS would be to bring an end to the chronic power outages, which have clobbered the country since 2008. Xi, whose visit also marked 25 years of diplomatic relations between China and South Africa, threw Ramaphosa and the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party a lifeline with a donation of emergency power equipment worth 167 million rand (\$8.9 million), plus a multi-million dollar grant for the power sector.

By: Sayantan Ghosh

In the realm of Indian politics, a recent proclamation by Uttar Pradesh Congress chief, Ajay Rai, has ignited discussions and raised pertinent questions about the upcoming electoral landscape. The announcement stated that the former party president and Member of Parliament, Rahul Gandhi, is set to re-enter the fray from the emblematic Amethi constituency.

This revelation unfolds against the backdrop of a nascent alliance named 'INDIA,' which is a collaborative endeavour between various Opposition parties. However, it emerges at a juncture when the contours of seat-sharing agreements and state-specific strategies within the Opposition bloc remain uncharted territories. The timing of these sweeping announcements is now under scrutiny, sparking a debate on their sagacity within the political discourse.

ALLIANCE VS AMBITION

Crucially, the essence of the matter extends beyond the individual choices of candidatures; it encompasses the broader implications for the strategic cohesion of the newly formed INDIA alliance. As the Congress party contemplates centring the election narrative around Rahul Gandhi's candidature from Amethi and the potential candidature of Priyanka Gandhi from Varanasi-Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stronghold-it raises a critical question about the proportionality of this focus within the larger ambit of the Opposition's objectives. While it is undeniable that individual charisma and lineage bear significance in politics, overly fixating on these personalities could inadvertently detract from the overarching goals of the INDIA bloc. A skewed emphasis on a couple of constituencies could lead to a scenario where the party's attention becomes unduly concentrated, sidelining other crucial constituencies and diluting the broader narrative.

The core principle that emerges from this scenario is the need for a balanced approach that harmonises individual ambitions with collective aspirations. It is imperative that the Congress party, as a key component of the alliance, recognise the importance of synchronised decision-making. When forging a collaborative front, it becomes



RAHUL GANDHI TO FIGHT FROM AMETHI?

Why This May Not Help The Opposition

indispensable for all participating parties to engage in shared deliberations before making substantial announcements. A parallel track of unilateral declarations could potentially erode the unity that is vital for the alliance's effectiveness.

A deeper historical perspective offers insights into the significance of Amethi within the Congress party's narrative. Analogous to Rai Bareilly, Amethi has entrenched itself as a bastion of the Congress—a legacy synonymous with the Gandhi family. The trajectory began in 1980 with Sanjay Gandhi's representation of the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency. Following his untimely demise, the mantle was passed to his brother, Rajiv Gandhi, a former Prime Minister of India, who secured consecutive victories in 1984, 1989 and 1991. Subsequently, Sonia Gandhi, the then Congress president, emerged victorious from this constituency in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. The baton was then taken up by Rahul Gandhi, who maintained the family's legacy by triumphing in Amethi between 2004 and 2014.

However, the political landscape underwent a seismic shift during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections when BJP leader Smriti Irani dethroned Gandhi to claim Amethi. Notably, Irani had previously contested the seat in 2014, losing to Gandhi by a substantial margin of over 1.5 lakh votes. Her electoral fortunes reversed in 2019, as she managed to secure victory with a narrower margin of around 55,000 votes.

The 2019 elections marked a historic shift, representing the first instance where a member of the Gandhi family was unseated in the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency. This transformation was swiftly capitalised upon by the BJP, which leveraged the event to level criticism against the Congress. Irani, now a prominent figure in the political landscape, emerged as one of Rahul Gandhi's vocal adversaries, actively challenging him both within the parliamentary chambers and outside. The contest for Amethi thus metamorphosed into an arena of ego-driven rivalries, particularly for Rahul Gandhi.

However, in the broader context of coalition politics, the fundamental paradigm demands a departure from ego-centric battles. Instead, the focal point should be the formulation of comprehensive ground-level strategies that resonate with the aspirations of the diverse constituencies involved. The nascent INDIA alliance must eschew succumbing to the gravitational pull of individualistic aspirations. It is incumbent upon the Congress to recognise that the path to a successful alliance lies in embracing shared goals and coordinated strategies.

In summation, the decision to field Rahul Gandhi from Amethi and the resonance of Amethi within Congress's political psyche underscore the intricate interplay of personal aspirations and collective strategies. As the INDIA alliance takes shape, the imperative is to balance the charisma of individual candidates with a broader narrative that

encapsulates the aspirations of the electorate. While Amethi's historical significance is undeniable, its transformation from an ego-centric battleground to a strategic asset hinges on the ability of the Congress and the alliance partners to navigate this delicate equilibrium. In this transformative phase of Indian politics, the mantra is clear: collective vision over individual egos.

NOT GOOD NEWS FOR THE OPPOSITION

The Opposition coalition is still in the process of finalising several crucial aspects, which include determining the seat-sharing arrangement and formulating state-specific strategies. An intriguing scenario emerges if Rahul Gandhi chooses to contest from Amethi and Priyanka Gandhi from Varanasi. This decision would necessitate the Congress party's undivided attention on these two constituencies.

Although the recent dynamics seem to indicate a swift decline in the Bharatiya Janata Party's influence, it is essential for the Opposition to broaden its focus across the entirety of India rather than getting fixated on specific electoral battlegrounds. The risk of hyper-focusing on particular seats, particularly in the face of formidable opponents, demands a strategic reconsideration from the Opposition political parties. An inherent concern arises if Rahul Gandhi opts for Amethi, potentially constraining his capacity to campaign extensively for the Opposition alliance. This might limit his mobility to the state of Uttar Pradesh, effectively

sidelining other crucial electoral battlegrounds. Furthermore, the Congress's decision to field candidates in such a manner can inadvertently furnish the BJP with potent ammunition to fuel their narrative against not only the Opposition alliance but also the Congress itself. The BJP could amplify its stance against dynastic politics, portraying it as a quintessential facet of the Opposition's agenda. This argument would gain traction if Rahul Gandhi contests Amethi, as it could be construed as a preference for personal interests over broader public service objectives. This very narrative was instrumental when Gandhi sought reprieve from the Supreme Court in the Modi surname defamation case, a move that led to his disqualification as a Member of Parliament.

Furthermore, such a scenario could potentially trigger a reiteration of the 2024 election narrative: the Gandhi family versus Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, historical trends underscore that this narrative hasn't borne significant fruit in past Lok Sabha elections. It becomes evident that this formula doesn't resonate effectively with the electorate, emphasising the importance of the Opposition steering their discourse towards more tangible and pressing issues that resonate with the common people. To achieve success, INDIA must steer clear of an overemphasis on personal ambitions, particularly those tied to the Gandhi family.

With Modi at Helm, The Middle Class Has Become Growth Engine of a New India

By: Sanbeer Singh Ranhotra

1.4 billion Indians united on August 23, 2023, as the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) scripted history by successfully landing the Vikram lander near the south pole of the Moon. No other country in the world - not even the so-called superpowers - has achieved this yet. ISRO's control room, from where the Chandrayaan-3 mission was monitored, burst into cheers and applause as Vikram landed on the moon. And who are the men and women who made this possible?

Middle-class Indians. Ordinary people who, by their sheer determination to excel and a drive to make their country proud, have accomplished what no other nation has.

These are the people who received ordinary educations and grew up with a host of limitations - but purely on the basis of their merit - made it into India's most prestigious scientific organisation. The same organisation is now giving the world's biggest space agencies a run for their money. MIDDLE CLASS: DRIVERS OF THE INDIA STORY

India's middle class has emerged as the engine of our country's growth. A growth that is now both inevitable and unstoppable. People in the middle class are both



employers and employees. They are educated and aware. They greatly influence the political discourse in the country today, something which the "elite" dominated for decades. The nature of India's elite is changing too, and more and more middle-class people can be considered the intellectual cream of the nation now.

For the past two elections, this class of Indian society has voted for Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister. Chances are, it will do so again next year, perhaps even more overwhelmingly than before. The growth of India's middle class coincides with the rise of Prime Minister Modi. Like most Indians, PM Modi comes from a very humble background. For India's middle class, the prime minister

serves as an example that if one perseveres and is meritorious, the sky is the limit.

A look at how the middle class has transformed in India over the past decade

The average income of the middle class (weighted mean) has grown from Rs 4.4 lakh in FY12-13 to Rs 13 lakh in FY22. Compared to 2011, 13.6 per cent population has left the lower-income strata and migrated upwards by 2022. Similarly, there is a huge chunk of Indians right now who earn less than Rs 5 lakh every year. However, this group is soon expected to rise up the ladder, enter the middle class and start contributing to the nation's tax pool. Also, interestingly, the share of zero-tax liability income tax returns went down from 84.10 per

cent in 2011 to 64 per cent by 2022.

Meanwhile, according to a report by the State Bank of India, the average income of people in the middle class is expected to go up to Rs 50 lakh by 2047, the same year India will celebrate 100 years of independence and also the year PM Modi has set the target of making India a developed nation. The future of India's middle class looks very promising. In 2020-21, the Indian middle class constituted just about 31 per cent of the total population. However, the size of India's middle class will nearly double to 61 per cent of its total population by 2047! India is also set to become one of the world's biggest consumer markets soon, and the middle class is going to play a pivotal role in achieving this. According to a Brookings report, by 2030, India will be home to 357 million young consumers below 30 years, which will effectively be the largest "young consumer market" in the world.

INDIA'S MIDDLE CLASS: NOT MIDDLING ANYMORE

Beyond just numbers and economic data, the Indian middle class is doing so much more to power India's rise as a formidable world power. Its impact transcends sectors and even borders. People who grew up in

middle-class families are today leading some of the biggest companies in the world. Take the example of Sundar Pichai, Satya Nadella, Shantanu Narayen and many more. Closer home, people like Zoho's Sridhar Vembu and Zerodha's Nithin Kamath have not just risen from humble backgrounds, but continue to inculcate the values they grew up with, in their children.

In the world of cinema, names like Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Pankaj Tripathi, Manoj Bajpayee, and Nawazuddin Siddiqui have become associated with perhaps the pinnacle of acting. All of them come from the middle class and even underprivileged backgrounds. They worked hard and are today known for their work around the world.

Since chess is the buzz right now, it would only be befitting to point out how grandmaster Praggnanandhaa, like most chess prodigies in India, including Vishwanathan Anand, hails from a middle-class family.

In academics too, Indians are shining internationally. Indian lecturers and professors are a lot more visible in foreign universities. Many have won international awards like Dr Anurag Mairal of Stanford or Dr Madhav Rajan of Chicago University.

Ask NAPCA

Q1. I have received SSRB (Social Security Retirement Benefit) since I turned 62. Will my retirement be increased when I reach my FRA (Full Retirement Age)?

No. Because you started receiving retirement benefit earlier than your FRA, it was fixed with the reduced amount permanently. Beneficiaries can collect full amount only when they start to collect retirement at their FRA. They can delay applying for benefit up to age 70 and it will grow by around 8% every year during those delayed years.

Q2. I am a US citizen and 58 years old. My husband just passed away. He had received Social Security Retirement. Can I receive survivor's benefits now or should I wait until I reach my retirement age? Can I get additional assistance for living even when I can receive spouse's benefits?

When you reach 60 years old you can apply for lifetime reduced



Surviving Spouse benefit. If you qualify for retirement benefits on your own record, you can switch to your own retirement benefit as early as age 62. You can receive whichever is the higher benefit. If you wait to apply for the survivor benefit until your FRA, you will receive 100% of the SSRB your deceased spouse received.

You may be eligible for Medicaid now if your income is limited. At 65, you should apply for Medicare, and you can try to apply for SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and/or MSP (Medicare Savings Programs) depending on your income and assets.

Q3. I am 65 years old and have been in the US for 10 years by

this September. I applied to be a permanent resident and will be getting my green card soon. When can I enroll into Medicare? I heard there is 5 year waiting period. Do I have to wait 5 years after I receive my green card?

To be eligible for Medicare, a person must be 65 or older and must be either a US citizen or lawfully present in the US for at least 5 continuous years. You don't have to be a permanent resident for the entire 5 years but need to be a permanent resident when you enroll in Medicare. Your IEP (Initial Enrollment Period) starts when you receive your permanent resident notice with card and lasts for the following 3 months.

Q4. When will my Medicaid Redetermination happen? When will I get my renewal letter from the state? I haven't gotten a letter from the state. What should I do?

When you receive Medicaid Redetermination notice depends on when your Medicaid end date is. In general, Medicaid recipients receive renewal notice 30-60 days prior to their coverage end date but every state has their own rules. Medicaid Redetermination is currently in progress and will continue for 2023 and expected to continue on a rolling basis through 2024.

It is very important to pay close attention to all communications sent by your State Department of Health, so your renewal goes smoothly and to avoid a loss of your insurance. That is why it's important to keep your contact information up to date. If you think you should have received your redetermination paperwork but haven't, you can call your local Medicaid office.

Kamala Harris slip-up reveals how Bidenomics hurting American families

By Andy Puzder

In the midst of President Biden's campaign to sell "Bidenomics" to American voters, Vice President Kamala Harris made a curious admission. Speaking about the costs of getting an abortion (so not Bidenomics), she stated that "[m]ost Americans are a \$400 unexpected expense away from bankruptcy."

Of course, as with most dramatic White House economic claims, it wasn't exactly true. But you have to give her credit for raising a counter-narrative the Biden administration is otherwise choosing to ignore.

The fact is that American families are in trouble, deep trouble, and it's far more significant than any Bidenomics spin can conceal. Harris's point comes from a recent Morning Consult survey which found that in the third quarter of this year only 46% of Americans could cover a \$400 unexpected expense without going into debt. That's

not the same as being \$400 away from bankruptcy, but it's still really bad. It shows how expenses as commonplace as a surprise car repair or a medical bill are forcing many American families into debt -



at a time when interest rates are disturbingly high. It also raises a very disconcerting question: Is this the new Bidenomics normal? Let's look at the data.

The Lending Club's Paycheck-to-Paycheck Report for June confirms the Morning Consult survey. It found that a majority of Americans (54%) were living

paycheck to paycheck. That includes 53% of consumers who earn \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year. So, this problem extends well beyond lower-income families, although it certainly hits you harder the

less you have.

But what about personal savings? American received a lot of cash from the government during the pandemic. In fact, when Biden took office, Americans had \$2.3 trillion in personal savings. That number shot up to \$5.7 trillion following Biden's March 2021 ironically named "American Rescue

Plan."

But by June of this year, a mere 27 months later, personal saving had dropped by nearly \$5 trillion to a much diminished \$862 billion.

Again, it isn't just lower-income Americans who have watched their savings diminish. According to a Bloomberg analysis, the average middle-class household has lost over \$33,000 in real wealth in just the past year.

The situation is so bad that Americans are even draining their 401(k) plans to cover expenses. According to Bank of America's analysis of its clients' employee benefits programs (with a total of over 4 million plan participants), 36% more people drained their retirement accounts to make ends meet in the second quarter of 2023 as compared to the same period last year. So, where did all that money go? Well, you may have noticed that Bidenomics-induced inflation has driven the cost of living up - a lot. Let's

look at it in dollar terms, which is how most Americans experience inflation.

The Bureau of Labor Statistic publishes the Consumer Price Index (CPI) each month, a common measure of inflation. CPI takes a basket of commonly purchased goods and services and prices them on a monthly basis. In January 2021, when Biden took office, that basket cost about \$261.50. In July of this year, the same basket cost \$305.70. That's a huge 16.9% increase in only two and a half years. It's also larger than the CPI increase for any full four-year presidential term since the 1980s, and Bidenomics has 16 months to go.

Exacerbating the problem, wage growth has failed to keep pace with inflation - increasing only 13% since Biden took office (versus nearly 17% for inflation). When you're living paycheck to paycheck, as most Americans are, that kind of disparity hurts.

Are China's Economic Crises Cyclical Or Structural?

By Dr. Sriparna Pathak

While China is and continues to be the manufacturing platform of the world, concerns around its decelerating growth in 2023 has triggered panic waves across the globe. Given the deep interconnection between the global economy and the Chinese economy, there is fear among nations that global growth will further decelerate due to the troubled Chinese economy. One of the most important questions in this context becomes how to tackle the fallout. To answer this question, it is first pertinent to understand whether the problem is cyclical or structural in nature. That clarity can help avoid the fallout.

In the past, China has emerged relatively unscathed from the Asian financial crisis and the global financial crisis. It even managed to somehow stay afloat until 2023, despite the US-China trade war since 2017. This gives the impression that such crises are cyclical in nature and are inherently in the DNA of the Chinese economy. Yet a closer examination would reveal that the crisis in 2023 is very different from

the ones that the Chinese economy has tackled in the past and is actually structural in nature.

At a Politburo meeting in July, China's leaders referred to the



economic recovery this year as "torturous". What they were referring to was China's current economic problems, which range from slowing GDP growth rates, to massive unemployment, to deeply entrenched inequality, to dangerously low levels of consumption among others. The interesting point to note is that such candour is difficult to imagine from a communist party institution, let alone from such an elevated body.

Consumer prices in July were lower than a year ago, suggesting that it might be on a cusp of deflation, which reflects a chronic shortage of demand in the economy. Foreign trade in the

same month showed a sharp fall in exports, owing to a weak global demand, with a sharper decline in imports signifying weaknesses in demand at home. Private firms and entrepreneurs are also not spending much on investment or on hiring people. Youth unemployment has topped 21% or thrice the rate in the US. Clearly, most things currently weighing on the Chinese economy have been building up for years, even while China was wowing the

world with its magical double digit growth rates and claiming to be making strides in lifting millions out of poverty while simultaneously moving up the technology ladder.

The two prongs of Chinese economic development since Deng Xiaoping's reforms and opening up since 1978 have been an export-led growth strategy along with investment. The reforms led to an improvement in the living standards of consumers in China, with greater buying capacity and greater demand for goods and services; investment in infrastructure, particularly in export-driven enterprises in the coastal belts of China also brought in revenues driving Chinese growth. Nevertheless, as compared to consumption levels in other countries, China's consumption rates have been generally low. Currently, consumption - a big driver of growth indices - is even further subdued in China, especially in big ticket items such as cars, houses and private investment. In fact, all three segments, the backbone of the Chinese economy, fell in the first half of

this year.

To drive consumption, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) even came out with 12 wide-ranging measures to boost domestic consumption, which include encouraging market entities to apply domestic AI technologies to enhance the levels of electronic products, improving the innovation capability of electronic products, cultivating new growth points for consumption and so on. Clearly, something is amiss, otherwise a wide-ranging agenda for driving consumption from the NDRC would not have come up.

Consumption is tied to income. As stated previously, youth unemployment alone has topped 21%, and the government has now stated it will stop publishing data on youth unemployment. Without employment, there is no income. Without income, it is impossible to consume. But beyond consumption's ties to income, there also are other structural reasons why consumption has been generally low while savings rates have always been extraordinarily high in China.



G20 Summit

AI-based cameras, snipers to secure foreign officials in Delhi

National Security Guard (NSG) commandos and Army snipers will be stationed in high-rise buildings for added security during the G20 Summit.

Elaborate security arrangements have been made by security agencies, including Delhi Police and paramilitary forces and other units, ahead of the G20 Summit, which is scheduled to take place in the national capital on September 9 and 10.

To enhance coordination and ensure foolproof security at the event venues, security agencies are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) modules. Through these machines, security personnel will be able to identify and filter suspicious activities using advanced AI-based cameras and software alarms.

If an individual is detected climbing walls or making unusual movements, such as running or bending down, AI cameras will immediately alert security personnel.

SNIPERS TO BE DEPLOYED ON HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS



Sources told India Today that National Security Guard (NSG) commandos and Army snipers will be stationed in high-rise buildings for added security during the G20 Summit. Prior to the commencement of the mega event, teams from international intelligence agencies, including the CIA from the United States, MI-6 from the United Kingdom, and MSS from China, have already arrived in Delhi.

To ensure the safety of heads of states and their representatives during their stay in Delhi, detailed security plans

have been shared with the security agencies of these countries. Intelligence sharing will facilitate better security arrangements through cooperation.

The security of G20 Summit attendees and venues is being closely monitored. For this purpose, the Indian Air Force and the Army's helicopters will continuously patrol the skies above Delhi. The NSG will also deploy anti-drone systems to counter any potential threats. A "Special 50" team comprising around 1,000 security personnel, who have experience



in VIP security, has been prepared by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

STAY OF FOREIGN DIGNITARIES

Foreign dignitaries, including US President Joe Biden, Chinese premier Xi Jinping, UK PM Rishi Sunak among others will stay at high-end hotels in the national capital. The Presidential suite on the 14th floor of the ITC Maurya Hotel will be occupied by President Joe Biden.

Xi Jinping will stay at the Taj Palace Hotel, while Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will be

accommodated at the Shangri-La Hotel. President Emmanuel Macron of France will stay at the Claridges Hotel, and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia will stay at the Imperial Hotel.

China and Brazil's representatives will be hosted at the Taj Palace, while Indonesian and Australian representatives will stay at the Imperial Hotel. Shangri-La will host the United Kingdom and Germany's representatives, while Italian and Singaporean representatives will be hosted at the Hayat Residency.

The Real Reason Drugs Cost So Much - and Do Too Little

Until 2003, Medicare covered most hospital and doctor visits for the elderly, but it did not cover the ever-growing costs of prescription medications. Former President George W. Bush changed that when he signed a law adding prescription drug coverage to Medicare.

But there was a catch.

At drug companies' behest, the Republican-controlled Congress banned Medicare from using its market power to drive down drug prices. The prohibition was controversial at the time - Nancy Pelosi, then the House Minority Leader, called it "unconscionable." Critics saw the prohibition as the government's abandonment of the single most effective tool for restraining drug costs. In the years since, the prices for brand-name prescription drugs have skyrocketed, and the prohibition on negotiation has become even more controversial. Higher prices mean larger co-payments for drugs for some seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes. It's also a major budgetary problem:

From 2018 to 2021, Medicare spending on the 10 top-selling drugs jumped from \$22 billion to \$48 billion, far outpacing the program's overall cost growth over the same period.

That's why, in last year's Inflation Reduction Act, President Joe Biden and congressional Democrats partly undid the prohibition. Under the law, Medicare will pay a much-reduced price for drugs that consume a disproportionate share of Medicare spending, ultimately saving an estimated \$100 billion over the next ten years. This week, the White House is expected to release a list of the first 10 drugs whose prices will be negotiated under the law.

This reform is already under threat. Concerned about lost revenues and about the possible effects on innovation, the pharmaceutical industry has launched a long shot litigation blitz against the new law. In six cases brought in courts around the country, drug companies say that the law violates the U.S. Constitution in a dizzying number of ways.

The lawsuits aren't likely to succeed - more on that in a moment - and the effects on the

research and development of new drugs, though uncertain, probably won't be as serious as the drug companies claim. In a way, however, that's a shame. The drug companies are right that the kind of innovation we get is closely linked to how we pay for drugs.

Although the Inflation Reduction Act marks the most substantial change in how we pay for drugs in two decades, it doesn't change the fact that drug companies will



still be rewarded for bringing a drug to market and selling as much of it as they can - whether or not the drug works very well. Medicare could pave the way toward smarter drug development by paying more for more effective drugs and less for drugs that are less effective. That would send the right signals about where drug companies should target their research investments. The Inflation Reduction Act isn't that law. We'll spend less on prescription drugs because of it, and that's all to the good, but we won't be spending any smarter. In building their lawsuits, the companies have emphasized the nuts and bolts of how the new price negotiation system will work.

Each year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Administration (CMS) will compile a list of all the drugs on which Medicare has spent the most over the prior year. From that list, it will choose a certain number of drugs - starting with 10 this year, eventually rising to 20 per year - that will be subject to negotiation. Some categories of drugs are excluded from price negotiation, including drugs that have not already been on the market for an extended period.

Once a drug is selected, CMS and the drug's manufacturer will sign an agreement to negotiate. Taking into account a wide range of factors, including the costs of researching and developing the drug, CMS will then offer a "maximum fair price." (A manufacturer that declines to negotiate will be subject to a hefty excise tax on the drug's nationwide sales.)

The manufacturer can make a counteroffer to the "maximum fair

price" and the agency can adjust its offer in response. But at the end of the negotiation period, the manufacturer will be left with a choice. It can either agree to accept a reduced price for its drug - or it can withdraw from Medicare and Medicaid altogether. The first price cuts are due to take effect in 2026.

The pharmaceutical industry thinks that this scheme is a charade. Facing a ruinous excise tax, drug companies say that they have no choice but to "negotiate" with CMS. Likewise, they'll have to accept a cut-rate price because no company can possibly afford to withdraw from Medicare and Medicaid, which together account for 45 percent of the nation's annual spending on prescription drugs. This isn't a true negotiation; instead, as pharmaceutical company Merck argues, it's "tantamount to extortion."

Why does that violate the Constitution? The drug companies advance different theories. Some say that it violates the First Amendment: Drug companies are forced to say that they "agree" that a reduced price for their drug is "fair," even though the companies don't think it is. Some say it "takes" their property

from them - both the intellectual property in their drugs and the manufactured products themselves - without just compensation in violation of the Fifth Amendment.

Others claim that the large excise tax for declining to participate in negotiations violates the Eighth Amendment's Excessive Fines Clause. Still others say that the scheme as a whole violates manufacturers' due process rights because it doesn't give them enough opportunities to challenge CMS' decision making. And so on. Impressive as these claims may sound, none are persuasive - and for the same reason. Medicare is a voluntary program and, like all such programs, imposes certain rules on those who participate. Those rules are called "conditions of participation." The IRA just creates a new condition of participation for drug companies: either they can agree to reduced prices for select drugs or they can leave the program.

Because drug companies can freely choose whether to waive their rights as a condition of participating in Medicare and Medicaid, the law doesn't violate the Constitution. (Although the Medicare statute typically imposes a waiting period on withdrawal, the Biden administration recently clarified that companies are free to exit immediately if they do not wish to negotiate.)

It may not be financially realistic for drug manufacturers to withdraw - but that's not because Medicare and Medicaid compel manufacturers to participate. It's because the programs are so lucrative to the pharmaceutical industry. (By way of analogy, imagine if Elon Musk offered you a billion dollars to fight him in a cage match. You might be foolish to reject that offer, but that doesn't make it coercive.)

Indeed, by the drug manufacturers' logic, the more lavishly a government program spends, and the harder it would be for participants to walk away, the more "coercive" it would be for Congress to cut that very program. That's absurd.

This isn't the first time the courts have heard the argument that cuts to Medicare violate the Constitution. But those claims haven't succeeded. Legal

doctrine reflects the common sense distinction between financial inducement and genuine coercion.

Back in 1972, Congress adopted a law that, like the IRA, attempted to rein in runaway Medicare spending. The law created Physician Standards Review Organizations that were given the authority to reject Medicare claims. Incensed, physicians argued that the law violated their constitutional rights to practice medicine as they saw fit.

The three-judge court that heard their claim was having none of it. If the doctors didn't like Medicare's rules, they could stop participating in Medicare. "It is true that there will exist economic incentive or inducement to participate in [Medicare]," the court wrote. "However, such inducement is not tantamount to coercion or duress."

The Supreme Court affirmed that decision without even bothering with a written opinion. And in the years since, the courts have consistently held that "where a service provider voluntarily participates in a price-regulated program or activity, there is no legal compulsion to provide service."

Which means that drug manufacturers will need to convince the courts not to apply existing law, but to change it. In particular, they'll have to persuade conservative justices on the Supreme Court to build on the decision in National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius, the first major case involving the Affordable Care Act.

There, seven justices held that the law's mandatory Medicaid expansion was unconstitutionally coercive. Why? Because a state that declined to expand would lose all of its existing Medicaid funding, not just miss out on the new money available under the ACA. That penalty put too much pressure on the states and forced them to knuckle under Congress's demands. The drug manufacturers say that the IRA puts them in much the same position: Unless they accept a low price for one drug, Medicare and Medicaid and will no longer buy any of their drugs.

The Real Reason Drugs Cost So Much - and Do Too Little

The problem for drug companies - and it's a big problem - is that they aren't states. In *NFIB v. Sebelius*, the Supreme Court was concerned with ensuring that the federal government didn't co-opt the states, which are separate sovereigns: "When pressure turns into compulsion, the legislation runs contrary to our system of federalism." That federalism concern is completely absent here.

These six lawsuits are thus unlikely to have a bright future. That said, they can't be written off altogether. In recent years, some conservative judges have grown increasingly aggressive in pushing back on Biden administration priorities, especially when it comes to health care. They have issued rulings invalidating the entire ACA, undoing the Food and Drug Administration's approval of mifepristone, and striking down a requirement for insurers to cover zero-dollar coverage for preventive services.

The pharmaceutical industry's lawsuits may not hold similar ideological appeal - drug negotiation is wildly popular among Democrats and Republicans alike - but the litigation is still young. Especially if the drug companies notch some early victories, momentum could build for legal arguments that seem far-fetched today. The likeliest endgame, though, is that the lawsuits will be dismissed, the IRA will take effect, and drug companies will earn billions less than they otherwise would have.

The manufacturers will tell you that this will hurt innovation. The concern can't be dismissed out of hand. Drug development

is expensive: Estimates vary, but it probably costs, on average, somewhere between \$1.3 and \$2.9 billion to develop a new drug. Manufacturers make these enormous investments because of the possibility of future earnings, including from billing Medicare. As a result, a reduction in what they can hope to earn from Medicare may mean that some investments into promising drug candidates, especially for drugs meant for the elderly, may not be worth making. Still, the magnitude of the effect is likely to be small. The private market and Medicaid spend billions on pharmaceuticals every year, and Medicare will still pay a lot for drugs, just a little less than before. There's also the enormous global market. As a result, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that we'll have just six fewer drugs coming on the market over the next 20 years than we would have otherwise. That's a real effect, but a modest one.

The IRA is most notable, in fact, for how little it changes how we pay for drugs. Both before and after the IRA, a company whose drug wins approval from the Food and Drug Administration will usually hold a temporary monopoly, via patents and other forms of market exclusivity, on sales of that drug. During that monopoly period, manufacturers can often demand eye-watering prices for their drugs, including from Medicare.

That's because doctors usually don't think too hard about how much a drug costs (if they even know), especially for insured patients. If a particular drug is

somewhat more effective than existing alternatives, or has a slightly safer risk profile, that's what doctors will choose. Physicians' familiarity with branded drugs, their own financial incentives, and extensive marketing campaigns also favor brand-name drugs.

Insurers push back in various ways, most frequently by requiring physicians to show that patients have tried alternatives and really need the drug. But insurers, especially public insurers like Medicare and Medicaid, do less pushing back than is commonly appreciated. Expensive brand-name drugs are prescribed all the time.

That's not necessarily a problem. Some drugs are (literally) worth their weight in gold. Think of Sovaldi and Harvoni, which were approved a decade ago and can cure Hepatitis C, a deadly viral disease that once afflicted between 3 and 5 million Americans. Paying a lot for cures encourages drug companies to invest in developing drugs with curative potential. But most drugs aren't cures. Drug companies generally earn more, in fact, on drugs that patients take over an extended period. That helps explain why fully one quarter of all drug approvals are for cancer drugs. They're really profitable, even though they often don't work very well. The President's Cancer Panel, for example, has concluded that "many new [cancer] drugs do not provide benefits commensurate with their prices," a conclusion amply backed up by research. You see the same pattern in drugs for other conditions, including recently

approved Alzheimer's therapies. They're priced well out of proportion to the health benefits they're expected to yield.

Drug companies aren't evil. They're profit-making enterprises that pay close attention to economic incentives. They aren't necessarily paid more for drugs that are more valuable for human health; they're paid, instead, for drugs that sell. And because marginally effective drugs can be sold for exorbitant amounts, a lot of research dollars are plowed into drug candidates that aren't that valuable.

By the same token, too little is invested in potentially valuable drugs with limited sales potential. There's a desperate need for new antibiotics, for example, to serve as a last line of defense to "superbugs." According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, antimicrobial resistance kills an estimated 35,000 people in the United States every year. And the problem is getting worse as bacteria evolve and develop resistance to more and more classes of antibiotics.

But we're not filling the antibiotic pipeline. A big reason why is that preserving the efficacy of new antibiotics would require limiting their use to when they were truly needed. Fewer pills mean fewer sales, however, which is why nearly all large drug companies have left the market. A similar story accounts for the relative dearth of investment into neglected tropical diseases that afflict millions worldwide. How we pay for drugs, in short, sends the wrong signals to the market about the kind of innovation we value. The good news is we can fix that.

How Wadhawan brothers, arrested for fraud, enjoy privileges in jail

Kapil and Dheeraj Wadhawan, two brothers accused of committing financial fraud worth more than Rs 30,000 crore, have been observed enjoying a life of luxury within the confines of Taloja Central Jail, located on the outskirts of Mumbai. The Wadhawan brothers, who were the promoters of the now-defunct Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited, were arrested in connection with charges of defrauding a group of banks. However, India Today TV's cameras have captured how the Wadhawan brothers managed to orchestrate a series of outings under the guise of medical check-ups at government hospitals in Mumbai. The startling scenes suggest that the Wadhawan brothers are enjoying a lifestyle that is far removed from the typical prison experience.

LUXURY BEHINDS THE BARS

Once prominent figures in Mumbai's business circles, Kapil and Dheeraj Wadhawan were seen engaged in deep discussions involving family and business matters in the parking areas

of various hospitals in Mumbai.

Their activities include sharing meals, sipping coffee, using mobile devices, and attending to paperwork, all of which is seen taking place in the parking lots of hospitals they visit under police escort ostensibly for medical appointments.

The Wadhawan brothers are at the centre of a criminal conspiracy case and have been accused of defrauding a consortium of 17 banks to the tune of Rs 34,610 crore. The case is being investigated by several agencies, including the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate.

ESCAPING CONFINES OF JAIL

Investigations by India Today TV have revealed the details of their unusual outings. On August 7, Kapil Wadhawan left Taloja Prison for KEM Hospital in Mumbai, ostensibly for a mandatory medical examination. There, he was seen visiting the hospital's parking lot where he met family members and associates and also accessed his private car.

Two days later, Dheeraj Wadhawan

repeated the same routine, leaving Taloja Prison for JJ Hospital in Mumbai for a similar 'health check-up'.

This seemingly indulgent scenario is facilitated by the Wadhawan brothers' police escorts, who are also seen being served snacks.

HISTORY OF DECEPTION

In July, Dheeraj Wadhawan was denied interim medical bail by a special court, but was allowed treatment for a heart condition at a private hospital. During this time, the prosecution opposed his bail plea, citing a previous instance where he allegedly misused his bail to sell paintings in 2021.

In 2020, the Wadhawans faced legal trouble when they violated the nationwide pandemic lockdown by traveling to Mahabaleshwar from Mumbai with a group of 20 people, ostensibly to evade scrutiny in the Yes Bank case. Senior police officer Amitabh Gupta, who was the principal secretary in Maharashtra government's home department at the time, issued travel permission to the Wadhawans during the

lockdown. Notably, the same officer, Gupta, now serves as the Additional Director General of Prisons in Maharashtra.

AUTHORITIES REACT

Following India Today's investigation, higher authorities in the state of Maharashtra have taken action. Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis assured an official probe into the matter, stating, "We will investigate the matter and take action against those responsible".

Sanjay Patil, a senior officer at Navi Mumbai's police headquarters, assured that measures would be fortified when transferring inmates out of the prison.

"Prison vans are already equipped with GPS. We'll also install CCTV cameras in those vehicles," Patil said, assuring a comprehensive investigation into the privileges extended to the incarcerated Wadhawan brothers.

After initial investigation, Navi Mumbai Police suspended 1 official and six constables who were in the escort team of the Wadhawan brothers.

Who is George Soros and what is his link to Adani Group's troubles?

After he waded into the Hindenburg Research report row, George Soros again has a shadowy presence as another report questions the Adani Group's business dealings. Here's a look at billionaire-philanthropist Soros and his Open Society Foundations.

First it was the Hindenburg Research, and now, the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). It's the second time in seven months that the Adani Group is facing allegations of using dubious means for business gains. And both times there is a shadow of billionaire-philanthropist George Soros.

A Jew who survived the Nazi Holocaust that killed 5 lakh Jewish Hungarians, George Soros has often been linked to regime changes that he and his Open Society Foundation perceive to be totalitarian. Critics perceive Soros to be an agent of chaos.

Born in 1930, George Soros had to struggle despite being born in an affluent family. Soros worked as a railway porter and waiter to fund his studies at London School of Economics.

George Soros and his Open Society Foundations have been called "agents of disruption" by a number of governments and rival groups. Soros has also been charged with being a key player in purported plots to topple Russian President Vladimir Putin, instability in the European Union through mass migration, and funding for Arab Spring protest movements, among other things.

Furthermore, Soros has been named as the one who had the crucial influence that resulted in the 1997 Asian financial crisis. He has come under fire for betting against Malaysia and Thailand's currencies, which started the crisis.

But why is George Soros's name cropping up again in the Indian context?

The Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) report said the Adani Group was channelling investments into publicly traded stocks via "opaque" Mauritius funds. These funds were found to mask the involvement of alleged "longtime business partners" of the Adani family.

The Adani Group has said these accusations by the OCCRP were orchestrated by interests linked to George Soros.

OCCRP AND GEORGE SOROS

According to the OCCRP, it is a global network of investigative journalists which "exposes crime and corruption so the public can hold power to account".

George Soros's Open Society Foundations is one of its donors.

Short-seller Hindenburg Research released its report on January 24, accusing the Adani Group of being "engaged in a

brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades". In February, George Soros jumped into the controversy and said PM Narendra Modi would "have to answer questions" from foreign investors and Parliament on allegations of fraud and stock manipulation at Gautam Adani's industrial empire. The Indian conglomerate vehemently



denied the allegations by Hindenburg Research. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) identified around a dozen companies as "top beneficiaries" of short-selling in Adani Group shares after the Hindenburg report.

George Soros and his organisations aren't new to controversies surrounding business groups and financial institutions.

Shorting the British pound contributed significantly to Soros' riches, garnering him the moniker "the man who destabilized the Bank of England."

He was a well-known hedge fund manager who allegedly made \$1 billion by betting against the British pound. Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea, and Malaysia went through severe economic downturns in 1997; Malaysia endured the worst.

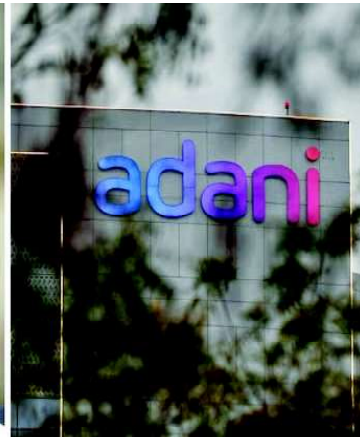
According to a Bloomberg report, George Soros took daring action before the crisis by betting against the currencies of Thailand and Malaysia. Mahathir Mohamad, the prime minister of Malaysia, blamed Soros for the problem and even referred to him as "a moron" in the process. A Bloomberg opinion piece claims that the Asian financial crisis resulted in political upheavals in a number of nations. For instance, South Korea witnessed the first election of an opposition candidate as president, and the crisis in Indonesia helped end the Suharto administration following a protracted period of economic prosperity. According to the Bloomberg article, Malaysia's Mahathir left a legacy of internal conflicts within the Malay elite despite keeping power.

SOROS'S FOUNDATION OF CHAOS?

The Open Society Foundations, which

George Soros founded in 1984, declare their dedication to advancing the values of justice, democracy, and human rights in more than 120 countries worldwide. According to reports from 2017, Soros had recently given the organization a contribution of almost \$18 billion, according to reports.

The Open Society Foundations is one of



the supporters of The Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), which published Thursday's report against the Adani Group.

According to a Forbes report, Soros promised to donate \$1 billion to create a new university network to combat the growth of nationalism during a speech at the 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. He blasted leaders including Chinese President Xi Jinping, then-U.S. President Donald Trump, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the same address.

Soros expressed his worries about India, claiming that democratically elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi was creating a Hindu nationalist state, enforcing restrictions in the semi-autonomous Muslim area of Kashmir, and running the possibility of deporting millions of Muslims.

REGIME-CHANGE ALLEGATIONS

According to its official website, George Soros' Open Society Foundation claims to have spent more than \$18 billion on its activities.

Russian news outlet Sputnik said in 2016 that Soros' Open Society Foundations were coordinating attacks on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Sputnik asserted, citing documents released by DCLeaks, that Soros and his organization were using their resources and influence to stir up world unrest in order to make money off of suffering and impose neoliberal ideas on a global scale. The article covered an OSF-organized meeting of international experts who were critical of Putin in 2012 where they

outlined joint goals for their efforts in Russia, including destabilization-related ones.

Additionally, Soros has been accused of inciting unrest in the US.

George Soros's name surfaced as a potential financier of the anti-Wall Street demonstrations in the United States in 2011. Although both Soros and the protesters have vehemently denied any direct connections, a Reuters investigation has shown indirect financial ties between Soros and Adbusters, a Canadian anti-capitalist organization that organized the demonstrations with goals akin to an Arab Spring-inspired insurrection against Wall Street.

Furthermore, claims imply that Soros supported the Arab Spring movement by providing funds and resources to regional groups active in the movement. The authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt were successfully overthrown during the Arab Spring, which was marked by pro-democracy protests and upheavals throughout the Middle East and North Africa in 2010 and 2011.

SOROS AND ADANI-HINDENBURG CONTROVERSY

Any comment by George Soros is sure to provoke significant reactions given the historical context and the accusations. In a statement in February, Soros said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will have to respond to questions from international investors and the Parliament regarding claims of fraud and stock manipulation at Gautam Adani's industrial empire.

The Hindenburg Research report was published on January 24.

The BJP responded by criticizing Soros, claiming that he was not only targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi but also undermining the Indian democratic system in an effort to ensure that those he supported were in charge of the country.

"Today, as a citizen, I call upon every individual, organization, and society to denounce the intention of this individual who is seeking to weaken our democratic interests for his personal gains," Union minister Smriti Irani said.

Targeting Soros, Irani said, "He wants a government that is pliable to his needs for making his nefarious plans successful. It is evident from his statements that he has declared funding of over one billion dollars particularly to 'target' leaders like PM Modi, which is significant."

So, after featuring in the Adani-Hindenburg controversy, George Soros is back again with his shadowy presence in the latest OCCRP report against the Gautam Adani-led conglomerate. Twice in seven months.

American firms say China is uninvestible, too risky: US commerce chief

US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said US companies have complained to her that China has become "uninvestible," pointing to fines, raids and other actions that have made it risky to do business in the world's second-largest economy.

The comments, made to reporters aboard a high-speed train as her delegation of US officials headed from Beijing to Shanghai, provided a bleak picture of how American firms view China and was the bluntest Raimondo has made on her trip

"Increasingly I hear from American business that China is uninvestible because it's become too risky," she said. Raimondo said American firms are facing new challenges, among them "exorbitant fines without any explanation, revisions to the counterespionage law, which are unclear and sending shockwaves through the US community; raids on businesses - a whole new level of challenge and we need that to be addressed."

She said there was "no rationale given" for Chinese actions against chipmaker Micron Technology MU.O, whose products were restricted by Beijing earlier this year and rejected any comparisons to US export controls. "There has been limited due process, and that's why I brought it up."

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The commerce secretary is the latest Biden administration official to visit China in a bid to strengthen communications, particularly on economy and defense, amid concerns that friction between the two superpowers could spiral out of



control.

Raimondo insists the United States does not want to decouple from China. "We can't have all our eggs in one basket," she added.

John Ramig, a partner at law firm Buchalter who has decades of expertise in international business transactions including the structuring of international sourcing and manufacturing operations, said before Raimondo's remarks that many businesses are not looking to expand in China.

"I don't have one client wanting to invest in China. Not a single client. Everyone is looking to either sell their Chinese operation, or if they're sourcing products in China, they're looking for an alternative place to do that. That's dramatically different from what it was even five years ago."

Earlier in the day, Raimondo told Chinese Premier Li Qiang at their meeting in the Great Hall of the People: "There are other areas of global concern, such as climate change, artificial intelligence, the fentanyl crisis, where we want to work with you as two global powers to do what's right for all

of humanity."

Companies have been at the center of a power struggle between the two countries for several years. China has criticized US efforts to block China's access to advanced semiconductors through export controls, while the US says curbs are needed to defend its national security. The United States is also using electric vehicle tax policies to prod carmakers to shift supply chains out of China, investing billions in subsidies to boost American semiconductor production and taking other actions to move some US investments away from China including a new executive order.

At the same time, Beijing is restricting shipments from prominent chip company Micron, failed to give timely approval to Intel Corp's INTC.O deal to buy another chipmaker that effectively killed the acquisition, and raided and fined US firm Mintz Group \$1.5 million for doing "unapproved statistical work." Boeing BA.N has also been unable to deliver, and get paid for, 85 737 MAX jets ordered by Chinese customers years ago, which she previously blamed on the

Chinese government.

The United States and China used to be each other's largest trading partners but Washington now trades more with neighbors Canada and Mexico, while Beijing deals more with Southeast Asia. "All of that creates uncertainty and unpredictability," Raimondo said of recent Chinese actions. "So businesses look for other opportunities, they look for other countries, they look for other places to go." Referring to both old and new business restrictions, Raimondo said, "The sum total of which is making China feel too risky for them invest." The comments could rile Chinese officials. JP Morgan last year called Chinese internet companies "uninvestible" in a research note, a label which helped trigger a sharp fall in their stock prices, but later said the term had been used in error. Raimondo said she did not receive any commitments on Boeing, Intel or Micron. "I was very firm in our expectations. I think I was heard," Raimondo said. "We have to see if they take an action."

Can't chance Kamala Harris as president: Indian-origin Nikki Haley fires salvo

Republican Presidential candidate Nikki Haley stepped up her attack on Democratic rival Kamala Harris, saying that the possibility of Harris becoming the Commander-in-Chief of the United States would send a 'chill down the American spine'. These remarks became the latest episode in the rivalry between the two Indian-origin American politicians. "My concern is we cannot have Kamala Harris as president. We can't chance this. We have to make sure that we have a new generational leader who's going to bring in not only Republicans, but we're also going to pull back the independents," Haley, who was also a governor of South Carolina, said. Her comments came after she was suggested that President Biden wouldn't



finish his term in the White House.

"We're going to bring back the suburban women, we're going to bring in Hispanics. We're going to bring in the Asian community. We have to make sure we win this, because the thought of Kamala Harris being president should send a chill up

every American spine," she told Fox News. The former diplomat had criticized Harris on multiple occasions as "incompetent," "unbelievably extremist," and "not qualified to be president." In her first Republican Primary debate, she said Harris should not be chosen for the top post even if

Democrats win in 2024. Commenting on the Democratic lineup for the election, Nikki said last week, "anybody is better than Kamala Harris."

She alleged that President Biden and Vice President Kamala are "the ones who left us in a situation where our kids are not going to forgive." Haley's attacks on Harris are viewed as part of her strategy to position herself as the most viable alternative to President Biden in the Republican Party. Meanwhile, she also cautioned against electing former President Donald Trump. "The fact is, I don't know if it's four or five or six, or how many indictments it is now, but he's going to spend a lot of time in a courtroom and not on a campaign trail," Haley said.

The Jagganath Temple rath yatra in July.

(Insider Bureau) LINGARAJ and Rajarani — the oldest temples in Bhubaneswar — greeted us in Orissa. With gracefully tapering shikhars covered with exquisitely carved gods, goddesses, mortals, animals, the temples presented us with details of all of creation.

We were a group of fifteen women — aged 25 to 70 — and members of Women On Wanderlust, united in our love for wandering the world. We stopped on our way to Puri at Pipli, which is famous for its vivid appliqué art. No pastels here, but primary colours glittered on lampshades, bedcovers and cushions. By sunset we walked through an idyllic green village scene, to visit a Padmashree patachitrakar (an artist who practices an ancient and indigenous art form). The artist etched on a sliver of palm leaf. And after his disciples inked and polished it, the image of a bird appeared. There was a cascade of mythical stories on palm leaves, on tussar and on canvas in his studio. The tide was coming in, white waves crashing near the hotel when we reached Puri. Once we



reached the Jagannath temple, we couldn't leave without sharing a bit of the mahaprasad served in banana leaves. An impressive broad avenue leads to the the great temple, where every July the deities go riding on massive chariots. Up at 4 am, we waited at the sanctorum for the lord's first arati. In a second I understood how stampedes occur. An incensed priest rushed in, fulminating, and pushing, and we skidded on worn, oil-slick steps. We reached the feet of the lord, barely saved by clutching stones. O NE of the holiest peeths in Hinduism, the Jagannath temple is unique for its massive trio of wooden deities — of siblings — created anew annually out of seaborne log. The features are simply painted red, yellow, black, contrasting with the skillful shapes on the walls outside. At Pahala, like North Indian dhabas, rows of shops sold three kinds of chenna sweets. Nearby, dancers frozen at a stone sculptor's atelier promised that the art of creating sinuous shapes was not lost. As we moved southwards, ravages of the October cyclone Phailin became apparent, with collapsed trees in the woods, eroded paths and

collapsed bridges. At Chandrabhaga beach, the International Sand Art competition was on. Greg from Vancouver, second time here, said the quality of sand here didn't allow piling high.

At sunset we arrived at Konark, awestruck at the great chariot of Surya, ceaselessly buffeted by saline air. Six of the horses have fallen, only one of the Sun's aspects — the western one — remains. This edifice with its wheels enumerating complexities of time had a melancholy grandeur.

At the Konark Dance Festival, suspended Pipli cloth lanterns create a fairland. The breathtaking shikhar of the temple, floodlit like sunrays, had a looming presence over the performances.

Along with the soft sensuousness of Odissi, young boys and girls performed Gotipua dances, full of incredible acrobatic sequences with their bodies creating a caparisoned horse at one point. The gossamer shimmer of Manipuri dancers whirled like inverted flowers. Swift athletic movements of Kuchipudi enthralled us on the second night when Padmashree Guru Ileana Citaristi performed with her dis-

ciples. She chose to replace the traditional concluding item ' Moksha', with ' Kal', a contemplation on time. "Where is the time?" — stridently repeated in English dissipated the atmosphere however.

As we journeyed forward, we retreated in time, towards the first century Buddhist caves of Udaygiri, rockcut temples of Jain Khandgiri and to peaceful Dhauili, where Ashoka's earthshaking transformation occurred after the Kalinga war. The first, executed by stone implements was a stupendous achievement and Khandgiri's temple out of one solid rock was astounding. We then made our way to where Lake Chilka and the Brahmani River at Bhitarkanika sanctuary flow into the Bay of Bengal. The Irrawady dolphins frolicked around our boat while 18 feetlong saltwater crocodiles basked amongst the mangroves and mud on the banks of the river.

Entranced, we walked miles in the sanctuary on forest paths, surfeited by eight days of beauty of temples, sculptures, paintings, textiles, nature — and the smiling dignity of Oriya villagers.



WANDERING IN ORISSA

Pak court suspends Imran Khan's 3-year sentence but he will remain in jail

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's three-year sentence in a corruption case was suspended by a Pakistan court on Tuesday. However, he will continue to remain in jail in a case related to the alleged disclosure of state secrets by him.

(News Agency) - Imran Khan's three-year sentence in the Toshakhana corruption case was on Tuesday suspended by a high court, which ordered his release from jail, but Pakistan's embattled former premier will continue to remain in prison in a separate case related to the alleged disclosure of state secrets by him.

A division bench comprising Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamir Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri announced the much-anticipated reserved verdict to release Khan, leaving many to guess if it is a relief ahead of elections or just a stopgap arrangement to fix him in another case.

"All we are saying now is that (Khan's) request has been approved," Justice Farooq said, referring to the former premier's appeal against his conviction and prison term.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party said the decision of the district court has been suspended by the high court.

The bench also ordered the release of the 70-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician on the production of surety bonds worth Rs 100,000.

IMRAN KHAN TO REMAIN IN JAIL



However, the former prime minister will continue to remain in prison as a special court holding his trial in the Official Secrets Act directed the Attock Jail authorities to keep him in the "judicial lockup" and produce him on August 30 before the court.

His deputy and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi is already in custody in the same case.

The case launched earlier this month alleged that Khan and others were involved in the violation of the secret laws of the country.

The high court bench reserved the verdict on Monday after the rival lawyers

concluded their arguments on the suspension of the conviction and three-year sentence handed down to Khan by Additional District and Session Judge, Islamabad, Humayun Dilwar on August 5 - a ruling that barred him from contesting general elections.

Khan was sentenced on charges of unlawfully selling state gifts acquired by him and his family during his 2018-2022 tenure. He was also barred from politics for five years, preventing him from contesting an upcoming election.

The main issue for supporters of the former premier is if he would be allowed to lead the party in the forthcoming

elections.

According to experts, it depends on settling the issue of his disqualification. "He was disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan after conviction in the Toshakhana case and the disqualification is not affected by mere suspension of sentence," senior lawyer Irfan Qadir said in a TV interview.

He said that the disqualification was linked with the decision of the appeal by Khan against conviction. Others believe that disqualification has also been suspended. "When sentence is suspended, the disqualification is also suspended," lawyer Qauseen Raza said. The matter may ultimately land in the high court or the supreme court of the country to decide if disqualification was suspended or not.

PAKISTAN ELECTIONS

General elections are scheduled to be held in Pakistan within 90 days after the dissolution of the National Assembly, which was prematurely dissolved on August 10 by President Arif Alvi. However, the polls are likely to be delayed as the government has announced that the elections could take place only after a new census is completed and new constituency boundaries are drawn.

Destination India? Drone with 10 kg of Afghan heroin seized in Lahore

The Anti-Narcotics Force of Pakistan recovered a drone, along with 10 kg of drugs, in Lahore. The heroin was from Afghanistan and would likely have been smuggled to India.

(News Agency) - A drone along with 10 kg of heroin was recovered from a smuggler in Pakistan's Lahore on Tuesday. The drone was recovered from the smuggler's vehicle, and a packet of heroin weighing 1 kg was attached to it, according to a Waqtnews report.

The remaining 9 kg of heroin was in the vehicle in separate packets.

Taking to X (formerly Twitter), senior Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir shared a photo of the drone recovered by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF). "Sources disclosed that this heroin came from Afghanistan and its ultimate destination was India," Hamid Mir said.

The image shows packets of drugs recovered by the Anti-Narcotics Force in Lahore. This follows just a month after a drone carrying six kilogrammes of heroin crashed in Lahore. The area



where the drone was found was close to the India-Pakistan border.

Notably, India has consistently raised concerns regarding the illicit trafficking of narcotics and weaponry from its

neighboring country, Pakistan.

In May last year, India Today reported insights obtained from intelligence sources, revealing Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) had

established drone facilities with the intent of smuggling arms and drugs into India.

Sources in the Border Security Force (BSF) had indicated that they had received intelligence reports indicating an increase in drone activities at several Pakistani border outposts across the IB from Ferozepur and Amritsar.

"Pakistan is using 'dummy drones' for weapons, drugs and explosives. Across the border near Khemkaran, smugglers fly drones with the help of Pak Rangers," the sources had mentioned. The BSF successfully intercepted and brought down a total of 22 drones or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that had infiltrated from Pakistan during the past year. These incidents all occurred along the International Border (IB) in Punjab.

Russia will not probe Wagner chief plane crash under international rules: Report

(News Agency) - Russia has informed Brazil's aircraft investigation authority that it will not probe the crash of the Brazilian-made Embraer jet that killed mercenary boss Yevgeny Prigozhin under international rules "at the moment", the Brazilian agency told Reuters on Tuesday.

Prigozhin, two top lieutenants of his Wagner Group and four bodyguards were among 10 people who died when the Embraer Legacy 600 crashed north of Moscow last week.

He died two months to the day after staging a brief mutiny against the Russian defense establishment that posed the biggest challenge to President Vladimir Putin's rule since he rose to power in 1999.

Brazil's Center for Research and Prevention of Aeronautical Accidents (CENIPA), in the interests of improving aviation safety, had said it would join a Russian-led investigation if it were invited and the probe held under



international rules.

Russia's aviation authority was not obligated to say yes to CENIPA, but some former investigators said it should, as the U.S. and other Western governments suspect the Kremlin of being behind the Aug. 23 crash of the Embraer Legacy 600, which has a good safety record.

The Kremlin denies any involvement. Prigozhin was publicly critical of Moscow's prosecution of its invasion of Ukraine. The Wagner mercenaries

fought battles there on Russia's side.

According to the Montreal-based United Nations International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the flight from Moscow with a destination of St Petersburg was domestic, so it is not subject to international rules known throughout the industry by their legal name "Annex 13."

NO OBLIGATION TO ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL RULES

"They are not obliged, only recommended to do that," CENIPA head

Air Brigadier Marcelo Moreno told Reuters after the agency sent an email last week asking Russia whether it would open such a probe.

"But if they say they'll open the investigation and invite Brazil we will participate from afar."

U.S. aviation safety consultant and former investigator John Cox said an internal Russian investigation would always be questioned without the participation of Brazil, the country where the plane was manufactured.

"I think it's very sad," Cox said after being told of the Russian response. "I think it hurts the transparency of the Russian investigation."

CENIPA said in an emailed statement it got the response from the Interstate Aviation Committee - Commission on Accident Investigation (IAC) on Tuesday, with the Russian authority saying it would not open for now a probe under Annex 13.

Adams condemns Hochul's handling of New York migrant crisis as 'wrong'

Hochul has faced pressure from municipal leaders, including in the political battleground in the Hudson Valley, to curb the busing of migrants into their communities.

(News Agency) - New York City Mayor Eric Adams on Tuesday knocked Gov. Kathy Hochul's handling of the migrant crisis, offering his sharpest critique of his partner in government.

Adams was, in particular, critical of Hochul's stance that the city should limit its movement of migrants to other parts of New York, especially without the consent and coordination of local leaders.

"I think the governor's wrong," the mayor said. "She's the governor of the state of New York. New York City is in that state. Every county in this state should be part of this."

Adams has recently urged Hochul to issue a statewide order that would bar municipalities from trying to block the arrival of migrants through local edicts. Hochul has rejected the concept, saying migrants should not be forced on other counties and, separately, arguing the right to shelter mandate that requires people who are homeless, including migrants, to be provided housing doesn't apply beyond the five boroughs.

"This is an agreement that does not apply to the state's other 57 counties, which is one of the reasons we cannot and will not force other parts of our state to shelter migrants, nor are we going to



be asking these migrants to move to other parts of the state against their will," she said in a speech Thursday.

She also said earlier this month that: "Putting someone in a hotel on a dark, lonely road in Upstate New York and telling them they're supposed to survive is not compassion."

Hochul has faced pressure from municipal leaders, including in the political battleground in the Hudson Valley, to curb the busing of migrants into their communities.

The governor and mayor's united front has begun to crumble as the number of migrants arriving to New York City surpasses 100,000. And it has also strained relationship with the Biden administration, which pushed back Monday on state leaders' urging that it do more to help New York.

They long defined their working relationship as strong, especially compared to their predecessors, but Adams has ramped up his insistence that Hochul take on a greater share of the burden. That tension spilled into the open earlier this month when Hochul's attorney submitted a letter in a court case that in part alleged a lack of coordination by the city and criticized the city for rejecting some state resources.

Adams spoke Tuesday in a "fireside conversation" hosted by the New York Law School and the Center for New York City Law.

"This is a real leadership moment," he said of the governor, who he separately praised for steps to improve subway safety. "And all those counties - we are the economic engine of this state. New York goes down. The entire state goes down." Hochul has sought to highlight the state's contributions as the surge of migrants to the city reaches more than 58,000 - and counting - in its care. The state has provided National Guard presence, budgeted \$1.5 billion in aid, lent the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center in Queens as a large-scale emergency housing site and is reimbursing the city for the cost of building and running

Creedmoor as well as a larger tent complex on Randall's Island in Manhattan.

City, state and federal are also working out the details - while butting heads on some specifics - of how to use the federally owned Floyd Bennett Field to shelter about 2,000 migrants.

Responding to the mayor's criticism Tuesday, Hochul spokesperson Avi Small referred POLITICO to the governor's speech on Thursday in which she implored the federal government for more help - while also stressing that helping new arrivals is a "moral imperative."

Hochul said then she and Adams have been in countless meetings together with federal, business and community representatives, and they were on the same page about trying to expedite work authorization for the asylum-seekers and getting more federal aid.

"What we've said all along is just let them work and help us out financially," she said.

Later Tuesday, Small offered additional comment: "It's unfortunate that the mayor is choosing to point fingers at the state," arguing that the state has provided the city with large amounts of financial support and the city should be working collaboratively.

Pure nitrogen to firing squad, ways in which US carries out executions

Alabama is set to become the first state in the United States to carry out an execution by making a prisoner breathe pure nitrogen. The method -- nitrogen hypoxia - is one of the half dozen methods approved to carry out death sentences in the US.

In India, the death penalty is awarded for "rarest of rare" crimes. The last executions were carried out in India in March 2020, when four convicts in the Nirbhaya 2012 gangrape case were hanged.

The government had in May told the Supreme Court that it was in the process of constituting a committee to examine less painful methods of execution of the death penalty in India.

As for the US, 17 prisoners have been executed in 2023, according to the Washington, DC-based Death Penalty Information Center.

But here come the hows and the whys. Twenty-seven American states permit executions, but of them, seven have put a hold on carrying them out. Of the 20 states that carry out the death sentence, the lethal injection method is approved in all. But here comes the first why - Why do those states need alternative methods to execute prisoners? Then comes the question, how did these methods come to be used?



Alabama's move to use nitrogen hypoxia for execution comes amid ongoing debates and controversies surrounding the methods of capital punishment in the United States. Hypoxia means a deficiency in the amount of oxygen reaching the tissues.

There is also a huge debate about whether death sentences need to be carried out at all in the civilized world. Support for the death penalty among Americans is at near-historic lows after peaking in the mid-1990s, according to Death Penalty Information Center. In 2021, polls indicated the support for executions hovering around 55 per cent.

A Pew Research Center report published in 2021 said 60 per cent of American adults favoured the death penalty for people convicted of murder.

VARIOUS METHODS OF EXECUTION IN THE US

The Death Penalty Information Center, a non-profit organization that provides analysis and information about capital punishment, has identified several methods of execution currently authorised across various American states. These include lethal injection, electrocution, gas chamber, hanging, and firing squad. Lethal injection is the most widely-used method, adopted first by

Oklahoma in 1977 due to its perceived cost-effectiveness and humanity compared to electrocution or lethal gas. Thirteen states and the US Military solely use lethal injection. However, other methods are still authorised in certain states. Tennessee, Utah, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Alabama authorise alternative methods if lethal injection is deemed unconstitutional or unavailable. In Florida, prisoners can choose electrocution, while South Carolina and Virginia allow prisoners to choose between lethal injection and electrocution. Arizona, California, and Washington provide lethal injection unless the inmate requests lethal gas or hanging. While state-level executions have decreased, the federal government put more prisoners to death under President Donald Trump than at any point since the US Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976, according to Pew Research.

HISTORY OF EXECUTIONS IN THE US
The history of capital punishment in the US dates back to 1608 when Captain George Kendall was executed by firing squad for spying on behalf of the Spanish government. Over the years, the methods of execution have evolved, with some states abolishing the death penalty altogether.

Burger King must face lawsuit claiming its Whoppers' size misleading: US judge



(News Agency) - A US judge has rejected Burger King's bid to dismiss a lawsuit claiming that it cheated hungry customers by making its Whopper sandwich appear larger than it actually is.

US District Judge Roy Altman in Miami said Burger King must defend against a claim that its depiction of Whoppers on in-store menu boards misleads reasonable customers, amounting to a breach of contract.

Customers in the proposed class action accused Burger King of portraying burgers with ingredients that "overflow over the bun," making it appear the burgers are

35% larger and contain more than double the meat than the chain serves.

Burger King, a unit of Restaurant Brands International, countered that it wasn't required to deliver burgers that look "exactly like the picture," but the judge said it was up to jurors to "tell us what reasonable people think."

In his decision made public on Friday, Altman also let the customers pursue negligence-based and unjust enrichment claims.

He dismissed claims based on TV and online ads, finding none in which Burger King promised a burger "size," or patty weight, and failed to deliver it.

TV crew went to cover robberies in Chicago, ends up being robbed



(News Agency) - 'Total irony', said a journalist after he and his co-worker were robbed in Chicago during the wee hours of Monday morning. The reporter-photojournalist duo were preparing a live shot, all set to question the authorities about a surge in cases of armed robberies. Little did they know that robbers were going to make them their next target. Employed at Univision, a television broadcasting channel, a reporter and a photojournalist were robbed by three men at gunpoint. The robbers wore "ski masks and displayed firearms", reported abc7 news. The incident took place at around 4:30 am on Monday, and robbers arrived in a black SUV and a grey sedan. However, one of the journalists noted that something like this could happen "any time of the day". "We

were preparing for a live shot to cover news of increased robbery and us being robbed is total irony", one of the journalists told Block Club Chicago news. "You report on the story but never think of becoming one. That is not why we do this," he told the news outlet. Despite that, he said the incident is a reminder of why journalists should keep doing their jobs and put pressure on authorities. The journalists were not injured in the attack, but their video camera, "the only valuable", was stolen. Cases of armed robbery are surging in some Chicago neighbourhoods. Police are investigating 8 such cases, where victims were robbed by a group of 3-4 people and sometimes beaten up too, abc7 news said.

Byju's chief business officer Prathyusha Agarwal, 2 senior executives resign

The fresh resignations come at a time when Byju's has been grappling with multiple legal and financial challenges. The company restructuringsaid the resignations were part of a restructuring process.

(News Agency) - Byju's Chief Business Officer (CBO) Prathyusha Agarwal and two other senior executives have resigned from the struggling ed-tech firm, confirmed a company spokesperson on Tuesday. Alongside her, Himanshu Bajaj and Mukut Deepak, two other business heads, have also exited the company.

It may be noted that Agarwal joined the edtech firm in February 2022 from Zee Entertainment Enterprises, where she was the chief consumer and data officer. She held several senior positions in Zee for over five years,



moneycontrol.com. Deepak was with the company for almost two years, and Bajaj joined in November 2021 to head Byju's Tuition Centers vertical from management consulting company Kearney. "As Byju's continues to chart

its path to profitability and sustainable growth, we have undertaken a restructuring of businesses and verticals including the consolidation of four verticals into two key verticals - K-10 and Exam Prep," a company

spokesperson said on the recent exits.

"At present, two very seasoned and senior leaders lead both verticals- Ramesh Karra leads the K-10 vertical while Jitesh Shah leads the exam prep business. And as a part of this reorganisation of businesses, Mukut Deepak, Prathyusha Agarwal, and Himanshu Bajaj will be moving on," the spokesperson added. In addition, Byju's witnessed the departure of Cherian Thomas, the Senior Vice President for international business, in the previous week.

Byju's, amidst grappling with numerous legal and financial

challenges, has parted ways with thousands of employees this year.

Investor Prosus NV highlighted management concerns, noting that advice was often disregarded. Moreover, Deloitte, the appointed auditor until 2025, resigned due to delayed financial statements, impacting its auditing capabilities.

Byju's plans to submit audited 2022 earnings by September and 2023 results by December. To address governance issues, an advisory council was formed in early July, comprising investor Mohandas Pai and former State Bank of India chairman Rajnish Kumar.

12 firms gained from short selling in Adani Group shares: Report



(News Agency) - Around a dozen companies, including foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) and foreign institutional investors (FIIs), based in tax havens, have been identified by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) as the "top beneficiaries" of short selling in Adani Group shares, reported The Indian Express. The ED shared the information with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in July, following its preliminary investigation into the Hindenburg Research report and the resulting market crash.

It may be noted that short sellers profit by borrowing and selling shares with the expectation of buying them back at a lower price

later. Short positions taken just before Hindenburg's report The ED's findings, as highlighted in the Indian Express report, revealed that some of these short sellers initiated positions just 2-3 days before the publication of the Hindenburg Research report, while others were engaging in short selling for the first time.

The agency's investigation disclosed that three of the companies are India-based, with one being the Indian branch of a foreign bank. Four entities are situated in Mauritius, and one each in France, Hong Kong, the Cayman Islands, Ireland, and London. None of the FPIs/FIIs have revealed their ownership structures

to the Income Tax authorities. For example, one entity was incorporated in July 2020 and remained inactive until September 2021. In just six months from September 2021 to March 2022, it claimed an income of Rs 1,100 crore on a turnover of Rs 31,000 crore.

Another global financial services group, operating as a bank in India, reported minimal earnings in India but a substantial income of Rs 9,700 crore as an FII without paying any income tax.

A Cayman Islands-based FII, listed among the 'top beneficiaries', had previously admitted to insider trading and paid a \$1.8 billion fine in the US. This FPI initiated a short position in Adani Group shares on January 20 and increased it further on January 23. A Mauritius-based fund engaged in short selling for the first time on January 10.

Among the 'top short sellers', two Indian companies were identified - one registered in New Delhi, against whose promoter Sebi had taken action for misleading investors and stock market manipulation, and the other registered in Mumbai.

Mukesh Ambani's succession plan, wife Nita exits RIL Board, 3 children appointed



(News Agency) - Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's children-Isha, Akash, and Anant- were appointed to the board of his energy-to-technology conglomerate, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), on Monday. This move is widely seen as a clear step in the direction of succession planning for India's most valuable company. The board of Reliance convened prior to the company's annual general meeting to officially ratify the appointments of Isha and Akash, along with Anant, as "non-executive directors of the company." This decision was communicated through a stock exchange filing made by the firm. Nita Ambani stepped down from the Board of Directors. However,

as the Chairperson of Reliance Foundation, she will attend all the RIL Board meetings as a permanent invitee to the Board. Last year, the 66-year-old tycoon had paved the way for his first-born, Akash Ambani, to assume the role of chairman at India's largest mobile company, Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. Despite this, Ambani retained his position as the chairman of Jio Platforms, the entity that holds Reliance Jio Infocomm. Akash's counterpart and twin sister, Isha, aged 31, was chosen to oversee Reliance's retail arm, while the youngest of the siblings, Anant, was assigned responsibilities within the new energy business sector.



Kiara Advani, Kareena Kapoor, Suhana Khan come together for a glam night, fans pick their favourite among them

Actors Kareena Kapoor and Kiara Advani, who have worked together in Good Newzz, had a reunion at the launch of a beauty brand campaign on Thursday. The two were joined by Suhana Khan, who will soon be making her film debut with The Archies

on Netflix. All the three were in their most glamorous avatars and each of them stood out with their individual style statement. Who wore what at the event Kareena looked stunning in a strapless black gown with dark eye makeup and a statement locket adding to the look.

Following the similar trend, Suhana Khan chose a red strapless gown with a side slit for the evening. Like Kareena, she also had her hair left untied. Kiara joined them in a dramatic pastel green halter top and palazzos in silk. A paparazzo shared a video of

them posing together at the event. Fans had their own picks in the comments section. Most of them looked impressed with Kareena. A fan wrote, "Kareena actually looks stunning for her age." "Kareena is justtt soooo damn beautiful," wrote another. One more said, "Bebo will

always be on top." A comment also read: "3 alag alag generation (fire emoji, hands raised emoji, heart emoji) Suhana the lady boss." Some also called Kiara the prettiest. Kareena, Kiara share looks on Instagram Ahead of the event, Kareena had shared a few stunning pictures of herself on Instagram in the black gown. "I'm ready for tonite @tirabeauty," she wrote in caption. Her actor sister Karisma Kapoor dropped a heart emoji in the comments section while stylist Anaita Shroff Adajania wrote, "Smokin!" along with a fire and heart emoji. A fan also wrote, "Good looks, good looks and good looks - Eternal Goddess." Kiara also shared a mirror selfie of herself on her Instagram Stories and wrote, "Good night," with a heart made with hand gestures emoji. Arjun Kapoor was also at the event and even clicked a selfie with the three women. Kareena is now gearing up for the release of her thriller drama Jaane Jaan this month, which will mark her debut in the OTT space. Kiara is currently working on her Telugu film Game Changer alongside Ram Charan. Suhana is currently busy with the promotions of her debut film The Archies.

'Dream Girl 2' box office collection Day 7: Ayushmann's film earns Rs 67 crore

Ayushmann Khurrana is once again winning hearts as Pooja/Karam in 'Dream Girl 2'. Released in theatres on August 25, the film also stars Ananya Panday as Pari. On August 31, it saw a huge incline in its collections as it minted a total of Rs 67 crore. Now, it remains to be seen how 'Dream Girl 2' fares at the box office after Shah Rukh Khan's 'Jawan' takes over on September 7.

'DREAM GIRL 2' BOX OFFICE COLLECTION

After a successful stint with 'Dream Girl' in 2019, Raaj Shaandilyaa is back with 'Dream Girl 2' in 2023. The film started off on a positive note by collecting a



whopping Rs 10.69 crore in India. As per early trade estimates, 'Dream Girl 2' managed to earn Rs 8 crore on Day 7, August 31. Hence, its total collection would now

stand at Rs 67.50 crore net in India. It remains to be seen how the film performs before Shah Rukh Khan's 'Jawan' arrives in theatres next week. Meanwhile, 'Dream Girl 2'

had an overall 26.65 per cent occupancy on Thursday. ABOUT 'DREAM GIRL 2' 'Dream Girl 2' traces the journey of a small-town boy Karam (played by Ayushmann

Khurrana) who is trying to live a serious life in Mathura. He falls in love with Pari (played by Ananya Panday) but life is hell-bent on not taking him seriously. In a turn of events, Karam becomes Pooja which creates further chaos in his already chaotic life. The film is directed by Raaj Shaandilya and produced by Ektaa R Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor under the banner of Balaji Motion Pictures. Besides Ayushmann, the film will also star Ananya Panday, Paresh Rawal, Rajpal Yadav, Asrani, Vijay Raaz, Annu Kapoor, Seema Pahwa, Manoj Joshi, Abhishek Banerjee and Manjot Singh.

Air pollution can reduce life expectancy by 5 years. Doctors explain why

A recent study showed that air pollution can reduce the life expectancy of an Indian by over 10 years. Doctors explain how high AQI can affect the mortality rate so drastically.

A recent study has shown that fine particulate matter (PM2.5) air pollution is estimated to shorten an average Indian's life expectancy by 5.3 years, and in Delhi (considered to be the most polluted city in the country), as much as 11.9 years.

The data was compared to the World Health Organisation (WHO) standards of 5 micrograms per cubic meter, according to an updated Air Quality Life Index released by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC). Doctors explain how low air quality has the ability to impact the mortality rate. Air pollution, being a significant contributor to the death rate, targets the lungs and eventually, the heart, kidneys, the brain and slowly causes detrimental effects on the body's system. "Over time,



we've come to realize that many years of productive business life can be eroded by sustained exposure to air pollution," said Dr Arjun Khanna, Department of Pulmonary Medicine, Amrita Hospital, Faridabad.

According to Dr Kuldeep Kumar Grover, Head of Critical Care and Pulmonology, CK Birla Hospital, Gurugram, exposure to pollutants like particulate matter (PM2.5), ozone, sulfur dioxide

and nitrogen dioxide can lead to respiratory problems, cardiovascular diseases and even cancer.

"Over time, these health effects can reduce life expectancy, especially among vulnerable populations like children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions. Efforts to reduce air pollution can have positive impacts on public health and potentially

increase life expectancy," said Dr Kuldeep Kumar Grover. Dr Avi Kumar, Senior Consultant, Pulmonology at Fortis Escorts said that studies have indicated areas with higher levels of air pollution tend to have higher mortality rates.

Respiratory health effects: Pollutants like particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), and sulfur dioxide (SO2) can irritate the respiratory system, leading to conditions such as bronchitis and asthma. Prolonged exposure to polluted air can exacerbate these conditions and reduce lung function over time.

Cardiovascular health effects: Air pollution can increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and hypertension. Long-term exposure to pollutants can contribute to the development of atherosclerosis, a condition

where arteries become narrow and hardened, increasing the risk of heart-related complications. Reduced lung function: Chronic exposure to air pollution can lead to a decline in lung function, particularly in vulnerable populations like children and the elderly.

Since the ongoing air quality menace poses serious health threats to humanity, experts urge critical corrective measures. "Efforts to mitigate the impact of air pollution on life expectancy include implementing stricter environmental regulations, transitioning to cleaner energy sources, improving public transportation, and raising awareness about the health risks associated with air pollution are the need of the hour," underscored Dr Avi Kumar.

Fruit and vegetable prescription by doctors could help increase nutrition levels

As part of produce prescription programs in the US, doctors are able to prescribe subsidised fruits and vegetables. A study found that adults at risk for heart disease had reduced blood pressure and body mass index.

"Prescribing" fruits and vegetables to adults and children has been associated with an increased consumption of these foods, according to a new study.

The analysis, published in the American Heart Association's peer-reviewed journal *Circulation*, observed that people who participated in the study had a lowered risk of heart disease.

As part of produce prescription programs in the US, doctors are able to prescribe subsidised fruits and vegetables.

Patients receive electronic cards or vouchers to access free or discounted produce of their choice at retail grocery or farmers' markets, explained study lead author Kurt Hager at UMass Chan Medical School in Worcester, Massachusetts. Adults at risk for heart disease who participated in producing prescription programs for an average

of six months increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables and had reduced blood pressure, body mass index and blood sugar levels. Among adults and children, produce prescription programs also appeared to decrease food insecurity, the lack of equitable and stable availability, access, affordability and consumption of healthy foods and drinks, and improve self-reported health status.

"We know that food insecurity impacts health through several important pathways, including overall dietary quality, but also through stress and anxiety, mental health and tradeoffs between paying for food and other basic needs such as housing costs, utilities and medications," said Hager. "These results indicate produce prescriptions may lay an important foundation for improved health and well-being," he added.



Study participants received a median of \$63 per month to purchase produce at local stores and farmers' markets. They also attended nutrition classes. At the beginning and after completing the program, from 4 to 10 months, participants completed questionnaires about fruit and vegetable consumption, food insecurity and health status.

Routine testing of blood pressure, weight and height, and hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) - a measure of blood sugar - was completed at enrollment

and at the conclusion of the program. The analysis found that blood sugar, as measured by HbA1c levels, decreased by 0.29 to 0.58 percentage points among adults with diabetes. "Poor nutrition and nutrition insecurity are major drivers of chronic disease globally, including cardiometabolic conditions like Type 2 diabetes and their cardiovascular consequences, including heart failure, heart attack and stroke," according to Mitchell Elkind, chief clinical science officer of the American Heart Association.

\$130M project lifts Hicksville's downtown revitalization efforts

A crumbling parking lot and two vacant commercial buildings in the shadow of the Hicksville Long Island Rail Road station are soon to be replaced by a new \$130 million mixed-use transit-oriented development.

The project, from Manhattan-based developer Alpine Residential, is the largest so far to be approved by the Town of Oyster Bay in its ongoing efforts to revitalize Hicksville's downtown.

The four-story, mixed-use development, which received the final go-ahead from the town's planning board last month, will bring 189 rental apartments over 7,660 square feet of restaurant and retail space to the 2.1-acre site at 99 Newbridge Road. Though it's taken a few years, the Alpine project is exactly the type of smart-growth development that's been sought by the town since it rezoned the area in 2021. The new Hicksville zoning was largely based on planning work done over the last several years by Vision Long Island, the Hicksville Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Hicksville Revitalization Committee.

The rezoning came three-and-a-half years after the town received a \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant from the state in August 2017. Alpine will get \$1 million of that DRI grant money to assist its project. The developer is also seeking economic incentives from the Nassau County Industrial Development Agency.

"The Alpine Residential project in Hicksville was born out of the vision of the residents of Hicksville who wanted to improve their commercial downtown with new residences and upgraded street-level retail," said attorney Bram Weber of Melville-based Weber Law Group, who represents the project. "The town board then took the lead and approved a zoning code which the Alpine project followed word-for-word. Working with the community's vision, the town, and with the support of Vision Long Island, Alpine has created a transformative project which received unanimous support at the town's public hearing. The Alpine project will be showpiece for Hicksville, the Town of Oyster Bay, and Nassau County." The new TOD will have two levels of underground parking to accommodate 338 vehicles. It will have a mix of 14 studios, 76 one-bedroom units, 88 two-bedroom units and 11 three-bedroom apartments. Monthly rents for the studios range from \$2,000 to \$2,275; from \$1,967 to \$3,411 for one-bedroom



apartments; from \$2,858 to \$3,902 for two-bedroom apartments; and from \$3,369 to \$4,172 for the three-bedroom apartments.

Nineteen of the new Hicksville apartments will be designated as workforce housing and offered at reduced rents. Amenities at the complex will include co-working space, lobby lounge, yoga studio, fitness center, outdoor pool, a playground for young children, and a rooftop lounge and dog run.

Todd Schefler, managing partner at Alpine Residential, grew up in Roslyn and knows the Hicksville site is a prime candidate for redevelopment.

"Anything in Nassau County at a train station is special and that train station is really a busy train station. When you go by there at night it's really desolate and it's kind of a natural place that has so much activity," Schefler told LIBN. "This will bring a lot of vitality to an area that's gotten kind of bleak at night when you get off the train."

The Alpine development is the second Hicksville project that's gained traction under the town's new zoning. Fieldstone at North Broadway LLC, an affiliate of Woodbury-based P7 Development, is planning to construct a mixed-use building that will bring 96 rental apartments over one level of parking and 3,500 square feet of retail space just two blocks north of the Hicksville LIRR station.

Dubbed Fieldstone at North Broadway, it will feature a clubroom, a fitness

center, a business center and a raised outdoor courtyard. Ten percent of the apartments at the project, which is still in the approvals process, will be designated as workforce housing and offered at reduced rents.

The town's efforts to revitalize Hicksville's downtown have received strong support from the community, as residents and local business owners have been involved in the planning process from the jump.

"This second mixed-use TOD project in downtown Hicksville had community support because it was planned locally," says Eric Alexander, director of Vision Long Island and co-chair of the Hicksville Downtown Revitalization Committee. "The Chamber of Commerce, local civics and municipal officials shaped the plan with the developer from the bottom up and that is the method for success not just in Hicksville but in communities across Long Island." Town officials say the Hicksville projects, which will add nearly 300 housing units, are examples of what can be accomplished to increase housing opportunities without mandates from the state, as Oyster Bay has strongly opposed Gov. Kathy Hochul's proposed housing compact. "This is a great example of local government and community working together to provide appropriate, responsible development and residential housing. This project went forward

with extensive community input, a full environmental review process and several revisions to ensure it met the needs of all, while fitting within the character for the neighborhood," said Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino. "The state's plan to remove local zoning control not only ignores the voice of our residents but doesn't address the need to affordable housing while attempting to turn our communities into urban centers."

The Alpine project team includes Fogarty Finger Architecture, Bohler Engineering and Racanelli Construction, and Schefler says he hopes to begin construction in July. It will create about 370 full-time-equivalent construction jobs and take nearly two years to complete.

The bulk of Alpine's portfolio has been developed in New Jersey, Connecticut and Florida and the Hicksville project will be the company's first on Long Island. However, the developer has planned another TOD in Westbury, which will bring about 190 apartments to a site on Union Avenue across from the Westbury LIRR station. That project is currently in the site-plan approval process.

But first up is Hicksville.

"We're very excited," Schefler said. "As a developer, you want projects that you're proud to show your kids as a before-and-after and this is a great example. To convert a run-down parking lot and boarded up office building into something beautiful is very exciting for those of us who do that."

Chairman of Bangladesh's Securities Regulator Got Payments From Bank Accounts Used for Alleged \$13-Million Fraud

by Zulkarnain Saer Khan

In July 2021, Shibli Rubayat ul Islam, the chairman of Bangladesh's capital markets regulator, took to a stage in Los Angeles. It was the first stop in his "The Rise of the Bengal Tiger" roadshow, which aimed to drum up enthusiasm for foreign investment into the country.

As the face of Bangladesh's international sales pitch, Rubayat ul Islam touted the country's growing economy and regulatory reforms under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

But behind the scenes, the picture was not so rosy. Just under two weeks earlier, Bangladesh's anti-corruption authorities had received a complaint alleging that the regulatory chief had gotten payments from a bank account connected to a multi-million-dollar fraud.

At the heart of the accusations was a convicted scammer, Javeed Matin, whom Rubayat ul Islam had met at university and had been friends with for two decades. Throughout much of 2020, the complaint alleged, Matin helped launder the proceeds of a scheme that defrauded a Hong Kong-based supply chain and sourcing company, Ming Global Limited, out of more than \$13 million.

Under the pretense of an investment, these funds were sent to two accounts held by a U.S. company, Monarch Holdings Inc., which then wired over \$800,000 to Rubayat ul Islam's personal account and to the accounts of a Bangladeshi company he appeared to be behind. (Current ownership details were unavailable.)

Through his lawyer, Rubayat ul Islam, who chairs the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC), told OCCRP he was not affiliated with the Bangladeshi company and that the transfers to his personal account were legitimate rent payments.

Ming Global filed a lawsuit against Monarch in the U.S. in 2020, but later shelved it, which the company's director told OCCRP was because none of the defendants - or the money that was allegedly stolen - are in the country. The company also filed a suit to recover funds in Bangladesh from Rubayat ul Islam, who has filed a countersuit against them. The country's Anti-Corruption Commission has taken no apparent action since it received the complaint against Rubayat ul Islam nearly two years ago.

"The legal system is one of the biggest disappointments of all this," Ming Global's director, Sarath Kumar Hegde, told OCCRP. After the alleged scam took place, the BSEC approved Matin's Bangladeshi company, also called Monarch Holdings, to receive a stock-trading license, even though Matin had been convicted for a 2010 "pump-and-dump" tax fraud scheme in the U.S., which should have disqualified him under



Bangladeshi law. (The chairman of the BSEC does not personally approve the licenses and OCCRP found no evidence Rubayat ul Islam influenced the process.)

Matin's partner in the Bangladesh-registered Monarch was one of the country's top cricket players, Shakib Al Hasan, who sometimes joined Rubayat ul Islam in his roadshow appearances. In a separate case, that company was reportedly fined for stock price manipulation last year.

The allegations against Rubayat ul Islam - which have not been made public until now - have had no apparent effect on his standing as chairman of the BSEC: He has continued his speaking appearances, and remained the public face of the country's push for foreign investment.

Prime Minister Hasina, whose government has been accused of allowing corruption to run rampant, faces general elections next year. OCCRP's previous reporting showed how one of Hasina's top aides accrued over \$4 million in New York real estate, without any apparent legitimate means of affording the properties.

"In general, financial regulators should take steps to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest," Ross Delston, a Washington-based attorney who specializes in financial crime issues, told OCCRP.

"In cases involving long-standing friendship combined with financial dealings and allegations of fraud, a financial regulator should recuse themselves from any official dealings with friends and business associates and allow others in the regulatory body to make all such decisions, including those involving licensing."

Matin, Al Hasan, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and Hasina's office did not respond to requests for comment.

Matin's Previous Fraud Conviction Rubayat ul Islam met Matin, the convicted scammer, while they were both at the

University of Dhaka. The two "established strong friendly relations," which they maintained for two decades, according to a statement from Rubayat ul Islam's suit in Bangladesh.

Over that time, Rubayat ul Islam worked in business before joining academia and becoming a prominent professor and researcher in banking and finance. He served in high-level positions at his alma

mater before he was appointed head of the BSEC in May 2020.

Matin, meanwhile, went into business. After studying at the University of Mississippi, he set up multiple apparel companies in the U.S. during the early 2000s. In 2010, he ran afoul of U.S. stock regulators when he was accused of running a "pump-and-dump" scheme. The scheme took place while Matin was serving as chief executive officer of Veltex Corporation, a Utah-registered apparel company purportedly operating in the U.S., Canada, and Bangladesh, according to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) complaint.

Between 2004 and 2008, Matin moved millions of Veltex shares to a Colorado-based company, Wilshire Equity Inc., without registering them properly. He then "touted Veltex by issuing a series of false and misleading press releases grossly inflating Veltex's revenues, embellishing its overseas operations, and assuring investors that Veltex's financial statements were being audited," the complaint said.



US: Former Cash Advance CEO Charged in \$190 Million Ponzi Scheme

BY HENRY POPE

A U.S. federal grand jury charged Friday the former CEO of a merchant cash advance company with multiple counts of fraud and money laundering, in connection to her alleged role as head of a Ponzi scheme that defrauded investors of more than US\$190 million.

Johanna Michely Garcia, 40, formerly the CEO of MJ Capital Funding, LLC, was indicted by a South Florida federal grand jury for allegedly running a \$190.7 million Ponzi scheme between October 2020 and August 2021.

According to investigators, MJ Capital advertised itself as a short-term financing company for small and medium-sized businesses. While investors were led to believe that their money would be used to provide these businesses with cash advances, prosecutors allege that Garcia instead misappropriated their investments to fund MJ Capital.

Garcia further lied to her investors, prosecutors alleged, when she told them that they would see returns on



their initial investments from the profits of the businesses supported by MJ Capital.

These annualized "returns," were advertised to be as high as 120% to 180%, according to the original complaint filed by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Upon signing on as an investor, MJ

Capital required them to sign a non-disclosure agreement, in addition to a non-compete agreement, where they would agree not to engage in any business that could be said to compete with MJ Capital for two years.

However, investigators said that Garcia's business model ultimately did not result in returns for the company, and that

investor returns instead were funded by the money solicited from new investors - a textbook example of a Ponzi scheme.

Millions of dollars in capital raised by investors, meanwhile, were misappropriated by members of the conspiracy for personal use, according to an indictment filed against co-conspirator Pavel Ramon Ruiz Hernandez in August last year. Hernandez pleaded guilty in April 2023 and is set to be sentenced on September 7.

Recruits brought into the scheme, who were tasked with soliciting prospective investors for additional funds, were paid a commission of 10 percent for what they brought in. Authorities did not comment if these recruits did so knowing the true nature of MJ Capital's business practices. As for Garcia, she faces several counts of wire fraud, mail fraud, and money laundering. Each of the fraud charges come with a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, while each money laundering charge could see her receive an additional 10 years in prison.

The Hollowness of the Vivek Doctrine

By JACK SHAFER

Substack's Josh Barro scored a palpable hit on Vivek Ramaswamy last week by capturing the presidential candidate's imbecilic narcissism when he called him a "section guy," that fellow student who dominates class discussion section with his "interpretations of the course material, and who will not ever, ever, ever shut up."

The grist for Barro's damnation was Ramaswamy's scene-stealing performance in the first Republican debate. He was a human magnet, all right, but instead of attracting the positive attention of voters he repelled it with maximum, negative propulsion. Had there been loose iron filings scattered on the stage, the crowd would have suffered a million tiny shrapnel wounds.

But Ramaswamy's hotdogging wasn't a complete bust. He attempted, in his lame section-guy way, to swing by a policy province not even peacenik Democrats will visit these days: the limit of American military intervention overseas. This week in the American Conservative, Ramaswamy expands on those notions in an article titled "A



Viable Realism and Revival Doctrine," invoking Richard Nixon - nobody's idea of a peacenik - and calls for a retreat from what he calls the "bloody follies of neoconservatism and liberal internationalism." Sounding like Republican Robert A. Taft, circa 1952 and Democratic policy anti-war paragon George McGovern, who in his 1972 presidential nomination acceptance speech, urged America to "come home." A good bit of Ramaswamy's article is pure trolling, as he brings up Nixon's realism again and again, calling the man

from Whittier his favorite foreign policy president, perhaps intentionally to draw the predictable catcalls of an establishment that has banished Nixon from polite society. He credits Nixon with using a reduced power footprint in the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent to accomplish diplomatic magic. Plus, Ramaswamy almost shouts, he got us out of Vietnam!

For a section guy, this is a pretty sketchy history of Nixon's realism agenda. Ramaswamy neglects to mention the American nuclear umbrella,

one that Nixon didn't mind rattling, like the time he went DefCon III in 1973, putting all U.S. forces at highest readiness over the latest Middle East war, or Nixon's maintenance of U.S. bases around the world encircling the former Soviet Union. Nor does he acknowledge Nixon got American forces out of Vietnam in 1973 on the same terms he could have gotten in 1969, hardly a foreign policy triumph. Imagining himself a latter-day Henry Kissinger, Ramaswamy promises that if elected president, he will go to Russia and negotiate a Ukraine peace deal in which Vladimir Putin promises to dump his military alliance with Xi Jinping in return for a no-NATO membership policy for Ukraine and assurances that he can keep the Ukrainian real estate he currently occupies. This would be a perfect plan if the world resembled a game of Risk, but do we have any confidence that Putin's territorial hunger ends at Ukraine, or that he can be counted on to keep a promise, or that the 70-year-old Putin's successors will keep it? Or that Xi won't make a superior counteroffer? Section guy is really talking out of his hindquarters here.

Trump Can't Go Home Again

Twitter is not the site that it used to be. And he's not the same man.

By JACK SHAFER

After surrendering on Thursday at an Atlanta jail to be booked on state felony charges alleging his involvement in a criminal conspiracy to void the 2020 presidential election, Donald Trump sat for a mug shot in which he scowls like a psychopath out of a Stanley Kubrick film. Trump's next grand act of surrender was to post the picture on his Twitter account - now called X by owner Elon Musk, pedants and copy desks but by nobody who uses it - marking his first appearance there since being reinstated in November, after being booted by the service 958 days ago following the Jan. 6 riots.

Trump's post, which garnered a healthy 1.3 million likes and 305,000 retweets, essentially concedes that his plan to build his own social media empire under the Truth Social banner is a bust. Aside from Trump's regular posts there, Truth Social is a wasteland of brimstone and salt whose finances and corporate structure make a Rube Goldberg machine look like a Swiss watch. Except for when journalists repeat his Truth Social outbursts or report on them, that Trump account goes unnoticed. By returning to the social media outlet that helped make him "great," Trump's post may presage an attempt to restart the media fire of his



2016 campaign and his presidency.

But no man ever steps in the same river twice - it's not the same river, and he's not the same man, as the sage said. Twitter is not the same and neither is Trump, and the media watershed that allowed Trump to politically prosper doesn't drain the way it once did. Thanks to inertia, changing technology, fickle tastes and Musk's determination to wreck it, the site has lost its cachet. What does that mean for Trump? Trump became a Twitter star by two means. The first was the novelty of a presidential candidate popping off like a sloppy drunk

at closing time. Personal attacks on his enemies, policy shifts, firings, lies about a "fixed election," warnings about the "deep state," his running commentaries on Fox News broadcasts and self-praise - Trump churned out tweets like an automatic writer. Political journalists created Donald Trump columns in their TweetDeck set-ups and shouted, "Didja see what Trump just tweeted?" throughout the workday. Trump sought to make news with his tweets and did, as many of his eruptions became instant news stories.

The environment that so nurtured Trump's nuttiness has degraded since he filled our silos with his opinions and policy statements. Many journalists still use Twitter, but the site has lost its cultural and political primacy. During his vacation from Twitter, TikTok became the world's most popular domain, and his comments on Truth Social or at rallies no longer carried instant weight now that he was an ex-president. Even since announcing his candidacy and leading the polls, Trump has often failed to make himself Topic A in the political conversation (except for during his spurt of indictments). Even Fox News, which pampered him like a pet pig during his presidency, now gives him the cold shoulder. Instead of being president or his party's leading presidential candidate, Trump is mostly a multiply charged criminal defendant battling state and federal prosecutors. After dipping his toe into the new Twitter stream, it's likely that Trump will aggressively recycle his 2015 to 2021 act on the service. But who will listen? Like most boars who are ignored, Trump will likely roar louder to be heard. But that won't likely win him the audience and approval he seeks. As the New York Times reported in 2019, an aide told him that the more he tweeted, the less people paid attention.

The other 'Niño' that fuels the most destructive hurricanes

By India Bourke

It only takes one storm in the wrong place at the wrong time to unleash chaos. That was what the population of Florida learned last year, when a near-normal hurricane season triggered one of the most deadly tropical cyclones in US history. Combined with the damage Hurricane Fiona wreaked on Puerto Rico, it also contributed to the third-costliest season on record.

Forecasting such disasters is not easy. How strong a tropical storm grows and where it hits are determined by weather patterns that are highly unpredictable beyond a few days. But scientists are at least able to give a broad overview of how each hurricane season will pan out. By tracking the development of various linked oceanic and atmospheric patterns, researchers can make predictions based on what they have learned from decades of data.

Earlier this month, scientists at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) updated their predictions for Atlantic hurricane activity

in 2023 - warning that it is now likely to be an above-normal season with more storms and major hurricanes than seen in an average year. Record ocean temperatures and unusual wind patterns in the atmosphere are contributing to a complex push-and-pull effect that governs the emergence of hurricanes.

Researchers have also recently drawn attention to an under-studied phenomenon that may represent another key factor in determining a hurricane season's outlook. A vast patch of water stretching out from the west coast of equatorial Africa undergoes periodic temperature fluctuations known as Atlantic Niño, or "El Niño's little brother". New research suggests this cycle of changing Atlantic Ocean sea surface temperatures can fuel some of the most powerful hurricanes that strike the Caribbean and US.

There are many factors, however, that determine whether a hurricane forms, how powerful it becomes, how long it lasts and where it makes landfall. And the Atlantic Niño's bigger sibling in the

Pacific will play a major role in determining what happens in this year's hurricane season.

The El Niño effect

Of the many climate systems that shape the birth of tropical storms in the Atlantic Ocean, two have typically stood out.

The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is a global climate pattern that forms in the central and eastern Pacific, which fluctuates between the warming phase of El Niño and the cooling phase of La Niña. During an El Niño, warmer-than-average ocean temperatures in the tropical region of the central and eastern Pacific drive global atmospheric circulations and increase vertical wind shear in the Atlantic. Hurricane systems like to stay upright, so when wind shear (the difference between the speed and direction of winds blowing at various altitudes) is high, they are at risk of toppling over and being pulled apart. By contrast, El Niño also leads to an increased risk of tropical cyclones in the northeast Pacific. The arrival of Tropical

Storm Hilary on the west coast of Mexico and Southern California - the first in the state since 1939 - has been attributed to the current phase of the climate pattern. Back in the Atlantic, the second major determinant of hurricanes is the Atlantic Meridional Mode (AMM), which represents fluctuations in low-level winds and tropical sea surface temperatures in the ocean. So when AMM is in a positive mode, ocean temperatures will be warmer than usual and offer up more heat, which fuel storms passing above.

The other Niño Both the ENSO and the AMM involve the interaction of ocean and atmospheric circulations - and measuring their impact on sea surface temperature helps predict hurricane activity, says Hosmay Lopez, an oceanographer at the NOAA. But both climate systems also have different locations where they're dominant. AMM has a strong impact on storm formation in the middle of the tropical Atlantic basin. Meanwhile, the ENSO usually has its largest influence over hurricanes that form in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico.



Opposition must not let petty differences divide it - the coming election is too important

The next election will be no ordinary election. It will indeed determine the path the country will take. Opposition must rise to the occasion

By Yashwant Sinha

A spectre, with apologies to Karl Marx, is haunting our beloved country: The spectre of communal hatred and violence, a false narrative of muscular nationalism and brazen majoritarianism. The truth is that underlying all this is a deep sense of insecurity in the mind of the Prime Minister and the fear of losing the next Lok Sabha elections. During the recent Parliament session, the PM's lacklustre reply to the no-confidence motion - in fact, he refused to attend Parliament till he was forced to reply to this - the untruths, half-truths and lies uttered by the ministers, the suspensions of the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and important Rajya Sabha members do not augur well for parliamentary democracy in our country. The PM's misuse of the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence Day to make an election speech and assert that he will be back next year is part of the same mindset. It was meant more to reassure himself and his followers than the people of the country.

How and why have we come to this pass? I was 10 years old when India became independent - not old enough to understand the full implications of what was happening then but certainly with the sense to comprehend that the events before Independence were horrible. I recall those nights when my father would take the entire family to the first floor of our house in Patna, bolt the ground floor doors as securely as possible, ask my elder brothers to guard the entrances and hope that the night would pass without any incident. I heard menacing slogans in the stillness of the night raised by both Hindus

and Muslims - "Bajrang Bali ki jai" and "Allah hu Akbar". Riots were taking place in other parts of the city, the province and the country and people were getting killed in large numbers. Thinking of the massacre of Hindus in Noakhali in the then-united Bengal and the revenge killings of Muslims in Masaurhi and other parts of Bihar makes me shiver even today. These experiences should have left me



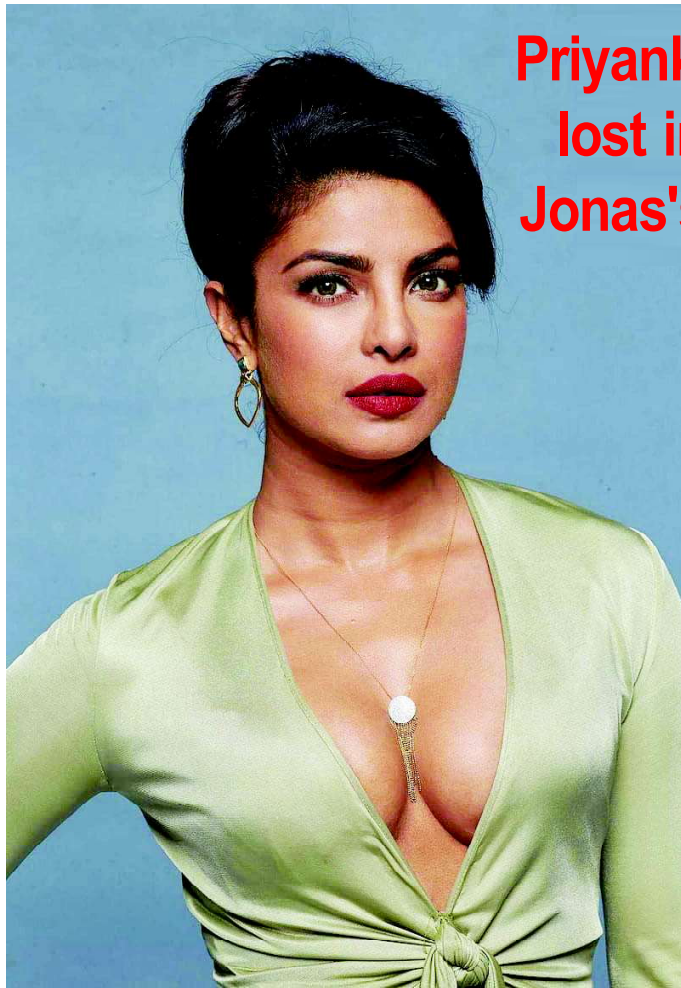
bitter and full of hatred against the Muslim community but they did not. Perhaps because I did not see the killings myself. Perhaps I was too young for such feelings of hate. Perhaps my elder brothers did nurture such feelings. But my mind was free of all such prejudices and therefore going forward, I embraced Muhammad Anwar as one of my closest friends with the same warmth as I did Murlin Sinha. These friendships have stood the test of time. Time, they say, is the best healer and one would have expected that almost

eight decades later, people would have largely forgotten those events and the hatred of the earlier days. But perhaps some people do not want to have things that way. Perhaps some people would want those wounds to remain fresh in our memory for their petty political gains. Perhaps some people would like the communal pot to remain boiling in India forever.

What is the remedy? The answer lies in understanding why India did not embrace religious fundamentalism in the late 1940s and why the country is becoming communal now. India was partitioned into two countries on the basis of religion - perhaps the only example in the world of its kind. This was preceded by large-scale violence between the two communities in many parts of the country which made Partition inevitable. Partition led to a massive transfer of population from one country to another - Hindus from

Pakistan to India and Muslims from India to Pakistan. The people of the two nations witnessed heart-rending scenes of violence and tragedy in this process. Tempers ran so high that those who wanted the communal frenzy to get worse assassinated even the apostle of peace, non-violence and communal harmony, Mahatma Gandhi. The newly-born Pakistan became an Islamic republic. But India retained its sanity and the wise men and women who sat in the Constituent Assembly of India gave us a liberal, democratic and secular Constitution which has stood the test of time. It is another matter that today the Constitution is under threat and even the "basic features" are not safe. Responsible people are openly talking about a new Constitution. What has changed between then and now? In one word: Leadership.

India, despite provocations, remained liberal, democratic and secular, because the leadership of that time believed in these values and persuaded people to follow them and imbibe these values. Seventy-five years later, in the Amrit Kaal of independence, those values have gone for a toss because the leadership of the day does not believe in them. It has no use for them. On the contrary, it believes in values which the country had discarded 75 years ago. If secularism was state-supported then, communalism is state-sponsored today. We are back to square one. India is engaged in a battle of values today. The next election will be no ordinary election. It will indeed determine the path the country will take, perhaps not for the next thousand years, as claimed by the prime minister but certainly for the next hundred years.



Priyanka Chopra waves at fans, gets lost in music as she attends Nick Jonas's concert with Danielle Jonas



and grooving. One more video showed Priyanka leaving the venue during half-time with Denise. Reacting to the visuals, a fan wrote in the comment section, "She looks so beautiful OMG." "She's such a vibe," added another. One more said, "She makes every color look so great." Meanwhile,

Priyanka Chopra makes sure she is there to cheer for her husband Nick Jonas at Jonas Brothers' ongoing tour in the US. As always, she turned up at the latest Texas concert but this time with her Danielle Jonas. Several photos and videos of Priyanka from the event have surfaced on social media.

Priyanka Chopra with family at concert
At the show, Priyanka looked gorgeous in a green cut-out dress with a humble slit. A video showed her arriving at the venue with her security and waving at fans in the audience. She was with Danielle Jonas as seen in a clip. Another video had Priyanka enjoying the music as she was seen singing along

several photos of Nick from the stage are also doing rounds on the internet. Priyanka and Nick got married in Rajasthan in December 2018, after dating for some time. They had their daughter Malti Marie Chopra Jonas via surrogacy in January last year. Priyanka is often seen attending Nick's shows alongside their family members and even friends at times.

Denise shares her favourite photo Talking about Priyanka, Denise recently showed her favourite photo of the Jonas family which features Priyanka, Danielle and Sophie Turner. The photo was clicked at Nick and Priyanka's wedding.

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