

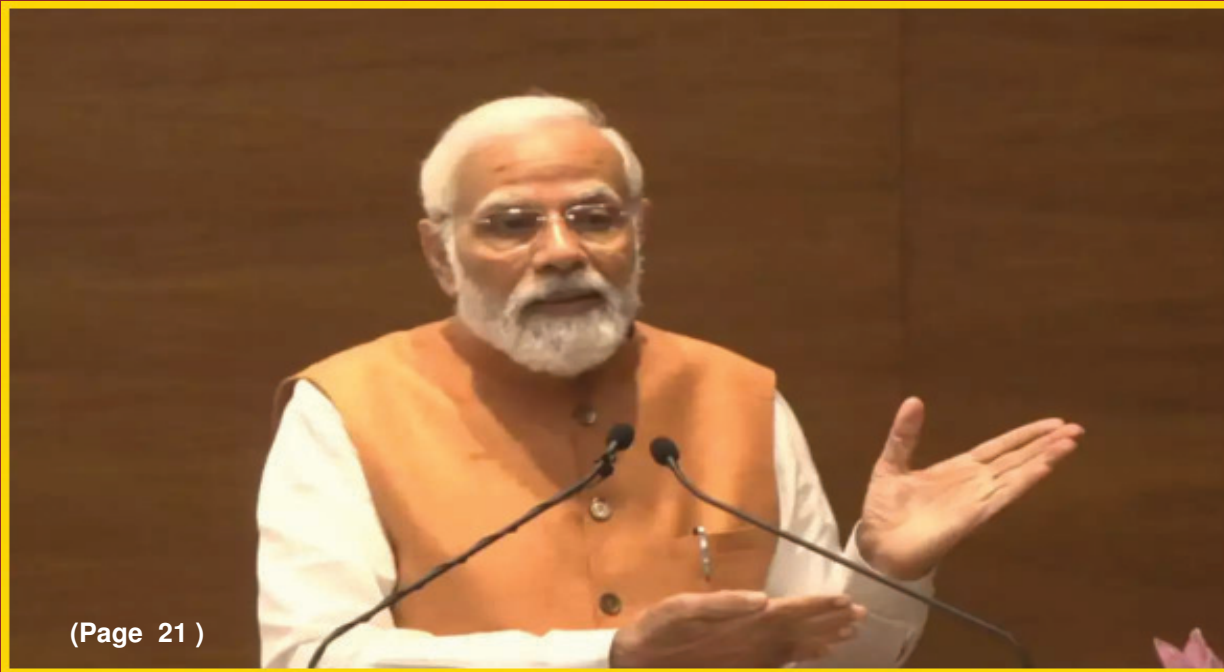


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## 'I Won't Bow Down...'

PM Modi Attacks Opposition Parties, Says All Those Deep in Corruption...



(Page 21)

## Rahul Gandhi's sentencing could also be good news for Congress

Rahul Gandhi's sentencing is a setback for the Congress. But here's why it could also be good news for the party struggling to come out of its existential crisis.



(Page 21)

**Next magic trick from ChatGPT: Forcing humans to wake up and smell the coffee**

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(Page 20)

## Who is Amrita Ahuja of Block Inc named in Hindenburg report

The daughter of Indian immigrants, Amrita Ahuja is the CFO of Jack Dorsey-led Block Inc. Hindenburg Research, in its report on Thursday, alleged that Amrita Ahuja dumped millions of dollars in stocks during the pandemic.

(SAI Bureau) Hindenburg Research published a damning report on Thursday, accusing Twitter founder Jack Dorsey's payments firm Block Inc of "overstating its user counts and understating its customer acquisition costs". The report also alleged that Block Inc's CFO Amrita Ahuja dumped millions of dollars in stocks during the pandemic. Amrita Ahuja is the daughter of Indian immigrants to the US. She revealed earlier that she was drawn to Square Inc (now Block Inc) because of its focus on empowering small-business owners like her parents. In 2021, Amrita Ahuja was named to the Forbes 50 Over 50 list.

### HINDENBURG'S ALLEGATIONS

Hindenburg Research said its investigation indicated that Block had wildly overstated its genuine user counts and had understated its customer acquisition costs. "Former employees estimated that 40%-75% of accounts they



reviewed were fake, involved in fraud, or were additional accounts tied to a single individual," it said. The report said that as Block's stock soared on the back of its facilitation of fraud, co-founders Jack Dorsey and James McKelvey collectively sold over \$1 billion of stock during the pandemic. Hindenburg also named Block Inc's Indian-origin Chief Financial Officer Amrita Ahuja of dumping millions of dollars in stock.

(Contd. Page 20)

## Amartya Sen raises 'deep concern' about democracy after Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as MP



Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen has raised 'deep concerns' about Indian democracy following Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as MP.

(Contd. Page 21)

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# Bill to reform H-1B and L-1 visa programmes introduced in US Senate

(By Staff Reporter)- A group of lawmakers have introduced a bipartisan legislation in the US Senate to comprehensively overhaul the H-1B and L-1 visa programmes for more transparency in the recruitment of foreign workers.

The H-1B visa allows American companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Tech companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The L-1 is the other type of work visa the US issues to professionals looking to work in the country. Unlike the H-1B, where an individual is looking to join an American company, the L-1 visa is issued to those who are already employed by the company in another country, and who are merely relocating to an American office.

Two influential Senators -- Dick Durbin and Chuck Grassley -- have introduced this legislation in the US Senate.



The co-sponsors include Senators Tommy Tuberville, Bernie Sanders, Sherrod Brown, and Richard Blumenthal.

The H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act will reduce fraud and abuse in the immigration system, provide protections for American workers and visa holders, and require more transparency in the recruitment of foreign workers, a media release said on Tuesday.

The legislation proposes to place new wage, recruitment and attestation requirements on employers looking to hire L-1 and H-1B workers, and employers seeking to hire H-1B employees to post those jobs on the

Department of Labour (DOL) website, it said.

It also proposes to give DOL the authority to place a fee on labour condition applications and use it to hire an additional 200 DOL employees and make reforms to the H-1B programme by prioritising the H-1B visa issuance for workers with higher levels of education in STEM and amending the definition of a "specialty occupation" to require a bachelor's degree or higher, according to the release.

The legislation seeks reforms to the L-1 nonimmigrant programme, including new time limits and evidentiary requirements for petitions from a "new office" and

mandating cooperation from the Department of State in verifying foreign affiliates.

"For years, outsourcing companies have used legal loopholes to displace qualified American workers and replace them with foreign workers who are paid sub-par wages and put under exploitative working conditions," Democratic Party Senator Durbin said. "These actions hurt all workers and make our country less attractive to the world's top talent. Our legislation would fix these broken programs, protect workers, and put an end to these abuses," he explained.

The H-1B and L-1 visa programmes were established to fill in gaps in America's high-skilled workforce, not supplant it, Grassley, a Republican, said.

"Unfortunately, some companies have exploited these programmes to replace American workers with cheaper labour, which ultimately harms American workers and foreign labour alike. Our bill puts American workers first and ensures that the programmes promote fairness for all workers,"

he said.

Durbin and Grassley, long-time advocates for H-1B and L-1 visa reform, first introduced the legislation in 2007.

Authors of this legislation said the H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act would stop these abuses by closing loopholes in these programmes.

The legislation will also crackdown on companies that hire large numbers of H-1B and L-1 workers to displace American workers and facilitate the outsourcing of American jobs, the media release added.

Thousands of highly skilled foreign-born workers, including Indians, in the US, have lost their jobs due to the series of recent layoffs at companies like Google, Microsoft and Amazon.

According to The Washington Post, nearly 200,000 IT workers have been laid off since November last year.

Industry insiders say that between 30 to 40 per cent of them are Indian IT professionals, a significant number of whom are on H-1B and L1 visas.

## Wrong to assume fired H-1B holders must leave within 60 days, multiple options available, says USCIS director

(By Staff Reporter)- Amid mass layoffs in the tech sector, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has said it is wrong to assume that fired workers holding H-1B visa has to leave the country within 60 days and that they have multiple options to stay. In a letter to the Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies, USCIS Director Ur M Jaddou said, "When non-immigrant workers are laid off, they may not be aware of their options and may, in some instances, wrongly assume that they have no option but to leave the country within 60 days."

The Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS), which has been working for laid-off H-1B visa holders, had recently written to USCIS about the impacts of recent technology sector layoffs and sought an increase to the up to 60-day grace period.

In the letter addressed to FIIDS director for policy and analysis strategy Khanderao Kand, the USCIS said it acknowledges the financial and emotional impact that job loss can have on employment-based non-immigrant workers and

their families in the United States. "We are aware of the issue of involuntary terminations, especially in the technology sector," it said.

When a non-immigrant worker's employment is terminated, either voluntarily or involuntarily, they typically may take one of the four actions, if eligible, to remain in a period of authorized stay in the United States, the USCIS said, Prominent among these include filing an application for a change of non-immigrant status and filing an application for adjustment of status.

They can also file an application for a "compelling circumstances" employment authorization document or be the beneficiary of a nonfrivolous petition to change employer, the USCIS said.

"If one of these actions occurs within the up to 60-day grace period, the nonimmigrant's period of authorized stay in the United States can exceed 60 days, even if they lose their previous non-immigrant status. "If the worker takes no action within the grace period, they and their dependents

may then need to depart the United States within 60 days, or when their authorized validity period ends, whichever is shorter," the USCIS said in its letter.

It said that because the up to 60-day grace period is codified in the Department of Homeland Security regulations, extending it would require a regulatory change in compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act and could not be extended by USCIS through policy guidance. Fortunately, most individuals facing job loss already have several options to remain in the United States while continuing their job search past 60 days, the USCIS wrote.

It said it recognizes the contributions made to the United States by talented foreign-born workers, including in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields.

"We will continue to monitor the technology sector layoffs and explore appropriate measures," Jaddou said.

In a statement, FIIDS director for policy and analysis strategy Khanderao Kand said departing

the US after layoffs has an immediate impact on the families of the laid-off H1B and their school-going children.

"Losing these professionals is also a brain drain impacting the future competitiveness of the US in emerging technologies. Hence, FIIDS has launched a multi-phase campaign from awareness building to jointly written letters to the USCIS with elected officials and other prominent

organizations," the statement said. FIIDS launched a media campaign in January to raise awareness about the issue. In February, it launched a petition which received support from various prominent organizations like the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, US-India Business Council, American Jewish Committee, and The Indus Entrepreneurs seeking an extension of the grace period.

## The assault of a senior journalist in Washington DC Press Release by Indian Embassy

(By Staff Reporter)- We have seen disturbing visuals of a senior Indian journalist from the Press Trust of India being abused, threatened & assaulted physically while covering so called 'Khalistan protest' in Washington DC earlier today.

We understand that the journalist was first verbally intimidated, then physically assaulted, and fearing for his personal safety and well being, had to call in law

enforcement agencies, who responded promptly.

We condemn such a grave and unwarranted attack on a senior journalist. Such activities only underscore the violent and anti-social tendencies of the so called 'Khalistani protestors' and their supporters, who routinely engage in wanton violence and vandalism. We thank the law enforcement agencies for their prompt response in the matter.



# Your long wait for US tourist visa appointments is finally over

(By Staff Reporter)-The wait time for US visitor's visa interview has come down by 60 per cent, a senior official said.

The United States has taken a lot of steps including increasing the number of officials issuing visas and opening other diplomatic missions to process these applications. Applications for US visa saw a major spike in India after coronavirus related travelling restrictions were lifted.

There have been a growing concerns in India over the long waiting period for first time visa applicants, especially for those applying under B1 (business) and B2 (tourist) categories. The waiting period of first time B1/B2 visa applicants in India was close to 1,000 days in October last year. While the wait times in Mumbai (332 days) and Kolkata (357 days) have dropped below a year, applicants opting for Chennai may still need to wait for almost two years, 680 days to be exact, for their B1/B2 visa appointments.

While the wait times in Mumbai (332 days) and Kolkata (357 days) have dropped below a year, applicants opting for Chennai may still need to wait for almost two



years, 680 days to be exact, for their B1/B2 visa appointments. The US Embassy at New Delhi has the shortest wait for tourist and business visa appointments - 247 days.

In an interview, Julie Stufft, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Services said that the goal of the State Department is to get to 1 million visas issued this year, which would be above the pre-pandemic number.

"We have increased the number of officers going to India. We have set up arrangements, which is unprecedented, with other embassies in the world like Bangkok to take Indians who are

seeking visas. We are opening a new consulate in Hyderabad... and we're just focused on making sure that we can bring the wait time down in India," she said.

She also noted that London, Frankfurt and Abu Dhabi have taken a lot of visa seeking Indian citizens. We have asked these missions to take Indians as if they were from their own host country. Especially in places like Bangkok where there is no visa required for Indians and it is a relatively short flight, she said.

"Obviously this is not ideal. We want Indians to be able to apply in India, and that's where we'll

get to," she said.

"As a result of all of these efforts, the visitor visa interview wait time has decreased by 60 per cent just in the last couple of months. This is a result of all the work that we've put into making sure that Indians who wish to travel to the US can do so."

Stufft said that currently, "visa production in India is 40 per cent higher than it was before the pandemic" and asserted that the State Department was working hard to bring down the wait time.

"Our team there is working very hard and they're well on their way to accomplishing the 1 million visa goal," Stufft said.

The State Department official also said that they are working on other types of visas including, student visas.

US recently expanded interview waivers for Indians, meaning that only some individuals need to go the consulate for an interview. This has made it possible for people who don't need an interview, those who have travelled to the US before, to get their visa in a record time of less than two weeks.

"It really is a global effort. Because we have such strong ties with India and the relationship between our

two countries means that the categories of visas are the highest in India... students, tech workers, and crew members. It's a high cultural, educational and work relationship between our countries," Stufft said.

"But make your appointment, find the place that you can go in India or outside of India where it's possible. And bear with us as we bring these wait times down. We're very excited to be hitting records every month with the number of visas that we're issuing in India," she said.

The United States is also planning to launch a pilot project on domestic renewal of visas. Under this project, Indians living in the United States will be able to get their visas renewed without leaving US.

"That's very exciting for all of us. It will take time. We're building up that operation from zero. That's something that we have not done for several decades at this point. This will have big benefits for Indians who are living and working in America," she added.

Currently, more than 100 US diplomatic missions have been issuing visas to Indians.

## H-1B visa-holders' spouses can work in US, says judge

(By Staff Reporter)-Big technology companies won a major court victory in Washington, where a judge dismissed a suit challenging the rights of highly skilled H-1B visa holders' spouses to work in the US. US District Judge Tanya Chutkan on Tuesday issued a decision upholding the Obama-era rule under which the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has issued H-4 visas to the spouses of hundreds of thousands of H-1B workers in the US, 70% of whom hold science and engineering jobs in the tech sector.

Amazon.com Inc., Apple Inc., Google, Microsoft Corp. were among the companies who urged the judge to let the rule stand. The ability of H-1B holders' spouses to also get jobs in the US has been a major attraction for highly skilled foreign workers, the tech companies have argued. In her ruling, Chutkan rejected arguments by Save Jobs USA,



a group representing Southern California Edison computer professionals who said they had been replaced by H-1B visa-holders. Save Jobs had claimed Homeland Security wasn't legally permitted to put the rule in place and sought to eliminate work authorizations for more than 90,000 new H-4 visa holders.

"Plaintiff's primary contention is that Congress has never granted DHS authority to allow foreign nationals, like H-4 visa-holders, to work during their stay in the United States," the judge wrote. "That contention runs headlong into the text of the (Immigration and Nationality Act), decades of executive-branch practice, and

both explicit and implicit congressional ratification of that practice."

A lawyer for Save Jobs said the group would likely appeal. "We now have complete chaos as the federal courts have seized control over the immigration system from Congress and handed that authority over to DHS," the lawyer,

John Miano, said.

Tech companies were among a group, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, that filed a brief in the case arguing that eliminating H-4 visas "would not only siphon off U.S. gross domestic product, but gift that productivity — and the innovation that comes with it — to other nations."

They said that 87% of families affected had made important life decisions, including whether to buy a house or whether to have a child, based on the ability of a skilled-worker's spouse to be employed under H-4.

Chutkan had previously dismissed the suit, ruling that Save Jobs lacked standing to challenge the H-4 rule. But a federal appeals court reversed that ruling in 2019 and revived the case. The case is Save Jobs USA v. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 15-cv-00615, U.S. District Court, District of Columbia (Washington).



# In Wayanad, no sound and fury over Rahul fate as Congress protests fizzle out amid infighting

**None of Kerala's key Congress leaders has visited Rahul's constituency so far to boost the local party unit, which has failed to galvanise people**

(By Staff Reporter)-Behind a garlanded picture of Mahatma Gandhi, about 50 Congressmen hold a protest Sunday at Kalpetta in Kerala as part of the party's daylong nationwide satyagraha against the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi as the Lok Sabha MP.

They are sitting on chairs arranged on a sidewalk in this town, the headquarters of Wayanad district, whose Lok Sabha seat fell vacant Friday when Rahul was disqualified following his conviction and sentencing to two years in jail by a Surat court in a defamation case over his 2019 remarks on the Modi surname. At a nearby bus shelter, passengers board and get off buses, with barely anyone stopping even for a moment to hear the speeches being delivered by the Congress activists, one after another.

By 4 pm, when the satyagraha is to wind up, there are more empty chairs than the Congressmen present at the protest site.

Three days into Rahul's disqualification, his Wayanad constituency has been missing the heat that the Congress has built up over the issue in Delhi, where the entire Opposition has rallied round the top Congress leader. Despite a few protests it has organised in Wayanad, the Congress has failed to galvanise the local people over Rahul's disqualification in this hilly, agrarian belt. None of the key



state Congress leaders has visited Wayanad so far to fuel the local party unit's protests, which have remained tepid.

No Congress banner pledging support for the disqualified local MP is seen on the streets of Kalpetta or in nearby villages or parts of the Wayanad constituency in the adjoining Kozhikode district. A few old billboards of Rahul's Bharat Jodo Yatra are seen sharing space with the DYFI hoardings about its April district meet.

What seems to have been missing in most parts of the constituency is a visible display of public solidarity with the beleaguered local MP disqualified over a year before the conclusion of his term. The issue seems to have ebbed away from the countryside, where locals were seen tracking social media about the health of actor Innocent (who died late on Sunday). The Wayanad District Congress Committee's president

and ex-MLA N D Appachan says, "We are sticking to a non-violent method of protest. For the last three days, we had protests in Kalpetta. We believe in Gandhian way of protest only and there are legal options for the party (to challenge the Surat court verdict). Don't expect that we would resort to violent protests in Wayanad. The party has legal options." However, the Congress's protest against Rahul's disqualification on Kalpetta streets Friday saw a clash between Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) member P P Ali and Youth Congress district secretary Sali Rattakkolly, who is also the office secretary of local Congress MLA T Siddique, and their supporters, who exchanged blows in front of TV cameras while jostling for space in the front row of their march. This open infighting has divided the Congress in Wayanad, forcing many local

leaders to stay away from subsequent protests. In a sign of the party's organisational crisis on Rahul's turf, the state Youth Congress had to mobilise workers from even outside Wayanad for its Sunday night protest. Suresh, an autorickshaw driver in Muttill town for the last 15 years, says: "People here are not very much concerned about Rahul's disqualification. They think Rahul would get a favourable verdict from appeal courts. Maybe a few Congress men would go for the agitation. On the ground, people are not interested. Look at the shops remaining closed, mainly due to the economic crisis, here. People do not have money at their disposal. The crisis is so deep and our concern is only about seeking our daily livelihood."

C Palani, a dairy farmer from Puthoorvayal near Kalpetta, says, "I don't have time to read newspapers or watch TV news. I picked up the details from

discussions at the milk collection centre. Rahul should not have insulted the backward communities. He should have been more cautious while speaking against others." A resident of Meppadi, T P Assainar, however says that public sentiments in the constituency are in Rahul's favour. "The issue has created an impression that he is the only person who can take on the BJP in the country. The Muslim community is very much concerned about the threat posed by BJP to minorities. Rahul being attacked means BJP sees him as its main rival," he says.

"In Wayanad, Rahul's popularity has only grown over the last four years. We thought he would be inaccessible and be like a migratory bird. But whenever he visits Wayanad, he tries his best to mingle with people. There would be sympathy building up in his favour in the wake of his disqualification," Assainar says. With the CPI(M), the main rival of the Congress in Wayanad as elsewhere in Kerala, finding a common cause with Rahul in the disqualification row, the BJP is the only party that would counter the Congress's campaign in the constituency. However, the saffron party has been silent over the issue so far. A BJP ally BDJS, a party floated by a backward Hindu community leader Vellappally Natesan, had contested the election from the constituency in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

## Congress protests near Red Fort over Rahul Gandhi's disqualification, leaders detained

(By Staff Reporter)-Congress leaders assembled near the iconic Red Fort on Tuesday with burning torches in their hands against the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Parliament. Visuals from the protest site showed leaders being taken away in police vehicles. Many Congress leaders, including former Uttarakhand Chief Minister Harish Rawat, were detained by the Delhi Police. The party's 'Loktantra Bachao Mashal Shanti March' was scheduled to start from Red Fort at 7 pm but the police



barricaded the Red Fort area.

Several Congress leaders and BRS MP Keshav Rao were spotted at the protest site. The Congress MPs were asked to gather at Red Fort with burning torches in their hands during the march. But they were either detained or stopped by police from reaching the protest site.

Senior leader P

Chidambaram was also stopped from reaching the Red Fort, from where the party had planned a protest march to Town Hall in old Delhi's Chandni Chowk.

The march was part of a month-long protest programme over the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi after he was sentenced to two years in prison in a defamation case.

Yesterday, the Congress held a 'black protest' in Parliament, in which they were joined by members of several other opposition parties.



# Atiq Ahmed held guilty in Umesh Pal kidnapping case: Who is this don-turned-politician?

**Atiq Ahmed is a former MP from the Phulpur Lok Sabha constituency and a five-time MLA in UP. He is facing over 70 cases of murder, attempt to murder, criminal intimidation and assault.**

(By Staff Reporter)-On Tuesday (March 28), former Member of Parliament Atiq Ahmed and two others were pronounced guilty by a Prayagraj court in connection with the 2007 kidnapping case of Umesh Pal, an eye-witness in BSP MLA Raju Pal's murder. Seven others were acquitted, including Atiq's brother Ashraf. The court held Atiq, Dinesh Pasi and Khan Shaukat Haneef guilty, said government counsel Sushil Vaish.

Earlier, as Prayagraj Police took his custody to transport him to Uttar Pradesh for the hearing, he said to reporters after coming out of the Sabarmati jail in Ahmedabad, "Mujhe inka programme maloom hai... Hatya karna chahte hain (I know their plan... They want to murder me)." The case involves the alleged kidnapping of Umesh Pal, who along with his two police guards was shot dead in Prayagraj on



February 24. Umesh was an eyewitness in the 2005 Raju Pal murder case in which Ahmed is a prime accused. According to Umesh's wife, Jaya, in 2006 the former MP and his associates kidnapped her husband and forced him to give a statement in their favour in court. After Umesh's murder last month, an FIR was registered against

Ahmed and his wife Sahista Parveen, their two sons, his younger brother Khalid Azim alias Ashraf and others.

Who is Atiq Ahmed?

Ahmed is a former MP and five-time MLA, who was until Sunday lodged in the Sabarmati jail for allegedly assaulting faculty members of an agricultural research institute in Prayagraj in

2016.

His political journey began in 1989 when he won the MLA seat from Allahabad West as an independent candidate. After retaining his seat in the next two legislative Assembly elections, Ahmed joined the Samajwadi Party (SP) and won his fourth consecutive term in 1996. Three years later, he became part of Apna Dal and once again won the seat in 2002.

The next year, he returned to SP and became MP in 2004 from the Phulpur Lok Sabha constituency, a seat once held by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The first major setback for the politician came when he was named in the murder case of Raju Pal. According to reports, the incident took place after Raju defeated Ahmed's brother, Ashraf, in an Assembly bypoll held in 2005 for the Allahabad West seat. "It was a big loss for the

Ahmed family as the seat had fallen vacant after Atiq won the Lok Sabha seat from Allahabad in the 2004 general elections", The Indian Express reported. On January 25, 2005, Raju was shot dead near his house while he was returning from a hospital along with his associates Sandeep Yadav and Devi Lal. Subsequently, Raju's wife lodged an FIR against Atiq, Ashraf and seven unidentified people on charges of rioting, attempt to murder, murder and criminal conspiracy. Due to political and police pressure, Atiq Ahmed finally surrendered in 2008 only to be released in 2012. He then contested the 2014 Lok Sabha elections on an SP ticket but lost. Things worsened for him during this time as his relationship with the SP soured as Akhilesh Yadav distanced himself from Ahmed due to his criminal record.

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## Savarkar remarks: After Sharad Pawar adds his voice to Sena objection, Congress agrees to tone down rhetoric

(News Agency)-WITH THE Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) staying away from Opposition meetings on Monday, upset over Rahul Gandhi's remarks against V D Savarkar, fellow ally and NCP chief Sharad Pawar has urged the Congress leadership to tone down its attacks on the Hindutva ideologue.

Sources said Pawar conveyed this to the Congress leadership at a dinner hosted by Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge at his residence Monday night. Both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul were present at the meeting, which was given a miss by the Uddhav Sena.

The Congress leadership is said to have explained the party's ideological position vis-a-vis Savarkar, but agreed to tone down the rhetoric in the interest of Opposition unity, notwithstanding its views on him. Pawar's argument was that Savarkar was not a member of the RSS and such distractions should not come in the way of the Opposition's fight, which was against the Narendra Modi government. Indicating that the issue was resolved, Congress communication department head Jairam Ramesh said on Tuesday that 19 parties were saying in one voice that democracy is in danger and "we have to unitedly face and fight this dictatorial government." Responding

to a question, he said the Uddhav Sena was one of the 19 parties.

"There were 18 parties last night. Today I have said 19. Understand the meaning. The number will go up from 18 to 19 when Shiv Sena is part of the group," he said at a press conference with AICC general secretary (Organisation) K C Venugopal.



"There is a little bit of an issue with Shiv Sena. We will sort it out. Don't worry," said Venugopal. Asked if the Congress would tone down the rhetoric on Savarkar, Venugopal said: "Don't try to divert. Whatever issue between the Congress and Shiv Sena is there... we have already sorted it out. We will sort it out... don't worry. Don't divert... our main issue is the Adani issue... we want a JPC. We are going to the people of this country pressing that

demand." Meanwhile, Uddhav Sena leader Sanjay Raut said that at the meeting held by Kharge, most of the Opposition leaders, including Pawar, told Rahul to refrain from making statements on Savarkar. "The talks are going on with Rahulji. We will soon sort out the issue. Those who attended the meeting at Kharge's residence, including Sharad Pawar, told him to refrain from speaking on Savarkar, since currently the fight is with autocracy and not Savarkar," he said, adding that Rahul had also agreed.

## Adani just a front, Modi ji is the investor: Arvind Kejriwal in Delhi Assembly



(News Agency)-Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched an attack against Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Adani issue. Speaking in Delhi Assembly on Tuesday, Arvind Kejriwal said, "If an ED or CBI probe takes place (in Hindenburg Report), Modi ji will go down and not Adani." Arvind Kejriwal said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has done nothing for anyone, then why is he so kind towards his friend? There was such a big crisis, the Hindenburg report came... Modiji is engaged in saving Adani. There is also a political perception." "It is said Adani is just the front; the investor behind him is Modi," the Delhi CM added.

Arvind Kejriwal alleged that PM Modi "pressurized" Sri Lanka into giving the \$442-million wind power project to the Adani Group. "Modiji forced Sri Lanka to give the wind project to Adani... Technically, the project was not given to Adani, but to himself (PM Modi). When Rajapaksa was asked about it in the Sri Lankan Parliament, he said that he gave the project under pressure," Arvind Kejriwal said in the Delhi Assembly on Tuesday.

He further claimed that when airports were privatized two years ago, some of the conditions for the auction were removed at the last minute and six airports were awarded to the Adani Group.

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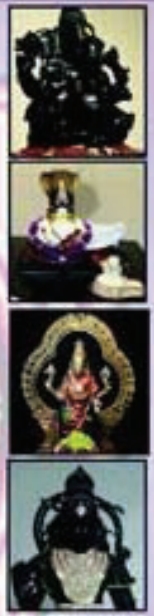
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# Rajasthan patients suffer as doctors' strike puts healthcare in ICU

(News Agency)-People of Rajasthan are suffering as doctors of private hospitals are on a strike against the state's Right To Health Bill. Government hospitals are flooded with patients and surgeries are being put off. On Wednesday, except for the emergency department, medics of all units of private and government hospitals will boycott their work.

Ajit Singh rushed his father, who had suffered a heart attack, to Jaipur from Bassi but didn't get medical assistance at any private hospital. "I rushed my father to Jaipur from 45 kilometres away in Bassi but doctors at every private hospital that I visited refused to treat him," said the youngster with his eyes welling up. Asha who brought her husband, who had been facing breathing problems and has a damaged kidney, to Sawai Man Singh (SMS) hospital couldn't get a bed for him despite struggling for more than three hours. Sawai Man Singh (SMS) hospital is the biggest government medical facility in Rajasthan.

The stories of Ajit Singh and Asha



are among scores of people who have been left to fend for themselves because of the ongoing strike by doctors in Rajasthan. Protests by medics continued for the 10th day on Tuesday.

And the situation could get worse.

The protest by doctors against the Right To Health Bill passed by the Rajasthan government on March 21 will intensify in the coming days. On Wednesday, except for emergency departments, all units of private and government hospitals will boycott work. At Sawai Man Singh (SMS) hospital, over the last week or so, more than 300

operations had to be postponed or delayed due to the doctors' strike. In Jaipur alone, at least 3,000 surgeries have been delayed due to the strike.

Several Resident doctors at various government hospitals in Jaipur, including SMS hospital and JK Lon hospital, have also joined the strike in support of private hospital doctors against the Right To Health Bill.

SMS Hospital Superintendent, Dr Achal Sharma, said that the number of minor surgeries has come down from 500 to 215. However, all emergency surgeries are being performed, said Dr Sharma.

On Monday, thousands of

doctors took to the streets to protest against the Bill. But people are suffering as the number of surgeries in government hospitals has come down as they deal with an increased load of patients turned away by private healthcare centres.

Rajasthan government officials on Sunday held a meeting with a delegation of private hospital doctors on the strike but failed to end the deadlock.

**WHAT THE BILL PROVIDES FOR**

On March 21, the government got the Right to Health Bill passed in the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly. It passed this Bill with the aim of providing better medical facilities to people of the state. The Right To Health Bill makes it clear that hospitals are required to ensure emergency services are provided and in the case the patient does not pay upon discharge or transfer, the hospital can seek reimbursement for the expenses incurred by the government.

The Bill, that was tabled in the state assembly by Rajasthan

Health Minister Prasadi Lal Meena was passed by voice.


**WHAT DOCTORS ARE PROTESTING ABOUT**

Since the passage of the Bill, all private hospitals have boycotted work and the healthcare system is on ventilator.


Anger of the protesting doctors is spilling out on the streets. Several doctors were seen fighting with taxi drivers and in many places, the protesting medics had direct confrontation with the police.

Private doctors insisted they would talk to the government only on the condition that the Right to Health Bill is withdrawn. Among other provisions, doctors at private facilities are opposing the move for compulsory free emergency treatment.

Doctors believe that the Bill violates provisions of the Minimum Wages Act under which a private worker can't be forced to work for free. They have questioned as to how the government will pay for the free treatment they provide and at what rates.



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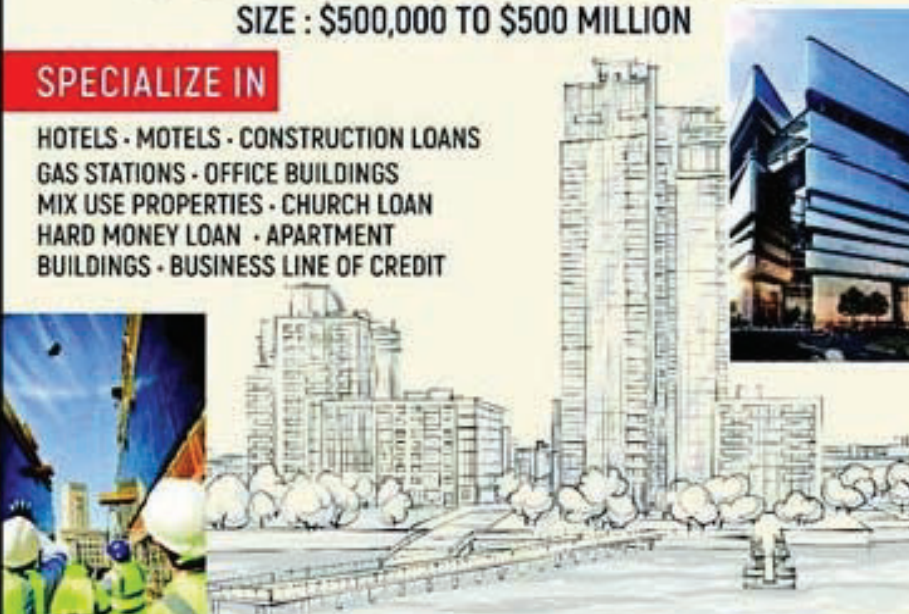
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# Should and Can the US Ban TikTok?

(News Agency)-TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew testified before the House Energy and Commerce Committee on March 23, 2023, amid a chorus of calls from members of Congress for the federal government to ban the Chinese-owned video social media app and reports that the Biden administration is pushing for the company's sale. The federal government, along with many state and foreign governments and some companies, has banned TikTok on work-provided phones. This type of ban can be effective for protecting data related to government work. But a full ban of the app is another matter, which raises a number of questions: What data privacy risk does TikTok pose? What could the Chinese government do with data collected by the app? Is its content recommendation algorithm dangerous? And is it even possible to ban an app? As a cybersecurity researcher, I've noted that every few years a new mobile app that becomes popular raises issues of security, privacy and data access. Apps collect data for several reasons. Sometimes the data is used to improve the app



for users. However, most apps collect data that the companies use in part to fund their operations. This revenue typically comes from targeting users with ads based on the data they collect. The questions this use of data raises are: Does the app need all this data? What does it do with the data? And how does it protect the data from others?

So what makes TikTok different from the likes of Pokemon-GO, Facebook or even your phone itself? TikTok's privacy policy, which few people read, is a good place to start. Overall, the company is not particularly transparent about

its practices. The document is too long to list here all the data it collects, which should be a warning.

There are a few items of interest in TikTok's privacy policy besides the information you give them when you create an account – name, age, username, password, language, email, phone number, social media account information and profile image – that are concerning. This information includes location data, data from your clipboard, contact information, website tracking, plus all data you post and messages you send through the

app. The company claims that current versions of the app do not collect GPS information from US users. There has been speculation that TikTok is collecting other information, but that is hard to prove.

If most apps collect data, why is the US government worried about TikTok? First, they worry about the Chinese government accessing data from its 150 million users in the US. There is also a concern about the algorithms used by TikTok to show content. Data in the Chinese government's hands

If the data does end up in the hands of the Chinese government, the question is how could it use the data to its benefit. The government could share it with other companies in China to help them profit, which is no different than US companies sharing marketing data. The Chinese government is known for playing the long game, and data is power, so if it is collecting data, it could take years to learn how it benefits China. One potential threat is the Chinese government using the data to spy on people, particularly people who have access to valuable information.

The Justice Department is investigating TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, for using the app to monitor US journalists. The Chinese government has an extensive history of hacking US government agencies and corporations, and much of that hacking has been facilitated by social engineering – the practice of using data about people to trick them into revealing more information.

The second issue that the US government has raised is algorithm bias or algorithm manipulation. TikTok and most social media apps have algorithms designed to learn a user's interests and then try to adjust the content so the user will continue to use the app. TikTok has not shared its algorithm, so it's not clear how the app chooses a user's content. The algorithm could be biased in a way that influences a population to believe certain things. There are numerous allegations that TikTok's algorithm is biased and can reinforce negative thoughts among younger users, and be used to affect public opinion.

## In Rahul Gandhi's disqualification, Modi-Shah lay an electoral trap for Congress

**Renuka Chowdhury's threat of defamation suit is just the beginning. In coming weeks, expect many Congress leaders to remark against Modi to try to impress the Gandhis.**

(News Agency)-In 2009, when Lok Sabha elections were over and the results were awaited, then-Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy came to Delhi to brief then-Congress president Sonia Gandhi. I went to see him in Andhra Bhawan after his meeting with her. "How many seats did you tell her?" I asked him. Thirty-three, he replied. "Are you serious? 33 out of 42! Did you really tell her that?" I asked in disbelief. "I would have said 34 but I am not sure about Khammam," he said with a cryptic smile. The Congress candidate in Khammam was Renuka Chowdhury, a Reddy-baiter who wore loyalty to Sonia Gandhi on her sleeves.

When the results came, Reddy was bang on. The Congress won exactly 33. And Renuka Chowdhury lost. Sonia Gandhi nominated her to the Rajya Sabha later. After her RS term was over in 2018, Chowdhury was virtually



in political wilderness. She returned with a bang on Thursday to hit the headlines, calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "classless megalomaniac" and declaring her intent to file a defamation case against him for referring to her as Surpanakha, Ravana's sister, during a debate in the Rajya Sabha in 2018. She should surely know how to please the Gandhis. Because the PM never used the word 'Surpanakha'. Even if she felt so, she spent enough time in

Parliament to remember Article 105 that exempts MPs from any judicial proceedings for what they say in Parliament. Renuka Chowdhury's disparaging remark against Modi and threat of defamation suit is just the beginning. In coming days and weeks, expect many other Congress leaders to make more damning remarks against Modi to try to impress the Gandhis.

On the face of it, Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as Lok Sabha

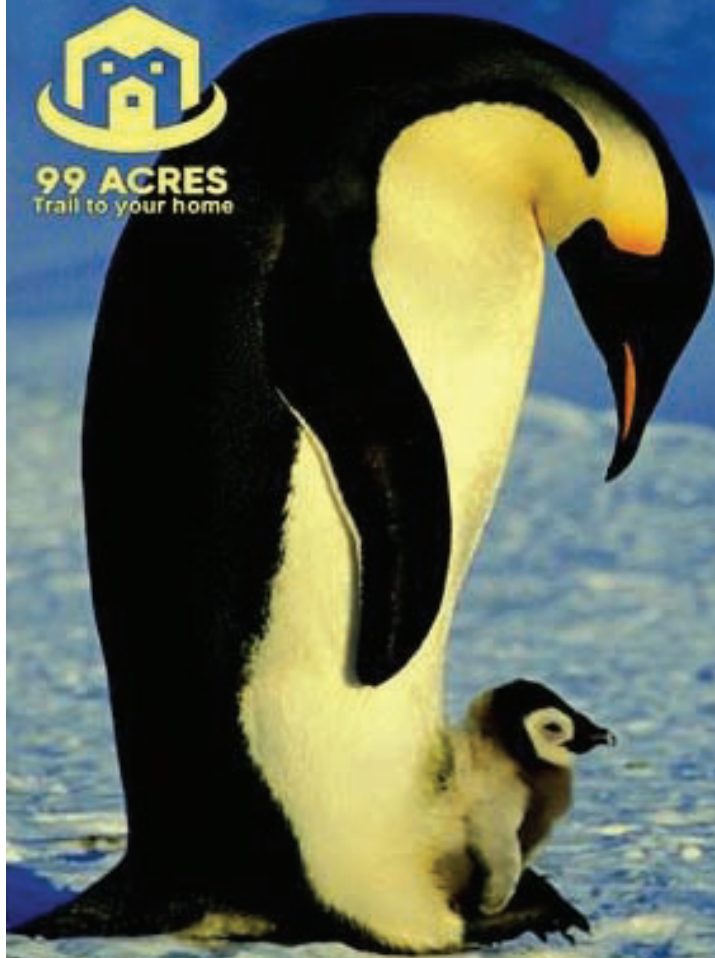
member following his conviction might look like a risky gambit for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It has fired up the Congress, brought almost the entire opposition together and given more ammunition to the opposition to accuse the Modi-led government of muzzling democratic dissent. BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad wasn't far off the mark when he said that Rahul Gandhi was trying to emerge a "martyr" to take political mileage in the Karnataka election because the Congress didn't show any urgency to get a stay on his conviction to avoid disqualification. One has to be naïve to think that PM Modi and Amit Shah have become so overconfident and arrogant that they didn't consider these obvious factors. So, why did they allow Gandhi to become a 'martyr'? There are at least five reasons for this.

### Karnataka election

The BJP is on a sticky wicket in

the southern state, with former chief minister and Lingayat face BS Yediyurappa remaining a loose cannon after the party gave him a snub by making incumbent CM Basavaraj Bommai campaign committee chairman. Given Bommai's below par governance record, the BJP is bending over backwards to get the caste arithmetic right, increasing the reservation quota of Vokkaligas and Lingayats at the cost of Muslims whose 4 per cent quota was scrapped on Friday. It also fits into the party's communal polarisation strategy, so far centred on Tipu Sultan, so-called 'love jihad', et al. The BJP leadership isn't feeling confident though. Unlike in most other states, DK Shivakumar-led Congress has remained a formidable challenger, keeping the heat on the Bommai-led government over corruption, misgovernance and other issues.





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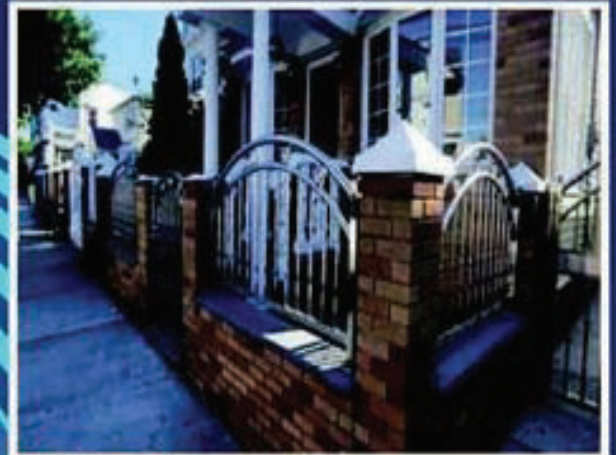
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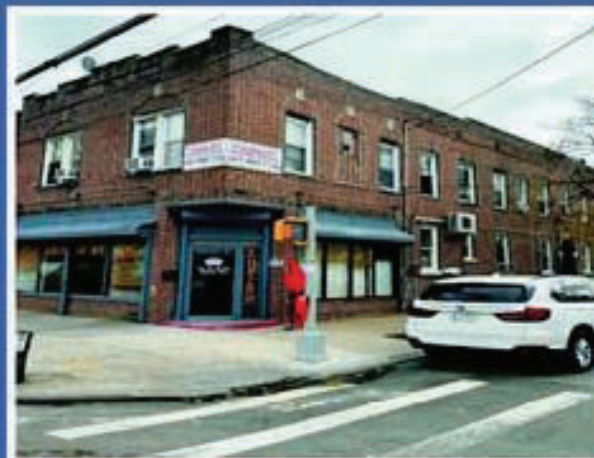
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## Punjab's situation is more than one of law and order

Keep in mind that viewing the current scenario in Punjab solely through the lens of law and order would be a mistake. This problem has its roots in society and politics. Those who believe that harsh legal action against self-styled Khalistan activist Amritpal Singh will solve things are mistaken. Arrests sometimes invigorate separatists. In the late seventies, efforts were made to push an arrogant Sikh campaigner from Damdami Taksal (an orthodox Sikh cultural and educational organisation) to the status of a mass leader. The exercise to portray leaders from various parties in Punjab as sold out was part of this strategy. The entire country was disillusioned then. Unemployed youths had no choice but to believe that their freedom was meaningless. Taking advantage of this, the Salim-Javed duo was portraying a down at heel hero as a great rebel in several film scripts. Similar scripting was being done for Bhindranwale in the altered backdrop of Punjab's religious politics. Those who were not paying attention to this had no idea how intense this script was. Bhindranwale not only transformed himself from a humble preacher to a "saint", but also from a saint to a defiant leader. It would be a waste of time to discuss which politicians gained or were harmed by this. A lot has already been written and said about this. That was, undoubtedly, the most dangerous attack on Indian sovereignty ever, from within the country.

Operation Blue Star was followed by four decades of uninterrupted peace, despite some leftover bitterness. Images of Bhindranwale can be seen in many gurudwaras even today. An attempt was made to make Indira Gandhi's killers martyrs, but the average Punjabi was unconcerned. At the same time, those who tried to rekindle old fires overseas persisted.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many separatists took shelter in Australia, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and east Europe, continuing to spread venom there. The result is now visible. Hindu temples and Indian buildings have been attacked in a number of western nations in recent weeks.

It is the obligation of the countries concerned to end this, but they hesitate in the name of freedom of expression. This is the classic western double standard. Would they have taken the same position had it been the ISIS protesting? Why are the operators of

torture centres such as Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib quiet? They are the same people who want to label Russian president Vladimir Putin a war criminal; yet for them, both Bushes, father, and son, who attacked Iraq and killed 450,000 people are democratic leaders. Undoubtedly, the moment has come again for the ministry of foreign affairs to show its teeth. The rulers of Chandigarh and Delhi, like foreign policy makers, have also blundered in the past. On April 25, 1983, Avtar Singh Atwal, DIG, Jalandhar Zone, was assassinated and thrown down the stairs of the Golden Temple. He was in uniform when attacked. Despite this, his body was left unattended for hours. Journalists covering Punjab eventually said Operation Blue Star could have been averted if the Punjab police and paramilitary forces had been pushed to act immediately.

### Are Chandigarh's rulers making the same mistake today?

Since the death of Deep Sidhu, an accused in the Red Fort violence, Amritpal's popularity in Punjab has rocketed. If the state's home department had closed in on him then, the current situation would not have arisen. In the absence of action, he became increasingly aggressive. On February 24, he not only stormed the Ajnala police station but also succeeded in getting his accomplice Lovepreet Singh Toofan released. Had the government acted against him then, Amritpal would not have got the opportunity to be featured in breaking news. The Ajnala incident made his anti-national outburst national and international news. In the late 1970s, Punjab's elderly politicians were nearing the end of their careers. A generation of ultra-ambitious youth was hell-bent on replacing them at any cost. Today, Punjab's political situation is far worse. Parkash Singh Badal's Akali Dal has lost its lustre. The Congress has lost its clout. The Bharatiya Janata Party is struggling to establish a significant base on its own. Not only is the ruling Aam Aadmi Party new, it also needs to consolidate its ideological foundation in the state. Similarly, no party has a strong leader who can inspire people to take the right direction. These circumstances are favourable for separatists. Simranjit Singh Mann's victory in the by-election for the Sangrur seat vacated by chief minister Bhagwant Singh Mann is an example of this. Keep in mind that viewing the current scenario in Punjab solely through the lens of law and order would be a mistake.

By- Shashi Shekhar

## Misuse of Agencies: Why Rahul Gandhi Has No Moral Authority to Accuse Narendra Modi and Amit Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while speaking at the Rising India Summit in New Delhi on Wednesday, put the record straight on the issue of the Central government misusing agencies to target the Opposition. "When you point one finger at others, remember that four other fingers are pointing at you," Shah said as he revealed how the previous UPA government had misused the central agencies to target him and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was then the chief minister of Gujarat. "I will tell you how agencies are misused, I have been a victim of it," he said.

"In my entire interrogation, I was told 'Modi ka naam de do, de do (Give us Modi's name). But why should I frame him? Because of me, several innocent police officers were put in jail. Today, the same Congress is crying over their fate. They must reflect on their behaviour," the Home Minister said as he added: "All these people were there when this was happening. Chidambaram, Sonia Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, and Rahul Gandhi were all present then." Decade is a long time in politics. And it becomes obvious when one reads a letter written by the late BJP leader Arun Jaitley to the then Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. In his letter, dated 27 September 2013, the then leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha accused the UPA government of misusing agencies to target Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. "The Congress strategy in the face of its depleting popularity is clear. Congress cannot fight the BJP and Narendra Modi politically. Defeat stares them in the face. By misuse of investigative agencies they have so far tried various methods of falsely implicating Narendra Modi, the Chief

Minister of Gujarat, Shri Amit Shah, the then Home Minister and also the Minister of Law, Transport & Parliamentary Affairs of the State of Gujarat and General Secretary of Bharatiya Janata Party and other important BJP leaders," the letter read.

To illustrate his point, Jaitley mentioned three cases in detail: Sohrabuddin Encounter case, Tulsi Prajapati encounter, and Ishrat Jehan encounter. And in all three cases, what was common was the political misuse of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) to target "Shri Amit Shah..., with the ultimate desire of implicating Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat". In the Sohrabuddin case, for instance, when the legal department of the CBI opined that there was no case against Amit Shah, the Supervisory Officer of CBI put up a 'Note' saying "the arrest of Amit Shah would enable the CBI to get some more witnesses, particularly the police officers since they would then feel intimidated". The officer also opined that "arresting Amit Shah was necessary since it was necessary to reach the eventual target of investigation of Narendra Modi". This 'note' was approved by then CBI Director Ashwani Kumar. Soon, Shah was arrested, interestingly, on the testimony of two noted land grabbers of Gujarat! Later, when he was granted bail, with the High Court saying there was no prima facie case against him, the Central government through its agencies ensured that Amit Shah was kept out of Gujarat for two years.

Like the Sohrabuddin case, the Tulsi Prajapati and Ishrat Jehan cases too saw central agencies being misused by the then UPA government. The Open magazine, in an article 'The Plot Against Modi' (22 July 2022), revealed how three senior UPA ministers and top party honcho Ahmed Patel met at a house near New Delhi's Teen Murti Bhavan in October 2013.

By Utpal Kumar



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Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

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# Rahul Gandhi's disqualification and the hypocrisy of Western elites

Today, as politics makes a full circle and returns to bite the Congress ecosystem, the same elites who crawled when they were asked to bend seem concerned about India's democracy.

By Ajit Datta

They say a son must not be held accountable for his father's sins. Wise words, no doubt. All too often, one comes across children being treated unfairly because their parents carry a certain reputation. Imagine how things would be if public memory was not so short; the sins of grandparents, great-grandparents, and other ancestors would be taken into account too. However, things are never so black and white. Certainly not with the hypocritical Indian elite. During modern India's crucial nation-building decades, many sections of this elite consciously perpetuated India's backwardness. From authoritarian politics to religious fundamentalism, every unscrupulous trick in the book was used to ensure the gap between them and the unperfumed masses remained unbridged. Many of the elite children then leveraged their privileges to settle in more developed countries like the United States. This is where the

plot takes a twist. From foreign shores today, these children point fingers and wax eloquent, often about India's backwardness. However, they conveniently forget to mention how it was perpetuated, sometimes quite literally, from their own homes. Perhaps they cannot be held responsible for the sins of their forefathers. But their convenient forgetfulness, while they point fingers, must be called out.

Take the example of Ro Khanna. A member of the Democratic Party, Khanna serves as a representative in the lower house of the US Congress from California. Khanna is a second-generation American. His parents immigrated to the United States from the state of Punjab in India. At the forefront of many supposedly progressive causes, Khanna has generally taken a dim view of the political paradigm shift in India since 2014.

Earlier this week, when Rahul Gandhi was convicted for making a casteist speech, sentenced to two years in jail, and automatically disqualified as

a member of India's Lok Sabha, Khanna took to social media. Quoting the New York Times which deceitfully referred to Rahul's disqualification as an expulsion, Khanna claimed that it had betrayed Gandhian philosophy and India's deepest values. He claimed that this was not why his grandfather, who took part in India's freedom struggle against the British, had sacrificed years in prison. He also tagged Prime Minister Modi, claiming that he had the power to overturn this decision, for the sake of India's democracy.

Khanna's tweet raised many questions. Firstly, does it matter if you are of Indian origin or have a grandfather who took part in the freedom struggle, if you have chosen a life in the United States for yourself? Khanna could just as easily be asked if his grandfather sacrificed years in jail to overthrow Western colonizers, only for his own children to abandon their motherland for the West. One could also ask if the Indian republic must work exactly according to what Khanna's

grandfather wished. After all, the freedom struggle and Indian law-making or policy-making thereafter involved thousands of people with different worldviews. Moreover, Khanna should have done his homework about whether Prime Minister Modi can overturn this decision or not. Rahul Gandhi's conviction and sentencing did not take place in Narendra Modi's court. Rahul's automatic disqualification is courtesy of an ordinance that he literally tore up when he was in power, which would have allowed him to continue as a Member of Parliament.

A little bit of digging up about Khanna's grandfather though, reveals the full extent of his hypocrisy. A freedom fighter and member of the Congress Party, Amarnath Vidyalkar served as a Minister in the Punjab government. He was also elected thrice to the Lok Sabha. His third term as a Member of Parliament was between 1971 and 1977. So, essentially, he was an MP of the ruling party during India's infamous emergency, when India

came closest to fascism. Setting aside the human rights violations of the period, how the entire political opposition was languishing in jail for months indicates the extent to which the ruling party cared for democracy. After much criticism on social media, Khanna now claims that his grandfather wrote two letters against the emergency and did not contest any election after that. However, Vidyalkar continued to be an active member of the Congress Party till he passed away in 1985. If freedom fighters did not make sacrifices only for Modi's India to emerge seven decades later, Khanna should enlighten us about whether these sacrifices were made for them to watch Indira Gandhi trample over human rights, press freedom, and political opposition. Instead of mobilizing the masses and finding ways to reinstate Rahul Gandhi, Khanna could also advise the Indian opposition to patiently write a letter or two and move on. After all, that would be more consistent with his approach.

(Contd. on page 24)

## Why India Should be Concerned About Growing Threat of Online Radicalisation



By: Arun Anand

Online radicalisation is now emerging as one of the biggest threats to India's national security. Two interesting reports released by Logically, a global social media and digital platforms monitoring unit, underlined this threat again and exposed the modus operandi of fundamentalist forces.

**ONLINE RADICALISATION IN FAVOUR OF KHALISTAN**

In its recent report, Logically found out that Khalistan supporters, backed by Pakistan, are carrying out an intense online radicalisation campaign. Though this campaign has been going on for quite some time, it was intensified further following Shiv Sena leader Sudhir Suri's murder in Amritsar on November 4, 2022. Support poured in for the accused, Sandeep Singh Sunny, across social media platforms.

Legal aid was announced for the accused Sunny, by a banned pro-Khalistani outfit called Sikhs for Justice (SFJ). The accused was also linked to 'Waris Punjab De' (WPD) leader Amritpal Singh, who is on the run now.

According to this report, followers of Amritpal Singh were also seen coming out in support of Sunny in their posts, calling him a "warrior". The leader of US-based SFJ, Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, leveraged the recent incidents to highlight its agenda and drive the need for a 'Khalistan Referendum'. Some other users used it to attack the Hindutva ideology and question local Sikh organisations' allegiance. "Some active pro-Khalistan groups and pages on Facebook have admins with origins in Pakistan, Scotland, and Canada. Likewise, pro-Khalistan activity has witnessed a surge coinciding with the referendums in Europe and Canada over the past year,"

the report said.

It is significant to note that the online radicalisation by separatists in favour of Khalistan is spreading across various digital platforms. 'Free Khalistan Movement', a private group on Facebook is managed by five different profiles. Two of the five admin accounts originate from Pakistan while one is from Canada and one from Scotland.

Another group, 'Kashmiri and Khalistani Freedom Fight', with around 5.1k followers has two admins whose accounts originate from Pakistan. Apart from the name, the description of the group calls India a "big export terrorist country". Another page, 'Stay Awake - Jaagde Raho', with over 30k followers, posts content in favour of Khalistan regularly.

Logically tracked the growing influence of Khalistanis on Instagram also. The report tracked Sikh activist Papalpreet

Singh, with 55.7k followers, actively sharing posts with Amritpal Singh and was also seen showing his support for Sandeep Singh Sunny. "His post about Amritpal announcing the 'Khalsa Vaheer' programme has garnered over 99,000 likes since it was posted on November 19, 2022," the report said.

Sikh Youth UK, with 49.9k followers, posted a video of Sandeep Singh Sunny being taken to a court. The caption read- Sandeep Singh present at court showing Chardi Kala (high spirits). Another Instagram account 'Panjabis in Germany' (28.1k followers) shared an unverified video of Punjab police confiscating weapons from households at an undisclosed location. The video caption says that the "government had done the same before the 1984 riots.

(Contd. on page 24)



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# Rahul Gandhi disqualification poses question. Who owns Constitution: Parliament or courts?

Whether it is Law Minister Kiren Rijiju who rages against the judiciary or a colonial-era law that sees Rahul Gandhi ejected out of office, the law and politics relationship goes beyond any reform of a statute.

By : **SHRUTI KAPILA**

I am all too often, for good or bad, reminded of a public debate I took part in some winters ago in Delhi. The topic of debate was: "Is India a 'rule of law society?'" I made the case that India was not, contrary to its self-image, a rule- or law-based society. I was supported by a young scholar from a national law school. Our foes were formidable: establishment intellectuals close to the Narendra Modi government, one a Supreme Court lawyer, another a journalist turned parliamentarian. This David versus Goliath debate was refereed by a television celebrity journalist. At the end of 90 minutes, the argument was decided by a popular vote: my side won the big, crowded hall overwhelmingly. The schoolgirl debater in me was thrilled. But a deeper disappointment soon overwhelmed me. The voting audience were all stakeholders in the Indian legal order: lawyers, policymakers, the odd politician and law students. The venue was the venerable Consti-

tution Club of India. If those responsible for upholding the law did not believe in it, then what really is the status of Indian law? And here comes the paradox: we might not believe in the rule of law or its efficacy but hell yes, we all know that the law is all-powerful. To top it, this paradox is soaked in bad faith!

## Defamation

So, you don't have to be Rahul Gandhi to know that the law is a potent blunt instrument. A Surat district court order convicting the Congress leader in a 2019 defamation case has led to his disqualification from Parliament last week. I am not even going into the surround sound of Adani-gate or questioning the judgement or sentence.

As it made global headlines last week, I was asked by a curious radio presenter of news here as to why such a heavy prison sentence had been passed on Rahul Gandhi over a defamation charge, a civil offence in the United Kingdom. It is timely, therefore, to ask why defamation in India is also

criminal but not a pure civil offence. It is after all the charge that has ejected Rahul Gandhi out of representing the good people of Wayanad, his parliamentary constituency in Kerala. On this at least and as a historian, the question is a simple one to address.

This is a colonial-era law that has remained on the statutes of the world's lengthiest constitution. Before you shout, 'let's decolonise!', here comes the rather tricky historical context of this law. In its English origins, the law of sedition came from the law of libel or defamation itself. To cut a very long and turbulent story short, in the era of religious wars in early modern England, sedition or treason was separated from libel or defamation, and as a specific harm to the sovereign or monarch and latterly the government. So, defamation for us mere mortals and sedition for kings, queens and rulers of the day. And yes, the noble constitution writers such as BR Ambedkar or Vallabhbhai Patel kept both se-



dition and defamation on the statutes and as criminal law too. No, they were not lazy to shake off some colonial hangover. Instead, this was a considered choice as no less than KM Munshi had raised sedition and related infringements on individual liberty, to be repealed. Munshi lost.

## Law contra politics

If Ambedkar et al were not lazy then why keep those very draconian laws that the British empire had deployed to control and depoliticise India under their rule? The answer is debat-

able. But, however you look at it, it concerns the regulation of politics. Ambedkar had matured as a thinker during the height of MK Gandhi's civil disobedience movements that had taken the peaceful breaking of the law as the arch political act. For the constitution writers, with Indian freedom, disobedience of the law had served its purpose. In independent India, thus, what was required was a disciplining of politics so that the rule of law could prevail.

(Contd. on page 25)

## India must make the most of China-Taiwan Conflict-change LAC status quo, fight Beijing better

Proactively taking advantage of China's involvement in the Taiwan Strait to fight China in multiple theatres is something Indian military planners should think about.



By **HARSH V. PANT/**  
**SUYASH DESAI**

The People's Liberation Army's frequent military exercises and incursions close to Taiwan, including crossing the median line after the United States Representative Nancy Pelosi's 2022 visit to Taipei, have increased the risk of escalation in the Taiwan Strait. There is a growing consensus within the

US policy establishment and a section of the academic community that under President Xi Jinping, China is developing military capabilities in a bid to engage in a forceful cross-strait reunification campaign before 2027, which also happens to be the PLA's centenary year.

To achieve reunification by force, Chinese authoritative texts such as The Science of Military Strat-

egy, Science of Joint Operations, Science of Campaigns, Science of Second Artillery Campaigns and Lectures on Joint Campaign Command and Joint Operations Headquarters Work suggest that Beijing could launch a number of campaigns in isolation or combination. These may include the joint firepower strike campaign (JFSC), the joint blockade campaign (JBC), and the joint-island landing campaign (JILC). The JFSC is an offensive operation that includes long-range precision strikes to intimidate an adversary's leadership and population. The JBC is a protracted campaign to worsen the enemy's economic conditions and induce submission, and the JILC is a large-scale joint offensive landing campaign to enable favourable conditions for follow-on military

operations.

Like every other country, India will be impacted irrespective of whichever campaign(s) Beijing pursues to reunite Taiwan with mainland China. India's trade through the South China Sea (SCS) — which stands at nearly 55 per cent of its total trade with the Indo-Pacific region — will be disrupted. Furthermore, India's trade with Taiwan (which has been on the rise for the past few years), China (its second-largest trading partner), East Asia, and some Southeast Asian countries is also likely to be severely impacted. Such an event should serve as casus belli — a war-provoking situation — for India. Beyond trade, the strategic implications of a serious cross-strait conflict would be extremely serious, with New Delhi being a mem-

ber of the Quad and thereby required to give a serious response. Since the stakes for India are high, such a scenario merits an intense discussion on the country's military, diplomatic, and economic response — something that has been missing from Indian policy discourse.

## India's likely responses

On a practical level, it is likely that India's military response would be limited to assisting partner countries, including the US, which might intervene to help Taiwan during the cross-strait conflict. India is the only country that has dealt with the PLA Ground Force (PLAGF) recently — at the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh in December 2022.

(Contd. on page 23)



# Rahul vs Uddhav over Savarkar defamation: Why Congress fails to crack hot-button tests

It's time for the Congress to tell people, and tell them in concrete terms, what its USP is, and why it should get a shot at power. Because negative campaigning, often riddled with ambivalence, isn't working.

By Darpan Singh

Long before Thursday's sentencing, the Surat court asked whether Rahul Gandhi wanted to apologise for his "why all thieves have Modi surname" remark. The Congress leader said he did not. His answer was the same for his lawyers and local party leaders as conviction seemed more and more imminent.

Rahul was convinced that he had "only targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi and fugitive businessmen like Nirav Modi" even though his stand in court seemed to have costs: after all, the complainant, a BJP leader, had alleged that the remark had insulted all the Modis from the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), a crucial voting bloc in Indian elections. The Congress was averting its eyes.

Perhaps, Rahul and his advisers didn't quite mind disqualification, a potential sympathy-generator that an electorally



demoralised Congress could use to attract many non-BJP but (at the same time) Rahul-wary parties such as the TMC and the AAP looking at a third front to take on PM Modi in the 2024 national polls. The unlikely support, which may or may not be lasting, did come about, timed with Congress protests from Sansad to Sadak.

This perception that the Congress courted disqualification was strengthened when, after getting two years in jail, the threshold for automatic disqualification from Parliament, Rahul got bail but his lawyers didn't immediately press for a stay order of the conviction.



There's nothing wrong; every party has the right to make and follow its political strategy.

## WHY SAVARKAR?

But what followed thereafter again showed the Congress's vulnerability to playing into the BJP's hands. While the presence of two OBC chief ministers, the only two CMs the Congress has, at Rahul's press conference was too optical to contain the damage caused, both by the BJP's shrewd exploitation and his Modi surname remark, he went on to say, "My name is not Savarkar, my name is Gandhi and Gandhi does not offer an apology to anyone." Earlier, the grand old party



had also put out a tweet, saying the same thing, referring to BJP's Hindutva ideologue V.D. Savarkar who reportedly wrote clemency pleas to the British for his release from jail.

Rahul's relentless attack on Savarkar looks surprising. Savarkar was never a competition to the Congress post-Independence. Rahul's great-grandfather, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, had a towering presence over Savarkar's, if any, on a newly Independent India's politics for the remaining years of the Hindutva icon's life. Nehru died in 1964, Savarkar in 1966. Incidentally, while Rahul is invoking Gandhi,

the most famous with that surname actually didn't deride or ridicule Savarkar. In fact, in one of his letters, Mahatma Gandhi addressed Savarkar with a courteous term of "Bhai", meaning brother. Also, Savarkar remained occupied with one or the other controversy, allegation or probe against him or his associates in connection with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi — verbal duel with B.R. Ambedkar over latter's conversion to Buddhism, arrest for hate speech (in which he was released only after the promise of keeping away from politicking) or the Jevanlal Kapur Commission in the 1960s to probe his role in the Mahatma's assassination. For the BJP or its precursor, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the matter had been different. The leaders needed a narrative to counter the Congress in order to make the Jan Sangh look like an alternative rallying pole of Indian politics.

(Contd. on page 22)

## Why Rahul Gandhi's Disqualification May Be a Turning Point

A new sequence in Indian politics has just started. When institutions of the Republic are captured by the ruling party the way they are in India today, the opposition is forced to find alternative ways and means. Rahul Gandhi first invested himself in Parliament, then embarked on a Bharat Jodo Yatra to forge a deeper connect with the people. He had to be neutralised by the ruling regime.



By Christophe Jaffrelot

India's political trajectory is completing the cycle I expected. In Modi's India (Westland 2023), I studied the transition from national populism to electoral authoritarianism, a phase marked by the capture by the executive of key institutions (including the Election Commis-

sion) and the domestication of "mainstream" media with the help of crony capitalists. During this moment that other countries have experienced too, elections are still taking place because the supreme leader needs the legitimacy of a popular mandate for prevailing over other power centres (including the judiciary), but elections are

not a level playing field anymore, not only because of the media's bias, but also because of the saturation of the public space that big money permits (hence electoral bonds etc.). A new sequence has just started. When institutions of the Republic are captured by the ruling party the way they are in India today, the opposition is forced

to find alternative ways and means. Rahul Gandhi invested first in parliament, where he denounced attacks against democracy and the nexus between the Modi government and new oligarchs, but that was clearly not enough: not only has parliament been emasculated (to such an extent that some of the debates which took place there during

the Emergency compare favourably with what we see today), but Lok Sabha speeches are not reported in the "mainstream" media anymore. The leader of the opposition needed to go to the people, to interact directly with those who otherwise would continue to ignore reality because of constant disinformation.

(Contd. on page 25)



# PM Modi's Millet Mission promises to become a decisive movement for holistic social growth

Modi's Millet Mission is bound to grow into a decisive movement for holistic social growth and well-being worldwide in the years to come.

By Tuhin A Sinha

"Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together..." - Vincent Van Gogh. The sheer magnitude of PM Modi's ideas doesn't immediately dawn upon everybody, till one gets acquainted with the massive, meticulous, perspicaciously drawn global plans around it. Hence, whether it was Swachh Bharat or the Yoga push, at the time they were conceived, very few would have thought that they would leave such a huge impact globally. This is where the personal conviction of PM Modi stands out. PM Modi has that rare ability to think 360 degrees around each idea and to diligently pursue it till such time when the global benefits around it are all too visible. The Millet Mission is one such revolution that is waiting to reveal its real impact globally. It is important to deconstruct here what went into PM Modi conceiving the idea of this massive millet push.

PM Modi has always



endeavoured to reach out to the poorest and most marginalised sections of society, as is evident in other landmark schemes like Jan Dhan Yojana or the Nal se Jal program. Now, millets are a highly varied group of small-seeded grasses, widely grown around the world as cereal crops or grains for fodder and human food. They include sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra), finger millet (ragi), little millet (kutki), foxtail millet (kakun), proso millet (cheena), barnyard millet (sawa), kodo millet (kodon) among others. Sadly, the 2.5 crore farmers growing millets in India are amongst the poorest farmers,

primarily due to neglect of this

food category and low demand, wherein many of them abandoned millets in favour of other regularly consumed crops. While a formal millet push directly benefits these 2.5 crore farmers, given the volume of production possible in India, it also paves the way for infinite future opportunities. This millet push endeavours to create a formal ecosystem around it that has the potential to generate employment, create entrepreneurship opportunities, enhance the nation's food security, change people's food habits, besides creating a new supply chain altogether. Hence, the idea is no less a positive

disruptor than some of PM Modi ji's previous game-changing initiatives. This one in fact carries the added natural health benefits of millet.

As PM Modi has pointed out, the millet push combines the two big problems the world is currently facing - food security and food habits. Millets are the favoured crop for water-stressed areas as they can be grown with minimal water requirements and are also largely climate resistant. Moreover, they are grown naturally and hence are chemical-free. At a time when chemicals used in growing vegetables and increased consumption of synthetic food

items have led to a surge in cancer cases globally, naturally grown millets provide the right alternative.

Millets were declared as nutri-cereals in 2018 and work has been going on since to educate farmers about their benefits as well as to generate buying interest among the general public. The big game changer came in when United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) accepted India's proposal and declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYM) on March 5, 2021. The proposal submitted by the Government of India was supported by 72 countries. Through this declaration, the UNGA aims to elevate awareness of nutri-cereals (millets) for food security and nutrition, enhance investment in R&D and extension, and to inspire stakeholders towards improving production productivity and quality of millets.

(Contd. on page 24)

## Imran Khan is promising Islamic utopia to Pakistanis. It might compel the military to return

The Pakistani military has excellent reasons to avoid staging a coup against Imran Khan. But chances are that soon it will be compelled to exercise its authority.



The Donkey of Kasur, who protestors employed to represent then Pakistan Prime Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin, was paraded through the lanes, ridden by an effigy of foreign minister Muhammad Zafarullah Khan. Scandalous words and slander were hurled at Mirza Bashiruddin, the second caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. Elegant theocratic ar-

guments had given way to Lahore's famously-colourful vernacular, the judicial investigation report of 1953 riot noted.

Exactly 70 years ago this month, and long before Twitter memes were invented, Islamist-led populism and the political élite of the fledgling republic were locked in a battle to decide whether Pakistan should be led by rural grandees, whiskey-sipping Gen-

erals, or the country's clerics. Dozens died in mob violence and police firing in 1953, the report would later determine before the first military rule was imposed. Five years later, the crisis led to Field Marshal Ayub Khan staging Pakistan's first coup d'état in 1958. And the war for the idea of Pakistan continues uninterrupted. Fresh from winning the Battle of Zaman Park—the botched police effort to compel Imran Khan to appear in court—the former prime minister is planning fresh rallies at the historic Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore.

Since 2008, the country has operated on a kind of hybrid political order, with chosen political proxies of the military being secured in charge of the government. Imran, helped to power by the Generals, was ignominiously

evicted by them last year. He is fighting back, though, by seeking to force elections that many believe he is certain to win—and in the process exposing the country to grave dangers at a time of deep economic and ideological crisis. The anti-Ahmadiyya movement

From 1950 on, communal violence grew across Pakistan's Punjab province—this time targeting the heterodox Ahmadi minority. Ahmadi preachers and religious gatherings were assaulted in Okara district by armed mobs. The community's mosque in Samundri was burned down. There were calls to deny Ahmadis access to drinking water, and even space in graveyards. Large mobs turned out in Gujranwala to stage mock funerals for Pakistan's suave foreign minis-

ter, an Ahmadi, and rewards were announced for his assassination.

The movement also saw growing anger against the élite, which had created Pakistan. The Sargodha cleric Ahmad Khan, the judicial investigation recorded, even lashed out at military officers for spending their time dancing and drinking. Led by the Majlis-e-Ahrar—which had opposed Partition and the creation of Pakistan—the movement of 1950 was a reassertion of power by the clerics who wielded power in the streets and neighbourhoods of northern India. They promised a new kind of regime, which would reconstruct the imagined Islamic utopia of Prophet Muhammad.

(Contd. on page 25)



# Lalit Modi, Nirav Modi are not OBCs. BJP calling them so is an insult to the community

BJP and RSS did nothing for OBCs but they want to show it's Rahul Gandhi who hates the community.



Modi and Nirav Modi into OBCs. I first heard this narrative from Union labour minister Bhupender Yadav, an OBC, during a news debate on 24 March. Thereafter it caught up through all layers of the party. BJP president JP Nadda, Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan and other senior ministers started repeating it. If Lalit Modi and Nirav Modi are OBCs, then the whole OBC community should be ashamed now.

## BJP's anti-OBC history

After Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister in 2014, the BJP consciously started using the OBC card because the community, the largest vote bank in the country, can alone keep the party in power.

The anti-OBC history of BJP and RSS has not been exposed since the Mandal movement started. The BJP did not support the OBC agenda at any critical moment in the struggle for

reservation. But to counter Rahul Gandhi, it is assigning the proverbial OBC certificate to everyone with the Modi surname.

Do all Modis belong to the oil-pressing Modh-Ghanchi-Teli community? Where is the evidence based on caste census, which the BJP is opposed to?

Only Akhilesh Yadav, former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and an OBC, is calling out the BJP's narrative by constantly talking about how Yogi Adityanath, the current chief minister of UP, had insulted his Shudra/OBC status by getting the CM bungalow sprayed with Ganga Jal after taking over the reins from Yadav. The BJP, and particularly its OBC prime minister, never objected to this inhuman and casteist practice of his party's CM.

But today, the party is playing on this narrative that Rahul Gandhi hates the community.

Perhaps it seeks to placate the community offended by the language used in Ramcharitmanas against the Shudras/OBCs?

It was in this context that RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat talked about how caste was not created by God but by priests. Bhagwat also said that the shastras (ancient Hindu texts) need to be reviewed.

## Private sector quota and Modis

It is true that the Congress intellectuals never talk about caste, as if it doesn't exist. Since the BJP and RSS are operating around the Hindu religion in opposition to the secular narrative, they have to face the caste challenge without losing power. And that is why they are imposing an OBC nationalist narrative by roping in anti-national characters like the fugitive businessmen Lalit Modi and Nirav Modi into the OBC list.

(Contd. on page 24)

# Google survived iPhone in 2007, it may not survive ChatGPT

The problem for Google is not a super-smart AI system. It is that the game it is in, the one where it makes a truckload of money, is changing. The problem for Google is, to use the toll booth analogy, that the road which has helped it create an empire is about to lose its relevance.

## By Javed Anwer

In the early 2000, some 20 years ago, the big tech companies were in a race. They all wanted to make the phone smart and then smarter. As it happens in the early days of new concepts and novel technologies, these different companies had different ideas about where they wanted to go and how.

Nokia by early 2000 was supercharging its phones by adding smarter features to them. For example, recall Nokia N-Gage. BlackBerry, which was already selling a personal work device, a phone that was sort of an extension of the office laptop, believed that a "smart" phone would be the one that would make people reply to emails better. Microsoft, with its Windows Mobile, was trying to create a computer that would be something like Windows Desktop Lite. Google, which was new to this game of smart devices, was



trying to create a smart platform — read software — that would allow it to be in control at a time when browsers and search were coming to mobile devices. And then there was Apple. The company, too, was working on its

"smart" phone. And its approach too was different. It was working on a device that would be all screen and no keyboard in its design and that would have a soul of a full-fledged computer. It may not seem so now but at that time the

idea was radical. When Steve Jobs unveiled the iPhone in early 2007, it changed the world in an instant. Although, BlackBerry, Nokia and Microsoft would take a while to get the memo. But Google, being the company it

was, saw the writing on the wall immediately. We know courtesy of a bitter legal fight that Apple waged on Android because the company believed Google stole all its good ideas. Steve Jobs was so angry that he once said "I will spend my last dying breath if I need to... I'm going to destroy Android, because it's a stolen product." Theft or no theft, Google switched the gears immediately in 2007. The company wanted to create Android for phones that would look somewhat like BlackBerry phones. It junked that idea. Google pivoted. Hard and quick. It turned Android into what we got a year later in 2008 and subsequently since then — software that powers full-screen phones and which more than matches the features and usability of Apple's iOS.

(Contd. on page 23)



# New protests against Macron and his pension bill amid warnings of violence

**Unions have asked Macron to withdraw or pause the bill - which has been adopted but not yet published, pending a review by the Constitutional Council - to calm things down.**



without a vote in mid-March, with polls showing that Macron's perceived disdain for voters, as well as footage of police violence, made things worse. In the last nationwide day of protests on Thursday, "Black Bloc" anarchists smashed shop windows, demolished bus stops and ransacked a McDonald's restaurant in Paris, with similar violence in other cities.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin warned on Monday that there was "a very serious risk" of further violence on Tuesday, in the capital and beyond. Some 13,000 police will be assigned to the rallies,

just under half of them in Paris. Violent far-left groups, some of them coming from abroad, want to "set France on fire", he told a news conference.

Police have advised shop owners on the path of the Paris protest rally to close for the day.

Rights groups and international organisations have denounced the excessive use of force by police in recent protests.

As with previous days of industrial action since mid-January, trains and flights will be disrupted and some schools shut, while rolling strikes continue to hit the energy

sector. On Monday, at least six out of seven refineries in France were shut or functioning at reduced capacity and liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals were blocked.

The government says the pension bill is vital to ensure the system does not go bust. Unions and protesters say there are other ways to do that.

Unions have asked Macron to withdraw or pause the bill - which has been adopted but not yet published, pending a review by the Constitutional Council - to calm things down.

Macron responded that he is more than willing to talk to unions, but on other topics.

(News Agency)-France faces Emmanuel Macron's plans to delay the retirement age by two years to 64 have been largely peaceful so far. But anger has mounted since the government pushed the bill through parliament

## 'We are all Chinese', former Taiwan president says while visiting China

**During his historic visit to China, Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou said people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are ethnically Chinese.**



the man celebrated for overthrowing the last Chinese emperor in 1911 and ushering a republic is buried, Ma praised Sun's contributions. "People on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are Chinese people, and are both descendants of the Yan and Yellow Emperors," Ma said, in comments provided by his office. Ma used wording in Chinese meaning people of Chinese ethnicity, rather than referring to their nationality. Descendants of the Yan and Yellow Emperors is an expression referring to a common ancestor for Chinese people. Most Taiwanese no longer identify as Chinese,

according to polls.

Sun is officially still considered the father of the Republic of China, which remains Taiwan's official name.

Sun is also lauded by the Communist Party for the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, but the governments in Beijing and Taipei do not recognise each other. Ma's visit is part of outreach by Taiwan's main opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), to China in hopes of reducing tensions. The KMT traditionally favours close relations with China, but strongly denies being pro-Beijing.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-

wen has repeatedly offered talks with China, but has been rejected as China considers her a separatist. She says only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

Ma, a senior KMT member, said he hoped for peace. "We sincerely hope that the two sides will work together to pursue peace, avoid war, and strive to revitalise China," he said, again using an expression that refers to the Chinese people as an ethnicity rather than a nationality. "This is an unavoidable responsibility of Chinese people on both sides of the Strait, and we must work hard."

(News Agency)-People on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are ethnically Chinese and share the same ancestor, former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou said on Tuesday at the start of a historic visit to China that Taiwan's ruling party has criticised.

Ma, in office from 2008-2016, is the first former or current Taiwanese president to visit China since the defeated Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in 1949 at the end of a civil war with the Communists. He is visiting amid heightened tension as Beijing uses political and military means to try and pressure democratically governed Taiwan into accepting Chinese sovereignty.

Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party has questioned why he is visiting just after China took away another Taiwanese diplomatic

ally, Honduras, on Sunday, leaving the island with official diplomatic ties with only 13 countries.

In comments in the eastern Chinese city of Nanjing at the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, where

## West's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine exposes double standards, says Amnesty

(News Agency)-Amnesty, in its annual world report for 2022, called out the West's "double standards" over human rights abuses throughout the world, news agency AFP reported on Tuesday.

Amnesty secretary general Agnes Callamard said, "The West's formidable response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine underscored double standards, exposing in comparison how inconsequential their reactions have been to so many other violations of the UN Charter." She also pointed out the West's silence on Saudi Arabia's rights record, repression in Egypt and Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. In the report, Amnesty said, "Russia's

assault that began on February 24, 2022 gave us an all too rare view of what becomes possible when there is political will to act" as the West closed ranks to support Ukraine." Many countries imposed sanctions on Moscow and opened their borders to Ukrainian refugees after the invasion, while the International Criminal Court launched an investigation into war crimes in Ukraine. But Amnesty said the conflict had highlighted shortcomings in responding to abuses in other parts of the globe, AFP reported. Meanwhile, Germany and Britain have delivered Western heavy tanks to Ukraine, officials said Monday, providing a key infusion of armored

firepower that will aid Kyiv's battle against invading Russian troops, AFP reported. The tanks were promised to Ukraine earlier this year and have arrived in time for an expected spring offensive by their forces. As Ukraine gains conventional firepower, the Kremlin vowed to follow through on a plan announced by President Vladimir Putin to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus, an initiative which has drawn widespread criticism, AFP reported. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told journalists on Monday that Berlin had provided "very modern" Leopard battle tanks to Kyiv, with the defence ministry later saying 18 were delivered.



# GitHub sacks entire India engineering team, around 140 of them

It is reported that approximately 142 engineering roles across GitHub's India operation have been impacted due to layoffs. Check out the full details.

(News Agency)-Microsoft-owned internet hosting service provider GitHub has fired its entire engineering team in India, which is also the company's second-largest developer community after the US. It is reported that approximately 142 engineering roles across GitHub's India operation have been impacted due to layoffs. To recall, GitHub was acquired by Microsoft back in 2018 and as of October 2022, the company's revenue was at \$1 billion annually. As per the latest media reports, GitHub let go of 142 engineers in India on Monday, March 27, 2023. "A total of 142 engineers were let go at GitHub India yesterday (Monday). Laid-off employees have been given two months' pay as severance," a source close to Business Today and the matter told the publication.

Although the company hasn't officially revealed the number of

employees that have been laid off, it confirmed the move. "As part of the reorganization plan shared in February, workforce reductions were made today as part of difficult but necessary decisions and realignments to both protect the health of our business in the short term and grant

us the capacity to invest in our long-term strategy moving forward," GitHub said in an official statement.

The GitHub CEO Thomas Dohmke sent an email to employees talking about the layoffs and justifying the measures. "We are announcing a number of difficult

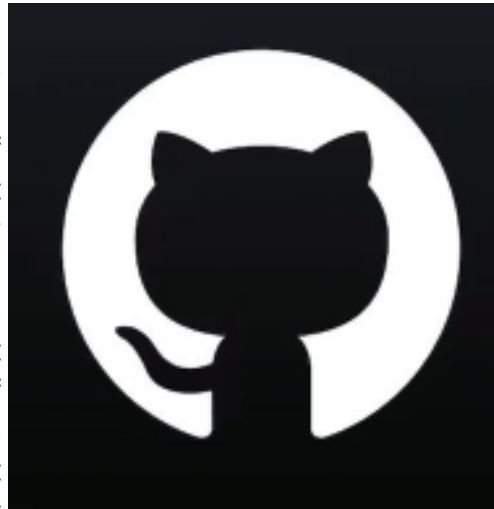
decisions, including saying goodbye to some Hubbers and enacting new budgetary realignments, designed to protect the short-term health of our business while also granting us the capacity to invest in our long-term strategy," Dohmke wrote in the email. In the same email, he also stressed that the

company will focus a lot on integrating AI "with urgency". "The age of AI has started and we have been leading this change with GitHub Copilot, our most successful product launch to date. We have an enormous opportunity to build

an integrated, AI-powered GitHub with urgency," the email read.

Furthermore, it is also reported that the layoff didn't happen based on the performance of employees, instead, the whole team was asked to leave. "Whole engineering team was asked to leave. Hundreds of engineers have been impacted. It was not performance related," the source further elaborated. All of the laid-off employees have been made to sign a strict Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) in lieu of severance benefits.

Well, this isn't the first round of layoffs at GitHub. Just last month, the Microsoft-owned company announced cutting 10 per cent of its workforce to cut costs. The internet hosting service provider has also paused hiring until further notice.



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# Next magic trick from ChatGPT: Forcing humans to wake up and smell the coffee

The world changes, to borrow a phrase from Ernest Hemingway, the way we go bankrupt — slowly and then suddenly. After years of incremental progress, that gradual chipping away, the world of technology is now in the middle of sudden changes. This change has a popular name — ChatGPT. Of course, it is not only about GPT. Instead, it is about AGI (artificial general intelligence), the kind that learns and acts unprompted and on its own. While we aren't there yet where we can say that AGI has arrived, we are moving at a pace towards a future where it can be a reality. In the interim, we have ChatGPT, now spookily intelligent in its version 4. It is capable of acing some of the toughest examinations in the world. We have Google's Bard, which is now taking baby steps and has started interacting with users. We have AI tools like MidJourney and Stable Diffusion, which can create images that look real or imaginative or both. And we have a new Bing powered by GPT-4, the sassy Bing that remains a chatterbox even after Microsoft clipped its wings because it fell in love with an NYT reporter and threatened a few users with harm like an arrogant human would do when they pushed it into edge cases. There is no denying that an ultra-smart AI — let's not call it AGI yet although it spooked a Google engineer so much that he called it sentient — has arrived. We

do not yet know how it is going to be assimilated into our lives. No one knows, not even OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, whose company is behind GPT. But the way it's moving, it is fairly safe to predict that AI tools like ChatGPT, Bard and MidJourney are going to be part of the fabric that will enfold around our 21st-century world in a few years from now. The possibilities are endless and even if only some of them come true, our world will be changed in a fundamental way, somewhat like how it was changed when humans realised they could control and master fire, or the day when someone figured out wheel, or in that year recently when Tim-Berners Lee wove his World Wide Web. The new and upcoming AI tools are all set to change the way we work and go about our lives. These will be big changes. And with these big changes, yet again there will come the big questions. In particular, there is one question that humans will have to face soon: What it means to be human in an AI-powered world and what is it that is different about us.

These questions are not exactly new. Whenever the world has changed, in this way or that, we humans have asked this question. If we are not God's favourite creation and are instead a product of evolution like Darwin said. Then what makes us different from any other animal?

Say, what's the difference between a chimp and a man? There have been profound answers, and there

have been jokes. As this one goes, we are nothing but just monkeys with anxiety. The profound bit is, and so said mathematician and philosopher Rene Descartes, "cogito, ergo sum" — I think, therefore I am. And so on and so forth.

In the coming years, humans will be confronted again with these existentialist questions. And as we try to search for answers, I think, we will realise just how much we have lost — or rather forgotten — the essence that makes us humans. At a superficial level, there is doubt about the answer: We are living beings and AI is not. We are conscious, whereas ChatGPT is not. But the foundation on which these assertions rest is going to be re-defined as we try to measure ourselves against super smart AI tools like ChatGPT. I think, therefore I am. But GPT can also "think" equally well if, by thinking we mean thinking of a solution or an answer.

But we can imagine, and hence we are humans. Sure, but so can ChatGPT. It can also imagine. For Lord of The Rings, JRR Tolkien imagined and invented a new language called Numenorean. But GPT can also do that. Ask it to imagine and create a new language, and it will do so within minutes, giving users a vocabulary of new words that don't exist in any dictionary. Humans can paint. But so can ChatGPT.

Humans can write unique novels. ChatGPT can do it as well, and probably

can write stuff that is better than most of the trade fiction that sells in India nowadays. What about emotions? We are humans because we have emotions. Again, the question is, how do we define emotions? This is because anyone who has seen ChatGPT and Bing interact with users so far knows that these AI tools are fairly good at expressing "emotions." In their replies to users, they can come across angry, miffed, helpful, empathetic and — as the New York Times reporter discovered — hopelessly and even creepily romantic when they fall in love with you. I know that AI tools are not sentient. But I must say that they sound and act like they are sentient, and that I believe is something which will force humans to confront the big questions. In an AI world, what makes you human?

The reality is that most humans in the 21st century, in the lives they live and the way they navigate these lives, are almost machine-like. We do not live very original lives, neither in thought nor in action. But just because we arrogantly believe that "I think, therefore I am", we get away with living a morose life. Metaphorically, these are the lives akin to the lives that knowledge workers in last year's sleeper hit *Severance* are seen living. And in the coming years, AI will be perfectly capable of living similar lives. It's an artificial life, something that Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard, once highlighted in his book

Extinction. He wrote: "The petit bourgeois and the proletariat are pitiful but insufferable products of the machine age." The artificial world produced the artificial human being, and conversely, the artificial human being produced the artificial world."

The world of the last 100 years has dulled a lot of our faculties that made us — metaphorically speaking — God's creation. Instead, modern times have made us into unimaginative bores. We have indeed turned into monkeys with anxiety, peering hopelessly into our smartphones and TV screens and living insignificant and petty lives. No, ChatGPT is not sentient. And it will never be in the human way. But I hope in the coming years it will force humans to think and imagine again the wonders that only humans can. Currently, most of humanity is living an artificial life, the kind of life lived while sleepwalking. In the coming years, I hope this artificial life will be lived by AI and humans will be free again — and probably be forced to — imagine a livelier future and more meaningful lives. We will probably discover again that it is not the IQ that makes us human. Passing the IIT exam, which a dog can't, doesn't make us human. Being a human is something more, it ought to be more. But what is this more? I am certain that GPT and ultra-smart AI tools will make us confront the question and we will find the answer that only humans can.

## Who is Amrita Ahuja of Block Inc named in Hindenburg report

"Other executives, including CFO Amrita Ahuja and the lead manager for Cash App Brian Grassadonia, also dumped millions of dollars in stock," it said.

### WHO IS AMRITA AHUJA?

According to her LinkedIn profile, Amrita Ahuja is the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and the chief financial officer (CFO) at Block. The CFO is the senior-most finance professional in an organisation and is responsible for the financial health of the business. Amrita

Ahuja is the daughter of Indian immigrants who owned a day-care centre in a suburb of Cleveland, according to a Wall Street Journal (WSJ) report. Amrita Ahuja said she was drawn to Square Inc (now Block Inc) because of its focus on empowering small-business owners like her parents. The WSJ report said that Amrita accepted a job offer in 2018 to become the chief financial officer of Square Inc, which was later renamed Block Inc. She was 39-year-old then.

### A YOUNG ACHIEVER

Amrita had earlier worked in strategy and finance roles at Walt Disney Co, Blizzard Entertainment, Activision, and Fox Networks Group. At Fox, she played a role in launching the streaming service Hulu, said the Wall Street Journal report. In 2021, she was named to the Forbes 50 Over 50 list, which recognises women who have achieved significant success in their careers after the age of 50. That Amrita Ahuja is one of Jack Dorsey's most-

trusted aides in anybody's guess. Dorsey is readily available to give her advice about topics internal and external to Square, she said. "Jack, when he hired me, saw something in me before others did," Amrita told WSJ. Amrita started her journey as an investment banker with consulting firm Morgan Stanley in 2001. She has a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.



## Rahul Gandhi's sentencing could also be good news for Congress

On Thursday, Rahul Gandhi was sentenced to two years in jail by a Surat court for referring to thieves as having the surname Modi. The court granted the Congress leader bail and suspended the sentence for a month to let him file an appeal. However, the real issue is disqualification.

According to law, Rahul Gandhi may lose his Lok Sabha seat. Disqualification will also lead to a bigger setback: he won't be able to contest elections for eight years (two years running with the sentence and six years under the Representation of the People Act, 1951). Rahul will turn 53 this June. Disqualification means he can't hope to be an MP, forget prime ministership, till age 60. If India doesn't have mid-term polls, the next general election he can fight is 2034. He will be approaching 64 by then. That's not all. Other cases are also going on against him, the most crucial being the National Herald corruption charges being probed by the Enforcement Directorate under the Modi government.

But all this cannot be seen in isolation. The sentencing has come on the back of the Congress's existential crisis arising out of the party losing senior leaders, many of them to the BJP, and its second straight general election humiliation in 2019 which also saw Smriti Irani of the BJP wresting Rahul's family pocket borough of Amethi. He remained an MP, thanks to his decision to contest from a second seat, Kerala's Wayanad.

### NO 1977 MOMENT

Some have sought to cite the ongoing Congress protests against Rahul's sentencing to suggest the party is in a 1977-like situation. The Emergency meant a massive defeat for Indira Gandhi and her Congress party in the national election. The CBI took her into custody. The former prime minister had to appear before an inquiry commission and face tough questioning. She portrayed herself as a victim and, later, as a fighter.

There was a massacre in Bihar's Belchi village. She sensed a political opportunity and decided to travel -- first by train, then by jeep, then through constant rain on a tractor. Mud and slush on dirt tracks meant she also had to ride an elephant. She managed to meet the families of the victims. Three years later, in 1980, she was back in power.

But the context today is different. She could be back in power because the Janata Party's was a numerically weak khichdi sarkar. The Congress could pull down Prime Minister Morarji Desai and prop up his deputy Charan Singh and then bring him down too, leading to fresh elections. Also, Rahul Gandhi is not his grandmother. And he has to remain in parliamentary and electoral politics to look for his own Belchi moment and make political capital out of his sentencing.

### A NEW RAHUL?

So, is Rahul Gandhi's sentencing only bad news for the Congress? Not really. Disqualification

or no disqualification, chances are that he will be less vocal going forward because of the sentencing and considering the pending cases against him. This might be an opportunity for him to do what he should have been doing all along: focus more on an alternative vision that the Congress can offer to the country. As an opponent, the Congress is expected to criticise the party and leaders in power. But it also has to be mindful that people are wired to hear about solutions. That Prime Minister Modi is popular among large sections of people cannot be contested. Constant criticism, though it could be valid in many cases, is bound to make the supporters defend their leader more and more. These are people the Congress ultimately wants to win over. There's a view that a Rahul Gandhi more focused on taking to the electorate big ideas, innovative even, that can transform the country if that's what the Congress wants to do, could help his party more.

### NO MODI VS RAHUL

If Rahul Gandhi is disqualified from the Lok Sabha and barred from contesting elections, it will be a body blow for the Congress. But if that happens, and if he takes a backseat, even while not fully fading out, it could also help the party in some ways, many would argue. The BJP has been sarcastically saying that Rahul is its biggest asset in winning elections. That's not entirely true because the BJP is seen to be winning primarily because of PM

Modi's popularity, Hindutva-nationalism, welfarism -- and a fragmented Opposition. What is true, however, is that the saffron party has been too keen on a Modi versus Rahul contest. And this explains the amount of spotlight, even before Thursday's sentencing, on the Gandhi scion. And this is the same Modi versus Rahul fear that has triggered efforts to put together a non-Congress, anti-BJP bloc for 2024 when PM Modi seeks his third straight term. The likes of TMC leader Mamata Banerjee, at the forefront of third-front talks, has said Rahul Gandhi is PM Modi's biggest TRP. But there are also suggestions that if Rahul isn't as aggressive and the Congress agrees to drop its big brother attitude regarding coalition negotiations, such a third front, which will only benefit the BJP, may not really be needed. Mamata Banerjee has often preferred to deal with Rahul's mother, Sonia Gandhi. BRS leader and another PM-face hopeful K Chandrashekar Rao's daughter, Kavitha, facing investigations into corruption charges like many other Opposition leaders, has also tried to reach out to Sonia. Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, till recently seen as one more aspirant for the top job, has a better working equation with Sonia. Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has often subtly mocked Rahul. Thursday marked a departure, though. Kejriwal posted a tweet say-

ing, "We have differences with the Congress, but it is not right to implicate Rahul Gandhi in a defamation case like this. A conspiracy is being hatched to eliminate non-BJP leaders and parties by prosecuting them." What was seen as Kejriwal's support for Rahul was also guided by the fact that two of his top Delhi leaders are in Tihar jail on corruption charges pressed by central agencies.

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## Amartya Sen raises 'deep concern' about democracy after Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as MP

Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen has raised 'deep concerns' about Indian democracy amid the uproar by various opposition parties over Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha. In a letter addressed to Sudipta Bhattacharjee, former Head of Department of Economics at Viswa Bharati University in Shantiniketan, Sen questioned if an opposition leader in India has the right to oppose or not. Can it be true that the Leader of the Opposition in India cannot any longer oppose? Can even a minor judicial officer make the task of the highest opposition leaders go away? Where has democracy come to in India?" wrote Sen in the letter. Sudipta Bhattacharjee, to whom the letter was addressed, told India Today that Sen felt that Indian democ-

racy was in peril. There has been a massive uproar, especially from the Congress, after Rahul Gandhi was disqualified from the Lok Sabha after a Surat court found him guilty in a 2019 defamation case when he remarked that "all thieves have Modi surname" and sentenced him to two years in jail. Following his disqualification, the Congress leader was also asked by the Lok Sabha Secretariat to vacate his government bungalow by April 22. The ante against Rahul Gandhi has been raised after he constantly accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of choosing to keep silent on the Adani row. The Adani Group suffered a massive setback after a US-based firm accused his company of stock manipulation and account fraud.

## 'Won't Bow Down...': PM Modi Attacks Opposition Parties, Says All Those Deep in Corruption...

(SAI Bureau) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday inaugurated the newly constructed BJP Central Office (Ext.) in Delhi. Speaking at the inaugural event, he called the Bharatiya Janata Party the "most futuristic party of India" and recalled the "tireless and continuous journey" of going from 2 to 303 Lok Sabha seats. He also launched an attack on Congress by raking up the issues of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, Emergency, and corruption. "The country can never forget that black chapter of 1984. Congress got a historic mandate in those elections, it was an emotionally charged atmosphere. We were completely destroyed in that wave, but we were not demoralized and didn't blame others," PM Modi said while addressing the event attended by BJP national president JP Nadda and other dignitaries. On the new office building, PM Modi said it is an "expansion of the aspirations of BJP workers who are the soul of the party and its office." He added, "The BJP is not the party that came from the TV screen or newspapers. Neither did it come from Twitter handles and YouTube channels. This BJP progressed on the basis of the hard work of its workers." Recalling the jour-

ney of BJP so far, he said, "Journey began with two Lok Sabha seats is now at 303 seats. The BJP is the only pan-India party from East to West and from North to South. The BJP gives opportunity to the youth to progress... A few days from today, our party will celebrate its 44th foundation day. This journey is a tireless and continuous journey. This journey is the journey of the culmination of hard work. We fought against the Emergency. The BJP is the most futuristic party of India." Stepping up attack on Congress, the Prime Minister further said the BJP never blamed others for poll losses.

In an attack on Opposition for questioning the credibility of central agencies and courts, the PM said, "Credibility of our institutions are being questioned. People who are indulging in corruptions, when they are being investigated by agencies then agencies are being targeted. When court gives a decision then courts are being questioned. Judiciary is being questioned. You all are witnessing this. Under PMLA, during Congress government Rs 5,000 crore worth property were seized.



# Rahul vs Uddhav over Savarkar defamation: Why Congress fails to crack hot-button tests

The Jan Sangh or later, the BJP needed both Nehru and subsequently Indira Gandhi (to attack) and Savarkar (to praise and root for its ideology). The Congress did not. Rahul does not. Indira or Rahul's father, Rajiv Gandhi, did not attack Savarkar for a reason. In fact, Indira praised Savarkar — describing him a “remarkable son of India”.

By attacking Savarkar — a non-rival for the Congress of its heyday — to target today's formidable BJP (which anchors its ideological strength in the Hindu Mahasabha leader), Rahul is firing his arrows backwards while his challenger is standing in his front.

For Indian politics, Savarkar's bus left its terminal decades ago. And the BJP and the Shiv Sena factions are the two long-distance passengers on the bus. Rahul has to fight a BJP that is more socialist in its policy than the Congress could possibly ever have been.

There is another aspect to Rahul's Savarkar obsession and refusal to apologise. Rahul has said sorry in the past. One prominent apology, an unconditional one, came in 2019 to the Supreme Court for wrongly attributing his “chowkidar chor hail” (the PM is a thief) remark over alleged corruption, a charge found unfounded by the judges, in the Rafale deal to them. This was a politically wise move. The ‘chowkidar chor hai’ campaign fell flat when the BJP retained power with a bigger majority, causing the second straight poll humiliation to the Congress that triggered its scramble for relevance.

## UDDHAV'S WARNING

In contrast, the latest attack on Savarkar has antagonised the Congress's ally, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. Thackeray said he considers Savarkar his idol and told Rahul that his insult won't be tolerated.

Thackeray's threat isn't really surprising, given his commitment to Savarkar's ideology, stretching as far as demanding the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour, for the polarising Hindutva figure. Thackeray's has been a right-wing party which broke up with the BJP in Maharashtra for a

brief but unnatural shot at power with the Congress but only to find most of its MLAs, led by Eknath Shinde, running away to the saffron party to effect a stunning change of guard.

In November 2022, too, Thackeray had the same warning to issue after Rahul's attack on Savarkar during his Bharat Jodo Yatra aimed at pulling the Congress out of its worst times following poll defeats and exits of top leaders, many of whom joined the BJP. Even in 2019, Rahul said, “My name is not Rahul Savarkar” when the BJP asked him to apologise for his comment that PM Modi had launched ‘Make in India’ but nowadays, it is ‘Rape in India’. He wanted to highlight growing crimes against women.

## BJP AND SAVARKAR

What is, however, surprising is that Rahul has gone back to Savarkar-bashing, which allows the BJP to paint him with more anti-Hindutva colours, at a time when he needs allies and when even those wary of him were warming up to him, though out of common-enemy political compulsions.

The BJP needed an anchoring ideology. It found the same in Savarkar's. The cadre culture of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the BJP emerged as an alternative to the Congress, whose secular ideology with an ‘appeasement’ taint and tilt has lost its vitality in the current political landscape of India.

What the Congress needs is a fresh rallying point — something that the BJP strived for with its Hindutva core. An example could be seen in the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which has made the so-called freebies its unique selling point. As the premier Congress leader, Rahul needs to find that new USP for his party. Instead, it is flogging a dead horse.

Savarkar has been a divisive figure. The Congress has protested the installation of his portraits in the legislatures of BJP-ruled states such as Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. The two parties have also bickered over Savarkar's portrayal in school textbooks.

Arrested by the British, he languished in the Andaman &

Nicobar Islands Cellular Jail (Kala Pani) for years. His detractors say he shot off clemency pleas to the British for his release from the jail, while those eulogising him assert his mercy petitions were driven by the desire to contribute to the anti-British struggle.

Savarkar's exclusive social philosophy that every Indian must consider India as her punya bhumi (holy land) causes unease among those whose religious practices originated in other countries and regions.

Also, since Indian polity is now deeply divided between ultra-nationalism and defensive secularism, Savarkar will remain relevant, especially due to his alleged links with Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Militant right-wing outfits celebrate the assassin, Nathuram Godse, because they think Gandhi appeased Muslims and let Pakistan happen.

India's principal opposition party, the Congress, doesn't want to lose Gandhi after the BJP substantially appropriated Sardar Patel and that's where the conflict, accentuated by the freedom struggle legacy, lies. Rahul's remark has again been criticised by Savarkar's grandson, and also by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde whose deputy Devendra Fadnavis of the BJP went on to announce a Savarkar Yatra across the state. The strategy seems similar to the saffron party's OBC outreach amid the Modi surname controversy.

## A SAFFRON NET?

But the Savarkar issue is also symbolic of how the Congress falls into BJP's trap, failing to crack the hot-button test over highly emotional and deeply controversial Hindutva-related issues, triggering immediate intense reactions.

It suits the BJP more if Rahul keeps going back to Savarkar and Hindutva — the combination that gives the nationally ruling party more fuel to galvanise its cadre. The Congress, on the other hand, looks to struggle to infuse the same level of energy among its workers despite a cross-country walk by its top leader. Their energy is sapped by shooting a target that is long gone.

On Sunday, Rahul's sister and

Congress leader, Priyanka Gandhi sought to counter the BJP's allegations of dynastic politics against the Gandhi family and the Congress and asked if the ruling party would say the same thing about Lord Ram, as he, too, came from a dynasty. A large chunk of India's population believes, with devotion or otherwise, in Lord Ram, and in politics, this goes in the direction of the BJP. It has gelled so well that any reference to Lord Ram by a political figure brings the BJP into picture. The game is always played on a pitch tailor-made for the BJP.

That is why Priyanka's remarks sparked a BJP backlash, similar to the one that forced Congress leader Salman Khurshid in December last year into issuing a clarification that he never compared Rahul with Lord Ram. She also said her brother was not a Pappu (a political novice), as branded by the BJP, because he had studied at Harvard and Cambridge. Ideally, she should be able to defend Rahul without citing his degrees but that's not what we're discussing here — especially when PM Modi and the rest of the BJP machinery work on the line that India needs “hard work not Harvard”.

It's the Congress's competing desires — to remain attractive to a Hindu-majority country and also denounce past and current Hindutva icons worshipped by the party in power — that cause many of the complications it faces.

But majoritarian politics has always been a norm in Indian politics. Only the scale of it may vary. The Congress, with its legacy of being a movement for India's independence, ruled at the Centre and in states for years and politicians from so-called upper castes held positions of power. The socialist movement sought to empower the OBCs in the 1960s-70s. Then prime minister and Rahul's grandmother, Indira Gandhi, had praised Savarkar for his defiance against the British, issued a postal stamp in his memory and got a documentary made on him.

The Congress's aggressive posturing over the 2002 Gujarat riots has often been blunted by the whataboutery, sometimes

not entirely out of line, that asks about the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom in the national capital on PM Rajiv Gandhi's watch, the 1989 killings of Muslims in Bihar's Bhagalpur when the Congress ruled at the Centre and in the state and the Babri mosque's demolition when the grand old party had its prime minister in Delhi.

Now, after 2014, the contours of Indian polity have changed in such a way that secularism and nationalism have become almost mutually exclusive. But this is where an opportunity also lies for the Congress.

Ridiculing BJP supporters as bhakts hasn't worked. And why ridicule people you want to win over. Not everyone is high on hatred. You can't invent your own electorate. The size of India's voting public is limited. Constant criticism of the RSS hasn't worked either. Nor has the derision of big corporate houses. Invoking the Gandhis, the former prime ministers, and their sacrifices may also not have much utility in today's India because their detractors are always ready with what all went wrong during their rule.

It's time for the Congress to tell people, and tell them in concrete terms, what its USP is, and why it should get a shot at power again. Because negative campaigning, often riddled with ambivalence, temple trips (being a case in point) isn't working, given the new rules of the game enforced by the BJP. And this USP must also keep aside individual ambitions to ensure a consolidation of Opposition blocs and check their further fragmentation, the single-biggest factor benefitting the saffron party.

POSTSCRIPT: On Monday evening, Thackeray's party said it would boycott a Congress meeting over Rahul's remarks against Savarkar. It said no one from the party will attend any meeting convened by the Congress till the grand old party understands Savarkar. This follows attempts (preempted by the BJP's constant efforts and the Congress's never-ending desire to keep Rahul at the forefront) by the TMC, the AAP and others to cobble together an anti-Modi front that excludes the grand old party.



# Google survived iPhone in 2007, it may not survive ChatGPT

In other words, even as the world changed almost overnight, and smartphones became the primary device that allowed users to connect to the internet and use various Google services, Google kept control on how users access the internet. With Android on mobile phones and Chrome on desktops and laptops, Google essentially runs the toll booth most people must pass through to access almost any service connected to the internet. And when they do so, they pay Google a toll in the form of data they share, the clicks they make and the ads they see.

For the company running this toll booth is of primary importance. So much so that even when it owns Chrome and Android, it still pays Apple to keep Google a default search engine on iOS. It is this toll booth that ChatGPT and Microsoft's Bing — which is powered by GPT 4 in its current avatar — are now threatening to make redundant.

Of course, nothing is set in the stone. Just like we saw in the case of the iPhone, a year from now Google may come out with

its super-intelligent AI system like ChatGPT. It already has Bard, an AI tool similar to ChatGPT, and it has done some exemplary work over the years in the field of artificial intelligence. Yet, the problem for Google is not a super-smart AI system. It is that the game it is in, the one where it makes a truckload of money, is changing. The problem for Google is, to use the toll booth analogy, that the road which has helped it create an empire is about to lose its relevance.

Think of it as another analogy. Not so long ago, just 600 to 700 years ago, Central Asia was a region that was arguably the most prosperous in the entire world. All roads that facilitated the trade ran through Central Asia and all traders paid a fee. Then suddenly the sea routes opened and in one fell swoop these roads lost their relevance and the cities on them that prospered soon withered and became irrelevant.

Google is a tech giant. Yet, despite its size, the company is essentially a one-trick pony — internet advertising based on clicks and views. It has a lot

of other stuff such as driverless cars, Pixel phones, a lot of this and a lot of that. But none of this and that makes it any significant amount of money. In 2022, Google had total revenue of a little over \$77 billion. Of this 77 per cent came from Google Search and YouTube ad networks. It is this Google ad empire that is under threat. Tools like ChatGPT and new Bing essentially change the way we access information on the web. Instead of a URL-and-keywords system, these AI tools offer information that is accessible through conversations. And while there is ample opportunity to create an ad network that could be part of conversations, it is not yet clear if OpenAI — the company behind ChatGPT — or Microsoft would be keen on it. And if they won't be, Google too will be forced to keep its AI tools like Bard clean of ads, at least until it can win against its competitors.

A win, however, is not guaranteed. In fact, for the first time since 2007, Google finds itself

threatened in an existentialist manner. And unlike in 2007, when the iPhone was only changing the way people access the internet and not the internet itself, the new AI tools aim to restructure the way information is created, shared and used on the internet.

It is not that Google does not have the AI chops. The company is a pioneer in work done on AI. The problem is that Google cannot use its expertise in AI without undermining its own business. This is probably the top reason why last year it was OpenAI and Microsoft that took the lead in pushing AI tools and not Google. Once users have access to a super-smart AI tool, they are not going to need something like Google — search, browse and click — to get their information. And if they are not going to follow this whole routine — search, browse and click — they undermine Google's ability to know its users and show them ads and make money from the time they spend on the internet.

Now, if this is not a challenge big

enough, Google also has to face something else: users who are not sympathetic to it. While a world where ChatGPT and similar tools act and operate like Greek oracles has its downsides, people are tired of Silicon Valley greed and of an internet that is littered with ads, built with help of opaque — sometimes downright illegal — mass data collection and little regard for privacy. The internet that exists right now is largely an internet shaped and created by Google. And it's not a nice internet. It used to be a much better place a long, long time ago, the kind of place where a company like Google — operating from a garage — could come and solve problems for users. But the internet in 2023 is different. So different that if tools like ChatGPT lead to its dismantling, there will be few mourners for it. Essentially, the time and tide both are against Google at the moment. And while we will see how Google navigates it if it fails to repeat its performance of 2008 when it managed to thwart a challenge from the iPhone, that would not be a surprise.

## India must make the most of China-Taiwan conflict-change LAC status quo, fight Beijing better

The PLAGF will play a major role in landing operations alongside the PLA Navy (PLAN) if China chooses to go ahead with a JILC. Although the operational theatre commands and the combination of armed services involved in dealing with India and Taiwan differ, the Indian experience and intelligence in tackling the PLA's "integrated joint operations" would benefit the partner countries.

In the event of a China-US war over Taiwan, India could offer its mainland to the US for refuelling aircraft — just like it did in the 1991 Gulf War. Unlike the US bases in the Philippines and western Pacific Ocean, which are likely to be directly involved in the conflict, refuelling in India is a much safer option. Furthermore, by granting the US access to its Andaman and Nicobar Island bases, India can block China's energy supplies passing through the Malacca Strait. However, these are escalatory steps, which would entail a serious reassessment of traditional Indian thinking on such matters. There will always be a danger that it could lead to an eventual Chinese

response on the Himalayas at a time and place of Beijing's choosing. There is no guarantee, though, that being cautious would actually deter the PLA from changing the status quo further along the Himalayas in the future as is evident from the ongoing military stand-off since the 2020 Galwan clash. India cannot stay completely out of any military fray over Taiwan even if it means escalation by the Chinese along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Like India, China also faces the challenge of a two-front war. The 2009 edition of Science of Joint Operations highlights that "China's enemies will exploit [its] difficulty...to service their own ends". Similarly, the 2012 document by the Academy of Military Sciences warns about a "chain reaction" (liansuo fanying), where another aggressor "in the PRC's high altitude plateau border area" could exploit its vulnerability to launch an offensive against Chinese interests. However, proactively taking advantage of China's involvement in the Taiwan Strait to change the existing status quo on the Himalayan border or fight China in multiple theatres is a possibility that Indian mili-

tary planners should start thinking about.

### Sanctions isn't the answer

Besides limited military steps that involve indirectly assisting partner countries, India could also engage in selective diplomatic and economic activities. For instance, India could be a part of a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution condemning Chinese aggression and demanding an immediate end to the Chinese offensive across the Taiwan Strait. In the past, India has refrained from criticising Beijing's actions. During Pelosi's visit to Taipei, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) "urged both sides to exercise restraint, avoidance of unilateral actions to change the status quo, de-escalation of tensions and efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region". While hoping that such a cautious approach may change Chinese behaviour, it has not really resulted in any positive movement on the China-Indian front. On the economic front, expecting India to be a part of the coalition willing to impose targeted sanctions on China remains unrealistic. The reason being that sanctions with the current nega-

tive trade balance between China and India would hurt the latter much more. Furthermore, despite the ongoing military stand-off, India hasn't imposed any concrete trade sanctions against Beijing. Notwithstanding the opportunity to use border hostilities as a reason to invoke the national secu-

rity clause in the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules for sanctioning China. As India desisted from levying major trade sanctions during China's Himalayan military aggression, it is unrealistic for New Delhi to do so should any conflict unfold or break out over Taiwan.

## Rahul Gandhi disqualification poses question. Who owns

### Constitution: Parliament or courts?

As a result, India now lives with two potent forms of political life: a law that can be blunt and draconian, and a politics (of all hues) that is far from being disciplined or even nonviolent. Whether it is Law Minister Kiren Rijiju who rages against the judiciary or a colonial-era law that sees a popular leader rudely ejected out of his hard won and popular office, the relationship between law and politics goes well beyond any reform of a statute. Or even how judges are appointed or what they might or might not do after they retire. It certainly goes beyond the all-too-familiar tug of war of who owns the Constitution: Parliament or

the Supreme Court. The latest dramatic confrontation between law and politics or the charge of defamation against Rahul Gandhi certainly begs any and all of these questions. It certainly begs the question of why defamation can be so whimsy and draconian, for starters.

The defamation case against Rahul Gandhi then goes to the heart of Indian democracy. It gives the room temperature of the world's largest democracy, for sure. It also tells us once more the true state of rule of law, which once again confirms my side of the debate I won at the Constitution Club of India in Delhi.



# Rahul Gandhi's disqualification and the hypocrisy of Western elites

Similarly, a few months back, Fareed Zakaria was outraged when author Salman Rushdie was stabbed in the neck in New York. Describing Rushdie as a brave and brilliant man, Zakaria claimed that the ghastly attack sickened him. Both Rushdie and Zakaria need no introduction. But for the uninitiated, Salman Rushdie is an Indian-born novelist, a Booker Prize winner no less, who has faced numerous death threats and assassination attempts for his fourth novel, *Satanic Verses*. Fareed Zakaria is an India-born American journalist covering both American and international politics, with his own show on CNN and his own column on Washington Post.

After spending his initial years in Mumbai, Fareed graduated from Yale. He later studied for a PhD at Harvard under some well-known academics like Robert Keohane and Samuel Huntington. Thereafter, he stayed back in the United States, becoming amongst the most well-known voices in politics and international affairs. Fareed's father was Rafiq Zakaria, a top Congress Party leader and an Islamic theologian. He served as Minister in Maharashtra, a member of Parliament, and even as the Congress Party's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha. Rafiq was a known advocate of traditional Islam. He also served as the Chancellor of Jamia Urdu.

Rafiq was also at the forefront of getting

Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* banned in India. He publicly accused Rushdie of being a liar when the author claimed his book was fiction. When Rajiv Gandhi's government finally banned the book, Rafiq emerged as one of the ban's vocal defenders. The accusations against Rushdie, backed up by state action, were the initial triggers that led to a slew of threats and assassination attempts against him. Rushdie became persona non grata in India. The knife-attack in New York, which Fareed found ghastly, was the culmination of a chain of events set in motion in the late 1980s. Fareed, however, conveniently chose to leave out how this chain of events was set in motion, and who did it.

Today, as politics makes a full circle and returns to bite the Congress ecosystem, the same elites who crawled when they were asked to bend seem concerned about democracy. As religious fundamentalism reaches Western shores, the elites who lit the fire are shocked that it managed to follow them all the way to the other end of the world. No doubt children cannot be held accountable for the sins of their forefathers. But if it affects them so much despite living abroad and having no skin in the game, if it affects them so much that they are finally ready for an honest conversation, perhaps they could begin from a place of honesty.

## Why India Should be Concerned About Growing Threat of Online Radicalisation

The ones from Shiv Sena who spoke against our Gurus are provided with bullet-proof jackets and gunmen while our identity is being confiscated from our houses." Accounts of Amritpal Singh and Waris Punjab De are also tagged in the post along with hashtags related to Bhindranwale, Nihang Sikhs, Punjabi singers - Amy Virk and Sidhu Moosewala. Platforms like Reddit, which are quite popular among the youth, are also being used by the Khalistan supporters. Tik-Toks and other posts calling for the Sikh community to unite for the creation of Khalistan along with the 'Draft of the Constitution of Khalistan' were shared on different Reddit communities. The 'Sikh politics' community with over 10k followers has users sharing posts related to the 'Khalistan Referendum', a draft of the Khalistani Constitution which, a user allegedly claimed, was passed on the 36th Republic Day of India in Amritsar and a video of 'Waris Punjab De' head Amritpal Singh in conversation with the California Sikh Youth Alliance.

### ONLINE RADICALISATION AND POPULAR FRONT OF INDIA

In another report titled 'The Popular Front's online narratives attempting to radicalise Indian Muslims', it becomes clear that despite being banned by the Government of India, the Popular Front of India (PFI) operatives remain quite active in the cyberspace and especially on the social media platforms to radicalise Indian Muslims. It may be recalled that the PFI and its affiliate groups were banned by the Indian government on September 28, 2022. After analysing various social media and digital platforms and tracking content posted by around 11,000 handles or social media accounts which were following PFI and its affiliates, Logically's research shows that despite the ban on PFI, the group and its affiliated outfits received considerable support online and offline. Organisations with similar interests have repeatedly aligned

publicly with the PFI. "The risk of radicalisation of Islamic youth and Indian Muslims remains high given the engagement and influence that the PFI has received at the domestic and international level. The softer narratives used by the PFI around self-determination which are centered around issues like the Hijab protests and the CAA-NRC protests may have helped draw audience members into more radical content. By using divisive political narratives and repeated claims of the 'otherization' of Indian Muslims, the PFI's messaging posed a gateway to more radical propaganda that often calls for war and to take up arms against the Indian government. The consistent usage of words such as 'fascist' and 'genocide' underscores a deliberate strategy to provoke Indian Muslims and reveals an attempt to radicalise them. The potential of such harmful content

online translates into real world harm, as previously as seen in the Udaipur assassination and the Coimbatore blasts in 2022."

### INDIAN RESPONSE

The response from the Indian establishment to counter the online radicalisation must be two pronged. First, on the legal front and the second on the front of countering disinformation campaigns. Indian government has made provisions over the past few years to tackle this menace. Under the Sections 124A, 153A, 153B, 295A and 505 of Indian Penal Code (IPC), content posted for online radicalisation is punishable. Additionally, there are provisions under the Information Technology Act (2000) to initiate action and block the social media accounts or digital platforms that are used for serving propaganda.

### POTENTIAL THREATS AND CHALLENGES

India is home to more than 700 million internet users now and around 500 million out of them are present on social media. A significant percentage of them are youth and adolescents. One can gauge the extent of potential threats posed by online radicalisation. One of the major challenges in this regard is the emergence of new encrypted platforms which refuse to adhere to Indian rules and regulations. As soon as any platform agrees to adhere to the India regulatory mechanism, in terms of sharing details of its users, new platforms emerge, and the radicalisation drive move to these platforms. Also, Indian authorities have no control over the anti-India content posted from other parts of the world. In view of such a dynamic situation, it is important to have an ever-evolving counter-radicalisation strategy, especially in context of the online radicalisation.

## PM Modi's Millet Mission promises to become a decisive movement for holistic social growth

The Government of India (GOI) aims to make IYM 2023 a people's movement for the overall benefit of the Cultivator, Consumer and Climate. To take the momentum forward, the Modi government has taken a multi-stakeholder engagement approach by involving farmers, start-ups, exporters, retail businesses, hotel associations and various arms of the Government in India and abroad to achieve the objectives of IYM 2023 and positioning India as the 'Global Hub of Millets'.

As the Modi government had already been quietly working on the millet push in the last few years, early results are now visible. In India, millets are primarily grown in 12-13 states. However, in these states, the domestic consumption per person

was not more than 2-3 kg per month. Today, it has increased to 14 kg per month. Moreover, there has been a 30 per cent increase in the sale of millet-based products. Even millet cafes are visible at some places. In 19 districts, millets are being promoted under 'One District One Product' scheme. More districts are being identified for the same.

Early trends confirm the success of PM Modi's Millet Mission. From ordering 'atta' online, urban households are now tempted to try out jowar and bajra. In fact, I ordered a packet of millet a couple of days ago from Amazon and was very impressed by the wide range of stocks available online. Retail food stores have started selling branded millets - the trend showing a swift

upsurge. It also needs to be remembered here that most of these 2.5 crore millet farmers belong to the tribal belts, which have always battled perpetual inadequacies and shortages. By bringing them to the core of India's food requirements, it brings a natural focus to the upliftment of the community, besides shifting India's farming focus to newer states.

PM Modi has been a reformer at heart. However, his exceptional ability to influence social and behavioural change through gentle nudges for the larger good of humankind makes him a rare leader. Modi's Millet Mission is bound to grow into a decisive movement for holistic social growth and well-being worldwide in the years to come.



# Imran Khan is promising Islamic utopia to Pakistanis. It might compel the military to return

The country's proto-constitution, the objectives resolution of 1949, passed under Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, ceded at least some of these demands. The resolution promised freedom of faith, but also insisted that public life would be governed in accordance with Islam, and asserted that "sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to Allah."

## For an Islamic State

Leaders of the Majlis-e-Ahrar claimed the objectives resolution was an incomplete manifesto. The organisation wanted that the Ahmadis be declared apostates, but there was more. Figures like Maulana Aleem Illahi demanded an Islamic state, with the Sharia—not nationalism—as its basis. Laws and the constitution themselves needed clerical authorship. The clerics who deposed to the commission were divided on most issues, but the core of their argument was the demand for a theological state.

Fearing the emergence of wide opposition, the Punjab government dithered in response to the crisis. The province sought to toss the issue to the centre, asking it to discuss these demands with the cleric. The central government, in turn, demanded Punjab impose order—an end

it tried, somewhat ineffectually, to achieve by bribing large numbers of local newspapers with funds purloined from the adult education budget.

The riot of 1953 that tore apart Lahore, though, forced the government to act. It ordered the imposition of martial law in several cities, and the clerical protests. The Islamist leader Syed Abul Ala Maududi was given a death sentence but it was later rescinded. The military, meanwhile, realised civilian leaders were ineffective and divided. And under Ayub Khan, simply seized power, establishing a praetorian order that still scars the country.

Each ruler, though, conceded the clerical cause. Ayub, though he sought to break the authority of the clerics, institutionalised Islam within the state to strengthen his authority. Former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto proscribed the Ahmadi faith, and vowed war-without-end over Kashmir. General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq gave the clerics an institutional role in law-making. The New Medina

Imran's core slogan of building a Riasat-e-Medina invokes the movement of 1953: A rebellion of the rural petty bourgeoisie and struggling informal-sector workers against the power of both landed wealth

and the new English-speaking élite. The Pakistan Imran promises is a utopia where, as scholars Kainat Shakil and Ihsan Yilmaz argue, pious citizens will receive housing, healthcare and jobs. The former prime minister dramatically expanded religious education by the state, and supported the Taliban's war on the West.

Facing this polemic, Imran's opponents seem unable to argue for the idea of a secular, modern republic. Twitter battles on Pakistani politics, anthropologists Ghazal Asif Farrukhi and Natasha Raheja have perceptively noted, still involve communal invective. Imran has been represented as Shiva, and his most visible opponent, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, as Kali. Loss of religious legitimacy, clearly, comes with a high price.

Like in 1953, economist Uzair Younus has noted, a fractious and ineffective civilian order runs the country. The government has delayed implementing a desperately-needed International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout, for fear of the harsh impacts it would have on citizens. This self-defeating strategy has compelled the Pakistan government to delay provincial elections in the face

of Supreme Court orders.

Faced with the prospect that the military could saw down the branch on which it placed him, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is hurling patronage at the Generals. The military has been given a staggering 45,000 acres for a corporate farming project. The National Assembly has expanded the country's draconian blasphemy laws, in a bid to placate their religious right. Foreign minister Bilawal Zardari-Bhutto has focussed his diplomatic energies on polemics about Kashmir. The Pakistani military, facing an ever-growing insurgency from jihadists it helped nurture, has excellent reasons to avoid staging a coup. It has no solutions to the economic crisis, either. The chances are, however, that Imran's demagogic population will soon compel them to exercise their authority—or make terms for their return. Either way, it won't solve Pakistan's core problem. "As long as we rely on the hammer when a file is needed and press Islam into service to solve situations it was never intended to solve, frustration and disappointment must dog our steps," wrote justices Muhammad Munir and MR Kayani, the judges who investigated the 1953 crisis.

# Lalit Modi, Nirav Modi are not OBCs. BJP calling them so is an insult to the community

The UPA government at least proposed a caste-based reservation in the private sector and constituted a committee headed by former Karnataka CM Veerappa Moily to convince the stakeholder. All major Indian industries opposed the proposal. Not a single Modi running a big business in India showed their support or offered jobs to the OBCs. Even after the BJP had an OBC prime minister in the driver seat, it did not propose such a reservation.

Caste status cannot be manipulated to deceive India's toiling masses. Most

OBCs of this country constitute the Shudra agrarian and artisanal masses. There is no doubt that the oil-pressing community in pre-modern industrial times was also an artisanal community. But that status cannot be tagged to everyone with the Modi surname. It doesn't even warrant a legal or social argument. For example, the Chaudhary surname is found in many communities in India, and not all of them belong to the same caste.

## Agenda for vote bank

On the one hand, the BJP and RSS are opposing anti-caste laws in India and in

countries like the United States and Canada. The RSS mouthpiece Panchjanya and the BJP's national general secretary Ram Madhav, who is one of the main functionaries of the RSS, wrote against Seattle's anti-caste discrimination law and movements in Canada. And on the other hand, the party is using the OBC agenda for vote purposes. Other than the fact that Narendra Modi of OBC caste is allowed to become the prime minister of India, the BJP or RSS has not taken any concrete step to further the cause of the OBCs of

India. Their stand on the issue must be questioned

It's not as if the Congress has any serious positive practice and stand on the OBC question. But it never used the community like the BJP and RSS are doing. If the same trend continues, it is the OBCs who will end up losing the most. Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd is a political theorist, social activist, and writer. He has been campaigning for English medium education in rural and urban government schools of India since the last thirty years. Views are personal.

# Why Rahul Gandhi's Disqualification May Be a Turning Point

Why Rahul Gandhi's Disqualification May Be a Turning Point

The Bharat Jodo Yatra was also a way to remobilise the Congress cadres in the wake of the recent party elections. In spite of very poor media coverage (qualitatively as well as quantitatively), this 4,000-km-long yatra has been a success: Congress was on its way back to its pre-independence roots, as a social movement bringing together all kinds of people, when the dominant majoritarian doxa tends to exclude so many citizens from the official nation.

The next moves

The next step was predictable: Rahul Gandhi "had" to be neutralised. The pretext that has been used—defamation of the Modis of the world—is the only thing one could find. It sounds paradoxical given the kind of sarcasm Narendra Modi himself resorted to vis-à-vis "Pasta behen", the "Jersey cow" and "Maun Mohan Singh". But there was no better alibi available. It was useful simply because MPs sentenced to two years of

jail can be disqualified—and the objective was to remove Rahul Gandhi from parliament.

This move reflects the extreme nervousness of the rulers who clearly apprehend new discussions on the relations between Gautam Adani and Narendra Modi in parliament, at a time when the business community, in India and abroad, is holding its breath. Moves of that kind are always Plan Bs—to avoid the worse. But this exercise in damage control will have adverse consequences. Blowback

First, opposition leaders are not sentenced to jail for minor crimes like this one in liberal democracies. India, therefore, is weakening its claim of being the "mother of democracy" and the "Guru of the word": the country is diluting its soft power six months before the G20 summit when it was supposed to promote this image.

Secondly, like in Turkey, Israel, Hungary and Poland, radical moves like this one foster the unity of the opposition. Rivals

of Rahul Gandhi, including Arvind Kejriwal, are now realising the existential risk that this regime is representing for all dissenters—including them, something the arrest of Manish Sisodia had already made clear. When opposition leaders close ranks, the task of authoritarian leaders become more complicated: their polarisation strategy, in a way, boomerangs. This new situation "forces" them to become even more illiberal, except if they can co-opt new supporters: whether the Jyotiraditya Scindia's "model"/syndrome can be replicated will be an important variable to factor in for assessing India's political situation in the coming weeks and months. But leaders of state parties, not only in Delhi and Punjab, but also in Bihar, in UP (where Mayawati may return to active politics one day), West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand and Kerala may join those of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu because the order of the day may now be to close ranks. The results of the coming elections in Karnataka (and then in Madhya Pradesh,

Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan) will of course also determine the scenario of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Lastly, the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi (and his possible imprisonment) may be counterproductive for the country's rulers.

In case he is jailed, it may result in the shift of the victimisation repertoire from one side of the political spectrum to the other. Since 2002, Narendra Modi projects himself as a victim of the establishment represented by the "liberals", "Lutyens Delhi-ites", the "Khan market gang" and their spokespersons (including the NDTV of yesteryears). He claimed to embody the suffering of the plebeians who are also the direct casualties of these elite groups, as a "chaiwallah" and an OBC. This repertoire may not be audible anymore if the real victim is none other than Rahul Gandhi, the great-grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru who spent more than nine years of his life in jail and made many sacrifices for the cause of India's freedom.



# Young Indian men are battling a chronic hair fall problem. Here's how they can reverse it

**We lose around 50 to 100 hairs daily. However, if this cycle is disrupted or a follicle is damaged, your hair may begin to fall out more quickly.**

Gone are the days when men experienced hair loss in their 50s and 60s; the modern man is confronting the same demon faster. A cocktail of pollutants, stress, anxiety, work pressure, and harmful chemicals is intensifying the receding hairline problem among men in their 20s and 30s.

While it is a definite cause for concern, wait before you enter panic mode. Like most predicaments, there are ways out of this one too. But first, let's understand the biological processes that cause hair growth and loss in the first place.

## Understanding hair growth

Did you know that your hair goes through a three-phase growth cycle? First comes the anagen phase, where your hair actively grows. According to an article in the National Library of Medicine, it can last six years before entering a period of rest. Next comes the catagen phase, where your hair stops growing and separates from the follicle—the minuscule cavity beneath the skin that holds the hair in place—lasting about 10 days. Finally, there's the telogen phase, where the follicle rests for two or three months before the old hair falls out and new strands begin sprouting in its place. We lose around 50 to 100 hairs daily in this natural cycle. However, if this cycle is disrupted or a follicle is damaged, your hair may begin to fall out more quickly than it grows back, leading to a receding, M-shaped hairline, patchy hair fall, and overall hair thinning in men.

## Causes of hair loss in men

Genetics play a crucial role in the onset of hair loss. But to assume you're destined for baldness because your parents lost their hair with age is a fallacy. Androgenetic alopecia (AGA), also called male pattern baldness, can manifest at any point after puberty and escalate over years or even decades.

In people with a genetic predisposition to AGA, a hormone called dihydrotestosterone (DHT) can bind to and miniaturise follicles,



making hair thinner and shorter till the follicle stops producing hair altogether. This is because DHT is produced from testosterone by an enzyme called 5-alpha reductase. Sadly, many men with this condition eventually end up permanently bald.

Next come hormonal imbalances. In men, hormonal imbalances can occur on a spectrum, ranging from minor to significant. Such shifts can arise from various factors, such as age, environment, lifestyle, emotional distress, and underlying medical conditions. Interestingly, hair loss can stem from either inadequate testosterone levels or excess oestrogen.

Underlying health conditions can also intensify hair loss in men. Ailments such as Telogen effluvium (excessive hair shedding), Anagen effluvium (abnormal hair loss caused by drugs or chemotherapy), Alopecia areata (patchy hair loss), Tinea capitis (fungal infection on the scalp), Cicatricial alopecia (destruction of follicles), Lichen planopilaris (follicle inflammation) and hair shaft abnormalities are commonly observed in men who complain of poor health.

How can men treat hair thinning? Natural remedies are a good way to start treating your hair loss. Bhringraj, which belongs to the sunflower family, is known for its hair growth benefits in Ayurvedic

medicine. Some studies have even shown that extracts of this herb are better than minoxidil (a medication used for pattern hair loss treatment) for hair regrowth. Chinese hibiscus is also considered a miracle remedy for hair loss in India. A 2003 study assessing hibiscus leaf and flower extracts for hair growth potential showed positive results. Introducing saw palmetto into your diet may also aid hair growth with few side effects. However, we still need more research to confirm its effectiveness.

If natural concoctions don't work for your scalp, you can always opt for treatments containing minoxidil. I have observed that in India, doctors tend to prescribe minoxidil to their patients twice a day for hair growth. However, having undergone fellowships in Germany and Iran, I have been trained to exercise caution and not recommend excessive use. While the regular use of this medication can lead to noticeable improvements in hair growth, discontinuing use can result in rapid hair loss. Therefore, I recommend limited usage (about twice a week) to avoid adverse consequences.

Weekly steaming on the scalp can also help reduce the miniaturisation of hair follicles by promoting blood circulation, which in turn can nourish hair follicles. When the scalp is exposed to steam, it unclogs the pores and

reduces the buildup of oils. Meanwhile, the heat causes blood vessels to dilate, increasing blood flow to the scalp. This increased blood flow can bring nutrients and oxygen to the hair follicles and stimulate new hair growth.

The Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) technique can also bear positive results. PRP is a procedure for treating hair fall and thinning with little to no adverse effects if done correctly. Here, platelet-rich plasma is extracted from a patient's blood sample via a centrifuge machine and injected into the scalp to stimulate hair growth. Results depend on the techniques of centrifugation and the content of the tube used, apart from the expertise of the dermatologist. PRP injections have been found to prevent hair fall and thicken the roots of thinning hair, promoting healthy hair growth.

The next method involves treatment through prescription pills. Finasteride and dutasteride are two tablets commonly prescribed by doctors to treat hair loss. These medications can take at least three months to perform and should only be taken under a doctor's supervision. Many men fear experiencing side effects such as impotence. However, when taken properly, these medications are safe and do not cause such drastic

issues. As a precaution, doctors usually do not prescribe these pills for more than six months.

## Last resort: Hair transplant

When all else fails, hair transplant is always an option for men. It is relatively easy and can be performed safely, but choosing a qualified and experienced doctor is essential to avoid mishaps. If the donor region is healthy and the doctor is competent, it's almost certain that positive results will be obtained.

However, in recent times, the market has been flooded with non-specialists doing quackery with different names for the same procedure, leaving many people confused about the ideal approach to take. To add to the confusion, some clinics charge absurd amounts—ranging from Rs 20 to 100 per hair graft—making it challenging to discern reliable, value-for-money clinics.

The only acceptable hair transplant techniques are Follicular Unit Transplantation and Follicular Unit Extraction (FUT and FUE). So, choosing a trained dermatologist or plastic surgeon with years of experience in these transplant methods is vital. It's also crucial that the doctor showcase their work by providing pre and post-transplant photos of at least 20 patients, and make you speak to at least one of their previous clients. This way, you can gauge their level of expertise, the quality of their work, and whether or not they are the right fit for you.

A balanced lifestyle, with reduced stress, chemicals, smoking cessation, and controlled hair gel and colour usage, can help with hair thinning. In the early stages, PRP, minoxidil, or any other hair tonic with a hedonic effect can help. The key is to increase vascularisation (reinvigoration of blood vessels), which can be done through light scalp massage with a mild shampoo in the shower. And let's not forget the importance of water quality. Opt for soft water to ensure the best results for your hair.



# How Did Savarkar, a Staunch Supporter of British Colonialism, Come to Be Known as 'Veer'?

**Not only did Savarkar pledge his allegiance to the British in return for being released from prison, his propagation of Hindutva hurt the freedom movement by dividing society along sectarian lines.**

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) – mythologised in popular imagination as ‘Veer Savarkar’ – not only refrained from participating in the freedom struggle after the British released him from prison on account of his relentless pleas for mercy, but also actively collaborated with the English rulers to whom he had declared his loyalty.

At the time when Subhas Chandra Bose was raising his Indian National Army to confront the British in India, Savarkar helped the colonial government recruit lakhs of Indians into its armed forces. He further destabilised the freedom movement by pushing his Hindutva ideology, which deepened the communal divide at a time when a united front against colonial rule was needed. Post independence, Savarkar was also implicated in Mahatma Gandhi's murder.

Such is the man who was declared by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be “the true son of Mother India and inspiration for many people”, in his Twitter salutation to Savarkar on his birth anniversary on May 28 last year. In 2015, commemorating Savarkar on his 132nd birth anniversary, the prime minister bowed before a portrait of the Hindutva icon in remembrance of “his indomitable spirit and invaluable contribution to India's history”.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley was quick to follow up on the act. “Today, on birth anniversary of Veer Savarkar, let us remember & pay tribute to this great freedom fighter & social-political philosopher,” he tweeted. And somewhere in the stream of Twitter accolades from numerous BJP ministers that followed, the TV anchor Rajdeep Sardesai joined the chorus, albeit with a caveat. While he disagreed “with his ideology”, Sardesai said he honoured Savarkar's “spirit as freedom fighter”.

A freedom fighter he definitely was, for a certain period in the first decade of the previous century, long before he'd begun articulating the notion of Hindutva. Savarkar was then an atheist and a rationalist, who had started out on a revolutionary



road to rid India of her colonial yoke, asserting:

However, when the time came to pay the price for being a revolutionary under an oppressive colonial government, Savarkar found himself converted and transformed into “the staunchest advocate of loyalty to the English government”, to use his own words. This was after he was arrested and sentenced to serve 50 years in the infamous Cellular Jail on the Andaman islands after he was found guilty of supplying the pistol that a member of the Abhinav Bharat Society used to assassinate the then collector of Nasik, A.M.T. Jackson, in 1909. ‘Veer’ Savarkar pleading with the British for mercy

Barely a month into the hardships of prison, Savarkar wrote his first mercy petition, which was rejected in 1911. The second mercy petition, which he wrote in 1913, starts with bitter complaints about other convicts from his party receiving better treatment than him:

Then, after confessing that he was misguided into taking the revolutionary road because of the “excited and hopeless situation of India in 1906-1907”, he concluded his November 14, 1913 petition by assuring the British of his conscientious conversion. “[I]f the government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me,” he wrote, “I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of... loyalty to the English government (emphasis added)”. “Moreover,” he went on to say, making an offer which few freedom fighters could even think of making, “my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious.. The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else

can the prodigal son return but to the paternal doors of the government?”

In his fourth mercy petition, dated March 30, 1920, Savarkar told the British that under the threat of an invasion from the north by the “fanatic hordes of Asia” who were posing as “friends”, he was convinced that “every intelligent lover of India would heartily and loyally co-operate with the British people in the interests of India herself.”

After reassuring the colonial government that he was trying his “humble best to render the hands of the British dominion a bond of love and respect,” Savarkar went on to exalt the English empire: “Such an Empire as is foreshadowed in the Proclamation, wins my hearty adherence”. “But”, he added:

Finally, after spending ten years in the cellular jail and writing many mercy petitions, Savarkar, along with his brother, was shifted to a prison in Ratnagiri in 1921, before his subsequent release in 1924 on the condition of the confinement of his movements to the Ratnagiri district and his non-participation in political activities. These restrictions were lifted only in 1937.

One might have argued in 1924 that the promises he made about his love and loyalty to the British, about his readiness to serve the government in any capacity required and so on were a part of a tactical ploy – perhaps one inspired by Shivaji – employed to make his way out of prison so that he could continue his freedom struggle. However, history has proven him to be a man of ‘honour’, who stood by the promise he made to the colonial government. How then, one might wonder, did Savarkar acquire the title ‘Veer’?

A book titled Life of Barrister Savarkar authored by Chitragupta was the first biography of Savarkar, published in 1926.

Savarkar was glorified in this book for his courage and deemed a hero. And two decades after Savarkar's death, when the second edition of this book was released in 1987 by the Veer Savarkar Prakashan, the official publisher of Savarkar's writings, Ravindra Ramdas revealed in its preface that “Chitragupta is none other than Veer Savarkar”.

Without mincing words in the name of modesty or moderating the use of adjectives in the name of literary minimalism, Savarkar wrote that Savarkar “seemed to possess no few distinctive marks of character, such as an amazing presence of mind, indomitable courage, unconquerable confidence in his capability to achieve great things”. “Who,” he asked about himself, “could help admiring his courage and presence of mind?”

Perhaps in polite society, we ought to quietly look the other way with an embarrassed smile when an ex-revolutionist, after breaking down in prison, indulges in self-glorification under the cover of a pen name after his release. And, indeed, no one who did not suffer the conditions the inmates of that infamous prison on the Andaman islands had to endure, can claim the right to castigate Savarkar for refusing to contribute to the freedom movement after he was released from jail.

But his purporting of an ideology which destabilised the freedom movement by deepening the divisions along sectarian lines and his active rendering of support to the British government – which was determined to subdue the anti-colonial struggle – was a betrayal that must be hard to forgive, especially for a ‘patriot’ and a ‘nationalist’.

The sectarian mindset, which eventually culminated into the articulation of Hindutva ideology, was evident – as Jyotirmaya Sharma has demonstrated in Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of

Hindu Nationalism – in the early Savarkar, that too from a tender age. Only a boy of 12, Savarkar, leading a pack of his schoolmates, attacked a mosque in the aftermath of the Hindu-Muslim riots in Bombay and Pune in 1894-95. Holding back the Muslim boys of the village using “knives, pins and foot rulers”, Savarkar and his friends mounted their attack, “showering stones on the mosque, shattering its windows and tiles”. Recollecting the incident, he later wrote, “We vandalised the mosque to our heart's content and raised the flag of our bravery on it.” When the news of Hindus killing Muslims in the riots and its aftermath reached him, little Savarkar and his friends “would dance with joy”.

The sectarian nature of Savarkar's social and political thinking not only bred in him a deep-rooted resentment against Muslims but also clouded his understanding of historical events, leading him to perceive the 1857 War of Indian Independence as retaliation by Hindus and Muslims against Christianity, in response to Britain's efforts to Christianise India. In his 1909 book, The War of Independence of 1857, published during his revolutionary days, years before he had declared his loyalty to the British government, Savarkar wrote, quoting Justin McCarthy, “The Mahomedan and the Hindu forgot their old religious antipathies to join against the Christian.”

What was to stop the British government, which had passed a law against the practice of Sati (widow burning), from meddling further with Hindu customs by passing a law against idolatry, he asked. After all, “[t]he English hated idolatry as much as they did suttee.” Describing a process he perceived to be the destruction of Hinduism and Islam in India, Savarkar wrote in his book:: The sepoys, according to Savarkar, were the primary targets in this mission to spread Christianity in India.



# What is an IMF bailout, when is it provided to a country, and what are the lending conditions?

**Sri Lanka secured a \$3 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund amid the worst economic crisis the island nation has faced since independence. Here is how IMF bailouts work.**



The International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board approved a nearly \$3 billion bailout plan for Sri Lanka last week, of which about \$333 million was to be disbursed immediately to alleviate the country's humanitarian crisis. Meanwhile, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the IMF wants his country to fulfil commitments from friendly countries on external financing to release bailout funds. The lender has been negotiating with Islamabad since early February to resume \$1.1 billion funding held since November, which is part of a \$6.5 billion bailout agreed in 2019.

**What are IMF bailouts?**

In a general sense, a bailout means extending support to an entity facing a threat of bankruptcy. Countries seek IMF bailouts when they are facing macroeconomic risks, currency crises and need assistance to meet external debt obligations, to buy essential imports and push the exchange value of their currencies.

According to the IMF website, inappropriate fiscal and monetary policies, which can lead to large current account and fiscal deficits and high public debt levels; an exchange rate fixed at an inappropriate level, which can erode competitiveness and result in the loss of official reserves, and

a weak financial system, which can create economic booms and busts are among factors that lead to economic crises. Political instability and weak institutions also can trigger crises, as can insolvent financial institutions. Both Sri Lanka and Pakistan witnessed a sharp rise in domestic prices and the exchange value of their currencies plunged. Currency crises are usually the result of mismanagement of the currency by its central bank. Sri Lanka's economic crisis can also be partly contributed to bad timing, as it saw a fall in the flow of US dollars into the country due a decline of foreign tourists during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The IMF was set up in 1945 with the aim to bring about international economic coordination to prevent competing currency devaluation by countries trying to promote their own exports. It later went on to become a last resort lender for countries facing severe economic crises.

**How is an IMF bailout provided?**

The IMF lends money to the economies in peril in the form of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), which is a basket of five currencies — US dollar, Euro, Chinese Yuan, Japanese Yen and

British Pound. It can be executed in the form of loans, cash, bonds, or stock purchases.

The lending is done through programs designed according to purpose. According to the IMF, these include standby arrangement, standby credit facility, extended fund facility, extended credit facility, rapid financing instrument, rapid credit facility, flexible credit line, short term liquidity line, precaution and liquidity line, resilience and sustainability facility, staff monitored program, policy support instrument and policy coordination instrument.

**Five steps of IMF lending**

First, a member country in need of financial support makes a request to the IMF.

Then, the country's government and IMF staff discuss the economic and financial situation and financing needs.

Typically, a country's government and the IMF agree on a program of economic policies before the IMF lends to the country. In most cases, a country's commitments to undertake certain policy actions, known as policy conditionality, are an integral part of IMF lending.

Once the terms are agreed upon, the policy program underlying an arrangement is presented to the IMF's Executive Board in a "Letter

of Intent" and detailed in a "Memorandum of Understanding." The IMF staff makes a recommendation to the Executive Board to endorse the country's policy intentions and offer financing. This process can be expedited under the IMF's Emergency Financing Mechanism.

After its Executive Board approves a loan, the IMF monitors how members implement the policy actions underpinning it. A country's return to economic and financial health ensures that IMF funds are repaid so that they can be made available to other member countries.

**What are the conditions applicable to an IMF bailout?**

Among the conditions laid down for a country seeking financial assistance from the IMF could be certain structural reforms, such as fiscal transparency, tax reforms and reforms in state-owned enterprises. Critics say these reforms can be tough on the public and may be driven by a geopolitical influence, since they are often decided by officials of various countries.

Proponents say these conditions are necessary to ensure successful lending by the IMF, as countries with policies that stem economic growth and stability would not be able to pay back their debts. Conditions for IMF lending also relate to macroeconomic variables, like monetary and credit aggregates, international reserves, fiscal balances, and external borrowing, as per the IMF.

**Pros and cons**

An IMF bailout ensures the survival of a country amid economic turmoil, also ensuring that essential industries and economic systems remain up and running. The IMF can also provide technical expertise to the affected country on how to implement reforms to strengthen the economy and institutions

On the downside, the IMF's conditions can result in reduced government spending and higher taxes, measures which have been historically unpopular with the people and often resulted in public unrest. It can also create a sense of dependency on external

funding, while also harming the country's reputation in the eyes of investors.

**Where does IMF get its money?** MF funds come from three sources: member quotas, multilateral and bilateral borrowing agreements. Quotas are the IMF's main source of financing, wherein each member of the IMF is assigned a quota, based broadly on its relative position in the world economy.

The IMF's current total resources of about SDR 977 billion translate into a capacity for lending of about SDR 713 billion (around US\$1 trillion).

Besides members of the Paris Club of creditor nations such as the United States, France and Japan, other lenders include China, India, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Kuwait.

Delays in funding approval worry nations in need

IMF funding is often the sole financial lifeline available to countries in a debt crunch, and key to unlocking other financing sources, with delays putting pressure on government finances, companies and populations.

Sri Lanka waited for over 180 days to finalise a bailout after a \$2.9 billion September staff level deal while Ghana, having defaulted on its overseas debt in December following a preliminary IMF deal, has yet to get board approval 80 days later. For countries such as Sri Lanka facing shortages of food, fuel and medicines as well as painful reforms to alleviate a debt crisis after years of economic mismanagement, the delays can be devastating.

This compares to a median of 55 days it took low- and middle-income countries over the last decade to go from preliminary deal to board sign-off, according to public data from over 80 cases compiled by Reuters. These delays have been caused by a number of reasons, but debt experts mainly point to the fact that China is still reluctant to offer debt relief in comparable terms with other external creditors. Beijing is the largest bilateral creditor to developing nations, extending \$138 billion in new loans between 2010 and 2021, according to World Bank data.





## After targeting Adani Group, Hindenburg attacks Jack Dorsey's Block, says it overstated user numbers

Months after targeting the Adani Group, US short-seller Hindenburg Research on Thursday accused Twitter founder Jack Dorsey-led payments firm Block Inc of "overstating its user counts and understating its customer acquisition costs".

After targeting the Adani Group, US short-seller Hindenburg Research on Thursday accused Twitter founder Jack Dorsey-led payments firm Block Inc of "overstating its user counts and understating its customer acquisition costs".

It said former Block employees estimated that 40%-75% of accounts they reviewed were fake. Hindenburg Research said its two-year investigation on Dorsey's Block "revealed the company's willingness to facilitate fraud against Block Inc. Block Inc, formerly

consumers and the government". Hindenburg said as Block's stock soared on the back of its facilitation of fraud, co-founders Jack Dorsey and James McKelvey collectively sold over \$1 billion of stock during the pandemic. "Other executives, including CFO Amrita Ahuja and the lead manager for Cash App Brian Grassadonia, also dumped millions of dollars in stock," the Hindenburg report said. The US short-seller firm said it held short positions in Jack Dorsey's

known as Square Inc, is a company with a \$44-billion market capitalisation. Block share price declined 20% to \$58.35 at 8:53 am in New York in US premarket trading, according to a Bloomberg News report. "Our two-year investigation has concluded that Block has systematically taken advantage of the demographics it claims to be helping. The 'magic' behind Block's business has not been disruptive innovation, but rather the company's willingness to facilitate fraud against

consumers and the government, avoid regulation, dress up predatory loans and fees as revolutionary technology, and mislead investors with inflated metrics," Hindenburg said. Hindenburg Research said its investigation indicated that Block had wildly overstated its genuine user counts and had understated its customer acquisition costs. "Former employees estimated that 40%-75% of accounts they reviewed were fake, involved in fraud, or were additional accounts tied to a single individual," it said. The

US short seller's report comes just two months after its allegations against the Adani Group. Hindenburg Research in a report in January accused the Adani Group of financial irregularities and stock manipulation. The Adani Group denied the allegations and said no wrongdoing had been committed by it. The Adani Group's total market capitalisation as of February 21 was approximately Rs 8.2 lakh crore, which is less than half of Rs 19.2 lakh crore as of January 24.

## First Citizens nearing deal to buy collapsed Silicon Valley Bank, investors bracing for more turmoil

First Citizens BancShares Inc was in advanced talks to acquire Silicon Valley Bank, days after it collapsed. Authorities around the world are on high alert for the fallout from the recent turmoil at banks following the collapse of SVB and Signature Bank in the US and the emergency takeover of Credit Suisse.



Days after Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), a four-year-old US lender and a cornerstone of the tech startup scene, collapsed, First Citizens BancShares was in advanced talks to acquire the bank, Bloomberg reported. First Citizens could reach a deal to acquire SVB from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp (FDIC), according to Bloomberg. Valley National Bancorp (VLY.O) was also a bidder for Silicon Valley Bank.

First Citizens has around \$109 billion in assets and total deposits of \$89.4 billion, Reuters said in a report. Global banks are staring at the biggest crisis since 2008 after two US lenders, SVB and New York-based Signature Bank, collapsed, stranding millions in deposits.

SVB was the nation's 16th-largest bank prior to its failure amid a bank run on March 10th, which made it the largest US bank to fail since the 2008-09 financial crisis. The bank's headquarters in Santa Clara, California, made it a popular lender for tech start-ups.

**Here are the top developments:**

First Citizens had placed a bid to buy SVB through the auction held by FDIC. The FDIC has been marketing SVB as two entities for prospective bidders – the Silicon Valley Bridge Bank, which holds its consumer deposits, and the Silicon Valley Private Bank, which offers wealth management services for high-net-worth clients. It's unclear at this time whether First

Citizens would acquire one entity or both if the deal is finalised, reports said.

As the global banking turmoil grows, investors and analysts are calling for more coordinated interventions from central banks to restore financial stability. The investors fear that after the collapse of two US lenders this month and the Swiss-government's takeover of Credit Suisse, markets are in a panic mode. There is a fear that global banking crisis may worsen amid rising interest rates.

After a European Central bank

official flagged a possible tightening in lending, the stress in the banking sector is being closely monitored for its potential to trigger a credit crunch, a US Federal Reserve policymaker told Reuters. In a bid to calm investors, the US Treasury said on Friday that the Financial Stability Oversight Council agreed that the US banking system is "sound and resilient". Commenting on the latest banking turmoil in the US, Australia and New Zealand Banking Group's CEO said the latest banking crisis had the

potential to trigger a financial crisis though it was early to predict it could bring one similar to that in 2008. "It's a crisis for some obviously, but is it a financial crisis, who knows? Does it have the potential to be one? Yes, it does have the potential to be one," CEO Shayne Elliott said in an interview on the bank's website. Investors are preparing for a long US stock market slog, braced for more banking sector tumult and worries over how the Federal Reserve's tightening will impact the economy.

## Alibaba to break up empire into 6 units as Jack Ma returns to China

Alibaba Group plans to split into six units and explore fundraisings or listings for most of them, it said on Tuesday, in a major revamp as Beijing vows to ease a sweeping regulatory crackdown and support its private enterprises.

Alibaba's US-listed shares rose as much as 8% after the news. The Alibaba stock is down around 70% since the regulatory crackdown started in late 2020. The Chinese e-commerce conglomerate said that the biggest restructuring in its 24 year history would see it

split into six units -- Cloud Intelligence Group, Taobao Tmall Commerce Group, Local Services Group, Cainiao Smart Logistics Group, Global Digital Commerce Group and Digital Media and Entertainment Group.

The revamp of the conglomerate comes a day after its founder Jack Ma returned home after a year-long stay abroad and as Beijing looks to spur private sector growth after a two-year-long regulatory crackdown on its showpiece private enterprises. "The original intention and fundamental

purpose of this reform is to make our organisation more agile, shorten decision making links and respond faster," Zhang said in a letter to staff seen by Reuters. Each business group, he said, had to actively tackle the rapid changes in the market and each Alibaba employee had to "return to the mindset of an entrepreneur." Daniel Zhang will continue to serve as chairman and CEO of Alibaba Group, which will follow a holding company management model, and concurrently serve as CEO of Cloud Intelligence Group.



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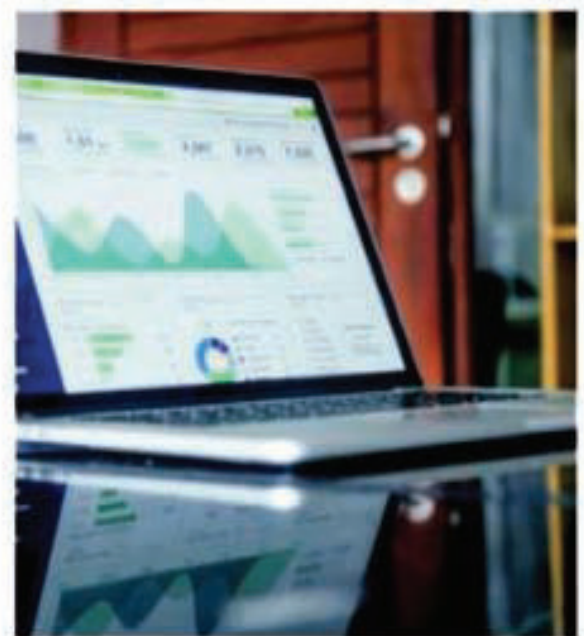
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# Have lingering sore throat? These home remedies could help you recover faster

To recover from a sore throat or cough faster, experts suggest adding foods that will give your throat moisture.



experts suggest letting it rest and adding foods that will give your throat moisture. According to Dr Savyasachi Saxena, Senior Consultant & HOD, ENT, Fortis Hospital, Noida, the treatment is avoiding any kind of irritants getting into your throat.

"If there is any coughing or some other symptoms persisting with a sore throat, then that has to be treated with medication. However, with just a sore throat that feels itchy, you can do certain things at home to relieve the pain," Dr Saxena told

indiatoday.in. The first treatment is that the patient should take

adequate rest. "Take a break from your work or if you have a vocal profession, it has to be stopped immediately," said Dr Saxena. To provide moisture to the throat, drink plenty of liquids. "Water, warm soup, other warm liquids like tea and coffee (but they should not be exceeded otherwise they'll lead to acidity) can be taken," said Dr Saxena.

Other than this, bland foods like fresh fruits and semi-cooked vegetables should be consumed for a fast recovery. Comfort foods like dalia and khuchdi can be added to your diet. Gargling is an important step

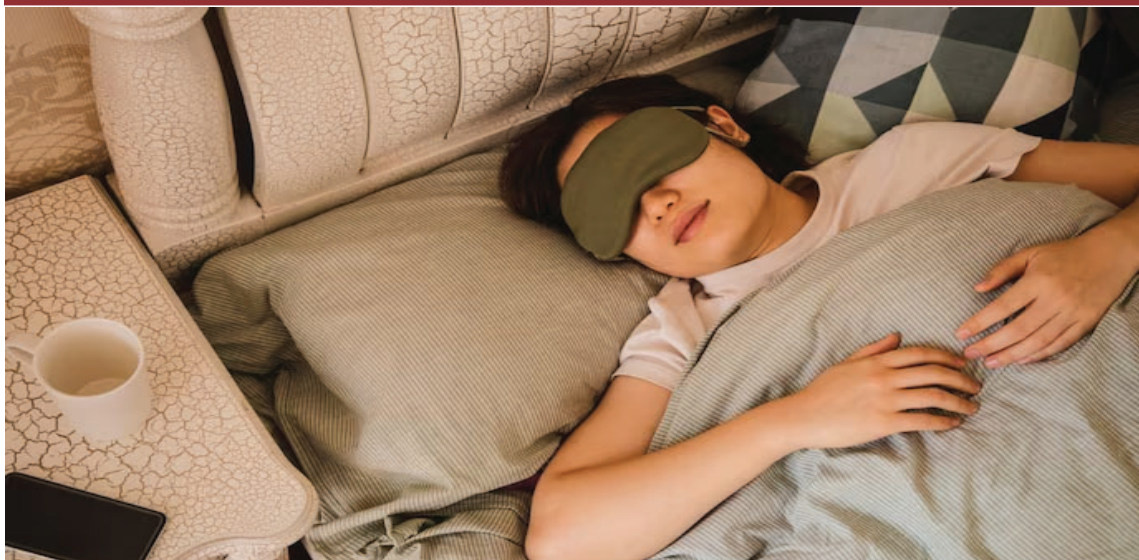
in treatment. "Keep gargling your throat with warm water with salt. Otherwise, some over-the-counter gargle medications are also available," he said. Since you must keep your throat moist, Dr Saxena suggested using an air humidifier can help. If you don't have a humidifier, steaming is a good way of easing the pain. Avoid smoking and alcohol during this time and restrict consuming bitter and sour food. "Take a break. If coughing increases or any unusual symptoms persist go to an ENT specialist or a physician," advised Dr Saxena.

(News Agency)-Almost every second person this season has been suffering from an itchy feeling in their throats. With seasonal flu like the H3N2 influenza virus being reported,

cases of Covid-19 and Adenovirus are also on the rise, people are experiencing sore throat, lingering cough and fever after getting infected. To recover from a sore throat or cough faster,

## Do eye masks really help you sleep?

Artificial lighting makes it harder to sleep, suppressing the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates the sleep-wake cycle.



(News Agency)-Sleep is one of the most important activities for maintaining a healthy body. Experts believe that most diseases can be kept at bay if a person receives quality sleep regularly.

Ensuring that your room is dark enough is an essential aspect of getting sound sleep. Artificial lighting makes it harder to sleep, suppressing the production of melatonin, which helps the body to sleep. Melatonin is a hormone produced in the brain that regulates the sleep-wake cycle of the body.

"Artificial light may make it harder to fall asleep by suppressing our body's natural sleep coordinator - Melatonin. Sleeping well helps to build mental resilience and promotes good mental health and overall well-being," said Dr YongChiat Wong, Group Head Scientist, Medical & Technical Affairs, P&G Health.

### Benefits of wearing an eye mask while sleeping

A study by Sleep Journal has pointed out that blocking out ambient light while you are sleeping can improve alertness and memory the following day. Eye masks are effective tools to help you

cut off any artificial light that could affect your sleep since it affects melatonin production.

Another study in 2010, published in the National Library of Medicine showed that patients in an intensive care unit (ICU) who were regularly distracted by light and noise were able to spend more time in REM (Rapid eye movement) sleep while wearing a sleep mask. Eye masks also provide a soothing feeling to the face and eyes. The soft texture of most eye masks produced in the market have cushioning that gives a relaxing feeling to people. Besides blocking out the light, eye masks could have a calming effect on the eyes, helping you to sleep faster. However, Dr Wong states that even though an eye mask helps you sleep better, they aren't useful for sleeping difficulties caused by other factors. "Other factors like ageing, irregular sleep schedule because of work or travel that also affect our body's melatonin levels, thus, causing a hindrance in quality sleep," said Dr Wong. In these cases, oral intake of sleep supplements containing melatonin close to bedtime can further support external habits to help our overall sleep cycle, added Dr Wong.

## Breast cancer in young women: How to screen and what are the preventions?



(News Agency)-Most young women do not think they are at risk of breast cancer. Yet, breast cancer can strike anyone at any age. It is always a good idea to screen and know about the preventions.

Breast cancer has become one of the most common cancers in women in India. Though cases of it are rising every year, diagnosis of the disease is quite challenging. Mainly because younger women typically have denser breast tissue than older women.

In fact, a younger woman, under the age of 40, may have advanced cancer by the time she feels a lump in her breast, which may be the first sign of any potential tumour. Experts believe that most young women do not think they are at risk of breast cancer. Yet, breast cancer can strike anyone at any age: nearly five percent of instances can be in women under 40. It is important for every woman to be informed

of the risk factors of breast cancer.

Some of the risk factors for breast cancer are as follows:

History of breast cancer or other non-cancerous breast illnesses in the individual.

Family history where a mother, daughter, sister, or other relative has had breast cancer. History of chest radiation treatment before the age of 40.

Being affected by a particular genetic disease, such as the BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation.

Periods before the age of 12.

Age during first delivery may matter to some women.

Breast cancer can also be aggressive and less likely to respond to treatment in younger women. Women under 40 are also more likely to have a mutant BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, which makes them susceptible to suffering from breast cancer. Delayed diagnosis of breast cancer may lead to several problems.



# Earth-like planet expected to be habitable turns out to be a burning furnace

TRAPPIST-1 b, the innermost planet, has an orbital distance about one hundredth that of Earth's and receives about four times the amount of energy that Earth gets from the Sun.



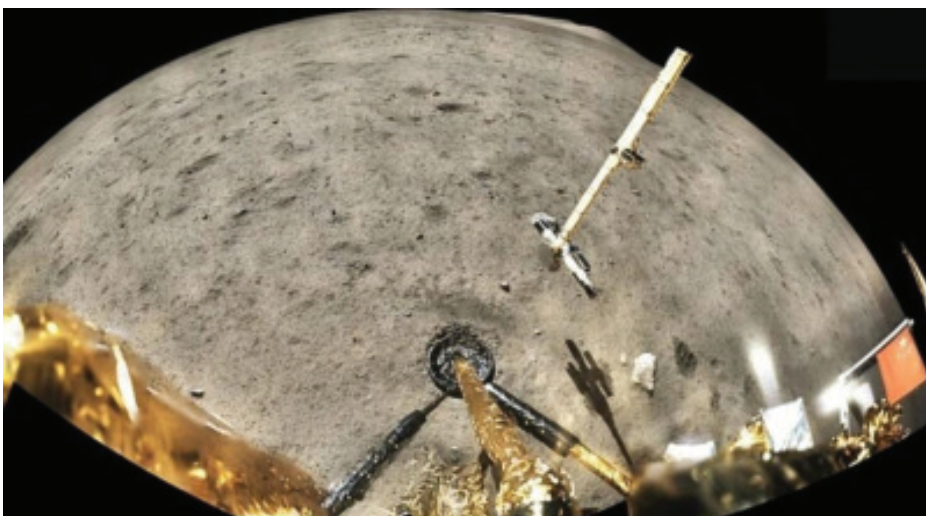
analyse the planet's thermal emission, the heat energy given off in the form of infrared light. "These observations really take advantage of Webb's mid-infrared capability. No previous telescopes have had the sensitivity to measure such dim mid-infrared light," Thomas Greene, an astrophysicist at NASA's Ames Research Center, said in a statement. This is the first detection of any kind of light emitted by an exoplanet and also marks a milestone in determining whether planets orbiting small active stars like TRAPPIST-1 can sustain atmospheres needed to support life. The lack of an atmosphere would mean no water and no protection from cosmic rays. The Trappist solar system — a rarity with seven planets about the size of our own — has enticed astronomers ever since they spotted it just 40 light-years away. That's close by cosmic standards; a light-year is about 5.8 trillion miles. Three of the seven planets are in their star's habitable zone, making this star system even more alluring. Because the Trappist system's innermost planet is bombarded by solar radiation — four times as much as Earth gets from our sun — it's possible that extra energy is why there's no atmosphere.

The James Webb Space Telescope has looked at a planet that is Earth-like with a rocky surface. The planet is part of the Trappist-1, which comprise the largest batch of Earth-like planets with a high chance of habitability. However, that's not the case with TRAPPIST-1 b. The team used Webb's Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI) to

By using Webb — the largest and most powerful telescope ever sent into space — the US and French scientists were able to measure the change in brightness as the innermost planet moved behind its star and estimate how much infrared light was emitted from the planet. The change in brightness was minuscule since the Trappist star is more than 1,000 times brighter than this planet. TRAPPIST-1 b, the innermost planet, has an orbital distance about one hundredth that of Earth's and receives about four times the amount of energy that Earth gets from the Sun. "There are ten times as many of these stars in the Milky Way as there are stars like the Sun, and they are twice as likely to have rocky planets as stars like the Sun," explained Greene. More observations are planned, not only of this planet, but the others in the Trappist system. Looking at this particular planet in another wavelength could uncover an atmosphere much thinner than our own.

## Moon holding billions of tons of water that could be extracted

The findings suggest that lunar soils contain a higher amount of water derived from the solar wind.



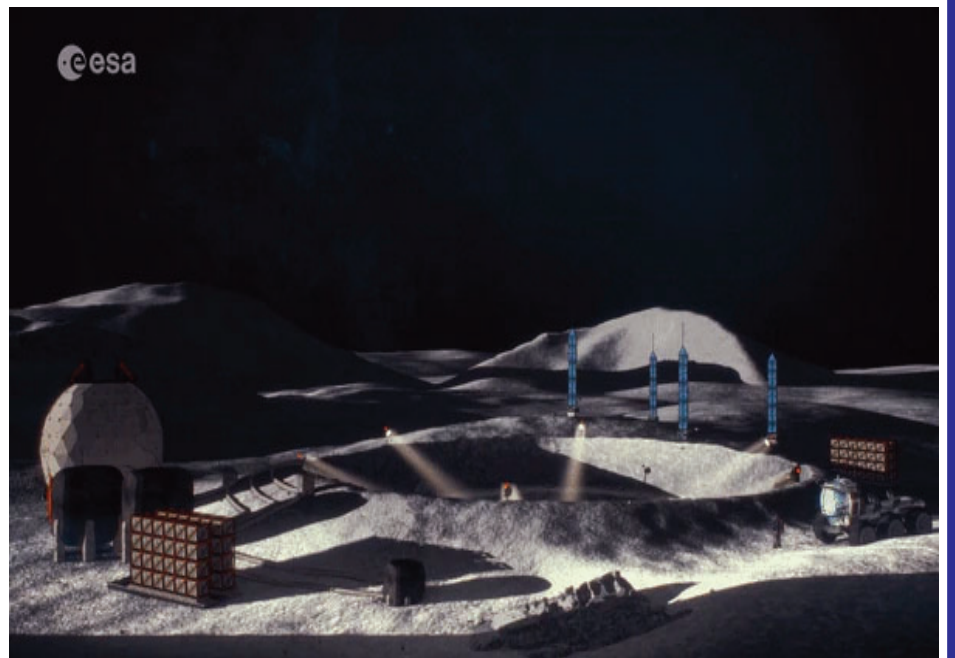
As countries rush to the Moon, a new finding has raised hopes for a sustained long-term human presence on the lunar surface. Scientists have found that the Moon could possibly have billions of tons of water in the glass beads strewn on the surface that could be extracted.

The glass beads are formed from the colling off of melted material that was ejected by the Moon and is found across the surface of the rugged terrain. The discovery was done by analysing samples of lunar soil returned from China's Chang'e-5 mission. The findings suggest that lunar soils contain a higher amount of water derived from the solar wind. The study published in the journal Nature Geoscience states that a hydrated layer exists at depth

in lunar soils, buffering a water cycle on the Moon globally. The new analysis reported the abundance of hydrogen isotope composition and core-to-rim variations of water measured in impact glass beads extracted from lunar soils.

"This work is an important advancement in our understanding of the abundance, source, and storage of water at the lunar surface. In this work, lunar impact glass beads collected by China's Chang'e-5 mission were studied. The results suggest that the lunar soils contain a much higher amount of solar-wind-derived water than previously thought," Professor Mahesh Anand, of The Open University, said in a statement. The beads range in size from the width of one hair to several

hairs; the water content was just a minuscule fraction of that, said Hejiu Hui of Nanjing University, who took part in the study. Since there are billions if not trillions of these impact beads, that could amount to substantial amounts of water, but mining it would be tough, according to the team. These beads could continually yield water thanks to the constant bombardment by hydrogen in the solar wind. These impact beads are everywhere, the result of the cooling of melted material ejected by incoming space rocks. Water could be extracted by heating the beads, possibly by future robotic missions. More studies are needed to determine whether this would be feasible and, if so, whether the water would be safe to drink. Previous studies found water in glass beads formed by lunar volcanic activity, based on samples returned by the Apollo moonwalkers more than a half-century ago. "This solar-wind-derived water appears to diffuse in and out of the glass beads over a time scale of a few years, confirming an active water cycle at the Moon. This would be of significant interest for creating resources during lunar expeditions using materials found on the Moon," Professor Anand added.





# ISRO to ink new deal to identify Ram Setu, other archeological sites

ISRO is all set to sign an MoU with the Indian Council of Historical Research to help them identify archeological sites, especially the Ram Setu, and establish ancient knowledge system.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) is all set to sign an MoU with the Indian Council of Historical Research to help them identify archeological sites, especially the Ram Setu, which has been a topic of debate between India and Sri Lanka for years, and establishing an ancient knowledge system. Isro chief S Somanath, while speaking exclusively to India Today, said they have been able to trace the dried-up channel of the mythological river Saraswati via high resolution imagery and satellite images. "We can view

Ramsetu, also known as Adams bridge via satellite images, but whether it is man-made or natural, for that you will need experts from domains such as the Archaeological Survey of India and other such departments," said Somanath. In the ancient Indian Sanskrit epic Ramayana, it was mentioned that the Ram Setu was constructed by Lord Rama and his army. Hence, it has great historical and cultural significance. The ISRO chief also said that for thousands of years, people in



India knew that the Sun is the centre of the solar system and that all planets revolve around it. "Later, Arabic travellers took this

knowledge to Europe and they also came to know about this fact during the Industrial Revolution when people like Einstein and

Newton worked upon this knowledge. We were not able to evolve or cultivate our knowledge," he said.

# Four humans to begin living on Mars



As scientists and engineers continue to develop the capability to send humans to Mars in the near future, four humans will live the dream this summer as they begin living on Mars. However, their Martian homes will be on Earth. The four volunteers are part of a year-long mission to

prepare humans for the exploration of the Red Planet. They will live in a habitat that will simulate conditions on Mars when humans arrive on the Red Planet in the near future. The 3D-printed habitat includes private crew quarters, a kitchen, and dedicated areas for medical,

recreation, fitness, work, and crop growth activities, as well as a technical work area and two bathrooms. The crew is scheduled to begin in June this year as the teams obtain the most accurate data during the analog mission. "During the simulation, crew members will carry out different types of mission activities, including simulated spacewalks, robotic operations, habitat maintenance, personal hygiene, exercise, and crop growth," Nasa said in a statement.

The crew will also face environmental stressors such as resource limitations, isolation, and equipment failure in order to be as close to the situation on Mars when humans arrive. The

team will be subjected to resource limitations, isolation, equipment failure, and significant workloads during their habitation. "The major crew activities during the analog may consist of simulated spacewalks including virtual reality, communications, crop growth, meal preparation and consumption, exercise, hygiene activities, maintenance work, personal time, science work, and sleep," Nasa has said in its mission brief.

Crew members will spend time remotely operating robotic elements, which will likely be necessary for real crews on Mars to extend their exploration capabilities. They will also be responsible for controlling a

helicopter-like drone and a roving robot. The American space agency is planning three such analog missions to better understand the requirements for a habitat on our next-door cosmic neighbour. While analog mission one commences this year, the second mission will be conducted in 2025 and the third mission will be followed up in 2026. "We're really looking at how the crew performance and health changes based on realistic Mars restrictions and the lifestyle of the crew members. So, the lifestyle is what we're trying to simulate by setting up a realistic environment and workload for the CHAPEA crew," Raina MacLeod, CHAPEA deputy project manager said.

# 27 per cent of industrial sector computers in India affected by malware in 2022: Report

Rising number of attacks were carried out using malicious scripts, phishing pages (JS and HTML) and denylisted internet resources

Nearly 27 per cent of industrial sector computers got affected by malware and other malicious software in India in 2022, a new report said on Tuesday.

According to the ICS threat landscape report by cybersecurity firm Kaspersky, the second half of 2022 was marked by a rising number of attacks carried out using malicious scripts, phishing pages (JS and HTML) and

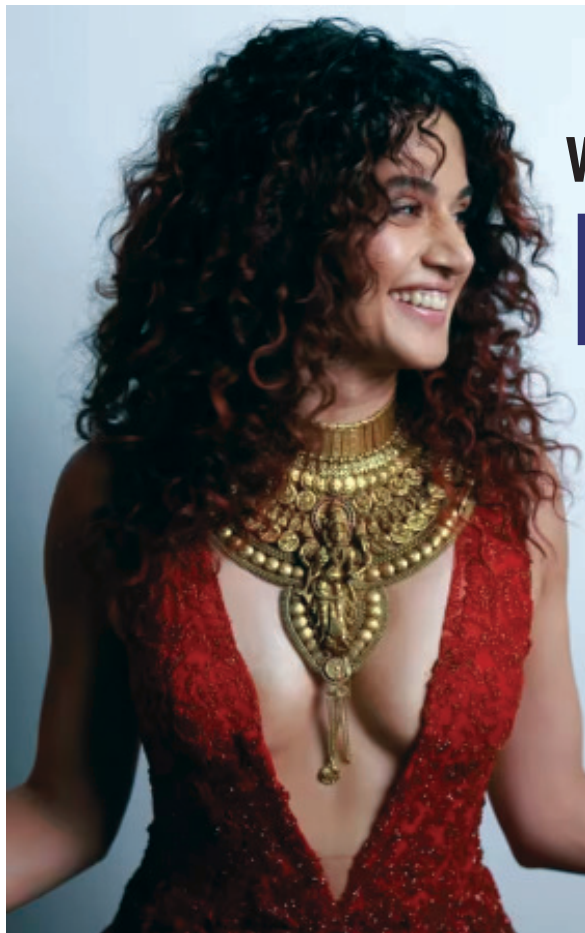
denylisted internet resources. Malicious scripts and phishing pages (JS and HTML) were distributed both online and via email, while, a significant part of denylisted internet resources were used to distribute malicious scripts and phishing pages. "Our team observed a steadily high rate of attacks on industrial sectors - without a typical drop-in attack during summer vacations or

winter holidays period. However, the growing attack rates in industrial sectors, that are being conducted using social engineering, seem alarming," Kirill Kruglov, senior researcher at Kaspersky ICS CERT said. The report said India has been highly affected by malicious scripts and phishing pages by 9.6 per cent and secondly by denylisted internet resources by 8.7 per cent when

observing geographical regions. While Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America got top regional rankings with most operational technology (OT) computers compromised using removable devices. Serbia (7.5 per cent) was in the third place in country rankings affected by web miners, and Northern Europe became the only region that showed a growth in ransomware attacks and

malware spread via email clients. The report said that threat actors use malicious scripts for a broad range of tasks -- from collecting information, tracking activity, and redirecting browser requests to malicious web resources, to downloading various malicious programs or loading malware (spyware or tools for the covert cryptocurrency mining) in the user's browser.





## Complaint filed against Taapsee Pannu for wearing Laxmi neckpiece with 'revealing dress'

**A complaint has been filed against Taapsee Pannu for allegedly hurting religious sentiments. It has been filed by Eklavya Gaur.**

A complaint has been filed against actress Taapsee Pannu for allegedly hurting religious sentiments. It was filed by Eklavya Singh Gaur, who had earlier also filed a complaint against Munawar Faruqui for his Indore show.

The complainant has claimed that the actress hurt religious sentiments by wearing a neckpiece that had Goddess Laxmi on it along with a 'revealing dress'.

### COMPLAINT FILED AGAINST TAAPSEE PANNU

A complaint has been filed against Taapsee Pannu at Chhatra Pura Police Station. It has been filed by Eklavya Gaur, the son of BJP

MLA Malini. The SHO of the Police station told ANI, "We received a complaint from Eklavya Gaur (son of BJP MLA Malini Gaur) against actor Taapsee Pannu for hurting religious sentiments and image of 'Sanatan Dharma' by wearing a locket having 'Goddess Laxmi' with revealing dress during ramp walk at Lakme Fashion Week held on March 12 in Mumbai."

According to ANI, in the complaint, Gaur mentioned that it was a planned attempt to degrade Sanatan Dharma.

### TAAPSEE PANNU WALKED THE RAMP IN LFW

Taapsee Pannu had worn a god-

dess Laxmi neckpiece at the Lakme Fashion Week 2023. Sharing a video of the same, "The evening with my princess gown n queen like jewels looked like æ. I was enchanted by Reliance Jewels' Akshaya Tritiya collection that is inspired by the majestic Thanjavur. Their designs captivated me, reigniting my love for jewellery all over again. Witness the glory of their mesmerizing jewellery collections by visiting their showroom today. (sic)" Eklavya Gaur had earlier also filed a complaint against Munawar Faruqui, following which the comedian was arrested. This happened on New Year's Day of 2021.

## 'My heart broke into pieces' Amrita Rao reveals how vengeful manager made her lose out on Salman Khan's Wanted

**Not Ayesha Takia, Amrita Rao was to play Salman Khan's ladylove in Wanted! The reason as to why it didn't work out will shock you.**

Salman Khan's 2009 film, Wanted, was a blockbuster. Directed by Prabhu Deva and starring Ayesha Takia as the female lead, everything about the action flick was all about entertainment! While the film might still be some of our go-to watch, here's a never-known-ever element about the project.

Not Ayesha but Amrita Rao was the first choice to play the leading lady. And it didn't work out not because she said no, but her vengeful manager didn't inform her about it at all! **AMRITA REVEALS HOW SHE LOST OUT ON SALMAN'S WANTED**

Salman Khan in Wanted was another league! The actor played a badass cop, who could take on the most dangerous goons at one time.

Ayesha Takia played the female lead in the film and we loved everything about her. However, not many know, but Amrita Rao was first approached for the role. However, she lost out on it due to her vengeful manager.

In her book Couple of Things, Amrita detailed out the incident. She wrote, "One evening, back from the shoot in the lobby of my hotel Taj Banjara, I bumped into a production guy who worked closely with Mr. Boney Kapoor. 'Oh, hi Amrita! How are you doing? If only our dates hadn't clashed, you would be shooting for us with Salman Khan for Wanted,' he said. I looked at him blankly. 'When was I approached for Wanted?' I asked, confused."

The person then told her, "Oh of course you were, I had called your

manager and he said your dates were impossible to match." And that's when Amrita added in her book, "My heart broke into pieces and I was completely shattered. 'I was never informed by him about such a huge offer, if only I knew, I'd have definitely worked out the dates for you,' I said, reeling from the shock! Instead of taking our separation in his stride, my ex-manager had decided to give me this vengeful parting gift!"

### AMRITA RAO'S FILMOGRAPHY

Amrita Rao has headlined blockbusters such as Ishq Vishk, Main Hoon Na, Vivah, Jolly LLB, Satyagraha and others. Her last film was Thackeray. The actress has also turned author with new book, Couple of Things, along with husband RJ Anmol.



## 'Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar' worldwide box office score breaches Rs 200 crore mark

Ranbir Kapoor and Shraddha Kapoor-starrer romantic-comedy "Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar" has crossed Rs 200 crore mark at the global box office, the makers said on Friday. In a post on Twitter, Luv Films said the Luv Ranjan-directed movie has raised a total Rs 201 crore worldwide since its release on March 8. "#TuJhoothiMainMakkaar

crosses a love worth more than 200 Crore! Thank you for your immense support," the studio tweeted. In a press note, the makers said the film's nett domestic collection stood at Rs 161 crore. "Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar" is produced by Luv Films and Ankur Garg and presented by Gulshan Kumar and Bhushan Kumar of T-Series.



# Arjun Rampal's Daughter Myra Rampal Raises Temperature in Sultry Photoshoot, Actor Reacts

Bollywood actor Arjun Rampal is a doting father to his children Mahikaa Rampal, Arik Rampal and Myra Rampal and his social media handle is proof. The actor doesn't leave any occasion to praise his kids. Recently, Myra took to Instagram to share some gorgeous photos from her shoot and Arjun was all hearts. In the photos shared by the starkid, she can be seen wearing a black crop top which she paired with a matching skirt and jacket. With a red tinge covering the photos, the youngster strikes sexy poses for the camera.

Arjun took to the comment section to write, "Love love ???" He also took to his own Instagram handle to repost the photos and add cute captions. Arjun Rampal got married to supermodel Mehr Jesia in 1998 but the couple got divorced in 2019. They share two daughters, Mahikaa and Myra. Arjun is currently dating Gabriella Demetriades with whom he shares his son Arik. The actor was recently seen in Kangana Ranaut's film Dhaakad. The film performed poorly at the box office and failed to impress audiences

and critics. Opening up about the failure of the film, Arjun told Hindustan Times, "It was an expensive film, so yes it does hurt when it doesn't do well. I don't think it deserved to do the kind of numbers that it did. People were sceptical at that point in time. Dhaakad was one of the first few films to come out post-pandemic. People were maybe scared to go to the theatres." The actor now has a couple of films lined up. He will be seen in The Battle of Bhima Koregaon, Hari Hara Veera Mallu, Crakk Films, Nastik and 3 Monkeys.



## Priyanka Chopra says she moved to the US because had 'beef' with people in Bollywood: 'Was being pushed into a corner, was tired of the politics'



**Priyanka Chopra said that she moved to the US because she had some 'beef' with people in the Indian film industry and wanted a fresh start.**

Priyanka Chopra made her way into Hollywood after she starred in the 2015 television series Quantico but way before that, PC featured in a few music videos as she was trying to make it as an international

music artist. With songs like 'In My City' and 'Exotic', PC was trying to showcase her singing talent but eventually focused on her acting career in the West. In a recent chat, Priyanka opened up about why she moved to the West in the first place when she was one of the top actors of Hindi cinema.

at playing that game so I kind of was tired of the politics and I said I needed a break." She added, "This music thing gave me an opportunity to go into another part of the world, not crave for the movies I didn't want to get but I would require to schmooze certain clubs and cliques of people. It would require groveling and I had worked a long time by then that I didn't feel like I wanted to do it." Earlier in an interview, Priyanka had shared how there was a time when people in the Indian film industry tried their best not to let her work. "I have had people wanting to jeopardise my career, take away from my work, make sure I wasn't cast just because I was doing well in what I was doing," she shared during her appearance on The Ranveer Show. Priyanka Chopra is looking forward to the release of the Russo Brothers' much-awaited series Citadel. It stars her as a spy along with Richard Madden. The series will stream on Prime Video from April 28. The actor is expected to return to Hindi cinema with Farhan Akhtar directorial Jee Le Zara, co-starring Alia Bhatt and Katrina Kaif.

Speaking with Dax Shepherd on his podcast Armchair Expert, the Citadel actor shared that she was being "cornered" in Bollywood. She was facing some opposition as people were not casting her in the movies and she also had some "beef" with people in the industry. It was at that time that her manager Anjula Acharia came to her rescue. Acharia saw her in a music video and called her to ask if she would be interested in building a career in music in the US. Priyanka shared that she grabbed the opportunity with both hands, especially because she was looking for ways to move away from Bollywood. She shared, "I was being pushed into a corner in the industry (Bollywood). I had people not casting me, I had beef with people, I am not good

at playing that game so I kind of was tired of the politics and I said I needed a break." She added, "This music thing gave me an opportunity to go into another part of the world, not crave for the movies I didn't want to get but I would require to schmooze certain clubs and cliques of people. It would require groveling and I had worked a long time by then that I didn't feel like I wanted to do it." Earlier in an interview, Priyanka had shared how there was a time when people in the Indian film industry tried their best not to let her work. "I have had people wanting to jeopardise my career, take away from my work, make sure I wasn't cast just because I was doing well in what I was doing," she shared during her appearance on The Ranveer Show. Priyanka Chopra is looking forward to the release of the Russo Brothers' much-awaited series Citadel. It stars her as a spy along with Richard Madden. The series will stream on Prime Video from April 28. The actor is expected to return to Hindi cinema with Farhan Akhtar directorial Jee Le Zara, co-starring Alia Bhatt and Katrina Kaif.

## Akshay Kumar's upcoming projects to be filmed in the UK: aviation-based 'Sky Force' & action-packed 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan'

**Akshay Kumar will return to London for his new film 'Sky Force' with shooting kickstarting May-end.**



sees Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff join the silver screen together for the first time, was unveiled. The big-budget, action-packed film is one of the most eagerly awaited and is set to be one of the biggest action films in Indian cinema.

The film also features Prithviraj, Sonakshi Sinha, and Manushi Chhillar in the lead, and is directed by Ali Abbas Zafar. Akshay Kumar's other releases include 'OMG: Oh My God 2', his debut in Marathi cinema with 'Vedat Marathe Veer Daudle Saat' where he portrays the role of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the real life story of chief mining engineer Jaswant Singh Gill in 'Capsule Gill', and the threequel to 'Hera Pheri'!

In "Sky Force," Akshay Kumar plays an officer of the Indian Air Force. It is a historical drama with a strong aviation theme that revisits and celebrates one of the Indian Air Force's greatest successes.

**Akshay Kumar to star in producer Dinesh Vijan's next?**

Recently in Scotland, Akshay

was seen performing a bike stunt despite injury when shooting for his upcoming high-octane action film 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan'. The video went viral on the internet, and the much-awaited film's release dates are to be announced. Fans have been extremely enthusiastic ever since Bade Miyan Chote Miyan, which





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