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Page 26

Americans Lost Over \$10 Billion To Fraudsters In India This Year: Report

Fraudsters running illegal call centres in India have been targeting people based in the US, especially senior citizens.



Page 26

How a budding Sikh ideologue stumbled in Punjab on religious turf

Amritpal Singh has been intriguingly quick to position himself as a potential Sikh ideologue in a matter of weeks. But the man seems to have stumbled big time within the core Sikh constituency he has been cultivating.



Page 27

What is going on in China with Covid? Why this needs an immediate answer

Why are Covid-19 cases rising in China? Is a new variant of the novel coronavirus to blame? We don't have hard answers to these questions. But it is crucial that we do as we enter another year with Covid still among us.



Page 25

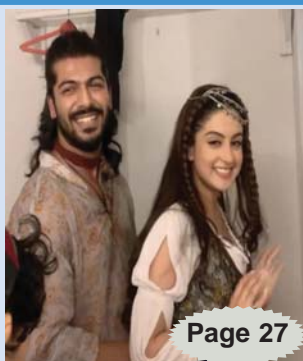
'Blizzard Of The Century' In US Turns Niagara Falls Into Winter Wonderland

Due to the recent wave of sub-zero temperatures that has gripped the region, Niagara falls have transformed into a partially frozen winter wonderland.



Page 26

Actor Sheezan Khan, Arrested In Tunisha Sharma Case, Deleted WhatsApp Chats: Cops



Page 27

Alia Bhatt's Wedding Memories: Pics From Haldi And "First Fitting"



Page 27

Nepal government formation : India Blindsided



Page 25

'Veer Baal Diwas' Observed



(By our staff reporter) Washington DC- 'Veer Baal Diwas' was observed in the Embassy of India in Washington DC on 26 December 2022 in presence of Indian Diaspora and students. All attendees paid tributes to the unparalleled sacrifices made by Sahibzade- the beloved sons of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. A digital exhibition on the lives of Sahibzades, Baba Ajit Singh Ji, Baba Jujhaar Singh Ji, Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji was also mounted on this occasion.

Speaking at the event, Charge d'Affaires Ms. Sripriya Ranganathan highlighted the various initiatives implemented by the Government of India which have facilitated commemoration of sacred festivals of Sikhism- including opening of Kartarpur Sahib Corridor; celebration of 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev

ji across the world; the commemoration of 400th birth anniversary of Guru Teg Bahadur ji - with a special commemorative coin and postage stamp being released by the Hon'ble Prime Minister to mark Guru Teg Bahadur's 400th Prakash Purab; and bringing back three 'Holy Swarups' of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji from Afghanistan with full honour in August last year.

The inaugural commemoration of 'Veer Baal Diwas' is taking place in India and across the world, as the country celebrates the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav signifying 75 years of India's independence. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi had announced on the occasion of the Prakash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji on 9th January 2022 that 26th December will be observed as 'Veer Baal Diwas' every year.

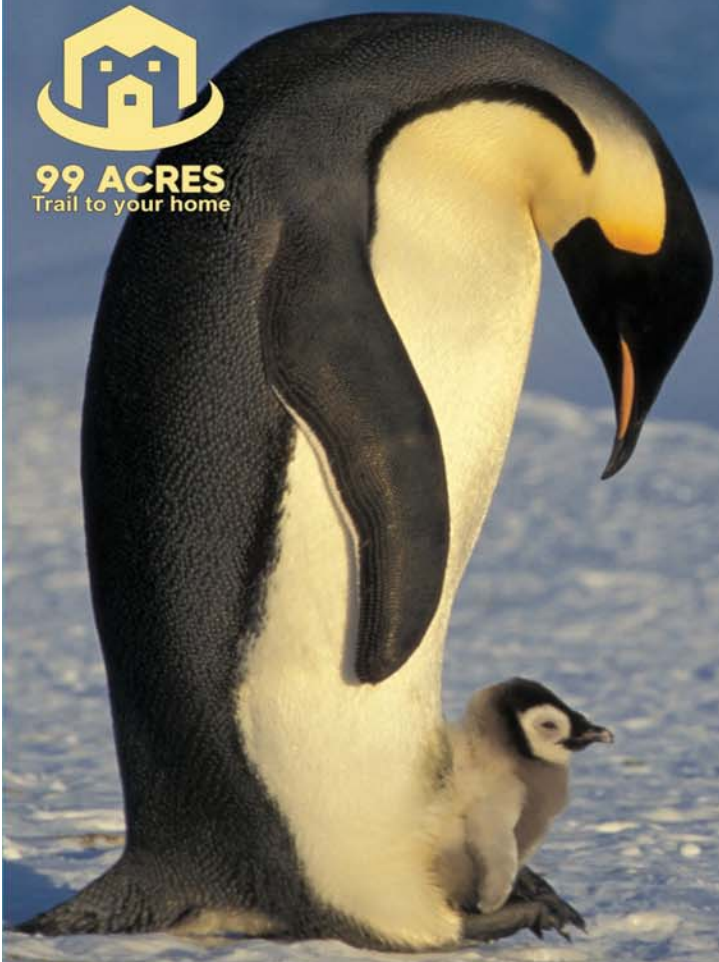
(By our staff reporter) New York: The Consulate General of India, New York marked Veer Bal Diwas on 26 December 2022 as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. The Day was celebrated to pay homage to the courage and sacrifice of Sahibzade Baba Fateh Singh and Baba Zorawar Singh - the sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the 10th Guru of Sikhs. An exhibition narrating the story of the sacrifice was showcased at the Consulate. It was on 26 December in 1704 that the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh ji, then aged 7 and 9 years, achieved martyrdom. They were captured and produced before the Nawab of Sirhind who gave them the option to either convert to Islam or face death. The Sahibzades chose to die in honour. This unparalleled sacrifice of young Baba Fateh Singh and Baba Zorawar Singh occupies a place of great pride and honour in Sikh history and remains an everlasting font of inspiration for all Indians. Earlier in the year on 9th January, on the occasion of the Prakash Purab of Guru Gobind Singh ji, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had announced that the nation would henceforth mark Veer

Bal Diwas on 26th December each year. Accordingly, the Diwas was celebrated in India and across the world.

Inaugurating the exhibition, Consul General Shri Randhir Jaiswal explained the significance of the day. He underlined the importance of keeping alive historical memories of struggle. Members of the diaspora participated in the exhibition with enthusiasm and deeply appreciated the effort of the Government to celebrate Veer Bal Diwas worldwide. Several prominent members of the Sikh community addressed the gathering. Participation of children was particularly encouraging. A number of community organizations and Gurdwaras expressed interest in displaying the exhibits in their premises in the coming weeks. Earlier, on 23 December 2022, Consul General Shri Randhir Jaiswal gave interview to ITV Gold and Heramb Studio and explained the history and significance of the Day. On 24 December 2022, the Consul General appeared in Punjabi language programme 'Ji Aayan Nu' on Radio Zindagi and encouraged members of diaspora to participate in the exhibition in the Consulate.



Jagdish Sewhani President The American India Public Affairs Committee and Vipul Dev Consul Culture paying tribute to Sahibzadas for Unparalleled Sacrifice made by beloved sons of Guru Gobindsinghji at Indian Consulate New York December 26th is commemorated as Veer Baal Diwas every year .



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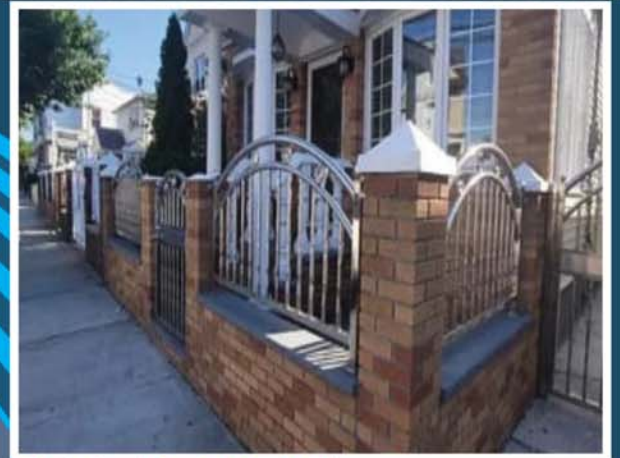
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3 Indian-Americans Walking On Frozen Lake Fall Through Ice, Drown

According to a statement released by officials with CCSO, "deputies stationed at a substation in the area were called to the lake after two men and a woman were walking on the frozen lake and fell through the ice."



after two men and a woman were walking on the frozen lake and fell through the ice." Woods Canyon Lake is located east of Payson in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. It is an area popular among hikers, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts. More than one million Americans and Canadians are facing problems as a massive winter storm continues to pummel North America. A bomb cyclone, that extends more than 3,200km from Quebec to Texas, has brought snow, strong winds and freezing temperatures. Nearly 250 million are affected, and at least 19 deaths have been linked to the storm.

Punjabi youth dies of heart attack two days after his arrival in Canada

(SAI Bureau) Washington: In a tragic incident, three Indian-Americans, including a woman, have drowned after they fell through the ice while walking on a frozen lake in the US state of Arizona. The incident occurred on December 26 at 3:35 PM at Woods Canyon Lake in Coconino County, Arizona. "The missing men are located deceased and identified as Narayana Muddana, 49 and Gokul Mediseti, 47. The female victim has been identified as Haritha Muddana (age unknown). The three victims resided in Chandler, Arizona and are originally from India," Coconino County Sheriff's Of-

fice (CCSO) said in a statement on Tuesday. Chandler is a suburb of Phoenix. Officials said they were able to pull Haritha from the water soon after and administered life-saving measures but were unsuccessful and she died at the scene, it said. Crews then began searching for Narayana and Mediseti, who had also fallen into the lake. The two men were found dead on Tuesday afternoon, the sheriff's office said. All the three bodies have been recovered. According to a statement released by officials with CCSO, "deputies stationed at a substation in the area were called to the lake

(SAI Bureau) Another young man from Punjab's Patiala succumbed to heart attack in Canada on Friday just within two days of his arrival in the country. Hashish Singh, nephew of Shiromani Akali Dal Senior Vice President I.S. Bindra, from Patiala went to Brampton on a study visa just two days ago before sudden death embraced him. His family back in India was still celebrating the fact that their son had gone to Canada for a better future, but just two days later, Hashish Singh died due to a sudden heart attack and the family was grief stricken. It is being told that Hashish, who had been

standing in line for 3 hours continuously to get a mobile SIM, fell down suddenly. After this he died. In this hour of grief, senior




leaders of the Shiromani Akali Dal and other leaders of various parties have expressed their deepest condolences to the family.

Diwali-Festival of Light Celebrated by Brahman Samaj of New York (BSNY) in Long Island




(SAI Bureau) Diwali is a celebration of new beginnings, change and the triumph of right over wrong, light over darkness. It is the time to come together, look forward to the future and enjoy each other's company over delicious food, fun, and a warm atmosphere. Divyesh Tripathi, Founder, President of BSNY along with his committee took this opportunity to present

and offer their best wishes for Diwali and new year. Function was graced by Town Clerk respected Ragini Srivastava from Town of North Hempstead and Dilip Chauhan, Deputy Commissioner for Trade, Investment and Innovation for NYC Mayor Eric Adams office for International affairs. BSNY honored them with a flower bouquet.



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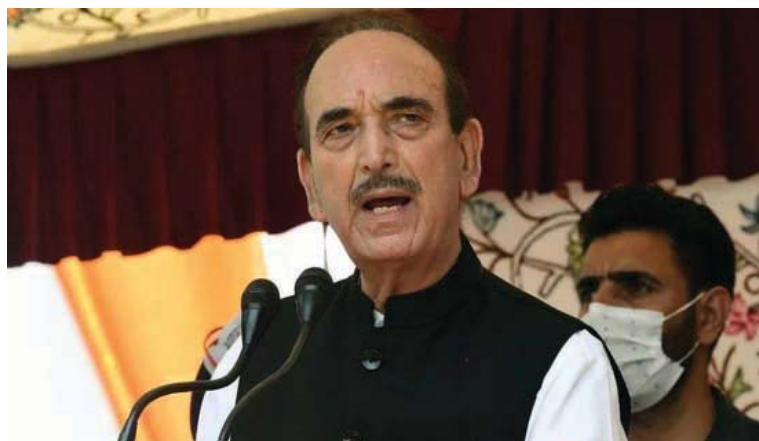


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Ghulam Nabi Azad dismisses report on him rejoining Cong, says 'shocked to see...'

Ghulam Nabi Azad, who quit the Congress in August after an explosive resignation letter, had claimed during the Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh elections that only the Grand Old Party can take on the BJP



story filed by ANI correspondent about my rejoining in congress party. Unfortunately such stories are being planted by a section of leaders in the congress party right now and are doing this just to demoralise my leaders and supporters", Azad tweeted.

"I dont have any ill will against congress party and its leadership, however I request them to tell these habitual story planters to refrain from doing so. Once again I would like to insist that this story is completely baseless!" the former Congress leader added.

Earlier in the day, a report by news agency ANI claimed that Congress leaders Akhilesh Prasad Singh, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Ambika Soni had been assigned the responsibility to bridge the gap between Azad and the Congress. According to the said news report, efforts to bring back Azad were fuelled by his statement during the Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh elections. The veteran leader had said that only the Congress can take on the Bharatiya Janata Party. The ongoing Bharat Jodo Yatra's convenor Digvijaya Singh had

invited him to join Rahul Gandhi's march.

Azad had quit the Congress in August after shooting an explosive resignation letter. In his parting letter, he had launched an all out attack on Rahul Gandhi, calling him 'non-serious'. The 73-year-old leader had claimed that important decisions in the Congress were being taken by Rahul or worse his security guards and PAs.

After ending his decades-long association with the Congress, he announced a new outfit called 'Democratic Azad Party'.

(SAI Bureau) Former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad on Friday rejected speculations of returning to the fold, this after a news report claimed that talks were underway between him and a section of Grand Old Party leaders. "I am shocked to see the

Non-essential construction & demolition banned in Delhi as air quality worsens

While under Stage III of GRAP, states also have the option to enforce a ban on BS III petrol and BS IV diesel vehicles, which was enforced the last time Delhi's air went in the 'severe' category, Delhi's transport department officials say a decision on this will be taken soon

(News Agency) With the air quality deteriorating ahead of the New Year, the Centre's air quality panel has directed the implementation of restrictions under the Stage III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in the Delhi-NCR region.

In a notification, the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital and adjoining areas stated that the air quality has deteriorated over last few hours and Delhi's AQI has been recorded as 399 as on December 30, 2022. The panel noted that the AQI in Delhi is expected to slip into 'Severe' category due to calm

wind and stable atmospheric conditions.

The actions under the Stage III of GRAP include:

1. Strict ban on non-essential constructions and demolition activities in the entire NCR, except for projects like railway services, metro rail services including stations, airports, inter state bus terminals, national security and defence related infrastructure, hospitals and other healthcare facilities etc.
2. Intensify the frequency of mechanised or vacuum-based sweeping of roads.
3. Daily water sprinkling along

with the use of dust suppressants before peak traffic hours on roads.

4. Shutting brick kilns, stone crushers, mining and associated activities. 5. State governments in the NCR may impose restrictions on BS III petrol and BS IV diesel light motor vehicles.

6. The citizens have been urged

to assist in the effective implementation of GRAP III guidelines through steps like sharing a ride to work or using public transport, working from home if their organisation allows, avoiding usage of coal or wood for heating purposes among others. While under

Stage III of Grap, states also have the option to enforce a ban on BS III petrol and BS IV diesel vehicles, which was enforced the last time Delhi's air went in the 'severe' category, Delhi's transport department officials say a decision on this will be taken soon.

3 men held in Delhi for involvement in illegal immigration racket

(News Agency) Three men allegedly involved in an illegal immigration racket were arrested from different areas of the national capital, police said on Wednesday, adding they recovered one Indian passport and two forged visas for different countries from their possession. Deputy commissioner of police (Indira Gandhi International Airport) Ravi Kumar Singh said that the gang made forged passports, fake Visas, and other travel documents in connivance with their accomplices in Delhi and Punjab. "With these three arrests, a cheating case registered at IGI Airport, under sections 420, 468, 471 and 120B of the Indian Penal Code and Section 12 of The Passport Act, has been solved. On the intervening night of November 9 and 10, Ritender Singh (42) of Kurukshetra (Haryana) approached the immigration counter for

departure clearance to Phuket (Thailand). On scrutiny of his passport, authorities found that the original pages of his passport had been replaced with pages from somebody else's passport to hide the offloaded and deported stamps. A fake immigration stamp was also found affixed to that passport. During the investigation, Singh was arrested and during interrogation, he disclosed that there were three offloaded stamps on his passport affixed by immigration counters at various airports. As a result, he was facing problems travelling to other countries," he said. Deputy commissioner of police (Indira Gandhi International Airport) Ravi Kumar Singh said that the gang made forged passports, fake Visas, and other travel documents in connivance with their accomplices in Delhi and Punjab.

Kamal Nath makes big prediction on Rahul Gandhi for 2024 polls

The former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister is the lone leader to have come forward in favour of Rahul Gandhi's candidature as the opposition face against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2024

(News Agency) Senior Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath on Friday declared that Rahul Gandhi will be the opposition's prime minister candidate for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, news agency PTI reported. Nath also praised the Wayanad MP for leading the grand old party's Bharat Jodo Yatra and said he is not doing politics for power but for the common people of the country. "Rahul Gandhi does not do politics for power, but for the people of the country who make anyone sit in power," he said. The former Madhya Pradesh chief minister is the lone leader to have come forward in favour of Rahul Gandhi's candidature as the opposition face against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2024.

Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra has covered nearly 3,000 kilometres and is currently in the national capital on a nine-day winter break. The march resumes on January 3 when it enters Ghaziabad's Loni in Uttar Pradesh.

Asked if there was any chance of Jyotiraditya Scindia's return to the party in the future, the 76-year-old Congress chief of Madhya Pradesh said

there was no place for "traitors" in the party after they betrayed the organisation. "I would not comment on any individual, but those 'traitors' who betrayed the party and broke the trust of its



workers, there is no place for them in the organisation," he said. Meanwhile, former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, rejected speculations of him returning to Congress, this comes

after a news report claimed that talks were underway between him and a section of grand old party leaders. Earlier in the day, a report by news agency ANI claimed that Congress leaders Akhilesh Prasad Singh, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Ambika Soni had been assigned the responsibility to bridge the gap between Azad and the Congress. "I am shocked to see the story filed by ANI correspondent about my rejoining in congress party. Unfortunately such stories are being planted by a section of leaders in the congress party right now and are doing this just to demoralise my leaders and supporters", Azad tweeted.

Hospitals across India conduct mock Covid-19 preparedness drills amid rise in cases

Mock Covid-19 preparedness drills are underway at health centres across the country after a surge in the number of infections in India. Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya also visited Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital to review the Covid mock drill

(SAI Bureau) Mock Covid-19 drills were conducted across a number of health facilities in several states and union territories in India on Tuesday to prepare for the rising number of infections reported in the country and globally. Mock drills were also conducted in hospitals across multiple cities including, Noida, Ahmedabad, Varanasi, Dehradun, Guwahati, Hyderabad, and Chennai, among other parts of India. India recorded a single-day rise of 157 new Covid-19 cases, while the number of active cases decreased to 3,421, according to Union Health

Ministry data on Tuesday. Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya also visited the Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi to review the Covid mock drill. Talking about the drills, the union health minister said, "To make sure there isn't Covid surge in the country, PM Modi has asked us to be careful. The government is also preparing in case covid cases increase. Today, mock drills are conducted across Covid hospitals in the country to make sure people get proper treatment." **TAMIL NADU HEALTH MIN TAKES STOCK**

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu Health Minister Ma Subramanian, visited the Rajiv Gandhi Government Hospital in Chennai to review the Covid mock drill taking place on Tuesday. After reviewing the drill and taking stock of the conditions and situation, Ma Subramanian said, "Almost 72,000 beds are allocated just for Covid emergencies. Medicines are stocked up for 6 months. Oxygen supplies are in stock around 60-65 metric tonnes." Talking about the multiple variants and the state



government's preparedness in identifying and treating them, the health minister further said, "The BA5 has already been found in TN. BF7 is an internal variant now. We have already tested it. So we know what it is." Touching upon whether TN was equipped to deal with the crisis, the health

minister said, "TN is fully equipped to face whatever threat the Covid poses. We have been conducting vaccination camps extensively. The first dose has been done for 96% and the second dose has reached 92%. So 90% of people are fully vaccinated and we can definitely face this."

Punjab Police busts terror sub-module operating from Philippines, 3 arrested

(SAI Bureau) The Punjab Police, in further investigation of the Sirhali Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) attack case, busted a sub-module of Canada-based terrorist Lakhbir Landa. Three of its operatives have been arrested and a loaded RPG along with a Rocket Launcher was recovered from their possession today. The sub-module was being handled by Yadwinder

Singh from the Philippines on Landa's instructions. Punjab's Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav identified the arrested accused as Kulbir Singh, Hira Singh, and Davinder Singh. They are all residents of Chambal village in Tarn Taran. The police have also charged Yadwinder Singh, he added. "With the recovery of a ready-to-use fresh RPG, the

Punjab Police have successfully thwarted another possible terrorist attack to disturb the peace and harmony of the state," said the DGP. The development comes days after the arrest of seven, including two juveniles in conflict with the law, who carried out the terror attack at the Sirhali police station building in Tarn Taran around 11.18 pm on December 9. In an intelligence-

led operation, the Tarn Taran Police laid a nakabandi at the Billianwala Bridge and arrested two bike-borne persons - Kulbir Singh and Hira Singh - in connection with the Sirhali RPG attack. Divulging more details, the SSP of Tarn Taran Gurmeet Singh Chauhan said that during interrogation, the accused revealed that they had provided one loaded RPG on the day of the attack on the instructions of Yadwinder Singh, who is currently residing in Manila. Yadwinder had also sent a tutorial video on how to launch an RPG to train the juveniles who fired the RPG, he

said. During further questioning, the accused disclosed that they, along with another accused, Davinder Singh, had concealed another RPG on the instructions of Yadwinder Singh, the SSP said, adding that the RPG along with a launcher was recovered from a pinpointed location on the banks of the river Beas in the Keedian village in Tarn Taran. He said that the teams of the police also arrested accused Davinder Singh, who disclosed that they were hatching a conspiracy to carry out another terror attack in the state on the instructions of Yadwinder Singh and Landa.

Mortuary staff has no answer to why Sushant Rajput's family didn't question cause of death

Sushant Singh Rajput was found hanging in his apartment in Mumbai's suburban Banda on June 14, 2020

(SAI Bureau) A former mortuary servant of the Cooper hospital where late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's autopsy was done has raised doubts about the actor's cause of death. Roop Shah, when questioned about why family members of Rajput did not raise any questions about who was one of the first responders after his death, Shah did not have any answer. Shah claims Rajput was punched in his eye and the marks on his neck were not from hanging and that he could have been strangulated.

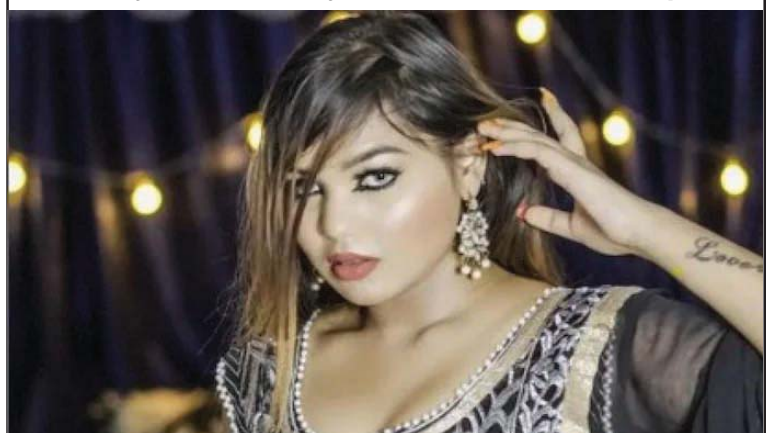
When asked about the doctors who performed the autopsy, Shah did not remember names and said that doctors were wearing COVID kits and

so he couldn't identify them. Shah claims that Rajput's bones were broken and they were not visible from outside. But he had seen those. When asked why Sushant's family, which also includes his sisters and brother in law who is an IPS officer, did not notice this, Shah did not have an answer. Even when told that the family had never raised any doubts about the cause of death, Shah said the family might not have known and he was experienced, as he had been seeing many bodies in all those years of work. Shah, when asked why he had been silent for over two and half years, did not answer clearly and hinted that he did not believe the government then.



Chhattisgarh social media star, 22, allegedly dies by suicide at home

Her family took her body down and informed the police.



(SAI Bureau) A 22-year-old social media sensation from Chhattisgarh has allegedly died by suicide. She was found hanging on the terrace of her house. Her family took her body down and informed the police. The police soon reached the spot and sent the body to the district hospital for an autopsy. More will be known after the autopsy report comes in, the police said.

Pakistani boat carrying arms, drugs seized along Gujarat coast, 10 arrested

The Indian Coast Guard apprehended a Pakistani boat attempting to venture into Indian waters with arms, ammunition and approximately 40kg of drugs worth Rs 300 crore

(SAI Bureau) The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) apprehended a Pakistani boat along the Gujarat coast that was attempting to venture into Indian waters with arms, ammunition and approximately 40kg of drugs worth Rs 300 crore. Ten people aboard the Pakistani boat have been arrested.

The Indian Coast Guard received intelligence input from the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), Gujarat, based on which, during the intervening night of December 25 and 26, the ICG strategically deployed its fast patrol class of ship ICGS Arinjay to patrol the area close to the notional International Maritime Border Line (IMBL). During the early hours of Monday, the ICG observed a Pakistani fishing boat 'Al Soheli' moving



suspiciously in Indian waters.

When the Indian Coast Guard started questioning those aboard the Pakistani boat, the boat started evasive

manoeuvring and did not stop even when

the Indian Coast Guard fired warning shots. 'Arinjay', the ship of the Indian Coast Guard, intercepted the Pakistani

boat. The Indian Coast Guards boarded the Pakistani boat and found the crew behaving in a suspicious manner. The ICG searched the boat and found arms, ammunition and approximately 40 kgs of narcotics worth Rs 300 crores. The officials seized the boat and arrested the crew, all of whom are being brought to the coastal town of Okha in Gujarat for further investigation. This is the seventh joint operation by the Indian Coast Guard and ATS, Gujarat in the last 18 months and first crackdown, wherein arms and ammunitions, along with drugs, were being smuggled into the country. During this period, a total 346kg of heroine worth Rs 1,930 crores have been seized and 44 Pakistani nationals and seven people from Iran have been arrested.

Two Russian men's deaths at Odisha hotel spark mystery, speculation

Vladimir Bidenov died due to a stroke and was cremated. His friend, Pavel Antov, was said to be depressed after Vladimir's death and he too died on December 25, the police said. However, mystery surrounds the deaths of the two Russian men

(SAI Bureau) Mystery surrounds the deaths of two Russian men who died at a hotel in Odisha's Rayagada within a span of few days under different circumstances. Vladimir Bidenov died of stroke, while Pavel Antov was found

lying in a pool of blood outside the hotel on Saturday. Speculation is rife about the death of Pavel Antov who, according to several media reports, was fiercely critical of Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine. Antov, who was reportedly a former lawmaker in Russia, is believed to have died after falling from the third floor of the hotel, two

days after his fellow traveller was found dead there. Vladimir Bidenov, Pavel's co-traveller, was found dead at the same hotel on December 22. He was found lying unconscious in his room on the first floor of the hotel with a few empty wine bottles around him, PTI reported. "We don't know if he [Pavel Anthom] committed suicide or fell from the third floor," Bijaya Kumar Swain, the



hotel receptionist, was quoted as saying by news agency ANI. As per police, Vladimir Bidenov died due to a stroke and was cremated. His friend, Pavel Antonov, was depressed after Vladimir's death and he too died on December 25, the police said. The police are investigating Pavel's death from all angles, including the possibility that he has fallen from the terrace accidentally. Two other members of the group were asked to stay back and coordinate with the investigation.

hotel receptionist, was quoted as saying by news agency ANI. As per police, Vladimir Bidenov died due to a stroke and was cremated. His friend, Pavel Antonov, was depressed after Vladimir's death and he too died on December 25, the police said. The police are investigating Pavel's death from all angles, including the possibility that he has fallen from the terrace accidentally. Two other members of the group were asked to stay back and coordinate with the investigation.

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ਕੀ ਸੱਚਮੁੱਚ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ ਨੂੰ ਅਮਰੀਕਾ ਵਿਚ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਗ੍ਰਿਫਤਾਰ?

ਭਾਰਤੀ ਮੀਡੀਆ ਨੇ ਕੀਤੀ ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਪਰ ਅਮਰੀਕੀ ਮੀਡੀਆ ਨੇ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ ਦੇ ਮਾਮਲੇ ਵਿਚ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਚੁੱਪ ਕਿਉਂ?

ਸਿੱਧੂ ਮੂਸੇਵਾਲਾ ਕਤਲ ਕਾਂਡ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਸੁਰਖੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਆਇਆ ਸੀ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ... ਨਿਊਯਾਰਕ (ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਵਿਦਿਓ) ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ ਮਸ਼ਹੂਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿੱਧੂ ਮੂਸੇਵਾਲਾ ਦੇ ਕਤਲ ਦੇ ਮੁੱਖ ਸ਼ਰਫਨਾ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ ਨੂੰ ਅਮਰੀਕੀ ਪੁਲਿਸ ਨੇ ਗ੍ਰਿਫਤਾਰ ਕਰ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ... ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ ਦੇ ਕਤਲ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਸੁਰਖੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਆਇਆ ਸੀ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ... ਸੋਲਲ ਮੀਡੀਆ ਦੇ ਹੁਕਮਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ ਦੀ ਗ੍ਰਿਫਤਾਰੀ ਕਰਵਾਈ ਗਈ ਸੀ...

ਪੁਲਿਸ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ 'ਚ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੈ

ਇਹ ਵਿਖਿਫਤ ਪੁਲਿਸ ਦੇ ਸੋਨੀਆਹ ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀਆਂ, ਸਿੱਧੂ ਮੂਸੇਵਾਲਾ ਕੋਲ ਵਿਚ... ਸੀ। ਸਿੱਧੂ ਮੂਸੇਵਾਲਾ ਕੋਲ ਵਿਚ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ ਦੀ ਵਿਵਹਾਰੀ ਸੋਫਟ ਕੋਪੀ ਸੀ।... ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ ਦੇ ਕਤਲ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਸੁਰਖੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਆਇਆ ਸੀ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ... 18 ਫਰਵਰੀ, 2021 ਨੂੰ ਗੁਰਨਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਭਲਵਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਲਾਹੌਸ ਸਿਠੀ ਭਲਵਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਦੋ ਸ਼ੱਕਾਂ ਨੇ ਗੋਲਡੀ ਬਰਾੜ ਦੇ ਕਤਲ ਦਾ ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ...

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Veer Bal Diwas-an unprecedented move taking a broader look at Sikh history

Till as late as 2014, the martyrdom of the Guru's Prince Sons, as Sahibzadey translates into English, was an occasion mostly observed in gurdwaras.



(SAI Bureau) It's not that the state moves every day to recognize historical high points that are largely confined to individual minority communities.

The BJP, as a party espousing Hindutva, may have its own ideological reasons to co-opt icons from Punjab, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka, Rajasthan and so forth.

FROM



BALLADS TO ANIMATED STORYTELLING

But when the Indian state officially appreciates Chaar Sahibzadey with none other than the Prime Minister of the country himself paying tribute to the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the move transcends routine electoral politics. The history of Chaar Sahibzadey that culminates in the first decade of the 1700s embodies a larger history of a revolution that has to be seen with a clear vision.

Till as late as 2014, the martyrdom of the Guru's Prince Sons, as Sahibzadey translates into English, was an occasion mostly observed in gurdwaras and in traditional Sikh ballads and storytelling.

A 3D-animation under the Baweja Movies banner which came that year hooked a larger audience to the momentous episode that unfolded in 1704 in Punjab. For non-Sikhs or non-Punjabis, the movie with all its classic

storytelling was still a drive-by history.

HISTORY DRAWS STATE POWER

Fast forward to 2021: the Modi government announces Veer Bal Diwas in honour of the sublime sacrifice of Baba Ajit Singh, Baba Jujhar Singh, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh.

The first commemoration takes place on December 26 at a stadium in the national capital with the full involvement of central and state governments.

The Indian state spanned the arch of the Sahibzadey's life and passing, and with that, the revolution that preceded and followed in Punjab, to the national level.

A range of events, including school quiz competitions and digital exhibitions at train stations, gas pumps and airports have been organized under state patronage.

"On the one hand, there were heights of terror and religious fanaticism, on the other, there was the pinnacle of spirituality and kindness to see God in every human being," Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted in his speech. Any country with such a glorious history, he continued, must be full of self-confidence and self-respect. But concocted narratives have instead created a sense of in-

feriority, he said.

BROADER LOOK AT HISTORY

A 38-page PDF titled Veer Bal Diwas issued by the central government contained facts as they were.

The siege of Anandpur Sahib by hostile forces, Guru Gobind Singh leaving his majestic fort, a fierce battle at Sirsa with enemy troops, the Guru getting separated from his family at the swollen river in a punishing December winter -- the weeks that led to the martyrdom of the Guru's elder teen sons on the battlefield and the bricking alive of his younger sons less than 10 years in age at Sirhind in Mughal custody have all been explained with art in short crisp sentences.

But what's noteworthy is that the BJP government's PDF does give a broader view of history -- collaborators from within and the emergence of support from outside the ranks go side by side.

A caption under an illustration reads how a cook named Gangu took the younger Prince Sons and the Guru's elderly mother to his home.

A non-Muslim, he then steals their gold coins and turns into a Mughal spy. Art depicts him informing the Mughal kotwal (officer) about the whereabouts of the Guru's family. The same PDF gives due recognition to the Nawab of Malerkotla,

Sher Mohammad Khan, who raised his voice in support of the two Sahibzadey and appealed for mercy.

Diwan Todar Mal Jain of Sirhind, a trader who paid a fortune to get a piece of land for the cremation of Baba Zorawar Singh, Baba Fateh Singh and Mata Gujri (also called Mata Gujar Kaur), finds a respectful mention in the history document.

And then there's a poignant reference to Bhai Moti Ram Mehra, whose family was crushed alive because he served milk to the Guru's sons and mother in Sirhind.

INCLUSIVITY, BEYOND NARROW INTERPRETATION, MATTERS

Inclusive history like this promotes critical thinking. When encouraged at the state level, it gives out the big picture that helps the citizenry relate it to current events. It tackles realities that for every despot like Aurangzeb and his tyrant governor Wazir Khan, there stands a Sher Mohammad Khan for a pushback. If there are collaborators like Gangu, the Moti Ram Mehra's would still stand beside righteousness no matter what. "There is a need to get free from the narrow interpretation of the past in order to move forward," Prime Minister Modi said in his address.

Why Maharashtra wants to join states that have laws against 'Love Jihad'



The Maharashtra government has announced that it would study bills and Acts of other states related to 'Love Jihad' to bring similar legislation. What's behind it?

(NewsAgency) The Maharashtra government has announced that it would study bills and laws of other states related to 'Love Jihad' and take an appropriate decision.

"Such cases are happening all across the country. Some states have made stringent laws to curb such cases; hence, Maharashtra is also ready to enact the law on similar lines to ensure long-term protection to women," Maharashtra Deputy Prime Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who also holds the law and judiciary portfolio, said on December 20. The government will take a final call soon. Fadnavis also pointed out that in the recent past, there have been 40-odd morchas at various places in the state demanding a 'Love Jihad' law. His comments came on a day rightwing activists beat up a youth who was accused of love jihad in the Indore district of Madhya Pradesh.

WHAT IS 'LOVE JIHAD'?

In 'Love Jihad', Muslim men are believed to target predominantly Hindu but also Christian women for conversion by means such as seduction, feigning love, deception, kidnapping, and marriage. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has been probing several cases, especially from Kerala. Some also see it as an Islamophobic conspiracy theory developed by proponents of Hindutva. They say the use of the term is more to target a particular community and appeal to the rightwing constituency for electoral gains. After Shraddha Walkar's brutal murder by her live-in partner Aaftab Poonawala, who chopped her body into pieces, social media

was abuzz with the term.

When Chandy flagged conversions

It was in 2009 that it drew bigger attention when Kerala Catholic Bishops Council reported that up to 4,500 girls in Kerala had been targeted in 'Love Jihad', while Hindu Janajagruiti Samiti claimed that 30,000 girls had been converted to Islam in Karnataka alone. On June 25, 2012, then Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy of the Congress informed the state legislature that 2,667 young

women had been converted to Islam in the state since 2006, of which 2,195 were Hindus and 492 Christians.

Even though Chandy said there was no evidence for forced conversions in the state and the fears about love jihad were baseless, his statement sparked a debate on the sensitive subject.

Many Hindu and Christian groups demanded an investigation into the "phenomenon". It was also alleged that the Popular Front of India, banned in September this year, and Campus Front were behind the spurt in 'Love Jihad' cases.

In September 2009, rightwing group Shri Ram Sena put up posters warning against love jihad in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. In December 2011, Mallika Prasad of the BJP stirred a hornet's nest in Karnataka legislative assembly

when she said that 84 girls had been reported missing in Dakshina Kannada district from June to November of that year, of whom only 69 had been traced. After her statement, the Karnataka government decided to launch a probe into 'Love Jihad'.

LAW IN UP

In 2019, the Uttar Pradesh State Law Commission submitted a report before the Chief Minister saying forced religious conversions or conversions through

On September 19 this year, the first conviction in UP under the ordinance was carried out when the Amroha district court sentenced 25-year-old Mohammad Afzal to five years in prison and imposed a fine of Rs 40,000 on him.

It was alleged that Afzal had lied about his identity, taken a 16-year-old Hindu girl to Delhi and forced her to convert to Islam for marriage. Afzal's lawyer contested the ruling and said, "The case rests on forcible conver-

provisions, including three to 10 years of imprisonment and a fine of Rs 50,000 in cases of marriage carried out by hiding religion, misrepresentation or impersonation.

The other states that have anti-conversion laws are Gujarat, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Odisha, Uttarakhand and Karnataka.

THE LANDMARK HADIYA CASE

In 2017, the Hadiya case, investigated by the NIA, made headlines. It was alleged by the father of a Hindu woman, Akhila alias Hadiya, that a Muslim man forcibly converted her to Islam for marriage. The Kerala High Court annulled the marriage on the grounds that the bride's parents were not present, nor gave consent for the marriage. On March 8, 2018, the Supreme Court overturned the annulment of Hadiya's marriage.

In June 2018, Jharkhand High Court gave its nod for a divorce in an alleged 'Love Jihad' case in which the accused allegedly lied about his religion and forced the victim to convert to Islam after marriage.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Even though laws against 'Love Jihad' are being made more stringent, it is pertinent to note that more and more interfaith couples are braving the odds to tie the nuptial knot. The laws against forced conversions are fine but they shouldn't spawn a culture of fear, experts have said. If this happens, the couples will resort to conversion as an escape route. India's Special Marriage Act calls for a month's notice before inter-faith couples can get married. The couple's family can raise objections to it and stop it.

While unlawful activities need to be dealt with, it is also imperative to give adult couples the right of freedom to choose their partners and their religion.



fraudulent ways were growing. It recommended a law to check it. In 2020, the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet cleared a draft ordinance against forceful inter-faith conversions — 'Love Jihad'. The Uttar Pradesh government implemented it aggressively. The law prohibits conversion of religion through force, misrepresentation, undue influence, allurements, fraud or marriage. It also prohibits a person from abetting, convincing, and conspiring to such conversions. Marriage is declared void if it was done for the sole purpose of unlawful conversion, vice-versa or if the religious conversion did not follow the procedure in the ordinance.

Apart from punishment, it also makes such an act of conversion a non-bailable criminal offence. Offences under the law are punishable by up to 10 years of imprisonment.

However, there is no evidence on record to prove that the accused was trying to forcibly convert the minor."

MADHYA PRADESH

After Uttar Pradesh, another BJP-ruled state, Madhya Pradesh, followed suit and passed a similar law. In March 2021, the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly passed the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Bill, 2021.

Those found guilty of conversion through fraudulent means will invite a jail of up to 10 years and a fine of Rs 1 lakh. Any marriage solemnised in violation of the law is considered null and void. Those willing to convert need to apply to the district administration 60 days in advance. The religious leaders facilitating the conversion must also inform about it 60 days in advance. A jail term and fine will be slapped if this is not followed.

The law also has many other

How dog and Bihar became bad words

What Piyush Goyal said about Bihar and Mallikarjun Kharge's dog remark led to uproar in Parliament and outside. But how did Bihar and dog become words to describe all things bad?



(News Agency) Bihar MP Manoj Kumar Jha of the RJD drew Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar's attention to Union minister Piyush Goyal's "demeaning" remark about Bihar. Jha said when he was speaking in the House, Goyal suddenly said, "Inka bas chale toh desh ko Bihar hi bana dein (if they have their way, they will turn the country into Bihar)." Jha sought House Leader Goyal's apology to the people of Bihar and urged Dhankhar to expunge the "elitist, sneering, contemptuous and condescending" remark made on Tuesday. Tejashwi Yadav, RJD leader and Bihar's deputy chief minister, also wrote on Twitter, "Look at the insult of Bihar and Biharis and an unwise and arrogant Union minister." On Thursday, Goyal withdrew his remark, saying he didn't intend to insult the state or its people.

In his letter to Dhankhar, Jha referred to Bihar as one of the greatest Indian states. The tone is similar to what the Bihar State Textbook Publishing Corporation has taught children for decades: Bihar is a land of Buddha, Mahavir, Samrat Ashok and Nalanda University and what not. That's more like living in the past while the present reality is different. However, a part of Jha's letter needs acknowledgement. It says, "It is deeply problematic if the government singles out one state and terms it a failure." Nitish Kumar has been ruling Bihar for 17 years, many of them with the BJP that's been in power at the Centre since 2014. So, if Bihar is so bad that it can be used as the lowest common denominator, part of the blame also lies with the saffron party. But it doesn't also absolve Jha's RJD, which ruled Bihar, with Lalu Yadav, first directly and then by proxy, having ruled the state from 1990 to 2005. This period was described by many as jungle raj for caste violence, organised crime, institutionalised corruption and widespread scams, the most notorious be-

ing the fodder scam cases for which Lalu Yadav had to quit as CM and install his wife Rabri Devi on his chair before going to jail and for which he has been convicted a few times. Jha's letter to Dhankhar, though on point in part, also smacks of defensiveness, many would argue. Because Nitish Kumar's rule in Bihar since 2005 has also been marked by his alliance with his RJD on two occasions, including the current one, which began in August this year when he dumped the BJP for the second time. But how did Bihar become a tool to describe the lowest common denominator in terms of governance? Before we attempt answering, a bit of relevant dog talk.

The 'Inka bas chale toh desh ko Bihar hi bana dein' remark follows Mallikarjun Kharge's question to the BJP: Did even your dogs die for the country? The Congress president was trying to highlight the assassination of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi and their party's role in India's freedom struggle while asserting that the saffron party made no such sacrifice for the country.

The BJP's response was equally problematic. A party MLA said, "Congress people roam around like 'darbari kutte' of [former Congress president] Sonia Gandhi. So, they view others as the same." Obviously, this is not the first time that politicians have used dogs as the lowest-benchmark analogy.

In 2013, then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi said, "If someone else is driving a car and we're sitting behind, even then if a puppy comes under the wheel, will it be painful or not? Of course, it is. If I'm a chief minister or not, I'm a human being. If something bad happens anywhere, it is natural to be sad."

Modi's remarks came in the context of the 2002 Gujarat riots and triggered outrage because many saw him drawing a hierarchical order, with puppies at the bottom but also featuring riot victims

above them. Naturally, the 'why use a puppy to show what's at the bottom' question didn't become much of an issue.

Then in 2015, Union Minister VK Singh of the BJP said when someone throws stones at a dog, the government is not responsible. This sparked a firestorm because he was responding to two Dalit children being burnt alive in Haryana. The question is, why use the word dog in such a manner? Hasn't the dog been man's best friend? A huge number of people love dogs. Much of this love comes from their loyalty to us and their inability to not hurt us back.

The love for dogs in popular culture is so intense that few novelists and screenwriters run the risk of having protagonists who are not kind to dogs.

China Gate villain Jageera's dialogue "Mere man ko bhaya, maine kutta kaat ke khaya" can perhaps be explained in a way. After all, he was a brutal villain and, like most brutal villains, maybe he didn't love dogs.

But the angry outburst of Sholay's hero Veeru, "Basanti, in kutton ke samne mat

nachna" could be perplexing for dog lovers.

Be that as it may, the question is, why do real-life people use phrases such as kutte ka pilla (even though puppy-faced babies are described as cute and puppy videos are often viral on the Internet), gone to the dogs, and kutte ki maut? Why do we use kutta-kamina for those we hate? Why does Kuttey follow Kaminey in Bollywood?

We don't quite know. Maybe some of us simply hate dogs? But there are some historical references. In 17th-century New England, for example, dogs were believed to be used by sorceresses to carry out evil commands. And the word dog was used to attack those thought to be "bad character."

In ancient Greece, too, dog was often used in a derogatory sense to refer to someone of "bad character." Why the word bitch is used to brand women as slut—while being a stud is a matter of pride for many men—has its problematic origin in comparing a person to a dog in heat.



Rahul's warmth for Vajpayee: Acknowledging a Bharat Ratna or taking a leaf from chacha Sanjay's book?

Rahul Gandhi's move to pay homage to former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's samadhi raises question whether he is taking a leaf out of his uncle Sanjay Gandhi's book that brought down the Morarji Desai regime in 1979, paving the way for the return of Indira Gandhi as prime minister in 1980

(By Staff Reporter) Politicians tend to be a bundle of contradictions, and Rahul Gandhi is proving to be no exception. Rahul's move to pay homage to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's samadhi is a curious mix of realpolitik and recognition of the Bharat Ratna's moderate, inclusive brand of politics.

The big question doing the rounds at 24, Akbar Road is whether Rahul is taking a leaf out of his uncle Sanjay Gandhi's book that brought down the Morarji Desai regime in 1979, paving the way for the return of Indira Gandhi as prime minister in 1980. In June 1979, Brig Kapil Mohan of the Mohan Meakins fame and a thick buddy of Sanjay had invited maverick Raj Narain, then a close confidant of Charan Singh at the Pusa Road, New Delhi, residence. In the presence of Sanjay, a discussion over lahsun ke pakore, mushroom ke pakore and tea resulted in a plot that saw the then deputy prime minister Charan Singh, Raj Narain and others toppling Morarji Desai as prime minister. Charan Singh quickly raised the bogey of dual membership, asking for the removal of Jan Sangh-RSS members from the Desai government. The farmer leader was subsequently sworn in as prime minister with the outside support of Congress. The bonhomie between Bharatiya Lok Dal and the Congress saw their workers raising the slogan, "Charan Singh laya aisi aandhi, desh ki neta Indira Gandhi (Charan Singh heralds a new wave with national leader Indira Gandhi)", was short-lived. Sanjay and Indira, hot on heels, withdrew their support to Charan Singh's regime, giving him the dubious record of being the prime minister to leave office without ever facing Parliament.

In the context of present-day politics, there is little relevance to the 1979 situation but a section of the Congress fancies some chances in making a distinction between



Vajpayee's BJP and its current avatar. In the purely imaginary and wishful scenario of 2024, can the Congress pit one section of the BJP against another just as Morarji bhai was upstaged by Charan Singh? The very idea may border on ridicule but then, it can be argued that politics is all about taking chances that are seemingly non-existent. A lot would depend on the kind of verdict 18th Lok Sabha throws up. Any party or coalition, short of a clear majority or below 250 seats would find it difficult to stay on.

The Vajpayee legacy
In the more immediate terms, Rahul seems to be acknowledging, without reservations and repaying, Vajpayee's legacy of displaying respect for rivals, including Congress for defeating Patastalwarts from Jawaharlal Nehru to Sonia Gandhi. However, just for the record, Vajpayee is credited to have attracted the attention of independent India's first Prime Minister when he sought a special session of Parliament in the middle of the India-China War in 1962. Jawaharlal Nehru conceded and debated the issue even though he was on the defensive. Till the end of his life, Vajpayee never hesitated in praising "Panditji", either at

home or abroad. In fact, when days after PV Narasimha Rao's death. Vajpayee, who was in his hometown officials to restore a portrait of Nehru on the wall behind the foreign minister's table and occasion to make an impor- chair. Some overzealous babus had removed the portrait as the first non-Congress government came to power at the Centre. Earlier, when Bangladesh was created in 1971, Vajpayee had described Indira Gandhi as "Abhinav Chandi Durga" for defeating Pakistan in the war. The comparison with the demon-slayer goddess had helped the Congress prime minister cultivate a larger-than-life image. Another instance of Vajpayee's graciousness came on December 26, 2004, three

tant disclosure, crediting the former prime minister as the "true father" of India's nuclear programme.

Sounding a tad emotional, Vajpayee revealed that when he assumed the Prime Minister's office in 1996 (the 13-day stint), he had received a paper from his predecessor, urging him to continue the country's nuclear programme. "Rao had asked me not to make it public. But today when he is dead and gone, I wish to set the record straight," he said. In typical Vajpayee fashion, the former prime minister went on: "Rao told me that the bomb is ready. I exploded it. I did not miss the opportunity."



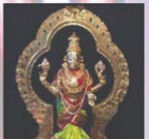
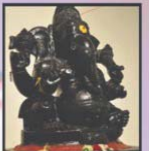
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Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh polls. Will revolving door trend change this time?

The two states, which will go to the polls along with Chhattisgarh, have seen musical chairs being played between BJP and Congress. Will the trend change in 2023 Assembly polls?



(By Staff Reporter) The poll focus has shifted to Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, where the Assembly elections are due next year. In all the three states, a kind of 'revolving door trend' has prevailed over the years. As the political developments are in a flux, will the syndrome change this time around? Let's take a closer look at what's exactly happening in these states as the poll countdown begins.

RAJASTHAN

Anti-incumbency has been a decisive factor in the state since 1998 when Congress strongman Ashok Gehlot took over from BJP's Bhairon Singh Shekhawat. In 2003, Vasundhara Raje of BJP assumed the CM's post. Congress came back to power in 2008 and Gehlot became the CM again. The musical chair between Raje and Gehlot continued. In 2013, Raje unseated him again and in 2018, Gehlot made her taste her own medicine.

This time, things are different, though. Gehlot is facing a tough fight from his fellow Congress leader Sachin Pilot. Their tussle for CM's post has been out in the open for some time now, with both at loggerheads to be at the helm. Gehlot's camp created a furore by not attending the legislature party meet where the crucial decision on CM's face was to be taken. Gehlot, who was the top contender for Congress party president and announced to contest for the position, later was forced to drop out of the race since the high-command took strong exception to his defiance. Pilot, who was the deputy CM in 2020, also hit out at Gehlot's audacity and his salvos against him have not stopped since then. However, they stood to-

gether with Rahul Gandhi as Bharat Jodo Yatra passed through the state.

The poll heat is on. In October, Raje asked the BJP to get ready for the elections. She said, "Only 350 days are left for the CM Gehlot-led Congress government in the state." On December 18, Gehlot claimed that there is no anti-incumbency in the state and there cannot be a bigger achievement than this. A major bone of contention is the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), which the Centre has allegedly tried to stall. "The state government has the right to decide the pension. Pension is a state subject, so OPS shall continue. The Centre cannot interfere in this," Gehlot said.

And even as Congress infighting rages amid the Gehlot-Pilot rift, the BJP is also grappling with factionalism within the party. While BJP is banking on the Gehlot-Pilot fissure, it is trying to downplay the differences between Raje and Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat that have surfaced of late. In September, party state president Satish Poonia went on a 'padyatra' from Pokaran to Ramdevra and no other senior leader of the BJP joined him. The apparent split was played down then as well.

On its part, the Congress is trying to make the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) an election issue. Gehlot has asked the centre to declare ERCP a national project, while Union Jalshakti minister Gajendra Shekhawat has said, "instead of the 13 districts of Rajasthan for which they are demanding to declare ERCP as a national project, we have included them in the

priority list of the National Perspective Plan".

The cost of the ERCP project is Rs 40,000 crore, whereas, in the plan prepared by us, the cost is only Rs 21,000 crore – 22,000 crore. The scheme can be completed at half the cost and with only 10 per cent state assistance, he added.

MADHYA PRADESH

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh ruled the state from 1998 to 2003. After this, BJP's Umar Bharti and Babulal Gaur held the post for brief periods. From 2008 to 2013, Shivraj Singh Chouhan remained at the helm. Congress veteran Kamal Nath became the CM after the BJP narrowly lost the November 2018 Assembly election. But senior Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia rebelled against Nath and MLAs loyal to him quit, which caused a crisis in the state. The Nath government collapsed after 1 year and 97 days. Scindia joined

BJP and the BJP MLAs chose Chouhan as the CM. Since March 2020, Chouhan has been the CM. But this time, rumours are rife that the BJP may opt for a new CM face, as it did in Gujarat and won. Changing the CM could help the party ride over a possible anti-incumbency wave. Signs of a replacement became more pronounced when Chouhan was dropped from the parliamentary board recently. One camp believes that BJP will make the change for electoral benefit, while another says a Cabinet reshuffle is in the offing, but Chouhan will continue to be the CM. In May, the opposition Congress reportedly decided to roll out 'Vachan Patra' (election manifesto) not only for the state level, but also for each district based on the local issues and demands. This could be a game-changing move, as people in some pockets of the state feel that their problems have not been addressed.

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2022 was the year we learned to move on

If there is one thing that even the virus couldn't stop, it was the politics-over the virus, with the virus, after the virus

You thought 88,966 fans rooting for their teams and gods—Messi and Mbappe—on 18 December 2022 was a celebration of the world's most popular sporting extravaganza. It was more than that. The nerve-jangling epic final in Qatar that the world is unlikely to forget for decades was an indicator of normalcy, and also a reminder of the fragile human memory which has this fantastic ability to forget and move on. What have we moved on from? It's the pandemic, stupid.

2022 was the year we came out and got our world back as we knew it, well almost. It's as if an alien trial had decided three years ago to put us through this agony, making us realise the importance of the mundane. Because the mundane is boring, we take it for granted. While our muscle-flexing neighbour is still fighting the invisible enemy, most of us on the southern side of the Himalayas have returned to 2019. You read it right. Moving on and embracing the future is the hallmark of the modern human spirit. And a new year is that opportunity when resolutions are made. But when a virus is bent on putting the clock back—from economy to livelihood to the way we breathe—embracing 2019 (the last time the world saw a normal year) isn't that bad an idea.

So here are five things that we got back as the virus eased its jaws. Some unchanged, some changed forever. Some still evolving under its shadow.

Fitness

In March 2022, when the gyms reopened after the Omicron variant of the coronavirus subsided, the fitness freaks got their 'life' back—you cannot compare a home workout that is full of restrictions with the one at the gym. Performing the muscle-pumping Arnold press while you look into the large mirror or a dumbbell pullover, lying flat on a bench, is hard to replicate at home. And more than equipment, it's the collective mojo that was missing.

Online fitness coaching did come as a replacement, but that couldn't give you the experience of brushing your shoulders (pun intended) with local gym veterans—read the 'Guddu Bhaiyas' who often show up at the gym on their 'Bult' (Bullet motorcycle). Now their gym playlist that includes Kumar Sanu songs from the '90s can be up for debate, but not their pro grip on fitness that inspires others. They are the ones who often help a newcomer get into the groove. 2022 brought them back. Or else, many would have had to keep peace with their 'office chair stretches' or conference room lunges or simply a walk to the washroom—convincing themselves of having burnt an extra calorie.

Elections

If there is one thing that even the virus couldn't stop, it was the politics—over the virus, with the virus, after the virus.

And elections were its biggest proof.

The virus did not halt democracy. But it changed the way elections were conducted. Curtailed timings for campaigning and extension of the 'silence period' before different phases of the election took the voice out of the electoral rumble.

As late as February 2022, when Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Punjab, and Uttarakhand went to polls, the shadow of the virus loomed large on the dance of democracy. It's with Gujarat and Delhi's municipal corporation polls that we saw the full range of motion the festival India is used to witnessing—PM Modi addressed 31 rallies in Gujarat and held three roadshows.

With the looming new variant, will we bring back the debate on simultaneous elections in India?

Work from home

How India works and studies changed forever. Pandemic or not, the learning of working/studying remotely is no less than an evolution even if it was a crisis response. Two years is a long enough period to experiment an idea and implement it, fine-tune it to meet the demands of a world that has returned to normalcy. The lockdown gave us that learning capital and we made some gains. But has the unlearning already started? Elon Musk doesn't like his employees working from home. Quite uncanny of a 'maverick' who talks about the future and explores space ideas. He has cancelled Twitter's work from home option. And Musk isn't the only one thinking on those lines.

Survey shows that Indian employees prefer a hybrid work model and cite improved productivity and better work-life balance. With fears of Covid surge again, Musk might have to eat his own words. A day might come when governments would force the WFH model to ease traffic. Fancying I am. That's the future I look forward to but without Musk's idea of tunnels to nowhere that are also aimed at easing congestion.

Travel

In April 2020, newspapers flashed images of migrants. That India you saw walking in standalone pictures, mostly travels in General compartment bogies for distances both long and short. They cannot afford a reserved ticket like you and me. Labourers with bags, babies and some backbone commute to the metros from far-flung underdeveloped pockets to earn a living. That's why the national transporter becomes India's lifeline. But social distancing made sure India travelled in 'compartments'—the railways were running only fully reserved trains to avoid crowding, attempting to prevent the virus spread. The railways announced on 1 March the restoration of general seats under unreserved category, facilitating passengers to travel with 'General Ticket'.

2022 was the year Big Tech died. 2023 will be the year of Small Tech

2022 could be the year historians declare the death of Big Tech. If so, 2023 should be the year of 'Small Tech', where innovation, agility and value creation (the things that allowed Big Tech to get big in the first place) return to our economy through an open, competitive environment with new, fragmented players.

This seems all but inevitable. Meta reported a drop in earnings for the first time since its founding. The industry has laid off more than 88,000 workers (and counting). Most significantly, Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter has driven many users to niche, specialized alternatives. The genie is out of the Big Tech bottle.

Some say that Big Tech should never have been allowed to get so big. That's understandable: At more than \$1.4 trillion, the five big tech companies in the US have more revenue than the GDP of either Mexico or Spain.

But the real problem isn't its size, or even its power. The real problem is what Big Tech uses its size and power for, and its effects on our economy and democracy

The world's best coders will be watching the mass layoffs underway in Silicon Valley and realizing that security and earnings are not guaranteed by Big Tech. Some may even be angry that, since those firms bought out so many newer competitors - and prevented new competitors from emerging by controlling so much talent - there are limited opportunities elsewhere.

A small number of the laid off will become the entrepreneurial fuel for the next wave of innovation in tech, something that we need. According to Dorothy Neufeld, over the last 250 years, we have witnessed multiple waves of innovation that ranged from the Industrial Revolution to green tech. We are currently in the sixth wave and the shortest of them all - AI.

We need as much competition as possible

to maximize this wave. We need as much talent out there solving as many problems as possible. We can't have Big Tech, who for many years now has broken its promise to 'move fast and break things', holding us back. You can only move so fast when your revenues are equal to a small country's GDP, and you can't break things when your in-house counsel is looking over your shoulder. Those inside the industry know this needs to happen, almost as much as those outside it: Nearly 80 percent of tech workers believe that Big Tech companies have too much power. 40 percent of those workers believe that they do more harm than good and that major companies like Facebook, Amazon, Alphabet and Apple should be broken up. But they don't need to be broken up by the over-reach of regulators. They are already being broken up by creative destruction of the markets.

The next Steve Jobs or Bill Gates is likely sitting at a desk right now getting paid a mid six-figure salary just so they won't leave and become a competitor to their current employer. I hope - for the sake of that person, and our economy - they are included in the current wave of layoffs. Apple and Microsoft - the grandfathers of Big Tech - became so successful and changed the entire world because of competition. Steve Jobs and Bill Gates once worked together, but soon parted ways because they aspired to excel their own companies. Their personal rivalry was only matched by their commercial competitiveness. In 2022, a young Gates or Jobs is likely to be in the gilded cage of a tech job. They shouldn't be. They should be out in the market, raising funds for their own ventures, and driving the entire sector forwards. This is already happening elsewhere. For example, China is set to invest more than a trillion dollars in tech companies and infrastructure in an effort to surpass the U.S. grasp over the industry. Given the proximity of Chinese tech firms to Beijing, this should worry the U.S., more than a plunging stock price.



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A Year of Getting Stuff Done!

By Mayor Eric Adams'
Every day when I'm out talking to my fellow New Yorkers across the five boroughs, I hear the same things. All of us want a strong economy, safe streets and subways; more affordable housing; support for working families and a great education for our children.

When I took office as your Mayor a year ago, I pledged that we would Get Stuff Done in these areas, and I am proud to report that we have done just that.

The economy is roaring back, with over 150,000 private-sector jobs added between January and October. Subway ridership is higher than it has been in two years. Tourism has recovered to 85% of pre-pandemic levels, supporting jobs across every sector, from hotels to restaurants, bars and shops.

After two years of the COVID pandemic, New York City is back. I can feel the energy everywhere I go, and I can see the difference from when I was on the campaign trail.

Much of this is due to our determination to focus on public safety from Day One. While New York remains the safest big city in America, we know that people need to be safe and to feel safe. That's why we worked so hard to address crime, disorder, and quality of life issues on every front.

The good news is that crime is down. Major crimes have dropped this November from where they were a year ago; and transit crime is down nearly 13%—due in large part to our surge of NYPD officers in the transit system. We've removed nearly 7000 illegal guns from our streets, and gun arrests are at a 27-year high. At the same time, we are of-

fering alternative pathways to New Yorkers living in areas that are at high risk for gun violence—for example, job opportunities and training with organizations like BlocPower. Housing our neighbors has never been more important; and I have called for an all-hands-on-deck effort to build half a million new units of housing over the next 10 years. We are already scaling up our efforts on this front, building more affordable housing across the five boroughs, and investing in improving the public housing that already exists.

We are also connecting New Yorkers in need to stable housing, and are taking bold measures to help our brothers and sisters with severe mental illness leave the streets and receive the medical support and services they urgently require.

Our young people have struggled over the past two years. We must make sure that they have the tools to recover from the isolation of the pandemic and to succeed in their careers and lives.

So, we expanded the Summer Youth Employment Program to serve 90,000 young New Yorkers over the past summer. We've instituted dyslexia screenings in our schools so that all our students can learn to read fluently; and we extended our services to youth in foster care so we can now support young people ages 21-26, who are facing the challenges of transitioning to independent adult lives.

And we are supporting our working families by increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit for the first time in over 20 years, putting \$350 million dollars in the pockets of hardworking New Yorkers who

need a break.

A safe city is also a clean and environmentally resilient city. We started the largest-in-the-nation composting program in Queens, which we hope to expand citywide. We are making sure that trash doesn't collect in neglected areas, like underpasses; and we are limiting the amount of time residential trash can be left out on the sidewalk in an effort to reduce our rat population.

Our city continues to face challenges, but as 2022 draws to a close there is much to be optimistic about. It is an honor to be mayor of the greatest city in world, And I'm proud of what our city has accomplished together. I'm looking forward to working for you and with you to Get Stuff Done for our city in 2023 and beyond.

All is not well in India's agriculture sector. State must help farmers access market systems

Advocates of reform agree that structures represented by Amul are interesting interventions. But it question is whether agriculture is a sustainable livelihood at all

While there could be differences on how to address the issues pertaining to agriculture as a sector and livelihood, the problems are well identified. One need not reiterate the issues of fragmentation of land holdings, unremunerative prices, ecological issues — particularly water table depletion, erosion in the quality of soil, monocropping and resource intensive industrial farming carried out in some geographies. These are accepted problems irrespective of an ideological divide without much debate. However, when it comes to addressing these problems, the jury seems to be divided on two sharply distinct ideological lines.

The advocates of reform define the solution as a market takeover — minimising the role of the State in agriculture, arguing that science (genetically modified crops) may be a solution to the intensive use of fertiliser and pesticides; or hydroponics could be an alternative. They believe that science will solve the problems created by science. The market determined prices will correct overproduction and hopefully even address the issue of water mining if only the prices of paddy, rice and sugarcane find their levels creating disincentives for putting in more land under these crops.

This school of thought is also represented by scholars who argue that the now repealed farm laws would have been the wand that produced magic.

On the other side is an argument for a greater intervention of the State, through procurement, legally binding support prices; a move towards zero budget natural farming (ZBNF) and organic farming. They argue that the support prices should be used as a signalling mechanism to modify the cropping pattern. It is also argued that a decentralised procurement programme will address the issues of Punjab based distortion. Both sides agree that using co-operative like structures represented by Amul or the Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO) are interesting interventions for reform in marketing ecosystem. The ultimate question to be asked is whether agriculture is a sustainable livelihood at all. Since this activity is associated with tradition and sentiment of land ownership, the cultural factors also trump the economics.

In addressing these issues do we have lessons to be learnt (beyond the obvious) from Amul and its replication under the operation flood programme? Can the principles of

market and farmer welfare be bundled? While a large part of the dairy sector is structured in the co-operative framework, the form of organisation need not to be like a religious edict. We need to unpeel the principles on which dairying was built.

Dr. Verghese Kurien, the doyen of the dairy movement said that there was no Anand (from where Amul started in Gujarat) without Mumbai (their first consumption hub). The markets are important. Developed markets give a lucrative price, particularly if there is value addition and processing. In case of dairying, aggregation of milk was always accompanied with the construction of a processing plant. The organisation of farmers at the village level was the job of the State, the processing plants at the district and state levels ran on commerce. The markets and market systems are not inherently lucrative. To access market systems, farmers have to negotiate an extractive value chain to get a better deal at each link of the chain. Being a co-operative helps these negotiations. The value for the farmer is not restricted to accessing a better price, but also in working the existing resources towards greater productivity. How can leakages in the production cycle be minimised? In

dairying it was maintaining the health of the animal and addressing nutritional requirements for higher production. This was achieved through provision of veterinary care and good quality fortified cattle feed. The former falls into the realm of the State — a welfare activity that was subsidised, while the latter was a commercial activity, if the end product (milk) was in a stable and remunerative value chain. The principles in traditional agriculture, would ensure crop protection, better farm practices (that fall into the realm of the State) and better nutrition, water and fertilisers or sustainable alternatives (falling in the realm of markets). Then there is a larger issue of productivity enhancement of the same resource but with significant investments. This involved investments in science: breed improvement through artificial insemination and embryo transfer technology, or in the case of traditional agriculture a move towards industrialisation (large farms, deep tilling, heavy use of fertilisers and liberal access to water). Alternately science could also move towards sustainable options—like ZBNF; Systematic Rice Intensification or Systematic Wheat Intensification.

India And China - A 2023 Tale Of Two Markets

Will the current reopening of the Chinese economy put an end to India's outperformance? That will be a question for global investors in 2023

By Andy Mukherjee

Compared with a year-and-a-half ago, when its economy had just begun to reopen after a devastating surge of the delta variant, India's stock market is unchanged in dollar terms. And yet, its weight in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index has zoomed past Taiwan and South Korea to second place, with almost the entire gain coming at the expense of the gauge's biggest constituent: China.

The world's second-largest economy has seen equities slump by two-fifths since June 2021, thanks to Beijing's isolationist Covid-19 policies, turmoil in the real-estate industry and a punishing antitrust campaign against the country's valuable tech firms. If China has been mired in a surfeit of pessimism, the opposite is true of India. Thanks to pent-up urban demand after the pandemic, stocks have held up reasonably well despite the US Federal Reserve's aggressive monetary tightening. As a result, while China's share of MSCI EM has

slid to 28 per cent, from 35 per cent in May 2021, India's has risen to 15 per cent, from 10 per cent. Will the current reopening of the Chinese economy put an end to India's outperformance? That will be a question for global investors in 2023.

If other countries' experiences are any guide, the pivot away from zero infections toward letting the virus rip through communities will be chaotic, and possibly deadly for China's elderly of whom only 40 per cent have booster shots. However, a decisive transition may help pull consumer and business sentiment away from near-record lows, shake the property market out of its slumber and accelerate auto sales. That may also prompt analysts to bump up their forecast of 4 per cent earnings growth over the next 12 months. Before the pandemic, those expectations were at 17 per cent.

In India, the pain of Covid-19 - and the gains from reopening - are both in the rearview mirror. The economy is now losing

momentum, although the market continues to be frothy. Even with some caution getting baked into estimates because of high inflation (hurting margins of local consumer firms) and a global slowdown (affecting software exporters), the consensus expectation is for earnings to rise by 18 per cent over the next 12 months. Optimism is the highest with banks. They're benefiting from higher business volumes as well as superior pricing: Elevated commodity prices have boosted demand for working-capital loans even as rising rates have shored up interest margins.

The case for some rotation away from Indian to Chinese stocks is already firming up. BNP Paribas recently downgraded India to "neutral" from "overweight" by removing the country's consumer-staples stocks from its model portfolio and pruning exposure to software exporters. "Our tactical caution on India arises from the market's sky-high relative valuations and the possibility of fund reallocations to North Asia with China's

reopening," says Manishi Raychaudhuri, BNP's head of Asia research. The consensus opinion on India's consumption-oriented stocks is probably too optimistic, while the federal government's budget - the last before the 2024 elections - could introduce additional volatility, he adds. In the longer term, India is seeking to buttress its investment appeal by emerging as an alternative to China. With President Xi Jinping's policies aggravating a rift with the West, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is pitching his country as a destination for multinationals to reduce their overexposure to Chinese supply chains. There's no guarantee that the gamble, backed by \$24 billion in subsidies for manufacturers, will work. As Arvind Subramanian, an economic adviser to the Modi administration until 2018, and Josh Felman, a former International Monetary Fund official in New Delhi, noted in a recent Foreign Affairs article: "India faces three major obstacles in its quest to

become 'the next China;' investment risks are too big, policy inwardness is too strong, and macroeconomic imbalances are too large."

Other countries may also have a claim. Vietnam, more open to trade than India, is on track to edge Britain out of this year's list of the US's seven largest goods trading partners. The Southeast Asian manufacturing powerhouse didn't even figure among the top 15 until 2019. Besides, regardless of how inviting New Delhi's policies are on paper, it's not at all certain they will be implemented impartially and not tweaked to benefit national champions - "the giant Indian conglomerates that the government has favored," according to Subramanian and Felman. Just the firms controlled by Gautam Adani, the richest Indian businessman, have accounted for a third of the 33 per cent jump, in local currency terms, since 2021 in the BSE 500, a broad index of the nation's largest companies.

(Contd on page 24)

Tales of Covid deaths out on Weibo but China playing censor-in-chief

The decision to stop publishing daily data will raise questions about Beijing's sincerity in informing its citizens, as well as the international community, about the Covid situation



Speculation about China's Covid-19 death count is rife. The country's National Health Commission estimated that the virus infects 37 million people a day. Beijing will stop sharing daily Covid data as it targets herd immunity. India and China held the 17th round of military talks on the Chinese side to resolve issues in Eastern Ladakh. A new section of the China-Russia Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline has been launched. Chinascope brings you the last newsletter edition of 2022.

China over the week

China's National Health Commission held an internal meeting on Wednesday, which became an instant headline around the world, according to reports by Bloomberg. The health body said in internal discussions that as many as 37 million people in China might have been infected with Covid on a single day last week.

According to minutes of a health body's meeting seen by Bloomberg, as many as 248 million people—almost 18 per

cent of the population—likely contracted the virus in the first 20 days of December. But what has caught the world's attention are reports of a rising death toll linked to the new Covid surge.

"There have been so many people dying," said Zhao Yongsheng, a funeral home worker, according to the Associated Press. "They work day and night, but they can't burn them all," Zhao Yongsheng added.

Reporters working for Associated Press could witness the crematoriums southwest of Beijing city in Gaobeidian receiving a large number of ambulances.

"Over two hours at the Gaobeidian crematorium on Thursday, AP journalists observed three ambulances and two vans unload with bodies," wrote Dake Kang of the Associated Press.

Just over an hour's drive from Beijing, the hospital hallways are packed.

"At Baoding No. 2 Hospital, in

Zhuozhou, Wednesday, patients thronged the hallway of the emergency ward. Patients were breathing with the help of respirators. One woman wailed after doctors told her that a loved one had died," reported Associated Press.

People are bombarding Chinese social media sites with comments like "everyone I know has it"—the 'it' meaning Covid. Now, Beijing has said only those who have died directly because of respiratory failure caused by the virus will be counted as Covid related casualties.

"So limiting a diagnosis of death from Covid to someone with a Covid -positive test and respiratory failure will underestimate the true death toll associated with Covid," said the World Health Organization (WHO)'s emergencies chief, Michael Ryan.

WHO has attributed the massive surge in Covid cases to the Omicron-linked subvariant

outbreak, which had been held back because of various zero Covid policies.

Despite cases raging across Chinese cities, the Beijing government continues to bring down Covid barriers. The hashtag 'National health and medical commission will not publish daily epidemic information' started to go viral on Sunday and reached 60 million views. It was also the top trend on Chinese search engine Baidu.

The decision to stop publishing daily data will raise questions about Beijing's sincerity in informing its citizens, as well as the international community, about the Covid situation.

Finding accurate information has been difficult since the beginning of the pandemic - and remains the case. Sixth Tone, a Chinese State media platform published in English, was censored over a news story about the undercount of Covid deaths - a taboo topic.

(Contd. on page 24)

Manufacturing in India before and after Make In India

By Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

Through domestic manufacturing under Make In India policy, India has achieved a record of \$400 billion of goods exported, the next best being \$330 billion achieved in 2018-19. Moreover, the export with the 12 ASEAN countries under RCEP, with whom India has regional trade agreements has increased from \$25.13 billion in 2015-16 to \$42.32 billion in 2020-21

Today Make in India's success is well known but what has not often been discussed is the critical analysis with the UPA Government's attempts at manufacturing. The Previous Government bet on the Regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP), a free trade agreement with 15 member countries excluding India constitutes 30% of the global population and GDP to boost manufacturing in India while the present Government has bet on Make in India as it has pulled out of the RCEP in 2019. This article is a comparative study of both these approaches. The 14 RCEP member countries contribute to 70% of our trade deficit, thus India being clubbed

with them was a loss-making proposition citing its already weak position. Moreover, out of these 14 countries, India already has a regional trade agreement (RTA) with 13 countries, thus it had nothing new to lose by being a part of RCEP, the only country which had to gain was China, which doesn't have an FTA with India and would have gotten exclusive access to the Indian market through RCEP. The Modi-era Make in India (MI) policy focuses on increasing domestic manufacturing before entering into any agreement where it is clearly going to lose. Through domestic manufacturing under MI policy, India has achieved a record of 400 billion dollars of goods exported, the next best being 330 billion achieved in 2018-19. Moreover, the export with the 12 ASEAN countries under RCEP, with whom India has regional trade agreements has increased from \$25.13 billion in 2015-16 to \$42.32 billion in 2020-21, although India still struggles to decrease the trade deficit with them which stands at \$25 billion.

RCEP proposes lifting of tariff on 90% of all products, thus Indian market gets opened up for huge imports from RCEP

countries, while at the same time, India doesn't get any guarantee from China to respect WTO obligations wrt non-tariff barriers, which it uses against India, especially in Pharma and IT. MI focuses on creating self-sufficiency in manufacturing in sectors where China creates non-tariff barriers, for example, India reduced dependence on API from China to 24 from 48. Under the Make in India scheme, PLI Scheme for 3 verticals in Pharma worth 21,000 crores has been launched and pharma exports witnessed a growth of 103% since 2013-14, from Rs 90, 415 crores in 2013-14 to Rs 1,83,422 crores in 2021-22.

In areas where India has dominance, RCEP doesn't provide any special provision for the country to grow, thus we can't leverage our own strengths while having to play according to our weaknesses. MI is a holistic scheme that understands to increase dominance in areas where it has strength, i.e., agriculture and allied products while slowly growing in areas where it has been traditionally weak, i.e., defense products. In 2009-14, Agri exports stood at 89 thousand crores, which

increased to 1.93Lakh crore between 2014-19 and in 2021-22, it rose to a record high of 3 Lakh Crore. In 2014, India's defense imports were 40 times the size of India's defense exports, this has changed under Make in India, the value of defense exports during the financial year 2021- 22 has been Rs 14000 crore. In imports, compared to 2012-16, the 2017-21 period saw imports falling by 21 percent, thus Make in India has started bearing fruits in previously disadvantaged sectors.

In sectors wherein there has been a traditional deficit in certain product segments being manufactured in countries listed in RCEP, there is no such guarantee of creating shared infrastructure in importing countries aimed at reducing huge trade deficits between countries and balancing trade, thus RCEP is skewed towards dominant countries, especially in lucrative areas that require extensive technology and high skills. In MI, the Government realised that whenever trade between China and India has grown, there has been a gradual yet steady shift of lucrative, high skill tech-intensive mobile phone manufacturing towards

China. Today imports of mobile phones from China have dropped by 55 percent to \$626 million in 2021-22, from \$1.4 billion in 2020-21. On the other hand, due to MI, India will be exporting mobile phone worth 43,500 crore in 2022 which is a jump of 75% as compared to the previous year. In RCEP, there has been no mention of an auto trigger of stopping imports once an upper threshold of imports has been breached in any segment. The flooding of cheap imports without any protection to the domestic market discourages domestic manufacturers to increase their competence at least in sectors where the RCEP countries can compete. In MI, those products that don't require high training or huge increase in manufacturing competence but were being imported were identified. In toy manufacturing, China had lion's share but due to an increase in domestic manufacturing competence under MI, the import of toys in FY21-22 have reduced by 70% to \$110 million (Rs. 877.8 cr.) and export worth \$326 million, an increase of over 61% over \$202 million during FY18-19 has been achieved.

(Contd on page 25)

India, a natural Nepal pal



By KA Badarinath

Nepal is in tumult. As expected, a big chunk of China-inspired Maoists and Marxists that failed to co-exist previously have got back to rule the mountain kingdom that has seen about ten swearing-ins and outs in as many years. Maoist guerrilla Pushpa Kumar Dahal seems to have not learnt the bitter

lessons of 2017 when he aligned and broke off from the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist – Leninist) led by Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli. Thanks to an opportunistic political saga unfolding in Nepal, Dahal, who's popularly known as 'Prachanda', ditched his latest ally Nepali Congress and returned to CPN – ML for forming a government primarily

to assume Prime Ministerial position on Monday. In fact, Dahal represents the oft-quoted saying that politics is an art of possibilities played very boldly. Dahal seems to have made most of these possibilities to ascend for the third time to become Prime Minister of Nepal in the last few years. His key lieutenants, led by Deputy General Secretary from the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist Barsha Man Pun, had headed for Beijing even as the counting of votes after November 20 elections threw up the possibility of a hung Parliament.

While the avowed reason was Pun's 'illness', his political engagements with the Communist Party of China (CPC) seem to have reportedly led to the breakup of a pre-

electoral alliance of Nepali Congress – CPC Maoist Centre. It was quickly followed by the forging of a new alliance of comrades from all shades and denominations pushed aggressively by CPC. CPN – ML leader K.P.Sharma Oli's inroads and linkages with CPC leadership also seem to have worked well in pushing the Nepali Congress into opposition space notwithstanding the latter being the single largest party with 89 members in the 275-strong Parliament. The big question in the melee is whether Dahal aka 'Prachanda' has his way to run Nepal's affairs without being a lackey to China. Dice are cast given that Beijing's proxy K.P.Sharma Oli would like to take all important political, economic and strategic calls relating to China

Hands off New Delhi policy towards Kathmandu vis-à-vis expansionist China will work wonders for Prachanda's regime.

and India. This uneasy alliance between Prachanda and Oli forged by forces in Beijing may find it difficult to find a working relationship given the bad blood that flew in the earlier government and in run-up to the campaign.

From India's perspective, Nepali Congress being out of power may be a big disappointment. But, it will have to find ways to work out a nuanced relationship with the new dispensation that's bound to assert the China way. In fact, Prachanda with his independent views that are equidistant from both China and India, may be the biggest bet.

(Contd. on page 25)

Congress wants to pin Modi down on China issue. It's holding the wrong end of the stick

For a debate in Parliament, Congress-led opposition is focusing on the status of India-China border – a historic dispute which isn't a making of the Modi government



By Sheela Bhatt

Rahul Gandhi, who is leading the Bharat Jodo Yatra, has increased the intensity of his attack on the Narendra Modi government for its handling of the border dispute with China. Congress has been accusing PM Modi for not naming and shaming China for its military-backed border diplomacy. Gandhi and his party leaders including president Mallikarjun Kharge, P. Chidambaram, Manish Tewari, Jairam Ramesh and Pawan Khera are doing their best to provoke Modi and his Cabinet colleagues to engage in the

debate, inside and outside Parliament, over India's border dispute with China. Even Congress's junior spokesperson Supriya Shrinate is telling Modi to not be scared and speak up before China – "Dariye mat, China ke saamne boliye." But the Modi government and the BJP have so far refused to take the bait.

They are cautious and cleverly diverting the China border issue because they feel they are on a strong wicket vis-à-vis Congress. A powerful BJP leader told me off the record, "The Congress is so belligerent and severe. Now,

expect the reactions too." Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar have given statements in Parliament but Congress' Jairam Ramesh has been pursuing the matter by quizzing the government over lack of certain actions.

"In the ongoing session of parliament, Nehru's memories have come alive. The Modi government is not going to allow China pe Charcha," said a senior BJP leader, adding, "Modi is not Nehru."

On 12 October 1962, Nehru had told reporters that he had directed the Indian Army 'to free our territory in the northeast frontier', which China "misinterpreted" as India declaring war against it. Nehru was drawn into the debate over the border dispute and the Chinese took advantage of it, eventually, and defeated India in the 1962 war.

No room for a debate now

Congress's energy derives from PM's remarks at the all-party

meeting on China on 19 June 2020 when Modi said, "Na koi wahan hamari seema mein ghusa aaya hai, na hi koi ghusa hua hai, na hi hamari koi post kisi dusre ke kabze mein hain (No one has intruded and nor is anyone intruding, nor has any post been captured by someone)." The remarks were carried live on television. Since then, the Congress wants to establish in Parliament that China has gained from Modi's statement, which the party says has weakened Indian position in negotiations over the serious border transgressions. The PM's office later issued a clarification on Modi's statement but it seems the Congress wants to settle scores about the China chapter of the Nehru era.

When so many diplomatic balls are in the air in the Indo-Pacific region, the government doesn't find the current time suitable to debate the border issue. In the changing world order when the Russia-Ukraine war is on, when China is witnessing new Covid threats, when India is trying to

balance Russia, China and US positions to its advantage, when the Taiwan issue is hot and under sharp global focus and when the world is struggling to emerge from post-Covid economic issues, this conservative Modi government is most unlikely to show any leniency to accommodate the Congress's demand.

More so after Rahul Gandhi's use of the term "peet rahe" (beating) for Chinese soldiers without adding that Indian soldiers stood their ground and forced them to retreat and Kharge comparing PM Modi to a "mouse", the government got the excuse to dismiss Congress's demand.

Truth is that even without Rahul's blunder, the government is too strong to let Congress set the agenda in Parliament, and would not have agreed for the debate.

"Vo zamana gaya," says a senior BJP leader when asked why can't ministers meet the Congress and other opposition leaders behind the scenes and brief them. (Contd. on page 23)

Why Devendra Fadnavis of 2022 isn't the same as in 2014

In the Maharashtra political circles, Fadnavis is seen behind the wheel but Eknath Shinde is deciding the destination

BY DK Singh

Maharashtra deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis had his Bharatiya Janata Party colleagues sit up in amazement and dismay last week. During an interaction with the Loksatta editorial team, he was asked about his initial reluctance to join the Eknath Shinde-led government. 'Was it because he wanted to join the Union Cabinet?' He said that he was a former chief minister and didn't want to look desperate to be in power.

But what caught his party colleagues' attention was his explanation: "I took that stand. My party first accepted it and then changed its opinion. There is no reason for me to go to the Centre. Nobody can send me there." "Nobody can send him out of Maharashtra! Can't believe he said that! In our party, you say that you will do whatever Modiji and Amitbhai decide. Devendra is showing guts," a BJP MP told me.

Some in the BJP found his remark 'insolent'. Others saw it as 'chutzpah' in a party where leaders don't start or end



a sentence without referring to 'Modi ji' or 'Amit bhai'. But Fadnavis, Modi's pick as Maharashtra chief minister in 2014, is not known to mince his words.

After grudgingly accepting the party's decision to make him deputy chief minister, he disclosed that Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda had called him to join the Shinde-led government, but he accepted it only after Prime Minister Narendra

Modi called him. 'Impressed' Mohan Bhagwat

What's behind Fadnavis' latest assertion about not shifting out of Maharashtra? In public perception, he is the de facto CM and the BJP high command's point person in the Maharashtra government. In reality, Shinde is gradually taking control. It was his policy initiatives and pronouncements that triggered a fresh Karnataka-Maharashtra border row.

Fadnavis had to play along even though the move may hurt the BJP's prospects in poll-bound Karnataka. But Shinde couldn't care less. Inclusion of Karnataka's Marathi-speaking areas in Maharashtra was an issue that first catapulted Bal Thackeray as the mover and shaker of Mumbai.

In December 1968, Thackeray declared that no leader from New Delhi would be allowed in Mumbai if the Marathi-speaking areas were not ceded to Maharashtra by 26 January of the following year. When deputy prime minister Morarji Desai landed in Mumbai in 1969, Shiv Sainiks created mayhem in the city. Thackeray was arrested but the Congress government at the time had to capitulate and buy peace with him. Seventeen years later, Shinde was arrested over the same issue in Belgaum, and he spent 40 days in Bellary jail. Today, when he is locked in a battle with Uddhav for Bal Thackeray's legacy, Shinde must make the right noises over those Marathi-speaking areas in Karnataka. (Contd. on page 23)

Putin signs decree banning oil exports to EU countries that put price cap

Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Moscow would ban oil exports to the EU countries that put a price cap on Russian oil



(By Staff Reporter) Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree banning oil exports to those countries in the European Union (EU) that put price cap on Russian oil. The ban will come into effect from February 1, 2023, according to the decree. The Kremlin's decree stated: "This...comes into force on February 1, 2023, and applies until July 1, 2023." However, the decree includes a clause that allows for Putin to overrule the ban in special cases. Earlier this month, Putin

had hinted that Russia could cut oil production and would not sell oil to any country that imposes the West's "stupid" price cap. His reaction came after the G-7 countries, the European Union and Australia agreed to a \$60 per barrel price cap on Russian seaborne crude oil over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February this year. On February 24, 2022, Putin launched a "special military operation" in Ukraine aimed at "demilitarisation and denazification".

12 more arrests over Leicester clashes post India-Pak cricket match

The British police has arrested 12 more people allegedly involved in clashes on the streets of the eastern England city of Leicester following an India-Pakistan cricket match earlier this year

(News Agency) British police investigating clashes between groups of men on the streets of the eastern England city of Leicester following an India-Pakistan cricket match earlier this year have made 12 more arrests over the course of December. Leicestershire Police said in an update this week that its investigating team is working through the evidence and has identified a number of suspects and carried out enquiries to work up to making over 47 arrests. A further 12 men were arrested in the last few weeks and one was voluntarily interviewed, with three of them being charged with offences relating to a number of disorder offences. "We've been working hard behind the scene reviewing the CCTV footage and all the hours of body-worn video from officers who were working and making IDs of those who may be involved," said Detective Chief Inspector Rob Arthur, who is leading

the force's investigating team. "This work has led us to be able to make these arrests and bring these people into custody in order to get their accounts. It's work that has taken time, due to the nature of it, and it's work we'll be continuing to carry out," he said.

Those arrested, aged between 25 and 45, are all said to be local to Leicester and have been arrested on suspicion of violent disorder or suspicion of possession of an offensive weapon in relation to the clashes that took place in September. Three of them arrested on suspicion of public order offences – Jadved Patel, 46, Zakir Umarji, 26, and Hassan Chunara, 28 – have been

charged to appear before Leicester Magistrates' Court on different dates next month.

"Identifying the number of people that



are involved is a significant investment but these arrests and charges are a step closer to bringing those responsible for the disorder to justice," said David Sandall, Deputy Chief Constable of Leicestershire Police.

It follows ongoing investigation

updates from the local police over what they termed as "serious disorder" and "significant aggression" as groups of men, believed to be largely from local Hindu and Muslim communities, clashed in the wake of the India-Pakistan Asia Cup cricket match in Dubai at the end of August. Leicestershire Police had to call in backup from other forces and repeatedly used dispersal and stop and search powers to restore calm over days of unrest, caught on some social media videos. The Indian High Commission in London issued a statement to "strongly condemn the violence perpetrated against the Indian community in Leicester and vandalism of premises and symbols of Hindu religion".

Some diaspora groups and think tanks have since claimed that much of the violence was the result of "misinformation" and fake news circulating on social media.

International NGOs pull out of Afghanistan after Taliban's ban on women staff

Several foreign aid groups have pulled out of operations from Afghanistan after the Taliban ordered a ban on women staff from working.

(News Agency) Several foreign aid groups have suspended their operations in Afghanistan after the Taliban ordered all NGOs to stop their women staff from working. The order from the Taliban threatened the NGOs after it said "serious complaints" were received that women working in NGOs were not observing a proper Islamic dress code. The move was met with severe backlash from several countries and international NGOs. On Monday, at least four international non-profits issued statements highlighting the crucial nature of the role of women in providing aid to the country's needy. Save the Children, Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE International and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) have said they will wind up operations in Afghanistan. "We cannot effectively reach children, women and men

in desperate need in Afghanistan without our female staff," the first three NGOs said in a joint statement adding that without women, the NGOs would not have jointly reached millions of Afghans in need since August 2021. "Whilst we gain clarity on this announcement, we are suspending our programmes, demanding that men and women can equally continue our lifesaving assistance in Afghanistan," read the statement. "With Afghanistan in the midst of a worsening

humanitarian crisis and economic collapse, humanitarian actors have been essential in saving lives in the country over the course of the past year," the IRC said in a separate statement. "None of that would have been possible without female humanitarian workers," it pointed out.



IRC's ability to deliver services rely on female staff at all levels of the organisation.

"If we are not allowed to employ women,

we are not able to deliver to those in need. Therefore, the IRC is currently suspending our services in Afghanistan," it added. The non-profit also said the exclusion of women from humanitarian service delivery holds "catastrophic consequences for the Afghan people because our services

depend on women workers". The latest government policy likely to have devastating consequences for Afghans who depend on aid as the country moves on to a cold winter. The acting head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Ramiz Alakbarov met the Taliban's acting economics minister Mohammad Hanif to urge him to reverse the decision. "Millions of Afghans need humanitarian assistance and removing barriers is vital," The Independent quoted UNAMA's statement. The Taliban, however, has dismissed concerns from the NGOs and said they do not allow anyone to "talk rubbish or make threats" regarding the decisions of its leaders under the title of humanitarian aid. Days earlier, the hardline Islamists also barred women from attending universities, prompting global outrage and protests in some Afghan cities.

Pakistan is selling its Embassy property in US. Guess the bidders

The highest bidder is a Jewish group, followed by an Indian and a Pakistani realtor

(News Agency) Pakistan got three bids for a building that once housed the defence section of the country's embassy in Washington. At almost \$6.8 million, the highest bidder is a Jewish group which wants to build a synagogue in the building, Pakistani newspaper Dawn reported quoting diplomatic sources in Washington. In the second spot is an Indian realtor with a bid of about \$5 million, followed by a bid of about \$4 million from a Pakistani realtor, the report said. Bidding for the property going to the highest bidder,

a Pakistani realtor, requesting to remain anonymous, said: "We should follow this tradition, also because it will create a lot of goodwill in an influential American community, which wants to use it as a place of worship." Earlier this month, Pakistan embassy officials told Dawn that one of the country's three diplomatic properties in Washington - a building on the

prestigious R Street NW - was up for sale.



On Monday, Pakistan's Cabinet

Committee on Privatisation asked the privatisation commission to appoint a financial adviser to lease the Roosevelt Hotel site in New York. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar chaired the meeting. Embassy officials in Washington are consulting an appraiser to assess whether the building should be sold as it is or after some renovation, the report added. "We are in no rush, and we will conclude a deal only if it benefits Pakistan," the embassy official said. The country's cabinet has approved the sale.

Winter storm kills 60 across US, over 15,000 flights cancelled; Buffalo worst hit

The severe winter storm, or the 'blizzard of the century' has claimed more than 60 lives so far across the United States, particularly in Buffalo. Thousands of flights have been cancelled amid howling winds and sub-zero temperatures

(News Agency) A relentless storm, what authorities called the 'blizzard of the century' paralysed western New York over the Christmas weekend. So far, the storm has killed 27 people in New York and at least 60 across the whole of the United States. Local officials on Monday said efforts to dig out the snow-bound region around Buffalo were on as rescue operations continued. Roadways remained littered with cars,



buses, ambulances, tow trucks and even plows buried beneath towering drifts, complicating efforts to clear snow-blanketed streets and reach stranded residents in need of medical care. Authorities deployed high-lift tractors as hospital transport. **BUFFALO WORST HIT** In New York, particularly in Buffalo, authorities said bodies were discovered inside vehicles and from under snow banks, as emergency officials

went from car to car to search for more survivors. A few of the grocery stores that had been closed for days reopened on Monday, and people trekked more than a mile (1.6 km) through the middle of otherwise impassable streets to get there. The severity of the storm, notable for a region accustomed to harsh winter weather, grew out of a combination of meteorological factors that supercharged one another. Up to 9 more inches of snow (23 centimeters) could fall in some areas of western New

York through Tuesday, the National Weather Service said. Scientists say the climate change crisis may have contributed to the intensity of the storm. That's because the atmosphere can carry more water vapor, which acts as fuel, said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

The blizzard roared across western New York on Friday and Saturday. Locals even pleaded on social media for donations of food and diapers. "It was like looking at a white wall for 14 to 18 hours straight," Poloncarz, the county official, said. New York Governor Kathy Hochul toured the aftermath in Buffalo — her hometown — on Monday, calling the blizzard "one for the ages."

OVER 15,000 FLIGHTS CANCELLED ACROSS THE US The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport

stood at 49.2 inches (1.25 meters) at 10 am, Monday. Officials say the airport will be shut through Wednesday morning. The brutal storm, howling winds and sub-zero temperatures forced the cancellation of more than 15,000 flights across the United States in recent days. Some 3,410 domestic and international flights were cancelled on Monday as of about 3 p.m. EDT, according to the tracking site FlightAware. The site said Southwest Airlines had 2,497 cancellations — about 60 per cent of its scheduled flights and about 10 times as

many as any other major US carrier. Southwest said the weather was improving, which would "stabilize and improve our situation." Based on FlightAware data, airports all across the US were suffering from cancellations and delays, including Denver, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Seattle, Baltimore and Chicago.

BIDEN SPEAKS TO OFFICIALS, ASSURES HELP

President Joe Biden tweeted on Monday that he had spoken to Hochul on the phone and that his administration would provide resources to help the region cover the daunting expense of storm rescue and recovery. "I spoke with Governor Kathy Hochul to get an update on the extreme winter weather hitting New York. We stand ready to make sure they have the resources they need to get through this," Biden said. "My heart is with those who lost loved ones this holiday weekend. You are in my and Jill's prayers," Biden said.



| Destination | Flights | Airline | Time | Status |
|---------------|---------|-----------|-------|-----------------|
| El Paso | 2411 | Southwest | 7:45 | Now 7:56 PM |
| Honolulu | 3845 | Southwest | 1:10 | 18B On Time |
| Houston Hobby | 2403 | Southwest | 5:20 | 17B Cancelled |
| Houston Hobby | 2457 | Southwest | 2:10 | 17B Now 3:59 PM |
| Kahului Maui | 8829 | Southwest | 1:10 | 18B On Time |
| Las Vegas | 2403 | Southwest | 4:20 | 16 Cancelled |
| Las Vegas | 4558 | Southwest | 6:40 | 16 Cancelled |
| Las Vegas | 753 | Southwest | 5:25 | 17A Cancelled |
| Little Rock | 1278 | Southwest | 11:40 | 12B Cancelled |
| Miami | 1482 | Southwest | 11:20 | 12B Cancelled |
| Nashville | 1527 | Southwest | 4:10 | 18A Now 6:13 PM |
| Nashville | 1447 | Southwest | 5:25 | 17A Cancelled |
| Nashville | 1278 | Southwest | 9:15 | 15 Now 11:04 AM |
| New Orleans | 1972 | Southwest | 1:50 | 12A Now 2:33 PM |
| New Orleans | 1436 | Southwest | | |

Women, kids among 1,200 Afghan migrants jailed in Pakistan

(News Agency) Pakistani police in multiple raids detained at least 1,200 Afghan nationals, including women and children, who had entered the southern port city of Karachi without valid travel documents, officials said Thursday.

The arrests brought criticism from around Afghanistan after images of locked up Afghan children were circulated online. The detentions underscored the strained relations between the two South Asian neighbors.

Police and local government officials said the detainees will be deported to Afghanistan after serving their sentences or when the paperwork for their release is completed by their attorneys.

Pakistani officials claim that most of the detainees wish to return home.

Although Pakistan routinely makes such arrests, multiple and apparently coordinated raids were launched beginning in October to detain Afghans staying in Karachi and elsewhere without valid documents.

Gul Din, an official at the Afghan Consulate in Karachi, said he was in contact with Pakistan



about a "quick and dignified return" of the Afghan citizens to their homeland.

Pictures of some Afghan children crammed into a cell of the central jail in Karachi went viral on social media, drawing appeals for their release along with their parents.

At least 139 Afghan women and 165 children are among those being held at a high-security jail in Karachi, according to a report released this month by Pakistan's National Commission on Human Rights. The report was based on interviews with scores of imprisoned Afghan detainees.

In the Afghan capital of Kabul, Abdul Qahar Balkhi, a spokesman for the foreign affairs ministry, said embassy officials had expressed their concerns during meetings with their Pakistani counterparts.

"The Pakistani authorities have repeatedly pledged swift release of these detainees," he told The Associated Press, saying that so far Pakistan had failed to "fully deliver on the commitment."

"We believe that such degrading treatment of Afghans in Pakistan is not in the interest of any party," Balkhi said. He said Afghans were advised not to enter Pakistan "unless absolutely

necessary and without proper documentation."

In Karachi, Murtaza Wahab, a spokesman for the Sindh provincial government, said police recently arrested only those Afghans who were residing in the province without valid documents. He said such detainees will be deported. He did not say how many Afghans were arrested for illegally residing in Sindh this year.

But Moniza Kakar, a lawyer who helps such Afghan detainees, said at least 1,400 Afghans were being held in Karachi's jails. "We are not sure exactly how many Afghans are currently being held at jails in Pakistan. So far, we have facilitated the release of hundreds of Afghans to their country," she said. Kakar said some pregnant Afghan women who fled Afghanistan to seek medical treatment and for other reasons, are among those detained in Karachi and elsewhere in Sindh province. She said one of the female Afghan detainees recently gave birth to a child in the Hyderabad jail. Kakar said dozens of Afghans were deported to Afghanistan last

month after they completed their sentences, which are usually up to two months. However, she suggested that such sentences should be only verbal and symbolic - so that the detainees can be sent back to their countries quickly.

Millions of Afghans fled to Pakistan during the 1979-1989 Soviet occupation of their country, creating one of the world's largest refugee populations. Since then, Pakistan has been hosting Afghans, urging them to register themselves with the United Nations and local authorities to avoid any risk of deportation.

According to a recently conducted U.N.-backed survey, 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees are residing in Pakistan. "Following the takeover of Afghanistan by the Afghan Taliban, there has been a drastic rise in Afghans seeking to enter Pakistan for a multitude of reasons ranging from fleeing persecution, seeking medical aid and looking for job opportunities," the report released by the National Commission on Human Rights last week said.

Pak Hindu Woman Killed, Skin Reportedly Peeled Off; India Responds

(News Agency) India on Thursday called on Pakistan to protect its minorities after the killing of a Hindu woman Daya Bheel in Sindh province.

Speaking at the weekly media briefing of the Ministry of External Affairs, spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "We have seen reports about it, but we don't have specific details on the case, but we have reiterated that Pakistan should protect its minorities along with their safety, security and well-being, which is their responsibility."

There is outrage in Pakistan's Sindh after a Hindu woman Daya Bheel was brutally killed.

Krishna Kumari, Senator of Pakistan Peoples Party from Tharparkar Sindh rushed to her village and confirmed the news of the brutal murder of the Hindu woman. "Daya Bheel, 40-year-old widow brutally murdered and her body was found in very bad

condition. Her head was separated from the body and the savages had removed the flesh from the whole head. Visited her village Police teams from Sinjhor and Shahpurchakar also reached," she tweeted.

"Daya Bheel, who was brutally



murdered -- her case won't be highlighted in the media, nor will Politicians in Islamabad or the Sindh government issue a statement. Will the police apprehend culprits? Will Hindus be treated as equal citizens in their motherland Sindh? tweeted The Rise News, a nonprofit news organization. Recently, the UK government this month imposed

sanctions on its Muslim cleric Mian Abdul Haq for forced conversions and marriages of girls and women from religious minorities, according to a Toronto-based think tank.

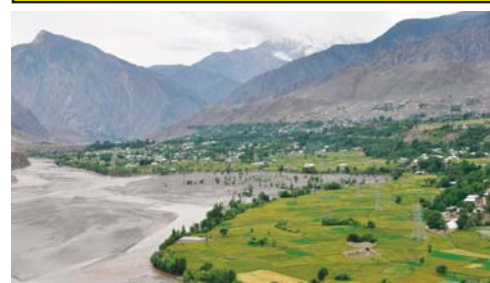
The International Forum For Rights And Security (IFFRAS)

said this latest sanction, once again highlighted the precarious situation of minorities in Pakistan. Sanction on Mian, described as a "controversial Sindh pi" by Dawn, was part of a new wave of sanctions that targets

corrupt actors, those abusing human rights, and perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict.

According to IFFRAS, Mian Abdul Haq was a Pakistan People's Party (PPP) lawmaker between 2008 and 2013. The party expelled him after the forced conversion and marriage of Rinkle Kumari, a girl from the minority Hindu community.

Pakistan court frees convicted rapist after 'agreement' to marry his victim



earlier in December following an out-of-court settlement made by a local "jirga" - a council of elderly men who make decisions based on Sharia law.

Sharia - also known as

(News Agency) A court in Pakistan on Monday freed a convicted rapist after it was "agreed" he would marry his victim, his lawyer said, enraging rights activists who say the ruling risks normalizing sexual violence in the South Asian country.

Daulat Khan, 23, was convicted in May of raping the deaf woman, 36, in 2020 in the northeastern district of Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to his lawyer Amjad Ali Khan.

He was sentenced to life in prison and fined 100,000 rupees (about \$440), said the lawyer, who is not related to his client. The woman later gave birth to a child as a result of the rape, the lawyer added. On Monday, the Peshawar High Court acquitted Daulat Khan after the two were legally married

Islamic law - is an interpretation of the faith's sacred texts and traditions that varies greatly across the Muslim world.

Swat is a mostly rural and conservative district, where deeply ingrained, often brutal patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes remain prevalent. In 2012, activist and Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai was shot in the head by the Pakistani Taliban in Swat for defying their orders by going to school. It is not uncommon for a jirga to settle cases in many parts of Pakistan on so-called taboo issues such as childbirth outside of marriage. Critics have long accused jirga of perpetuating a culture of victim-shaming, especially on issues of rape and sexual assault.

Vision of a smart nation: How Bangladesh is planning to become a developed country

'Digital Bangladesh' is all about upgradation of fundamentals and being a launch pad for a developed nation. The vision of Smart Bangladesh is all about taking the nation to a new height — a developed one.

(News Agency) In the run up to Bangladesh's national election in 2008, a look at the manifestoes of two political parties — Bangladesh Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) — revealed two completely different pictures. While the BNP's manifesto revolved around "save country, save people", something never-before-told and now proven far ahead of its time came through the Awami League. A pledge of 'Digital Bangladesh', a concept completely unheard of in the youngest nation in South Asia, resonated amongst the countrymen well. On impact, the Awami League won the election with an unprecedented majority in 2008, while the BNP-Jamaat combine was decimated to a handful of seats in parliament. Before 2008, Bangladesh was a completely analog country where high internet costs and expensive talk-time for mobile users defined the ambit of digitisation. But since 2009, a silent revolution began that brought in real and measurable gains on the front of the digital landscape. Expansion of digital centers on the grassroots, people getting access to services at their fingertips, freelancers making money from outsourcing, a record rise in internet and mobile users emerged as key parameters in the process. The introduction of mobile financial services (MFS),



fuelled by a rapid rise in terms of users, grabbed global attention, while distribution of social safety net schemes through MFS bore the fruits for countrymen. At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, successful distribution of safety schemes to affected people through MFS stands as a shining testament to the country's strength achieved over the years. During lockdowns, when schools, colleges and universities were closed, distance learning saved the day for students, thanks to the expansion of the internet. No wonder the country now even boasts of having a satellite in space -- a dream of the founding father of the nation after the country's independence, which was realised decades later through his daughter and

grandson. From the science and technology affairs sub-committee, a key affiliate body of the party, we gathered a pool of doctors and opened up a round-the-clock health helpline that provided guidance for patients calling to seek medical help.

Smart Bangladesh, next vision

With almost a year left for the next national election, the Awami League has floated a new action course before the nation and set a target to make a 'smart country'. "We are looking forward to becoming a cashless society," Sajeeb Wazed said recently before a group of young change-makers. This pledge marks the beginning of the party's next course of action, a step that would help the country's pursuit

to become a developed nation by 2041. A month ago, we organised an international conference that saw hundreds of prominent experts submitting their research papers. The focus was on the work required in all key sectors to adapt to the fourth industrial revolution. The overwhelming response from a host of global experts with a message from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) president welcoming the initiative symbolises the relevance of our party's initiative. A top expert panel of academics analysed those papers and we would submit a set of recommendations to our party chief. 'Digital Bangladesh' is all about upgradation of fundamentals and being a launch pad for a developed nation. The vision of

Architect of 'Digital Bangladesh'

"My son Sajeeb Wazed gave me lessons on the usage of smartphone and computer," Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, talking about her son. As his mother's Information and Communication Technology advisor, Sajeeb Wazed Joy has presided over the penetration of GenNext InfoTech into all spheres of life — from online schooling to digital monetary transactions. Bangladesh saw the best phase of its digital transformation during the Covid pandemic. The country managed to keep its economy going through a wide spectrum of digital activities, including telemedicine, virtual courts, and delivering money to poor people through mobile platforms and e-commerce. Its better growth trajectory than its bigger neighbours during the Covid pandemic owes much to this all-encompassing digitisation. A University of Texas graduate in Computer Engineering and a Harvard post-graduate in Public Administration, Sajeeb Wazed Joy has been instrumental in the country's technological advancement.

Smart Bangladesh is all about taking the nation to a new height — a developed one.

'Hungry and weak': 58 Rohingya refugees reach Indonesia after weeks at sea

Dozens of hungry and weak Rohingya Muslims were found on a beach in Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh on Sunday after weeks at sea

(News Agency) A group of 58 Rohingya refugees at sea for more than a month landed at a fishing village in Indonesia's Aceh Besar district early on Sunday. Villagers who saw the group on a rickety wooden boat helped them on to Indrapatra beach at Ladong, a fishing village, and then reported their arrival to authorities, said Rolly Yuiza Away, the police chief. "They look very weak from hunger and dehydration. Some of them are sick after a long and severe voyage at sea," said Away, adding that the men received food and water from villagers and others as they waited for further instructions from immigration and local officials in Aceh. At least three of the men were rushed to a health clinic for medical care, and others are also receiving various medical treatments, Away said.

The United Nations and other groups on

Friday urged countries in South Asia to rescue a boat of Rohingya refugees that has been adrift for several weeks in the Andaman Sea.

"Reports indicate those onboard have now remained at sea for a month in dire conditions with insufficient food or water, without any efforts by states in the region to help save human lives," the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) said in a statement. On Monday, the UNHCR said a separate boat with 180 Rohingya was presumed drowned, and that 2022 could end up as one of the deadliest for the community forced to flee its home in Myanmar

because of ethnic violence. Away said one of the men on the boat that reached Ladong spoke some Malay and said they had been at sea for more than a month, aiming to land in Malaysia to seek a better life and work there. More than 700,000 Rohingya have fled from Myanmar to refugee camps in Bangladesh since August 2017, when the Myanmar military launched a clearance operation in response to attacks by a rebel group. Myanmar forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and burning of thousands of homes. Groups



of Rohingya have attempted to leave the crowded camps in Bangladesh and take hazardous sea voyages to other countries in the region. Malaysia has been a common destination for boats, as traffickers promise the refugees a better life there. But many Rohingya refugees who land in Malaysia face detention. Although Indonesia is not a signatory to the UN's 1951 Refugee Convention, the UNHCR said a 2016 presidential regulation provides a national legal framework governing the treatment of refugees on boats in distress near Indonesia and to help them disembark. These provisions have been implemented for years, most recently last month when about 219 Rohingya refugees, including 63 women and 40 children, were rescued off the coast of North Aceh district on board two rickety boats.

Congress wants to pin Modi down on China issue. It's holding the wrong end of the stick

Contd from page 18

"In the UPA government we used to do match-fixing and meet the opposition leaders and cool them down days before Parliament debate on sensitive issues were scheduled," said a former minister in the UPA government while discussing merits of the debate in Parliament.

In Nehru's era, the debates were on the floor of the House and not on social media. Now, memes, short videos, tweets, and racy bytes can be edited out of context of any statement or remark by both sides and made viral even before any supposed meeting between the ministers and Congress leaders get over. The Indian armed forces will be the unintended victims on social media if the debate or banter becomes an excuse to score points. Nobody trusts anyone in New Delhi's no-holds-barred politics anymore. The breakdown of formal relationships is more between Congress and the government. Other parties of consequence are either openly or secretly having some communication with the government. The Congress is raking up this issue also because it wants Modi to have a reality check before he uses India's G20 leadership to enhance his global reach.

According to the data tabled in

Parliament, there were more than 400 border violations by the PLA in 2015. It increased to 600 in 2019 on the 3488-km-long India-China border. When Congress demands urgent debate in Parliament, it certainly looks legitimate and serious as people in a democracy have the right to know, but this is one issue which carries too many historical contexts.

And who doesn't realise that the Congress knows this game better than the BJP? They have had total, sole, and uninterrupted control of this most historic and unresolved border dispute between India and China from 1947 to 1977, 1980-89, 1991-96 and 2004-2014. Shivsankar Menon and many other dignitaries know the history of 54 years of Congress government in dealing with China. This massive institutional memory of dealing with China gives them the edge that no other party has.

Congress leaders have done it all, and seen much more.

The border troubles are not much different in 2022 from 2013 when the Congress was in power.

Congress is holding the wrong end of the stick

After 1962, it's a known reality that all governments in New Delhi have been politically vulnerable, at all times, when PLA soldiers did mischief at the border. The

Himalayan border area has been a live theatre where small skits have played out without bloodshed, but it makes headlines and fodder for domestic politics when the actions at borders, routine or serious, get leaked or when one of the stakeholders decides to make it public for its own advantage. Beijing has got the upper hand because public sensitivity on the issue and vulnerability of the rulers in New Delhi is much higher than it is in Beijing. The Modi government is trying to change this psychological leverage that China has been using and enjoying.

The Chinese want to keep tension simmering on low heat to its exclusive advantage.

Many retired senior Army officers would vouch that for decades, they had two types of reporting of hundreds of local-level fights and clashes at the India-China border. One through formal channels and another through informal channels. On the border area, the G-O-C in Command never liked clashes because he would be made responsible for it at the Army headquarters. Maintaining "peace and tranquility" was the political goals of both sides for a couple of decades. Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the LAC set

standard operating procedures and stood the test of time but through it China "bought time" and went on to develop strategic infrastructure on its side of the border much faster than India.

The BJP is making it a big political issue that the Congress government didn't develop infrastructure in border areas faster when borders were relatively peaceful as the Chinese wanted to be. Precisely this is the bone of contention between BJP and Congress. Congress's weak link of its handling of the border dispute is A.K. Antony's statement in Parliament in 2013. He has admitted that earlier governments thought no development in border areas was the best defence against China.

BJP thinks the "soft approach" of Congress towards China to keep the borders calm has been exploited by China to develop infrastructure on their side of the border areas. This is debatable, though. The Congress strategy was a demand of global trends of that era. It reflected Indian priorities of those times.

While raking up the China border dispute, the Congress is keeping its goal too high when it challenges Modi on his core identity. Modi has invested his entire life in building his nationalist image. Surely, Galwan

and Tawang clashes are not normal, and it's also undeniable that China is flexing its muscles and Modi has a lot to answer for. But, instead of "Chinese digressions", the Congress should have demanded debate on national security issues. The government is getting away easily, probably, because the opposition is dubbing the demand with focus on the status of India-China border – the historic dispute which isn't a making of the Modi government. In the past, all attempts to settle border disputes have failed. Both sides have not given their official claims of the entire border, nor have official maps been exchanged. The government and Congress' fight is most unfortunate because as Jaishankar told Parliament, "Today we have a deployment of the Indian Army on the China border that we have never had. It is done in order to counter Chinese deployment which has been scaled up massively since 2020."

When China is steadily increasing use of its military power to press territorial claims, India will have to increase its spending in billions of dollars to defend itself at the cost of its developmental goals. That's why Parliament debate to pin Modi down can wait.

Why Devendra Fadnavis of 2022 isn't the same as in 2014

Contd from page 18

Shinde is acting like the de facto and de jure chief minister. Fadnavis can't do much except extend support in running the government.

Shinde's stocks in Delhi and Nagpur are growing rapidly. A Balasahebanchi Shiv Sena (BSS) parliamentarian told me that Modi and Amit Shah now call Shinde directly to discuss the state of affairs. He, however, hastened to add that the equations between the CM and his deputy are "very warm and cordial" and they work "very much together". According to a BJP functionary,

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat is "very impressed" with Shinde and has been telling his colleagues how "very good" the new CM is. Shinde is a Maratha and his rising stocks in the Sangh Parivar may not comfort many in the state

BJP.

The Sena parliamentarian maintained that the immediate goal of both his party and the BJP is to "finish Uddhav Thackeray". He was dismissive about the commonly held belief that if and when Uddhav's hold over the Shiv Sainiks is broken, the BJP would move next to appropriate Bal Thackeray's entire political legacy, leaving neither Shinde nor Uddhav as stakeholders.

"Our immediate goal is to finish the Thackerays. We aren't thinking about anything more. And don't underestimate Eknath Shinde. If he can take away 55 MPs and MLAs right from under Uddhav Thackeray's nose, he certainly knows his politics, doesn't he?" the Sena MP said. Ambitions or insecurities?

BJP functionaries are already looking at various possibilities in the distant future. What if Shinde, a

Maratha, becomes the BJP's face one day? A long shot, obviously, but food for thought nonetheless – just enough to keep ambitious BJP leaders on the edge. Wild speculations and conjectures aside, the Fadnavis of 2022 doesn't look the same as the one we saw from 2014 to 2019. He used to be a voice of progress, reason and modernity. Fadnavis as the CM wouldn't care if there were raised eyebrows in the Sangh about his wife, Amruta, walking the ramp at New York Fashion Week. Though an RSS activist since his student days, he wouldn't get into polarising debates. Today, Fadnavis is making headlines, defending the formation of a committee to track inter-faith marriages and talking about the so-called 'love jihad'. When a BJP CM (or deputy CM in this case) starts shedding his moderate image to

project himself as a Hindutva hardliner, you know from experience what's happening. It's invariably about ambitions or insecurities. So, if it's the first in the case of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the second category includes CMs like Shivraj Singh Chouhan (Madhya Pradesh) and Basavaraj Bommai (Karnataka). It may be premature to put Fadnavis in either of the boxes yet.

In November 2021, the BJP high command gave fodder to conspiracy theorists by promoting Vinod Tawde as national general secretary and nominating Chandrashekhhar Bawankule to the Legislative Council.

Both Tawde and Bawankule had been denied party tickets in the 2019 assembly election in what was then the Fadnavis era in Maharashtra.

India And China - A 2023 Tale Of Two Markets

(Contd. from page 16)

Throw in rival Mukesh Ambani's telecoms-to-petrochemicals empire, and half of the gains are spoken for by the two wealthiest tycoons. So far, however, a rising concentration of wealth seems to have worked well for local investors - they are neither too skeptical of their country's destiny, nor too critical of its direction. That's because their prosperity is also hitched to the same bandwagon of pro-capitalist policies. Four years ago, India's largest firms earned a combined pre-tax income of 7 trillion rupees (\$85 billion), out of which the exchequer took almost a third. Now, the pre-tax profit has risen to 13 trillion rupees, but the government's share has fallen to about a quarter. The relative importance of indirect taxes - including on

petroleum products - has grown. It isn't a great outcome for India's poor, who are hurt more than the rich by levies on consumption, particularly in an inflationary environment. But to the extent the burden of taxation is light on companies, the stock market is unlikely to question the absence of meaningful purchasing power beyond a tiny affluent class. India's wage-led economy has become a profit-driven enterprise, and domestic investors seem fine with it. In five years, India's managed investments - life insurance, mutual funds, retirement accounts, hedge funds and portfolio services - has grown to 57 per cent of gross domestic product from 41 per cent, according to Crisil, an affiliate of S&P Global Inc. As the hunt for yield reaches more of the smaller cities and towns, the

\$1.6 trillion industry may not take long to catch up with \$2 trillion in bank fixed deposits. With net outflows in excess of \$187 billion, global investors' exit from China this year has been far more brutal than the \$17 billion they have pulled out of India. As China reopens, they're bound to put more money at work in the People's Republic. Even if some of those funds come at India's expense, it's important to remember that a rapidly swelling pool of local institutional liquidity is eroding the sway of overseas fund managers. As long as India Inc. delivers reasonable earnings growth, foreigners won't be able to ignore a country where an increasingly muscular domestic investment class has come to worship profit.

Tales of Covid deaths out on Weibo but China playing censor-in-chief

(Contd. from page 16)

The Sixth Tone had reported on the social media post by Chinese actor Wang Jingsong in which she said her mother died after catching Covid. Weibo users responded to the post by telling stories about elderly grandparents succumbing to the virus. The report was quickly censored to stop the spread of China's high death toll worldwide.

Meanwhile, India has announced that travellers from China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Thailand must present a negative Covid test report before entering the country.

During his latest 'Mann Ki Baat', Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked people to "be vigilant" as they head for travel during the holiday season.

China's military activities in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait got extensive international media coverage. But we didn't hear about the US' military presence in China's immediate neighbourhood as much.

A China-linked think tank has now claimed that the US sent 589 military aircraft from January to November to conduct information-gathering activities just over the South China Sea.

The data was published by South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, which regularly features data on the US's naval activity in the South China Sea area.

The sounds of unease in Beijing over Russia's Ukraine war have circulated in media headlines over the past months. Last week, former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev was on a surprise visit to Beijing for talks with President Xi Jinping. Medvedev remains a close ally of current President Vladimir Putin. We have seen Russian business tycoons and former politicians being used for diplomatic back-channel talks since the Ukraine war started.

Unlike the past meetings between Russian and Chinese leaders, there was no mention in the Chinese readout of the 'no limits partnership', which has

been the guiding principle of relations between the two countries. Even Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi didn't mention 'no limits partnership' in his annual address—which has consistently appeared in joint statements issued by Russia and China in recent years.

Instead, Xi brought up the Ukraine war, which the Chinese State media mentioned in the readout given to him. "On the Ukrainian crisis, China has always decided its position and policy according to the merits of the matter itself, upholding an objective and impartial position and actively persuading and promoting peace talks. We hope that all parties concerned will exercise rational restraint, engage in comprehensive dialogue and resolve common security concerns through political means," said Xi during his meeting with Medvedev.

The unease in Beijing has been expressed by other Chinese diplomats as well. Fu Cong, the new envoy to the European Union (EU), has admitted that Russia's war in Ukraine has put Beijing in a "very difficult position".

But how do we interpret these murmurs of unease?

"The symbolism of Medvedev's visit was likely more important than the substance of anything discussed. With the war in Ukraine at an inflection point, Beijing may be leaning harder into a 'pro-Russia neutrality' posture", wrote Joe Webster, senior fellow at The Atlantic Council, a think tank in Washington DC.

Besides the meeting between Xi and Medvedev, China and Russia brought online a new section of the Power of Siberia pipeline.

As part of the project, the two sides launched an 800-km-long new gas pipeline from the Kovykta field in Irkutsk to the Chayanda field in the Republic of Sakha.

"This (new) section will complement the Power of Siberia main gas pipeline,

thereby bringing our most important gas transportation route into operation throughout its entire length. It will exceed 3,000 km," said Putin.

According to an estimate by The Kremlin, the Kovykta field has approximately 1.8 trillion cubic metres of natural gas and 65.7 million tonnes of gas concentrates. Russia will sell this gas to Beijing.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy and the Russian Navy are currently conducting a week-long naval exercise in the East China Sea called Joint Sea 2022.

The Chinese side has sent "five ships from the PLA Navy's East Sea and North Sea fleets, including CNS Baotou, a Type 052DL guided-missile destroyer, and CNS Binzhou, a Type 054A guided-missile frigate, would participate in the exercise along with submarines, early-warning aircraft and helicopters from the Chinese navy," said Senior Captain Gao Xiucheng.

Australia and China have sparred over the issue of tracing the origins of the pandemic. Beijing has detained two Australian citizens, journalist Cheng Lei and writer Yang Hengjun, on the grounds of national security.

Australian foreign minister Penny Wong was in Beijing on Wednesday to hold talks with foreign minister Wang Yi.

"China appreciates the positive intention that the new Australian government has shown multiple times to improve and develop our bilateral relations," said Wang Yi during the meeting with Wong on 21 December.

When Wong became foreign minister after the election of Anthony Albanese as the Prime Minister, there was an expectation that she will take a different approach from her predecessor. Now Australia appears to be engaging in Canada-style negotiations to get its citizens out of Chinese detention.

"In the past few years, China-Australia relations have encountered difficulties and setbacks, which we do not want to

see, and we must fully learn from them. China and Australia have neither historical grievances nor fundamental conflicts of interest. They should and can become mutually needed partners," said Wong.

China in world news

After a long lull in military-level dialogue between India and China, the 17th round of the Corps-Commander-level talks was held on the Chinese side of the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on 20 December.

The two sides issued a joint statement after the meeting, which was made public on 22 December.

"They had a frank and in-depth discussion, keeping in line with the guidance provided by the State Leaders to work for the resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest, which would help in the restoration of peace and tranquillity along the LAC in the Western Sector and enable progress in bilateral relations," said the joint statement published by the PLA on their website. Wang Yi's annual foreign policy address on Sunday gives us an insight into international issues that have kept Beijing busy during the year.

"China and India have maintained communication through the diplomatic and military-to-military channels, and both countries are committed to upholding stability in the border areas. We stand ready to work with India in the direction toward steady and sound growth of China-India relations," he said. Following the clash in Tawang, a video from 2021 showing Indian Army and PLA soldiers sparring somewhere in Arunachal Pradesh circulated on social media. The video was shared on Weibo and hasn't been censored despite visuals of the PLA retreating from their position. In the past, leaked videos have been used by Beijing to stir up Chinese public sentiment, and it is possible that the decision to allow this video to exist is a calculated move to exploit it for another purpose in the future.

Manufacturing in India before and after Make In India

Another major problem with RCEP was non-clarity on the Rule of origin, Trade circumvention often happens when countries like China dump products from countries like Indonesia which enjoy tax concession with India. Understanding the implications of rule of origin, the countries that have FTA with India have to show credible proof of value addition to the product being

exported to India. Value addition through assembling in India is also important sector for Make in India. China is a global assembly hub, but due to Make In India, assembly giants like Foxcon, Pegatron, Wistron have all set up assembly plants in India.

RCEP doesn't take into consideration the geopolitical impact of importing/exporting certain products, or

those products necessary for a nation's security and sovereignty. MI policy understood that trade can be weaponised against India for geopolitical ends thus in critical sectors like Semiconductors, Government came up with a \$10 billion worth PLI scheme for semiconductor design and manufacturing. It was never imagined that Semiconductors manufacturing

was possible in India, despite it being a \$27 billion domestic market, but today, Vedanta and Foxconn are investing Rs 1.54 lakh crores to set up India's first semiconductor production plant in Gujarat, while other 23 applications are in various stages of development. Similarly, India is proud to roll out 100% made-in-India 5G services, architecture and infrastructure.

Nepal government formation : india Blindsided

With the ascendance of Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' as Prime Minister of Nepal and India's bete noire K P Sharma Oli playing king-maker, the Indian establishment has come a cropper in the Himalayan nation. It was betting the house on a favourite, Sher Bahadur Deuba, whose party, the Nepali Congress, although short of the majority, had won the largest number of seats in Parliament. Oli outmanoeuvred India's play and installed Prachanda in the top job, sacrificing his immediate ambitions for long-term goals.

The US and the European nations were also outdone in Kathmandu. They, too, had backed Deuba, who boasted that he enjoyed the support of "both Washington and Delhi." Their aim was to prevent the coming together of Prachanda's Communist Party of Nepal. The US and the European nations were also outdone in Kathmandu. They, too, had backed Deuba, who boasted that he enjoyed the support of "both Washington and Delhi." Their aim was to prevent the coming together of Prachanda's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). The US fear of Communists is easy to understand because the two Left parties had been opposing the American Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) fund, a US\$500 million pledge for infrastructural development. They suspected it had hidden security dimensions. The last Deuba-government had got it ratified in Parliament despite opposition from its coalition partner, Prachanda's CPN (Maoist Centre), assuring Parliament that the MCC funding would not be allowed to draw in Nepal as part of US military strategy. not be allowed to draw in Nepal as part of US military strategy.

What is going on in China with Covid? Why this needs an immediate answer

The alarm bells are ringing. Once again. China is grappling with an inexplicable surge in the number of new Covid-19 cases. Unlike 2019, when the novel coronavirus first upended our lives, there is no mystery virus behind the rise in infections. Unlike 2019, scientists don't need to race to understand how this virus transmits or how best to combat it. However, just like 2019, we don't have the full picture of what the hell is going on in China. According to some estimates, China is running the risk of around 2 million deaths because of the recent rise in Covid-19 cases. One epidemiologist, in a now viral tweet, has projected that 60% of the country's population could end up being infected over the course of the next few months. With such grim headlines, you'd expect clarity on obvious questions such as: Why are Covid-19 cases rising in China? Is a new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus to blame? What is China doing to curb the spread of Covid-19 within its boundaries and prevent spillovers to other nations?

We have these questions. And some speculative guesswork. But no hard answers. China being China, it has been mum on the Covid situation in the

country. China did not say much while it pursued a ruthless zero-Covid policy that prompted massive protests in various cities. Those protests forced Beijing to ease restrictions in the country. This in turn led to the spike in cases that we're seeing right now. Yet, China remained and remains quiet. It's a worrying throwback to late 2019 and early 2020 when China reported the world's first cases of Covid-19. Back then, we knew nothing about the virus that would go on to run riot across the world. And, China was accused of wasting time and not giving the world a crucial heads up in time about the gravity of the situation.

There's obviously no point crying about spilled milk; enough has been written and talked about when it comes to China's initial (arguably delayed) response to the Covid-19 pandemic. But the worry now is whether history will repeat itself. While China battles its Covid crisis, the rest of the world is going about its business having mostly left haunting memories of the pandemic behind. This is why it is important for China to be open, transparent and communicative about its Covid situation lest the world be pulled into a false sense of complacency that can have devastating

consequences if cases were to similarly spike in other nations. Is the Covid crisis in China due to inadequate vaccinations? Or is a new variant of the novel coronavirus behind the spike? Do countries need to restrict travel to and from China in order to prevent a repeat of 2019? Or is the surge in cases reason enough for the world to explore boosting their citizens with another shot of existing Covid vaccines? And, equally important, will this new Covid wave in China disrupt an already unstable global economy? Answers to these questions are crucial if we want an answer to the big daddy of all questions: Should we be worried? Answers to these and other similar questions will determine the best course of action for countries as we enter another year with Covid still among us. These answers are only possible if China gives up its tradition of being tight-lipped when it comes to its domestic affairs. The Covid virus knows no boundaries or nationalities. Which is why China needs to be forthcoming about its current Covid crisis and give the world crucial information that will help it better prepare for what's coming (if something is, that is). Being secretive about Covid-19 didn't help in 2019 and it won't help now.

India, a natural Nepal pal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first global leader to congratulate Prachanda on his appointment as his Nepalese counterpart through a Twitter post. Secondly, a hands-off approach towards Nepal which has been the centre of India's engagement with Kathmandu till date, should continue to guide the civilizational partners. Continuing with the time-tested 1925 Indo-Nepal pact in 'spirit and content' without interference from a third party will be the biggest challenge. Thirdly, India being a trusted economic and development partner, should continue to engage with the new Nepali government irrespective of machinations attempted by K.P.Sharma Oli for his masters in Beijing.

Fourthly, political uncertainty is

bound to continue given the multiple partners in the coalition and the aspirations that they bring to the table rather than the value, ideas and content to the new government. Keeping close tabs on political developments, interest groups and policy matrix will work well for India. Fifthly, Beijing is bound to push itself hard this time round to edge out India and attempt a 'virtual occupation' through Belt and Roads Initiative apart from taking control of the country's hydroelectric power generation assets. More than all that forced DNA sampling of Nepali population is likely to be done ala what is being Tibet as part of its strategic and expansionist thrust. Sixthly, India will have to work overtime to keep even-keeled relations with

Nepal that's been its partner from milk, vegetables to oil needs. More than all that, the two countries' 'sanatan dharmic linkages' will have to be celebrated and embellished, thereby reinforcing the unalienable nature of the two people's relationships. If Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi is to be believed, Beijing proposes to work with India for steady and sound growth in bilateral relations. Against this backdrop, not meddling with India's civilizational partners like Nepal could work as the starting point. Nepal's political leadership from across the spectrum will have to realise that its interests are intertwined with those of India as an all-weather friend that can work wonders in South Asia.

Americans Lost Over \$10 Billion To Fraudsters In India This Year: Report

US citizens lost more than \$10 billion to phishing gangs and fraudsters operating from India in 2022. A majority of these victims were found to be elderly, who were duped of over \$3 billion in the last two years, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data shows, reported The Times of India. Fraudsters running illegal call centres in India have been targeting people based in the US, especially senior citizens, on the pretext of providing technical support or other

assistance. Americans lost \$10.2 billion through the Internet or call centre-related fraud in just the last 11 months. This indicates a jump of 47 per cent as compared to the last year, when the total money lost was put at \$6.9 billion, the report added. Earlier this month, Delhi Police officials informed that they had arrested three men running illegal call centres in the capital and defrauding US senior citizens by promising them technical support for the "malfunctioning"

of their systems. While three accused were caught in Delhi after overnight raids, one of their accomplices was caught by Canadian Law Enforcement Agency in Toronto and the other from New Jersey, US, by the FBI. The police informed that as per the information shared by the US, over 20,000 victims fell prey to such scams causing a revenue loss of \$10 million to America between 2012 and 2020. Given this rise in frauds originating from India, the FBI deputed a permanent

representative at the US Embassy in New Delhi.

With this, the FBI aims to curb such crimes by working with the CBI, Interpol, and the Delhi Police, the TOI report said. The official attached with the US embassy in Delhi, Suhel Daud, was quoted as saying by TOI that romance-related frauds led to a loss of around 1 8,000 crore to victims in 2021 and 1 8,000 crore in the last 11 months of this year as per frauds reported on FBI's website.

We're losing to the cartels at the border. Here's how we can win

Our nation is under attack by strong and persistent cartel networks based in Mexico and in the U.S. In response, we have an urgent need to significantly strengthen our homeland security network.

Our dedicated law enforcement and security professionals continue to risk their lives every day to make us all safer, and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Those charged with protecting us against these cartel networks must succeed! But how? There is an important lesson learned on the failure to "connect the dots" against networks determined to do us harm.

In late 2001, National Security Council (NSC) Counterterrorism Security Group Chairman Dick Clarke came before the September 11 Commission and testified that "Your government failed you..." - the NSC didn't connect the dots.

That failure permitted the al-Qaeda terrorist network to succeed in attacking the American homeland. Now, 21 years later, our government is failing us again, in the same way. The top levels of our Homeland Security enterprise urgently need to "connect the dots" today and use the vast variety of information available to them to make our homeland security enforcement network stronger against the clear and present danger posed by the

cartel network organizations that conduct human, sex and drug trafficking—particularly fentanyl; throughout the US.

The reality is that the cartel networks in Mexico (using their network tentacles in the US) are at war with us and are intent on inflicting pain and devastation every day in pursuit of their ill-gotten gains.

Every day the leadership in the Homeland Security and Justice Departments receive comprehensive reports from the Intelligence Community (IC), but those findings fail to translate into effective policy and strategy that strengthens our network against the cartels. Those findings include the "known-known" Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) reports on drug cartel distribution of fentanyl distribution and the limitations of Customs and Border Protection (CBP)'s capability to scale to address the threat.

Why They are not organized for success. A presidential administration needs to have organizational support for the policy and strategy response.

Regretfully, when the Biden administration put together its National Security Organization, Homeland Security policy coordination against the cartels had to compete against Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea.

You can't effectively "connect the dots" or manage policy and strategy against the cartels without the expertise or organizational authority to make the fight a national priority.

One recommendation would be to model a proven organizational process to "connect the dots" and govern homeland security issues used by former president George W. Bush with his Executive Order 13228. From my experience, a revised Executive Order 13228 could be drafted and promulgated by the president within a day and new newly established Homeland Security Council could be up and operational within a week. Once established, the IC and agency professionals at Justice (DEA), Defense (SOUTHCOM), Homeland Security (CBP and USCG) can bring forward their recommendations against the cartels and their networks throughout the US.

This focus would help "connect the dots" through strategic communication that provides Colin Powell-style efficiency using a macro slide that illustrates the cartel networks operating in the US, the top 3 focal points to "cut off and kill" the cartel networks and executive authority to surge homeland security

task forces to the top three areas.

Once established, the office of the Homeland Security Adviser would be able to strategically communicate and lead efforts to "connect the dots" and prevent and disrupt the ongoing malign effects from human trafficking, terrorism and fentanyl distribution. In conclusion, we cannot continue on our present course. Our Homeland Security professionals need organizational assistance from the Biden Administration NOW to establish an effective policy and strategy process to address the array of challenge from the cartel networks. Our government is failing us again and the top levels of our Homeland Security urgently needs to "connect the dots" against the cartel networks in Mexico and throughout the US. As we said in the Bush administration against al-Qaeda – "it takes a network to defeat a network" and the need to defeat the cartel network against their nefarious human, drug and drug trafficking of narcotics and fentanyl operations has never been more important. So I hope the Biden administration will reorganize tomorrow, because the dots are there to connect, and the American people demand a response. Failure is not an option.

'Blizzard Of The Century' In US Turns Niagara Falls Into Winter Wonderland

Over the Christmas weekend, western New York was paralysed by a relentless storm that authorities dubbed the "blizzard of the century". The extreme weather that gripped the United States over several days, caused widespread power outages, travel delays and several deaths. Several images and videos have surfaced on social media describing ferocious conditions, particularly in Buffalo, where bodies were discovered in vehicles and under snow banks.

Now, a video of Niagara Falls

covered in ice has surfaced on the internet. Due to the recent wave of sub-zero temperatures that has gripped the region, the falls have been transformed into a partially frozen winter wonderland. While parts of the falls were frozen, the sheer volume of water that gushes over, combined with the constant movement of the raging liquid, ensures that they almost never completely freeze, the New York Post said. "During particularly cold temperatures, the mist and spray begin to form a crust of ice over top of the rushing water, making it appear

as though the Falls have in fact stopped. However, the water continues to flow underneath the sheets of ice," says the Niagara Parks website.

According to the Niagara Falls New York State Park, around 3,160 tonnes of water flows over Niagara Falls every second. It is falling at a rate of 32 feet per second.

Prior to 1964, ice could obstruct the flow of water further upstream, causing the volume of water on the US side of the Falls to freeze. This happened five times before steel ice-booms were installed to prevent

large ice accumulations. "During particularly cold temperatures, the mist and spray begin to form a crust of ice over top of the rushing water, making it appear as though the Falls have in fact stopped. However, the water continues to flow underneath the sheets of ice," says the Niagara Parks website.

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obstruct the flow of water further upstream, causing the volume of water on the US side of the Falls to freeze. This happened five times before steel ice-booms were installed to prevent large ice accumulations. Ice and snow frequently form over the Niagara River at the base of the falls during particularly cold winters, forming an "ice bridge". Authorities prohibited people from walking on the ice bridge after three people died when ice broke loose and tossed them into the Niagara River on February 4, 1912, as per the Post.

Actor Sheezan Khan, Arrested In Tunisha Sharma Case, Deleted WhatsApp Chats: Cops

Tunisha, 21, allegedly died by suicide on the sets of her TV show 'Alibaba - Dastaan-e-Kabul' in Vasai near Mumbai on December 24.

Mumbai: Actor Sheezan Khan, who has been arrested as part of an investigation into the death of his co-actor and former girlfriend Tunisha Sharma, was in touch with another woman who was his ex-girlfriend, the police claimed today. The police said Sheezan was talking to his another

ex-girlfriend on WhatsApp but later deleted all his chats with her.

The police found 250 pages of WhatsApp chats from Sheezan's mobile phone which will be studied and further analyzed.

The cops have written to WhatsApp to retrieve all of Sheezan's chats with

his another ex-girlfriend and are probing why he deleted the messages. Tunisha, 21, allegedly died by suicide on the sets of her TV show 'Alibaba - Dastaan-e-Kabul' in Vasai near Mumbai on December 24. Tunisha reportedly broke up with Sheezan 15 days before her death.

The lead actor has been arrested on Tunisha's mother's complaint on charges of abetment to suicide. The actor will remain in police custody till Friday, a court near Mumbai said today. He was presented before the court by the police after his custody expired.

Alia Bhatt's Wedding Memories: Pics From Haldi And "First Fitting"

"Pics that never made it to the gram," Alia Bhatt captioned the post

New Delhi: Alia Bhatt curated some of her favourite moments from 2022 and shared them in a form of an Instagram reel on Wednesday morning. The video begins with Alia smiling with a camera in her hand. The video also has shots from the Berlin Film Festival, her 29th birthday celebrations on a beach. She also posted a picture from her haldi ceremony and she wrote: "My haldi hair." She also posted a picture from her first bridal outfit fitting and write:

"First fitting for (ring emoji)." She also posted a picture from her pregnancy diaries, a picture from her swim session captioned "Swim for two." She also shared a picture from the sets of Heart Of Stone, which marks her Hollywood debut. There are also photos of the actress with her sister Shaheen, her mother Soni Razdan and her cats. "My first day back postpartum," read a caption on another picture shared by her.

Alia Bhatt captioned the post: "Pics that never made it to the gram." Take a look at Alia Bhatt's post here: Alia Bhatt had a stellar year professionally. She will make her Hollywood debut with Heart Of Stone, co-starring Gal Gadot. Other than that, the actress has multiple films in the line-up. Alia Bhatt had four film releases this year - RRR, Gangubai Kathiawadi and Brahmastra - all of which received

stellar box office collections. She also starred in and co-produced Darlings, which released on Netflix and received positive reviews. On the personal front, Alia Bhatt married her Brahmastra co-star Ranbir Kapoor in April this year at their house Vastu, in front of a few family members and close friends. The star couple had been dating for over 5 years before getting married. They welcomed a daughter in November this year and named her Raha.

How a budding Sikh ideologue stumbled in Punjab on religious turf

He's the proverbial new kid on Punjab's block.

A Sandhu Jat, Amritpal Singh, reportedly returns from Dubai in the second half of 2022 after spending ten years in the Emirate. He's installed as head of Waris Punjab De (meaning the inheritors of Punjab), a group set up by actor Deep Sidhu, who died in February this year.

WHO IS AMRITPAL SINGH?

To cut the long story short, the 29-year-old man has been intriguingly quick to position himself as a potential Sikh ideologue in a matter of weeks. He probably owes his rapid popularity to his typical religious oratory, his traditional getup, his ravings about "Sikh freedom" and frank praise of slain militant leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, and of course, to the right-wing friendly social-media algorithms.

OLD TACTICS, NEW WAYS

It's not that he's the first proponent of "Sikh freedom". He's isn't the first vocal supporter of Bhindranwale either.

The fringe advocating Khalistan, which co-opts Bhindranwale, has existed in Punjab since the mid-1980s. The movement itself,

however, died down and lost popular support in the 1990s in Punjab. Elections happen, mostly peacefully. The democratic process from parliament to panchayats and routine economic activity go on with all their trademark issues of rich-poor divides, agrarian crises, environmental degradation, unemployment and so forth. But yes, netas do raise the Khalistan bogey closer to elections in a state with a sizeable Hindu population.

In fact, no election in Punjab has ever happened since the return of peace without politicians attempting to polarize Sikh-Hindu votes by accusing one another of siding with the pro-Khalistan fringe.

THE IMMEDIATE BACKDROP But the vote in 2022 was different. It came on the back of a year-long farm agitation led by the farmers of Punjab.

The mobilisation was historic and precedent-breaking.

Frustrations with traditional political players grew phenomenally and Punjab's Sikh and Hindu electorate across caste lines gave AAP a thumping majority.

No polarisation tactic could weave its magic on voters. But the enthusiasm with the

Aam Aadmi Party evaporated sooner than expected.

Simranjit Singh Mann, a dichotomous pro-Khalistan politician nearing 80, emerged from near oblivion and broke into the bastion of a younger chief minister barely four months after an election that had torn apart the duopoly of the Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal on Punjab. Mann ascended to the Lok Sabha from CM Bhagwant Mann's stronghold of Sangrur in the June by-election that came amidst surging anger in Punjab over the murder of singer Sidhu Moosewala on May 29. The veteran politician's revival signalled that the ground was fertile for the Sikh political right in Punjab, more so when the far-right seems to be thriving across the world.

THE SIKH AND HINDU POLITICAL RIGHT

The dramatic arrival of a much younger Amritpal Singh on the scene coincides with the emergence of a number of Hindutva exponents seen issuing communally provocative statements and with the conversion issue gathering steam in the same Punjab.

Modelling himself after

Bhindranwale, in costumes and armed personal guards to be specific (and nothing more), the young Sikh man soon became a darling of Facebook reels bumped up on Sikh feeds world over.

NO FIXED GOALPOST

But when watched with attention to detail, Amritpal Singh could be seen switching from one goalpost to another or holding several of them at once — a Punjab Da Waris, the inheritor of a diverse Punjab, a supporter of the idea of "Sikh freedom", a crusader against conversions and a budding Robin Hood attending to people's grievances in villages. But the man seems to have stumbled big time within the core Sikh constituency he has been cultivating. Amritpal Singh's fledgling campaign suddenly turned inward.

FROM "SIKH RAJ" TO GOING AFTER CHAIRS IN GURDWARAS

Singh's supporters polarized Sikh opinion vertically after they barged into gurdwaras in Punjab and vandalized furniture placed inside for the elderly and arthritis patients. For some it's disrespectful of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, for others it's a humanitarian measure aimed at helping the old and the infirm

while inside gurdwaras. The videos of ransacking of gurdwaras by Amritpal Singh's supporters have gone wildly viral.

ANTITHETICAL TO SIKH DOCTRINE, SEWA

His men even burnt chairs and benches, and he was heard calling gurdwara furniture "impure". In Sikh doctrine though, the notions of external purity and impurity are rejected from the word go! Online, many of his supporters who have been usually critical of the Akal Takht Jathedars because they are appointed by the Badal-controlled SGPC, circulated old edicts by the same seat of the Sikh temporal authority that banned chairs inside gurdwaras. But Amritpal Singh's supporters instead took a refuge in the letter of the Jathedars' edicts and a code of conduct framed in the 1930-1940s to defend their vandalism. But neither the religious orders nor the code prescribes use of force to implement the no-chair guidance in gurdwaras. The reaction from within the Sikh intellectual class has been strong, which condemned Amritpal Singh's actions in no uncertain terms, finding them antithetical to the spirit of their faith.

Controversial internet personality Andrew Tate and his brother detained in Romania

He made headlines this week for a Twitter interaction with Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, who told Tate to get a life after he tweeted about his numerous cars “and their respective enormous emissions.”

Controversial internet personality Andrew Tate and his brother were detained in Romania on Thursday, according to their defense lawyer. Authorities in Romania said police served search warrants at five homes and detained four suspects, — two Britons and two Romanians — as part of an investigation into organized human trafficking and rape. They did not name any of those detained.

Romania’s Directorate for In-

vestigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) said the four suspects had been detained for an initial 24 hours. It asked a Bucharest court on Friday for the detentions to be extended to 30 days, according to Reuters.

A lawyer for Andrew and his brother Tristan Tate confirmed to CNN that a court hearing was scheduled for Friday. He stressed that Andrew Tate was not under arrest. “He was not arrested. He was detained for 24 hours,” said the lawyer, Eugen Vidineac.

The attorney did not discuss any of the allegations. DIICOT released an edited, grainy, sometimes out-of-focus video purportedly showing the raids. A man can be seen being patted down by police. It’s unclear who is being detained in the video.

In a separate video aired by CNN affiliate Antena 3, officers from the crime agency can be seen escorting Andrew and Tristan Tate into police ve-

hicles.

On Friday, Andrew Tate tweeted from his verified account, “The Matrix sent their agents.” DIICOT alleged that the four unnamed suspects formed an organized criminal group that stretched from Romania to Britain and the United States, for the purpose of committing the crime of human trafficking.

The authorities allege that two of the suspects misled the victims “into believing that they intended to enter into a marriage/cohabitation relationship” while transporting victims to Romania and later sexually exploiting them with physical violence and coercion.

Authorities also said one of the suspects raped a victim on two separate occasions in March 2022. At least six victims were allegedly “sexually exploited by the organized criminal group,” the DIICOT statement said.

Andrew Tate, a former professional kickboxer, is known for



his viral rants online about male dominance, female submission and wealth. He openly advocates violence against women, and had previously been banned from every major social media platform until Elon Musk reinstated his Twitter account after taking over the company.

He rose in prominence earlier this year, with many adults including school teachers voicing alarm about his misogynistic ideas taking root in the minds of countless young boys. Before it was taken down, his TikTok account racked up

about 11.6 billion views. He made headlines this week for a Twitter interaction with Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, who told Tate to get a life after he tweeted about his numerous cars “and their respective enormous emissions.”

There was speculation online that authorities were alerted to Tate’s presence in Romania by the appearance of a particular pizza box in one of the photos he posted in his spat with Thunberg.

But, according to Reuters, a spokesperson for DIICOT said the pizza boxes did not play a role in the detentions.



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Turkey's underground city of 20,000 people

More than 85m beneath the famous fairy chimneys of Cappadocia lies a massive subterranean city that was in near-constant use for thousands of years.



Violent gusts whipped loose soil into the air as I hiked through Cappadocia's Love Valley. Pink- and yellow-hued hillsides coloured the rolling landscape scarred with deep red canyons, and chimneystack rock formations loomed in the distance. It was arid, hot, windy and devastatingly beautiful. Millennia ago, this volatile, volcanic environment naturally sculpted the spires surrounding me into their conical, mushroom-capped shapes, which now draw millions of visitors to hike or hot-air balloon in the central Turkish region.

But beneath Cappadocia's crumbling surface, a marvel of equally gargantuan proportions lay hidden away for centuries; a subterranean city that could conceal the whereabouts of up to 20,000 inhabitants for months at a time.

The ancient city of Elengubu, known today as Derinkuyu, burrows more than 85m below the Earth's surface, encompassing 18 levels of tunnels. The largest excavated underground city in the world, it was in near-constant use for thousands of years, changing hands from the Phrygians to the Persians to the Christians of the Byzantine Era. It was finally abandoned in the 1920s by the Cappadocian Greeks when they faced defeat during the Greco-Turkish war and fled abruptly en masse to Greece. Not only do its cave-like rooms stretch on for hundreds of miles, but it's thought the more than 200 small, separate underground cities that have also been discovered in the region may be connected to these tunnels, creating a massive subterranean network. According to my guide, Suleman, Derinkuyu was only "rediscovered" in 1963 by an anonymous local who kept losing his chickens. While he was renovating his home, the poultry would disappear into a small crevasse created during the remodel, never to be seen again. Upon closer

investigation and some digging, the Turk unearthed a dark passageway. It was the first of more than 600 entrances found within private homes leading to the subterranean city of Derinkuyu.

Excavation began immediately, revealing a tangled network of underground dwellings, dry food storage, cattle stables, schools, wineries and even a chapel. It was an entire civilisation tucked safely underground. The cave city was soon spelunked by thousands of Türkiye's least claustrophobic tourists and, in 1985, the region was added to the Unesco World Heritage list. The city's exact date of construction remains contested, but Anabasis, written by Xenophon of Athens circa 370 BCE, is the oldest written work that seems to reference Derinkuyu. In the book, he mentions Anatolian people, in or near the region of Cappadocia, living underground in excavated homes rather than the more popular cliffside cave-dwellings that are well known in the area.

According to Andrea De Giorgi, associate professor of classical studies at Florida State University, Cappadocia is uniquely suited to this kind of underground construction due to the lack of water in the soil and its malleable, easily mouldable rock. "The geomorphology of the region is conducive to the digging of underground spaces," he said, explaining that the local tuff rock would have been fairly easy to carve with simple tools like shovels and pickaxes. This same pyroclastic material was naturally forged into the fairy-tale chimneys and phallic spires jutting from the earth above ground. But whom to credit with Derinkuyu's creation remains a partial mystery. The groundwork for the sprawling network of subterranean caves is often attributed to the Hittites, "who may have excavated the first few levels in the

rock when they came under attack from the Phrygians around 1200 BCE", according to A Bertini, an expert in Mediterranean cave dwellings, in his essay on regional cave architecture. Adding weight to this hypothesis, Hittite artefacts were found inside Derinkuyu.

However, the bulk of the city was likely built by the Phrygians, highly skilled Iron-age architects who had the means to construct elaborate underground facilities. "The Phrygians were one of Anatolia's most prominent early empires," explained De Giorgi. "They developed across western Anatolia around the end of the first millennium BCE and had a bent for monumentalising rock formations and creating remarkable rock-cut facades. Though elusive, their kingdom spread to include most of western and central Anatolia, including the area of Derinkuyu."

Originally, Derinkuyu was likely used for the storage of goods, but its primary purpose was as a temporary haven from foreign invaders, with Cappadocia seeing a constant flux of dominant empires throughout the centuries. "The succession of empires and their impact on the landscapes of Anatolia explain the recourse to underground shelters like Derinkuyu," De Giorgi explained. "It was at the time of the [7th-Century] Islamic raids [on the predominantly Christian Byzantine Empire], however, that these dwellings were used to the fullest." While the Phrygians, Persians and Seljuks, among others, all inhabited the region and expanded upon the underground city in subsequent centuries, Derinkuyu's population swelled to its peak during the Byzantine Era, with nearly 20,000 residents living underground.

Today, you can experience the harrowing reality of life underground for just

60 Turkish lira (£2.80). As I descended into the musty, narrow tunnels, the walls blackened with soot from centuries of torch lighting, the unfamiliar sensation of claustrophobia began to set in. However, the ingenuity of the various empires that expanded upon Derinkuyu soon became apparent. Intentionally narrow, short hallways forced visitors to navigate the labyrinth of corridors and dwellings while stooped over and single file – obviously an inopportune position for intruders. Dimly lit by lamplight, half-ton circular boulders blocked doors between each of the 18 levels and were only moveable from the inside. Small, perfectly round holes in the centre of these hefty doors would have allowed residents to spear invaders while maintaining a secure perimeter.

"Life underground was probably very difficult," my guide Suleman added. "The residents relieved themselves in sealed clay jars, lived by torchlight and disposed of dead bodies in [designated] areas."

Each level of the city was carefully engineered for specific uses. Livestock was kept in stables nearest to the surface to reduce the smell and toxic gases produced by cattle, as well as provide a warm layer of living insulation for the cold months. The inner layers of the city contained dwellings, cellars, schools and meeting spaces. Identifiable by its unique barrel-vaulted ceilings, a traditional Byzantine missionary school, complete with adjacent rooms for study, is located on the second floor. According to De Giorgi, "the evidence for winemaking is grounded in the presence of cellars, vats for pressing and amphoras [tall, two-handled jars with a narrow neck]." These specialised rooms indicate that inhabitants of Derinkuyu were prepared to spend months beneath the surface.

Let's Get American Revenge

For too long, we've been consumed by our darkest impulses. It's time to rise above it.

In this season of gratitude and goodwill, we're greeted with headlines reporting revenge travel, revenge dressing, revenge impeachments and revenge of presidential proportions in the 2024 campaign of Donald Trump. But are Americans avengers?

The answer was simple once. Yes, we dreamed of revenge, cheered it at theaters and sports arenas, secretly wished it upon bosses and double-crossers. We prayed revenge would right family slights and false friends. Yet we respected the line between fantasy and action. Our society demanded it. Vengeance was considered uncivilized, unethical, an act of ugly self-destruction. We denied the need to get even. In recent years though, we've

seen a surge in vindictive behavior. Judges, journalists, politicians and their families have been targeted with violent reprisals. Online encounters trend spiteful, with TikTok and Bumble fighting the spread of revenge porn. Corporate culture plays like a mud-pit production of "Measure for Measure," starring Elon Musk. And congressional midterms are a grudge match, the next round scheduled for January, according to the headlines: "The GOP captures the House — and is ready for revenge."

If we are engaged in a "battle for the soul of the nation," as President Joseph Biden says, we are struggling with the rules of engagement. More than ever, retaliatory behavior tempts us, as we confront anti-democratic forces at home and abroad. Stung, we wonder how to best address injustice: I shouldn't seek an eye for an eye, but I can't turn the other cheek either. How did we get here, and where do we go?

When I first studied revenge 20 years ago, it was hard to find Americans willing to speak openly about settling scores. I had to travel overseas to find communities that embraced their revenge heritage, while researching my book *Revenge: A Story of Hope*. In northern Albania, I met Mark Pashko Malotaj, a retired farmer and one of six Christian members of the local Blood Feud Committee. I asked him, "How does your canon [revenge code] fit in with 'Turn the other cheek'?"

Mark laughed: "In Albania, we have a saying, 'Don't hit my



cheek because I'll kill you."

In the cobblestone alleys of Sicily, cradle of la vendetta, even the clergy acknowledged rough justice. Padre Ennio Pintacuda, told me, "If you don't take revenge, you're like a woman!"

In Iran, vengeance rites were so mainstream, the justice system incorporated them. In the holy city of Qom, Grand Ayatollah Abdul Karim Musavi Ardebili, Chief Justice of Iran's Supreme Court, told me about a case in which a man had thrown acid in the face of his beautiful wife. She took him to court.

"I want his eyes," the woman said, rejecting her husband's \$7,000 offer in blood money. "I want to blind him as he blinded me."

Under the judge's supervision, she felt for her husband's face, her fingers striking the air like a piano player. Relatives guided her wrists, helping her find her husband's eye sockets. She used a metal spoon to dig.

"The husband was happy," the Grand Ayatollah explained to me, winking. The wife poked out only one eye. "He got a discount." Although these examples were extreme, they revealed a theme: Beyond U.S. shores, revenge was acceptable, at times respectable. It wasn't a moral choice but self-preservation, a sacred duty, or animus dressed up as honor. Yet when I came home and shared these stories with American friends, they furrowed their brows. Revenge was for others.

That is, until recently. The cultural shift began two

decades ago, the sunny morning that our country was sucker-punched. Dec. 7, 1941, may be a date that lives in infamy, but Sept. 11, 2001, prevails as a date of humiliation. While Pearl Harbor was damaged by the military might of the Japanese empire, the World Trade Center was devastated by 19 guys with box cutters. That moment of revealed weakness was more than painful for our nation; it was shameful.

For those seeking an education in revenge, shame is the first lesson. It is the first of four conditions — shame, memory, jungle, simplicity — that incubate revenge, that altered our domestic environment over the last 20 years, and that changed the way Americans behave. Shame, or the loss of honor, triggers revenge, sometimes more than the actual offense. In certain tribal societies, shame is the only lawful motive for homicide. In old Europe, when men dueled, they often fired one shot. Even if both survived, striking back eased public embarrassment. Since the U.S. was blindsided on 9/11, presidents of every temperament — from George W. Bush's displaced punishment of Iraq, to Barack Obama's record number of drone strike assassinations, to Trump's Muslim ban — have struggled to erase the national humiliation. The mad-as-hell swagger extended to the general population because, if we're being honest, we too were mortified. Add to that a growing focus on the past,

where Americans learned their second lesson in revenge: memory. While shame ignites vengeance, memory keeps it burning. In southern Greece, women sang bloody lullabies to the sons of murder victims so they would remember and avenge. In Ireland, the bardic tradition kept sectarian memories simmering since the 1690 Battle of the Boyne.

As citizens of the New World though, Americans distinguished themselves by looking forward. We benefited from a kind of adaptive amnesia, setting aside destructive grudges. Whether we were unjustly fired, cheated on, or ripped off, Americans were schooled to view the past as an economist might — sunk costs. Our focus was on material progress, and on optimizing the future. As the ecumenical American clergyman Douglas Horton once said, "While seeking revenge, dig two graves — one for yourself." The self-defeating nature of revenge rendered it unproductive — economically, socially and politically — and therefore, distinctly un-American.

As I wrote, tongue in cheek, in my book: "The opposite of revenge isn't forgiveness. It's shopping. It's being busy with the practical, shallow, now." Americans were good at the practical-shallow-now. Then our model crashed. The socio-economic shocks starting in 2008 eliminated jobs, homes, savings, and for millions, a future. With nowhere to go, people began trolling the past.

For some, like the "Jews will not replace us" crowd at Charlottesville, they yearned for the bygone era of white, male power.

Others looked back at U.S. history in justifiable horror, calling for a long overdue racial and ethnic reckoning. There was no moral equivalency, no grounds for comparison, yet all were energized by memories. Rather than forgive and forget, folks retaliated and remembered. Historic characters poked through the layers of time in the form of statues, raising buried hatchets of class and color. Who deserved to be torn down? Who will be offended? Americans now track a running score of insults. No one wants to be the last slandered or attacked, because in this environment if you aren't a predator, you become prey.

Which leads to the third lesson in revenge: the law of the jungle. In the jungle, the roles are clear. There are aggressors and victims. No animal can hope for a mediating agent to swoop in and order a predator to retreat. The same is true for humans living in conditions of chaos. Disputes resolve themselves according to the Darwinian rhythms of jungle justice.

"In my world, if I'm helpless I'm dead," an Israeli gangster named Smitt once told me, sitting on a curb in Jerusalem. Smitt's crew wore Adidas sneakers because they had the quietest treads to prowl the homes they robbed.

"Revenge is the law of the outlaws," Smitt said.

For people like Smitt, whose criminal gang relied on street justice, score-settling is about survival, not hate. Although most Americans have yet to descend into such lawlessness, we are increasingly doubtful of the institutions and individuals that guarantee fair play. We've lost confidence that the government, international agencies and other societal referees, can enforce order in multiple domains, including elections, social media, pandemics, immigration, cyber and climate. As public trust erodes, private justice emerges.

While these three elements of revenge explain motive, there's no execution without the fourth: simplicity.

Sebi orders attachment of bank, demat accounts of Sahara group firm, Subrata Roy, others

Sebi asked all banks, depositories and mutual funds not to allow any debit from accounts of Sahara India Real Estate Corp, Subrata Roy, Ashok Roy Choudhary, Dubey and Bharrgava.

(SAI Bureau) Sebi on Monday ordered the attachment of bank and demat accounts of Sahara Group firm, its chief Subrata Roy and others to recover Rs 6.42 crore for violating regulatory norms in the issuance of optionally fully convertible debentures (OFCDs). The recovery proceedings against five entities — Sahara India Real Estate Corporation (now known as Sahara Commodity Services Corporation), Subrata Roy, Ashok Roy Choudhary, Ravi Shanker Dubey and Vandana Bharrgava — for Rs 6.42 crore, includes interest, all costs, charges and expenses, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in the attachment order. In its notice, Sebi asked all banks, depositories and mutual funds not to allow any debit from accounts of



Sahara India Real Estate Corp, Subrata Roy, Ashok Roy Choudhary, Dubey and Bharrgava. However, credits have been permitted. Further, the market watchdog has

directed all banks to attach all accounts, including lockers, of the defaulters. The regulator, in its order in June, levied a fine totalling Rs 6 crore on Sahara India Real Estate Corp, Subrata Roy, Ashok Roy Choudhary, Dubey and Bharrgava. The case relates to the issuance of OFCDs by Sahara India Real Estate Corporation and Sahara Housing Investment Corporation during 2008-09. They raised money through the public issue of securities by issuing OFCDs without following the various procedures intended to protect the interest of the investors, in respect of public issues, prescribed under the norms, as per Sebi order. According to Sebi, the subscription towards the OFCDs was solicited by the two companies from the general public throughout the country, without adequately informing them about the risks involved in the instruments. The issuance was allegedly done in contravention of the provisions of the Sebi's ICDR (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations and PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices).

Venugopal Dhoot, Chanda Kochhar, her husband in CBI custody till Dec 28 in loan fraud case



(SAI Bureau) Chanda Kochhar, Deepak Kochhar and Venugopal Dhoot were arrested for alleged cheating and irregularities in loans sanctioned by the ICICI Bank to Videocon Group companies. A special CBI court in Mumbai on Monday extended the custody of former ICICI Bank CEO and MD Chanda Kochhar, her husband Deepak Kochhar, and Videocon group founder Venugopal Dhoot till December 28 in connection with a loan fraud case. A Limosine, the prosecutor representing the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), sought three days' custody. He submitted before the court that while Chanda Kochhar was heading the bank, as many as six loans were sanctioned which are under the scanner. "There is wrongful loss to ICICI bank of Rs 1,730 crores between 2009 and

Kochhars did not. Again on December 23, Dhoot was called but he did not appear while Kochhars came. When the Kochhars were arrested, Dhoot was called again but he still did not come on December 25. So when he came today, he was arrested." While the Kochhars were arrested on Friday night, Venugopal Dhoot was arrested on Monday. The three accused have been arrested for alleged cheating and irregularities in loans sanctioned by ICICI Bank during Kochhar's tenure to

Videocon Group of town and came and went to CBI office. He has crossed 70 years of age and there are no chances of him fleeing. The loan that was given to Videocon was paid back in full and thus there was no wrongful loss to ICICI Bank and this was reflected in the document perused by CBI. Advocate S Laddha, appearing for Dhoot, submitted that the businessman was undergoing medical treatment in Aurangabad from where he hails. "We have put Dhoot's air ticket to show that he was indeed out

of town and came and went to CBI office. He has crossed 70 years of age and there are no chances of him fleeing. The passport is already surrendered. Just for confronting and recording statement, arrest should not have been made. I am wondering what made them arrest him...," said Laddha. Advocate Vikram Chaudhri, appearing for Deepak Kochhar, argued that three judicial authorities have gone through the issue and "have concluded that the case is bereft of any merit."

World economy is headed for a recession in 2023: Experts

According to the Centre for Economics and Business Research, the world economy is headed for a recession in 2023

(SAI Bureau) The world is headed for a recession in 2023, according to the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), reported Bloomberg. The research revealed that the world faces a recession in 2023. Fresh borrowing costs aimed at tackling inflation cause a number of economies to contract. The British consultancy, in its yearly World Economic League Table, said that the world economy surpassed \$100 trillion for the first time in 2022 but will stall in 2023 as policy makers continue their fight against soaring prices. According to director and head of Forecasting at CEBR, Kay Daniel Neufeld, "It's likely that the world economy will face recession next year as a result of the rises in interest rates in response to higher inflation." "The battle against inflation is not won yet. We expect central bankers to stick to their guns in 2023 despite the economic costs. The cost of bringing inflation down to more comfortable levels is a poorer growth outlook for a number of years to come," the report added.



The findings of the research are gloomier than the recent forecast from the International Monetary Fund. That institution warned in October that more than a third of the world economy will contract and there is a 25% chance of global GDP growing by less than 2% in 2023, which it defines as a global recession, Bloomberg reported.

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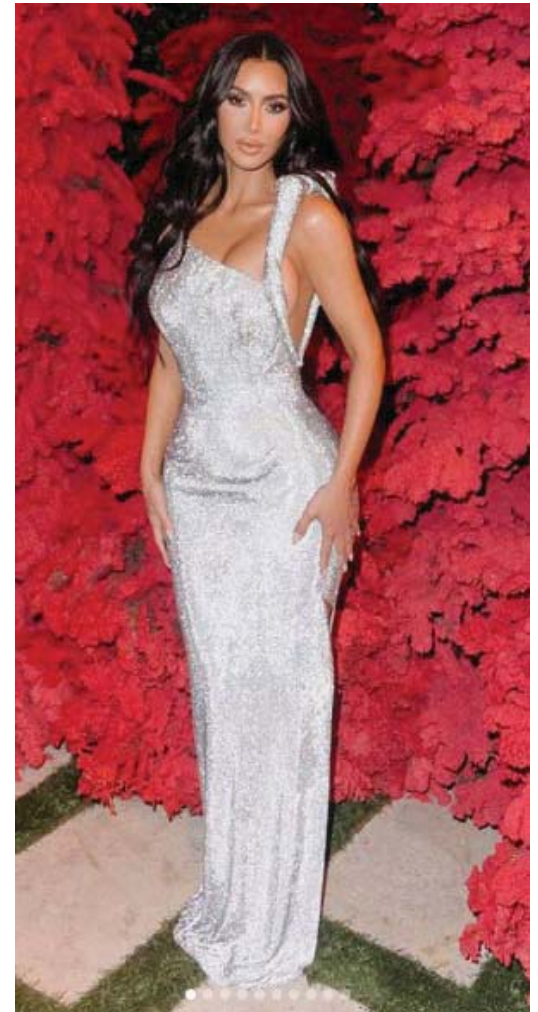


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Kim Kardashian shared a family picture of the Kardashians and the Jenners on Instagram on Monday. But internet users are convinced the portrait is "photoshopped."

The Kardashians are no strangers to trolling or negative publicity. They often take the internet by storm with their fashion looks, family pictures and the drama that unfolds in their scandalous reality show.



(SAI Bureau) But nothing says more opulent than their parties. For Christmas, the Kardashian-Jenner family had a red and silver-themed bash for which red Christmas trees were installed as part of the ambience along with a ceiling of large red balloons. Though the grand party was all about bringing together a family festive spirit, what the internet couldn't stop talking about was the portrait of the Kardashian-Jenner sisters that Kim posted on Instagram on Monday.

In fact, even the large spread of gingerbread houses on the table with colourful candies had gone unnoticed. "It looks so photoshopped," wrote one Instagram user. The picture in question is the first image in the carousel that features Khloe Kardashian, Kim Kardashian, Kris Jenner, Kourtney Kardashian, Kylie Jenner and Kendall Jenner. ' While Khloe, Kris and Kendall dressed up in red, Kim wore a silver coset-like gown, Kourtney a white

dress and Kylie a black and beige lace dress. An Instagram user pointed out their eyes looking in different directions, which added to their suspicions of the picture being morphed to fit the entire clan together. "Why do their faces all looked photoshopped in the picture like none of them were actually there," a person wrote. A nother one asked, "Did they just take everyone's favorite picture and paste it all together?" Trolling the Kardashians, a person

hilariously wrote, "Y'all forgot to take a pic all together huh?" Meanwhile, Kim Kardashian is co-parenting her four kids - North, Saint, Chicago and Psalm - with Kanye West after their separation last year.

Kate Middleton felt 'betrayed' by Prince Harry over Netflix docu-series: Report

As per a report, Kate Middleton reacted to Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's docu-series. She reportedly feels hurt and betrayed by Prince Harry.

(SAI Bureau) Meghan Markle and Prince Harry's Netflix docu-series has created a storm on the internet. Titled Harry & Meghan, the six-episode web show features the Royal couple talking about their lives in the West after stepping down from their Royal duties in 2020. While the internet is divided over the series, Kate Middleton is reportedly upset. "Kate feels hurt and betrayed that Harry would do this to her, too, especially as the pair used to be so close," a source explained to Us Weekly on Thursday. The source also revealed Prince Williams is not planning on giving his side of the story. "William isn't planning to give his side of the story or openly retaliate. He's remaining dignified and is getting on with the job," the source added. Sharing that Prince William is disappointed with Harry for "portraying him and the family in a cynical



light." Harry claimed, in the docu-series, that William had been complicit in negative stories appearing about the couple in the media and blamed the press for Meghan having a miscarriage. Harry alleged that his department from England had created a "wedge" between him and his brother. He also referred to a 2020 report about the siblings feuding, claiming he had not agreed to release a joint statement "squashing the story about [Prince William] bullying" him and Meghan out of the family. "William and Kate's aides have briefed them on the show, but don't expect the couple to sit down in their cottage with a bowl of popcorn to tune in themselves," the insider further said. Prince Harry and Meghan Markle left the UK in 2020 after announcing that they have stepped down from their duties as Royal members. The couple has two kids - Archie and Lilibet.

Who is Salt Bae and why is he trending

Nusret Gokce, also known as Salt Bae, has been banned from attending the US Open Cup Final 2023. Here's all you need to know about the Turkish chef

(SAI Bureau) Turkish chef Nusret Gokce, popularly known as Salt Bae, recently took over headlines for his stint on the field with Argentinian players following the FIFA World Cup win. Salt Bae left the internet fuming after he grabbed the coveted FIFA trophy and then tried to get a selfie clicked with Lionel Messi, who was noticeably irritated in a viral clip. Due to the uproar over his antics, the chef has now been banned from attending the US Open Cup final. Salt Bae, a famous restaurateur, posted a video of him meeting and interacting with Messi on Instagram. However, his followers were quick to point out that the clip was captured in 2018. Born in 1983 in Erzurum, Nusret, the man behind his nickname Salt Bae, is a Turkish butcher, chef and entrepreneur who rose to fame because of his peculiar way of sprinkling salt on a steak. He belonged to a Kurdish family - his father named Faik was a mineworker and his mother was named Fatma, as per a report by The Sun. His upbringing was poles apart from his current luxurious lifestyle. In sixth grade, Nusret was forced to leave school and work as a butcher's apprentice in Istanbul due to his family's financial struggles.



Neeraj Pandey reflects on Khakee The Bihar Chapter's success, shares Season 2 update

In an exclusive chat with IndiaToday.in, Neeraj Pandey shares that response to Khakee: The Bihar Chapter was overwhelming. He shared an update on the next chapter as well

(SAI Bureau) Neeraj Pandey had a successful 2022 with Khakee: The Bihar Chapter. The Netflix original show made it to the top 10 non-English language series watched globally as well. Khakee: The Bihar Chapter featured an ensemble cast that includes Karan Tacker, Avinash Tiwary, Nikita Dutta, Jatin Sarna, among others. Neeraj Pandey along with his partner Shital Bhatia produced the Netflix show under their production house, Friday Filmworks. In an exclusive chat, the producer duo reflects on the year 2022 and how Khakee's success motivated them to further the chapter. They also shared an update on the next chapter of the show.

Do you feel relieved about the response to Khakee: The Bihar Chapter?

Neeraj: We feel blessed and relieved that the show met the expectations of the audiences all over. If I have to sample, one of the comments that we have been receiving [since the release of Khakee] is from officials who want to get in touch and share their



stories. I feel them reaching out to us is a testimony that they feel it's worth their time. So, in that sense, it is overwhelming.

Shital: One of the responses that we've got for Khakee is from the people of Bihar that we recreated that world authentically. A lot of effort had gone into doing that.

It is after we work on a story at hand and look at the material, and at the merits that it offers. It's only when you have something very tangible in hand, that's when you try and explore the possibility of taking it to the next

level. But, it always starts with the merit that it carries.

A common thread with Friday Filmworks is that most of the stories deal with realism. Does that genre appeal to both of you over anything else?

No, I don't think that any one particular genre excites us. We have worked across genres but, like you mentioned, the reality of a story is a big attraction for us. We talk about stories which are rooted in our world and have a sense of realism to it. Having said that, we don't see any harm in

choosing science-fiction as well.

Khakee was mounted on a huge scale. With OTT, do you face any challenges with budgets?

As far as OTT is concerned, the usual conversation is 'this is the script, this is the amount of money it'll require.' And then, after reviewing, that's the amount of money that you get from a platform. So, it's true for films that budgets fail many-a-times. But, as far as OTT goes, it is very clear from the beginning that this is what is required to mount a certain project.

On a parting note, Khakee's next chapter is the most-awaited. Has work begun on it?

That was always the vision of the show that we would take it to places and other states. We are going to start writing very soon, which takes generally about eight to nine months, from the scripting to the casting. After that, we will figure out when to start work on that. A lot will also depend on when Netflix is looking at showcasing it. So, hopefully, we'll make an announcement to that effect very soon.



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Pakistani film The Legend of Maula Jatt, starring Fawad Khan, to release in India on Dec 30

After shattering box office records in Pakistan, Fawad Khan and Mahira Khan-starrer The Legend of Maula Jatt, is all set to release in India. Directed by Bilal Lashari, the film will open in Indian cinemas on December 30

(SAI Bureau) Pakistani film The Legend of Maula Jatt, starring Fawad Khan and Mahira Khan, is likely to be released on the big screen in India this Friday, an INOX official said. This will perhaps be the first film from Pakistan in over a decade to get a theatrical release here.

"It will be played in Punjab and a few theatres in Delhi in INOX where there are Punjabi speaking people," Rajender Singh Jyala, chief programming officer, INOX Leisure Ltd, told PTI. Multiplex chain PVR Cinemas had shared a release announcement on its official Instagram page but deleted it soon after.

"Presenting the official poster of #TheLegendofMaulaJatt! Coming to PVR this Friday," the post read. The action drama, which has become the highest-grossing Pakistani film of all time amassing \$10 million, was released in Pakistan on October 13.

Directed by Bilal Lashari, The Legend of Maula Jatt is an adaptation of the 1979 cult classic Maula Jatt and producers have said it is neither a remake nor a sequel. The movie stars Mahira and Fawad, who are familiar to Indian audiences through their popular Pakistani drama Humsafar and Bollywood. Fawad, who was most recently

seen in the superhero series Ms Marvel, has featured in Khoobsurat, Kapoor & Sons, and Ae Dil Hai Mushkil while Mahira appeared in Shah Rukh Khan-starrer Raees. The last Pakistani film to get a theatrical release in India was Bol starring Mahira in 2011. Before that was Ramchand Pakistani starring Nandita Das and Rashid Farooqi in 2008. Khuda Kay Liye, which included Fawad in the ensemble cast alongside Naseeruddin Shah, released in 2007. Pakistani films, however, have been screened at festivals in India. In November this year, the Dharamshala International Film Festival screened



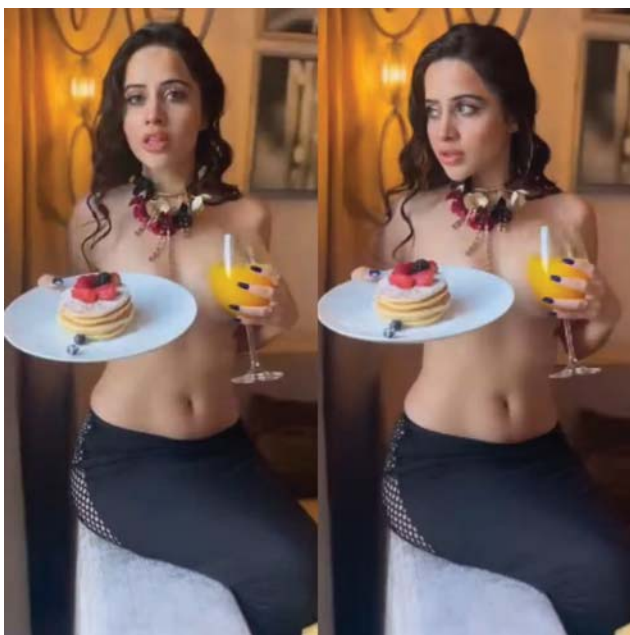
Saim Sadiq's Joyland, which is Pakistan's official entry in the international film category at the 95th Academy Awards. Khuda Kay Liye was the first ever Pakistani film to be included in the official selection of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). The Legend of Maula Jatt started production in January 2017 and concluded in June 2019. The film's release kept getting de-

layed due to copyright related issues and the COVID-19 pandemic. Pakistani actors stopped being cast in Indian productions following the 2016 terror attack in Uri in which 19 Indian Army personnel were martyred. The decision came amid demands by various political outfits to ban Pakistani artistes from Indian films and from performing here.

Uorfi Javed serves breakfast as she goes topless for new video

Uorfi Javed has hit the headlines again for her new video. The actress went topless while serving breakfast

(SAI Bureau) Uorfi Javed continues to make headlines like never before. After rising to fame with Big Boss OTT, the actress has been in the news for her sartorial choices. Uorfi is known to pull off any given outfit with confidence. Each time she steps out in public or posts a picture on social media, the actress leaves everyone stunned. She has often been trolled for her bold outfits. And the actress has once again grabbed the headlines for her new video. In the clip, the Uorfi can be seen posing topless.



official IG account, Uorfi simply wrote, "Breakfast. (sic)." If you haven't seen her video yet, check it out right below:

UORFI JAVED GOES TOPLESS, WATCH

A while ago, Uorfi Javed shared a new video on her Instagram handle. In the clip, the actress can be seen hiding her modesty with pancakes in one hand, and an orange juice in another hand. While posting the video on her of-

UORFI JAVED ON DATEBAAZI

Meanwhile, Uorfi Javed recently made a guest appearance on Datebaazi, a dating reality show. The show is hosted by TV star Rithvik Dhanjani. On the show, Uorfi was asked to reveal her weirdest fantasy. And she managed to leave everyone surprised with her answer.

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2023



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