

BBC Hitjob against Narendra Modi is Just the Tip of Britain's anti-India Iceberg



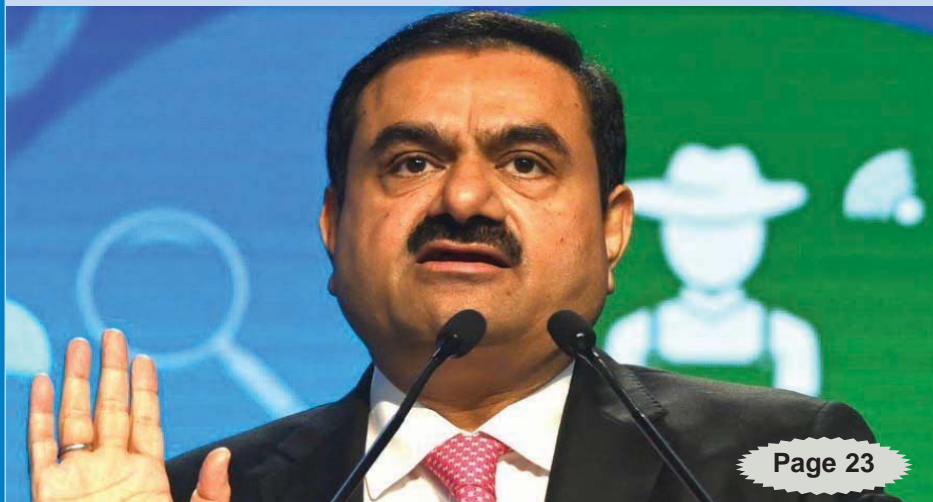
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As Bharat Jodo Yatra comes to an end, Rahul Gandhi needs to rethink his media plan



(News Agency)—Barring a handful of TV news channels and anchors, Rahul Gandhi's assumption that 'the mainstream media has become an instrument that serves only the interests and destructive ideology of those in power', is inaccurate and exaggerated. For many, the curious case of Rahul Gandhi's 'disengagement' with the 'mainstream media' during his mammoth Bharat Jodo Yatra is a case of missed opportunity. **(Contd on page 22)**

Adani Disaster Is Badly Timed For India's Economy



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Asaram Bapu: Indian spiritual guru, 81, jailed for life in second rape case



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Eight million Americans earning more than \$100,000-a-year are living paycheck to-paycheck

Inflation Continues To Decimate Earnings

(News Agency) Almost two thirds of Americans now say they are living paycheck-to-paycheck, a new survey has found - with nearly five percent of those struggling earning more than \$100,000 a year. As inflation continues to bite - the Consumer Price Index for December showed that, over the last 12 months, the all-items index increased 6.5 percent, before seasonal adjustment - the numbers of those feeling the pinch is still rising. Of 4,000 people surveyed by industry publication Pymnts.com and LendingClub, between December 8 and 23, a total

of 64 percent said they were living paycheck-to-paycheck. That means 166 million Americans are unable to save any money at all at the end of the month. And of those 166 million, 8 million - almost 5 percent - were earning more than \$100,000 a year. The total figure represents a 9 percent increase from last year. The average American earns \$58,260 a year, according to the Bureau of Labor statistics. 'Prospects for consumer spending are cloudy,' said Lydia Boussoir, senior economist at EY Parthenon. **(Contd. on page 22)**



No place for violence, vandalism: Australian minister after pro-Khalistanis attack Indians in Melbourne

In the wake of the attack on unarmed Indians by pro-Khalistani forces in Melbourne, Australia's Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Tim Watts said there was no room for violence in the country

(News Agency) Australia's deputy foreign minister said he was "appalled" by the clash between alleged pro-Khalistanis and unarmed Indians in Melbourne on Sunday that left at least five injured. Issuing a strong statement, Australian MP and Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Tim Watts said there was no room for violence in the land Down Under. He also mentioned that a police investigation into the incident is underway. "I was appalled to see the violence at Fed Square in Melbourne on the weekend. People have the right to engage in peaceful protest in Australia, but there is no place for the violence or vandalism we've seen recently. Pleased @VictoriaPolice responded quickly & are investigating," Watts tweeted.

Echoing the sentiment, Australian High Commissioner to India Barry O'Farrell said in a tweet, "Saddened by these scenes so soon after Australia and India celebrate diversity and unity on their respective national days. Our commitment to



peaceful protest does not extend to violence," Australian High Commissioner to India.

WHAT HAPPENED?

According to a report by Australia Today, men from alleged pro-Khalistani groups attacked a group of Indians carrying the Tricolour at Federation Square in Melbourne, in the state of Victoria, on Sunday afternoon. The Indians had arrived at the scene to protest against an

unofficial referendum on the creation of an independent state for Sikhs organised by the US-based secessionist group Sikhs For Justice. The Age reported. Videos shared on social media showed a group of men waving the Khalistani flag and attacking Indians carrying the Tricolour. The pro-Khalistani forces were also seen carrying rods and chasing the Indian protesters.

Sharing one such purported

video of the fracas, Bharatiya Janata Party leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa condemned the "anti-India activities" by pro-Khalistanis in Australia. The incident capped simmering tensions within the Indian diaspora following a string of attacks on Hindu temples in Australia. As many as three temples were vandalized and defaced with anti-India and pro-Khalistani graffiti in Victoria province in the past month.

The Indian High Commission in Canberra had called these attacks blatant attempts to promote animosity and discord among the Indian community.

INDIAN ENVOY VISITS VANDALISED TEMPLES

On Monday, Indian High Commissioner to Australia Manpreet Vohra visited the Shri Shiva Vishnu Temple in Carrum Downs which was desecrated by alleged Khalistan supporters on the eve of Pongal.

The Indian envoy called the temple "a place of worship that has always been revered by all communities and faiths," and condemned its "vandalization" by "pro-Khalistani elements".

Vohra also offered prayers at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Temple and Iskcon Krishna Temple in Melbourne, two of the three sites where anti-India graffiti was daubed on the walls, allegedly by Khalistan supporters, earlier this month. He also met Daniel Andrews, the premier of Victoria province, of which Melbourne is the capital.

Celebration of India's 74th Republic Day in New York



(News Agency) The 74th Republic Day of India was celebrated in Consulate General of India, New York with a flag hoisting ceremony on Thursday, January 26th 2023.

Consul General Randhir Jaiswal unfurled the national flag after which the national anthem was sung. Consul General then read out the address of the President of India. A short cultural program of patriotic songs was presented by Bharatiya Vidya

Bhavan, USA. A large number of members of Indian diaspora and friends of India participated in the celebration. The event was webcast live through the Consulate's social media platforms.

In the evening, Consul General hosted a reception which was attended by prominent members of the diaspora, elected officials, members of the diplomatic corps, friends from media and people from different



walks of life. The leading lights of Indian diaspora graced the occasion, including Prof. S. R. Srinivasa Varadhan, the recipient of Padma Vibhushan this year - the second highest civilian award. State Senator Kevin Thomas, Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the UN Ambassador R. Ravindra, Consuls General of Japan, Bangladesh, Mexico, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand, Peru, Malaysia and

Germany, besides diplomats from several other Consulates participated in the reception. More than 150 guests graced the occasion.

The evening function began with singing of Indian and US national anthem by Master Ishaan Tangirala, a young talented singer of Indian origin from New Jersey. Consul General welcomed the guests and thanked everyone for their participation. He underlined the growing partnership

between India and the US, the oldest and the largest democracies in the world and the key role of diaspora in strengthening these ties. Congratulatory video messages from Congresswoman Susan Wild and Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick was played, followed by reading out of a citation from Congressman Michael Lawler. State Senator Kevin Thomas and Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar delivered remarks conveying their greetings on the 74th Republic Day of India. This was followed by a video on the Consulate's activities. Later, Grammy Award winning singer Falguni Shah delivered a enthralling performance of patriotic songs. Guests were then invited for an Indian dinner where they were treated to a wide variety of regional cuisines. A special attraction on the menu was cuisines of millets from different parts of India, in celebration of International Year of Millets - 2023.

Canada may be considering waiving eligibility criteria for thousands to cut visa backlog



Canada may be considering drastic measures to reduce its mounting immigration backlog, including waiving eligibility requirements for nearly half a million visitor visas, The Globe and Mail reported quoting a policy memo. A draft document dated December reveals that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is prepared to take "aggressive action" to significantly reduce its backlog of visitor visa applications by February. According to the memo, IRCC has two options to reduce the number of visitor visa applications. Under the first, it aims to process an estimated 195,000 applications in bulk. This could include a large number of tourists from countries that require visas to visit Canada. Under the second option, Canada would waive certain eligibility requirements for approximately 450,000 applications. By waiving admission rules, foreign nationals would not have to prove they will leave Canada when their visa expires. Visitors would still be subject to an eligibility check. This ensures, for example, that applicants do not pose a threat to national security. In a statement, Canada's Immigration Minister Sean

Fraser did not address any issues related to the policy memo or the changes being considered. "Canada is now processing visitor visa applications faster than it was before the pandemic," he said. More than 260,000 visitor visas were processed in November, he said, compared to a monthly average of about 180,000 in 2019. "Despite the progress we've seen, there is still much more work to be done to meet pre-pandemic processing timelines," Fraser added. The number of applicants in IRCC's inventory decreased from approximately 2.2 million to just over 2.1 million over December. As of early December, there were more than 700,000 temporary resident visa (TRV) applications in the system. "We're actually removing cases from our system faster than they're coming in, which gives me confidence that we're getting back on track," Fraser said at a news conference in December.

Russian Golden Visa: Russian gov aims to lure Indian investors with new residency program

A new Russian Golden Visa program was launched in January 2023 in an attempt by the Russian Government. This residency program is offered to Indians as an incentive to attract foreign investors to Russia.

A. Timur Beslangurov, Managing Partner of Vista Immigration ET's Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury spoke with the company that will facilitate the Russian Golden Visa program. Russian residency can be beneficial to Indian investors who wish to move to the country as well as people who are interested in investing but do not necessarily reside in the country, but benefit from investment income. The Russian Golden Visa program was launched in January 2023 this is an attempt by the Russian Government to use the residency program to attract foreign investors to Russia. It is not a

secret that numerous nations have programs that are comparable to this one, each of which has its own set of advantages and disadvantages. Instead of comparing the different programs that are available, we will focus on the Russian program.

Before the new Golden Visa program, Russian immigration law allowed foreigners to apply for permanent residency on several grounds: quota (very hard to get because there aren't many quotas), marriage to a Russian, having a Russian child, graduating with a diploma from a Russian university, and employment. For a person who has his own family and is not yet old enough to become a student it was quite difficult. In Russia, getting a residency was very difficult. The new Golden visa program is very beneficial for India.



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Union Budget 2023: Sending money abroad to burn bigger hole in pocket



the tax collection at source remains at 0.5% of the amount which is in excess of Rs 7 (TCS) norms remain in excess of Rs 7 lakh. If the lakh.TCS norms relating to unchanged. If the amount is remittance towards education remittances for medical being remitted out of an expense is not from a loan, treatment also remain eligible loan, then the TCS the TCS is 5% of the amount, unchanged.

US launches more initiatives to cut wait time for visa applicants

The first in a series of special Saturday interview days, part of a larger effort to reduce wait times for first-time visa applicants, was organised on January 21 by the US embassy in New Delhi and the consulates in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad

The United States has launched a multi-pronged initiative, including scheduling special visa interviews on Saturdays and deploying dozens of temporary staffers, to address the backlog in visa processing due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The first in a series of special Saturday interview days, part of a larger effort to reduce wait times for first-time visa applicants, was organised on January 21 by the US embassy in New Delhi and the consulates in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad.

These interview days are for applicants who require in-person visa interviews. "In the coming months, the mission will continue to open additional slots for appointments to take place on select Saturdays," the US embassy said in a statement. The US department of state has already implemented remote processing of interview waiver cases for

applicants with previous US visas. Such applicants no longer have to appear for in-person interviews. "Between January and March 2023, dozens of temporary consular officers from Washington and other embassies will arrive in India to increase processing capacity," the statement said.

The department of state is also increasing the number of consular officers permanently assigned to the embassy and consulates in India. The US mission also released more than 250,000 additional B1 and B2 visa appointments. The consulate in Mumbai extended its weekday operating hours to make space for additional appointments.

By the summer, the US mission will be at "full staffing, and we expect to be processing visas at levels from prior to the Covid-19 pandemic", the statement added.

As per the Budget applied only on the amount proposal, banks remitting in excess of Rs 7 lakh (thus funds overseas will have to collect tax at source at 20% if Rs 10 lakh was being remitted, only Rs 3 lakh without the applicability of any threshold limit. So, whether you are buying a house in Dubai, or meeting the day-to-day expenses of your child studying abroad, or investing in global stocks, it will pinch your pocket.

Earlier, in such cases, the remitting bank collected tax at source at 5% only if the amount or aggregate amount being remitted in a financial year exceeded Rs 7 lakh. Further, the withholding tax

in excess of Rs 7 lakh (thus if Rs 10 lakh was being remitted, only Rs 3 lakh was subject to the tax collection norms). But these norms have now changed. The taxpayer can, of course, adjust the amount withheld as TCS against his tax liability, when filing the I-T return. But the higher TCS dents the cash flow, as this adjustment happens only later. Refund, if any, arising out of the higher TCS follows later. However, when it comes to pure educational expenses — such as fees —

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Bengaluru home guard arrested for extorting money from tourist

The man had taken Rs 1000 as a fine from the woman and her male friend who was sitting at Bengaluru's Kundanahalli Lake.



(News Agency) A home guard deployed by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) was arrested on Tuesday for allegedly extorting from a woman tourist. The arrested guard, identified as Manjunath Reddy, allegedly fined the woman tourist Rs 1,000 for "sitting without permission" at Bengaluru's Kundanahalli Lake.

The case came to light after the woman, Arsha Latif, narrated the incident on Monday in a now deleted post on Twitter. She said she was sitting at Kundanahalli Lake with her male friend when Manjunath Reddy took a picture of them and started "harassing" them, saying they did not have permission to sit there. The woman claimed Manjunath Reddy started interrogating what the two of them were doing at the lake. He then "insinuated that he will take us to the police station and his senior will deal with us, but it's best to settle the matter here because he speaks a little Hindi but his senior only speaks Kannada." He asked the woman and her friend to pay him Rs 1,000 as a fine and let him go. In an update to the tweet, the woman said the Bengaluru Police informed her that Manjunath Reddy had been arrested and he was impersonating the police to extort money.

Income Tax raids on premises of 2 pastors in Punjab

Income Tax raids were carried out on premises linked to two pastors from Punjab's Jalandhar.



(SAI Bureau) The Income Tax department on Tuesday conducted raids on the premises linked to two pastors from Punjab, Baljinder Singh and Harpreet Deol.

The I-T teams from Bhatinda, Haryana, Jammu, and Amritsar conducted raids at various locations in Amritsar, Kurali, and New Chandigarh in Punjab. The two pastors, Baljinder Singh and Harpreet Deol, are from Jalandhar. The Income Tax Department


raided several churches and houses of priests in Punjab this morning. At around 8 am, the I-T department scrutinized documents of The Open Door Church, a famous church in northern India located in Khojewal, Kapurthala. More than 30 employees were questioned by the I-T team. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were deployed around the church and outside the two pastor's residences.

Armed forces can take action against officers for adultery: Supreme Court


(SAI Bureau) The Supreme Court on Tuesday clarified that its 2018 judgment striking down Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) will not have any impact on the court martial proceedings initiated against personnel serving in the armed forces for their adulterous conduct. A five-judge bench, headed by Justice K M Joseph, clarified that the 2018 judgment was not at all concerned with the provisions of the Armed Forces Act. "The judgment of this court was concerned only with the validity of Section 497 IPC and Section 198(2) CrPC. In this case, this court had no occasion to consider the effect of the provisions of the Armed Forces Act. As we notice, it is not as if this court approved of adultery. This court found adultery, maybe, a modern problem. This court also held that it will continue to be a ground for dissolution of marriage," the bench said. "In view of the fact that the scheme of

the acts in the context of Article 33 did not fall for consideration before this court, we must observe and clarify that the judgment of this court was not at all concerned with the effect and provisions of the Armed Forces Act. This court was neither called upon nor has it ventured to pronounce on effect of Section 45 and Section 63 of the Army Act as also the corresponding provisions of the other Acts," the Supreme Court said.

Senior advocate Madhvi Divan, appearing for the Army, had sought clarification on the Joseph Shine judgment. The order further read, "ASG Madhavi Divan brought our attention to provisions of the Army Act. There are similar provisions in the Navy and Air Forces Act. It is argued sufficiently that the word adulterous acts would bear the meaning assigned to it in dictionaries, so also the word promiscuous and need not be connected with Section 497 of the IPC as such."



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Summary of the Budget 2021-22

The Budget proposals for 2021-22 rest on 6 pillars.

Health and Wellbeing
Physical & Financial Capital, and
Infrastructure

Inclusive Development for
Aspirational India

Reinvigorating Human Capital
Innovation and R&D

Minimum Government and Maximum Governance

Budget at a Glance - English
Health and Wellbeing

There is substantial increase in investment in Health Infrastructure and the Budget outlay for Health and Wellbeing is Rs 2,23,846 crore in BE 2021-22 as against this year's BE of Rs 94,452 crore, an increase of 137 percentage.



(SAI Bureau) The Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2021-22 in Parliament today, which is the first budget of this new decade and also a digital one in the backdrop of unprecedented COVID-19 crisis. Laying a vision for AatmaNirbhar Bharat, she said this is an expression of 130 crore Indians who have full confidence in their capabilities and skills. She said that Budget proposals will further strengthen the Sankalp of Nation First, Doubling Farmer's Income, Strong Infrastructure, Healthy India, Good Governance, Opportunities for youth, Education for All, Women Empowerment, and Inclusive Development among others. Additionally, also on the path to fast-implementation are the 13 promises of Budget 2015-16 which were to materialize during the

AmrutMahotsav of 2022, on the 75th year of our Independence. They too resonate with this vision of AatmaNirbharta, she added. Health and Wellbeing Expenditure - English The Finance Minister announced that a new centrally sponsored scheme, PM AatmaNirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, will be launched with an outlay of about Rs 64,180 crore over 6 years. This will develop capacities of primary, secondary, and tertiary care Health Systems, strengthen existing national institutions, and create new institutions, to cater to detection and cure of new and emerging diseases. This will be in addition to the National Health Mission. The main interventions under the scheme are: Support for 17,788

rural and 11,024 urban Health and Wellness Centers Setting up integrated public health labs in all districts and 3382 block public health units in 11 states; Establishing critical care hospital blocks in 602 districts and 12 central institutions; Strengthening of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), its 5 regional branches and 20 metropolitan health surveillance units; Expansion of the Integrated Health Information Portal to all States/UTs to connect all public health labs; Operationalisation of 17 new Public Health Units and strengthening of 33 existing Public Health Units at Points of Entry, that is at 32 Airports, 11 Seaports and 7 land crossings; Setting up of 15 Health Emergency

Operation Centers and 2 mobile hospitals; and Setting up of a national institution for One Health, a Regional Research Platform for WHO South East Asia Region, 9 Bio-Safety Level III laboratories and 4 regional National Institutes for Virology.

Health Sector

Vaccines Provision of Rs 35,000 crore made for Covid-19 vaccine in BE 2021-22.

To strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach, and outcome, Government will merge the Supplementary Nutrition Programme and the PoshanAbhiyan and launch the

Mission Poshan 2.0. Government will adopt an intensified strategy to improve nutritional outcomes across 112 Aspirational Districts.

PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Finance Minister said that for a USD 5 trillion economy, our manufacturing sector has to grow in double digits on a sustained basis. Our manufacturing companies need to become an integral part of global supply chains, possess core competence and cutting-edge technology.

(Contd. on page 7)

Summary of the Budget 2021-22

To achieve all of the above, PLI schemes to create manufacturing global champions for an AatmaNirbhar Bharat have been announced for 13 sectors. For this, the government has committed nearly Rs.1.97 lakh crore in the next 5 years starting FY 2021-22. This initiative will help bring scale and size in key sectors, create and nurture global champions and provide jobs to our youth.

TEXTILE INFRASTRUCTURE

The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) which the Finance Minister announced in December 2019 is the first-of-its-kind, whole-of-government exercise ever undertaken. The NIP was launched with 6835 projects; the project pipeline has now expanded to 7,400 projects. Around 217 projects worth Rs 1.10 lakh crore under some key infrastructure Ministries have been completed.

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE

Finance Minister announced that more than 13,000 km length of roads, at a cost of Rs 3.3 lakh crore, has already been awarded under the Rs. 5.35 lakh crore Bharatmala Pariyojana project of which 3,800 kms have been constructed. By March 2022, Government would be awarding another 8,500 kms and complete an additional 11,000 kms of national highway corridors. To further augment road infrastructure, more economic corridors are also being planned. She also provided an enhanced outlay of Rs. 1,18,101 lakh crore for Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, of which Rs.1,08,230 crore is for capital, the highest ever.

RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

Indian Railways have prepared a National Rail Plan for India – 2030. The Plan is to create a 'future ready' Railway system by 2030. Bringing down the logistic costs for our industry is at the core of our strategy to enable 'Make in India'. It is expected that Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) and Eastern DFC will be commissioned by June 2022.

URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Government will work towards raising the share of public transport in urban areas through expansion of metro rail network and augmentation of city bus service. A new scheme will be launched at a cost of Rs. 18,000 crore to support augmentation of public bus transport services.

A total of 702 km of conventional metro is operational and another 1,016 km of metro and RRTS is under construction in 27 cities. Two new technologies i.e., 'MetroLite' and 'MetroNeo' will be deployed to provide metro rail systems at much lesser cost with same experience, convenience and safety in Tier-2 cities and peripheral areas of Tier-1 cities.

POWER INFRASTRUCTURE

The past 6 years have seen a number of reforms and achievements in the power sector with the addition of 139 Giga Watts of installed capacity, connecting an additional 2.8 crore households and addition of 1.41 lakh circuit km of transmission lines.

Expressing a serious concern over the viability of Distribution Companies, the Finance Minister proposed to launch a revamped reforms-based result-linked power distribution sector scheme with an outlay of Rs. 3,05,984 crore over 5 years. The scheme will provide assistance to DISCOMS for Infrastructure creation including pre-paid smart metering and feeder separation, upgradation of systems, etc., tied to financial improvements.

PORTS, SHIPPING, WATERWAYS

Major Ports will be moving from managing their operational services on their own to a model where a private partner will manage it for them. For the purpose the budget proposes to offer more than Rs. 2,000 crore by Major Ports on Public Private Partnership mode in FY21-22.

A scheme to promote flagging of merchant ships in India will be launched by providing subsidy support to Indian shipping companies in global tenders floated by Ministries and CPSEs. An amount of Rs. 1624 crore will be provided over 5 years. This initiative will enable greater training and employment opportunities for Indian seafarers besides enhancing Indian companies share in global shipping.

PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS

Smt Sitharaman said that the government has kept fuel supplies running across the country without interruption during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Taking note of the crucial nature of this sector in people's lives, the following key initiatives are being announced:

Ujjwala Scheme which has benefited 8 crore households will be extended to cover 1 crore more beneficiaries.

Government will add 100 more districts in next 3 years to the City Gas Distribution network.

A gas pipeline project will be taken up in Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

An independent Gas Transport System Operator will be set up for facilitation and coordination of booking of common carrier capacity in all-natural gas pipelines on a non-discriminatory open access basis.

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

The Finance Minister proposed to consolidate the provisions of SEBI Act, 1992, Depositories Act, 1996, Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956 and Government Securities Act, 2007 into a rationalized single Securities Markets Code. The Government would support the development of a world class Fin-Tech hub at the GIFT-IFSC.

FINANCIAL INCREASING FDI IN INSURANCE SECTOR

She also proposed to amend the Insurance Act, 1938 to increase the permissible FDI limit from 49% to 74% and allow foreign ownership and control with safeguards. Under the new structure, the majority of Directors on the Board and key management persons would be resident Indians, with at least 50% of Directors being Independent Directors, and specified percentage of profits being retained as general reserve.

DISINVESTMENT AND STRATEGIC SALE

In spite of COVID-19, Government has kept working towards strategic disinvestment. The Finance Minister said a number of transactions namely BPCL, Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, IDBI Bank, BEML, Pawan Hans, Neelachallspat Nigam limited among others would be completed in 2021-22. Other than IDBI Bank, Government propose to take up the privatization of two Public Sector Banks and one General Insurance company in the year 2021-22.

DISINVESTMENT AND STRATEGIC SALES

In 2021-22, Government would also bring the IPO of LIC for which the requisite amendments will be made in this Session itself. In a very important announcement, the Finance Minister said that in the AtmaNirbhar Package, she had announced to come out with a policy of strategic disinvestment of public sector enterprises and said that the Government has approved the said policy. The policy provides a clear roadmap for disinvestment in all non-strategic and strategic sectors. Government has kept four areas that are strategic where bare minimum CPSEs will be maintained and rest privatized. In the non-strategic sectors, CPSEs will be privatised, otherwise shall be closed. She said that to fast forward the disinvestment policy, NITI Aayog will work out on the next list of Central Public Sector companies that would be taken up for strategic disinvestment. Government has estimated Rs. 1,75,000 crore as receipts from disinvestment in BE 2020-21.

3. Inclusive Development for Aspirational India

Under the pillar of Inclusive Development for Aspirational India, the Finance Minister announced to cover Agriculture and Allied sectors, farmers' welfare and rural India, migrant workers and labour, and financial inclusion.

Agriculture

Dwelling on agriculture, she said that the Government is committed to the welfare of farmers. The MSP regime has undergone a sea change to assure price that is at least 1.5 times the cost of production across all commodities. The procurement has also continued to increase at a steady pace. This has resulted in increase in payment to farmers substantially. In case of wheat, the total amount paid to farmers in 2013-2014 was Rs. 33,874 crore. In 2019-2020 it was Rs. 62,802 crore, and even better, in 2020-2021, this amount, paid to farmers, was Rs. 75,060 crore. The number of wheat growing farmers that were benefitted increased in 2020-21 to 43.36 lakhs as compared to 35.57 lakhs in 2019-20. For paddy, the amount paid in 2013-14 was Rs. 63,928 crore. In 2019-2020, this increased to Rs. 1,41,930 crore. Even better, in 2020-2021, this is further estimated to increase to Rs. 172,752 crore. The farmers benefitted increased from 1.24 crore in 2019-20 to 1.54 crore in 2020-21.

In the same vein, in case of pulses, the amount paid in 2013-2014 was Rs. 236 crore. In 2019-20 it increased to Rs. 8,285 crore. Now, in 2020-2021, it is at Rs.10,530 crore, a more than 40 times increase from 2013-14.

The receipts to cotton farmers have seen a stupendous increase from Rs. 90 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 25,974 crore (as on 27th January 2021).

Early this year, Honourable Prime Minister had launched SWAMITVA Scheme. Under this, a record of rights is being given to property owners in villages. Up till now, about 1.80 lakh property owners in 1,241 villages have been provided cards and the Finance Minister proposed during FY21-22 to extend this to cover all states/UTs.

To provide adequate credit to our farmers, Government has enhanced the agricultural credit target to Rs. 16.5 lakh crore in FY22. Similarly, the allocation to the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund increased from Rs. 30,000 crore to Rs. 40,000 crore. The Micro Irrigation Fund, with a corpus of Rs.5,000 crore has been created under NABARD will be doubled.

In an important announcement to boost value addition in agriculture and allied products and their exports, the scope of 'Operation Green Scheme' that is presently applicable to tomatoes, onions, and potatoes, will be enlarged to include 22 perishable products.

Around 1.68 crore farmers are registered and Rs. 1.14 lakh crore of trade value has been carried out through e-NAMs. Keeping in view the transparency and competitiveness that e-NAM has brought into the agricultural market, 1,000 more mandis will be integrated with e-NAM. The Agriculture Infrastructure Funds would be made available to APMCs for augmenting their infrastructure facilities.

Fisheries

Finance Minister proposed substantial investments in the development of modern fishing harbours and fish landing centres. To start with, 5 major fishing harbours – Kochi, Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Paradip, and Petuaghat – will be developed as hubs of economic activity.

Migrant Workers and Labourers

Government has launched the One Nation One Ration Card scheme through which beneficiaries can claim their rations anywhere in the country. One Nation One Ration Card plan is under implementation by 32 states and UTs, reaching about 69 crore beneficiaries – that's a total of 86% beneficiaries covered. The remaining 4 states and UTs will be integrated in the next few months. Government proposes to conclude a process that began 20 years ago, with the implementation of the 4 labour codes. For the first time globally, social security benefits will extend to gig and platform workers. Minimum wages will apply to all categories of workers, and they will all be covered by the Employees State Insurance Corporation. Women will be allowed to work in all categories and also in the night-shifts with adequate protection. At the same time, compliance burden on employers will be reduced with single registration and licensing, and online returns.

migrant workers Financial Inclusion

To further facilitate credit flow under the scheme of Stand Up India for SCs, STs, and women, the Finance Minister proposed to reduce the margin money requirement from 25% to 15%, and to also include loans for activities allied to agriculture. Moreover, a number of steps were taken to support the MSME sector and in this Budget, Government has provided Rs. 15,700 crore to this sector – more than double of this year's BE.

Taliban welcome India's funds announcement for Afghanistan in Budget 2023-24

(SAI Bureau) Taliban welcomed the Indian announcement for Afghanistan in the Union Budget 2023-24, which was presented on Wednesday by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. New Delhi announced a development assistance of Rs 200 crore (\$24.3 million) for the country in the budget, which was the same amount announced in last year's budget as well. Taliban's Suhail Shaheen told WION, "We appreciate development assistance for Afghanistan by India. It will contribute to boosting

relations and trust between the two countries." Notably, India has continued its support to Afghanistan for the second year in a row since the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, despite not recognising the regime. Taliban took over the country in August 2021.

New Delhi has several times emphasised the historic links with the Afghan people and also sent consignments of wheat, vaccines and humanitarian support to the country. In the Indian Union budget presented in

the Parliament on Wednesday, the development partnership portfolio got 32.40% of the total budget for the Ministry of External Affairs. The largest share of India's aid portfolio is towards Bhutan of Rs 2400 crore, which is around 41.04% of MEA's development assistance. MEA has been allocated Rs 18,050 crore in this year's budget, which is 4.64% higher than last year. Shaheen noted, "There were various projects in Afghanistan which were being funded by India. If India resumes work

on these projects, it will contribute to boosting relations between the two countries and eliminating distrust." India has taken responsibility for building the Afghan parliament and the India-Afghanistan friendship dam in Herat province. Shaheen, who once was part of the Taliban's negotiating team for the intra-Afghan talks, said, "The people of Afghanistan are currently facing poverty and unemployment and need reconstruction and development projects more than ever."

Budget to support growth, tame inflation

Budget 2023: Global investors are focusing on emerging markets and India is on their radar

(SAI Bureau) The continued focus on infrastructure capex by the government, along with the positive surprise on personal tax rates to strengthen consumption, will accelerate the country's economic growth in the future. With more funds being allocated to defence, railways and affordable housing schemes, private capex will also get an impetus amid global headwinds. The Budget's focus on supporting the domestic economy will clearly boost our growth as well as create a positive image for the country among foreign investors, given the current concerns around global headline events. Moreover, the major shake-up in income tax will increase spending power and contribute to economic growth. Global investors are focusing on

emerging markets and India is on their radar. This Budget will ensure India is back on the investment map for foreign portfolio investors. It may happen in the second half of calendar year 2023, when the earnings upgrades start to happen. However, market valuation, which seems high right now, could be a roadblock for many investors in the short term. On the other hand, what Indian investors will take note of is that the Budget was not so populist, especially considering the many state elections lined up this year as well as the upcoming general elections early next year. We believe that the Budget's clear focus is on companies that derive a bulk of their business from India and will benefit from the consumption boom, hotels, services and



electronics. Other themes in the investment list are companies that will benefit from a higher capex. So, defence, electronics, railways and infrastructure-related stocks are on our radar.

Sitharaman applies Amrit-anjan balm to give middle class relief

(News Agency) Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said the Union Budget 2023 seeks to make it more attractive for individuals to move to the new tax regime and is aimed at benefiting the middle class. India goes to the general elections next year. "Personal income tax has seen substantial changes after a very long time, which will benefit the middle class. This country has been waiting for direct taxation to be simplified and compliance to be made easier," Sitharaman told reporters after presenting her fifth straight Budget.

"The new taxation regime we brought in two-three years ago has now got greater incentives and attraction so that people can unhesitatingly move from the old system to the new. Of course, we are not compelling anyone to move to the new regime and those who want to remain in the old system can do so. The new one is now

attractive as it gives greater rebate, is simplified and has lower rates of taxation and lesser number of slabs," she added.

A reason for incentives in the new regime could be low traction among taxpayers. While revenue secretary Sanjay Malhotra refused to share the number of taxpayers who had opted for the new regime in the last two years, he said 61% companies had opted for the no-exemption plan. He said the government sees a majority of individuals moving to the new regime.

"We want to make the new tax regime, which is without exemptions, attractive enough for individuals through better rates and easier compliance. If rates are so low, you are going to pay less even without any exemptions. The ultimate interest is to make the simpler regime more attractive," Sitharaman said.

Here's How Budget's 16% Duty Hike On Cigarettes Will Impact Prices

This upward revision in National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD) would have negligible impact on smokers and the companies could easily absorb the shock as it may not also have any resultant impact on margins, experts said.

(News Agency) New Delhi: The duty hike on cigarettes by 16 per cent announced in the Union Budget 2023-24 would have a nominal impact of around 7-12 paise per stick across cigarette categories, according to experts. This upward revision in National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD) would have negligible impact on smokers and the companies could easily absorb the shock as it may not also have any resultant impact on margins, they said. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharama in the Union Budget for 2023-24 on Wednesday proposed to revise and increase the duty on cigarettes to about 16 per cent. "National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD) on specified cigarettes was last revised three years ago. This is proposed to be revised upwards by about 16 per cent," she said in her Budget speech in Parliament. On the impact of the move, Crisil Ratings Director Anand Kulkarni said, "The upward revision in NCCD on

cigarettes is not expected to have a material impact on the profitability of cigarette manufacturers. The hike of 15-16 per cent will result in an increase in cost by 7-12 paise per stick across cigarette categories (based on size, filter, etc)". The profitability will be less than one per cent and will not have any bearing on the credit profiles of players, he added. Similarly, Nuvama Institutional Equities Executive Director & Head of Research Committee Abneesh Roy said the overall impact would be negligible. "This increase seems lower than our and street expectations, so a positive for ITC and other cigarettes companies," he said adding "cigarettes companies will need only low single-digit hike of around 2 to 3 per cent, which is not much of an issue, given three years of hardly any increase in prices for the consumer, will be easily absorbed by consumer".

Budget 2023 Has Chilling Implications for India's People

It seems that the Narendra Modi government has decided, in an election year, that general elections can be fought and won without efforts to improve the material conditions of the bulk of the people, and even simply ignoring their suffering.

The annual budget is generally supposed to be a statement of not only the Union government's actual and proposed revenue raising and spending plans, but also of its general economic policy intent. If so, the indications this year are chilling. It seems that the Narendra Modi government has decided, in an election year, that general elections can be fought and won without efforts to improve the material conditions of the bulk of the people, and even simply ignoring their suffering. (Presumably other strategies are to be used for the coming elections.) Instead, the focus of the government will be on infrastructure investment, which may have some positive fallout over the longer term, but in the short run will only generate profits (and kickbacks) for a very select few. The Economic Survey already suggested that the government is innocent of – or in denial about – the material conditions of the vast bulk of the Indian population. Remember that aggregate employment rates are at historically low levels; formal employment is coming down and job losses are hitting even the most “dynamic” sectors like IT; median money wages are lower than they were two years ago; official surveys are finding horrifying nutrition indicators and micro surveys reveal evidence of growing incidence of absolute hunger. But for the finance ministry, there is hardly any mention of any of this, as cherry-picked data are produced to suggest that the period since 2014 (and before that, the term of the A.B. Vajpayee government of 1999–2004) have been golden periods for the Indian economy despite all the challenges. In other words, “sab chunga si”, and our only concern is how to insulate ourselves from global economic problems, since we apparently have none of our own. One important caveat: we need to remember that most of the numbers for the Union Budget 2023-24 – both the declared intentions for the coming year and the so-called “Revised Estimates” for the current financial year 2022-23 – are dubious. The current fiscal year's numbers are based on the available (and still preliminary) data for April to December 2022, since numbers for January 2023 are not yet available even to the finance ministry, and February and March have yet to occur. Since the numbers for the last quarter of the year are as yet unknown, the finance ministry is free to fill in whatever it likes as the total for the entire year, and thereby claim whatever to meet whatever revenue, expenditure and fiscal deficit targets it chooses. And it can also declare whatever numbers it chooses in the coming year without informed scrutiny about the underlying assumptions. Given this, the numbers provided in Budget 2023-24 are startling to say the least. It is safe to say that we have not experienced such a savage

cutback of essential social spending in a very long time, and certainly not in the last two decades. In a period of falling employment and lower real wages especially for the rural poor, the allocation for the MNREGA has been cut by around one-third from the likely spending in the current year, to only Rs 60,000 crore. The group People's Action for Employment Guarantee has estimated that the allocation for the coming year should be at least Rs 2,72,000 crore if the promise of 100 days' work is to be met even for those who worked on the programme in the current year – this would be only around one-fifth of that.

The massive cut in the allocation for the food subsidy by nearly one-third is similarly striking given all the evidence on undernutrition and absolute hunger. The increase in allocation for the National Health Mission will not keep pace with inflation, implying a cut in real terms and an even bigger cut in terms of per capita spending. The much-celebrated public health insurance scheme PM Swasthya Suraksha Yojana was allocated Rs 10,000 crore in the current year but will apparently manage to spend only Rs 8,270 crore. For the coming year, the allocation is only Rs 3,365 crore! So what will happen to all the unfortunates who are currently covered under this scheme – will their “insurance” simply lapse?

Unlike most countries in the world that significantly increased public spending on schooling to allow for students to deal with learning losses during the pandemic, the Indian government did not do so. Instead, even the budget estimate of Rs 63,449 crore for 2022-23 is not expected to be met, with a shortfall of Rs 4,396 crore. And the budget outlay for the coming year is only Rs 5,356 crore more, once again just about keeping pace with expected inflation. The higher education outlay is slated to increase by a pathetic Rs 3,267 crore, suggesting no real expansion. The finance minister spent what seemed like an aeon talking about agriculture – but the total budgetary outlay for agriculture is down, as is that for rural development. Some of the reductions are striking: the Market Intervention Scheme that is supposed to provide price support for farmers when market prices fall below a certain minimum level was announced with much fanfare a few years ago. But the allocation for that scheme has fallen from Rs 1,500 crore to only Rs 1 lakh! (You read that right – it's not a typo.) The finance minister announced that the PM-KISAN payments would increase from Rs 6,000 per farmer to Rs 8,000 per farmer in what is clearly one of the few pre-election sops – but that is not reflected in the expenditure budget, where the amount allocated is the same as the previous year, Rs 60,000 crore.

I'm tired of watching Black men like Tyre Nichols die. This shouldn't be normal

I'm probably one of the few people who hasn't seen the video footage of 29-year-old Tyre Nichols being beaten to death by five Memphis police officers. I haven't watched the video because, honestly, I am tired of seeing Black men die. It shouldn't be normal to participate in a person's last moments like this. To hear Black men scream for their mothers as the state takes their lives. To be constantly haunted by images of young men and women who could easily have been you or someone you know. Yet I say all this while knowing how important it is to bear witness in times like these.

In 1991, the world got an early taste of what's now become norm, when video footage was released of four Los Angeles police officers brutally beating Rodney King. We know what happened next; the video helped galvanize one of the most well known protest movements in US history, but it also established a blueprint for a frustrating cycle of witnessing, resisting, and then seeing little to no real accountability for police. And in the years since, with cellphones, body cams and social media colliding to make viral police brutality videos a regular occurrence, such videos have gone from helping correct the narrative about what really happened to serving as a morbid reminder of the fragility of Black life in America. As many people have remarked, the lead-up to the release of this particular video was also eerily reminiscent of public lynchings. It calls back to a time when these horrific executions would be widely publicized beforehand, and then images of the beaten, hanging bodies later circulated throughout the country via postcard. In those images, and the ones we've seen since, white officers were usually the ones inflicting the violence. That's why so much has been said about the fact that officers

implicated in this killing are Black. And as noteworthy as that fact might seem on its surface, the race of the cops who did this never made them any less likely to participate in the abuse of other Black people. There's no amount of compliance, deference or even imagined kinship that can humanize Black people in the eyes of state-sanctioned executioners who have been trained to see Black lives as completely worthless.

And as we became used to (read: entitled to) being a part of these people's dying moments, many of us slowly stopped asking why we were engaging in this gruesome voyeurism to begin with. Why do we continue to place this burden of video evidence on Black and other racialized communities who are being victimized? Why isn't the mere fact of these incidents enough to put a stop to this? Why have all the years of watching this footage not been enough to push our lawmakers to real action?

It feels like a painfully pointless exercise. But if politicians and the government won't do anything about the problem, then, at the very least, police brutality videos create an emotional reaction and radicalize everyday people against police violence, right? Not always. In reality, seeing these images time and time again has “deaden[ed] our collective senses”, as Jamil Smith wrote in the New Republic in 2015. And for people who refuse to see the ways that policing is a direct assault on Black life, these videos hardly change their minds. Even the man who filmed the Rodney King beating wasn't convinced that cops were all bad, and said he regretted the impact his video had on the Los Angeles police. Needless to say, overexposure to these brutal images also creates immense vicarious trauma for other Black people who empathize with these victims.



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Biden should deport illegal immigrants who refuse to leave Manhattan

New York needs a leader who can tell Biden to deport those migrants who refuse to play by the rules

New York City Mayor Eric Adams has had it with the migrants, and who can blame him? He and Gotham as a whole have bent over backwards to accommodate the flood of humanity unleashed by President Joe Biden's bumbling border policies. But some of those migrants are now laughing in our faces. Maybe, just maybe, it's time for him to call for some of these malcontents to be deported.

This week we saw full out protests, and the erection of yet another Bidenville tent city outside Midtown's Watson Hotel when ungrateful migrants were set to be moved to a facility at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal. Mind you these are some of the people who have been causing mayhem in these hotels, as widely reported throughout the media. Adams is now begging the federal government to help him out as the border crisis crashes into the five boroughs, he means money of course, but why not ask for real help? Why not ask that the federal government deport those single adult males who refuse to play by our

rather generous rules? One has to ask, are these genuine asylum seekers who would do anything to escape the punishing and unlawful conditions of their homeland, or tourists set to give Mayor Adams a poor Yelp review? What exactly is going on here?

Since the Biden administration has decided that just about anybody can claim asylum for just about any reason Hizzoner is stuck providing room service and X-Boxes to grown, single men. Sadly that may constitute assimilation in today's broken American society, but why won't Adams demand these people be shown the door? Deportation is the one solution to this problem that Democrats like Adams cannot abide. Oh, they'll evict migrants from Martha's Vineyard to an army base faster than you can say Cesar Chavez, but send them out of the country? That's supposedly inhumane. So where do Adams and his Democrat allies think the migrants should go? Some farm community in Idaho? The

Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia? Those locales didn't sign up to be sanctuary cities, New York did. Was that all just talk? As comedian Jerry Seinfeld once pointed out to a rental car clerk, anybody can just take reservations, the important part is holding the reservation. Well, now tens of thousands of people in the country on very questionable grounds are calling in their reservations, and Adams has no answers.

There is an answer, and it is obvious, it's the answer any of us would say to an unruly guest in our own home, "take what we are offering or leave." Most Americans have a story or two about their ancestors who arrived as immigrants. Whether those ancestors signed the Mayflower Compact or blew clarinet in a Jewish Lower East Side tenement, none of them were as coddled and cuddled as the not-so-huddled masses we see today. They got jobs on the docks, not hotel rooms. If Mayor Adams is serious about this problem, if he's worried

about the actual consequences and not just his political ambitions, then he should be calling for swift and decisive action. The most obvious answer, and frankly the one most likely demanded by our laws, is to deport those who refuse to accept our system and instead insist we handle their situation on their terms, not ours. The American people, even mostly liberal New Yorkers are not going to stand for this much longer. We don't get free hotel rooms, we don't get to dictate what our government provides for us, half the time we doubt we have any say at all. If Adams wants to lead he has a chance. If he wants to be a new voice in the Democrat Party then he can be. He can do it by demanding that Biden deport those migrants who refuse to play by the rules. This shouldn't be particularly controversial. If these young single men are truly escaping oppression then what New York is offering is a Godsend. If not, then it's time to leave. New York needs a leader who can say this and make it happen.

China's communists don't have food, so now they want to control ours

Home to 20 percent of the global population, but only 7 to 9 percent of the world's arable land, China is an extreme food shortage. To combat the crisis, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) devised a decades-long strategy of purchasing millions of acres of American farmland, livestock, seeds and food supply lines from the United States.

In fact, in ten years, Chinese ownership of U.S. farmland has jumped from \$81M in 2010 to \$1.8B in 2020. It doesn't take a top-secret security clearance to imagine the dangerous economic and national security implications of China maintaining undue leverage over U.S. food supply. Although food security isn't always at the top of defense and national security conversations, it should be.

In the coming days, members of Congress will reintroduce the Promoting Agriculture Safeguards and Security (PASS) Act. The legislation bans China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea from investing in or acquiring any land or business involved in American agriculture. It also adds the Secretary of Agriculture as a standing member of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) — which reviews transactions involving foreign investment in the U.S.

The PASS Act corrects a major vulnerability in American food security: there are currently no legal restrictions on foreign investments in U.S. agricultural land. Both



Republican and Democrat members of Congress ought not hesitate to pass this much-needed legislation to keep our food supply free of foreign control. After all, if Congress does not act—China will. Every year, China mounts a new challenge to American food security. In 2013, with the CCP's backing, Chinese company WH Group acquired Smithfield Foods — the largest pork producer in the United States. The acquisition marked China's largest purchase of a U.S. asset to date at \$4.7 billion. The acquisition included 146,000 acres of American farmland throughout North Carolina, Missouri, Utah, Virginia, Colorado, and Oklahoma. In one transaction, and with little pushback, the Chinese government gained significant leverage over American food supply infrastructure.

In Texas, one Chinese billionaire—with close ties to the CCP—bought over 140,000 acres of land. In fact, in 2020, he purchased a 15,000-acre

parcel of land in Val Verde County which is also home to Laughlin Air Force Base. With no interference from the American government, the Chinese bought land directly next to our premier training ground for military pilots. While the purchase caused a stir from then-Rep. Hurd who represents the district, existing law allowed the transaction. A year later, another Chinese company—Fufeng Group—with strong ties to the CCP bought land in Grand Forks, North Dakota for its new wet corn mill. Of course, the plot of land is located just 12 miles from Grand Forks Air Force Base—which houses some of the United States' top intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets. As one government report noted, "the location of the land close to the base is particularly convenient for monitoring air traffic flows in and out of the base, among other security-related concerns."

The American people deserve a

government that at least stops our enemies from buying our arable land—especially when such land is in close proximity to military facilities—and controlling our food supply. The flagrant disregard for serious national security concerns marks a betrayal of trust between the government and the people it is intended to serve. Congress must pass the PASS Act and prevent a national security crisis before it's too late. To be clear, it's not just Congress that has a role to play. We also need a Commander-in-Chief who will make American food and farmland security a priority. CFIUS—composed of nine Biden-appointed cabinet-level officials—must ratchet up the intensity of its review process for foreign investments. If Chinese purchases of strategic farmland doesn't warrant CFIUS' intervention, it's hard to imagine what does. And finally, state governments need to step up too. While policymakers in Texas and North Dakota are already taking action, so many other states should follow suit. State legislatures must pass legislation to develop necessary safeguards against foreign acquisition of strategic farmland. With cooperation at all levels of government, we can secure our food supply for generations. It doesn't always take top-secret, clandestine intelligence operations to understand what our enemies are planning next. Sometimes, the threats are right under our nose. It's about time our elected leaders started paying attention.

India Needs to Equip Itself for the Age of Quantum Cybersecurity



rapidly gaining and leading the quantum race, especially in the field of computing and communications, there is a need for increased focus on the particular field. India needs to provide more resources and funding for the conceptualisation, standardisation and development of 'quantum resistant cryptography' to ramp up its cybersecurity efforts.

FOCUS ON QUANTUM RESISTANT CRYPTOGRAPHY

Currently, the most commonly used cryptography model (and its different algorithms) remains the asymmetric/public-key encryption model. Public-key encryption uses a pair of keys, one for encrypting data and the other for decrypting it. The message is encoded using a public key, and it is decoded using a private key. Such encryption techniques like the RSA employ algorithms that permit the message to be decrypted by the legitimate holder of the private key. These keys are challenging for traditional computers to crack because information encoded for the recipient's public key can only be unlocked by his private key.

These encryption techniques will be rendered useless against a modern-day

quantum computer. Recent public-key cryptography techniques are predicated on the idea that while classical computers can compute enormous numbers, such as multiplying large prime numbers, they require years of processing to identify the factors of such a massive product. In other words, public-key cryptography is simple to use in one way but difficult to reverse. A professor at MIT, Peter Shor, devised a hypothesis in the 1990s that quantum computers could instantly divide huge numbers (integers) into their primes. This algorithm, known as Shor's Algorithm, describes the ability of such systems to break down complex encryption techniques in very short time periods.

Although the commercial capability of quantum computers remains out of reach currently, the pace at which technological developments have taken place in recent times showcases the urgency of the situation. While the number of quantum computers (almost all housed at research institutes or tech companies) is in its infancy and mostly used for only research purposes, it is time that 'post-quantum cryptography' is paid due diligence considering the

cybersecurity (especially offensive attacks on critical ICT infrastructure) vulnerabilities it poses.

US AND CHINA TAKING THE LEAD

In light of China's recent 'quantum leaps' and rising cross-border cyberattacks, the US has taken the first steps towards increasing its preparedness for post-quantum cryptography. The National Security Agency (NSA) developed the first set of quantum-resistant encryption algorithms known as the 'Suite B Quantum-Resistant Cryptography'. The National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) has also been engaged in developing a new set of encryption standards and tools to handle quantum computer attacks. Specifically, it has been working on combining four new encryption algorithms to form a new cryptographic standard by the year 2024. This has not been the only development in the US. In early January 2023, President Biden officially signed the Quantum Computing Cybersecurity Preparedness Act. This was aimed at all federal agencies to prioritise shifting to post-quantum encryption systems in light of future cyber threats from quantum computers.

(Contd on page 22)

Uddhav Thackeray And BJP - Talk Of A Re-Up Is Building

The BJP has begun overtures to Uddhav Thackeray seeking a do-over of the alliance that unspooled so dramatically in 2019. This is according to sources in both parties who I spoke to for this column. Governor BS Koshiyari's resignation -he had huge run-ins with the Opposition led by Thackeray- is seen as a significant gesture in this regard.

Eknath Shinde turned against Uddhav Thackeray in June, forcing the Sena to split. The exercise was enabled by the BJP and allowed it to return to power in Maharashtra with Shinde as Chief Minister; the BJP's Devendra Fadnavis had to reconcile to being subjugated to Deputy Chief Minister, a considerable comedown given that he was top boss from 2014 to 2019 when the BJP ran the state with Uddhav Thackeray.

Of late, the BJP in Maharashtra has been asking publicly for Fadnavis to return as Chief Minister, suggesting that ahead of the next general election, it will position its own man for the job that Shinde currently holds. Shinde himself is preoccupied with long-running tussles of power with Thackeray: who gets rights to the Sena party symbol, for example, and

more importantly, converting the cadre into treating him as the true holder of the legacy of Balasaheb Thackeray, who founded the Sena and was Uddhav's father.

What this means is that the Shinde-BJP alliance is in loosey-goosey mode barely 400 days to go for the general elections. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, running for a history-making third consecutive term, wants to take no chances with the 48 Lok Sabha seats of Maharashtra.

Sources tell me that the initial outreach to estranged ally Thackeray was via a billionaire industrialist trusted by both sides. Now a powerful BJP politician is hoping to move the operation to negotiations stage. Thackeray is less than enthused after his bitter experience with the BJP dismantling his party and the Maharashtra Vikas Agadi (MVA) government which he headed.

A big test for all players lies in the election to the financial capital's municipal corporation. Dates for this have yet to be announced but Thackeray, in a deft political move, announced this week that his faction of the Sena will combine with the political outfit of

Dalit leader Prakash Ambedkar. Thackeray said it was the coming together of the

"Bhim Shakti and Shiv Shakti to save democracy". Thackeray's other two allies, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress, share a voter base with Ambedkar's party. Yet, in a bid to keep Thackeray within the fold, they have offered no criticism of his new partner. Sources say Sharad Pawar was in the know of Thackeray's negotiations with Ambedkar and is fine with the add-on, provided that Ambedkar's share of candidates is carved out of the Sena's quota.

Interestingly, BJP central and BJP Maharashtra may be working at cross-purposes. Fadnavis, the reluctant Deputy, is getting impatient with his downsizing. Fadnavis has made the Maharashtra BJP in his own image and state leaders from the part want the Shinde Sena to merge with the BJP, which would allow the latter to claim the lion's share of positions. But the central BJP feels promoting Fadnavis at this time will eclipse the larger cause of concentrating whole-time on the approaching general election. It also knows that Fadnavis is an irritant for Uddhav.

The icy equation shared by Shinde and Fadnavis is currently the biggest fodder

for gossip in Mumbai with tales of two police commissioners being appointed and critics of Fadnavis accusing him taking unilateral decisions and making big announcements such as studying the viability of the Old Pension Scheme.

Shinde is chafing at all the Fadnavis moves and is still bitter at the public relations disaster of multibillion projects such as the Foxconn-Vedanta deal moving to Gujarat just before the elections there. Shinde projects himself as the little guy in opposition to Thackeray's dynast and a fierce protector of the "Marathi Manoos". This image has been severely dented. Multi billion projects going to Gujarat is a particularly bad look for the BJP in Maharashtra as the Maharashtra-Gujarat equation is freighted with bitter history and anxiety. Shinde is paranoid that members of his Sena are already in touch with Fadnavis. Some recent voter surveys have pointed to Maharashtra and Karnataka as the two states where the Opposition can make a dent in the BJP's winning spree. That could be the reason for the outreach - or the rumours of one - to Uddhav Thackeray.

Why Rahul Gandhi's Refusal to Engage with 'Mainstream' Media during Bharat Jodo Yatra is a case of Missed Opportunity



Congress. Rahul's bid to usher 'newness' in the party was stonewalled from leaders who actually drew strength from his mother Sonia Gandhi. Months before 2014 Lok Sabha, Rahul had deputed Madhusudan Mistry and his team to look for new candidates for 2014 Lok Sabha but a majority of names and recommendations given by Mistry did not even come up for a serious discussion at the AICC's Central Election Committee in the early months of 2014. It is also an open secret that Rahul did not want the party leadership to openly back Mallikarjun Kharge's candidature, but his advice went unattended.

Would Bharat Jodo Yatra and the 2024 general elections be further additions in the long list of missed opportunities or the Gandhi scion would turn the tables on critics? Last heard, Team Rahul now wishes to focus on 200 Lok Sabha seats for 2024 that would make or mar the grand old party. There is a growing

realisation that a third successive defeat would signal the end of Nehru-Gandhi hegemony and result in 'Janata-Dal-isation' of the Congress. The latest poll survey by a channel and pollster, if the general elections are held today, the BJP would win 284 Lok Sabha seats and that 67 percent of survey respondents were 'satisfied' with the Narendra Modi government's performance regardless of the issues such as lack of jobs, economic crisis, threat from China etc. It is easy to dismiss and even mock the survey and the prime-time news channel, attach motives or even term the mood of the nation as a fictitious exercise. But deep down, are not the Congress leaders of all hues and shades worried, uncertain and nervous about 2024? The survey has predicted 68 Lok Sabha seats for the Congress if the elections are held today. Bizarre and paradoxical as it may sound, but a section of

the party leaders and well-wishers consider this as somewhat a comforting figure, and better than their internal assessment which varies between 37 to 50. In 2019, the bulk of the Congress Lok Sabha seats had come from Kerala [15], Tamil Nadu [8] and Punjab [8]. In 17 states and union territories, the Congress had not even opened its account. Almost in all seats that the Congress won with a margin of over two lakhs and more, these verdicts came from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. As the Bharat Jodo Yatra comes to end, Rahul has consciously avoided giving interviews to the mainstream media, i.e. prime time TV news channels, leading newspapers, regional press and digital platforms. While it is commendable that he held 13 press conferences, fielded all questions, he only gave interviews to influencers and bloggers popular on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter.

(Contd. on page 21)

For many, the curious case of Rahul Gandhi's 'disengagement' with the 'mainstream media' during his mammoth Bharat Jodo Yatra is a case of missed opportunity. In fact, throughout the 19-year-old political stint, Rahul has been arriving early and late on formulating strategies or implementing them. For instance, Rahul spent far too many years between 2006 and 2013, in trying to democratise the Youth Congress and the NSUI. As an unconventional politician, he had fancied himself as a reformer, catalyst, etc, but his act of tearing off a UPA affidavit boomeranged. In the modest opinion of this columnist, the idea of opposing a proposed legislation to allow convicted politicians was not an affront to the good doctor, prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh. It came to haunt Rahul and the Congress as the Gandhi scion failed to keep tainted politicians Ashok Chavan and Suresh Kalmadi out of the list of party nominees for the 2014 Lok Sabha. I have always maintained that the history of the Congress is drastically different from the story of the

Kashmir: The Change Has Just Begun

It is time to look at Jammu and Kashmir beyond the statistics of violence. The real change on the ground is reflected in overall development and the social milieu.

The statistics reflect a significant fall in terrorist incidents since the revocation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. This thaw in the frozen turbulence has given time for people to ponder, rethink and reinvent their lives. The change is here to stay because it is coming from within.

The priorities of the people of Kashmir have taken a turn. Stone pelting and hartals are passé. People are participating and pursuing art, sports and other interests as never before. There are demands for better roads, infrastructure, power supply and facilities for education, health and sports. People are raising issues of corruption, delay in delivery of services and demanding avenues for employment – a sign of trust in democratic institutions. The regional newspapers are capturing Kashmiri society's newfound aspirations. The Central government's approach towards dealing with the lingering problem after the repeal of Article 370 may have scripted the turnaround. Kashmir has always been the hotbed of Pakistan-peddled terrorism and this has had forced successive governments to look for a solution through the prism of security. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, known for

taking tough decisions, has decided to go whole hog to decimate terror infrastructure and isolate terrorists. He is backing his larger vision of a progressive Kashmir with a multi-pronged approach which goes much beyond security and rests on socio, economic and political paradigm.

Modi's choice to lead this transformation in Kashmir reveals it all. Breaking from the past where we have seen bureaucrats and defence experts as the choice of the Central government, Modi

has settled for a thorough professional politician from the heartland of politics for implementing his vision for a holistic lasting solution for Kashmir. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has followed the policy of zero tolerance against terrorists, separatists and their ecosystem, but that is just the precondition for his prime objective of setting up of the stage for connecting to people. And he has struck a balance. He has not hesitated in awarding ex gratia compensation and seeking inquiry on reports of alleged killing of civilians by the army.

Sinha has often emphasized that it was not just the responsibility of police and security forces to establish peace. It also required participation of the civil administration and every stakeholder of the community. Sinha launched the 'My Town My Pride' and 'Back to Village'

programmes which, in his own words, was to connect with the stakeholders to achieve "inclusive development, Jan Bhagidari and public awareness". The massive public outreach

programme, in which high ranking government officials at times even spend their nights in the villages, has led to fulfillment of basic needs of the people. The belongingness has now emboldened people to insist on authorities to deliver on promises. It is business as normal, despite sporadic attempts by terrorists to disturb peace and communal harmony in certain regions of Jammu and Kashmir. The end of the era of hartals, bandhs and stone pelting signifies vanishing influence of terrorists, separatists and their sympathizers on the masses. That anti-

national elements are feeling wounded in the new democratic polity has led to some desperate attempts in the recent past.

The government has reciprocated in equal measure. It has brought in investments, promoted industry and business opportunities, provided facilities for skill development and greater opportunities for pursuing medical, fashion and other professional courses.

Jammu and Kashmir has seen over 1.88 crore tourists' visit last year which is unparalleled since independence.

The effort at dismantling the terror ecosystem with strict vigilance, suffocating finance and identifying informers and sympathizers who have infiltrated into government systems is now paying dividends. The society is purged of the shadow of uncertainty and this is reflected in the social psyche. People are participating in sports and adventure activities like never before. The equal participation of women in conflict area is the social indicator of empowerment. Reports of women participating in soccer, rugby and adventure sports are green shoots of things to come. Kashmir is mainstreaming today by boasting of women rappers and hip hoppers. This can be contrasted with the pathetic reverse witnessed with Taliban taking over Afghanistan.



Israelis missed an opportunity, again

Israel's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abba Eban, famously quipped that the Palestinians "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Ironically, Eban's sentiment is more reflective of Bibi Nethanyahu's Israel today.

On Sunday, the Pope deplored a spiral of death as violence between Israelis and the Palestinians worsens. On Saturday, a 13-year-old Palestinian boy shot and injured two Israelis near a settlement in East Jerusalem, the day after a Palestinian gunman killed seven people outside a synagogue in the city. Arguably, the Israeli raid on Jenin in the West Bank last week, killing at least nine Palestinians, ignited this latest round of violence. It did not have to be this way. The U.S. — particularly our team at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Security Coordinator — gave the Israeli government a decade-long opportunity to reduce tensions in, of all places, Jenin. More importantly, we forged the political space to build a more peaceful, enduring coexistence between the Israeli and Palestinian people. Yet, the Netanyahu government missed this remarkable opportunity, failing to envision a reality that protected Israeli citizens while meeting Palestinian political aspirations. Here is the story.

During the Second Intifada, Jenin was the most dangerous city in the West Bank and arguably more dangerous than Gaza City. Sometimes called "the Martyrs' Capital," Jenin was home to at least 28 suicide bombers responsible for killing



124 Israelis. In April 2002, as part of the largest military operation since the 1967 War, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) entered Jenin in a bloody 10 day battle. Despite the Israeli offensive, militant activities in the refugee camps were so intense that suicide bombings continued well into the mid-2000s.

Soon after the Ariel Sharon government evacuated four settlements near Jenin in 2005, we worked with the Israeli military, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and the Palestinian private sector to open markets, facilitate trade, and promote commerce at the Jalameh crossing, just north of Jenin city.

First, we encouraged Palestinian traders to ship goods to high-end Israeli markets and across the globe through Haifa port. Second, we worked to deploy better trained and more professional PA security services to reduce crime and militant influence. Later, we negotiated

with Israel's security establishment to allow access for Israeli Arabs to drive into Jenin to eat at restaurants, repair their cars, or buy furniture all while maintaining adequate and efficient security. Indeed, with 929,000 vehicles entering from Israel in 2018. This brought in \$344 million a year on average. The then-Israeli Mayor of Gilboa and the Palestinian Governor of Jenin joined together to champion trade and cooperation.

Unemployment in Jenin — at Gaza levels as late as 2007 — fell by close to 60 percent; the business community prospered; the streets of Jenin became safe, and the PA improved health care and education. Perhaps most strikingly, almost none of the lone wolf attackers in 2014 were from Jenin.

The Americans provided \$10 million in assistance for the Jalameh trading corridor, leveraging annually hundreds of millions of dollars of sustained, private

sector trade that fundamentally changed the economic, security, and social fabric of the northern West Bank for a decade. The Jalameh pilot proved the theory: sustained economic well-being could create the space to negotiate a political settlement between the parties. For well over a decade, Israeli politicians pocketed this stability. In exchange, they offered nothing — nothing to their citizens, the Palestinians in the West Bank, or to the Americans who had funded this decade of stability and security.

Seeing the success of the Jalameh crossing, IDF senior leaders believed it could be replicated in Tulkarem and Qalqilya, two Palestinian cities in the northern West Bank without jobs, hope, or a future. The IDF pushed to establish additional crossings along the Green Line — but were shut down by the Netanyahu government. Most recently, the Netanyahu government sought to reestablish the four settlements Ariel Sharon evacuated a generation ago, effectively messaging to the Jenin Governorate that a decade of stability was meaningless. At the height of the Second Intifada, Jenin was dangerous and deadly. We carefully, laboriously, and diplomatically tested a sustainable model of economic integration, reasonably effective governance, and shared security from the ground up. With a nod to Abba Eban, the Israelis missed a rare opportunity to reshape their neighborhood and the broader Middle East.

Veto Russia's UN veto

Two years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, in a televised ceremony honoring young geographers, Vladimir Putin quizzed a boy about where Russia's borders end. "At the Bering Strait with the United States," the 9-year-old ventured hesitantly. "The borders of Russia," Putin declared, "never end." (Thunderous applause.) "It was a joke," Putin then added. Russia's border is longer than the circumference of the earth. The faux "federation" occupies fully one-third of Asia. Only one of its sub-regions is larger than France, Spain, Japan, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Greece, Sweden and North Korea, combined. And the European part is larger than Turkey and India, also combined — 40 percent of continental Europe. Russia needs Lebensraum? Its invasion of Ukraine is not just a crime of aggression, an illegal war that

subsumes war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. It's explicitly and proudly a war of extinction against a founding member of the United Nations. The country whose independence helped "make America great again" by winning the Cold War is now a death pit. Add the resulting global food, energy, refugee, financial and economic disaster for all. The UN was founded to prevent the invasion and ensuing synthesis of horrors, its Security Council having "the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security." But abject Western fealty to the veto of a terrorist state interring the "rules-based international order" continues.

Using the UN's credentials procedure is one way to dispose of Russia's vote. It was used previously — effectively — to kick out Taiwan and South Africa.

Since it's a "procedural matter," under the UN Charter, Russia's purported veto right wouldn't come into play.

Or, expel Russia by vote of the General Assembly. The long-held interpretation of the relevant Article 6 has been that this cannot be done without the Security Council first recommending expulsion, which means a Russian veto. But there is an argument that that is not necessary. Regardless, even if such recommendation is required, a Russia veto would not be determinative since the UN Charter sidelines a party (Russia) to a dispute.

But contortions around Russia's veto power necessarily concedes the very legitimacy of its membership. Ukraine's position avoids the calisthenics and gets to the very core of it all. The League of Nations kicked out the Soviet Union after its invasion of Finland, even though the



USSR was a member. But Russia is not a UN member. It never should have been one in the first place. It's not a question of overriding its veto; non-members don't get a veto. Admitting a new member to the UN requires a decision by the General Assembly. There was no such decision. Article 23 lists the Permanent Members of the Security Council. Russia is not mentioned; the USSR is but it hasn't existed since December 1991. Consider that the General Assembly voted to recognize the communist regime in Beijing (not the government in Taiwan) as the

"legitimate" government of "China." If there's a vote to determine which government rules, certainly there must be a vote if a country (Russia) purports to occupy the seat of an entirely different (and defunct) state (USSR) with a vastly different territory, population, etc. But there was no such vote. Russia presented no credentials to the UN Credentials Committee. The committee had nothing to approve. If the UN both represents and (we're told) enforces the "rules-based international order," then how about enforcing its own rules?

(Contd. on page 20)

USAID's largest-ever foreign assistance package doubles down on colonial aid

USAID is on the verge of allocating \$17 billion in contracts for global health. This will be the agency's largest-ever commitment to an aid program that nearly everyone agrees is broken. Rather than continuing with this colonial model of aid, we need to press pause on the current contract designs, reissue new calls for proposals and seize the opportunity for real reform that spends money smarter.

USAID's "Next Generation Global Health Supply Chain" contracts could hasten many countries' transition from a relationship with the United States defined by aid to one built on mutually-beneficial trade. The laudable goal is to help low- and middle-income countries access essential health commodities like HIV tests and malaria medications. But as currently written, the contracts threaten local markets by displacing businesses that are already operating effectively. Travel to any country in Africa, Asia or Latin America and you'll find dozens of companies transforming global supply chains and increasing access to health care for hundreds of millions of people. For example, mPharma, owner of Africa's largest pharmacy network, is rapidly increasing access across the continent to health care professionals and life-saving medications, including in remote communities.

These are the kinds of companies USAID Administrator Samantha Power was talking about more than a year ago when she described a "new vision" for global development focused on

getting more resources to organizations in a position to drive better, cheaper and more sustainable impact. They're also the kinds of firms the U.S. Development Finance Corporation invests in. But USAID's Next Generation contracts don't leverage any of these kinds of innovative companies that can deliver on Power's mission. Instead, they are anti-competitive deals for the dozen or so government contractors that have won most of the agency's business since the 1960s. One contract to provide in-country logistics services actually directs firms to budget just 25 percent of the total contract value for any in-country supply chain providers; the winning government contractor can take the rest.

Another technology-focused contract restricts eligibility to apply to pre-approved government vendors, precluding the world's best tech firms from even submitting a bid.

No next-generation company could ever compete directly for a dollar of any of these "Next Generation" awards. Nor should they count on a subcontract, either. Seventy-three percent of firms that have tried to work with USAID's largest contractors report that big aid contractors routinely

cut them out of promised work, a pervasive problem that Power has acknowledged but the agency has not addressed.

USAID says its "overarching" objective is to "help countries become self-reliant, thus ending the need for foreign



assistance." But these Next Generation awards will instead perpetuate dependence on foreign aid by putting contractors in the position of running other countries' health supply chains. This \$17 billion project is a continuation of a \$10.5 billion one before that, which was a \$2.5 billion one before that. Billions of dollars in a string of awards dating back to the 1960s have been used to pay salaries, overhead and rent for office parks in Virginia and Maryland rather than making an impact in the countries where it is intended. That makes it hard to call this "foreign" assistance. Worse, the vast majority of this \$17 billion taxpayer-funded project will pay contractors to perform activities instead of deliver results. A 2019 USAID inspector general report

chastised the agency for paying contractors in full even when they failed to deliver results — yet USAID has designed these Next Generation awards to do it again.

If Power really wants to reform foreign assistance (and I believe she does), she must get in the weeds. Procurement, with its mind-numbing jargon, jaw-droppingly expensive systems requirements and years-long payment schedule, prohibits innovation. It's where ambitious reform goes to die. African nations in particular are understandably frustrated with our track record, including our shortsighted response to the pandemic. Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.) told Power last year that countries abstaining or voting against us on UN resolutions is meant as a wake-up call about "our failure, our lack of delivery on vaccines [and] humanitarian relief." He added, "I am convinced that many African countries would still prefer to be close partners with the United States, but they view us as unreliable. We have a moment where we could make that right." Rather than perpetuate another decade of broken development, these contracts are our chance to transform aid, encourage innovation and help low- and middle-income countries work toward economic independence. These contracts could be streamlined and structured to boost markets rather than gutting them with anti-competitive funds. Last month, during the U.S.-Africa Summit, President Biden outlined "a forward-looking foundation for a 21st century partnership between Africa and the United States." Let's be that partner.

Four principles for crypto regulation

There was a substantial surge in the market capitalization of cryptocurrencies recently, reaching nearly \$3 trillion in 2021 but collapsing to under \$1 trillion by the end of 2022. We also witnessed fraudulent behavior by many bad actors, from Terra (Luna) to FTX.

Any asset has fluctuations, and the fraudulent behavior was not due to an inherent flaw in distributed ledger technologies (DLTs) but rather bad governance and an absence of a predictable and reasonable regulatory framework. In fact, nearly all the fraudulent behavior took place offshore, at least in part because most cryptocurrency



companies have viewed the U.S. regulatory framework as too confusing or ambiguous to set up shop.

Distributed ledger technologies, often referred to as "web3" (or the new generation of the internet for short), use the blockchain to provide ways for users to access, record and validate activity digitally. Although the process is not always fully decentralized, or "permissionless," blockchain is an enabling technology for collaboration and economic activity often among many, geographically disparate people. Web3 tools include cryptocurrencies.

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Peshawar mosque blast toll rises to 90. What has happened so far

The Peshawar mosque explosion has so far claimed 90 lives, while more than 50 people are still hospitalised. The suicide bomber appeared to have passed through several barricades to reach the mosque premises.



also included 27 police officials. The explosion was reported a day before an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission to Islamabad to initiate talks on unlocking funding for the South Asian country's economy, which is enduring a balance of payments crisis.

PESHAWAR MOSQUE BLAST - HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED

At nearly 1.40 pm on Monday, a suicide bomber blew himself up inside a crowded mosque in a highly fortified security compound in Pakistan's Peshawar. The attacker appeared to have passed through several barricades manned by

security forces to get into the "Red Zone" compound that houses police and counter-terrorism offices.

The initial death toll was 17, while scores of other people were hospitalised with serious injuries. Videos showed chaotic scenes as the police and the rescuers scrambled to rush the wounded to hospitals.

The explosion brought down the upper storey of the mosque, trapping dozens of worshippers in the rubble. Rescuers struggled to cut through the collapsed rooftop to make their way down and tend to victims caught in the wreckage.

Local Taliban known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, an umbrella group of Sunni and sectarian militant groups, denied responsibility. "Tehreek-e-Taliban has nothing to do with this attack," the TTP said in a statement. An inquiry was underway into how the attacker breached such an elite security cordon and whether there was any inside help. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack, saying, "The sheer scale of the human tragedy is unimaginable. This is no less than an attack on Pakistan, I have no doubt terrorism is our foremost national security challenge."

(News Agency) The death toll in the Pakistan mosque explosion has surged to 90. According to a hospital spokesperson in Peshawar, 57 people injured in the blast which took place on Monday, are still being treated for their injuries. Nearly 400 worshippers were present inside the mosque in Peshawar when a suicide bomber blew himself up. The deceased

Bangladesh secures \$4.7bn from IMF as other South Asian countries see delays

(News Agency) The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved loans of \$4.7 billion to Bangladesh for disbursement starting immediately, making it the first to secure such funds out of three South Asian countries that applied last year amid economic trouble.

The loans are a win for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina ahead of a general election early next year and will help the country, which has seen a sharp widening of its current account deficit, depreciation of the taka currency and a decline in its foreign exchange reserves. Bangladesh will get about \$3.3bn under the IMF's extended credit facility and related arrangements, with an immediate disbursement of about \$476 million. The IMF executive board also approved about \$1.4bn under its newly created Resilience and Sustainability Facility for climate investments for Bangladesh, the first Asian country to access it. The IMF said the loans will "protect macroeconomic stability and rebuild buffers, while helping to advance the authorities' reform agenda". The agenda includes creating fiscal space to enable greater social and developmental spending, strengthening Bangladesh's financial sector, boosting fiscal and governance reforms and building climate resilience. "Since independence, Bangladesh has made steady progress in reducing poverty and significant improvements in living standards," Antoinette M. Sayeh, the IMF's deputy managing director, said in a statement.

"However, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent Russia's war in Ukraine interrupted this long period of robust economic performance," Sayeh added. Multiple shocks have made macroeconomic management challenging in Bangladesh. The country last year also sought \$2bn from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank amid efforts to bolster its foreign exchange reserves. Bangladesh's regional counterparts, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, are doing much worse economically but have not been able to get final approval for IMF loans.

Pakistan braces for fuel shortages amid liquidity crisis

(News Agency) Pakistan could face a crunch in fuel supplies in February as banks have stopped financing and facilitating payments for imports due to depleting foreign exchange reserves, traders and industry sources said.

The country is facing a balance of payments crisis and the plummeting value of the rupee is pushing up the price of imported goods. Energy comprises a large chunk of the import bill.

Pakistan typically meets more than a third of its annual power demand using imported natural gas, prices for which shot up following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"There is no shortage this fortnight. If we don't have LCs (letters of credit) open right now, we might see shortages in the next fortnight," a senior official at one of the oil companies told Reuters. A letter of credit issued by the importer's banks is a standard form of payment guarantee in the oil trade to the exporter.

Oil traders, however, are shunning countries such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka due to an acute shortfall of foreign exchange. Pakistan on Sunday raised petrol and diesel prices by 16 per cent to Rs249.80 a litre and is in talks with the International Monetary Fund to unlock a suspended bailout package. State-owned refiner Pakistan State Oil (PSO) and Pakistan LNG Ltd have left a flurry of fuel tenders unawarded in the last couple of months. At an



industry meeting on financial challenges faced by fuel importers, State Bank of Pakistan officials cited "severe liquidity issues" faced by the country for delays in the opening of LCs, according to a Jan 19 letter from Imran Ahmed, director general of oil, reviewed by Reuters.

At the same meeting, the managing director of PSO said a gasoline cargo due for loading on Jan 13 has already been cancelled due to the non-opening of LCs. "He added that the country is having limited stocks and such a situation can lead to dry out," according to the letter. Previously, the Oil Companies Advisory Council (OCAC), representing refining, pipeline, and marketing companies, also flagged that delays in the opening of LCs could "lead to a fuel shortage in the country". In a Jan 13 letter to the Ministry of Finance, OCAC said Pakistan needs to import around 430,000 tonnes of gasoline, 200,000 tonnes of diesel, and 650,000 tonnes of crude oil every month, costing \$1.3 billion to

meet local demand. "If LCs are not established on a timely basis, critical imports of petroleum products would be impacted which may lead to a fuel shortage in the country," the OCAC said. Pakistan bought only 223,000 tonnes of gasoline in December versus 608,000 tonnes in the same period a year earlier, data from Kpler showed. In January this year, the country was projected to import 270,000 tonnes of the fuel, compared with 393,000 tonnes in the same month in 2022, the data showed.

Some banks have denied delays in issues of LCs, while SBP did not respond to a Reuters email seeking comment. "If there are no issues with LCs in Pakistan then why have the SBP and sector been holding meetings all of last week?" a senior official from one of the oil companies said. PSO said last week it was ensuring a seamless supply of gasoline and oil across the country and had ample stocks. It also said its import cargoes were arriving smoothly as planned.

Support to IMF's \$2.9-bn bailout for Sri Lanka helps India firm up standing in island nation

India's move has forced China also to support the debt revamp plan for Sri Lanka

(News Agency) India's decision as the first bilateral lender to inform the International Monetary Fund (IMF) about its support for Sri Lanka's debt restructuring plan to help it secure a \$2.9-billion bailout package from the global lending agency has raised Delhi's political stock significantly in the island. But it has also put its regional rival China in a spot.

A reflection of the Indian popularity and appreciation of its decision was visible at the function of the Republic Day celebrations at the Indian High Commissioner Gopal Baglay's official residence in Colombo on Thursday. More than 1,000 guests attended the reception that included the former president and prime minister of Sri Lanka, Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Mahinda Rajapaksa respectively, plus more than half the cabinet members of the Sri Lankan government and other business and political leaders.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe did not come for the reception but he attended a musical function that was organised

as part of the Republic Day celebrations a few days back. Sri Lankan High Commissioner Milinda Moragoda in Delhi articulated his country's sentiment in an interview and said the social fallout of the economic crisis in his country would have been much worse if India had not acted swiftly. He felt India's help would minimise any trust deficit in future. The Indian decision was made public when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Colombo on January 20. The announcement has now forced China also to express its support for a debt restructuring plan for Sri Lanka. For Colombo to get the bailout package, Beijing's official support for the debt



restructuring plan is essential. Sri Lanka requires the backing of China, Japan and India ? its biggest bilateral lenders ? to reach a final agreement with the IMF on the bailout package that is essential to put its battered economy back on track. Japan is part of the Paris Club creditor nations — a grouping of rich countries, which has also expressed support for Colombo in its debt restructuring plan.

Sri Lanka, a country with a population of 22 million people, is facing its worst

economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948. Policy makers in Colombo have been grappling with multiple challenges over the past year including a shortage of dollars, runaway inflation and steep recession. According to the China Africa Research Initiative, Sri Lanka owed Chinese lenders \$7.4 billion by the end of last year. New Delhi provided Colombo with about \$4 billion in rapid assistance between January and July in 2022, including credit lines, a currency swap arrangement, and also supply of fuel and other essential items. India and China are also Sri Lanka's two biggest trade partners, accounting for about \$5 billion each in bilateral trade in 2021. Colombo had reached an arrangement with the IMF in September last year after agreeing to usher in tax reforms and changes to the way electricity is priced to revive its moribund economy. But it is still awaiting IMF board approval as Sri Lanka needs financing assurances from its three biggest bilateral creditors.

Pakistan's forex reserves with central bank drop to \$3.1 billion

(News Agency) ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank decreased by 16. 1% to \$3. 1 billion in the week ending January 27, the

Limited (AHL) calculated that the reserves are at their lowest since February 2014 and now only cover 18 days worth of imports, the lowest the import cover has been since 1998.

"The country is in dire need of fresh inflows and the resumption of the IMF programme as soon as possible to avoid the crisis," Tahir Abbas, head of research at AHL said.

Cash-strapped Pakistan on Tuesday held talks with the IMF in a bid to unlock funds from a \$7 billion bailout designed to ward off economic meltdown. The talks, to

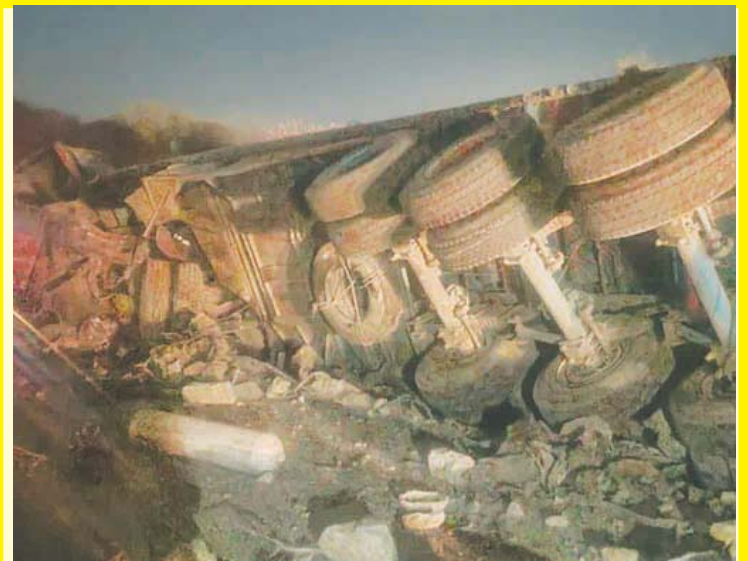
continue through February 9, are meant to clear the IMF's 9th review of its Extended Fund Facility, aimed at helping countries with balance-of-payments crises. The lender had set several conditions for resuming the bailout, including a market-determined exchange rate for the local currency and an easing of fuel subsidies. The central bank recently removed a cap on exchange rates and the government raised fuel prices by 16%. During Thursday trading, the rupee lost 0. 93% in the interbank market, closing at a new historic low of 271. 36 rupees against the US dollar, according to state bank data. The rupee also dropped 0. 18% in the open market. Overall, the rupee is down 24. 51% over the fiscal year that began in July.



State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said on Thursday, which analysts said covers less than three weeks of imports. The country is locked in negotiations with the IMF to release much-needed money under a stalled bailout programme. A successful outcome with the IMF would also help to release money from other platforms that are looking for a greenlight from the lender.

The central bank said in a statement that the drop in reserves was due to external debt repayments. Reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$5. 7 billion, taking total liquid reserves in the country to \$8. 7 billion, SBP added. Local investment firm Arif Habib

17 people killed in bus-truck crash in northwest Pakistan: Official



(News Agency) A head-on collision between a Rehmat Ullah said. TV passenger bus and a footage showed images of speeding truck trailer near a the destroyed bus. Azam Khan, the caretaker chief minister in the province, has expressed his deep sorrow and grief over the tragic accident. On Sunday, a passenger bus crashed into a pillar and fell off a bridge in Kohat district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to the local emergency official and people. Deadly accidents are common in Pakistan due to poor road infrastructure and transported all the dead and injured to a hospital in a disregard for traffic laws.

French protests intensify against pension age rise



(News Agency) France has seen a second wave of protests and strikes against President Emmanuel Macron's plans to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64.

Anti-government corteges were as loud and as big, if not louder and bigger than on the first day of action.

The interior ministry said more than 1.27 million people protested, a higher figure than 12 days ago.

Eight key unions took part in the strike, which disrupted schools, public transport and oil refineries. The CGT trade union said half a million protesters had gathered in Paris alone, although authorities put the number at 87,000, and the union put the total number across France as high as 2.8 million. But for all the mass mobilisation, it is still far from clear if the protesters can force Mr Macron to back down. The government can withstand any number of "days of action" like this so long as they take place along the predictable and orderly lines that they have so far.

Mr Macron's government is pushing ahead with its pension age reforms in the face of opinion polls that suggest two-thirds of voters are opposed to the changes, which begin their passage through the National Assembly next week.

Without a majority in parliament, the government will have to rely on the right-wing Republicans for support as much as the ruling parties' own MPs.

Hours before the main protest began in the Place d'Italie in central Paris, thousands of marchers turned out in Toulouse, Marseille and Nice in the south, and Saint Nazaire, Nantes and Rennes in the west. A reported 11,000 police were deployed to cover the demonstrations taking place in more than 200 towns and cities. Some skirmishes were reported at the end of the Paris route in Place Vauban and 30 people were arrested. The interior minister praised police for their handling of the protests.

"Mr Macron is certain to lose," far-left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon told reporters in

Marseille. "Nobody wants his reforms, and the more the days go by, the greater the opposition to them."

Karima, 62, held up a placard in Paris highlighting that the government's plans hurt women far more than men: "Lots of us already have broken careers and will have to work even longer than men in order to have a full pension." There was severe

disruption to transport, with three-quarters of trains outside Paris cancelled and only two driverless metro lines operating normally in Paris. Large crowds were reported on one of the main overground lines in the capital. Transport strikes no longer have the capacity to throttle France like they used to. The proportion of public sector workers on strike was actually lower on Tuesday than on 19 January - a sign, presumably, of a fear of lost wages.

The CGT union said at least three-quarters of workers had walked out at the big TotalEnergies oil refineries and fuel depots, although the company said the number was far lower. Power plants reported reduced production after workers went on strike at the main electricity company EDF.

One of the main teachers' unions said some 55% of secondary school teachers had walked out, although the government said the figure was just over a quarter. High school pupils staged protests outside some schools

and students said they would occupy Sciences Po university in Paris in support of the strikers.

"A lot of French people feel that working is more and more painful. It's not that they don't want to work, they don't want to work in these conditions," Sciences Po political scientist Bruno Palier told the BBC. There was also evidence that while raising the state pension age was a unifying call to arms, people were turning out for wider reasons, too. A male nurse said he was there because conditions in public hospitals had become intolerable. Teachers are angry at the state of schools. Mr Macron the bogeyman was pilloried in cartoon and effigy. For the president and for Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, that is a good argument for sticking to their guns: letting the people work off their anger, which is really just an expression of their powerlessness in the face of remorseless and incomprehensible change.



As US mulls TikTok ban, CEO Shou Zi Chew to testify before Congress

TikTok Chief Executive Shou Zi Chew will testify before the US Energy and Commerce Committee in March, as lawmakers scrutinize the Chinese-owned video-sharing app over national security concerns.



(News Agency) TikTok Chief Executive Shou Zi Chew will appear before the US Energy and Commerce Committee in March, as lawmakers scrutinize the Chinese-owned video-sharing app. Chew will testify before the committee on March 23, which will be his first appearance before a congressional committee, said Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers, the Republican chair of the panel, in a statement on Monday. The news comes as the House Foreign Affairs Committee plans to hold a vote next month on a bill aimed at blocking the use of TikTok in the United States over national security concerns. "ByteDance-owned TikTok has knowingly allowed the ability for the Chinese Communist Party to access American user data," McMorris Rodgers said, adding that Americans deserve to know how

these actions impact their privacy and data security. TikTok confirmed on Monday Chew will testify. "We welcome the opportunity to set the record straight about TikTok, ByteDance, and the commitments we are making to address concerns about US national security before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce," a company spokesperson said, adding the company hopes "by sharing details of our comprehensive plans with the full committee, Congress can take a more deliberative approach to the issues at hand." The company also said "there is no truth to Rep. McMorris Rodgers' claim that TikTok has made US user data available to the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese Communist Party has neither direct nor indirect control of ByteDance or TikTok."

Bolsonaro asks for US visa

(News Agency) Former Brazilian leader Jair Bolsonaro has asked the U.S. for a six-month tourist visa to continue his stay in the country, while officials in Brazil deal with the fallout of the violent right wing protests in the capital city earlier this month.

Bolsonaro applied for the visa last week, which was first reported by the Financial Times. The former Brazilian president has been in the U.S. since just days before his term ended late last year. The immigration firm

representing Bolsonaro, AG Immigration, confirmed to The Hill that he has applied for a six-month visa in the U.S.

But Bolsonaro is facing a number of investigations back home stemming from his time in office. In the wake of the riots in Brasilia, the capital city, earlier this month, a number of U.S. lawmakers have called on the federal government to stop allowing Bolsonaro refuge in the country.

Dozens of House Democrats

called on the Biden administration this month to revoke the diplomatic visa that Bolsonaro may have been staying in the country with, as he entered when he was still president of Brazil. "The United States must not provide shelter for him, or any authoritarian who has inspired such violence against democratic institutions," the letter, signed by 46 House Democrats, said. The protests in Brasilia this month saw supporters of Bolsonaro breach



the country's Congress, Supreme Court and the presidential palace. Bolsonaro has long questioned the validity of Brazil's democratic elections and refused to fully concede his defeat to new Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Bolsonaro is also being investigated for whether he played any role in the uprising in the capital this month.

Seventh Memphis officer suspended in Tyre Nichols death investigation



(SAI Bureau) The Memphis Police Department (MPD) has announced a seventh officer has been suspended as the investigation into Tyre Nichols's death continues.

The officer, who has not been

identified, was relieved of duty on Jan. 8, the day after Nichols was reportedly stopped for reckless driving and severely beaten. Graphic video footage of the incident was released on Friday. The footage showed an

initial stop of Nichols, where officers immediately attempted to pull him from his car and proceeded to tase him before he escaped and ran away. When five other Memphis officers, who are all Black, caught up to him, they can be seen deploying pepper spray and a stun gun against Nichols and repeatedly punching and kicking him as he was yelling for his mother. News of the seventh officer's suspension comes after the department identified Preston Hemphill, a white officer hired in 2018, for his involvement in the initial stop of Nichols. "Officer Hemphill's actions and involvement has been under investigation as he participated in the initial traffic

stop and the use of a TASER," the department said in a statement posted to Twitter. News of both Hemphill and the seventh officer's involvement was delayed as MPD investigated the five officers directly involved in beating Nichols, leaving him with serious injuries that eventually lead to his death on Jan. 10. "The MPD's team of Internal Affairs investigators prioritized interviewing officers and witnesses related to the second scene first, where the most egregious aspects of the incident occurred," the statement said. "Officer Preston Hemphill and other officer's actions and inactions have been and continue to be

the subject of this investigation since its inception on January 8, 2023." The five officers initially named in the incident — Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Emmitt Martin III, Desmond Mills Jr. and Justin Smith — were fired on Jan. 20 and have since been indicted on second-degree murder charges. In addition to the seven officers, the Memphis Fire Department announced on Monday that it had terminated two emergency medical technicians and a lieutenant for violating numerous policies and protocols in their response to the scene. MPD said it expects "the next phase of personnel action" to come in the following days.

Biden administration unveils new green card design with eye on enhanced security

(SAI Bureau) The Biden administration released a new design for Permanent Resident Cards, also known as green cards, and Employment Authorization Documents (EADs), adding a series of new security measures for the immigration documents. The new cards will be issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as of Monday; older cards will remain valid until their expiration date. "This redesign further demonstrates USCIS' commitment to taking a proactive approach against the threat of secure document tampering, counterfeiting, and fraud," said USCIS Director Ur Jaddou in a statement.

"Consistent updates to secure documents, informed by our knowledge of the latest methods of bad actors and the innovation and ingenuity of our staff, ensure the continued integrity of secure documents issued by our agency." Permanent Resident

Cards and EADs serve as proof of authorization to work in the United States for qualifying immigrants.

Green cards are granted to legal permanent residents, a majority of whom are eligible to apply for citizenship. EADs are granted to foreign nationals who can work but don't have a temporary work visa, such as recently graduated higher education students, green card applicants, asylum-seekers and refugees. According to the Department of Homeland Security, there are almost 13 million legal permanent residents in the United States — that number declined by 1.7 percent from 2021 to 2022 as more permanent residents chose to pursue naturalization.

The new green cards and EADs will have "improved detailed artwork," as well as upgrades to holographic images and optically variable ink, and the arrangement of data fields will change from current cards.



Trump-DeSantis rivalry approaches boiling point

(SAI Bureau) The long-simmering tensions between former President Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) are nearing a boiling point amid signs that DeSantis and his team are actively moving toward a 2024 presidential run. DeSantis's national ambitions have long irked Trump, who sees himself as the Florida governor's political benefactor and the GOP's presumptive 2024 nominee. But Trump's frustration became more apparent over the weekend, when he called out DeSantis during his first major campaign swing. "If he runs, that's fine. I'm way up in the polls. He's going to have to do what he wants to do, but he may run," Trump told The Associated Press in an interview after a campaign appearance in South Carolina on Saturday. "I do think it would be a great act of disloyalty because, you know, I got him in. He had no chance. His political life was over." It wasn't the first time that Trump took direct aim at DeSantis, but his latest comments come amid signs that the Florida governor's



presidential ambitions may be taking on a more tangible form. Advisers to DeSantis have begun reaching out to potential hires, including several veteran Republican staffers and operatives, according to a person familiar with the moves. The Washington Post reported over the weekend that two top DeSantis

campaign veterans — Phil Cox and Generra Peck — were involved in discussions about a 2024 run. DeSantis, who has largely avoided talking about any potential 2024 plans, hasn't yet made a final decision on a run, though Republicans almost unanimously believe that a presidential campaign

is a near-certainty, with a potential announcement expected later this year after the Florida state legislative session wraps up. That belief has put him and Trump on an almost-inevitable collision course as they vie for dominance within the GOP. "I do think DeSantis is going to run. Ninety-eight percent chance," one Florida Republican operative said. "If you're DeSantis, I think you'd love to wait until 2028. But you have a particular window. You have to keep the name ID up." "On the other hand, I think Donald Trump knows this is his last chance to run," the operative added. "The idea of trying again in four years — that's just too much of a reach, even for him."

In addition to criticizing DeSantis's loyalty over the weekend, Trump also accused him of "trying to rewrite history" when it came to his response to the COVID-19 outbreak, telling reporters that "Florida was closed for a long period of time" at the onset of the pandemic.

Almost 70K 'questionable' Social Security numbers used for \$5.4B in pandemic-related loans: watchdog

A pandemic watchdog group identified nearly 70,000 "questionable" Social Security numbers that were used to obtain \$5.4 billion in pandemic-related federal loans.



loans and grants awarded to the flagged Social Security numbers could have been "questioned further" by the Small Business Administration, which also could have verified the numbers with the

Social Security Administration. The report acknowledged that implementing information-sharing agreements between the Social Security administration and other agencies can be a "lengthy" process. During an emergency, such as the coronavirus pandemic, these agreements could cause delays in executing the program effectively, the report read.

Google workers stage protests in New York, California against layoffs

(SAI Bureau) Google, the tech giant has recently fired around 12,000 employees this January, due to which many workers of the company staged protests on both US coasts this week to call attention to labor conditions for subcontracted workers and support thousands of co-workers who were laid off. One rally was held on Wednesday at Google headquarters in Mountain View, California, while another took place near Google's

corporate offices in New York City, according to Bloomberg news. About 50 employees staged a protest in New York outside a Google store on Ninth Avenue, just minutes after parent company Alphabet Inc reported fourth-quarter results, including \$13.6 billion in profit.

Alberta Devor, a software engineer said, "Today, Google has debunked its own rationale for laying

off 12,000 of our co-workers. It is clear that the meager savings the company is pocketing from laying off workers are nothing in comparison to the billions spent on stock buybacks or the billions made in profit last quarter." The demonstrations were organized by the labor group Alphabet Workers Union, which doesn't have collective bargaining rights, and whose members include Google subcontractors as well as employees, Bloomberg reported. In an interview, Devor who has worked at

Google for more than three years and is an AWU member said, "Today shows that some of the issues we're talking about affect all workers regardless of what their actual job title or job status is." In California's rally, dozens of subcontractors spoke out against what they called substandard conditions, including what they said were "poverty wages and no benefits."



(SAI Bureau) The group, the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee, issued the report on Monday analyzing information from more than 33 million applications from the COVID-19 Emergency Injury Disaster Loans and the Paycheck Protection Program. The group found that more than 221,000 Social Security numbers used on applications were "not issued" by the federal government, or did not match the applicants' name or date of birth. Despite the risk for identity fraud, the federal government awarded nearly 70,000 of the 221,000 Social Security numbers flagged for potential identity fraud a loan or a grant. About 175,000 of the Social Security numbers that were flagged for potential identity fraud attempted to receive a loan or grant, but were unsuccessful, according to the report. The group determined that the Social Security numbers may be potentially fraudulent by cross-referencing public data from the Social Security Administration. The watchdog said that both of these relief programs were more "susceptible" to fraud because of the "elevated urgency" to provide aid to applicants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The watchdog said that there need to be more information-sharing agreements across agencies to ensure there is adequate verification of Social Security numbers. It said that the



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BBC Hitjob against Narendra Modi is Just the Tip of Britain's anti-India Iceberg

The BBC documentary, "India: The Modi Question", is a political hitjob. If this documentary was produced in 2014 when Narendra Modi became Prime Minister or in 2019 when he led the BJP to an even bigger electoral victory, the context would have been more explicable. But why now, when nothing new has happened on the political front and the next general elections are not imminent. The intention of the documentary is to keep a negative narrative on India under Modi alive internationally, especially when news from India is good on the economic side, the country's international stature under Modi is growing, his diplomacy is making a mark, and now India seeks to become a voice of the Global South.

The mainstream media in the West has been bent on tarnishing Modi's image ever since he came to power. A rising India under a strong leader does not fit into established perceptions about India as a country mired with internal problems and not a significant player internationally. Modi, with his agenda of domestic reforms, vaunting India's inherent strengths as a civilisational country and building a self-confident nation, seeks to change that perception. His international activism and the obvious ambition to make India a global leader are causing agitation in those Western circles that are traditionally ill-disposed towards India and, in particular, a more Hindu India. The minority issue which caused India's Partition and remains a source of internal divisions even now is a lever that can be exploited by Western lobbies that are uncomfortable with a rising India, which they fear will make India less manageable and increasingly capable of pursuing a more independent course in international affairs. Woke-ism, with its obsession with minorities, also affects how "anti-minority" trends are seen in Modi's India. The complex relationship that the West has with Islam, historically and currently, the invasion and destruction of many Islamic countries by the West, the swelling of minority Muslim populations in Europe and the failure to integrate them fully, the concerns about violent extremism and terrorism getting out of hand in European societies, human rights issues and accusations of Islamophobia standing in the way of any robust measures to deal with radical Islamic elements within their own borders, explain to some degree why India is being targeted on the minority issue as a distraction from their own problems.

The role of the UK in the various dimensions of ties with Modi's India has some special characteristics. As a former colonial power, its ties with India have a particular sensitivity which it does not always heed. It gives at times the

impression of taking India for granted. Its ruling class retains the illusion of being an imperial power (as is seen in the manner it is treating Russia currently), which might explain its unresponsive attitude towards some of our legitimate concerns.

The British midwifed Pakistan and possibly see it as their moral duty to protect it politically, which is why they frequently push for an India-Pakistan dialogue, project the Pakistan leadership at various junctures as willing to reach out to India and encouraging India to test their intentions. They have been circumspect on the issue of Pakistani terrorism against India. They have made allowances for Pakistan's links with the Taliban, despite India's concerns, and have underplayed the Taliban's religious extremism and terrorist activities. Pakistan appears to be still seen as a counterweight to India in the subcontinent, and as an entry door for the UK's role in the region as the ex-colonial power.

On human rights issues, especially in Kashmir, they take shelter behind their democratic system that prevents them from interfering in the working of their parliament by advising the Speaker not to allow debates on the subject at the initiative of Pakistani-origin British MPs. Many of their parliamentary constituencies have a high percentage of people of Pakistani origin, which drives the MPs for electoral reasons to raise the Kashmir and human rights issue in parliament at their behest.

What is unsatisfactory is the response of the government ministers to these debates, in that at times the MPs are thanked for the debate, the UK's general position on human rights issues is reiterated, and the formula that the Kashmir issue should be settled by India and Pakistan taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people is repeated, which means that the issue of sovereignty is not closed in their eyes, elections held in J&K by India and the constitutional changes made by the Indian government are not recognised, and self-determination remains an open question. The UK has not followed the US in now asking India and Pakistan to settle the issue bilaterally, without the earlier reference that they too made to the "wishes of the Kashmiri people."

All this is in contrast with India not encouraging a parliamentary debate in our parliament on our many grievances against Britain, including on the interference in our internal affairs by their parliament, their equivocation on the Kashmir issue, not keeping us fully in the loop on their policy on Afghanistan, giving safe haven to absconders from Indian law

for financial crimes, and not moving on extradition issues. The little-too-clever argument now used by the British is that given the sub-continental diaspora in their country, there is an inevitable spillover of happenings in India into Britain, be it the revision of Article 370, the Citizenship Amendment Act, the Delhi riots, etc, and hence our problems become theirs too. The British also use the argument of free speech and right to peaceful protest to allow demonstrations by Pakistani and Khalistani lobbies against our High Commission despite our protests and despite India being a friendly country. Their agencies are well aware of the forces behind these demonstrations but refuse to keep them away from proximity to our mission. This contrasts with India not encouraging counter demonstrations against the UK High Commission in India as we treat the UK as a friendly country. We even keep a curb on demonstrations against the Chinese Embassy despite our adversarial ties with China, knowing the political implications of allowing such demonstrations.

The outburst by Home Secretary Suella Braverman under the Liz Truss government on jacked-up concerns about open-ended Indian migration into the UK if the mobility agreement under negotiation went through reflected the undercurrents of political and bureaucratic lobbies in the UK that are antipathetic to India. Braverman, who is an unabashed admirer of the British colonial empire, has been inducted again as Home Secretary in Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government, which is not reassuring. Without recalling the "Yes Prime Minister" series, it is well established that the bureaucracy in the UK is powerful, as is to be expected of any structured civil service. We are occasionally told at the level of British Prime Ministers themselves about the need to overcome bureaucratic resistance within their system to initiatives towards India at the political level.

This should not be surprising as elements in the bureaucracy in India without having lived through the British colonial period here are distrustful of the UK, as they suspect its role in the region and policies towards us. Likewise, the bureaucracy in the UK would have its own views about India rooted in the history and psychology of an erstwhile imperial power that no longer holds sway in the region. The very negative press we get in the UK, what with the empire nostalgic Economist and those permeated with leftist ideology like The Guardian, is not unconnected with links with the British establishment which includes the bureaucracy, the intelligence agencies, the think tanks and civil society activists.

The view that the BBC's anti-Modi documentary was an indirect swipe at the Indian-origin Hindu Prime Minister of the UK may have some element of truth in it. This might explain in part his very brief and tepid response to the defamatory allegations against Prime Minister Modi in the documentary listed by the Pakistan-origin British MP. Prime Minister Sunak obviously did not want to be seen to be robustly defending the Indian Prime Minister to avoid being smudged as a Hindutva sympathiser and implicitly sharing his perceived anti-Muslim leanings.

But then, the issues raised in the documentary are a rehash of all that has been alleged, discussed and investigated in India for years, and do not seem linked to the future course of India-UK ties, the 2030 Road Map or the FTA under discussion. They are rooted in internal politics in India, with known Modi-baiting Indian activists. That Jack Straw gave an interview to The Wire is added confirmation of the intent of this documentary to give a fillip to anti-Modi elements in India and sustain an anti-Modi narrative abroad.

Kanwal Sibal is a former Indian Foreign Secretary. He was India's Ambassador to Turkey, Egypt, France and Russia. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not represent the stand of this publication.

The role of the UK in the various dimensions of ties with Modi's India has some special characteristics. As a former colonial power, its ties with India have a particular sensitivity which it does not always heed. It gives at times the impression of taking India for granted. Its ruling class retains the illusion of being an imperial power (as is seen in the manner it is treating Russia currently), which might explain its unresponsive attitude towards some of our legitimate concerns.

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As Bharat Jodo Yatra comes to an end, Rahul Gandhi needs to rethink his media plan

In fact, throughout the 19-year-old political stint, Rahul has been arriving early and late on formulating strategies or implementing them. For instance, Rahul spent far too many years between 2006 and 2013, in trying to democratise the Youth Congress and the NSUI. As an unconventional politician, he had fancied himself as a reformer, catalyst, etc, but his act of tearing off a UPA affidavit boomeranged. In the modest opinion of this columnist, the idea of opposing a proposed legislation to allow convicted politicians was not an affront to the good doctor, prime minister Manmohan Singh. It came to haunt Rahul and the Congress as the Gandhi scion failed to keep tainted politicians Ashok Chavan and Suresh Kalmadi out of the list of party nominees for the 2014 Lok Sabha.

I have always maintained that the history of the Congress is drastically different from the story of the Congress. Rahul's bid to usher 'newness' into the party was stonewalled by leaders who actually drew strength from his mother Sonia Gandhi. Months before the 2014 Lok Sabha, Rahul had deputed Madhusudan Mistry and his team to look for new candidates for the 2014 Lok Sabha but a majority of names

and recommendations given by Mistry did not even come up for a serious discussion at the AICC's Central Election Committee in the early months of 2014. It is also an open secret that Rahul did not want the party leadership to openly back Mallikarjun Kharge's candidature, but his advice went unattended.

Would Bharat Jodo Yatra and the 2024 general elections be further additions to the long list of missed opportunities or the Gandhi scion would turn the tables on critics? Last heard, Team Rahul now wishes to focus on 200 Lok Sabha seats for 2024 that would make or mar the grand old party. There is a growing realisation that a third successive defeat would signal the end of Nehru-Gandhi hegemony and result in the 'Janata-Dal-isation' of the Congress. The latest poll survey by a channel and pollster, if the general elections are held today, the BJP would win 284 Lok Sabha seats and that 67 per cent of survey respondents were 'satisfied' with the Narendra Modi government's performance regardless of the issues such as lack of jobs, economic crisis, the threat from China etc.

It is easy to dismiss and even mock the survey and the prime-time news channel, attach

motives or even term the mood of the nation as a fictitious exercise. But deep down, are not the Congress leaders of all hues and shades worried, uncertain and nervous about 2024? The survey has predicted 68 Lok Sabha seats for the Congress if the elections are held today. Bizarre and paradoxical as it may sound, but a section of the party leaders and well-wishers consider this as somewhat a comforting figure, and better than their internal assessment which varies between 37 to 50. In 2019, the bulk of the Congress Lok Sabha seats had come from Kerala [15], Tamil Nadu [8] and Punjab [8]. In 17 states and Union Territories, the Congress had not even opened its account. Almost in all seats that the Congress won with a margin of over two lakhs and more, these verdicts came from Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

As the Bharat Jodo Yatra comes to end, Rahul has consciously avoided giving interviews to the mainstream media, i.e. prime time TV news channels, leading newspapers, regional press and digital platforms. While it is commendable that he held 13 press conferences, and fielded all questions, he only gave interviews to influencers and bloggers popular on social

media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. This was reportedly an advice tendered by his core team including members of the AICC's communication department. Rahul was even heard saying, "They [mainstream media] don't want to listen. It is as if they know everything. They have already taken a decision as to what they need to do and what they don't need. So, what's the point of talking to them? But if someone has an open mind, then one can talk to them."

Nothing can be farther to truth than this. Barring a handful of TV news channels and anchors, Rahul's assumption that 'the mainstream media has become an instrument that serves only the interests and destructive ideology of those in power', is inaccurate and exaggerated. My friend and editor-in-chief of The Tribune, Rajesh Ramachandran's poster in "An Uncertain March" has gone uncontested. Rajesh Ramachandran has wondered how a mainstream newspaper like The Tribune [I can add 40 more such publications without a hesitation] can be clubbed with some "repugnant TV anchors for the mainstream." Rahul's stand also belittles hundreds of media practitioners who have diligently been

working at district and state levels.

While every politician and public figure is entitled to act as per his/her whims and fancies, parliamentary democracies across the globe have often seen greater interaction between media and the Opposition. During the Emergency years [1975-77], the Indian media had almost joined the opposition ranks that resulted in a crushing defeat of a mighty Indira and her ambitious son, Sanjay Gandhi. The last leg of the UPA too saw a massive mobilisation of media onslaught of sorts against a tottering Manmohan Singh regime. The period had also seen favourable media projection of Anna Hazare, Arvind Kejriwal and other 'India Against Corruption' protagonists. After his long and remarkable foot-march from Kanyakumari to Srinagar, Rahul needs to reflect upon his remark, "They [mainstream media] don't want to listen..." and check its veracity. He need not go further. The AICC's communication department itself is packed with those having made a successful lateral entry in politics/Congress. In short, are those tendering him advice on media, actual stakeholders in elections and electoral polity? Rahul may find an answer there.

Eight million Americans earning more than \$100,000-a-year are living paycheck-to-paycheck, disturbing study reveals, as inflation continues to decimate earnings

'Elevated prices, eroded personal savings and increased reliance on credit point to weak consumer

spending this winter. 'These dynamics will be exacerbated by negative wealth effects from lower

stock prices and declining home values.'

Respondents also reported trouble in paying their bills.

Almost one in four - 24 percent - said they had issues paying their bills in December. Among those earning more than \$100,000 and living paycheck-to-paycheck, the share rose to 16 percent - up from 11 percent a year earlier. The sharpest increase in costs over the past 12 months has been energy: fuel oil is up a whopping 41.5 percent, year on year, according to the Bureau of Labor statistics. They slowed down in December, but still rose uncomfortably quickly at 10.4 percent above a year ago, federal data show. Dallas, the Twin Cities, and Baltimore are suffering some of the country's highest rates of inflation for food prices, - with a rise of 14.1 percent, 13.7 percent, and 13.5 percent respectively, according to an

Axios analysis. By comparison, food prices rose just 7 percent in Washington DC, 7.7 percent in Chicago, and 8.8 percent in Miami, according to the report. The latest consumer price index report showed that in December, inflation for groceries continued to be higher than for restaurants, with food at home rising 11.8 percent, and food away from home rising 8.3 percent. Inflation rates for groceries hit a 40-year high of 13.5% in August, and have since moderated somewhat. Driving the steep increases are rising energy and commodity prices, due to lingering effects from pandemic supply chain disruptions, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which sent world wheat prices soaring. On top of that, an avian flu outbreak has sharply curtailed the national supply of

eggs, sending prices soaring in 2022. The national average price for a dozen grade A, large eggs soared to \$4.25 in December - up nearly 140% from \$1.79 one year ago, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. More than 43 million of the 58 million birds slaughtered over the past year to control the virus outbreak have been egg-laying chickens, including some farms with more than a million birds apiece in major egg-producing states like Iowa. Wholesale egg prices have fallen somewhat in recent weeks, following the holiday baking surge, though it remains to be seen how much of that relief will translate to lower consumer prices. December's overall annual inflation rate of 6.5 percent marked the slowest annual pace for price increases since October 2021, and the sixth straight month of declining overall annual inflation rates from June's peak of 9.1 percent.



Adani's \$70 Billion Disaster Is Badly Timed For India's Economy



On any list of winners from the ginormous losses ruining Gautam Adani's year, Elon Musk deserves a spot. Adani's \$70 billion loss these last few days knocked the Tesla founder's market-value disaster from the headlines. The selloff started last week with allegations of fraud by short seller Hindenburg Research. It accelerated when Adani thought it wise to issue a 413-page rebuttal that conveyed a thou-dost-protest-too-much vibe. If you can't address concerns about your conglomerate's corporate governance in a few pages, it's time for a new investor-relations team.

We'll leave it to the folks at Hindenburg to defend their allegations (which Adani has firmly denied). Musk, too, whose distraction since buying Twitter has investors fleeing Tesla (and costing him way more than Adani). Far more interesting is how the troubles facing India's richest man are complicating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic narrative, too.

"To a significant extent, the damage has been done," says analyst Udith Sikand at Gavekal Research. "Whether Hindenburg's specific allegations are shown to have merit or not, the report's publication throws a spotlight on corporate India's governance that is likely to cause at least some investors to reassess their expectations of returns from the world's fastest-growing major economy."

It's worth noting, too, that "the accusations of fraud at one of India's biggest companies come at an especially inconvenient moment" for Modinomics.

They come at a time when India isn't just growing faster than China, but producing more tech "unicorn" startups than Xi Jinping's economy. They are overshadowing the release of

Modi's annual budget on Wednesday, the Bharatiya Janata Party's big chance to shrink a record budget deficit, get structural reforms back on track and reassure credit rating companies.

The allegations come, too, a bit over a year ahead of national elections. This week, Modi's party had hoped to turbocharge its argument to stay on after nearly a decade in power. "Now," Sikand says, "the allegations of scandal at the Adani Group will come as a gift to Modi's political opponents, given the longstanding perception that Adani's rapid

rise to the top of India's billionaires' list is largely attributable to his close relationship with the prime minister, who like Adani hails from the western state of Gujarat."

The political establishment being reminded of the place Modi ran from 2001 to 2014 is rather ill-timed for another reason. Modi rose to folk-hero status thanks to Gujarat's lively economy. Year after year, Modi produced faster gross domestic product, greater productivity and innovation, less bureaucracy, better infrastructure and corruption dynamics that seemed less endemic than national averages. In 2014, voters returned the BJP to power in hopes Modi would apply the "Gujarat model" throughout the second-most-populous nation. In his first term, Modi opened a number of key sectors to increased overseas investment, including aviation and defense. He presided over the implementation of a national goods-and-services tax. Modi's team projected a sense of confidence that

dovetailed with the startup boom putting India in international headlines for all the right reasons. But few would say Modi transformed India Inc. in the epochal ways global investors hoped. One metric Modi boosters can't easily explain away: how India's 85th place ranking on Transparency International's corruption perceptions index still puts it 20 rungs behind 65th-ranked China.

India's score in press freedom surveys is plunging precipitously. This is not a state of affairs that cheers global investors angling for less opacity, leveler playing fields and faster progress in reducing poverty.

Debt, meantime, remains a chronic demerit. Modi still must prove he can narrow a deficit that hit 9.2% of GDP during the first year of the pandemic—and to maintain that progress.

True, Modi's government hopes to narrow the gap to about 6.4% this year. But that's easier said than done amid recession fears in the U.S., Europe and Japan and an

uncertain trajectory for China. The same goes for making reform upgrades that score India a credit rating higher than one rung above junk.

There's at least one way Adani's troubles are a microcosm of India's: a misplaced belief you can simply grow your way out of debt. Japan's made it amply clear that growth alone isn't enough these last 30 years. China, too, is seconding the difficulty of the strategy.

In the financial year ended March 31, 2022, Adani Group's total gross debt rose 40% to 2.2 trillion rupees (nearly \$27 billion). In its rebuttal to Hindenburg, Adani has sought to frame the allegations as an assault on India itself. This suggests Adani is more focused on the symptoms of the conglomerate's woes—and emotions—than the underlying cracks. The fact Adani's stumble is now tripping up the broader stock market suggests this a moment for India Inc. to redouble efforts from reassuring global investors. Modi's government, too.

Indian spiritual guru, 81, worshipped by millions is jailed for life



An Indian spiritual guru with millions of followers was today jailed for life after he was convicted of raping one of his devotees who he kept prisoner for five years.

Asaram Bapu, 81, was yesterday found guilty of sexually abusing the woman several times between 2001 and 2006 at his monastery in the western Indian state of Gujarat. Today, a court in Gandhinagar sentenced Asaram to life in prison and ordered the self-styled guru to pay a fine of 23,000 rupees (£228) and also 50,000 rupees (£496) as compensation to the victim. Asaram is already serving a life sentence after he was convicted of raping another devotee, who was 16 at the time, at his ashram in Rajasthan in 2018. The guru raped the 16-year-old while her parents waited outside his room chanting prayers as he 'cured' her. He threatened to kill the girl's parents if she told anyone.

In the latest case, a woman told police in 2013 that Asaram raped her several times at his ashram in the city of Motera where he kept her prisoner for five years before she managed to escape. Today, Asaram, who has millions of followers and more than 400

ashrams in India, was convicted of the woman's rape and wrongful detention.

In 2019, Asaram's son Narayan Sai was sentenced to life in prison for raping and illegally confining the same woman's younger sister.

The woman came forward in 2013 to report the rape to police after Asaram was arrested in a separate case of sexual assault. In that separate case, two of Asaram's followers accused him of raping their 16-year-old daughter.

They said the guru had forced the daughter to perform sex acts on him in his ashram in the city of Jodhpur, Rajasthan, and threatened to kill her family if she told them of the abuse. Asaram was sentenced to life in prison in 2018 for raping the teenager in 2013. He has been at the centre of a series of controversies over the years. In 2013, he sparked outrage after he said that Jyoti Singh, who was gang-raped by six men on a bus in New Delhi in 2012 before dying of her injuries, was partly responsible for her own attack. Asaram said the 23-year-old medical student, whose gang-rape sent shockwaves through India, was as 'guilty as her rapists'.

Four principles for crypto regulation

The expansion of DLT into all areas of the economy is inevitable because it is simply better at doing the job than existing centralized ledger technologies, including in financial services. But the regulatory environment will influence whether the U.S. can take advantage of the technology to its fullest — or whether we sit idly by as other countries, such as the United Arab Emirates and Singapore, lead the charge in attracting investment, entrepreneurs and technologists. We believe there are four important issues that must be reflected in regulation. Impose licensing requirements on centralized cryptocurrency exchanges and other digital currency services that behave like banks.

Just because a company trades cryptocurrencies does not mean that it should be exempt from financial regulation. If the company serves as a custodian of consumers' assets, and it lends those deposits to others, it is effectively operating as a bank and should be subject to similar regulations that banks are subject to based on their size and asset class. Sadly, many companies in this space have sought regulatory arbitrage by operating outside of the U.S. because of regulatory ambiguity and the opportunity to arbitrage on it. That's exactly what happened with FTX, but what's worse is that then-CEO Sam

Bankman-Fried did so in plain sight and conversation directly with regulators that were supposed to be watchdogs. What does adherence to regulatory requirements look like? For starters, it could involve capital requirements of the form laid out in the recent current and expected credit loss framework that requires that banks use "reasonable and supportable" forecasts to derive the amount of capital reserves they need to hold out in case of adverse economic events. Or it could involve basic cybersecurity and financial security regulatory requirements, like SOC 2 compliance. Centralized crypto exchanges need to consider the effect that their failure has on the system, and simply arbitraging and evading regulation that already exists and that they should be under can provide the proper guard rails to mitigate future catastrophic outcomes. Provide regulatory clarity about the specifics of legal web3 behavior. Sadly, there is no single source that specifies the legal requirements for web3 builders. And, in some cases, the regulatory guidance is conflicting. Most notably, the Department of Justice has referred to tokens as commodities in its enforcement actions, whereas the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has called them securities and enforced them as such. Creating guideposts for legal activity will promote not only greater innovation since more

companies will build within the U.S. regulatory sandbox, but also more consumer protection since enforcement will have more legal precedent and the bright line for legal activity will be clearer. Clear and consistent regulations are essential for companies operating in the cryptocurrency space. Regulators should work to create regulations that are easy for companies to understand and follow and that do not create unnecessary barriers to entry. An example of clear and consistent regulations is the New York State Department of Financial Services issuing a "BitLicense" specifically for companies operating in the cryptocurrency space, which sets clear and consistent requirements for companies to meet to operate in the state.

The U.S. has the luxury of experimenting with different approaches because of the varying state-level capabilities. For example, Wyoming passed legislation that recognizes certain types of cryptocurrencies and blockchain tokens as legal property and created a new type of bank specifically for cryptocurrency companies, which allows them to operate in a more permissive regulatory environment. Similarly, Tennessee passed legislation that recognizes decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs) — a new form of governance that leverages the use of smart contracts and tokens

— as limited liability corporations, which provides additional liability coverage for DAO members.

Harmonize international standards.

Because of a rigid and stringent regulatory framework, many web3 entrepreneurs and companies locate outside the U.S. for business and residence. Much like developed countries meet to coordinate economic policy through the G20 annual meetings, and the OECD has published international guidelines around the ethical use of artificial intelligence, U.S. regulatory agencies should cooperate with others to identify a common set of principles and standards.

Although many look to the SEC for guidance, they too can learn a lot from international counterparts. For example, they could work with the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) to share information and coordinate regulatory efforts to combat fraud and protect investors in both regions. Similarly, the U.S. could learn from best practices in other countries, including Switzerland's regulatory sandbox, which not only provides much more clarity on the distinction between security tokens and their counterparts, but also safety in piloting a token as long as the amount raised and transacted upon is below 1 million Swiss francs. Foster dialogue with researchers and industry practitioners.

Veto Russia's UN veto

It's not a matter of merely a name change. Russia (the "RSFSR") was never the same state as the USSR, but one of 15 "republics." On Dec. 8 and Dec. 17, 1991, the republics declared the USSR dissolved. Mikhail Gorbachev's resignation as president of a nominal "USSR" on Dec. 25, 1991, and the self-dissolution of the Soviet "parliament" were pro forma. By that time, the USSR no longer existed. It could not have been otherwise. Each of its constituent parts having gone their separate ways, no "union" remained. That on Dec. 17, 1991, they agreed that Russia take the place of the USSR for purposes of UN membership is moot. First, their declaration was wholly outside the UN and can hardly usurp or amend the UN Charter. Second, Russia grossly and repeatedly breached its pledge to them and the world, along with ongoing conditions of UN

membership. More critically, the charter makes no provision for substitution or succession of membership. When Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, each had to apply for membership. Neither was a "successor state." The same happened with the break-up of Yugoslavia. "But this was 30 years ago," one might argue. A self-styled "statute of limitations" interjected to prevent application of cynically dismissed UN membership criteria would absolve guilt and grant a perpetual license for genocide, for which there is no such time limit. It would be back-door subversion, converting original UN recklessness to intentional felonious malfeasance by 193 countries as the perpetrators. But what of the retroactive effect on the 30 years of UN decision-making? There is nothing preventing the UN from removing Russia but keeping

those decisions intact. If that discomfits the suddenly diligent apparatchiks, so be it. Pivotal to comprehending it all is that Russia's negation of 192 countries is classic reality reversal. The UN was born of a war that, for Adolf Hitler, had as its purpose the occupation and colonization of Ukraine. Both Berlin and Moscow considered Ukrainians as sub-human. Little wonder that the highest price paid in World War II for the rules and institutions that America championed was by Ukraine. Oxford's Norman Davies judged that significantly more than 5 million Ukrainian civilians were killed. Even the lower range exceeds the combined military deaths in Europe of the United States, Canada, England, France, Germany and Italy. Millions more Ukrainians were killed serving in the Red Army and as slave laborers in Germany. Moscow has tossed the rules,

except those castrating the institution forged by the very conflagration it engineered as Hitler's partner, thereby obliterating the country that most paid for those rules. "Russia has the bizarre power to act like a criminal defendant who, with farcical impunity, single-handedly vetoes his own indictment." Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was straight-faced: "Never again will there be a situation when you lie, sign documents and then refuse to fulfill them." As the cheerleader for Russia's UN membership, we dived into a tar pit of our own making. Worse, we're wielding a companion veto, compounding our strategic witlessness. Consider Putin's 2013 New York Times opinion piece: "[I]f you cannot count on international law, then you must find other ways to ensure your security. Thus, a growing number of countries seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction. This is logical: If you have the bomb, no one will touch you." In 1994, we

hectorated Ukraine into surrendering its nuclear arsenal to Russia — not just to destroy it, or at least to turn it over to us. Today we're apoplectic about Russia's nuclear bombast as it pulverizes Ukraine with those very same missiles (sans nuclear warhead). We then veto the victim's ability to prevent that by targeting launch sites in Russia. Result? We grant the criminal immunity and sanctuary on its territory and confine the apocalyptic destruction to the victim's territory. Not to worry. If Russia adds the warheads, we promised to refer the matter to the Security Council. Victor Rud is the past chairman of the Ukrainian American Bar Association and now chairs its Committee on Foreign Affairs. He is a senior adviser to Open Ukraine, a nongovernmental organization in Ukraine, and the senior adviser to the Centre for Eastern European Democracy in Toronto. The opinions expressed here are his alone.

India Needs to Equip Itself for the Age of Quantum Cybersecurity

It also highlighted how the Act was devised keeping in mind the national security status of the country, especially in providing better safeguards against future quantum computer cyberattacks. This, coupled with the thriving private sector's role in providing quantum-resistant security solutions, the US has announced its intent to lead the way in championing post-quantum cryptography.

On the other hand, China has showcased tremendous growth in harnessing both quantum computers' positive and negative capabilities. Owning some of the fastest quantum computers in the world, Chinese researchers have managed to extract most of the existing quantum computing technology. In December 2022, some Chinese cybersecurity experts published a scientific paper which details the methodology to break the most widely used RSA

algorithm using a quantum computer made of 372 qubits.

Most scientists have accepted this theory but have questioned its practicality and scalability of it. But considering the recent development of quantum technology applications, the possibility of this becoming a potential offensive tool in the cyber arsenal soon is very high. This emphasises the need to provide holistic quantum-resistant solutions as soon as possible.

WHAT CAN INDIA DO?

Considering the cyber threats posed by quantum computers, it is critical for India to at least look at post-quantum/quantum-resistant cryptography as a national security priority area in the coming years.

One, India must look to align itself with the existing or the in-development global post-quantum cryptography systems. The US' NSA quantum-resistant protocols and

NIST post-quantum encryption standards can be taken as the current baseline for protection against potential quantum cyber attacks. With cross-border attacks on the rise, India must ensure that globally verified, validated and tested post-quantum encryption techniques are used to protect its own critical ICT infrastructure.

Two, India must invest in the private sector and other startups which have made tangible gains in the field of quantum cybersecurity. Domestic companies like QNu Labs and BosonQ are doing exemplary work in providing cybersecurity solutions for the quantum age. The state must identify such firms, provide the required support (financial and otherwise) to ramp up their operations, and procure scalable solutions that can be implemented nationally. Three, the recently announced National Mission on

Quantum Technologies and Applications (NM-QTA), comprising a total outlay of Rs 8,000 crore, must include post-quantum cybersecurity as a key area of focus. While the funds under the mission have not been disbursed yet (as per the government's reply on the floor of Parliament), there must be a push by the state to allocate a significant chunk of resources from the National Mission towards developing quantum-resistant cybersecurity solutions through academic or defence research institutions.

Although current-day quantum computers still need to develop targeted offensive capabilities, the threat of quantum cyberattacks remains at large. It is also in India's interest to remain vigilant and build concrete quantum-resistant capacities. The age of quantum cybersecurity is here, and India cannot afford to be underprepared.

Why Rahul Gandhi's Refusal to Engage with 'Mainstream' Media during Bharat Jodo Yatra is a case of Missed Opportunity

This was reportedly an advice tendered by his core team including members of the AICC's communication department. Rahul was even heard saying, "They [mainstream media] don't want to listen. It is as if they know everything. They have already taken a decision as to what they need to do and what they don't need. So, what's the point of talking to them? But if someone has an open mind, then one can talk to them." Nothing can be farther to truth than this. Barring a handful of TV news channels and anchors, Rahul's assumption that 'the mainstream media has become an instrument that serves

only the interests and destructive ideology of those in power', is inaccurate and exaggerated. My friend and editor in chief of The Tribune, Rajesh Ramachandran's poster in "An Uncertain March" has gone uncontested. Rajesh Ramachandran has wondered how a mainstream newspaper like The Tribune [I can add 40 more such publications without a hesitation] can be clubbed with some "repugnant TV anchors for the mainstream." Rahul's stand also belittles hundreds of media practitioners who have diligently been working at district and state

levels. While every politician and public figure is entitled to act as per his/her whims and fancies, parliamentary democracies across the globe have often seen greater interaction between media and the Opposition. During the Emergency years [1975-77], the Indian media had almost joined the opposition ranks that resulted in a crushing defeat of a mighty Indira and her ambitious son, Sanjay Gandhi. The last leg of the UPA too saw a massive mobilisation of media onslaught of sorts against a tottering Manmohan Singh regime. The period had also seen favourable media projection of Anna Hazare, Arvind

Kejriwal and other 'India Against Corruption' protagonists.

After his long and remarkable foot-march from Kanyakumari to Srinagar, Rahul needs to reflect upon his remark, "They [mainstream media] don't want to listen..." and check its veracity. He need not go further. The AICC's communication department itself is packed with those having made a successful lateral entry in politics/Congress. In short, are those tendering him advice on media, actual stakeholders in elections and electoral polity? Rahul may find an answer there.

How Corporates Rescued The \$2.25 Billion Adani Enterprises FPO From The Hindenburg Effect

International Holding Company (IHC), an Abu Dhabi-based conglomerate, announced on Monday that it will invest \$381 million in the Adani Enterprises FPO

Despite the feeble interest shown by retail investors, Adani Enterprises follow-on public offering (FPO) was fully subscribed by the time market closed on Wednesday. The \$2.25 billion share sale was subscribed 1.12 times although retail investors lapped up only 12 per cent of the shares reserved for the category.

Following the Hindenburg report that came out on 24 January, which accused the Adani Group of fraud and market manipulation, there were concerns in the market whether Adani Enterprises will attract investors' attention in its FPO. Incidentally, the share sale which opened on 27 January, is the largest FPO ever on the Indian bourses.

The investigative report prepared by Hindenburg Research last week had immediate impact on the Adani stocks, dragging most of them down

for three straight trading sessions until Monday. At this juncture, with the FPO on its penultimate day, Adani Enterprises could only gather 3 per cent subscription from the market. An important development took place on Monday, perhaps acting as a trigger of the investor surge that was to take place the next day. International Holding Company (IHC), an Abu Dhabi-based conglomerate, announced on Monday that it will invest \$381 million in the Adani Enterprises FPO. This is not the first time that Abu Dhabi's largest listed company is investing in the Adani Group. In 2022, IHC had invested \$2 billion in Adani Group companies.

"Our interest in Adani Group is driven by our confidence and belief in the fundamentals of Adani Enterprises Ltd; we see a strong potential for

growth from a long-term perspective and added value to our shareholders," said Syed Basar Shueb, chief executive officer, IHC. When markets opened on Tuesday, Adani stocks continued to feel the heat of the Hindenburg effect, with Adani Power, Adani Wilmar and Adani Total Gas not attracting a single buyer. However, other scrips belonging to the group, including Adani Enterprises, witnessed better investor participation. In the FPO, retail investors subscribed to only 12 per cent of the shares offered to them while the employee category witnessed 55 per cent subscription. The weak participation from these categories can be attributed to the Hindenburg effect which resulted in the Adani Enterprises share being available on the primary market at a price lower than the one offered in

the share sale. While the scrip closed at Rs 2,948 on Tuesday, the lower end of the FPO's price band was Rs 3,112. Much of the heavy lifting in the FPO's last day surge sale was done by non-institutional investors (NIIs) and qualified institutional banks (QIBs). While the NII category was subscribed 3.32 times, QIB category saw 126 per cent subscription. This ensured that the FPO was fully subscribed by the end of the day. In the NII category, more than half of the bids came from corporates while high net worth individuals (HNIs) made up the rest. It was reported earlier in the day that several family offices based in UAE and India will invest close to Rs 9,000 to ensure that the FPO is fully subscribed. Family offices are entities created by HNIs to manage their investments.

A Journalistic History of the Adani Group

As the tycoon from Gujarat faces short-sellers, here is a list of reports charting his rise.

What would a brief history of India Inc look like?

At the time of independence, India's private sector was dominated by a clutch of business families. Their reign continued into the license raj years – and then was challenged by newcomers like Dhirubhai Ambani. In the 1990s, the country saw the flowering of a new generation of companies. These were the post-liberalisation firms in both new sectors like IT, ITES (IT-enabled services), healthcare and telecom as well as older sectors like infrastructure.

Relations between these promoters and India's political leadership covered a broad spectrum. Firms operating in sectors where the government had a relatively small role – think IT – had low interaction. Firms in government-heavy sectors – like infrastructure – made larger allowances for India's political economy. Some stayed equidistant from political parties, donating to all. Others forged opportunistic alliances with the party in power. Yet others were owned (covertly or overtly) by politicians themselves.

Political patronage itself stayed opportunistic. In both the captive coal block allocation scam and Arunachal Pradesh's hydel scam, firms willing to pay trounced more established rivals and bagged coal blocks and hydel MoUs. This was broad-spectrum crony capitalism. As this reporter has written earlier: "Companies with political links got what they wanted. And so did others. All that mattered was their willingness to pay."

In this system, it was hard to say who was in the driving seat. Industrialists could get their way through bribes. Politicians could determine who got the largesse. With Gautam Adani, India is seeing something new. According to economic commentators, the government has chosen his group as a 'national champion' – and is encouraging its expansion into a clutch of sectors critical for India. At the same time, the financial underpinnings of the group are opaque – like its quicksilver pace of growth despite the absence of cash cows in the group; shadowy investors; charges of stock-price manipulation, and a thick density of related-party transactions.

This combination needs to be understood. How was the group chosen as a national champion?



Is that the right strategy for India – or could it push India closer to a pairing, as described by James Robinson and Daron Acemoglu, between an extractive political institution and an extractive economic institution, both working for a few?

The latter worry is not an imagined fear. Given the financial pressures to win elections, India's political parties are increasingly kleptocratic. As for Adani, there are multiple instances of him abusing his market position.

In all, Adani represents a new chapter in the evolution of India Inc. The Wire has strung together a reading list that traces his journey towards becoming a "national champion"

1. The backstory: In 2013, Economic Times profiled Adani, describing his early days – importing plastic granules from Gandhidham; upgrading into wider trading; and then backwards integrating into Mundra port – and his consequential alliance with then-chief minister Narendra Modi. As the paper says, Modi took charge in 2001 as CM but "did not want to depend on Pramod Mahajan, who was managing the BJP's finances". As for Adani, he wanted to grow big in a state that already had Reliance.

2. Adani in Gujarat: Under Modi, the company saw meteoric growth in Gujarat. Its record was mixed. On one hand, it created a world-class port complex at Mundra. On the other, its growth was underpinned by state support. It got government

largesse, as described in multiple CAG reports; the SEZ at Mundra came up without an environment clearance; rival ports like state-owned Kandla made a series of decisions which hurt them but benefitted Mundra; one could go on. The Union government, run by the Congress-fronted UPA at the time, played along as well, taking the environmental violations at Mundra port as a fait accompli.

3. The first Modi term: Once Modi came to power at the Centre, Adani went national. Scroll looked at the group's growth between 2014 and 2019 – a mix of inorganic growth (where Adani bought stranded assets off India's bankruptcy courts); growth in existing businesses; and forays into new sectors.

4. How the group financed this expansion is a puzzle. In 2018, for instance, it announced future expenditure of Rs 167,000 crore despite a net profit of just Rs 3,455.34 crore. The answer seemed to lie (partially) in an arrangement where the group floated new companies, pledged their shares to raise money, and then deployed those funds across the group – to shore up struggling firms; and as equity to start more new firms. Researchers in Australia too flagged similar patterns.

The government stayed supportive. It set up a committee to ensure Adani Power did not slip into bankruptcy proceedings.

The group also benefited from other government decisions.

One instance is Adani's power project at Godda. Another instance is the claim by a Sri Lankan power official that Modi had asked Gotabaya Rajapaksa to award a project to Adani. A third instance is airports, where rules were changed to get him in.

In tandem, investigations into the group went nowhere – like the DRI investigation into coal imports.

5. The government's preferred 'national champion': When the NDA first came to power, business circles speculated that Modi would create five or six large business houses – to cut down on Reliance's overweening dominance in India's political economy. Relations between India Inc and the government were changing. See this issue of Seminar for more. The names of a few firms did the rounds in the first term – Vedanta in mining; Dilip Buildcon in construction; JSW in steel; Adani in infrastructure; etc. By 2019, however, Adani had eclipsed them all. Modi began relying more on Adani, using the group to meet India's global commitments on fronts like decarbonisation. The group forayed into defence, drones, polysilicon, and more. In a report, FT called him "Modi's Rockefeller". The underpinning of this expansion, however, remained sizeably unclear.

6. The mystery of the investment funds: Then came a report from The Morning

Context, saying a handful of investment funds invest almost solely in Adani – most of the group's free float was with them. Economic Times followed up when NSDL froze these funds' accounts due to "insufficient disclosure of information regarding beneficial ownership". Speculation grew that these funds had been used to drive up Adani share prices – which could then be pledged as collateral by the group.

7. Enter, Hindenburg: In its report, the short-seller sizably focused on these funds. It was followed by a rebuttal from Adani late on Sunday night. By Monday morning, Hindenburg had released its own response. Read all three documents and you will have a fairly decent sense of how the group finances its operations.

As things stand, Hindenburg isn't the only organisation to say Adani Enterprises are overvalued. Here is Hindu Businessline. It steers clear of Hindenburg's report but finds overvaluation all the same.

8. Post-FPO Adani: As this article gets written, the group's FPO has been a success – retail investors stayed out but a handful of big industrialists stepped in. On February 1, however, Adani shares began falling once markets opened. In tandem came the news that Credit Suisse will not accept bonds of Gautam Adani's group of companies as collateral for margin loans – a line of credit that lets clients borrow against the securities they hold. One wonders what happens next.

'We'll end up like Sri Lanka': Pakistan stares at economic collapse as IMF visits

A former World Bank economist said without immediate intervention, Pakistan would end up like Sri Lanka. His statement came as Pakistan stared at an economic 'collapse' amid a visit from IMF officials

Pakistan is gripped by a major economic crisis, with the rupee plummeting, inflation soaring and energy in short supply as IMF officials visit to discuss a vital cash injection. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for months held out against the tax rises and subsidy slashing demanded by the International Monetary Fund, fearful of backlash ahead of elections due in October. But in recent days, with the prospect of national bankruptcy looming and no friendly countries willing to offer less painful bailouts, Islamabad has started to bow to pressure.

The government loosened controls on the rupee to rein in a rampant black market in US dollars, a step that caused the currency to plunge to a record low. Artificially cheap petrol prices have also been hiked. "We're at the end of the road. The government has to make the political case to the public for meeting these (IMF) demands," former World Bank economist Abid Hasan told AFP. "If they don't, the country will certainly default and we'll end up like Sri Lanka, which will be even worse." Sri Lanka defaulted on its debt last year and endured months of food and fuel shortages that sparked protests, ultimately forcing the country's leader to flee overseas and resign. In Pakistan, time is of the essence, with Nasir Iqbal from the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics warning the economy had already "virtually collapsed" due to mismanagement and

political turmoil.

COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

The IMF delegation will arrive on Tuesday to a nation in panic, still reeling from unprecedented floods that submerged a third of its territory. The world's fifth-biggest population has less than \$3.7 billion in the state bank — enough to cover just three weeks of imports. It is no longer issuing letters of credit, except for essential food and medicines, causing a backlog of thousands of shipping containers at Karachi port stuffed with

stock the country can no longer afford. Industry has been hammered by the imports block and massive rupee devaluation. Public construction projects have halted, textiles factories have partially shut down and domestic investment has slowed. In downtown Karachi, dozens of day labourers including carpenters and painters wait with their tools on display for work that never comes. "The number of beggars has increased and the number of labourers has decreased," said 55-year-old mason Zafar Iqbal, who was eating biryani from a plastic bag donated by a passerby.

"Inflation is so high that one cannot earn enough."

At the petrol pump, a widow with her son said every few hundred rupees (75

cents) of fuel for their motorcycle was precious, with the pair only eating two meals a day.

"The cost is so high that we eat our breakfast late and the second meal at



around seven, with nothing in between," said Ulfat, who declined to give her second name.

POLITICAL MAYHEM

Pakistan is locked in an endless cycle of servicing external debt. State Bank governor Jamil Ahmed last month said the country owed \$33 billion in loans and other foreign payments before the end of the fiscal year in June.

A diplomatic offensive has seen \$4 billion rolled over by lending nations, with \$8.3 billion still on the negotiating table. Meanwhile, Pakistan is battling severe energy shortages — with capacity drained by poor infrastructure and mismanagement — compounding the misery of businesses and citizens.

Last week the whole country was plunged into a day-long blackout

because of a fault in the national grid that followed a cost-cutting measure.

State petroleum minister Musadik Malik told reporters in Islamabad that imports of Russian oil would start in April, paid for in currencies of "friendly countries" in a mutually beneficial deal.

The tumbling economy mirrors the country's political chaos, with former prime minister Imran Khan heaping pressure on the ruling coalition in his bid for early elections while his popularity remains high.

Khan, who was ousted last year in a no-confidence motion, negotiated a multi-billion-dollar loan package from the IMF in 2019.

But he reneged on promises to cut subsidies and market interventions that had cushioned the cost-of-living crisis, causing the programme to stall.

It is a common pattern in Pakistan, where most people live in rural poverty, with more than two dozen IMF deals brokered and then broken over the decades.

"Even if Pakistan avoids default, the underlying structural factors that triggered the current crisis — one exacerbated by poor leadership and external global shocks — will still be in place," tweeted political analyst Michael Kugelman, the director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington.

"Barring difficult, large-scale reforms, the next crisis could be just around the corner."

G20 Presidency is India's opportunity to prep for sustainable and climate finance

Key enablers that India needs to showcase are our MSME, our experience in democratisation of digitalisation, scalability of IT-enabled platforms, where we can play a lead role in the sustainability transitions for the developing world

India, being the incumbent host of the G20 Presidency for 2023, would like to pioneer the cause of Sustainable Finance as one of the major workstreams during this term and support climate finance-led industry growth. Will this remain rhetoric or, given India's own development needs, can we as a nation move effectively in that direction and showcase our strength to the world, is the moot question. Essentially, for any sustainable development to happen on a medium-term time horizon, it needs to be based on inclusive, collaboration, and innovation as key guiding principles of such a framework. Besides any Framework to have an accelerating effect, it needs to leverage change enablers and mitigate the inherent constraints prevalent in our public infrastructure project management.

While speaking of constraints, India's experience in project management needs to become more predictable in

milestone delivery. This would mean more coherent policy regulation and better project management, to avoid the delays we have seen in some projects over the past decades. Commercial finance for projects by issue of bonds, borrowings from international financial institutions tend to be increasing the debt on our sovereign balance sheet and the cost of funds borne by taxpayers for delays on projects further accentuates the problem. Some of the key enablers that India needs to showcase are our MSME, our experience in democratisation of digitalisation, and scalability of IT-enabled platforms, wallets, UPI, etc where we can play a lead role in the sustainability transition for the developing world. Green transition which is a catalyst for climate finance goals of Zero Net GHG emissions, global warming benchmarks of 1.5 degree Celsius, is another enabler that we need to push internally using the fervour for

same in the G20 and seek external help wherever needed only to reduce our debt burden.

Speaking of MSME, India has done some pioneering work in this area and more so in the recent past. While on regulation a lot has been done over the years, a key aspect is a technology-led enablement that has happened in last few years thru TReDS receivable platform. MSME's issue invoices to their suppliers (Large corporates and MNC) who are also registered on this platform. The financiers or banks fund the procurement from MSME on the risk rating of the corporates and without recourse to the MSME. This is a non-collateral based cheap source of funds which otherwise for MSME to take working capital limits or debt would be costlier basis their own balance sheet. This platform can be leveraged for Indian exports (a beginning has been made recently in early 2023 by IFSCA granting a

license to M1NXT to set up ITFS platforms) by MSME to Indian and Global companies and by making a showcase of this platform to developing nations by onboarding corporates and MSME from these countries for a larger good and demonstrate India's leadership commitment on sustainable finance. This platform can also be used wherever Indian companies have a global presence and source locally. Another area of concern is how to raise climate finance, which is cheaper vis a vis the traditional sources of commercial finance which increase our sovereign debt and how to make deployment successful, i.e., accelerate demand for electric vehicles, renewables, Solar products. These investments are hard to come as many state-run undertakings have financial losses and private sector players who will participate will expect regular payments for ensuring delivery on time.

Preparing for the Age of Ageing



The need for “ageing in the right place” will mean that most health services for the elderly will need to be given at places where they reside. Hence the need for large scale and integrated expansion of affordable and equitable home monitoring, and wearables that ensure continuous and synchronous care. Our world is entering into an age of ageing, an unprecedented era which will have a profound impact on the way in which humans live and on their well-being. The United Nations’ World Social Report 2023 made for an instructive study on this matter. As per the report, by 2050, the number of people aged 65 and above is expected to double to reach about 1.6 billion. Of this, the number of people who are 80 years or above is expected to rise from 155 million in 2021 to 459 million by 2050. Summarily put, whereas in 2021, 1 in 10 people are currently above the age of 65. By 2050, this is expected to become 1 in 6. Amalgamate this projection with the population plateaus being witnessed in countries like India and the milestone decline in China, the world is witnessing a demographic shift, one which the world needs to prepare for. Epigrammatically, the demographic dividend of the late 20th and early 21st century can become a demographic debt in the years. Impacting this change in demographics will be its major impact on the health and social wellbeing of this elderly population. The

clinical specialists, technology, and infrastructure. Along with the need for ‘traditional’ health services, nouveau models of care need to be deployed. Only recently has geriatric medicine become a standalone science of its own, and hereto a limited one. The need to create a formal integrated clinical specialty around ageing and geriatrics has become critical for countries across the world. The fact that this will entail a blending of a cross-section of existent clinical specialties like orthopedics, oncology, general medicine, neurosciences, physiotherapy and rehabilitation services etc. requires institutional push from governments and regulators to make it a widespread reality. Similarly, the need for “ageing in the right place” will mean that most health services for the elderly will need to be given at places where they reside. Hence the need for large scale and integrated expansion of affordable and equitable home monitoring, and wearables that ensure continuous and synchronous care. Again, the rise of assisted & home care services is a welcome step, but it needs regulatory cover and structured protocols on monitoring, reporting and continuity of care to ensure quality and uninterrupted services. On

the horizon are also newer technologies to aid organ failures and replacements. 3D printing of organs, once considered to be in the realm of science fiction has become a reality and it needs adequate research and funding to ensure its mass deployment. While much attention has been given to new technologies, the greater challenge remains not in the what, but in the who. The rise in the number of the elderly, will require a paradigm shift in health human resourcing. Most health systems already face a crippling deficit in the number of healthcare workers, an issue that will only exacerbate over time. From the availability of trained workforce to a projected mismatch in the number of able individuals in health services as against the number of elderly people in the community requiring care will emerge as a cause for concern. As per projections, the EU will have 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men over 65 years needing long-term care. While the infrastructure for institutional or tech-enabled, home-based, long-term care may come along, trained and widely available health workers will impede any infrastructural advancements. Currently, as per the UN, a deficit of 13.6 million long term care workers exists, an issue that needs immediate addressal and forward

planning. Health systems will also need to adequately plan for financing this rise in the elderly. Given the current dismal state of healthcare funding, especially in the developing world, a focus on how geriatric care will be funded needs governmental attention. The projected rise in the elderly will put fiscal pressure on governments as they face the challenge of a depleted pool of workforce, mismatched pension contributions versus dispersals and rising cost of social services.

Countries in the developing world need to be mindful of what funding long term care will cost. Currently, the rich cohort of OECD countries spent 1.5 per cent of GDP in 2019 on long term care, with calls for major increases on this front. Compare that with what the developing world spends on their entire tab for the health sector, and the challenge becomes apparent and daunting. Within this Gordian Knot, the need for budgetary allocation for long term care is something that governments will do well to pay immediate attention to lest it becomes a structural health financing challenge in the future.

The emergent 21st century global challenges like climate change, ensuing social migrations, mortality due to new diseases and the prospect of new pandemics will all impact the elderly, especially when their numbers in the total population mix increases. We must celebrate the significant milestones that humans have made in health care, mother and childcare and human longevity. These achievements have ensured that individuals are able to see multiple generations, improved living standards and that of health for many parts of the world. Equally though, the din of these achievements should not take away our sights from a global challenge that has ironically emerged from human progress.





The New York Times' Obsession with Itself

The newspaper promises-and fails-to take readers behind the scenes.

If Page A1 of the New York Times is the most valuable two square feet of real estate in newspaper history, what then is the paper's next page, A2?

Even print subscribers who don't read the paper in its entirety reliably flip to A2 before abandoning it for their commute or web browsing. A2's value, and that of its sister page, A3, was reflected in the premium that advertisers paid for placement in those spaces two decades ago, as luxury retailers like Cartier, Tourneau, Burberry, Tiffany, Mikimoto, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bulgari, Cole Haan and other high-end shops would line up to park their ads in that privileged space.

Even though advertisers no longer flock to A2 — or any other part of the paper, for that matter — A2 remains choice real estate. But for unfathomable reasons, Times editors routinely dedicate a majority of its acreage to what appears to be their favorite topic: The Times itself. Most days, a self-glorifying feature titled "The Story Behind the Story" runs on A2 that presents "insider" looks at Times coverage that can only be read as advertisements for the Times itself.

Defying the journalistic maxim that reporters should never be the story, "The Story Behind the Story" frequently

chronicles the mundane mechanics of assembling the Times. Recently, the space has featured a first-person piece by a Times reporter about how she got her story about the things people stand in line for these days; how its book critic read and reviewed Prince Harry's *Spare* in a day; how its reporter found sources for a piece about young people and personal finance; how its reporter covered the recent 5.6 magnitude earthquake in West Java; inside commentary on the paper's crossword; a profile of the paper's photography department; and a profile of a food-truck proprietor who vends on the street outside the Times' offices.

Other days the feature runs Q&A's with reporters in which they regurgitate the facts they've already conveyed in published pieces about classified documents, Ticketmaster, and the recent German coup plot. (Some of these Q&A's are double-dribbled from the Times' "The Daily" podcast.) Then there have been retrospectives on the influence of the paper's "Snow Fall" feature from 10 years ago and a history of the guest book at Times headquarters. It would be one thing if any of these pieces broke ground or were great reads, but they don't and they

aren't. Most days' entries have that tossed off quality that passes for insight when applied to podcasts. The reading experience is like soaking your brain in brackish well water. Perhaps nobody has ever attacked these columns because nobody ever reads them.

The feature swells with such clueless self-regard some days that it recalls former New Republic Editor Michael Kinsley's jokey response to a colleague who asked him to concoct a magazine title that would appeal to hardcore New Republic readers. Kinsley pitch was *New Republic World: The Magazine for Readers of the New Republic*. By giving the Times readers re-tastings of pieces they've already read, the paper accomplishes the ouroboros design Kinsley imagined.

In theory, a continuing Times feature that critically examined the paper's output could be salutary for both Times readers and journalists. At a time when radical transparency is in vogue and the need to demystify journalism to a skeptical public has never been greater, "The Story Behind the Story" could be an essential campaign to reading the Times. But in its current form, the project does not come close to serving any

real function. It's unworthy of an institution like the Times.

In theory, an enterprising editor could raise the standards and demand work that is as newsworthy as other Times stories. In fact, the paper has a recent tradition of critical self-reflection. For 14 years, the paper hosted the public editor column that, with varying success, X-rayed and fanny-whacked the Times' coverage. But the paper spiked the exercise in introspection in 2017, with Publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr. offering that the "watchdogs" of social media and "readers across the Internet" could fill the void left by the public editor's departure.

Even after the vanquishing of the public editor, the paper still ran its barbed media column, launched by the late David Carr and continued by Jim Rutenberg and Ben Smith, which occasionally made the Times its subject. But the paper has yet to replace Smith, who departed about a year ago for his Semafor venture, which means that just about the only place in the Times to read about the Times is this soft, accommodating feature that denies its writers the freedom to be fully honest about how their stories come together. Trust me, reader, sometimes the process can

be very ugly. Other times, as we've seen from the Times feature attests, it's as exciting as going grocery shopping.

Properly reconstituted, the Times insider feature could take up the slack created by the cashing in of the public editor and the failure to replace Smith. If the paper's true objective is to reveal "who we are and what we do" and deliver "behind-the-scenes insights into how our journalism comes together," "The Story Behind the Story" could do just that by engaging in Maoist self-criticism exercises that confess the paper's miscues and goofs and state the paper's case against its critics.

You could successfully argue that griping about the misuse of a valuable Times print perch in an era when most people engage the paper in its online incarnation is a wasted complaint. But setting the feature's placement aside, you're still left with the reality that the world's top newspaper thinks running an extended, onanistic public relations campaign for itself is a good use of its journalists' and readers' time. The first question of any act of journalism is, does the story matter? The second is, who cares? In the case of "The Story Behind the Story," the answers are "no" and "nobody."

Hacking groups looking to hire top IT engineers on dark web, salary up to Rs 16 lakh per month

Cybersecurity company, Kaspersky has reported that it had spotted a couple of job ads and resumes on the dark web.

(SAI Bureau) Cybercrime is becoming a sought-after career option for many. Though illicit, the cybercriminals, through nefarious means, mint a lot of money. However, in order to function, they also need people with similar skills and mindset to join their teams. As odd as it might sound, a group of cybercriminals are on the look out for fresh talents. Cybersecurity company, Kaspersky has reported that it had spotted a couple of job ads and resumes on the dark web. The cybersecurity website revealed that it analyzed those containing information about a long-term engagement or a full-time job. Kaspersky in its blog detailed that, like any other type of business, cybercrime also needs manpower to help its business grow. "It needs new team members to participate in cyberattacks and other illegal activities are recruited right where the business is done – on the dark web.

We reviewed job ads and resumes that were posted on 155 dark web forums from January 2020 through June 2022 and analyzed those containing information about a long-term engagement or a full-time job," the blog read. Kaspersky's findings revealed that the maximum number of job ads were posted in March 2020,

around the same time Covid was at its peak and most people were either working from home or had lost their jobs. To recall, cybercrime has also rapidly increased in 2020, with many people facing cash crunch. The cybercriminals targeted the vulnerable job seekers and siphoned off their hard-

earned money.

The major dark web employers are hacker teams and APT groups looking



for those capable of developing and spreading malware code, building and maintaining IT infrastructure, and so on," Kaspersky notes in its blog. The website also stated that job ads seeking developers are the most frequent ones, at 61 per cent of the total job postings on dark web.

As per the cybersecurity website, the developers topped the list of the best-paid dark web IT jobs. They spotted the highest advertised monthly salary figure in an ad for a developer was \$20,000 (approximately Rs 16 lakh), the median levels of pay offered to IT professionals varied between \$1,300 and \$4,000 and highest median salary of \$4,000 could be found in ads for reverse engineers.

Employers on the dark web look for highly skilled workforce, so they seek to select the best candidates. The hiring process is similar to those used by legitimate businesses. The employers offer lucrative benefits to hire fresh talents. The most frequently mentioned advantages included remote work, full-time employment, and flextime. That The employee are also offered paid time off, paid sick leaves, and even a friendly team listed among the terms of employment.

All you need to know about short selling

Short selling is a complex trading strategy that is based on speculation, much like betting. Of course, well-researched short positions come with high risk and high rewards. Here is all you need to know about short selling

(SAI Bureau) Short selling or shorting, an advanced stock market trading strategy, has been in the limelight for the past few days, all thanks to the recent face-off between Adani Group and US short-seller firm Hindenburg Research.

Hindenburg released an alarming report on Adani Group and said it had taken a short position in Adani Group companies through US-traded bonds and non-Indian-traded derivatives. While the tussle between Hindenburg and Adani continues to intensify, it has also raised curiosity around what exactly short selling is.

What is short selling?

Short selling is a complex trading strategy that is based on speculation, much like betting. Of course, well-researched short positions come with high risk and high rewards. The most basic way to define short-selling is speculating about the decline in a stock and then betting against it.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) defines short selling as the sale of a security or share that the seller does not own. In short selling, an investor sells borrowed shares in the market in the hope of buying them back at a cheaper price.

Too complicated? Don't worry, we



will break it down further.

Short selling is exactly the opposite to usual stock market investments, where an investor has bought a stock, hoping that its price will rise in future. In short selling, an investor holds a short position after anticipating a decrease in the value of a stock.

Simply put, an investor makes money by betting on a company's stock or assets.

So, what is the process involved?

In short selling, an investor does not need to own a particular company's shares to short them. Instead, they can borrow shares/assets of the company from any broker or dealer. You also need to have a margin account for shorting and need to pay

interest on the value of borrowed shares while the position is open.

You borrow the shares from the brokerage, sell them and then the proceeds are credited to your account. But wait, that's just half the job done. You need to close the position also – sooner or later – by buying back the exact number of shares (technically called covering), and return it to your broker.

Your short position will pay off if you succeed in buying the shares back at a lower price as you get to keep the additional money credited to your account from the sale. However, investors must be ready to pay any interest or commissions charged by the broker.

But if your prediction goes wrong and

the stock price goes up, you will have to pay an additional amount from your pocket. It may be noted that the risk of a loss on a short sale is theoretically unlimited, as the price of shares can climb to infinity. Given the high risk involved, shorting or short selling is an advanced investment tool, used only by the most experienced traders.

Is short selling worth it?

Short selling is a highly complicated trading strategy that reaps huge profits on correct predictions. At the same time, it could lead to heavy losses if the value of a shorted stock does not go down.

However, an individual who is shorting a stock bears much more risk than a person investing in a stock. How? This is because a person who has bought a stock can lose only 100 per cent if the value becomes zero, but a person who has shorted a stock can lose more than 100 per cent if the value increases by more than 100 per cent – highly unlikely but a possible outcome.

Some of the pros of shorting are the possibility of making huge profits and little or no initial capital requirement (you borrow the stocks and sell them). On the other hand, the cons are potentially unlimited losses, mandatory requirement for a margin account and a need to pay interest on margin.

3 habits you should follow to get good sleep

To get a good night's sleep, a nutritionist unpacked ways that will help you make better lifestyle choices.

(SAI Bureau) A lifestyle filled with deadlines, stringent work schedules, erratic shifts and junk food can cause irregular sleep cycles. Where good sleep is supposed to be a daily requirement, it ends up becoming a luxury for many. Nutritionist Rujuta Diwekar took to Instagram recently to share three habits to get good sleep. As part of her 12-week fitness project, she shared three important ways to help you get a proper night's rest: fixing your bedtime, a warm water bath with neem leaves and nutmeg and rubbing ghee on the soles of your feet.

FIXED BEDTIME

Rujuta shared that following a fixed bedtime routine keeps your body in sync with other functions like digestion. It also prevents diseases and premature ageing. "Ayurveda gives a whole lot of importance to dinacharya or to following a routine in life where things are done on time. We all



understand that this is important be it in business or academics but with health, we don't appreciate it in its full glory. A fixed bedtime helps your body to be in sync with the natural rhythms, improves digestion and helps prevent diseases or ageing," she wrote.

WARM WATER BATH WITH

NEEM LEAVES/NUTMEG

Bathing in warm water with neem leaves or nutmeg can optimise your sleep and give you a sense of calm.

She added, "Neem is celebrated in India for its ability to fight infections and keep your immunity up. Nutmeg too is known for its antioxidants and

anti-inflammatory properties. A warm bath in the night with any of these or both of these will leave you feeling calm, strong in your mind and help optimise sleep."

GHEE ON THE SOLES OF YOUR FEET

Rujuta shared that rubbing ghee on the soles of your feet helps with bloating at night. It is also

useful when you're feeling anxious and improves your quality of sleep.

"This has many benefits, especially for those who feel bloated and gassy at night. It also brings about a balance in your constitution and is especially useful when anxiety and fatigue may have gripped you. It leads to improved sleep quality and allows you to wake up feeling fresh as a daisy. Traditionally, there was also a special waati (kansya) with which you are supposed to rub the ghee on your feet,"

Besides this, the nutritionist shared three more habits that should be a part of your daily sleep hygiene.

Keep a 2-3 hour gap between dinner and bedtime.

No gadgets 60 minutes before sleeping.

Have haldi milk at night.

Sleep in a well-ventilated, cool and dark room.

Say a prayer before sleeping.

How to incorporate yoga into your daily routine

Incorporating yoga into your daily routine can be a game-changer for both your physical and mental well-being. The ancient practice of yoga has been around for thousands of years and offers a wide range of benefits that can help you lead a more balanced, healthy, and fulfilling life

(SAI Bureau) Incorporating yoga into your daily routine can be a game-changer for both your physical and mental well-being. The ancient practice of yoga has been around for thousands of years and offers a wide range of benefits that can help you lead a more balanced, healthy, and fulfilling life. From improving flexibility and strength to reducing stress and anxiety, yoga can help you achieve a sense of calm and peace that is hard to find in today's fast-paced world. But with so many different styles and forms of yoga, it can be difficult to know where to start. How do you make yoga a regular part of your daily routine? How do you find the right style of yoga for you? And how do you keep yourself motivated and on track? Here are some tips to help you make yoga a regular part of your daily routine: Set a specific time and place for your practice: One of the key elements of making yoga a regular part of your



routine is to set aside a specific time and place for your practice. Whether it's first thing in the morning, during your lunch break, or before bed, choose a time that works best for you and make it a non-negotiable part of your daily schedule.

Start small and be consistent: When incorporating yoga into your daily routine, it's important to start small and be consistent. You don't have to

do an hour-long yoga class every day, just a few minutes of yoga practice can make a big difference. Start with just a few minutes of practice per day and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable with the practice.

Make it a habit: The key to making any new habit stick is to make it a part of your daily routine. One way to do this is to link your yoga practice with

an existing habit, such as practicing yoga after brushing your teeth in the morning or before going to bed at night.

Find a style that resonates with you: Yoga comes in many different styles and forms, so it's important to find a style that resonates with you. Some popular styles include Hatha, Vinyasa, and Kundalini yoga. Each style offers a unique set of benefits and can help you achieve

different goals, so be sure to explore different styles to find the one that best suits your needs.

Use props if needed: Yoga props such as blocks, straps, and blankets can be extremely helpful for beginners, or those with injuries or limited mobility. Props can help you achieve proper alignment and can make certain poses more accessible.

Practice with a partner or a group: Practicing yoga with a partner or a group can be a great way to stay motivated and on track. It can also be a fun way to explore different poses and styles of yoga.

Incorporating mindfulness and meditation: Yoga is not just about stretching and physical movements but also incorporates mindfulness and meditation to improve overall well-being. Mindfulness and meditation can help you focus on the present moment and reduce stress, which can make your yoga practice more effective.

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Deepika Padukone styled her stunning floral gown with Rs 7k earrings. Here's a closer look

Deepika Padukone looked pretty in a beautiful billowing dress for the Pathaan press conference. She styled her outfit with a pair of stunning dual-tone earrings



(SAI Bureau) Deepika Padukone embraced the power of florals as she attended the Pathaan press conference with Shah Rukh Khan, John Abraham and director Siddharth Anand in Mumbai on Monday (January 30). The Pathaan stars turned up in their sartorial best for the event that was hosted to celebrate the spectacular success of the film. While SRK looked dapper in a black blazer set, John rocked a crisp black shirt with denims. Deepika, we must add, stole the show with her vibrant floral-print dress. The actress exuded floral charm in a custom dress by designer duo Gauri and Nainika. She wore a sleeveless mid-length outfit featuring a risque plunging neckline.



Deepika, who has often showcased her affinity for florals, once again put forth a note-worthy moment in this designer creation. Adding a hint of bling to her look was the striking pair of earrings. Keeping the jewellery game minimal but effective, she opted for a pair of two-tone crystal drop earrings. Deepika's two-tone drop earrings frosted with high-shine crystal and enamel work are from the label Isharya. If you want to add the same earrings to your jewellery box, you can purchase them from the brand's website. A pair costs approximately Rs 7,874 (USD 96). To complete the look, Deepika opted for slicked open hairdo and flaunted minimal makeup with rosy-pink glow.

Here's everything you need to know about Jennifer Aniston's chikankari lehenga designed by Manish Malhotra

Jennifer Aniston has taken over the internet with her desi avatar in a Manish Malhotra lehenga. Here's all you need to know about her ensemble.

(SAI Bureau) Jennifer Aniston's desi avatar in the Murder Mystery 2 trailer has left her fans super excited! The actress, who plays a detective alongside Adam Sandler in the sequel of their much-loved Murder Mystery (2019), has rocked a regal lehenga. The trailer of the film which was released on Monday offered a glimpse of the same. Several photos of the Hollywood actress dressed in an ethnic ensemble are doing rounds of the internet since then. Well, rightly so!

Jennifer Aniston looks absolutely stunning in the ethereal ivory

lehenga from the shelves of designer Manish Malhotra's eponymous label. Want to know more about the exquisite Manish Malhotra lehenga? For the Indian wedding scene in the upcoming movie, the actress was keen on wearing a lehenga that was contemporary yet adorned with the essence of Indian handicraft. Costume designer Debra McGuire and Manish Malhotra locked in on the ivory colour, as the wedding shown in the film is a beach soiree.

The actress exuded ethnic glam in an elegant chikankari lehenga featuring graduating rectangular motifs all over the voluminous



lehenga skirt. The blouse she wore boasted of intricate floral embroidery, pearl droplets and a handmade back tassel. The outfit took over 3 months to be made.

Interestingly, Jennifer Aniston went all ethnic with her lehenga look. She took the desi glam up by a notch with her oversized chandbali earrings and delicate haathphools. The film Murder Mystery 2 is slated to release on Netflix on March 31.

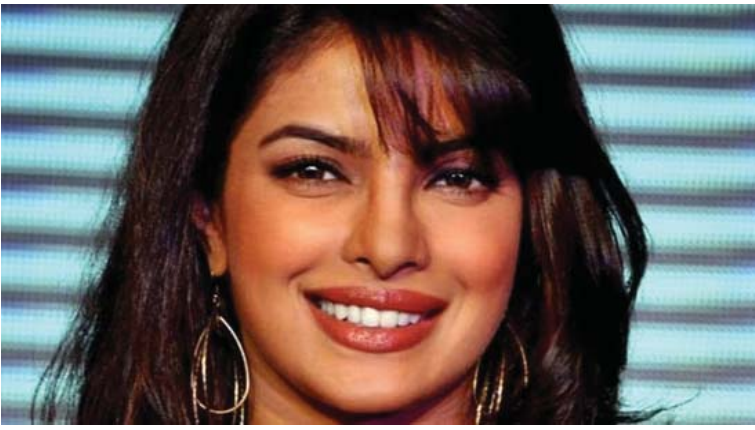
The importance of quality time: How to connect with your child



(SAI Bureau) When it comes to raising children, there is nothing more precious than the time you spend with them. Quality time with your little ones is not only crucial for their emotional and mental well-being, but it also lays the foundation for a strong and ever-lasting parent-child bond. All parents strive to create meaningful and lasting connections with their children, but in today's fast-paced world, it can be challenging to find the time and energy to do so. However, by making a conscious effort to prioritize quality time with your children, you can not only strengthen your relationships with them but also positively impact their development and overall well-being. Here are some tips for making the most of the quality time you spend with your child: Make it a priority: Block out specific times during the week for quality time with your child. This could be a regular game night, a walk in the park, or simply sitting down to have a conversation over dinner.

Get rid of distractions: Turn off your phone, the television, and any other distractions that might take away from the time you're spending together. **Listen actively:** When your child is talking, make sure you're giving them your full attention. Show that you're listening by making eye contact, nodding, and responding to what they're saying. Show interest in their lives: Ask your child about their day, their friends, and their interests. Show that you care about the things that are important to them.

When Priyanka Chopra spoke about feeling 'utterly insignificant': 'I hadn't done enough for anyone in life...'



endless, a grandeur I'd never seen before. I looked below and saw a river. A 70 plus man was trying to cross it along with a child on a mule. The boy was coughing and sneezing, I guessed he was unwell. Next, I saw the old man take off his own woollen cape and wrap the child in it. It was freezing 3 degree Celsius but the man braved the cold just so he could keep the boy warm. Watching

this scene made me feel utterly insignificant. At that point I felt I hadn't done enough for anyone in life," Priyanka told Filmfare in 2004. She had further said, "We are such a small part of the universe and yet we like to play God. Also, we are constantly harping about I, me and myself. That's so sad. We need to really go out there and do our bit." Priyanka's upcoming projects

include Love Again with Sam Heughan and Celine Dion. She also has Prime Video's upcoming series Citadel with Russo Brothers. She will be seen alongside Richard Madden in the show that is billed as an 'action-packed spy series' that spans the globe, and is designed to launch spinoff series set in countries such as India, Spain and Mexico.

(By Staff Reporter) In a 2004 interview, Priyanka Chopra had spoken about a film's shoot near Manali in 'freezing 3 degree Celsius'. She recalled an incident during the outdoor shoot that made her feel 'utterly insignificant'.

Priyanka Chopra has been photographed at various high profile events in the past few days – from attending a star-studded party in Los Angeles with Oprah Winfrey, Kim Kardashian, Jennifer Lopez and other Hollywood celebs to watching husband-singer Nick Jonas' band Jonas Brothers get star on Hollywood Walk of Fame. Recently, Priyanka also made headlines after she spoke about daughter Malti Marie Chopra Jonas' birth in a new interview. Today, Priyanka is one of the most famous Indian actors, who

is known the world over. However, in an old interview, the actor had spoken about feeling 'utterly insignificant'. After Priyanka was crowned Miss World 2000, she joined films and made her acting debut in the Tamil movie Thamizhan (2002), followed by her first Bollywood film, The Hero: Love Story of a Spy (2003). In a 2004 interview, Priyanka Chopra had spoken about a film's shoot near Manali in 'freezing 3 degree Celsius', where she saw an old man take off his woollen cap and wrap it around a child, who was likely unwell, as they crossed a river on a mule. Priyanka said the incident made her feel she 'hadn't done enough for anyone in life'. "I was shooting at the Rohtang Pass near Manali recently and I was standing on this one peak all by myself. Around me was an expanse of land that seemed

Author Paulo Coelho calls Shah Rukh Khan 'king, legend, friend but above all great actor' after Pathaan

(By Staff Reporter) Author Paulo Coelho singled out Shah Rukh Khan on Twitter to praise the actor after the tremendous success of his latest film Pathaan. The Brazilian novelist responded to a video shared by the actor thanking his fans gathered outside his house, Mannat, in Mumbai. He brought the 2010 film My Name Is Khan which he shared was one of

the actor's best performances, according to him. Paulo urged his followers to check out the film. Taking to Twitter, Paulo responded to a video shared by Shah Rukh where his fans gathered outside his house in Mumbai.

He wrote, "King. Legend. Friend. But above all GREAT ACTOR (for those who don't know him in the West, I strongly suggest "My name

is Khan- and I am not a terrorist")." One fan replied, "Wooww... and what a way to introduce to those who don't know him." While another added, "Paulo thank you man you always stand by our king srk lots and lots of love

(red heart emojis)." This is not the first time that the author has praised Shah Rukh and his performance in My Name Is Khan. In 2017, Paulo had gone on Twitter to congratulate Shah Rukh on the seventh anniversary of the film.



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Aamir Khan Takes Pic Of Salman Posing With His Family, Shared By Sister Nikhat

(By Staff Reporter) New Delhi: Aamir Khan may have taken a break from movies, but the star keeps making appearances on social media. This time, his sister Nikhat Hegde has offered a glimpse of Aamir Khan. In the picture, Aamir turned photographer for his family. The photo also features Salman Khan. Yes, the images seem to be from Salman's recent visit to Aamir Khan's house. In the image, Salman is seen posing next to Nikhat and Aamir's mom Zeenat Hussain, while Aamir clicks a perfect group picture. Aamir's other relatives are also present in the picture. Sharing the post, Nikhat Hegde wrote, "For those who were missing Aamir." Soon after she shared the post, fans flooded the comment section. A user wrote, "Salman and Aamir are the most beautiful pillars of Bollywood," while another wrote, "Oh so cute. Aamir Sir, the cameraman. Love you Aamir Sir! Love your family. You are pride of our nation. Talking about Aamir Khan's sister Nikhat Hegde recently made a cameo appearance in Shah Rukh Khan's Pathaan. She played the role of Shah Rukh's foster mother Saba. Coming back to Aamir Khan's social media appearance, the superstar attended a wedding in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, where he met Punjabi singer Jasbir Jaasi. The singer shared several pictures on his Twitter handle and wrote, "Dil da Ameer (rich by heart), Aamir Khan."



Kangana Ranaut's Tweet On Uniform Civil Code, Actor Uorfi Javed's Reply

Kangana Ranaut returned to Twitter recently after a ban for nearly two years. The microblogging website banned her account in May 2021, after she posted controversial content linked to post-election violence in Bengal.



(By Staff Reporter) New Delhi: A comment on blockbuster Shah Rukh Khan starrer Pathaan triggered a viral back-and-forth on Twitter between actor Kangana Ranaut, and actor and influencer Uorfi Javed.

It all started with Kangana Ranaut's comment on an appreciation post for Shah Rukh Khan, which said, "Hindu Muslims love SRK equally" and that "India is super secular".

"Very good analysis... this country has only and only loved all Khans and at times only and only Khans...And obsessed over Muslim actresses, so it's very unfair to accuse India of hate and fascism ... there is no country like Bharat in the whole world," wrote Kangana Ranaut, commenting on a Bollywood producer's post. Very good analysis... this country has only and only loved all Khans and at times only and only

Khans...And obsessed over Muslim actresses, so it's very unfair to accuse India of hate and fascism ... there is no

country like Bharat ???? in the whole world. Uorfi Javed reacted to the two-day-old tweet by the 'Manikarnika' actor and commented: "Oh my gosh ! What is this division , Muslim actors , Hindu actors . Art is not divided by religion . There are only actors." Kangana Ranaut, who is an open supporter of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reacted to Uorfi Javed's tweet: "Yes, my dear Uorfi that will be an ideal world but it's not possible unless we have The Uniform Civil Code, till the time this nation is divided in the

constitution itself it will remain divide, Let's all demand Uniform Civil Code from @narendramodiji in 2024 Manifesto. Shall we?"

Back to Uorfi, who sought to make light of Ms Ranaut's suggestion. "Uniform would be a bad idea for me maam ! I'm popular only because of my clothes," said the Instagram favourite known for her outrageous fashion.

Then she followed it up with a "clarification". Ms Ranaut, who often posts outrageous and no-filter content on Twitter, had earlier posted

similar tweets on Pathaan. "I do believe Indian Muslims are patriotic and very different from Afghan Pathans ... the crux is India will never be Afghanistan, we all know what is happening in Afghanistan, it's beyond hell there, so apt name for the movie Pathan according to its storyline is the Indian Pathan." Ms Ranaut returned to Twitter recently after a ban for nearly two years. The microblogging website banned her account in May 2021, after she posted controversial content linked to post-election violence in Bengal.

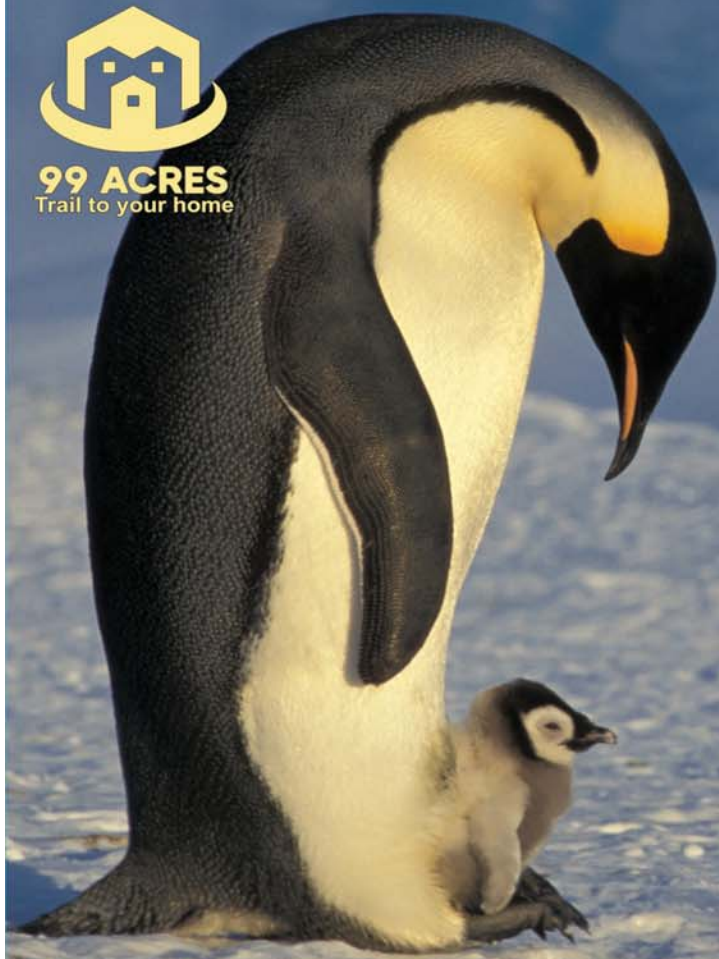


Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan Snapped Together After a Long Time, Fans Call Them 'Favourites'

(By Staff Reporter) Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan won everyone's hearts when they appeared in Karan Johar's 2012 film Student Of The Year. The two actors then worked together in several other films including Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania, Badrinath Ki Dulhania and Kalank. Their on-screen chemistry was widely loved by all. While the two have not shared the screen for a long time now, they were snapped together on Tuesday as they attended an event.

For the event, Alia Bhatt sported a pastel-coloured floral outfit. On the other hand, Varun Dhawan looked dapper as always in an orange tee layered with a brown jacket. In a video that surfaced on social media, the two were seen interacting with each other. This left 'Varia' fans in complete awe. While one of the social media users called them 'favourites', another user wrote, "looking so

beautiful". "I am not crying," a third comment read. "VARUN AND ALIA, AFTER SO LONGG REALLY WANNA SEE THEM ONSCREEN ASAP!!!!" one of the Tweets read. Meanwhile, on the work front, Alia Bhatt will soon mark her Hollywood debut with Heart of Stone along with Gal Gadot, Jamie Dornan, Matthias Schweighofer and Sophie Okonedo. She also has Karan Johar's Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani with Ranveer Singh in her pipeline which will be released in April next year. Besides these, she will also share the screen with Priyanka Chopra and Katrina Kaif in Jee Le Zaara. On the other hand, Varun Dhawan was last seen in the horror-comedy film 'Bhediya' by filmmaker Amar Kaushik. Next, he will be seen with Samantha Ruth Prabhu for the Indian adaption of the sci-fi series Citadel. Apart from this, Varun Dhawan will also be seen in Bawal with Janhvi Kapoor.



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