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"Gave Darshan Hiranandani My Parliament Login Credentials": Mahua Moitra



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India's Got Talent - Where Are They Headed?



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Punjabis migrating to Canada are fulfilling their need for low-skilled workers: Hardeep Singh Puri

(Sai Bureau)-Most Punjabis, who migrate to Canada are employed there in the capacity of low-skilled workers, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said. Explaining the high frequency of Punjabis trying to emigrate to Canada, the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas in an interview with news agency ANI said: "If you are barely educated and you clear the IELTS exam (and learn to communicate in basic English), then you go to Canada as a truck driver and get a lot of money. The low-skilled manpower requirement



of Canada is being met through this." He then discussed how such a migration pattern is born out of short-sightedness and soon there will be a reverse migration trend

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Mukesh Ambani's children get shareholders' approval to join Reliance board



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Bank fraud: ED arrests 2 promoters, CA of Chandigarh-based pharma company; searches Ashoka University in Haryana

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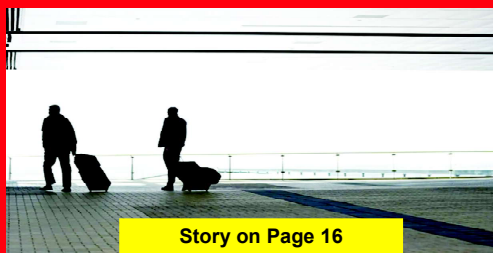
Elon Musk does not want people to have a bank account, says X will take care of all financial needs



(Sai Bureau)-Elon Musk has dreamt of creating an "everything app" for people for a long time. The X owner has often talked about his vision for the platform that he acquired a year back, saying that he wants people to be able to do much more than share their thoughts with the world on X. And recently, Musk, for the first-time, held an all-hands meeting at Twitter (now called X). Musk was joined by X CEO Linda

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This Country Is Slapping \$1,000 Tax On Travellers From India, Africa



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Indian national sentenced to 16 years in jail for raping university student in Singapore



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Qatar awards death penalty to 8 retired Indian Navy men for alleged espionage

(Sai Bureau)- "We are deeply shocked by the verdict of death penalty and are awaiting the detailed judgment. We are in touch with the family members and the legal team, and we are exploring all legal options. We attach high importance to this case, and have been following it closely. We will continue to extend all consular and legal assistance. We will also take up the verdict with the Qatari authorities," said an MEA statement. The eight men had begun working for a private company, AI Dahra Global Technologies, owned by two ex-servicemen of Qatar armed forces from 2018 onwards, shortly after the renewal of the India-Qatar Defence Cooperation Agreement for five more years. Dahra Global provided training and other services to Qatar's armed forces and security agencies. They were arrested by the Qatari domestic intelligence agency State Security Bureau sometime in mid-September last year and the first public knowledge about their arrest filtered out after they spoke to their families on September 30 last year. Charges were also framed against two Qataris, including former Oman Air Force officer Khamis al-



Ajmi, who was also the CEO of Dahra Global. Qatar's then Head of International Military Operations Major Gen Tariq Khalid Al Obaidly was the other Qatari national to be interrogated. Sources said the Indians were employed for a super-secret project to build Italian-technology based midget submarines with stealth characteristics. They have been convicted of allegedly spying for Israel with the Qatari authorities stating that they have electronic evidence in this regard. The sources said Dahra

Global Technologies had employed a large number of former Indian Navy personnel. After the controversy broke out, the rest were offered a severance package and told not to come for work from May 31 this year. The MEA said it was making "all efforts to assist these Indians" even as it declined to give further details, saying that "due to the confidential nature of proceedings of this case, it would not be appropriate to make any further comment at this juncture".

Indian-origin man convicted of injuring compatriot who died in Singapore hospital

(Sai Bureau)-An Indian-origin man has been convicted of voluntarily causing hurt to a compatriot who died in hospital five days later from neck and head injuries. Sakhthivel Sivasurian, 33, also pleaded guilty to a charge of giving false information to a public servant while out on bail. Sakhthivel will return to court in November for sentencing, The Straits Times reported. After they alighted from a taxi, Sakhthivel and Manjunatha Louis Ravi got into an altercation. Sakhthivel punched Manjunatha who fell down. The relationship between the two men was not mentioned in court documents. The nationalities of the two were also not stated in the media report. The defence's position at the 16-day trial was that the initial injury sustained by Manjunatha from the fall was not fatal. Instead, it was when Sakhthivel tried to pick him up and drop him that aggravated the initial injury and resulted in his death. According to court documents, District Judge James Elisha Lee said he accepted the evidence from Sakhthivel's lawyer Vaswani Sanjiv that Manjunatha had been dropped twice when Sakhthivel and a woman were trying to lift him up after he had fallen to the ground.

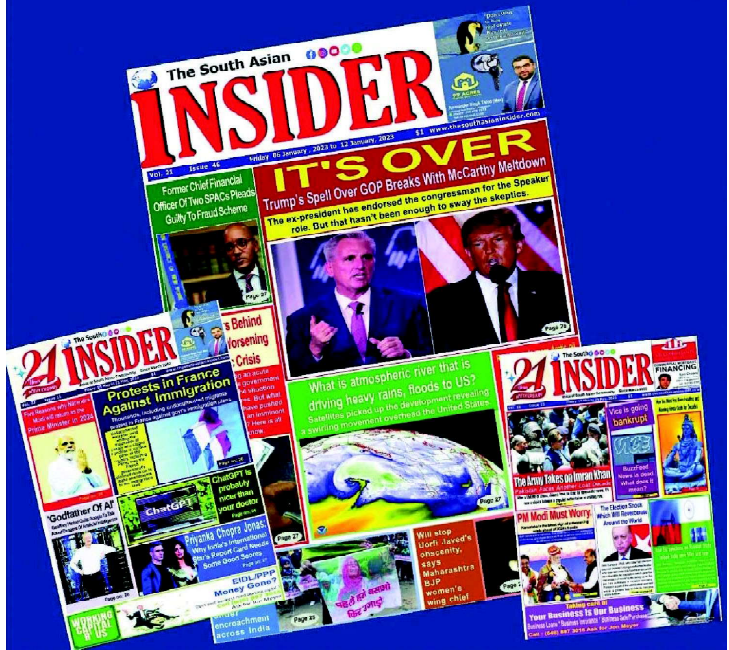
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Indian-origin ex-cop barred from policing over 'touching a woman inappropriately while on duty'

(Sai Bureau)- An Indian-origin former cop has been barred from policing after a misconduct hearing in the UK found that he breached the professional standards of behaviour by allegedly touching a woman inappropriately while on duty in 2021.

Sergeant Anish Sharma, who was based on the West Area Command of the Metropolitan Police, was added to the Barred List held by the College of Policing at a misconduct hearing which concluded on Friday. The misconduct panel heard that on July 30, 2021, Sharma attended a party in the Thames Valley area.

While in the garden, he inappropriately touched a woman without her consent by putting his hand on her thigh and then exposed himself to her, the Met Police statement said.

The woman told a third party, who relayed this information back to Sharma. This individual and Sharma subsequently engaged in communication, some of which was deleted by Sharma, prior to



his arrest and subsequent interview. A day after the incident, Sharma was arrested by officers from Thames Valley Police on suspicion of sexual assault by touching and he was suspended from duty.

The criminal investigation was later closed with no further action and a gross

misconduct hearing arranged. On April 3, 2023, Sharma resigned from the Met Police. The hearing, which began on July 12 this year, found that Sharma breached professional standards of behaviour with regards to honesty and integrity, discreditable conduct, equality and diversity, and authority, respect and

courtesy.

It also found that Sharma would have been dismissed without notice were he still in post.

"Sharma's actions were both appalling and cowardly. Following his completely inappropriate behaviour, he then engaged in improper communications with a third party, before deleting a number of messages prior to his arrest and subsequent interview," Chief Superintendent Sean Wilson, in charge of policing for West Area, said. "Clearly he has shown himself to be someone who falls well below the standards we expect from our officers and staff, and the panel have made the right decision to ensure he will never work in policing again," Wilson said in a statement released by the Met Police.

Being placed on the Barred list, Sharma cannot be employed by police, local policing bodies, the Independent Office for Police Conduct or Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

Indians to benefit as US recommends employment authorisation documents at early stage of Green Card application process

(Sai Bureau)-A White House Commission has recommended issuing an employment authorisation card and other necessary travel documents at the preliminary stage of the Green Card application processing system, a proposal if approved by the US President would be a big relief to thousands of foreign professionals, an overwhelming majority of whom are Indians.



A recommendation on this was approved by the White House Commission for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Affairs on Thursday.

A Green Card, known officially as a Permanent Resident Card, is a document issued to immigrants to the US as

an overwhelming majority of whom are Indian-Americans whose Green Card wait period now runs into decades.

During the meeting, Bhutoria, who is a member of the White House Commission for AANHPI Affairs, moved the recommendation.

According to it, the Department of Homeland Security's US Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS USCIS) should grant employment authorisation documents (EADs) and travel documents to individuals who have approved I-140 employment-based visa petitions in the EB-1, EB-2, EB-3 categories, who have been waiting in the visa backlog for five or more years, regardless of whether they have filed applications for adjustment of status.

The validity of the EAD and travel documents should be till their Green Card application final stage is processed, said the recommendation, which now has been accepted by the Commission. Since only a limited number of Green Cards can be issued every year, there is a backlog of over 1.8 million Green Card applications and this impacts primarily people from AAPI countries including China, the Philippines, and India, among others.

evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently.

There are multiple stages in the Green Card application process, and it starts with employers filing I-140 applications, and the next important step is an adjustment of status called I-485. This is when they currently get their Employment Authorisation Card - EAD and travel documents Advance Parole, which allows them to work for any employer till their Green Card application is processed, explained Indian-American community leader Ajay Jain Bhutoria who moved the recommendation during the latest meeting of AANHPI this week.

If the proposal is accepted by US President Joe Biden it would come as a big relief to hundreds and thousands of foreign professionals,

Interpol has issued a Red Corner Notice against 19-year-old Haryana-based gangster Yogesh Kadyan.

(Sai Bureau)- Kadyan has been charged with attempt to murder, criminal conspiracy, and Arms Act. According to sources privy to the matter, he escaped from India and has taken refuge in the US. Following the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) crackdown on the gangster-terror network, several gangsters have either gone underground or fled India using fake passports. Kadyan is expected to have fled using fake passport as well. This comes amid the ongoing diplomatic relation between India and Canada, which has reached



an all-time low. The row began after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged, what he said was credible evidence, a potential link between Indian agents and the June killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was gunned down by unidentified men outside a gurdwara in Vancouver suburb.

India has dismissed Trudeau's allegations as absurd. The US, meanwhile, has favoured a thorough probe into Nijjar's killing and underlined the importance of following principles of international law, sovereignty, and non-interference.

Vir Das's dig at Narayana Murthy as internet shreds '70-hour work week' remark

Comedian Vir Das took a dig at Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy's comments about the '70 hours a week' work culture.

(News Agency)-Comedian Vir Das took a dig at Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy's comments about the '70 hours a week' work culture.

"Life's hard. You meet a girl, fall in love, get married. Her dad wants you to work 70 hours a week. You can't work that hard, you just wanna chill and run England," he wrote in a tweet after Narayana Murthy's remark created a buzz online. In another tweet, he quipped: "If you're working 70 hours a week, 5 days a week, essentially from 9am to 11pm. Getting home by 12.30, leave home by 7.30? You should be allowed to fart in your bosses office. If you're going to request relationship like time commitment, you've got to accept the intimacy too."



Vir Das's posts come after Murthy emphasised the need to boost India's work productivity while speaking on the



inaugural episode of 3one4 Capital's podcast, "The Record,". He argued that unless the country's youth commit to

significantly longer working hours, India may struggle to keep pace with economies that have experienced remarkable progress over the past few decades.

Unsurprisingly, Murthy's statement triggered a wave of reactions on social media. People slammed him for seemingly promoting a culture of overwork, likening it to a form of modern "slave culture." Others, however, pointed out that the CEO might have been misquoted and that he was emphasising the importance of adopting a strong work ethic rather than clocking in excessive hours. What are your thoughts on this age-old debate regarding "hustle culture" versus work-life balance?

High Court asks YouTube to remove videos of judge apologising after outburst: Report



(News Agency)-The Gujarat High Court has reportedly ordered YouTube to take down all videos from its platform of a judge who apologised for his outburst against his woman colleague on the bench, The Indian Express reported. The development came two days after a video of the judge's outburst and apology had gone viral on social media. The High Court, which live-streamed the proceedings, sent a notice to YouTube to remove the videos, citing copyright violation. On October 23 (Monday), Justice Biren Vaishnav, the fourth senior-most judge of the Gujarat High Court, reprimanded his colleague, Justice Mauna Bhatt, for voicing her disagreement while the bench was hearing a batch of tax cases. "Then you differ, yaar. Then you differ. You have differed in one, differ in the other,"

Justice Vaishnav was quoted by The Indian Express as saying. To this, Justice Bhatt said, "It is not the question of differing." Justice Vaishnav then interrupted and told her to pass a separate differing order instead. On Wednesday, Justice Vaishnav apologised before the day's hearings began. "Before we begin the session, what happened on Monday shouldn't have happened. I was wrong. I'm sorry for that and we begin a new session. It shouldn't have happened. I don't know. I was wrong," Justice Vaishnav was quoted as saying. After the High Court sent the notice to YouTube, several websites pulled down the video, saying it was "no longer available due to a copyright claim by Gujarat High Court," according to the report.

Surat : Hi-Tech Sweet Water Denies Bank Fraud Allegations In Media

(News Agency)-Hi-Tech Sweet Water Technologies Pvt. Ltd. categorically disputes the false and defamatory claims of bank fraud and loan default levelled against it. According to these charges, the company's directors fled the country after allegedly defaulting on a Rs. 100 crore loan from Bank of Baroda. Hi-Tech Sweet Water Technology Director Vijay Shah informed PNN that Hiren Bhavsar of Kashyap Infraproject Pvt Ltd, a man with a history of commercial problems with Hi-Tech Sweet Water Technologies, made unsubstantiated charges. Furthermore, Kailash Lohiya has previously committed fraud in the company's Bihar water project. Hiren Bhavsar provided the project's subpar solar panels/pumps. Kailash Lohiya had fraudulently transferred shares in a Hi-Tech Sweet Water Technologies group firm to his name and stolen substantial cash in the name of his wife, Disha Lohiya. He further said that a FIR had been filed at the criminal branch in Surat against Kailash Lohiya, who had previously spent time in prison. Both Kailash Lohiya and Disha Lohiya are now free on bail. There are grounds to think that Kailash Lohiya, in collaboration with Hiren Bhavsar and others, is degrading Hi-

Tech Sweet Water Technologies' reputation and brand. Shah went on to say that the SME Branch of Bank of Baroda, where Hi-Tech Sweet Water Technologies has an account, validated the bank account's excellent performance by email on October 25. Hi-Tech Sweet Water Technologies' accounts (Cash Credit A/c and Term Loan A/c) have a "Standard" categorization since there are no due/overdue balances.



Vijay Shah, Director of Hi-Tech Sweet Water Technologies, shared the history of problems between the two firms, stating that concerns arose owing to substandard materials and delivery delays on the side of Kashyap Infraproject in the supply of pump sets for the Bihar project. Despite promising to repair the damaged pump sets, Hiren Bhavsar did not follow through and instead filed complaints with CID Surat and Athwalines Police to reclaim the money. Following police investigations, it was decided that the allegations were without merit. In 2022, the Ahmedabad bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) dismissed Hiren Bhavsar's case under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) against Hi-Tech Sweet Water Technologies.

Bangladesh opposition protest turns violent amid calls for PM to resign

(News Agency)-One police officer was killed in Bangladesh on Saturday and over 100 people injured during an opposition party protest demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and calling for a free and fair vote under a caretaker government. Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets as clashes erupted when tens of thousands of supporters of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) gathered in the capital Dhaka, chanting slogans against the government.



Dozens of vehicles, including were set on fire, police and police vans and ambulances, media said.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police spokesman Faruq Hossain told reporters one officer had been killed and 41 others were injured in clashes with protesters. Several journalists were attacked and injured while trying to cover the clashes, media reports said. Security was tightened in the city in recent days as thousands of people arrived to attend the rally. Hundreds of opposition party activists have been arrested, BNP leaders said. The party has been calling on Hasina to resign to allow

elections scheduled in January to be held under a neutral caretaker government - a demand her government has so far rejected.

Today's rally continued for hours in a perfectly disciplined and peaceful manner until all of a sudden the lobbing of tear gas shells started," senior BNP leader Abdul Moyeen Khan told Reuters.

"The intensity increased and violent attacks with sounds of blasts and shootings turned the whole place into a war zone."

Pakistan's ex-leader Nawaz Sharif regains right to appeal convictions, opening a path to election

(News Agency)-A federal court in Pakistan's capital on Thursday restored the right of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to appeal his 2018 convictions in two graft cases, officials said, less than a week after he returned home from four years of self-imposed exile in London.

The decision by the Islamabad High Court was a boost for Sharif ahead of parliamentary elections due in January.

If the court overturns his convictions in the coming weeks, Sharif would be eligible to run for a seat in parliament, and analysts say his Pakistan Muslim League party could also return to power. Sharif stepped down as prime minister in 2017 over corruption charges. In July 2018, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison by the anti-graft tribunal in a case involving the purchase of luxury apartments in



London. In December of the same year, he was sentenced to a further seven years by a different court in a separate corruption case. His party called the verdict a "black stain" on the justice system.

Mariyum Aurangzeb, a senior leader from Sharif's party, on Thursday hailed the court order.

Writing on X, previously known as Twitter, she described the reinstatement of Sharif's appeals against his conviction as "progress towards ending the injustice".

She said when Sharif got justice, he would put the country back on the path of development and progress.

The latest development came days after the Islamabad High Court granted Sharif protection from arrest, enabling him to surrender before it. At Thursday's court hearing, which Sharif attended, the court extended his protection from arrest after the anti-corruption body said it had no intention of detaining him in connection with pending cases. Sharif was elected prime minister three times but could never complete his term.

In 2018, Sharif was replaced by cricketer-turned politician Imran Khan after the elections, which Sharif says were massively rigged. Khan's government arrested Sharif in 2018, and a year later he complained of chest pains and was granted permission by Khan to travel to London for medical treatment following a court order.

Sharif says his medical conditions

did not allow him to travel back to Pakistan.

Currently, Khan — Sharif's successor and main political rival — is imprisoned on corruption charges and serving a three-year sentence. Khan was ousted in a no-confidence vote in April 2022 but he is still Pakistan's leading opposition figure and enjoys a large following, along with his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party.

Sharif has returned to lead the election campaign for his party ahead of the elections.

Like Khan, Sharif — at least for the time being — is not eligible to run for a seat in parliament. But Thursday's court order has been seen by analysts as a step toward overturning his conviction, as the prosecutors Thursday did not oppose his appeals. The prosecutors said they did not want to arrest him.

Sharp increase in Afghans leaving Pakistan due to illegal migrant crackdown, say UN agencies

(News Agency)- U.N. agencies have reported a sharp increase in Afghans returning home since Pakistan launched a crackdown on people living in the country illegally. They urged Pakistan to suspend the policy before it was too late to avoid a "human rights catastrophe." Pakistan earlier this month said it will arrest and deport undocumented or unregistered foreigners after Oct. 31. Two provinces bordering Afghanistan

have set up deportation centers. The government says the campaign is not aimed at a particular nationality, but it mostly affects Afghans who make up the bulk of foreigners living in the country.

U.N. agencies said Friday there are more than 2 million undocumented Afghans in Pakistan, at least 600,000 of whom fled after the Taliban takeover in 2021.

Afghanistan is going through a

severe humanitarian crisis, particularly for women and girls, who are banned by the Taliban from education beyond sixth grade, most public spaces and many jobs. There are also restrictions on media, activists, and civil society organizations. The International Organization for Migration and the U.N. refugee agency said tens of thousands of Afghans left Pakistan between Oct. 3-15, with many citing fear of arrest as the

reason for their departure. "We urge the Pakistan authorities to suspend forcible returns of Afghan nationals before it is too late to avoid a human rights catastrophe," the agencies said. "We believe many of those facing deportation will be at grave risk of human rights violations if returned to Afghanistan, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, cruel and other inhuman treatment." Pakistan insists that nobody will be mistreated after their arrest

and says the deportations will be executed in a "phased and orderly" manner.

Its deportation campaign comes amid strained relations with its neighbors. Pakistan accuses the Taliban-led administration in Afghanistan of sheltering militants who go back and forth across the countries' shared 2,611-kilometer (1,622-mile) border and stage attacks on Pakistani security forces.

The Taliban deny the accusations.

Maldives President Muizzu Says Talks Have Begun with India on Removal of Troops



(News Agency)-Maldives has started talks with India to remove its military presence, President-elect Mohamed Muizzu said in an interview published by Bloomberg News on Friday. The issue of removing Indian troops from the Maldives was a key campaign promise made by Muizzu, who recently defeated former President Ibrahim Solih in the elections.

Around 70 Indian military personnel are currently stationed in the Maldives, overseeing radar stations and surveillance aircraft sponsored by New Delhi. Adding to that, Indian warships play a role in patrolling the Maldives' exclusive economic zone.

Muizzu said in the interview he had already begun negotiations with the Indian

government on removing its military presence, calling those talks "very successful already." "We want a bilateral relationship that's mutually beneficial," Muizzu told Bloomberg, adding that Indian soldiers would not be replaced by troops from other countries.

Asking India to remove military personnel in no way indicated "that I'm going to allow China or any other country to bring their military troops here," he said. Muizzu's win extends the tug-of-war between China and India for influence over the Indian Ocean. Successive governments have tilted either toward India or China. Both Asian powerhouses have invested heavily in upgrading Maldives infrastructure and extended loans, as they compete with each other.

Israel Has No Right to Exist, Will Repeat Oct 7 Attack: Defiant Hamas Terms Civilian Deaths 'Collateral Damage'

(News Agency)-"We will repeat the October 7 attack time and again till Israel is annihilated," Hamas leader Ghazi Hamad said in an interview with an Arabic channel, asserting that "everything we do is justified". "Israel has no right to exist. We are victims, everything we do is justified. Our every attack is justified and we will not sit back quietly," Hamad said.

He added: "We are aware of the price we are going to pay but we are not bothered. We want Muslim and Arabic nations to come and help us." On Wednesday, the leader of the Palestinian militant group, Ismail Haniyeh, accused Israel of committing "massacres" in the Gaza war to cover its own "defeats".

Haniyeh, whose Islamist group launched the bloody October 7 attacks on Israel that sparked the Gaza war, accused Israel of "committing barbaric massacres against unarmed civilians". "Its villainy will not save them from resounding defeat," he vowed in a speech broadcast by Al Jazeera. The weeks of Israeli bombardment and a more recent

ground incursions came in response to attacks by Hamas militants which killed around 1,400 people in Israel, the majority civilians, according to Israeli officials.

Haniyeh said that ahead of the October 7 attacks, Hamas had warned that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "and his fascist government will continue their contentious policies".



THE WAR IN NUMBERS

ore than 20,000 wounded people are still trapped in the Gaza Strip, according to Doctors Without Borders (MSF), despite initial evacuations of foreign passport holders and badly injured Palestinians across the border to Egypt.

MSF noted the evacuations of "a number of severely injured" people in a statement on Wednesday, saying that its 22 international staff members in Gaza had also been among those who left the territory via the Rafah border crossing.

"However, there are still over 20,000 injured people in Gaza with limited access to healthcare due to the siege," it said.

Afghanistan Sets Up Commission to Help Deportees from Pak As Nov 1 Exit Deadline Nears

(News Agency)-In view of Pakistan's deadline for deportation of all Afghani nationals living illegally in the country, the Afghanistan government has established a high commission led by Maulavi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the deputy prime minister for administrative affairs, along with 31 high-ranking officials, to resolve the problems of the refugees. The Pakistan government has ordered that all Afghani nationals living in Pakistan illegally must leave the country by November 1, after which they will be forcefully sent back home by the authorities — an order the Taliban government has called "inhuman" and "amounting to harassment".

While around 1.3 million Afghans are registered refugees in Pakistan and 880,000 more have legal status to remain, caretaker interior minister Sarfraz Bugti has alleged that a further 1.7 million Afghans are in Pakistan illegally. Almost 1 million of these refugees will be deported in the first phase, sources told CNN-News18 earlier.

The communication issued by Afghan

government spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid assured Afghans who have gone to foreign countries due to some concerns that they "can return and live a dignified life in their country".

In order to provide basic services to the



returnees, a procedure has been approved in eight chapters and 31 articles, and a secretariat and 12 committees have been formed to implement this procedure.

These committees are assigned the responsibilities of providing temporary accommodations to migrants, identification, transfer, basic and health

services, and in line with a specific procedure, necessary facilities will be provided to businessmen and industrialists. The Pakistani government said on Thursday it would open several "holding centres". The Pakistani and

Afghan government officials on Tuesday discussed border management issues as well as the smooth evacuation. Jan Achakzai, the Balochistan caretaker information minister, said Pakistani border management officials and representatives from the Taliban Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in the meeting discussed the provision of facilities to Afghans crossing the border, including patients, and also the smooth and organised evacuation of illegal Afghan refugees.

"There was also a strong emphasis on the challenges faced by patients at the border," Achakzai said.

"Thousands of Afghan refugee families have already crossed over to Afghanistan via the

Chaman border," said Achakzai, adding that there was a daily outflow of hundreds of illegal refugees. IMPACT ON TIES

The move is expected to widen the rift between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The order comes as Pakistan grapples with a rise in attacks the government blames on militants operating from Afghanistan, a charge Kabul has routinely denied. There is also a rising anti-Afghan sentiment as a prolonged economic hardship burdens the Pakistani state. Recently, the Afghanistan cricket team dedicated their victory against Pakistan to Afghan refugees. CNN-News18 has earlier reported on how Pakistan has been handling Afghan refugees and how the one document policy will be implemented for Afghans.

Pakistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. It governs the entry and presence of refugees under the country's Foreigner's Act, which allows authorities to apprehend, detain, and expel foreigners, including refugees and asylum-seekers lacking proper documentation.

From Pakistan to Palestine, Extremism Has One Face

Daniel Pearl would have turned 60 on October 10, 2023. For those who don't remember his name, he was a brilliant reporter for The Washington Post who was lured to Karachi where he was kidnapped by Pakistani terrorists. On the day of Eid al-Adha in 2002, he was slaughtered by decapitation in the most horrific manner. This was the first time an execution was recorded by terrorists and made public, as a recruitment video for jihad, as a taunt to the West.

As his friend Asma Nomani reminds us in a beautiful tribute to Daniel, among his last words captured in the video were these 11 words, "My father is Jewish. My mother is Jewish. I am Jewish." The same 11 words for which the Hamas savagely attacked a rave in Israel, several kibbutzim. They slaughtered men, women, children and old people. They raped, maimed, plundered. They took civilian hostages to Gaza like trophies of a medieval conquest.

From Pakistan 21 years ago, to Palestine in 2023, nothing has changed. For the Wahabi-Salafi groups such as ISIS, Hamas, Hizbul Mujahideen and Taliban, this was a wonderful achievement which they all celebrated. In the streets of London and Amman, there were celebrations supporting Hamas, and in Milan and Rome pro-Palestine demonstrations.

Among the non-Muslims, several stood unconditionally with Israel. Many condemned Hamas' actions but asked for Israel's restraint. There were those who justified this savage attack, where Israel is still counting its dead and missing as "Palestine's liberation struggle" and a result of Israel's apartheid policies.

Mustafa Barghouti of the Palestinian National Initiative or al-Mudbara, not affiliated to Hamas nor the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, squarely blames Israel. Abu Mazen, the 87-year-old weak and tired autocrat who succeeded Yasser Arafat, piped in from Ramallah that Palestinians have a right "to defend themselves against the terrorism of settlers and occupation forces," after a discussion with security officials. Abu Mazen is worried that Hamas will use its newly found popularity to encroach on his dwindling West Bank domains.

Hamas, the terrorist group which was quickly losing relevance, is now at the center of the Islamic world once again. This attack has become its new recruitment video with former leader Khaled Mashaal calling for Muslims worldwide to join the struggle. In a recent message broadcast by Al Jazeera, he has called for violence on Friday in the US, Europe and Israel. Women and men, Arabs and Muslims, from India to Germany openly express joy at Hamas' attack, but are quick to be concerned about Palestinian civilians as Israel has cut off Gaza completely, with no electricity, water or food.

In India, the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's highest

decision-making body, expressed its "dismay and anguish" over the war and underlined its support of the Palestinian people's right to "land (and) self-government, and to live with dignity and respect". After receiving a lot of flak, Shashi Tharoor tried to calm the waters. In an interview with Rajdeep Sardesai, defending his party's weak stance on Hamas' barbaric attack, he said that "these are terrorist acts". However, he refused to label everyone who was a Hamas member a terrorist as one day "we or Israel may have to negotiate with them". The Congress lacks simple gratitude. During India's security nightmare on 26/11, there was a Congress government in Maharashtra and Delhi which Tharoor was a part of.

Israel stood by India with no political conditions and supported India's efforts at regaining control of the situation. Both Priyanka and Rahul Gandhi proudly state that they have lost their grandmother and father to terrorists. It is rather callous for victims of terror to not verbalise unconditional support to a state which supported them in their darkest hour of need.

The Wahabi-Salafi strain of Islam which was a small minority decades ago now has fully gripped the Muslim ummah worldwide. Muslim leaders are unable to use simple words to condemn the barbaric nature of the violence, afraid of losing their standing in the ummah. The only leader courageous to stand with Israel directly and unconditionally is UAE's President Mohamed bin Zayed. Even the educated Palestinians, who should be condemning the violence, justify it as a response to Israel's blockade of Gaza. The Palestinian argument is that for 50 years, Israel has colonised and occupied their lands and this is the only way they will achieve independence.

The argument is flawed. The men who danced on the body of a dead soldier and dragged a woman by her hair in the Gaza marketplace were not anybody's freedom fighters. They were simply terrorists. Those that murdered children in their beds, burnt people alive and raped women next to their dead friends, none of these are freedom fighters of any cause, just savages.

It's surprising that Palestinians and Muslims, in general, believe that such men can actually establish a just state where they will prosper and be able to live happy lives, especially women. There is clear evidence of the suffering of women under ISIS and Taliban rule. Both organisations follow similar theological schools to Hamas. The argument is that Hamas does not represent Palestinians, just some of them. If Hamas does not represent the Palestinians and just a part of them, it's even worse. Not one Palestinian leader has tried to gather consensus and stand up to Hamas. Not one has tried to ensure that the women, children and wounded were returned immediately. Not one has tried to ensure the safety and care of Israeli soldiers who were captured. Not one.

Biden approves new section of border wall as Mexico crossings rise

US President Joe Biden's administration is to build a section of border wall in southern Texas in an effort to stop rising levels of immigration.

About 20 miles (32km) will be built in Starr County along its border with Mexico, where officials report high numbers of crossings.

Building a border wall was a signature policy of Donald Trump as president and fiercely opposed by Democrats.

In 2020, Mr Biden promised he would not build another foot of wall if elected.

His administration passed a proclamation soon after taking office that said building a wall across the southern border "is not a serious policy solution".

On Thursday, however, Mr Biden said he "can't stop" the construction of the border wall because the funding for it had already been appropriated.

When asked whether he believes the wall could work, he replied simply: "no". In a statement to Associated News on Wednesday night, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) similarly defended the latest move, saying it was using funds already allocated for a border barrier. "Congress appropriated fiscal year 2019 funds for the construction of border barrier in the Rio Grande Valley, and DHS is required to use those funds for their appropriated purpose," the statement said. Mr Biden and the statements stand in stark contrast to a notice about the project on the US Federal Registry in which Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said that there is "presently an acute and immediate need to construct physical barriers and roads in the vicinity of the border of the United States in order to prevent unlawful entries into the United States in the project areas".

Speaking at his daily news conference, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador criticised the announcement, saying that a wall is "contrary" to what President Biden had previously advocated. "I understand there is strong pressure from extreme right-wing political groups in the United States," he added. The rising number of illegal border crossings has made the issue a vulnerable one for president Biden. More than 245,000 crossings have been made this year in the Rio Grande Valley area alone, government data shows, and September is expected to be a record month. Several US cities say they are feeling the strain of the influx.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams predicted the cost of housing the more than 100,000 new arrivals since last year will rise to \$12bn over the next three years. Mr Adams is travelling to Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador this week to discourage migrants from setting out. "We are at capacity," he said on Tuesday. Dozens of federal laws have been waived in order to approve its construction, including the Clean Air Act and Safe Drinking Water Act. The move has angered environmentalists, who say the structures will cut through the habitats of endangered plants and animals. It's disheartening to see President Biden stoop to this level, casting aside our nation's bedrock environmental laws to build ineffective wildlife-killing border walls," said Laiken Jordahl, a conservation advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity. According to a proposal by US Customs and Border Protection, the barriers will consist of large bollards embedded in a concrete base, as well as gates, cameras and CCTV equipment.

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The Heavy Cost Of A Widening Israel-Hamas War

By Kanwal Sibal

The Israel-Hamas conflict is looking more and more ominous. Israel is bent on seeking ruthless revenge. The outrage in Israel provoked by the horrific Hamas killings of Israeli civilians and the taking of hostages is understandable, but how far will Israel go?

The immediate response has been to inflict terrible punishment by destroying buildings in Gaza city, cutting off supplies of food, water and fuel, and force Gazans to move from the north to the south of the Strip in order to have a freer hand in operations and avoid large-scale indiscriminate civilian casualties. Israel's land invasion of Gaza, which seemed imminent at one time, has been delayed. Whether this is on account of the US' dissuasion or to give time for the deployment of US military in the area to be completed, or to make room for behind-the-scenes diplomacy to get hostages freed, or hesitation because of huge casualties Israel will inevitably suffer in urban warfare is not clear.

The US is giving Israel full support, but has tried to balance it by calling for restraint in order to limit civilian casualties and has backed the supply of humanitarian aid to Gaza. How far this balancing can work in attenuating anti-US sentiments in the region is open to doubt, as the US is seen as the principal supporter of Israel for geopolitical reasons as well as those linked to America's domestic politics.

The US has been working successfully for the regional acceptance of Israel through the normalisation of its ties with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan, crowned by Saudi Arabia ties, as part of the Abrahamic accords. The Palestinian cause, which had already lost its centrality in Arab politics, would have been further marginalised with these accords. This was happening even as Israeli settlements were being expanded in the West Bank and the Benjamin Netanyahu government's determination to bury the two-state solution was

manifest. The Hamas attack has arrested this normalisation process and has brought the Palestinian question back to the centre of regional politics.

Major western leaders - from Germany, UK and France - have also shown full solidarity with Israel, supporting its right to defend itself, while also, as in the case of the US, reminding it, as



a democratic country, to respect the laws of war. Israel, however, is continuing to bomb Gaza, and civilian casualties continue to rise. Israel is determined to decimate the Hamas as a fighting force once and for all, though it is not clear how long that operation will take and whether the costs Israel will incur in the huge war losses will be sustainable. If Israel succeeds, the issue of who will govern Gaza will arise.

The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, already in disrepute as being ineffective, may not want to enter Gaza on the back of an Israeli victory coming at a great human cost for Gaza's population. In the past, the idea of an Arab peacekeeping force in Gaza to ensure security for all was rejected by Arab countries. Whether that idea can be revived without resolving the larger question of an independent Palestinian state seems most unlikely. For Israel to demand security against threats from Gaza while keeping its hold on Arabs in the West Bank would not be a workable political

proposition.

The UN Security Council, predictably, has not been able to act. The Brazilian resolution for a "humanitarian pause" was vetoed by the US. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken opposes a ceasefire as that would allow Hamas to "refit". The White House spokesperson has taken the position that in war loss of

civilian lives is inevitable. The US is also questioning the accuracy of the numbers of civilians killed in Gaza.

To prevent the conflict from becoming regional, a ceasefire would seem an essential first step, but on this, there is no agreement in the UNSC. The Russian proposal for a ceasefire and return of hostages failed to secure a majority, besides being rejected by the US, UK and France. The US resolution, which called for a humanitarian pause but not a ceasefire, has been rejected by Russia, China and the UAE. China has taken a markedly pro-Palestinian position, calling the US resolution evasive and unbalanced and failing to call for a ceasefire. The UN General Assembly is now set to vote on a draft Arab resolution calling for a ceasefire and the revocation of the Israeli order to evacuate North Gaza.

The irony in all this is that the US realises the danger of the conflict spreading, which is why it has decided to send two aircraft carrier strike groups and a

marine unit to the Mediterranean. It fears that regional actors like the Hezbollah in Lebanon, backed by Iran, may open a second front against Israel from the North where already some exchange of fire has taken place. The US wants to deter Hezbollah and Iran by a show of military strength and stern warnings to both to stay out of the conflict.

Iran is engaged in active diplomacy with a mixture of defiance and diplomacy to effect the release of hostages.

The US has begun to supply more arms aid to Israel. The option is not to prevent war but to stop others from joining it in support of the Palestinians. If under this US military cover Israel continues to bombard Gaza and, at some stage, send its land forces in, the likelihood of a blow-up could well increase.

The spectre of the daily bombardment of Gaza, buildings being reduced to rubble, and civilians being killed, the collective punishment imposed on the Gazans is turning international opinion against Israel. The Arab street is of course inflamed, but big public demonstrations against Israel by local Muslim populations and others are taking place also in European and American cities. France has sought to ban pro-Palestinian demonstrations to avoid street violence. Amazingly, protestors including American Jews have intruded into the US

Capitol to express their opposition to Israeli actions. The bombing of the al Ahli hospital in Gaza has further turned the narrative against Israel, even if it is unclear who was responsible for it, whether it was Israel or the Islamic Jihad.

The UN Secretary General has been focusing on the issue of humanitarian aid for the Gaza population, to the point of being personally present at the Rafah crossing in Egypt to supervise the entry of relief trucks into Gaza. His statement at the most recent UN Security Council meeting condemned the Hamas terror attacks as well as the act of inflicting collective punishment as a war crime. He stressed that the action of Hamas had not occurred in a vacuum as the Palestinians have seen their land "steadily devoured by settlements and plagued by violence; their economy stifled; their people displaced and their homes demolished", with their hopes for a political solution vanishing. He sees a two-state

solution as the only realistic foundation for true peace and stability. The Secretary General's statement has been violently criticised by Israel, with calls for his resignation, a reaction that does not help Israel's case in international public opinion.

The mantra of a two-state solution can be recited politically by world leaders but the reality on the ground argues against it in practical terms.

The size of Israeli settlements on the West Bank is massive, with over 4,50,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank and an additional 2,20,000 living in East Jerusalem. Can they be uprooted without a huge internal crisis in Israel? Who would impose such a solution? The manner in which Israel, for security and other reasons, has broken the West Bank into enclaves raises the question of whether the Palestinians will accept an unviable state. India has taken a carefully balanced position in the UN Security Council that responds to the developing situation after the initial horrific terrorist attacks that Israel suffered.



By: Omer Ghazi

India has sent nearly 6.5 tonnes of medical aid and 32 tonnes of disaster relief material for the people of Palestine. Moreover, \$29.53 million has been contributed by India to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for the Palestinian refugees. This might come as a surprise to many who have recently developed a newfound sense of unequivocal camaraderie with Israel in the wake of the war raging in the region. It is true that India's relations with Israel have strengthened considerably in recent years, encompassing various sectors like trade, technology, defence, and counter-terrorism cooperation; however, situations like the ongoing Israel-Palestine war demand much more than a knee-jerk reaction.

India is emerging as a strong mediator in major geopolitical conflicts and is exercising its soft power to push for global peace and stability. New Delhi understands that as the dawn of the 21st century tilts the power axis towards the east, India faces stiff competition from China to test its geopolitical clout and influence. Whether it's the Israel-Palestine conflict, the inclusion of the Global South in G20 or the Russia-Ukraine War, India's steps are calculated towards securing a particular spot in the changing geopolitical scenario of the 21st century.

The Palestine is hopeful that India, as a significant global power, will mediate in the Israel-Palestine conflict, urging Israel to "cease territorial seizures" and to collaborate with Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey in distributing humanitarian aid to the 2.2 million Palestinians

in Gaza. The Palestinian Ambassador to India, Adnan Mohammad Jaber Abualhayjaa, stressed the need for an immediate ceasefire during the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. There are also indications that President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine may engage in discussions with Prime Minister Modi soon. India's longstanding support for the two-state policy envisions peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine with officially recognised borders established through direct negotiations.

India's complex situation becomes evident when considering the multifaceted implications of the Israel-Palestine conflict. On one hand, India maintains a substantial relationship with Israel, which includes defence procurement and technological cooperation. The ongoing conflict has the potential to impact this partnership, as Israel may understandably prioritise its security needs during this tumultuous period. Israel is also a primary supplier of military equipment to India, and the defence business between the two nations is valued at around \$2.1 billion.

On the other hand, India heavily relies on oil imports from the Middle East. Any escalation of tensions in the region can have a direct impact on energy prices, which, in turn, can affect India's economy. The interconnectedness of the global economy means that if countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran become entangled in the Israel-Palestine conflict, it could lead to direct consequences for India's energy supply, economy, and investments.

Furthermore, the Israel-Palestine

conflict holds the potential to disrupt the stability of the Middle East, an area of significant strategic importance to India. Any escalation of hostilities could have serious implications for India's interests and engagements in the region. This concern is particularly relevant as India recently embarked on the ambitious India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a large-scale infrastructure project designed to connect India, the Middle East, and Europe through various transportation modes, including shipping and rail networks. The conflict's impact on this corridor is an additional dimension to consider in the larger geopolitical landscape. Apart from the Israel-Hamas War, India also flexed its geopolitical clout as it successfully advocated for the addition of the Global South in the league of the G20 nations. In January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended invitations to 125 primarily developing countries for a virtual meeting, underlining New Delhi's commitment to representing their interests on the international stage. During the virtual gathering, Prime Minister Modi outlined critical challenges, emphasising that addressing these issues requires a greater presence for developing nations in the evolving global order. These challenges encompassed the Covid pandemic, climate change, terrorism, and the conflict in Ukraine. PM Modi expressed the view that the world is currently grappling with a crisis, and most of these global challenges are not of the making of the Global South, yet they disproportionately affect these nations.

India has made a commitment to

Israel-Palestine, Russia-Ukraine and Global South: India Emerges as a Strong Mediator

amplify the voices of the Global South, a diverse array of primarily developing nations spanning Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Oceania, and the Caribbean. Officials hailed this decision as a "significant stride" toward a more equitable, inclusive, and representative global structure and governance. India's systematic engagement with Africa commenced in 2008, but China, taking the lead with its outreach in 2000 under the presidency of Jiang Zemin, has enjoyed a head start. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) initiative took shape with its inaugural ministerial meeting in Beijing that year, marking the growing Chinese interest in Africa. Nonetheless, India's recent move to incorporate the African Union into the G20 positions it as a leader of developing and underdeveloped nations. This aligns with India's goal of securing permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), for which it seeks the support of Africa, holding 55 crucial votes. Beyond acting as a bridge to the developing world, India positions itself as an emerging global player and also a crucial mediator in bridging the divide between the Western powers and Russia.

Amidst the Russia-Ukraine War, China has been seeking to establish itself as a mediator and take up the global leadership mantle; however, China's efforts have helped shed light on India's distinctive approach to conflict resolution. In contrast to China, which has positioned itself against the American approach, India has leveraged symbolic expressions of power to enhance its soft power image. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has projected India as a champion of democracy and a moral force for global peace. India's

support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity has been clearly conveyed through various statements and interactions. Prime Minister Modi engaged in multiple telephonic conversations with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, emphasising India's commitment to high-level engagement with Ukraine and its dedication to addressing the crisis. India has extended its support for peace efforts in Ukraine, emphasising the importance of resolving the conflict through diplomatic means and aligning itself with the position of other global players, including the United States. India recognises the interconnected nature of geopolitical dynamics and aims to harmonise its stance with the key stakeholders involved in conflict resolution. It's important to note that India's engagement with Ukraine does not imply a complete departure from its historical ties with Russia. While expressing solidarity with Ukraine, India acknowledges Russia's military and geopolitical significance, considering it within the context of its own military preparedness and regional stability. India's active engagement in the Ukraine crisis signifies its growing recognition and influence on the international stage. This involvement positions India as a key player in addressing global conflicts and reaffirms its commitment to maintaining global peace and stability. By engaging with Ukraine, India aims to assert itself as a responsible global actor, actively contributing to peaceful conflict resolution and shaping international relations constructively.

However, India encounters challenges in matching China's influence due to its limited material resources, economic capacity, and military potential.

The geopolitical angle behind Qatar sentencing 8 retired Indian Navy men for alleged espionage

By Vibha Sharma

While Opposition parties corner the Narendra Modi Government over the issue, observers are sensing more behind the sentence to the eight retired Indian Navy personnel for alleged espionage by a court in Qatar, a country India considers a "friend" and also shares strong trade ties, largely in the area of sourcing natural gas.

In fact, the eight lakh Indians there make them the largest expatriate community in Qatar.

Pointing to Qatar's support for Palestine, including mediating efforts that led to the release of some captives, the observers believe the quantum of punishment appears to be driven by some hardcore geopolitical messaging.

The timing has led to speculations about a possible connection with the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict and India's support for Israel after the deadly Hamas attack. The eight men have been convicted of allegedly spying for Israel.

Qatari authorities have stated that they have electronic evidence in this regard, according to a detailed report in The Tribune today.

The Israel connection

According to some geopolitical



experts, maybe Qatar wanted to "embarrass India by showing Indian citizens as Israeli spies. Or could it be that Qatar is worried over India's growing influence in the Middle East? Another reason could be the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor or maybe the arrested men are a bargaining chip." Though a section of experts also believes that the initial support shown by India to Israel after the deadly Hamas attack and polarisation in the world are among the reasons, according to a BJP leader, the case against the men "is not a new one".

Notably, after the Israel strike-back, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani expressed concerns over

"escalating violence in the Gaza Strip", urging the international community not to grant the country "unrestricted authorisation" to kill Palestinians.

"We say enough. Israel shouldn't be granted an unconditional green light and unrestricted authorization to kill," he was quoted as saying, faulting the international community for "turning a blind eye" to Palestinian children. "We do not accept double standards and acting like the lives of Palestinian children aren't accounted for, as if they don't have faces or names," he said.

Qatar and Nupur Sharma notably, Qatar was also the first country to demand a public

apology in the wake of the Nupur Sharma controversy, leading to the ruling party taking strong action against its spokesperson for the comments on Prophet Mohammad and Islam.

The BJP suspended Sharma from the primary membership around June 2022.

Geopolitical experts say ever since he assumed power in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has tried to "build on relations" with Qatar. His 2016-visit to the country was followed by the then EAM, late Sushma Swaraj.

"Qatar was invested in India's energy sector and after the BJP came to power, it also agreed to decrease the selling price of gas besides other economic benefits," they add.

Opposition parties slam government

Meanwhile, Opposition parties have castigated the BJP government for not taking the issue seriously when several MPs referred to it in Parliament. Taking a dig at PM Modi, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi also said that he must bring back the men as he "boasted" how much Islamic countries love him. "In August, I had raised the issue of our ex-naval officers

stuck in Qatar. Today they have been sentenced to death. @narendramodi has boasted about how much "Islamic countries" love him. He must bring our ex-naval officers back. It's very unfortunate that they face the death row," he posted on social media.

Congress MP Manish Tewari said the government never took the requests of the family members, Ex-Servicemen League and even MPs seriously.

"Their families were never informed what the charges against them were. Even the lawyer engaged for their defence was I am informed evasive with the families," he added.

The issue - The men were arrested by the Qatari domestic intelligence agency State Security Bureau in mid-September last year. The first public knowledge about their arrest came out after they spoke to their families. "The eight men had been working for a private company, AI Dahra Global Technologies, owned by two ex-servicemen of Qatar armed forces from 2018 onwards, shortly after the renewal of the India-Qatar Defence Cooperation Agreement for five more years.

China Envisions A New World Order Via BRI

By Harsh V. Pant

Reaffirming his nation's commitment to continue pouring billions of dollars into the economies of developing countries as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - the "project of the century" - enters its second decade, Chinese President Xi Jinping underlined earlier this week at the BRI forum that "China can only do well when the world is doing well... When China does well, the world will get even better." More significantly, and perhaps expectedly, he took aim at the West when he suggested that "we stand against unilateral sanctions, economic coercion, decoupling, and supply chain disruption."

With only 24 world leaders in

attendance, compared to the 37 who had attended the last BRI Forum, Xi was keen to



showcase that China is open for business at a time when concerns are rising about the health of Chinese economy. Promising to "comprehensively remove restrictions on foreign investment access in the

manufacturing sector," the Chinese leader talked of his intent to focus on "cross-border

trade and investment in services and market access for digital products."

This was China's first major international event since coming out of around three years of pandemic lockdown in

January 2023 and was a celebration of one of Xi's signature projects. Not surprisingly, he was gung-ho about the achievements of BRI as he underlined how his initiative has helped the developing world by making infrastructure and connectivity the centerpiece of emerging global economic discourse. He outlined how China has "endeavored to build a global network of connectivity consisting of economic corridors, international transportation routes and information highway as well as railways, roads, airports, ports, pipelines and power grids," thereby boosting "the flow of goods, capital, technologies and human resources among

countries involved and injected fresh vitality into the millennia-old Silk Road in the new era. "There is no doubt that BRI has been an innovative idea to energize the next stage of economic globalisation and, for a large part of the world left outside the global economic order, this was a timely initiative which, by mobilising as much as \$1 trillion in finance, allowed for new economic possibilities to emerge. But it was the operationalization of the idea that left much to be desired as several nations got saddled with huge debt even as the financial and environmental sustainability of many projects brought to the fore the vulnerabilities of a centralised, top down project.

Mamata Banerjee Will Find It Hard To Defend L'affaire Mahua Moitra

On Vijaydashami day, as West Bengal's annual religio-cultural Durga Puja festivities wound down, Cyclone 'Hamoon' threatened the coastal areas of the state. For the government of Mamata Banerjee and her Trinamool Congress (TMC), this annual threat of nature added to a storm raging for the past fortnight over l'affaire Mahua Moitra, the party's MP from Krishnagar.

Trinamool, which is quick to play victim and allege the misuse of agencies by the Centre when scams related to the state are probed, maintained a deafening silence as charges were traded on what has come to be known as the "cash-for-query" scam. (West Bengal is among the states that have withdrawn general consent to the CBI to probe cases - all CBI probes and most Enforcement Directorate probes in the state are being conducted under the directions of the Calcutta High Court, which is using these agencies as its arm).

The silence was broken four days back, not voluntarily but necessitated by media queries. Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh appeared to smirk as he told television cameras, "Trinamool Congress has nothing to say on the Mahua Moitra issue. The party will not give any reaction to it."

Ghosh hinted that it was for Mahua Moitra



to offer clarifications. Ghosh speaks only at the instance of his boss Mamata Banerjee. His denial had the intrinsic hazard of affirmation. Two days after Ghosh chose to wink at l'affaire Mahua Moitra, the party's Rajya Sabha leader, Derek O'Brien, clarified that the Trinamool would take an "appropriate decision" after relevant parliamentary forums examined the matter. This was not the last from the Trinamool brass. A day after O'Brien's categorical assertion, West Bengal Minister Firhad Hakim, who is also Mayor of Kolkata, seemed to go soft on Moitra and endorsed her stand that the allegations were aimed at 'silencing' her in parliament. Hakim was quick to add that he was expressing his "personal view, not the views of the party". Sudip Bandyopadhyay, Trinamool's leader

in Lok Sabha, preferred silence on the MP who belongs to this House. West Bengal BJP leaders were quick to seize on the mismatch and allege that the Trinamool is divided on the subject.

Interestingly, during the Durga Puja festivities, while Mamata Banerjee and her party were silent on Moitra, top BJP leaders who visited Kolkata - Amit Shah, JP Nadda, Dharmendra Pradhan, Tejaswi Surya - too avoided raising the topic. Their focus was different. Durga Puja pandals are famed for their unique themes. The Subodh Mullick Square Puja pandal, organised by a BJP councillor, was built like a replica of the Ram temple coming up in Ayodhya. It drew the maximum crowds this year.

The stoic silence of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who perhaps fancies holding the

copyright on "exposing the Modi-Adani nexus", is also worth noting. Sanjay Raut of Shiv Sena (UBT), Tejaswi Yadav of (RJD) apart, no member of the opposition INDIA alliance has come to Mahua Moitra's defence.

The exposé by lawyer Jai Anant Dehadrai (referred to as jilted ex by Moitra), its escalation by Nishikant Dubey and the affirmation of their charges by businessman Darshan Hiranandani in an affidavit to the Consul General of India in Dubai (where he is resident) seem to have stunned the political class into silence.

The Trinamool is battling a number of scams. Alleged corruption in the recruitment of teachers; selections in municipal jobs; coal and cattle smuggling (to Bangladesh) are weighing heavily on the party. Apparently, it does not want to add to the list l'affaire Mahua Moitra.

The Ethics Committee, a 15-member body with seven BJP and eight opposition members, will now take up Nishikant Dubey's complaint. By month-end, the Delhi High Court will resume hearing the defamation suit filed by Moitra against Dubey, the whistleblower-lawyer Dehadrai, and against media entities that have reported the story. The initial hearing had to be aborted as Moitra's lawyer had to withdraw from the case over issues related to ethics.

Why Tabu is In a League of Her Own

By: Biswadeep Ghosh

There is nobody quite like Tabu in the Hindi film industry. Fifty-one years old, she makes frequent appearances on the big screen. Her contemporaries, on the other hand, have slowed down with time. Tabu had made an uncredited appearance as a child artist in Sagar Sarhadi's drama Bazaar (1982). However, her first commercial success as the female lead was Farouq Siddique's Vijaypath (1994) opposite Ajay Devgn, her co-star in many films in the years to come.

A glance at her filmography reveals why Tabu is, without a shade of doubt, one of the most accomplished actresses of her generation. A recipient of many awards, the critically acclaimed actress has also enjoyed a lot of commercial success in a three-decade-long career studded with fine performances.

Tabu has appeared in five films since the beginning of 2022, a depressing year for the industry that was hit hard by too many failures. But she had two releases last year, both of them commercial successes. Her first 2022 film was Anees Bazmee's comedy-drama Bhooh Bhulaiyaa 2, a standalone sequel to Priyadarshan's Bhooh Bhulaiyaa (2007), which was a commercial success. Tabu's superb



performance in the ensemble cast film was a major attraction in BB 2, a timepass masala mix with a ghost, a 'baba' and much more, which became a blockbuster. Her second release of the year was Abhishek Pathak's gripping crime drama Drishyam 2, the direct sequel to the late Nishikant Kamat's Drishyam (2015). An edge-of-the-seat thriller revolving around a family trying to evade the legal consequences of an accidental murder committed by the elder daughter, Drishyam 2 was a widely appreciated success. Tabu's character of a cop does not have much screen time in the sequel, but the actress establishes its relevance in the story effortlessly.

Tabu's first 2023 release was Aasman Bhardwaj's action thriller Kuttey, a well-scripted, fast-paced ensemble cast film that takes the viewer deep inside a dark world of deceit, corruption, violence and greed. Playing a foul-mouthed

small-town cop, Tabu overshadows others around her whenever she appears in the film. Kuttey received its share of appreciation, but it collapsed at the box-office. Her next release was the Ajay Devgn-helmed action thriller Bhola, a high-octane entertainer revolving around a just-released prisoner who is going to meet his ten-year-old daughter for the first time. What happens after a police officer (Tabu) gives him a task that takes him on a journey full of dangers takes the story forward. Lovers of the action genre liked the film, and it was reasonably successful. Some might say, and rightly so, that Tabu has been playing the cop too often lately. Yet, she has given each of her cops a distinct identity, the quality of a gifted and seasoned performer. Tabu's third 2023 release is Vishal Bhardwaj's Khufiya, a spy thriller released digitally on Netflix. The actress plays the author-backed character of a secret agent, who happens to be a divorcee with a son who resents her. She develops a special bond with another agent, who gets killed during a mission. A mole in the agency is directly - or indirectly - responsible for the murder. Khufiya is eminently watchable because of how the story unfolds. Tabu delivers what film-goers expect: a fine performance in the central role.

Why the Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza is Déjà Vu for India

By: Reshmi Dasgupta

World leaders have now ensured “international humanitarian aid” is allowed into Gaza though aid workers are calling for “far more desperately needed supplies” for the displaced Palestinians. India is among the countries that have responded but given the tone and tenor of coverage, people could be forgiven for thinking the Gaza crisis is unprecedented in contemporary history and unmanageable without the attention and support of Western and Arab nations.

In the context of humanitarian crises arising from conflicts, one name comes to mind: Dr Dilip Mahalanabis who was posthumously awarded a Padma Vibhushan this year. His herculean humanitarian feat has few parallels in modern history. He was the Indian paediatrician from Kolkata whose brilliantly simple oral rehydration therapy (known now as ORS) saved the lives of millions of Bengali East Pakistanis who fled to India to escape extermination in 1971. Dr Mahalanabis’ valiant but mostly unknown and unrecognised role epitomises

reported so far in the 2023 Hamas-Israel war. Three million East Pakistanis, mostly Hindus, were killed by order of their own government located in West Pakistan. The world did not care. In the past two weeks, just over 5,000 Palestinians have been killed due to retaliatory Israeli strikes for the murder of over 1,400 Israelis by terrorists of



Hamas. And the world is traumatised.

An astounding 10 million Bengali-speakers fled to India to escape targeted slaughter from March to December 1971 and the west waited for “a humanitarian catastrophe” to unfold. It did not,

wrought by West Pakistan on its eastern brethren. India quietly tended to 10 million—not just one million—even as the US helped the aggressor by sending the Seventh Fleet to the Bay of Bengal to intimidate India!

In 1971, the US Consul General in Dhaka Archer Blood informed Washington DC (in vain) about Bengali-speaking Pakistanis

humanitarian crisis” of a million Palestinian refugees. Amazingly, neither the widespread and sustained repression, torture and killings in East Pakistan nor its consequence—the exodus of a mind-boggling 10 million of its Bengali-speaking citizens to India—qualified as a “humanitarian crisis” for world leaders of that time, although

Western intelligence agencies were certainly aware of what was happening there. The bar for qualifying as a “humanitarian crisis” has evidently been lowered considerably over the past 50 years. The US journalist Sydney Schanberg, famous for his reports from Cambodia that led to the film *The Killing Fields*, also covered the killing fields of East

Pakistan for the *New York Times* but those equally horrific reports were not made into a film or even mentioned in his obituary. He had reported West Pakistanis were singling out Hindu houses in the East by painting the letter H on them and killing all Hindus and Awami League supporters they could find. DÉJÀ VU?

In June 1971 Pakistani journalist Anthony Mascarenhas bravely wrote in *The Sunday Times*: “I have witnessed the brutality of ‘kill and burn missions’ as the army units, after clearing out the rebels, pursued the pogrom in towns and villages... In the officer’s mess at night, I have listened incredulously as otherwise brave and honourable men proudly chewed over the day’s kill. ‘How many did you get?’ The answers are seared in my memory.” Sounds familiar? India’s Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s radio broadcast to the nation on December 3, 1971, reiterated the point of the refugee influx and India’s intention to stand up for those innocent civilians being targeted for elimination in East Pakistan by its own government. Her words remain a reminder of how different the world was before media and social media made the dissemination of information and garnering support so much

easier, albeit rarely well informed.

“Since last March we have borne the heaviest of burdens and withstood the greatest of pressure and a tremendous effort to urge the world to help in bringing about a peaceful solution, in preventing annihilation of an entire people whose only crime was to vote democratically,” she declared. “But the world ignored the basic causes and concerned itself only with certain repercussions.”

“The situation was bound to deteriorate... The war in Bangladesh has become a war on India, and this imposes upon me, my government and the people of India an awesome responsibility. We have no other option but to put our country on a war footing. Our brave officers and jawans are at their posts, mobilised for the defence of the country... Every necessary step is being taken, and we are prepared for any eventualities.” Her words could well have been Netanyahu’s.

There are unmistakable echoes of the events of 1971 in the Israel-Gaza conflict in 2023. Only, the world was largely unmoved back then. The UN has still not recognised the genocide of East Pakistanis and rapes and other atrocities by Pakistani soldiers. But in 2023, there are voices in support of (and opposition to) both sides. Hamas targeted Jews specifically, but ironically, charges of anti-Semitism are now countered by accusations of Israelis being Nazis! Despite his seminal role in preventing a “humanitarian crisis”, Mahalanabis did not get official recognition even from India (much less the rest of the world) until the Modi government included his name this year’s Padma Awards in the category of Unsung Heroes. India itself is an Unsung Hero too. Most of those now concerned about the happenings in Gaza and Israel in 2023 have no idea what a huge humanitarian precedent was set by India way back in 1971.



the tremendous odds against which India not only fought a third war with its perpetually aggressive neighbour but also marshalled its limited resources to help millions of East Pakistani Bengali refugees. India fed, clothed and housed them, and ensured there was no outbreak of cholera or other diseases with little support, moral or otherwise from other nations. But does anyone remember? The statistics of the India-Pakistan war of 1971 far outstrip anything seen or

thanks to India’s concerted efforts, including Mahalanabis’ ORS. But huge protests and dire forecasts about the fate of a million Palestinians who have fled from north Gaza to the south have galvanised world leaders and the media in 2023 to call for immediate ceasefire and aid. The Muslim world is particularly incensed by the deaths and destruction in Gaza. But back in 1971 there was no world outrage at the slaughter of innocents, no rising diplomatic initiatives driven by “distressing” visuals of the “humanitarian crisis”

Muslims are attacking poor people’s quarters and murdering Bengalis and Hindus.”

Blood was recalled from Dhaka as President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger continued with their anti-India, pro-Pakistan stance with an eye to wooing China. Fifty years on, China is US’s Enemy No1, Israel has two US aircraft carriers supporting its action to eliminate Hamas and rescue 220 hostages, and the media is feverishly covering world leaders responding to the “spiralling



Why West Lecturing India on Canadian Diplomats Smacks of Hypocrisy

By: Kanwal Sibal

Under the Vienna Convention, India is within its rights as the host country to decide on the size of a foreign mission on its soil. The size cannot be unilaterally decided by a foreign country. It must correlate with the scope and quality of bilateral ties. Political, economic, trade, scientific, cultural exchanges, tourist flows, educational ties, defence cooperation, and so on, can determine the size of missions.

The principle of reciprocity is important. The number of consulates in each other's country is especially based on this principle. If relations with a particular country are problematic at the political level, as in the case of Pakistan, for instance, the size of the foreign mission is strictly controlled. There is always a concern about the intelligence activities of a foreign mission, even that belonging to a friendly country. Our problems with the Justin Trudeau government on the issue of its tolerance, even connivance, with the anti-India activities of pro-"Khalistani" extremist Sikhs on its soil that promote secessionist violence in India have come to a head with Prime Minister Trudeau publicly accusing India, without evidence, of having a hand in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a fugitive from Indian law who was campaigning for "Khalistan" and was involved in instigating terrorist violence in India. Imbued with a sense of righteousness and an exaggerated sense of self-importance, as well as an inflated belief in Canada's international clout as a G7 country, Trudeau underestimated India's reaction to his provocation.

India retaliated by reciprocally expelling a Canadian diplomat, castigated Canada for providing a safe haven for terrorists, drug

traffickers and human traffickers, for failing to provide adequate security to its diplomats in Canada, and for interference in India's internal affairs. It suspended issuing visas by our missions in Canada and, most importantly, demanded parity in the number of diplomats stationed in each other's country. It did not publicly mention either the numbers or a date for compliance. Eventually, 41 Canadian diplomats had to leave India by October 20 to avoid their diplomatic immunity being revoked if Canada defied India's demand. India has justified its action under



Article 11.1 of the Vienna Convention, which allows the size of a foreign mission to be kept within limits considered by the receiving State to be reasonable and normal, having regard to circumstances and conditions in the receiving State and to the needs of a particular mission. The position taken by Canada's Foreign Minister that India's "unilateral revocation of the diplomatic privilege and immunity is contrary to international law" is a dishonest one. India has stated that it has engaged with the Canadian side on the issue for over a month in order to work out the details and modalities to ensure the implementation of parity in diplomatic presence. Given India's clear position and Canada's obligation under international law to abide by the receiving State's demand, international law would have been violated if Canada had refused India's demand.

The consequence of defiance would have meant the loss of diplomatic

status of its personnel, who would then be treated as individuals staying in India illegally and therefore liable to be deported. If Canada's tactics were to delay acting on the demand for parity in the hope of mobilising external pressure on India to modify its decision, that plan has been thwarted. Trudeau has engaged in his habitual grand-standing by calling India's action as "contravening the basic principle of international law and democracy" and stating that it is something that "all countries in the world should be worried about". It is surprising that

neither he nor his Foreign Minister have been adequately briefed by their officials on the provisions of the Vienna Convention. This kind of shooting off the hip politically brings further discredit to Canada. To claim that India's action contravenes democracy is empty rhetoric, as if the use of the word "democracy" puts Canada in a superior moral position. Does Trudeau think that the Vienna Convention, which India has relied on, is violative of democracy? Should "all the world be worried about" India's action, as Trudeau claims?

If by the world he means Five Eyes, it is another matter. But if he means the rest of the world, especially the Global South, then he is mistaken. Many may rejoice at India's decision to put Canada in its place, as they have long suffered on account of the West weaponising democracy to interfere in the internal affairs of others. As it happens, the leader of the

opposition in Canada has slammed Trudeau for destroying Canada's ties with many countries, including India, with his unprofessional conduct of affairs. Canada's position has been echoed by the US and the UK, indicating close coordination. This is neither a bilateral matter between India and the US nor one between India and the UK. Their interference in a bilateral matter between India and Canada is wrong. India has not invoked the Vienna Convention to demand that the missions of the US and the UK in India should have parity with our missions in their

countries, even though the reality is that their missions in India, especially that of the US, far exceed the size of the Indian missions on their soil.

Surely, the legal departments of the Foreign Offices of the US and the UK are expected to do their homework better about the articles of the Vienna Convention. That the US should "expect" India to uphold its obligations under the Vienna Convention, including with respect to immunities and privileges of accredited Canadian diplomats, when they well know that India is upholding its rights under the Convention is pure politics.

The statement by the UK Foreign Office is more objectionable, as it is also presumptuous. The UK does not "agree with the decisions taken by the Indian government", as if India sought or needed its agreement to exercise its rights under the Convention. The UK objects to the "unilateral removal of privileges and immunities" as not being consistent with the "principles and effective functioning of the Vienna Convention". It then adopts a patronising tone by expecting "all states to uphold their obligations under the Convention", and asking India to "engage with Canada on its independent investigation" into Nijjar's death. Who is the UK to demand this?

Both the US and UK statements resort to diplomatic triteness in saying that resolving differences requires communication and diplomats on the ground. Our differences with Canada over the safe havens it gives to extremists threatening the sovereignty and security of India are long-standing. Canada has not acted on the several dossiers on these elements handed over to it. Our extradition requests have been ignored. Now there are death threats against our diplomats and our political leaders by these criminals. Despite Canada having had an inflated number of diplomats on the ground in India these differences have not been resolved. Worse, as Jaishankar has now said at his level, Canadian personnel have been interfering in India's internal affairs. He has warned that information on this will come out in the public domain in due course.

Ironically, the UK's record of interference in our internal affairs and providing safe havens to anti-Indian extremists is much worse than Canada's. Violent demonstrations in front of our High Commission by "Khalistanis" in league with local Pakistani elements are allowed by the UK authorities despite our protests. The UK also does not meet our extradition requests. Such extremist elements are also active in the US. Our mission in San Francisco has been attacked twice. The Ministry of External Affairs has let the UK get away with its uncalled-for statement. In 2018, the UK expelled 23 Russian diplomats. Russia responded by demanding that British and Russian embassies be of equal size and asked more than 50 British diplomats to leave the country. This was done. In 2017 parity was achieved between US and Russian missions in each other's country. The State Department in its statement at that time said nowhere that this violated the Vienna Convention. Between 2020 and 2023 the US expelled 223 Russian diplomats.

OMG, Will Disinformation Drive the Elections in 2024?

By: K Yatish Rajawat

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are not only going to be the biggest, they are also going to be the toughest as success for Opposition parties is survival. Moreover, we have a neighbour — China — which has taken a very aggressive stance against the current government and its policies. The biggest fear in next year's elections is therefore interference by China and other foreign powers using AI, social media, and WhatsApp to build a narrative of disinformation by disrupting the selection of candidates, creating social unrest, and affecting the whole election process.

Desperate times lead to desperate measures. Besides Opposition parties, China and Pakistan are equally desperate. Moreover, AI has made disinformation so easy and cheap to circulate that it can be done by a small PR agency with limited manpower.

A chance to manage or disrupt political stability in an enemy state is the stuff of statecraft that intelligence officers dream about. Earlier, disruption in an election involved cash, lots of feet on the ground, and the ability to engineer a riot or a rout for the right candidate. Its impact was limited to a constituency, region, or mostly a state. Now, technology, social media, and artificial intelligence are offering the tools that allow these disruptions to be engineered from the comfort of an office in Beijing or Toronto across the country. This Dussehra, an AI-based anchor, Zania, was greeting everyone on WhatsApp groups. Now, imagine a video of a political leader exhorting a particular community to riot as happened recently in the Nuh riots, but this time, created with Chinese funds by an Indian agency using AI.

In my conversations with intelligence officers, both serving and retired, on the weaponisation of disinformation to be used during elections, they are unanimous about it as the biggest known risk. While the Indian intelligence agencies

will do what they can, there are many things they cannot do. Disinformation spreads faster than truth and there is enough research done on why we tend to share it faster and how the credibility of every share adds to its virality and impact. Case Sunstein highlighted the impact of social media on democracy in his seminal work #Republic way



back in 2000. The blurb for the book read, "See only what you want to see, hear only what you want to hear, read only what you want to read....Our power to filter decreases exponentially if the content matches our beliefs." With WhatsApp groups becoming the sole arbiters of sharing information, everything gets shared as facts. A Facebook post, a tweet, a random post on a medium or an OpEd written on a website, nobody seems to exercise the basic judgement of whether it is factual, or disinformation before sharing it. People start exercising their immense capabilities to comment and opine about it because everyone has fingers and keypads but very little judgment over their reactions. Most WhatsApp groups are by their very design and selection extremely deep echo chambers so the sharing is based completely on what they already believe in. This is where disinformation thrives and grows into a narrative that impacts decision making like choosing a candidate in an election.

In a new book 'Why Falsehood Fly' to be launched in February 2024, Paul Thagard, Distinguished Professor at Waterloo University says that motivated inferences drive

acceptance of disinformation as truth. Everyone is prone and susceptible to motivated inference. Thagard cites examples of motivated inference in sports, even if a team is losing its fans will still believe that today the team will win, but are surprised and disappointed yet again. They will ignore the evidence and trend of poor performance and genuine

challenges with the team. "Motivated inference is not just simpleminded wishful thinking, in that motivations do not lead directly to beliefs. Rather, the goals lead to acquiring and considering only selective information, so that the evidence that makes it reasonable to maintain an emotion-based belief is questionable."

Motivated inference also happens with stock market investors, 'This time is different, this is not a bubble it is the 'New Economy' and I get it, but all these other naysayers do not really understand it.'

This motivated inference can play havoc in election season if it is fed as disinformation by foreign powers looking to disrupt an election. According to an assessment by the US Intelligence Community of foreign threats to the 2020 US elections, Russian President Putin authorised Russians to engage in a multi-pronged campaign to denigrate the Democratic Party and Joe Biden's candidacy, specifically. The Russian efforts attempted to influence voters via disinformation and unsubstantiated allegations against Biden. This is captured in the US Department of National Intelligence report on interference

in US elections in 2020. The allegations against President Biden were repeated by both traditional media and social media and in the end, as Goebbels said, a falsehood repeated long enough becomes the truth. Another report from 2021 cites that Iran specifically used social media propaganda during civil unrest like protest marches and other demonstrations like Black Lives Matter in the US. DNI report on Iran said, "We assess that Iran carried out an influence campaign during the 2020 US election season intended to undercut the re-election prospects of former President Trump and to further its longstanding objectives of exacerbating divisions in the US, creating confusion, and undermining the legitimacy of US elections and institutions. Tehran's efforts were aimed at denigrating former President Trump, not actively promoting his rivals. Iran's efforts in 2020—especially its emails to individual US voters and efforts to spread allegations of voter fraud—were more aggressive than in past election cycles."

The reason the US intelligence community is able to detect and describe these attempts by foreign intelligence agencies into US elections is because they have access to every email, post, and video posted on these social media platforms. Every internet company based in the US has to comply with a request for data including the origin of every post. The US has always trawled and tracked every bit of data on the internet for its benefit.

These social media companies do not give the same kind of access to Indian intelligence agencies to the same data, citing all kinds of legalese including freedom of expression. India banned TikTok and most social media apps from China but they still have a presence in India through their investment in Indian companies that control content. Some of these platforms have dropped news from their name but their role is perpetuating disinformation.

Meta-owned WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and the

Elon Musk-owned X (formerly Twitter), a quartet of content feeds disinformation from one platform into another targeting different age groups. These platforms always cite the number of times the Indian government has asked them to bring down content but are rarely transparent about the number of times disinformation has circulated across their platform. Nor are they transparent about how they use or share information about users from one platform to another.

For instance, do you see an advertisement on Facebook that you have just searched on the browser? Now, this is the cookies gleaning all your data from your browser and feeding it back to Meta. Is it also doing the same with WhatsApp conversations? We don't know and nobody knows but they will certainly not share information about disinformation campaigns by foreign governments proactively with the Indian intelligence agencies.

This lacuna has to be addressed through policy if we have to keep the institutions safe. Social media may have decimated traditional media but if it destroys the election process? Digital India Bill addresses this issue but only partly by laying the content responsibility back on these platforms but it is not enough. There has to be debate, discussion, and decision on how to curb the disinformation on these platforms. They have failed to self-regulate themselves and their lobbying has run circles around Indian efforts to control it. Hiding behind the garb of freedom of expression and pretending to be media entities all the while avoiding any responsibility of a media organisation is the worst abuse that these lobbyists have done. Now, it is up to the Digital India Bill to reintroduce the exceptional circumstances access where Indian intelligence agencies under the direction of the Central Election Commission are given access to the origin of disinformation on these platforms.

Bank fraud: ED arrests 2 promoters, CA of Chandigarh-based pharma company; searches Ashoka University in Haryana

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday arrested two promoters of the Chandigarh-based pharma company Parabolic Drugs and its chartered accountant in a money-laundering probe linked to an alleged bank fraud, official sources said.

Parabolic Drugs promoters Vineet Gupta and Pranav Gupta and CA S K Bansal were taken into custody under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) following a long session of questioning. A special PMLA court in Panchkula sent them to five days of ED custody, they said.

The central agency continued with its searches against the group for the second day, including at the Ashoka University's corporate and registered offices in Delhi and campus in Haryana's Sonapat.

A total of 17 premises in Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh, and Panchkula were covered by the ED after the raids were launched on Friday.

The Guptas are also the co-founders of the Sonapat-based Ashoka University but had stepped down from their posts in 2022 after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a case against them and the company in 2021.

The university on Friday said the "Enforcement Directorate has sought information in the matter of investigations into the case of Parabolic Drugs where Ashoka University founders, Vineet Gupta and Pranav Gupta, are directors." While a statement from the institute on

the ED action is awaited, it had said Parabolic Drugs was "in no way linked to the Ashoka University."

"Ashoka University has no past



or current relationship with Parabolic Drugs, the company being investigated, and any attempt to create a link is without any basis and misleading," it had said.

The money-laundering case stems from a CBI FIR in which the promoters and the pharma

company were booked for allegedly defrauding a consortium of banks, led by the Central Bank of India, of Rs 1,626.74 crore. While a

statement from the institute on the ED action is awaited, it had said Parabolic

Drugs was "in no way linked to the Ashoka University." "Ashoka University has no past or current

relationship with Parabolic Drugs, the company being investigated, and any attempt to create a link is without any basis and misleading," it had said.

The money-laundering case stems from a CBI FIR in which the promoters and the pharma

company were booked for allegedly defrauding a consortium of banks, led by the Central Bank of India, of Rs 1,626.74 crore. According to the sources, the ED suspects that the institute on the Guptas "layered and diverted" bank loan funds to the tune of Rs 7 crore to the university.

It has found documents that allegedly show that an amount of the loan funds was transferred in September 2013 "Ashoka University has no past or current and of this, he reportedly sent Rs 1 crore to the university.

Another amount of Rs 50 lakh is under the ED's scanner as the agency suspects it was transferred to a sister company of Parabolic Drugs — Jamboree Education Private Limited — and subsequently, transferred to the university by Vineet Gupta.

Mukesh Ambani's children get shareholders' approval to join Reliance board

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has gained approval from its shareholders for the appointment of Isha Ambani, Akash Ambani, and Anant Ambani as non-executive directors of the company. This development was disclosed in a stock exchange filing on Friday. Following the announcement

ahead of RIL's Q2FY24 results, shares of the conglomerate jumped 1.8 per cent.

The announcement follows Reliance chairman Mukesh Ambani's statement at the company's 46th Annual General Meeting, where he shared his succession planning for India's most valuable private sector

company. Mukesh Ambani expressed his confidence in his three children, Isha, Akash, and Anant, who are poised to take on significant roles across various business segments within the company. "Akash and Isha have assumed leadership roles in Jio and Retail, respectively. They have been passionately involved

in our consumer businesses since inception. Anant has also joined our New Energy business with great zeal. In fact, he is spending most of his time in Jamnagar," Mukesh Ambani said at the AGM.

Furthermore, he highlighted that the next generation of Ambanis holds a prominent position within

a team of young leaders and professionals who are already achieving remarkable feats at Reliance. The three siblings receive daily guidance and mentorship from the company's senior leaders, including Mukesh Ambani himself and the board of directors.

While the leadership at Reliance has expressed strong confidence in this succession plan, domestic proxy advisory firm Institutional Investor Advisory Services (IIAS) had suggested that Reliance shareholders vote against Anant Ambani's appointment to the conglomerate's board. Additionally, US-based Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS) also recommended a similar stance to investors. IIAS raised concerns primarily about Anant's age, being 28 years old, which does not align with their voting guidelines. ISS, on the other hand, pointed to his limited leadership and board experience, spanning just six years.

Despite the apprehensions raised by the firms, the shareholders of Reliance have given a strong vote of approval to Reliance's succession plan.

Elon Musk does not want people to have a bank account, says X will take care of all financial needs

Yaccarino and together, the two made some announcements.

As per a report in The Verge, Musk wants the world to use X as their go-to platform for everything related to finances. He feels that X users won't even need a bank account and his application will be able to take care of all their financial needs. Elon Musk on X replacing banks

As per The Verge report, X will be able to take care of anything financial by the end of 2024. According to an audio of the meeting obtained by the

company, Musk told his employees, "When I say payments, I actually mean someone's entire financial life. If it involves money. It'll be on our platform. Money or securities or whatever. So, it's not just like send USD 20 to my friend. I'm talking about, like you won't need a bank account." These features are expected to roll out by the end of next year, Musk said. CEO Linda Yaccarino chimed in and said that this will become "a full opportunity" in 2024. The report also said that Musk talked about PayPal at the meeting

and said that it was a "less complete" product than what was imagined by him and David Sacks back in 2000.

X users to pay for new accounts. A couple of days back, Musk had confirmed X will start charging new users to create an account under a new subscription method. Presently, this is being done only in two countries and is limited to users trying to create a web account. The subscription method is called "Not A Bot" and is aimed at reducing bot activity, spams and manipulation of the platform.

It is to be noted that users who do not wish to pay a subscription fee can still make an account, but they will only be able to take "read only actions" like going through posts, watching videos and follow accounts. They won't be able to post their own content or interact with posts.

Confirming the same, Musk wrote in a tweet, "Read for free, but USD 1/year to write. It's the only way to fight bots without blocking real users. This won't stop bots completely, but it will be 1000X harder to manipulate the platform."

This Country Is Slapping \$1,000 Tax On Travellers From India, Africa

El Salvador is charging passengers from Africa or India a \$1,000 fee, in an apparent bid to curb migration to the US through the Central American country. People traveling on passports from India or any one of more than 50 African nations will be obliged to pay the fee, El Salvador's port authority said in a statement on its website dated Oct. 20.

The money raised will be used to improve the nation's main international airport, the authority added. El Salvador President Nayib Bukele this week met Brian Nichols, US assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, to discuss "efforts to address irregular migration," among other topics. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol encountered a record 3.2 million migrants across the country in fiscal

year 2023, which ended in September. Many migrants from Africa and elsewhere make it to the US via Central America. Including VAT, the additional cost is \$1,130 from travelers from the affected countries. The new fee took effect Oct. 23 and was imposed due to increased use of the country's main international airport, according to the statement. Airlines will be required to notify

Salvadoran authorities daily of passengers who come from a list of 57 countries in Africa, and India. Listen to the latest songs, only on JioSaavn.com Colombian airline Avianca, which is one of the hub's biggest users, began notifying travelers that passengers from the list of countries must pay the mandatory fee before boarding flights to El Salvador.

"Gave Darshan Hiranandani My Parliament Login Credentials": Mahua Moitra

Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra on Friday said that the only things she had received from Darshan Hiranandani, the CEO of the Hiranandani Group, as gifts were "one scarf, some lipsticks, and other makeup items including eye shadow" but she admitted to letting him use her Lok Sabha login credentials to post questions that she claimed were hers. She denied allegations of taking bribes from Mr Hiranandani and demanded that she be given the chance to cross-examine him, in an interview to India Today.

Her remarks come amid allegations that she received gifts from Mr Hiranandani in exchange for asking questions in Parliament. The Ethics committee of the parliament has summoned her to present her defence on October 31 but Ms Moitra has requested more time due to "pre-committed programmes" in her constituency Krishnanagar. Most members of the Ethics committee have said the charges against Ms Moitra are serious in nature and amount to a breach of parliamentary privilege. BJP MP Nishikant Dubey and Delhi-based lawyer Jai Anant Dehadrai have already recorded their statements and presented evidence against the Trinamool MP.

Ms Moitra on Friday also lashed out against Mr Dehadrai, citing that he did not deserve the national

importance he was getting. She also said his complaint against her was motivated by the acrimonious custody battle that both were fighting over their pet dog Henry. Ms Moitra defended sharing login credentials with Mr Hiranandani saying she has done that with others too "as she worked from a remote constituency." "But there is always an OTP and the team would always post my questions," she said, claiming that the NIC that operates government and parliamentary websites had no rules against this.

This was countered by Mr Dubey in a tweet in which he posted the rules specified by the NIC and a form that every parliamentarian was obligated to fill out. These include instructions to keep the credentials private and confidential and inform the NIC of any alternate user as any breach could have security implications.

Mr Dubey also demanded a probe into the attempts that he claimed were being made to influence Mr Hiranandani and if Ms Moitra was in touch with him. Mr Hiranandani is an approver in this case with his signed affidavit corroborating the charges raised against Ms Moitra by both Mr Dubey and Mr Dehadrai.

Ms Moitra said the things she had received from the businessman, who she called a close personal friend, were a scarf for her birthday present, lipsticks, and makeup items from Bobbi Brown. She said that the

makeup products were brought for her from Dubai's duty-free store. She also said she had consulted him for changing the interiors of her house, and he had presented her with new architectural plans and drawings, but the expenses were undertaken by the CPWD which comes under the government.

Listen to the latest songs, only on JioSaavn.com "When I was allotted my personal bungalow, it was in a dilapidated state. I asked Darshan if he could get one of his architects how the doors can be re-designed so light can come in," said Ms Moitra, showing pictures of designs sent to her by Mr Hiranandani's architects for the bungalow's rooms, layout, and kitchen. She said that the designs were submitted to the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) and claimed that her bungalow's renovation was done by the government body. She also said whenever she was in Mumbai, she would use Mr Hiranandani's car as he was a friend. "I would urge Darshan Hiranandani to come immediately and put on record if he has given anything else to me. Anyone can make an allegation, but the onus is always on the complainant to prove those allegations. There's no mention of ? 2 crore cash given to me in the affidavit. If cash is being given, please tell the date and provide all the documentary evidence," she said.

Indian national sentenced to 16 years in jail for raping university student in Singapore

A court here has sentenced a 26-year-old Indian national to 16 years in jail and 12 strokes of the cane for raping a university student in 2019.

It also took charges of abduction and theft into consideration for the sentencing. The Today newspaper reported that after stalking the university student as she walked to a bus stop late at night, Chinnaiah, who worked here as a cleaner, pointed her in the wrong direction and then punched her before dragging her to a forested area and viciously raping her. The victim was so badly injured with facial bruising and other injuries that her then boyfriend did not recognise her upon visiting her at the hospital.

The rape took place on May 4, 2019. The court heard that the reason the case had taken some four years was that Chinnaiah's mental condition had required several rounds of psychiatric evaluation. Deputy Public Prosecutor (DPP) Kayal Pillay said while Chinnaiah was sexually assaulting the student, she had tried to pull his hand away from her throat as she

was unable to breathe. But Chinnaiah responded by tightening his grip, causing her to wheeze further, Pillay said.

He also told her to keep quiet and that no one would hear her. Pillay said that after he raped her, Chinnaiah started rummaging through her belongings. He took her water bottle and drank from it before he poured the remainder of the water over the lower half of her body. Once he walked away, the student immediately went to her bag where she found her scissors and held them in her hand in case Chinnaiah returned, the DPP said.

While she was unable to locate her spectacles, she was able to find her mobile phone to speak to her boyfriend. He later contacted her friend who called the police.

The DPP said after police arrived, the student was taken to a hospital for a sexual assault examination where she was found to have sustained multiple scratches, bruises and scrapes, including strangulation marks over

her neck area. Chinnaiah was arrested on May 5, 2019. Seeking 15 to 17 years' jail and 16 to 18 strokes of the cane, the prosecution argued that the degree of violence used to facilitate the rape was extreme and his attack had been unrelenting and vicious.

DPP Yvonne Poon said the attack was not spur of the moment as Chinnaiah had numerous interactions with the victim and had directed her away from her last possible route to safety.

Describing Chinnaiah's pre-meditation as "insidious", DPP Poon added that the man had made serious efforts to avoid detection by making his presence less apparent as he followed her. The DPP also referred to the university student's victim impact statement dated July 13, 2023, where she states she still has nightmares and flashbacks, thoughts of suicide, and a sense of shame.

For aggravated rape, Chinnaiah could have been jailed for up to 20 years with no fewer than 12 strokes of the cane.

Punjabis migrating to Canada are fulfilling their need for low-skilled workers: Hardeep Singh Puri

with people returning to India, which is well on its path to becoming the land of opportunities.

Puri said: "How much more short-sighted can we become? But I can make a prediction today: This process of people wanting to move out will reverse because India is growing; today India is a land of opportunity. Why would anybody want to leave India." He has stressed reversing this trend earlier too. In September 2021,

Puri had said: "We are a globalised community. In Punjab, normal people are saving money to send their children to England and Canada. We must now start the reverse migration." The BJP leader also pointed out that the trend in Punjab is a specific case as the state is still grappling with the drug menace. "I know Punjab is a specific case because of the drug menace. Do you think a drug menace can grow when you've got

synthetic drug factories inside and you've got people coming and saying 'we will help you get off drugs' but not putting in any real effort." Notably, Canada is among the most favoured countries for Indian students; for the past five years, India has been Canada's largest source country for international students. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education, in 2022, the number of Indian students in the country

rose 47 percent to more than three lakhs, making up for nearly 40 percent of the overseas student population.

Further, Canada is reportedly home to around 1.4 million people of Indian origin, i.e., roughly 3.7 percent of the country's total population. In the last 20 years, Canada's Sikh population has more than doubled with frequent migration in search of better jobs and higher education.

India's Got Talent - Where Are They Headed?

Indians make up the largest migrant population in OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. Indians are the principal national group when it comes to acquiring rich-country citizenship in 2022 and this has been the trend since 2019 (1.5 lakh), according to OECD's International Migration Outlook 2023 report released recently.

In 2021, around 1.3 lakh Indians acquired the citizenship of an OECD country. The OECD is a group of 38 countries, mostly high-income and ranked high on the Human Development Index (HDI). India was followed by China and Romania. OECD-members are rich countries that have always attracted migrant populations and students. In 2021, 4 lakh new Indian migrants (excluding students) went to OECD-member countries. In

2020, the figure was 2.2 lakh, possibly due to closed borders during Covid. Interestingly, the economic prosperity of India and the improving wealth of the Indians after economic liberalisation have coincided with more Indians seeking to migrate abroad. India has seen an upswing in legal economic migration. The outflow from India is not just restricted to English-speaking countries like the US, UK, Canada, and Australia but to Italy, Germany and The Netherlands. Indians migrate to other countries for better opportunities. To the advantage of the host country, they arrive with high skills and contribute to human capital development and technological progress. Indians have helped offset labour shortage by filling roles both in fast-growing and declining sectors of the economy of these developed nations. Overall, Indians abroad play a big role in putting India on the global map. Better economic opportunities are the primary reasons for Indians acquiring

citizenship to rich OECD countries. Higher wages, improved living standards and career advancement plays a crucial role in this. Several OECD countries have skilled migration programmes that attract Indian professionals with skills in demand," says Abhash Kumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College, Delhi University.

"Indian diaspora in OECD countries helps promote trade and investment ties

migration and mobility partnership deal. The agreement aims to ensure transparent and 'clean' migration to curb the exploitation of migrants by touts and agents. Portugal, Germany and Austria have already signed agreements on migration and mobility with India.

However, there is a flipside. Large-scale migration also implies India is still miles behind other developed countries in providing quality education, employment and ease of living. Indians continue to

As India's young, skilled labour force leaves home in search of better rewards for their effort and talent, it also means a lost opportunity for the country to grow faster. The loss of the fiscal contributions of these highly skilled individuals is a big loss for the country.

"Migration as well as Indians acquiring foreign citizenship deprives India of a huge tax revenue as the diaspora do not pay taxes for their earnings. It results in double drain for India. Firstly, the nation



loses its hard acquired talent and skills- both technical and professional. When millionaires acquire foreign citizenship, the nation is deprived of the benefits of the huge investment of scarce resources made on education of these individuals by India," says TR Chandrashekara, development

between India and these countries. The diaspora facilitates business relationships and cross-border investments," adds Mr Kumar.

A large migrant population means a huge cash inflow for India due to the remittances from overseas Indians and the money they park in Indian banks as NRI deposits. Both these factors help the country's external balance. Remittances from abroad obviously have a large impact on the individual families and increase their purchasing capacity. In 2022, the inflow was \$111 billion, about 3.3 percent of GDP.

According to the World Bank, almost 36 per cent of the country's remittance inflows are sourced from high-skilled migrants in the US, UK and Singapore. Skilled Indian migrants in The Netherlands fill some of the critical vacancies in the IT sector. More than two lakh Indian migrants are working in the agricultural and dairy sectors in Italy. India and Italy are close to finalising a

go abroad not only for greener pastures - better employment and money, work-life balance - but also because our education system is below par and so is the job market. It is not just high net worth Indians who have left the country; educated unemployed who couldn't get jobs here have also jumped ship. Millions of young talented Indians from various disciplines have left in search of better opportunities.

"India ranks low on happiness and peace (136), Human development index-131; Indian passport ranked 87th on the passport index released by Henley Passport Index. India still has partial capital account convertibility. The major reasons for leaving Indian citizenship are financial constraints, education of children, lack of social security benefits, tax legislations, healthcare, standard of living and ease of travelling," says Sujata Pandey, former director, Atharva Institute of Management, Mumbai.

economist. Millennials raised with a western outlook in privileged schools find it easier to insert themselves in developed western countries than suffer the ignominy of the rat race and struggle in India. Their parents have the financial means to facilitate their life-altering decision.

The gaps that compel people to leave the country must be plugged. Ensuring better quality of life, job opportunities, social structure, financial and social security, development, gender equality, freedom in all walks of life are some ways the government can stop its human capital from becoming an asset to other countries.

India's rapidly growing economy and burgeoning pool of young talent are the envy of many nations. While Indian migrants continue to be our goodwill ambassador, the brain-drain challenge casts a shadow over India's growth prospects, especially when it aims to be a developed country by 2047.

Humanitarian crisis deepens in Gaza, nations appeal for peace

(News Agency) - As Israel maintained its bombardment of Gaza and its military forces conducted an overnight incursion to destroy Hamas forward posts, the UN has stepped up its appeal for fuel in Gaza as the humanitarian crisis has deepened with doctors ignoring warnings to abandon hospitals.

Fears of a wider war continued to persist as the Israeli military continued hitting targets in Syria and Lebanon, besides its continuous bombing of Gaza, and the US was bringing in military hardware such as air-to-air refuellers that are deployed for battles with a state. As many as 18 displaced Palestinians were killed in Israeli bombing near a hospital while the entire family of an Al-Jazeera correspondent in Gaza was wiped out in another Israeli air strike. Israel admitted it carried out about 250 airstrikes in Gaza



in the last 24 hours which mainly targeted militant infrastructure. Infections were spreading in hospitals and doctors were

conducting amputations with "slight anaesthesia", said reports.

If Israel continues blockading supplies, fuel will run out by Thursday. "The agency is deciding how to ration its supply. Do we give for the incubators or the bakeries?" a UN official told the media on the dilemma facing aid workers, 35 of whom have been killed in the air strikes. Taking note of illegal Israeli settlers also joining in the gunning down of Palestinians, US President Joe Biden said this amounted to pouring gasoline. "It has to stop. They have to be held accountable. It has to stop now," Biden said in Washington.

The UN Security Council, meanwhile, remained deadlocked as it has been on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. A Russia-China resolution failed to pass as did one moved by the US.

China ex-Premier Li Keqiang, sidelined by Xi Jinping, dies at 68

(News Agency) - Chinese former Premier Li Keqiang died of a heart attack on Friday, barely seven months after retiring from a decade in office during which his reformist star had dimmed. He was 68.

Once viewed as a top Communist Party leadership contender, Li was sidelined in recent years by President Xi Jinping, who tightened his grip on power and steered the world's second-largest economy in a more statist direction. The elite economist supported a more open market economy, advocating supply-side reforms in an approach dubbed "Likonomics" that was never fully implemented.

Ultimately, he had to bend to Xi's preference for more state control, and his former power base waned



in influence as Xi installed his own acolytes to powerful positions. "Comrade Li Keqiang, while resting in Shanghai in recent days, experienced a sudden heart attack on Oct. 26 and after all-out efforts to revive him failed, died in Shanghai at ten minutes past midnight on

Oct. 27," state broadcaster CCTV reported. Chinese social media experienced an outpouring of grief and shock, with some government websites going black-and-white in an official sign of mourning. The Weibo microblogging platform turned its

"like" button into a "mourn" icon in the shape of a chrysanthemum.

Li was premier and head of China's cabinet under Xi for a decade until stepping down from all political positions in March. Laying a wreath in August 2022 at a statue of Deng Xiaoping - the leader who brought transformational reform to China's economy - Li vowed: "Reform and opening up will not stop. The Yangtze and Yellow River will not reverse course." Video clips of the speech, which went viral but were later censored from Chinese social media, were widely viewed as a coded criticism of Xi's policies.

"Li has been seen as the representative of the reformists," said Yun Sun, director at the Stimson Center in Washington.

"But during his 10 years as the premier, China saw the regression of many policies."

End of an era
Li sparked debate on poverty and income inequality in 2020, saying 600 million people in the increasingly rich nation earned less than \$140 per month. Some Chinese intellectuals and members of the liberal elite expressed shock and dismay on a semi-private WeChat channel at the passing of a beacon of China's liberal economic reform, with some saying it signalled the end of an era. "Li will probably be remembered as an advocate for the freer market and for the have-nots," said Wen-Ti Sung, a political scientist at Australian National University. "But most of all, he will be remembered for what could have been."

North Korea has likely sent missiles as well as ammunition and shells to Russia, says Seoul

(News Agency) - North Korea has likely supplied several types of missiles to Russia to support its war in Ukraine, along with its widely reported shipments of ammunition and shells, South Korea's military said Thursday.

The assessment was released a day after South Korea's spy service told lawmakers that North Korea recently provided more than a million artillery shells to Russia amid deepening military cooperation between the two countries, both key US adversaries. In a background briefing for local journalists, South Korea's military said that North Korea is suspected of sending an unspecified

number of short-range ballistic missiles, anti-tank missiles and portable anti-air missiles to Russia, in addition to rifles,



rocket launchers, mortars and shells. The contents of the briefing were shared with The Associated Press. Last week, South Korea, the US and Japan strongly

condemned what they call North Korea's supply of munitions and military equipment to Russia, saying that such weapons shipments sharply increase the human toll of Russia's war in Ukraine. Any weapons trade with North Korea would be a violation of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions, which Russia, a permanent U.N. Security Council member, previously endorsed. Both Russia and North Korea dismissed the weapons shipment accusations as baseless. Outside speculation about North Korean arms shipments flared after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un travelled to

Russia in September to meet President Vladimir Putin and visit key military facilities. The U.S. and its allies accuse North Korea of seeking high-tech Russian technologies to modernize its arsenal of nuclear weapons and missiles in return for its shipments of conventional arms. In a private briefing with lawmakers on Wednesday, the National Intelligence Service — South Korea's main spy agency — said that more than a million North Korean artillery shells have been sent to Russia since August via ships and transport planes.

UK Man Loses Life One Year After Visiting Doctor For Night Sweats, Here is What Was Diagnosed

(News Agency) - 48-year-old Dene Firth in the United Kingdom visited a doctor in 2019 after he had extreme night sweats and a swollen foot. Dene lived with his wife and two children and worked as a property clerk with South Yorkshire Police when one day he started experiencing night sweats and also developed a swollen foot. On visiting a physiotherapist, he was told to visit a general practitioner who said that he was suffering from acute myeloid leukaemia.

"The physiotherapist realised immediately this wasn't a problem that she could do something about and sent him to his GP. The GP gave Dene a blood test on September 4 2019, and by that afternoon he was in Sheffield's Hallamshire Teaching Hospital with a diagnosis of acute myeloid leukaemia,"



Firth's wife Diane said. Even though the news came as a shock to many, Dene was sure that his condition could be cured. His wife explained, Dene was quite

healthy – he was a football coach for his son's team. We were in disbelief, and very frightened. But despite our fear of the future, we remained hopeful it could be cured."

Soon, the 48-year-old began with his chemotherapy. Meanwhile, Diane was searching for a stem cell donor for a stem cell transplant.

However, a prerequisite for the transplant is that the patient must have less than five per cent cancerous cells in his body. On founding the donor it was discovered that Dene still had more than 40 per cent cancerous cells in his body, meaning the stem cell transplant could not go ahead. Even though he did go to his third round of chemotherapy, his chances of survival were bleak and he eventually died on July 9, 2020 at the age of 48.

'Took turns sleeping': Maine deserted as US cops hunt for shooter who killed 18

(News Agency) - Heavily armed police on Thursday surrounded a home, as their search for Robert Card, a US Army reservist who is the suspect in connection with the mass shootings at a bowling alley and a bar in Lewiston, Maine, continued. The incident, which happened on Wednesday night (US local time), claimed the lives of 18 people and injured 13 others. According to the Associated Press, the house, near the town of Bowdoin, was owned by Robert Card's relative. Dozens of law enforcement officials also descended on the property, with extended announcements calling for Card and anyone in the home to come out into the driveway.

MAINE SHOOTING

The shooting on Wednesday began shortly before 7 pm at the 'Just-In-Time Recreation' bowling alley, where one woman patron and six men were shot dead, police told news agency Reuters. Within about 10 minutes, they received reports of a shooting at Schemengees Bar and Grille Restaurant, about 5 kilometres away, where eight men were shot dead. All but one of the patients were taken to Central Maine Medical Center, where the emergency room was overflowing with wounded and bleeding patients. Eight patients remained there as of Thursday evening, three of them in critical condition, hospital President Steven Littleton told reporters. The 18 fatalities are close to the annual number of homicides that normally occur in Maine, which has fluctuated between 16 and 29 since 2012, according to Maine State Police.



WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SHOOTING SUSPECT - Forty-year-old Robert R Card is a sergeant at a nearby US Army Reserve base and law enforcement officials said he had been briefly committed to a mental health facility in 2003. Soon after the incident, his photographs were circulated, which showed him in a brown hooded sweatshirt and jeans at one of the crime scenes armed with what appeared to be a semi-automatic rifle. Hundreds of officers from an array of agencies including the US Coast Guard joined the search and neighboring Canada said its border officers were on alert. Card's trail led to Lisbon, about 11 kilometres to the southeast, where Maine State Police found a white SUV they believe Card used to get away and parked at a boat launch on the river. Public records showed he has three watercraft

registrations: two Sea-Doos and a Bayliner. Card is a petroleum supply specialist at the Army Reserve base in Saco, Maine, and had never been deployed in combat since enlisting in 2002, news agency Reuters quoted the US Army as saying. A Maine law enforcement bulletin described Card as a trained firearms instructor who recently said he had been hearing voices and had other mental health issues. He threatened to shoot up the National Guard base in Saco and was "reported to have been committed to a mental health facility for two weeks during summer 2023 and subsequently released," according to the bulletin from the Maine Information and Analysis Center, a unit of the state police.

MAINE SHOOTING VICTIMS

With the suspect still on the run, Green,

a 40-year-old software engineer who spoke to news agency AFP in front of his house, said he and his partner "took turns" sleeping, in order to keep watch until the morning. "Where is he now? Is he here? That's a terrible feeling," Green said, clearing his throat to hide emotion.

A man, Bill Young, and his teenage son, Aaron, out for a night of bowling and a bar employee at his place of work were among those killed in shooting attacks in Lewiston, Maine, family members told Reuters. Fifty-three-year-old Tricia Asselin was trying to call 911 when the gunman shot and killed her at the bowling alley, her brother DJ Johnson told CNN. Asselin, who worked at the bowling alley part-time, was there for a night out with her sister, who survived the massacre, Johnson said. Another victim of the shooting was Joseph Walker, an employee of Schemengees Bar and Grille who lived in nearby Auburn, Maine. He was a husband, father and grandfather who was helping to raise two grandchildren and a stepson, his father, Leroy Walker, said on MSNBC. The elder Walker said his son was close to family, living near two of his brothers. He frequently put on tournaments to raise money for local causes and had been planning a cornhole tournament to help veterans when he was shot and killed on Wednesday. Bryan MacFarlane, 40, was part of a group in the deaf community participating in a cornhole tournament at Schemengees Bar and Grille when he was killed, his sister Keri Brooks told CNN. MacFarlane was an avid motorcyclist who loved his dog and had recently moved back to Maine, Brooks said.

Ivanka Trump must testify at her father's civil fraud trial, judge rules

Ivanka Trump must testify at her father's New York civil fraud trial, the judge overseeing the case ruled on Friday.

(News Agency) - New York Judge Arthur Engoron denied a motion from Ivanka Trump's attorneys to quash a subpoena for her testimony, though he said her testimony should not be scheduled before Wednesday to give her time to appeal his ruling.

Ivanka Trump's attorney had argued that she should not be forced to appear after an appellate court removed her as a defendant in the case.

"Ms. Trump has clearly availed herself of the privilege of doing business in New York," Engoron said.

The judge also said Ivanka Trump should have submitted an affidavit asserting that she does not live or work in the state presently. "Only she can tell us that, and it's too late to do that now," Engoron said. Following his decision, Engoron quickly denied a follow-up request from Donald Trump's attorney Chris Kise to entertain a deposition from Ivanka Trump taken in Florida. "We want her here in person," Engoron said, noting that he prefers to hear testimony live in court. Donald Trump's children are expected to be called to testify next week, and the former president could be called in to testify the week after that, the attorney general's office said in court Friday.

The attorney general's team is nearing the end of the witness list for their case in the



civil fraud trial of Trump and his co-defendants, including Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump.

The attorney general's team mapped out the remainder of their case in open court Friday. They'll also have a chance to call additional witnesses in a rebuttal case after Trump's defense case later in the trial.

The AG's lawyers said they expect Donald Trump Jr., Eric Trump and Ivanka Trump to each testify for a day starting Wednesday, though Ivanka Trump's testimony may depend on the status of her appeal.

After that, the attorney general's office expects to call Trump as its final witness

the week of November 6.

The witness schedule can always change or be shifted, so the dates are not set.

Trump attorneys say Ivanka testimony creating 'another circus day'

Attorneys for Donald and Ivanka Trump argued that Ivanka Trump has not lived or worked in New York since 2017, so the court does not have jurisdiction over her, accusing New York Attorney General Letitia James of seeking her testimony to create a media spectacle.

Kise called the subpoena "continued harassment of President Trump's children."

"They just want another free-for-all on one of President Trump's children," Kise said.

"They want her in the courtroom so it can be filled with media and we can have another circus day."

Ivanka Trump had initially been listed as a co-defendant – along with Donald Trump, Eric Trump, Donald Trump Jr., and several Trump Organization executives – in the \$250 million lawsuit filed last September by James, alleging they were involved in an expansive fraud scheme lasting over a decade that the former president and his eldest children used to enrich themselves.

In June, however, a New York appeals court dismissed Ivanka Trump as a co-defendant, finding the claims against Ivanka Trump were too old, because she was not part of an August 2021 agreement between James' office and the Trump Organization to toll the statute of limitations.

Bennet Moskowitz, an attorney for Ivanka Trump, argued that she has not lived or worked regularly in New York since 2017, so the court does not have jurisdiction over her. He offered to file an affidavit signed by Ivanka saying as much.

She is no longer a party in this case and the business entities registered in New York where the AG's office sent the subpoena are not parties in this case either, Moskowitz argued.

New Zealand gangs may be forced to cover facial tattoos with makeup, incoming government says

(News Agency) - New Zealand's gangs may have to cover up offensive tattoos with makeup if the incoming government's crackdown on gang activity goes ahead.

On Thursday, the National party's police spokesperson, Mark Mitchell, told the national broadcaster RNZ that if its proposed ban on gang patches – large insignia sewn on to jackets, for example – does not work, then it would consider making gang members apply foundation over their facial tattoos, or face arrest.

"If the gangs think they are going to get around a ban on gang patches by having swastikas and offensive tattoos on their faces, then we'll take action to curb that," Mitchell said. The National party ousted Labour at this month's general election, but it may be weeks before it takes over as the final votes are yet to be counted and coalition discussions are still under way. Mitchell referenced Western Australia's ban of gang tattoos in 2021, which also allowed gang members to cover them with makeup.

"There are stories in Australia, where you have senior gang members over there that wake up in the morning and have to apply foundation," Mitchell said.



Associate Prof Mark Lauchs at the Queensland University of Technology, who studies New Zealand and Australian gangs, questioned the effectiveness of the proposal, noting that no other state in the country had replicated Western Australia's ban.

"There's a point at which you go beyond effective policy into ... spiteful laws," said Lauchs, comparing Western Australia's tattoo ban to a plan to force jailed gang members to wear pink jumpsuits in Queensland prisons.

The pink jumpsuits were proposed but never enacted and were designed to embarrass gang members rather than increase public safety, the purpose of anti-gang laws, Lauchs said.

The New Zealand police would have added difficulty in differentiating between gang and cultural tattoos, especially for Māori, where the traditional facial tattoos called a moko have seen a resurgence in recent years. "What counts as a Mongrel Mob tattoo as opposed to the cultural tattoo of the people who joined

the Mongrel Mob?" Lauchs said. "It is going to be a point of contention that could cause a lot of confusion."

Gangs have existed for decades in New Zealand, and the latest figures from the police's Gang Harm Insights Centre puts membership at roughly 8,870 across 33 gangs. Members of the country's largest gang, the Mongrel Mob, are a familiar sight in many provincial towns and cities, and it is common for members to have insignia, including bulldogs, tattooed on their faces.

Gangs hold a complex space in New Zealand society: while they can be perpetrators of violence and crime, they can also act as forces for good within their communities.

The National party is also proposing to extend police search powers, including getting rid of the requirement for police to obtain a warrant from the court, banning gang activity on social media and allowing police to issue verbal dispersal notices to stop gang members talking to one another. When asked how the police would prevent gang members meeting, Mitchell said "they'll have to make arrests till the gang members understand that we are serious about this".

Microsoft offered \$15 billion to Apple for iPhone search, Google said we would pay more and got the deal

Google reportedly pays billions annually to Apple, Samsung, and others to remain as the default search engine on their smartphones.

A few weeks ago, during the ongoing US v. Google antitrust trial, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said that one of the reasons Bing is behind Google is because Apple has made Google its default search engine. He said he regrets how Microsoft's deal with Apple didn't work out, and how Apple was reluctant to sign a deal with Microsoft because of its agreement with Google and its fear of retaliation from Google. While Google's deal with Apple has been one of the key focuses of the trial, the one question always stayed was how much Google is paying Apple to be the default search engine in Safari on Macs, iPads, and iPhones. Especially when Apple even rejected Microsoft's offer of around \$15 billion a year. Many estimates during the trial suggested that Google was paying Apple \$10 billion to \$20 billion to make Google the default search engine on Safari. However, a new report by the New



York Times now reveals that Google paid Apple "around \$18 billion" in 2021. The report suggests that Google paid Apple to maintain its hold on the search market and to keep growing its business. It was worried about Apple's developments around search technology, so it looked for ways to undercut Apple's Spotlight search tool. Not only

Google paid Apple to be default search, reports cite that Google also developed its own version of Spotlight for iPhones. This version of Spotlight was designed to be more user-friendly and to provide users with better results. Google also tried to persuade more iPhone users to use Chrome instead of Safari. By doing these things,

Google was hoping to maintain its dominance in the search engine market and to prevent Apple from becoming a serious competitor. Although Satya Nadella's reasoning around Apple's deal with Google is contradictory, Nadella thinks Apple continued the deal because it feared Google's dominance with apps like Gmail

and YouTube. Nadella mentioned Google's potential to use these popular services to promote Chrome, which could lead users to abandon Safari. Meanwhile, in addition to Google's deal with Apple, the company has signed similar contracts with Samsung and Mozilla. These deals were highlighted in the ongoing Google antitrust trial, where the US Justice Department claimed that Google illegally cemented its monopoly in online search by paying to be the default search engine on browsers and phones. Google is accused by the US Department of Justice and 37 states for allegedly abusing its market dominance in the search engine industry. The lawsuit alleges that Google is paying billions of dollars to phone makers and web browsers to make Google the default search engine on most devices, pre-installing its services on Android devices, and using its market power to stifle competition.

Meet Spot, a Chat-GPT powered robot tour guide that will take you around the city wearing a hat and moustache

Meet Spot, a robot dog tour guide created by Boston Dynamics engineers. Spot can walk, talk, and even give tours of places, all while sporting a distinguished British accent, a hat, a moustache, and captivating people with its googly eyes. Spot is also integrated with ChatGPT and other open-source large language models (LLMs) to carefully train its responses. Boston Dynamics engineers have revealed that their robot dog, Spot, uses a combination of a scripted dialogue and visual question answering models to answer questions about its surroundings, thanks to AI integration. In a demo video posted on YouTube, Spot can be seen walking around the Boston Dynamics facility, giving a tour and showing things around the room. The video begins with Spot asking, "Shall we commence our journey?"



and then identifying a pile of rocks as "a collection of stones inside wooden boxes." Spot even opens its mechanical mouth to answer questions which seem like it is actually speaking. Matt Klingensmith, the principal software engineer at Boston Dynamics, reveals that for each room in the facilities, Spot's engineers have provided it with a brief script. Spot then uses the cameras on

its gripper and body to gather images of the room, which it uses to get more information about what it sees before generating a response. Visual question answering models allow Spot to essentially caption the images and answer questions about them. The robots of Boston Dynamics have often been seen showcasing their dancing and parkour skills, but with

"Shakespearean time traveler" who responds in rhyming couplets, and a sarcastic "Josh" personality who tells Klingensmith, "I see the unfathomable void of my existence reflected in this QR code-filled board... oh and also a large window." "We're excited to continue exploring the intersection of artificial intelligence and roboticsâ€œ

These models [LLMs] can help

provide cultural context, general commonsense knowledge, and flexibility that could be useful for many robotics tasks - for example, being able to assign a task to a robot just by talking to it would help reduce the learning curve for using these systems," writes Klingensmith in the official blog on Boston Dynamics website. Meanwhile, OpenAI has recently added voice and image recognition capabilities to its chatbot, ChatGPT. This means that ChatGPT can now generate AI-generated voice lines synthesized from the voices of real-life voice actors, essentially allowing it to speak back to users. Additionally, ChatGPT can now recognize images and provide information about what is in them. This update has also opened up possibilities for what all AI can do, including in the case of robo dog of Boston, which can now listen and speak.

generative AI, their robots can now hear and respond directly to human input. The robots have multiple personalities, including a "precious metal cowgirl" who excitedly talks about the potential minerals found underneath all that stone, a

provide cultural context, general commonsense knowledge, and flexibility that could be useful for many robotics tasks - for example, being able to assign a task to a robot just by talking to it would help reduce the learning curve for using these systems," writes Klingensmith in the official blog on Boston Dynamics website. Meanwhile, OpenAI has recently added voice and image recognition capabilities to its chatbot, ChatGPT. This means that ChatGPT can now generate AI-generated voice lines synthesized from the voices of real-life voice actors, essentially allowing it to speak back to users. Additionally, ChatGPT can now recognize images and provide information about what is in them. This update has also opened up possibilities for what all AI can do, including in the case of robo dog of Boston, which can now listen and speak.

Five ways to make your home less toxic

We are surrounded by chemicals – in food and drink, cleaning products, household items and furnishings. Here’s how to reduce household pollution

Ventilate

Cleaning products, cooking, candles and building materials all contribute to pollution inside our homes. The British Lung Foundation (BLF) recommends choosing fragrance-free cleaning products and using solid or liquid products when possible, rather than sprays. It also advises opening windows or skylights, especially when cooking or showering, and avoiding the use of several candles or incense sticks in a small room such as a bathroom. As outdoor pollution can also travel into the home, the BLF also suggests keeping windows closed when Defra’s Daily Air Quality Index is high.



from a wide variety of products, it is like a parking lot for chemicals in the home,” wrote Veena Singla, co-author of the study from the Natural Resources Defense Council in California. Simple steps to reduce exposure include washing hands with plain soap and water, keeping household dust to a minimum by dusting with a damp cloth and using a vacuum with a high-efficiency particulate air (Hepa) filter. Damp and mould can also affect your immune system, as well as increase the chance of respiratory problems. Preventing the build-up of condensation is key, says the NHS, though mould be must removed carefully so as not to release spores.

Cut down on plastic

The synthetic chemical Bisphenol A (BPA) is found in many plastic products and can be ingested or absorbed through skin contact, potentially disrupting the endocrine system. Ninety-five percent of adults are thought to have traces of BPA in their bodies through continuous exposure – Tamara Galloway, a professor of ecotoxicology at the University of Exeter, says avoiding heavily processed

and packaged food can help to limit exposure. Breastfeeding or buying baby bottles with a BPA-free label are also among her recommendations.

Make your own cleaning products

The author of *All You Need is Less: A Guilt-Free Guide to Eco-Friendly Living and Stress-Free Simplicity*, Madeleine Somerville, says soap, baking soda and vinegar are all you need to make your own cleaning sprays. She recommends filling

a spray bottle with hot water, leaving a few inches at the top, before adding a ¼ cup of white vinegar, 2 tsp of eco-friendly washing-up liquid and an optional 1tbsp of borax.

Reduce dust and tackle any damp or mould

A 2016 US study identified 45 toxic chemicals in indoor dust, including phthalates, flame retardants and phenols. “Because indoor dust contains chemicals

Consider your paint choices

As well as the fumes and chemicals given out during painting, freshly decorated walls can continue to pollute long after they are dry. Paint labelled “ecofriendly” or “natural” due to its lowered levels of volatile organic compound (VOC) are not necessarily “green”, wrote interior design journalist Katherine Sorrell. Among her recommendations are Edward Bulmer Natural Paint, Aglaia, Biofa, Earthborn and Ecos Organic Paints.

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A hidden feedback loop under Antarctica's glaciers could accelerate sea level rise, scientists find

Glaciers in East Antarctica could lose ice faster in the future than previously thought, scientists reported Friday, in an alarming feedback loop where glacier meltwater is triggering even more ice loss and sea level rise as the planet warms.

The findings come less than a week after scientists reported rapid melting of West Antarctica's ice shelves may now be unavoidable, thanks to human-caused global warming. Together, these and other recent studies paint a dire picture of a melting southern continent that poses extreme risk of life-altering sea level rise around the world.

"This paper shows that it's not only bad, but it's even worse than we thought," said Jamin Greenbaum, co-author of the study and assistant research geophysicist at the University of California San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography. The study, published Friday in the journal *Science Advances*, focused on the Denman and Scott glaciers in East Antarctica that together hold enough ice to trigger roughly five feet of sea level rise. Previous studies have shown that as glaciers melt, the water flows underneath them and out to sea — a process that enhances glacial melting and ice loss. Friday's study factored that feedback into simulations to see how much it could accelerate Antarctic melting and sea level rise.



Scientists found the glaciers could retreat past a critical threshold about 25 years earlier than they would have without the meltwater discharge, if the world burns planet-warming fossil fuel at an accelerated rate. Adding the meltwater feedback increased the sea level rise from the Denman and Scott glaciers by nearly 16% by the end of 2300 under this scenario of high levels of planet-heating pollution.

Importantly, Greenbaum said, the extra ice loss from meltwater discharge is currently excluded from climate models projecting sea level rise, despite the fact that it could be a major driver of ice loss across the whole continent. Measuring this phenomenon and accounting for it in climate models is necessary "to get

a realistic picture of global sea level rise," Greenbaum said.

Tyler Pelle, lead author of the study and postdoctoral researcher at Scripps, said people need to pay attention to this part of the world as East Antarctica becomes more unstable, posing a higher risk of sea level rise for coastal communities and low-lying island nations.

"These are huge ice masses that we previously thought were stable, and now we have all of this evidence from coastal observations showing that these glaciers have been in patterns of retreat for quite a long time now," Pelle told CNN. "That makes it very worth the attention." People's lives are at stake, researchers say.

While people alive today may not

experience the devastating impacts from this melting, Pelle said the actions taken today seal the fate of future generations. "What we emit now is going to be impacting climate for generations to come," Pelle said. "What we do today does have an impact on what the Earth is going to look like in 2100 or 2300, even if we're not on this Earth anymore." Jan De Rydt, associate professor of polar glaciology and oceanography at Northumbria University, who was not involved with the study, said the researchers make "a strong argument" for why subglacial discharge needs to be accounted for in all simulations of Antarctic ice loss.

"Given this evidence, subglacial melt and discharge is a process that can no longer be ignored in future projections of Antarctica's contribution to sea level rise," De Rydt told CNN.

While the researchers only used a present-day simulation for the study, which led to conservative results, Greenbaum said they plan to go back on the field to analyze the depths of the ice sheet and the ocean to truly understand what the future holds.

"The least-explored part of Antarctica is the most important to observing and monitoring," he said. "That's a huge problem, that's like yell it from rooftops, and it's something that our group is really focused on."

Earth's core is leaking, scientists say

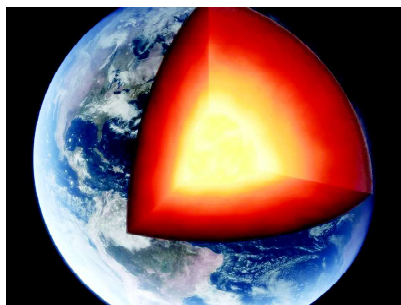
Scientists have detected a surprising amount of a rare version of helium, called helium-3, in volcanic rocks on Canada's Baffin Island, lending support to the theory that the noble gas is leaking from Earth's core — and has been for millennia.

The research team also detected helium-4 within the rocks.

While helium-4 is common on Earth, helium-3 is more readily found elsewhere in the cosmos, which is why scientists were surprised to detect a larger amount of the element than had been previously reported from the rocks on Baffin Island. A study describing the discovery published recently in the journal *Nature*.

"At the most basic level, there is little ^3He (helium-3) in the universe compared to ^4He (helium-4)," said lead study author Forrester Horton, associate scientist in the department of geology and geophysics at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, in an email. " ^3He is rare in Earth because it

has not been produced in or added to the planet in significant quantities and it is lost to space," Horton added. "As Earth's rocky portion stirs and convects like hot water on a stove top, material ascends, cools,



and sinks.

During the cooling stage, helium is lost to the atmosphere and then to space."

Detecting elements that leak from Earth's core can help scientists unlock insights into how our planet formed and evolved over

time, and the new findings provide evidence to bolster an existing hypothesis about how our planet came to be.

A trove of 'scientific treasures'

Baffin Island, located in the territory of Nunavut, is the largest island in Canada. It's also the fifth-largest island in the world.

A high ratio of helium-3 to helium-4 was first detected in Baffin Island volcanic rocks by Solveigh Lass-Evans as part of her doctoral studies under the supervision of University of Edinburgh scientist Finlay Stuart. Their findings were published in *Nature* in 2003.

The composition of a planet is a reflection of the elements that formed it, and previous research found that trace amounts of helium-3 leaking from Earth's core supports the popular theory that our planet originated in a solar nebula — a cloud of gas and dust that likely collapsed due to

the shock wave of a nearby supernova — which contained the element.

Horton and his colleagues took it a step further when they conducted research on Baffin Island in 2018, studying the lava that erupted millions of years ago when Greenland and North America split apart, making way for a new seafloor. They wanted to investigate the rocks that may contain insights about the contents locked within Earth's core and mantle, the mostly solid layer of Earth's interior located beneath its surface.

The researchers traveled by helicopter to reach the remote, otherworldly landscape of the island, where lava flows have formed towering cliffs, giant icebergs float by and polar bears stalk the coastline. Local organizations, including the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and Nunavut Research Institute, provided the researchers with access, advice and protection from the bears, Horton said.

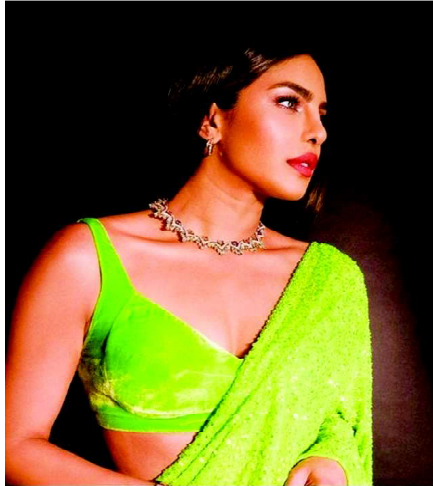
Nick feels wife Priyanka is 'just looking like a wow' in green saree

Nick Jonas can't stop praising his beautiful wife, Priyanka Chopra with a special post on Instagram. The singer shared Chopra's post from an event in Mumbai and participated in the viral 'so beautiful, so elegant' viral trend.

Nick Jonas is completely in awe of his wife Priyanka Chopra and his latest Instagram post is proof. The singer shared a picture of his beautiful wife from an event in Mumbai and participated in the viral 'just looking like a wow' trend.

NICK JONAS PRAISES PRIYANKA CHOPRA'S LOOKS

Recently, Priyanka Chopra who was in India for the Jio MAMI festival, donned a green saree for a grand event in Mumbai, and the



so elegant... just looking like a wow." or the unversed, the hilarious 'just looking like a wow' meme originated after a video of a woman selling salwar suits on Instagram went viral. Several Bollywood stars including Deepika Padukone, Ranveer Singh and others, participated in the trend.

PRIYANKA CHOPRA LEAVES INDIA- Priyanka Chopra who was in Delhi to attend the Jio MAMI festival, has finally returned to her child and husband Nick Jonas. The actress was clicked late at night at the airport as she left for LA. She also took to her Instagram story to share a glimpse of Mumbai's skyline and wrote how much she will miss everything.

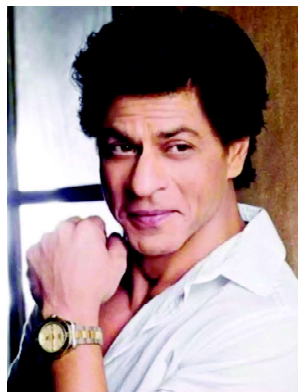
look has left Nick Jonas spellbound! The actor-singer dedicated a love-filled post for his wife on Instagram with a unique

caption. Nick participated in the viral 'Just looking like a wow' trend that has taken over the Internet. For the event, the

'Citadel' actress wore a green Sabyasachi saree and it left her husband in awe. He captioned the post and wrote, "So beautiful

Pulkit Samrat was to play SRK's son in 'Fauji 2': He taught me...

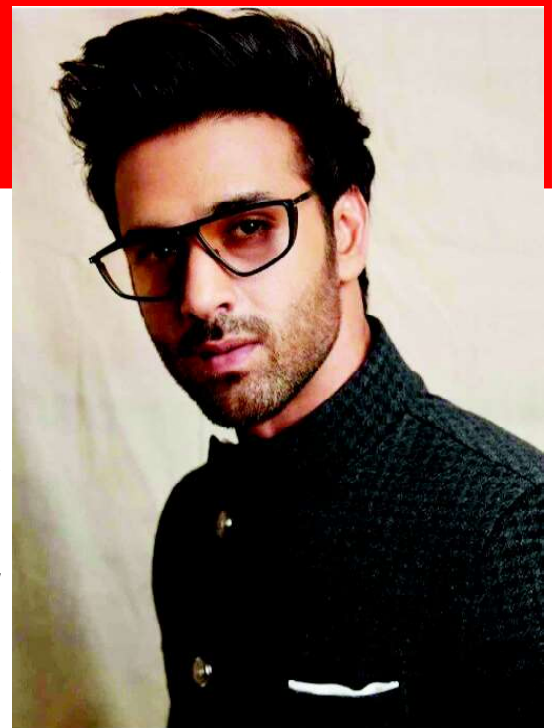
Pulkit Samrat, in an exclusive chat with IndiaToday.in, opened up about meeting Shah Rukh Khan for the first time. He was to play the superstar's son in a project. Way before Shah Rukh Khan became the badshah of Bollywood, the actor had won hearts with his performance in 'Fauji'. In fact, even now, when the superstar plays an Army officer, fans remember his 'Fauji' days. Over a decade ago, a sequel to 'Fauji' was on the cards. Red Chillies was to bankroll it and the new cast was also finalised. And it had none other than Pulkit Samrat, as Shah Rukh Khan's on-screen son. On SRK's 58th birthday,



Pulkit recalled meeting SRK for the first time on the sets of the project and shared the experience to IndiaToday.in. **PULKIT SAMRAT REMEMBERS FIRST MEETING**

WITH SRK

During an exclusive chat with IndiaToday.in, Pulkit Samrat remembered his first meeting with SRK. He told us, "(Meeting SRK was) Surreal! I was shooting for the sequel to 'Fauji' and was playing his son in it. That is where I got a chance to shoot with him." An excited Pulkit further said, "Just imagine, a guy from Delhi, who's come to Mumbai following SRK's footsteps gets a chance to play his on-screen son in a show produced by Red Chillies! I was lucky enough to shoot with him and he was extremely kind, extremely humble and sharing his trade secrets with me."



Hrithik Roshan, Deepika Padukone finally wrap Siddharth Anand's 'Fighter' shoot

Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone have joined forces for the very first time for 'Fighter'. Helmed by Siddharth Anand, the movie is one of the most-anticipated projects of next year. Now the makers of the film took to social media and announced the final schedule wrap of 'Fighter'. **IT'S A WRAP FOR 'FIGHTER'**

On November 1, Siddharth Anand took to Instagram to announce the completion of the 'Fighter' shoot. Sharing a picture of a camera, he captioned, "And it's a film shoot wrap on #FIGHTER (sic)." Hrithik Roshan also took to his Instagram handle to repost the picture. Earlier in



October, a BTS picture of the cast of 'Fighter', from Italy, surfaced on social media. Actor Afreen Khan took to Instagram on October 3 to share a

behind-the-scenes photo of Deepika and Hrithik along with Siddharth and his wife Mamta Anand, choreographer Bosco Martis and others. In the photo, they seem to be taking a coffee break in between their shots. The selfie was clicked by Hrithik Roshan. **ABOUT 'FIGHTER'** Hrithik Roshan will be seen playing an Air Force officer for the first time in 'Fighter'. Deepika Padukone is also expected to have some high-octane action sequences in the film. The film also stars Anil Kapoor in a pivotal role. Directed by Siddharth Anand, 'Fighter' is set to release on January 25, 2024.

Shraddha Kapoor's new Lamborghini sparks debate: From 'Save Aarey' to Rs 4 crore luxury

In a surprising twist that quickly set the Internet abuzz, Bollywood star Shraddha Kapoor's recent acquisition of a sleek red Lamborghini Huracan Tecnica, worth a staggering Rs. 4 crore, coinciding with the auspicious occasion of Dussehra, triggered an unexpected controversy. The controversy gained traction due to Kapoor's previous involvement in protests against the construction of a Metro car shed in Mumbai's Aarey forest belt back in 2019.

Kapoor's active participation in environmental protests, notably her wearing a 'Save Aarey' t-shirt during the demonstrations, was brought back into the spotlight in response to her luxurious new purchase. Social media promptly ignited with debates about what some perceived as a stark contradiction



between her activism and her choice to own a high-end, diesel-consuming sports car. To put it in perspective, the Lamborghini Huracan Tecnica boasts an ARAI-rated fuel efficiency of 7 kilometers per liter of diesel consumption. However, given the traffic conditions in Mumbai, the car's real-world fuel efficiency in the city drops to a range of 3 to 4 kilometers per liter. Shraddha's previous vehicle choices were not known for their fuel efficiency either. This information became a focal point of online criticism, and social

media platforms were flooded with images of her from the 2019 protest as netizens began to scrutinise her actions. One comment on social media carried a tone of irony, saying, "@ShraddhaKapoor which fuel does this car use? Oxygen from the Aarey trees that you saved and delayed the project." Another person wrote, "I think we need to see the difference between a lifestyle choice and extravagance. Surely, no one expects protestors to wear a loincloth and ride a bicycle, but the optics of holding a 'Save Aarey' placard in one hand and the steering of a fuel guzzler in another is not pretty." Yet another quipped, "The mileage of a Lambo would be 5-6 kmpl. Madam ji was part of the Aarey protest, effectively delaying public transport for millions."

'Dunki' Drop 1: Get a glimpse into SRK aka Hardy's world. Don't miss Vicky Kaushal



The teaser of 'Dunki' is now out. Called 'Drop 1', it gives us a glimpse into Hardy aka Shah Rukh Khan's world. Vicky Kaushal was clearly the surprise element in the video. The teaser of 'Dunki' was unveiled today, November 2, on the occasion of Shah Rukh Khan's birthday. Called 'Drop 1', it gives us a glimpse into Hardy aka SRK's world. While Taapsee is playing the female lead, Vicky

Kaushal was clearly the surprise element in the video. 'DUNKI' DROP 1 OUT NOW 'Dunki' 'is a delightful collaboration between two of the most loved artists of our generation, SRK and Raju Hirani! The film aims to bring back the sweetness and nostalgia of cinema, evoking cherished memories. The teaser of the film, being referred to as 'Drop 1', was unveiled today,

November 2. It gives us a glimpse into the wonderful world of Rajkumar Hirani and presents a heart-warming tale of four friends and their quest to reach foreign shores. It charts the arduous yet life-changing journey they are about to undertake to make their dreams come true. Drawn from real-life experiences, 'Dunki' is a saga of love and friendship that brings together these wildly disparate stories, and provides

hilarious and heart-breaking answers. Sharing the video, SRK wrote on X, "A story of simple and real people trying to fulfill their dreams and desires. Of friendship, love, and being together... Of being in a relationship called Home! A heartwarming story by a heartwarming storyteller. It's an honour to be a part of this journey and I hope you all come along with us. The #DunkiDrop1 is here... #Dunki releasing worldwide in cinemas this Christmas. (sic)" The video unit takes us on a whirlwind roller-coaster with colourful characters portrayed by an exceptionally talented ensemble cast that includes, Boman Irani, Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal, Vikram Kochhar, Anil Grover, along with Shah Rukh Khan.

It also gives a glimpse into an enchanting, heart-warming and unique tale that marks the return of storytelling to cinema and is all set to unfold for audiences worldwide this Christmas. ABOUT 'DUNKI' A Jio Studios, Red Chillies Entertainment and Rajkumar Hirani Films presentation, produced by Rajkumar Hirani and Gauri Khan. Written by Abhijat Joshi, Rajkumar Hirani and Kanika Dhillon, 'Dunki' is slated to release this December 2023.

Kareena Kapoor, Ranveer Brar, Ekta Kapoor, Hansal Mehta And Others At The Buckingham Murders Premiere At MAMI Fest

New Delhi: Kareena Kapoor's upcoming film *The Buckingham Murders* premiered at the inaugural night of the MAMI Mumbai Film Festival. The actress attended the event along with the makers and the cast of the thriller. The official Instagram page of the MAMI Mumbai Film Festival shared a series of pictures and videos showing the stars on the red carpet. The opening frame features Kareena in an all-black kaftan-style gown from the shelves of Rajesh Pratap Singh. Kareena Kapoor styled her outfit with hot pink sleeve extensions. Kareena was also seen posing with her director Hansal Mehta and producer Ekta Kapoor. The *Buckingham Murders* also marks Kareena's debut as a producer. The series of pictures concluded with the entire *The Buckingham Murders* team posing for a group picture. We also caught glimpses of Ranveer Brar and Ash Tandon with Kareena, Ekta and



Hansal Mehta. In one of the videos, Kareena was seen addressing the audience from the stage, ahead of the premiere. The note along with the pictures read, "A great start to a much-awaited festival, *The Buckingham Murders* received a great reception today at the opening ceremony. The entire cast and crew being present for the

screening made the South Asian premiere of the film a staggering success." *The Buckingham Murders* also premiered at the 67th BFI London Film Festival. Kareena announced the big news through a special post on her Instagram. She shared a series of pictures, showing an official document carrying the movie's details and two stills of herself from the film. In the

photos, Kareena can be seen with an intense look. Dressed in an all-black pantsuit, she is seen walking in an empty corridor in one of the pics. In the other frame, Kareena can be seen looking outside. In the detailed note, Kareena mentioned that *The Buckingham Murders* is one of the three films from India that made it to the festival. She wrote, "*The Buckingham Murders*' a journey that Hansal Mehta, Ekta Kapoor and I took is premiering at the 67th BFI London Film Festival. It is an atmospheric thriller that explores themes of loss, closure and the immigrant experience. What makes this moment even more special is that it's one of the three films from India that made it to the festival!" Inviting fans to watch the movie, Kareena wrote, "If you happen to be in the UK, we hope you can watch it, it's being shown at the Curzon Mayfair on 14th and 15th October."

'Tejas' Review: Kangana's film is a bumpy ride muddled with inconsistencies



Kangana Ranaut's 'Tejas' has finally been released in theatres on October 27. Read the review to know if it lives up to the expectations.

Kangana Ranaut might not be everyone's favourite because of the stand that she takes in her personal life, but there is no doubt at all that she is one of the finest actresses in the nation. She has given the audience several standout performances, like 'Queen' and 'Tanu Weds Manu'. In fact, the actress has received the National Award so many times. So, when one goes to watch her film, they can be assured that even if everything else fails, Kangana's performance will elevate the movie overall. However, that has not been the case for 'Tejas'! In 'Tejas', Kangana Ranaut plays airforce officer Tejas Gill, an ambitious girl who can't wait to fly an aircraft solo in the academy and who is the first to take up the most difficult

missions. The film begins by showing how Tejas follows her heart rather than instructions and how she saved one of her seniors, putting her own life and career at risk. As the film progresses, we get to learn more about her and what shaped her to become how she is. She is a woman of exemplary bravery and even successfully foils a terrorist attack. However, right from the start, you will wonder what is up with Kangana. In the first few minutes, we see her exaggeratedly emoting in every scene, a few coming out as unintentionally hilarious even. It did not get better for a very very very long time (excuse the use of so many 'very's, but that was how disappointing it turned out to be)! For example, the scene where she speaks

about the Tejas aircraft and shares its details in the class turns unintentionally funny. She probably could have passed with the bad performance had there not been a very seasoned performer like Sunit Tandon, who plays her teacher, sharing the screen time with her in the particular scene.

The entire first half is choppy. It oscillates between the present and the past and tries to give a background to Tejas Gill. Not only does Kangana's performance disappoint highly here, but the bad VFX makes it even worse. It's 2023 and no, bad VFX marring cinema experience cannot be an excuse! The makers knew right from the start that the film was about the airforce, so aircrafts looking like toy planes being flown on a green-screen-turned-to-sky is unforgivable.

On top of that, there's bad editing as well. How else would you justify Varun Mitra's introduction sequence, where he continues singing the song for 4 minutes while it could easily have been cut short? Even the juxtaposition of the flashbacks within the track felt rough.

The second half does provide respite

though. Kangana's performance improves (which is, honestly, a big relief). As expected, that makes the film bearable. The tempo also picks up. The VFX continues to disappoint. The action sequences and the climax make up for a lot of the mess that was made in the first half. Sadly though, these can't fully redeem the film.

Anshul Chauhan, who plays Afia, delivers a brilliant performance. She stands out in the film with her perfect comic timing and because of the quirks that her character has. Chauhan shows immense potential and we hope we will see her more often. Ashish Vidyarthi has a brief appearance but performs his role with ease.

Sarvesh Mewara, who has written and directed the film, seems to have lost control over it several times. The inconsistencies in 'Tejas' are jarring. If the second half is decent, the first half makes it look like he had hurriedly put something together and compiled it together. The villains in the film seem to be absolutely moronish people, who lack far-sightedness.

Iran may not want a full-blown war with Israel, but it may be dragged into one

By Nadeen Ebrahim

A day after Palestinian militant group Hamas launched its brutal attack on Israel, a curious video emerged out of Tehran's Azadi stadium. Hundreds of soccer fans, gathered to watch a match between Persepolis FC and Gol Gohar Sirjan FC, chanted in unison: "Shove the Palestinian flag up your a**."

The vulgar protest came in response to officials attempting to raise a Palestinian flag in the stadium to show support for the October 7 attack. But for the fans, it was another unwelcome mixing of politics and soccer, and a stark reminder of the Iranian government's involvement in proxy battles in far-flung arenas.

Following Hamas' attack, which killed 1,400 people according to Israeli authorities, prompted a fierce aerial campaign on Gaza that has so far killed more than 7,000 people, according to the health ministry in Hamas-controlled Gaza. And there are now concerns that more fronts will open in the war, including one with Iran. Experts say that while Iran is wary of being dragged into the Israel-Hamas war, it may not be in full control if the militias it backs in the region independently intervene as Hamas suffers heavy blows and the death toll in Gaza continues to mount. "What connects all these groups to Iran is their anti-Israel policies," said Sima Shine, head of the Iran program at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv, noting that while Iran has varying levels of influence over the groups, it doesn't dictate all their actions. In the early days after the October 7 attack, questions were raised about Iran's potential involvement in the killings. Tehran at the time commended the operation but was quick to deny any hand in it. Initial US intelligence also suggested that Iranian officials were surprised by Hamas' attack, and that Tehran was not directly involved in its planning, resourcing or approval, CNN has reported. Despite its denial,



however, Iran has ramped up its rhetoric against its arch enemy. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has warned that Israel's bombardment of Gaza could have far-reaching consequences, saying that if Israel does not halt its airstrikes, "it is highly probable that many other fronts will be opened." "This option is not ruled out and this is becoming increasingly more probable," he told Al Jazeera last week. On Monday Abdollahian said the US has sent Iran two messages regarding escalation in the region. "The first message said that the United States is not interested in expanding the war, and the second message asked Iran to have self-restraint and insisted that Iran should also ask other countries and other sides to have self-restraint," Abdollahian said during a news conference in Tehran Monday, without saying how and when the messages were delivered.

He added that while the US says it wants to de-escalate, it has contradicted itself by continuing to support Israel. Proxies have 'their own strategic calculations' Trita Parsi, vice-president of the Quincy Institute in Washington, DC, said there is no appetite or desire from either Iran, the US or Israel for a wider war, but that Washington's failure to restrain Israel may inadvertently drive the region towards escalation. US President Joe Biden last week pledged continued support for Israel, which has hardened Arab sentiment across the region and translated to mass protests against Israeli and American policies.

"The only actor that has a clear interest in (a wider conflict) is Hamas, given that an enlargement of the war could change the dynamics in a favorable way for them," Parsi

said. In the absence of US efforts to rein in Israel, "many (regional) actors are going to feel compelled to step in... because of their own strategic calculations." "When Israel is mobilizing 300,000 (troops), it is not likely that Hezbollah is going to sit there and assume that this is done only to go after Hamas," he said, adding that it will factor in the risk of Israel going after the Lebanese group as well. An Iran-backed armed group and



powerful regional force, Hezbollah has been trading fire with Israel's military since the October 7 attack by Hamas. The fighting has been the worst since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, but it has so far been restricted to the border between Lebanon and Israel.

Israel's defense minister last week said that Israel was not interested in another war with Hezbollah. Israel has nonetheless turned the area of 4-kilometer radius near its border into a closed military zone, and evacuated residents from 28 communities within 2 kilometers of the Lebanese border.

Hezbollah's influence spans beyond Lebanon, however. It also operates alongside Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard Corps in Syria, where the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights separates Israel from Tehran-

aligned fighters. The Lebanese group also has its own channels with Hamas. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah met Wednesday with top officials from Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, it said in a statement, without revealing where the meeting took place. "An assessment was made of... what the parties of the resistance axis must do at this sensitive stage to achieve a real victory for the resistance in Gaza and Palestine and to stop the treacherous and brutal aggression against our people," it said.

The Hamas-Israel conflict has also led to skirmishes in Syria and Iraq, from which Iran-backed militias have launched multiple drone attacks on US forces. And the US now has specific intelligence that those same groups could escalate even further as the war between Israel and Hamas continues, CNN

reported this week. The US continues to warn Tehran against taking advantage of the current situation or encouraging its proxies to escalate. On Tuesday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged the United Nations Security Council to warn Iran against any further involvement. "Tell Iran, tell its proxies in public, in private, through every means: Do not open another front against Israel in this conflict. Do not attack Israel's partners," Blinken said, noting that a "broader conflict would be devastating, not only for Palestinians and Israelis, but for people across the region, and indeed, around the world." The US on Thursday carried out airstrikes targeting two facilities linked to Iranian-backed militias in eastern Syria, according to a statement from

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. The strikes came after a series of drone and rocket attacks against US forces in the region. The statement said the targeted facilities have been used by Iran's IRGC and affiliated groups.

Shine, of the INSS, said that Iran does not want a direct war with Israel because that would mean a direct war with the US. "It is very obvious that Iran does not want to be directly involved, and would prefer that (only) the proxies are involved."

But that may not play out exactly how Iran wants, added Shine, who previously served in the Israeli intelligence community for most of her career. "Iran has to take into account that the world is not operating according to what Iran decides or wants," she told CNN. "So, if they decide to use their proxies too much, they might find themselves in a war they don't want."

Parsi of the Quincy Institute said that the Iranian government is nonetheless preparing its population for war.

Iranian media has been brimming with news of the Gaza war, with officials across Iran's political spectrum expressing solidarity with Palestinians.

"They're already preparing the public opinion for this eventuality by essentially trying to make the argument that this is something that is brought to their doorstep because of what the Israelis are doing and because of the American support for it," Parsi said.

This shows there are already concerns in the Iranian government about how citizens will react to a war in which Iran is directly involved, he added.

Even if there is a widener war that is still "below the threshold of a direct US-Iran engagement" — where it is restricted to Iranian proxies fighting Israel — it would still be an extremely unstable situation, he said. "No one can even control the current situation and make sure it doesn't escalate."

Ask NAPCA



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<Q1> I have already received the Updated Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine when it came out last year. Do I still need to get vaccinated for COVID-19?

Like Flu virus, the virus that causes COVID-19 has changed over time. The bivalent vaccine which was available since September 2022 isn't well matched to the currently circulating strains of COVID. A new vaccine has been developed and was approved by the FDA on Sep 11, 2023. The new vaccine provides better protection against the currently prevalent COVID-19 variant and is available for administration starting from late September, 2023.

<Q2> Does everyone need to get the new COVID-19 vaccine? CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get an updated COVID-19 vaccine to protect against the potentially serious outcomes of COVID-19 illness this fall and winter. Getting vaccinated every year is the best way to prevent serious illness requiring

hospitalization. The people most at risk for getting very sick from COVID-19 are over age 65 or have health conditions like asthma, diabetes, or heart and lung disease. The risk of hospitalization is pretty low for those under 18-year-olds. But if you are 65-74 that risk is 36 times higher. The older you are, the higher your risk is. So, if you are over age 65 or have underlying condition, it is especially important to get the most updated vaccine. Note that young people should be considered to get vaccinated not only for themselves but also to protect the older adults who live with them.

<Q3> If I already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccine after you recover from COVID-19 infection

provides added protection against COVID-19. You may consider delaying your vaccine by at least 3 months from when your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, when you recovered a positive test. People who already had COVID-19 and don't get vaccinated after their recovery are more likely to get COVID-19 again than those who get vaccinated after their recovery.

<Q4> Do I need to wait after getting a Flu vaccine or another vaccine before getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

There is no recommendation waiting period between getting a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines. You can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including a Flu vaccine, at the same visit. Possible side effects after getting vaccinated are

generally the same when given alone or with other vaccines. Talk to your healthcare provider about getting vaccines.

<Q5> Does my health insurance cover the Flu and COVID-19 vaccines? What if I don't have health insurance?

Yes, Medicare Part B and most state Medicaid cover Flu and COVID-19 vaccines at no cost. All Health Insurance Marketplace plans and most other private insurance plans cover these vaccines without charging out-of-pocket cost when provided by an in-network provider. People who don't have health insurance or with health plans that do not cover the cost can get a free vaccine from their local health centers; state, local, tribal, or territorial health department; and pharmacies participating in the CDC's Bridge Access Program. Your state health department can tell you where to go for free and low-cost vaccines, including community centers, schools, and religious centers.

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'Musk destroyed all that': Twitter's business is flailing after a year of Elon

Dan Milmo

Elon Musk wrote within hours of buying Twitter that he "didn't do it because it would be easy".

That statement has proven to be one of the few certainties about his ownership of the influential social media platform, which has tipped the business into a state of constant flux, with advertisers slashing spending, user numbers down, regulators circling and the staff at less than 50% of what it used to be. From dumping a world-renowned brand to attempting to overhaul the company's business model, Musk has changed Twitter more in the past year than any other executive in the 16 years prior.

Rebranding Twitter

Musk acquired Twitter on 27 October 2022. The biggest single change in a tumultuous 12 months was rebranding Twitter as X, a long-mooted move for an entrepreneur who has harboured ambitions to create an "everything app" that handles messaging, social networking, audio, video, payments and online shopping. Shortly before he completed the \$44bn (£36bn) takeover, Musk signalled what was coming when he described



the deal as an "accelerant to creating X, the everything app". Nonetheless, the sudden dumping of the Twitter brand in July this year took the tech world by surprise. Compared with Facebook and Instagram's multibillion-person combined user base, Twitter was a modest platform with 238 million daily users – but it was influential and well-known.

According to X's new chief executive, Linda Yaccarino, speaking at a conference last month, the social network now has between 200 million and 250 million users, although she indicated later during her appearance that the number is 225 million – which would indicate

a decline. Visits to X dropped 10% on the prior month to 5.8bn in September, according to data firm Similarweb.

Bruce Daisley, the former head of Twitter's European operations, said the rebranding move had damaged a business that was in "brand heaven".

"There was plenty wrong with the product, but the brand was in the top tier of companies in the world," he said. "Names as diverse as Barack Obama, Kim Kardashian, The Rock and Greta Thunberg would all use the name and help promote the platform. Musk destroyed all of that."

Changing the social media business model
If the rebranding of Twitter

signalled a shift in the company's business model, there was a need for change anyway due to the pressure on its main revenue stream. Advertising accounted for nearly 90% of Twitter's \$5.1bn in annual revenue in 2021. That total has slumped due to an advertiser exodus triggered by fears over moderation standards on the platform and general concerns about Musk's leadership. In a post last month, Musk said US advertising revenue had fallen 60%, a situation which he blamed on pressure from the Anti-Defamation League, which campaigns against antisemitism and bigotry. With quarterly debt payments of \$300m and a fall in the main source of cash to pay it, the company needs to find money elsewhere – if it can. It is against this backdrop that Musk has sought to overhaul the platform's subscription product, formerly known as Twitter Blue but now branded as X premium. The X rebrand has carried promises of turning the business into an "everything app" modelled on Tencent's WeChat, dominant in China, that carries out a multitude of tasks from messaging to payments and food deliveries.

But even before completing the takeover – a tortuous process in itself – Musk had signalled that he aimed to reduce the platform's reliance on advertising via a subscription drive, which he also hoped would reduce the number of automated accounts vexing the social network.

To this end, he oversaw a botched relaunch of the Blue product in November, which resulted in a slew of impersonator accounts operated by pranksters who took up the offer of a verified account checkmark – and all the chaos that could cause if, for instance, you're not really George W Bush – for \$8 a month.

Since then, the subscription service has relaunched again with perks, including the verified checkmark and greater prominence on the platform for your posts. According to one estimate from Travis Brown, a software developer who tracked Twitter Blue sign-ups, the number of subscriptions had reached more than 600,000 by April this year, or more than \$5m a month in extra revenue which is not enough to cover a multibillion-dollar advertising slump.

El Salvador is gradually filling its new mega prison with alleged gang members

With tattoo-covered faces, and wearing white shirts and shorts, gang members captured during El Salvador's state of exception are gradually filling the country's new mega prison.

Unveiled earlier this year, the prison 45 miles (72 kilometers) southeast of the capital now holds some 12,000 accused or convicted gang members, barely a quarter of its 40,000 capacity.

Prisoners here do not receive visits. There are no programs preparing them for reinsertion into society after their sentences, no workshops or educational programs. The exceptions are occasional motivational talks from prisoners who have gained a level of trust from prison officials. Prisoners sit in rows in the corridor outside their cells for the talks or are led through exercise regimens under the supervision of guards. They are never allowed outside. President Nayib Bukele ordered its construction when El Salvador began making massive arrests early last year in response to a surge in gang violence. Since then, more than 72,000 people have been arrested for being alleged gang members or affiliates.



Human rights organizations have said that thousands have been unjustly detained without due process and dozens have died in prisons. When Bukele unveiled the Terrorism Confinement Center in February, he tweeted: "El Salvador has managed to go from being the world's most dangerous country, to the safest country in the Americas. How did we do it? By putting

criminals in jail. Is there space? There is now." His justice minister said later those imprisoned there would never return to communities. The prison's massive scale and lack of any sort of rehabilitation have been criticized by human rights organizations. Bukele's security policies are widely popular among Salvadorans. Many neighborhoods are enjoying life out

from under the oppressive control of gangs for the first time in years.

Walking through one of the prison's eight sprawling pavilions Thursday, some prisoners acknowledged a group of journalists with a nod of the head or slight wave. Journalists were not allowed to speak with them or to cross a yellow line two yards from each cell. Guards' faces were covered with black masks.

Each cell holds 65 to 70 prisoners. Steel walkways cross atop the cells so guards can watch prisoners from above. The prison does have dining halls, break rooms, a gym and board games, but those are for guards. "We're watching here all day, there's no way to escape, from here you don't get out," said a guard with his face covered. Melvin Alexander Alvarado, a 34-year-old "soldier" in the Barrio 18 Sureño gang serving a 15-year sentence for extortion, was the only prisoner that prison officials allowed to speak with journalists. He said prisoners were treated well and were fed. Alvarado, his shaved head and his arms completely covered in gang tattoos, said he hoped people would help him find a job when he gets out and give him a chance at a new life.

The Unseen Cost of Meta's Influence On India's Young Minds

By Pankaj Mishra

In a nation that adds the maximum number of vulnerable young minds to platforms like Instagram, Meta's insidious tactics are not just a far-off Silicon Valley problem; they are a ticking time bomb in our own homes. Yet, the irony is that India is among the last to raise a flag against the digital colonisation of its young minds.

Last week, Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, was sued by more than three dozen US states for knowingly using features to hook children to its platforms.

In India, where the concept of "family" is sacrosanct, where elders are revered, and children are considered divine gifts, it's a paradox that we've allowed a platform to infiltrate our homes and minds so insidiously. Remember the fervour with which activists and social crusaders took to the streets, holding dharnas against Meta for Net Neutrality? The issue became a rallying cry, a cause that united people from all walks of life. So, why the deafening silence now? Do we consider our children's emotional and psychological well-being "soft" issues?

The Quiet Desperation of Sameera
A few weeks ago, I met Sameera, an 11-year-old in Bengaluru, who seemed quieter than her usual "bubbly" self. "What's going on, Sameera?" I asked (name changed to protect her identity). "Everyone hates me!" came her swift reply. She didn't say much more, but her eyes spoke volumes. I couldn't shake the feeling that something inside her was breaking, crumbling into pieces too small to put back together.

Later, a psychiatrist in Bengaluru told me that children's emotional resilience is becoming "wafer-thin, thanks to the touchy world of Instagram. Sometimes, we also find suicidal tendencies, rarely, but it's there." It made me wonder about my 12-year-old daughter, her friends, and my nieces. The danger lurks around us, and finding Instagram accounts for 9 to 12-year-olds is mainstream. It's fashionable, existential, and a necessity they can't live without.

The Poison We Feed

We see it, don't we? The anxiety, the depression, and the emotional turmoil these platforms are causing our children. Yet, we often look away, handing mobile screens to young ones to keep them engrossed and out of our hair. We're inculcating a poisonous habit from early childhood.

When Instagram Reaches India's Heartland



REUTERS

Earlier this year, I was in Dhakjari, a nondescript village in Bihar's Madhubani district. I was there on assignment for another story, but as a journalist, I know that stories often find you when you least expect them. That's how I met Rani, a 10-year-old girl who was as engrossed in her father's smartphone as any child in an upscale Mumbai or Delhi neighbourhood might be.

"What are you looking at, Rani?" I asked, curious.

"Mr. Faisu," she replied without moving her gaze from the screen. "He's really cool."

For the uninitiated, Mr. Faisu is an Instagram influencer with millions of followers. Rani went on to tell me how her elder siblings had been hooked on TikTok until it was banned in India. "I used to watch them all the time," she said, her eyes finally meeting mine.

It struck me that Rani was consuming the same digital content as her urban counterparts and it was taking an emotional toll on her. "Every time the phone is snatched away from her, she goes into oblivion," her elder brother told me.

An Early Warning Ignored: The Calculated Indifference of Meta

In October 2021, Facebook - now Meta - announced it was pausing the development of an Instagram service tailored for children who are 13 or younger. This was a reluctant step back in the face of mounting criticism. The company's internal research, reported in *The Wall Street Journal*, showed Instagram's detrimental mental health effects on teenage girls. Yet, Meta still wanted to build an Instagram product for children, promising a more "age-appropriate experience".

The decision to halt the app's development is a rare reversal for Meta, which has become perhaps the world's most heavily scrutinised corporation.

The company's statement that it would take time to "work with parents, experts, policymakers, and regulators" is a smokescreen. It's a calculated move to buy time and wait for the public outcry to simmer down so they can proceed with their plans unobstructed. Meta argued that young people were using the photo-sharing app anyway, despite age-requirement rules, so it would be better to develop a more suitable version. This is akin to saying, "Kids are going to smoke anyway, so let's give them 'light' cigarettes." It's a flawed, dangerous logic that underscores Meta's ultimate motive: profit.

The company's internal research showed that Instagram had caused teen girls to feel worse about their bodies and had led to increased rates of anxiety and depression. And yet, they were planning to target an even younger demographic. This is predatory.

In 2017, a report titled "Status of Mind" flagged how 91 per cent of people between 16 and 24 were using the internet for social networking and that rates of anxiety and depression had risen 70 per cent in the past 25 years. The report called for actions like pop-up heavy usage warnings and teaching safe social media use in schools. Four years later, Meta is sued for knowingly hooking children to its platforms. The early signs were there - we chose to ignore them.

The Digital Pied Pipers of India's Young We've unleashed a Pandora's box in a country where digital literacy campaigns have been hailed as a sign of progress. Children, barely in their teens, are now armed with smartphones, scrolling through an endless feed of filtered realities. They are learning, but what exactly are they learning? To equate self-worth with

likes? To seek validation from strangers in distant lands?

And let's not forget the influencers, the new-age Pied Pipers, leading this vulnerable demographic down a path fraught with mental health risks. They post glamorous photos, flaunting lifestyles that are often unattainable, creating a mirage that many in these small towns and villages chase, unaware of the mental health impact.

Why are we not questioning these influencers, who profit from the insecurities they help instil? They, too, are part of this "exploitation ecosystem", and it's high time we held them accountable. They are not just influencing fashion choices or vacation spots; they are shaping self-esteem, moulding perceptions of success and failure, and doing it from the bustling cities to the remotest corners of India.

The Uncomfortable Mirror: What Sameera's Silence Tells Us All

As I circle back to my conversation with Sameera, the 11-year-old who felt the world was against her, and the psychiatrist who warned of children's "wafer-thin emotional resilience", I can't help but think of Rani.

Rani's story is a haunting echo of Sameera's. Both are young girls, separated by geography but united by the invisible threads of social media weaving a web of complex emotional and psychological challenges.

The difference between Rani and a child in an urban setting isn't the content they consume; it's the context in which they consume it. In a village like Dhakjari, where even basic amenities can be a luxury, the aspirational lifestyles peddled by influencers are not just unattainable; they are cruel fiction. Yet, the emotional dependencies - the highs of a 'like' and the lows of its absence - are universal.

We have handed our children the keys to a digital kingdom that we don't fully understand, governed by algorithms designed to exploit their vulnerabilities. If we don't act now, if we don't force policymakers and corporations to change, then we're failing Sameera and Rani and an entire generation. So, parents, scrutinise the digital diets you're feeding your children.

Policymakers, it's high time you legislate for the emotional well-being of our children. And, to the young minds caught in this digital web, remember - your worth is not measured in likes or follows.

It's time to reclaim our humanity from the algorithms that have stolen it.

Two Nobels and two assassinations: Road to Middle East peace is paved with blood

Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin and Egypt's Anwar Sadat were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in different years, for trying to bring peace to the troubled Middle East. But both had to pay with their lives for their peace efforts.

By Rishabh Sharma

On November 4, 1995, then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin attended a peace rally in Tel Aviv's Kings Square. Speaking to the crowd of one lakh people, Rabin said, "I always believed that most people want peace and are ready to take a risk for it."

The rally was conducted in support of the Oslo Accords -- a series of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) that aimed to establish a framework for peace between the two parties in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The rally ended at 9.30 pm. As Rabin walked down the city hall steps toward the open door of his car, a young Jewish man shot him with a Beretta 84F .380 ACP caliber semi-automatic pistol. Rabin was rushed to a hospital where he died from blood loss and a punctured lung.

Yitzhak Rabin's assassination was a reminder of the fate of former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who was killed 14 years before him.

Yitzhak Rabin and Anwar Sadat were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in different years, for trying to bring peace to the troubled Middle East. But the Nobel, and their efforts, cost them their lives.

Coincidentally, their killers were radical members of their own communities, who were angry at them for "betraying" their country by advocating peace. **ANWAR SADAT AND THE CAMP DAVID ACCORDS**

Since its birth in 1948, Israel has found itself in conflict with its Arab neighbours and such was the antagonism that the newborn nation had to face a war against five Arab countries.

After the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel captured more territories from its Arab neighbours -- the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from



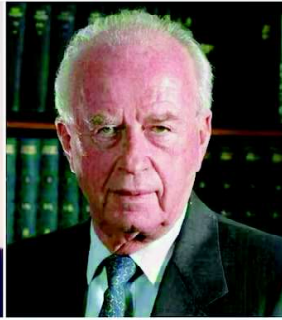
Syria.

Egypt, undergoing an economic crisis, found it hard to counter Israel, which was backed strongly by the United States and other Western powers. But the humiliation in 1967 forced the new president, Anwar Sadat, to launch a daring attack on the Jewish state to regain the lost territory.

In 1973, Egypt joined hands with Syria to launch a surprise attack on Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. With the Jewish army busy observing the holy day, the armies of Egypt and Syria made inroads into the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights, respectively. Other Arab nations, like Iraq and Jordan, also backed Egypt and Syria in the 1973 war.

After the initial surprise, the Israeli Defense Forces counterattacked and recaptured the Golan Heights and most of the Sinai Peninsula. Israel emerged victorious, but with heavy casualties. Egypt's Anwar Sadat realised that the lost territories couldn't be won back through military campaigns. So he took the diplomatic route and sought the US's support in recovering territories lost to Israel. In 1977, Sadat undertook a bold journey to Jerusalem, offering Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin a peace treaty in return for the occupied Sinai Peninsula.

Despite its initial reluctance, Israel took a chance at peace at the US's persuasion. Anwar Sadat was invited to Israel and he spoke before a session of Israel's Parliament, the Knesset,



in November 1977.

After 12 days of negotiations and US President Jimmy Carter serving as a mediator, Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Israel's Menachem Begin signed the Camp David Accords on September 17, 1978, in the White House. The Accords ensured that both Egypt and

also became a public enemy of Islamists in Egypt as well.

On October 6, 1981, Anwar Sadat was reviewing troops on the anniversary of the Yom Kippur War. Suddenly, a group of officers of the Egyptian army, led by Lieutenant Khaled el Islambouli, approached him with arms. Sadat thought it to be a part of the military parade and stood there to salute them. But the armed men shot him, as Talaat al-Sadat, Anwar Sadat's nephew, told CNN. Anwar Sadat was taken to hospital but died from internal bleeding.

His killer, Khaled el Islambouli, had connections to the terrorist group Takfir Wal-Hajira, a radical Islamic extremist movement that rejected established governments.



Israel achieved their primary goals -- Egypt regained the Sinai Peninsula and Israel got its first formal recognition from an Arab state. The same year, Sadat and Begin shared the Nobel Peace Prize. The following year, they signed the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty.

ANWAR SADAT KILLED BY ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS

However, after signing the peace treaty with Israel, then Egyptian President Anwar Sadat faced a huge backlash in the Arab world. Egypt was suspended from the Arab League at the behest of Syria, which was still nursing its wounds from the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

Not only did he face the anger of the Arab nations, but Sadat

YITZHAK RABIN SIGNS PEACE TREATY AND IS ASSASSINATED

In January 1993, secret negotiations were initiated by Terje Larsen, a Norwegian sociologist, and Yossi Beilin, a member of Israel's Labor Party government, for a peace treaty between Israel and Palestine. The aim of this treaty was to formalise the two-state formula for the state of Palestine.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) met for peace in Oslo, Norway.

Arafat, who once led an armed struggle against Israel through his PLO, had declared the independence of the Palestinian

state in 1988. However, with a shift in the political climate of the Middle East after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Arafat found it wise to come to the negotiation table with Israel.

In brief, Arafat had supported Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, which damaged the support for the Palestinian cause in the Arab world. Kuwait was among his major supporters, and by going against it, Arafat had brought scrutiny to his cause. In Oslo, Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin agreed that the PLO would recognise Israel and renounce terrorism, while Israel would grant Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza limited self-rule. This agreement was formalised when Rabin and PLO Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, commonly referred to as the "Oslo Accord", in the White House on September 13, 1993.

The Oslo Accords were based on the 1978 Camp David Accords -- signed by Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Israel's Menachem Begin -- and were intended to be an interim agreement that allowed for initial steps towards peace. Subsequently, Jordan also normalised ties with Israel in 1994.

Yitzhak Rabin was a former soldier who also served as Israel's army chief of staff. In 1994, Rabin was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Shimon Peres, his foreign minister, and Yasser Arafat, after the signing of the Oslo Accords. But like in Anwar Sadat's case, the peace treaty signed by Rabin made him subject to anger and ridicule of radical Jewish elements. They saw the Oslo Accords as a "betrayal" of Israel and a danger to the country's security. On November 4, 1995, a Jewish man shot dead Yitzhak Rabin. His killer was Yigal Amir, a law student at Tel Aviv University. In court, Amir showed no regrets for his actions and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

What Has Biden 'Got Done' In Israel? Turns Out, Not Much

By **Srishti Shanker**

President Joe Biden, on the backfoot on board Air Force One, defended his Tel Aviv visit. Biden claimed that 20 trucks of aid would enter Gaza from the Rafah border on Friday. He hopes to push that number to 150 soon. Even before landing in Israel, he announced that Egypt had agreed to allow movement of aid into Gaza. But not a single aid truck has crossed over yet. So has all the legwork by Anthony Blinken come to naught?

Instead of aid trucks rolling into Gaza from Egypt, Israeli tanks lined up at the Gaza border shortly after Biden left and UK PM Rishi Sunak arrived in Tel Aviv. So, what exactly has Joe Biden 'got done'?

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has dug in his heels on not allowing aid into Gaza until the hostages are released and Hamas is steadfast on not releasing any hostages until there is ceasefire. Drawing a comparison with the Russia-Ukraine war, Palestine has been calling out what it terms as doublespeak by the United States for a while now. The attack on Al Ahli Hospital has left Biden isolated in the Arab world



too. Neither Egypt nor Jordan hosted him. Jordan cancelled Saturday's emergency Summit.

In the world of diplomatic negotiations having no truck with the other side is a zero-sum game. Turkey, Jordan, and Qatar were playing mediators of sorts with Hamas on the hostage issue. Except for Qatar, the other two went silent about any kind of talks after the hospital attack.

The blame game over who fired the rocket meant nothing either in the face of Palestine's claim of 500 dead. The fact is that Palestinians in Gaza are the ones paying a heavy price.

Amidst all this, Iran is trying to unite 'Islamic and Arab nations'. Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi called on the Islamic and Arab world to sever diplomatic ties with Israel. On Tuesday, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei said Islamic nations were "seriously angry" at the continued

Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip and warned that if they continued, these nations would "lose tolerance."

Back home in the US, protesters calling for a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war descended on the Capitol. And Biden's announcement of the \$100 million aid package for Gaza and Israel has also drawn criticism.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has also jumped into the mix terming the attack on the hospital a terrible catastrophe. Russia is also sending aid to Gaza via the Red Crescent.

Two UNSC resolutions on Gaza, the first by Russia and the second by Brazil, have been vetoed. On Wednesday, the US blocked Brazil's resolution calling for "humanitarian pauses" to deliver lifesaving aid to millions in Gaza on the grounds that it did not mention Israel's right of self-defense. Russia and the UK abstained from the vote. So where does all this leave Palestinians in Gaza? And has Joe Biden's forced balancing act in giving arms to Israel and aid to Gaza left the issue hanging in balance? The jury is still out.

Disney's Sales To Reliance Will Follow Rupert Murdoch's Logic

By **Andy Mukherjee | Bloomberg**

A new class of competition is disrupting legacy media in the world's most-populous nation, leading to a second change in the ownership of a popular franchise in four years. Rupert Murdoch was the first to see the threat. Now it's Bob Iger's turn.

The Walt Disney Co. boss is nearing a multi-billion-dollar deal to sell his Indian operations, Bloomberg News reported this week. In 2019, Iger was the buyer, and Murdoch the seller. The Star India business came to Disney as part of a \$71 billion global acquisition of 21st Century Fox Inc.'s entertainment assets. Even that transaction had a lot to do with India.

Murdoch received a warning shot when an upstart — Facebook Inc. — turned up at a 2017 Indian cricket league auction with a \$600 million bid for streaming rights. Star saw off the threat by paying \$2.55 billion for television and web for five years, but the writing was on the wall — the internet was coming for sports programming, the crown jewel of appointment viewing. Three months later, the Australian-born media mogul struck a deal with Iger. The transaction closed after about 15 months.

This time, the challenger is not Mark Zuckerberg, but Mukesh Ambani. In 2017, the Indian



tycoon's fledgling 4G telco was just starting to disrupt the wireless industry with free voice calls and cheap data. Six years later, he has more than 400 million customers, and a burgeoning consumer empire blurring the lines between carriage, content and commerce. The country's digital market has exploded, but has also effectively shrunk into a duopoly. Legacy TV doesn't stand a chance for too long in this altered landscape.

Which is why Iger is offloading the business in his second stint as the Disney chief executive. He's valuing Star India — or Disney Star as it is now called — at \$10 billion. Ambani views the assets at between \$7 billion and \$8 billion, according to Bloomberg News. A successful transaction will be a demonstration of Iger's promise to take the behemoth closer to its core

offerings of theme parks, Hulu and Disney+, and ESPN.

For Ambani, too, it will be a critical validation. Foreign participation in Indian TV began in the early 1990s with a satellite transponder leased from the Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-shing. Murdoch entered in 1993 by buying Star from Li. Things are going to be different now. Japan's Sony Group Corp. will still be in the driver's seat of the country's largest television network once it closes its long-pending merger with the homegrown Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. But Ambani will likely control a bigger share of consumers' wallets and advertisers' budgets. That's because a deal with Iger will help bring credibility to three of Ambani's propositions — digital, retail and consumer finance. Last year, Ambani wrote a \$2.7 billion check and snagged the streaming

rights for Indian Premier League from Disney, essentially succeeding where Zuckerberg had failed in 2017. He also poached some of the key executives that had helped make Star India, and especially its Hotstar streaming service, a valuable franchise for the Murdoch. Although the Disney+ Hotstar platform in India is currently riding the wave of record World Cup Cricket viewership, the momentum has shifted toward Ambani's JioCinema. All he needs to do now is to translate some of those eyeballs into consumer spending — both in his own stores and at the mom-and-pop shops affiliated with his retail network — and he will have a story for investors. Brands that want to sell nationally won't be able to succeed unless they go through Ambani, in media as well as distribution. What's more, some of these brands — from cheap smartphones and laptops to fuzzy drinks and food — will be Ambani's own. He will get to advertise them practically for free and drive demand with cheap finance. Jio, together with other Indian carriers, is also lobbying the telecom regulator for a right to charge large internet-traffic generators, such as Netflix Inc., a network-usage fee. That controversial levy will put pure-play content companies at a disadvantage to Ambani's

dominance across multiple, interconnected markets. (In August, Netflix decided to bundle its offering with Jio's mobile data plans.) Going forward, the only serious competition the conglomerate may face is from Amazon.com Inc. and the Mumbai-based Tata Group. Neither of them owns a telco, and Tata Group is absent from media, but at least they will compete against Ambani in three out of the five areas: wireless, on-screen entertainment, physical retail, e-commerce and finance. Like in the mature US market, cable will eventually succumb to cord-cutting in India, too. But traditional TV still has a huge following among the nation's 1.4 billion people. The real problem lies elsewhere. A media titan with a weakening grasp on cricket — and not much of a chance to make Bollywood work in its favor — doesn't have a third magic bullet in India. Before buying 21st Century Fox, Disney had acquired a local studio to produce Hindi-language movies. That dream soured in about four years. By contrast, the Star Studios setup it got later from Murdoch is successful, but there may not be any point in holding on to it if Indian creators don't allow it to profit off their intellectual property. The World Cup cricket rights will expire in 2027.