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Decades after war, Russia's relentless hunt of Chechens continues

Even two decades after the war in Chechnya, Chechens refugees in Europe live in fear of Russia's long arm



(SAI Bureau) Twenty years after Vladimir Putin flattened their capital Grozny in the same way that his forces are now destroying Mariupol, Chechens refugees in Europe still live in fear of Russia's long arm.

(Contd on page 31)

PM Modi meets German Chancellor Olaf Scholz; discusses regional and global developments



Full Story on Page 28

Biden announces 1.5-year extension for selected expiring immigrant work permits



(SAI Bureau) The Biden administration has announced an automatic extension of authorisation cards (EAD), for expiring work permits for certain categories of immigrants, including those seeking green cards and spouses of H-1B visa holders who get employment authorisation cards (EAD), for a year and a half. The move, announced by the Department of Homeland Security on

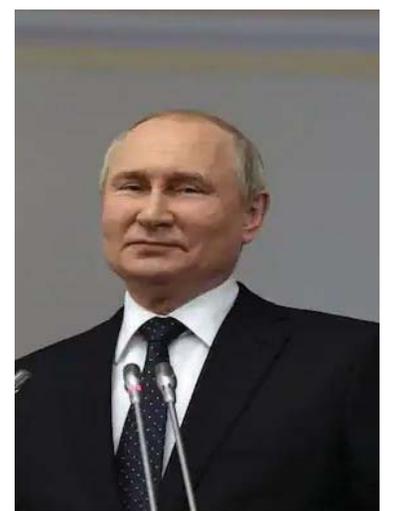
The Biden administration will grant an automatic extension of expiring work permits for certain categories of immigrants to the US

Tuesday, is likely to benefit thousands of Indian immigrants. The extension period of up to 180 days will automatically be extended to up to 540 days from the expiration date stated on the current EADs, the Department of Homeland Security said.

(Contd on page 28)

A popular Telegram channel General SVR made these extraordinary claims adding that its source is a well-placed figure in the Kremlin, the report added.

(SAI Bureau) Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin is set for cancer surgery hence he may be forced to give up the command of the war in Ukraine for days. Putin will reportedly nominate hardline former FSB chief Nikolai Patrushev to take temporary control of the invasion while he is under the knife, claims a Kremlin insider. Also Read - 'Ghost of Kiev' Pilot Only A Superhero-Legend? Here's What Ukraine Air Force Command Said According to a Daily Mail report, Patrushev, the 70-year-old incumbent Secretary of Russia's Security Council, is seen as a key architect of the war strategy



so far and the man who convinced Putin that Kyiv is awash with neo-Nazis.

(Contd. on page 30)

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Full page Advt. on page 44

Indian-Origin Man Appointed CIA's First Tech Officer

Nand Mulchandani has over 25 years of experience working in Silicon Valley and recently the Department of Defence

(SAI Bureau) Nand Mulchandani, an Indian-origin man who studied at a Delhi school, has been appointed the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) first-ever Chief Technology Officer. The announcement for the coveted position was made by Director William J Burns in a blog post and also shared on social media. As per the statement by the CIA, Mr Mulchandani has over 25 years of experience working in Silicon Valley as well as the Department of Defense (DoD). It added that Mr Mulchandani "brings substantial private sector, startup, and government expertise to CIA". Sharing the development, Mr Burns said, "Since my confirmation, I have prioritized focusing on

technology and the new CTO position is a very important part of that effort. I am delighted Nand has joined our team and will bring his extensive experience to this crucial new role." In his role as the CTO, Mr Mulchandani will ensure that the Agency is leveraging cutting-edge innovations, the statement said. Additionally, "scanning the horizon for tomorrow's innovations to further the CIA's mission" will also be on Mr Mulchandani's agenda as the CTO. Following a degree in Computer Science and Math from Cornell, Mr Mulchandani pursued a Master of Science degree in Management from Stanford as well as a Master in Public Administration degree from Harvard.

Before his new role at the CIA, Mr Mulchandani served as the CTO and Acting Director of DoD's Joint Artificial Intelligence Center. He has co-founded and served as the CEO of several successful startups such as Oblix (acquired by Oracle), Determina (acquired by VMware), OpenDNS (acquired by Cisco), and ScaleXtreme (acquired by Citrix). Mr Muchandani studied at Delhi's Bluebells School International between 1979-1987. Speaking about his appointment, Mr Mulchandani said, "I am honoured to join CIA in this role and look forward to working with the Agency's incredible team of technologists and domain experts who already deliver world-class



intelligence and capabilities to help build a comprehensive technology strategy that delivers exciting capabilities working closely with industry and partners."

Sorrowful Funeral For Mentally Disabled Indian-Origin Man Hanged In Singapore

Nagaenthran Dharmalingam was a member of Muslim-majority Malaysia's ethnic Indian Hindu minority, and the funeral followed the community's traditions, with sobbing relatives placing flowers on his coffin.



(SAI Bureau) Singapore: Hundreds of mourners wept, read prayers and banged drums Friday at the funeral of a mentally disabled Malaysian man whose hanging in Singapore this week sparked an international outcry. Nagaenthran K. Dharmalingam, convicted of trafficking a small amount of heroin into the city-state, was executed Wednesday after more than a decade on death row. His case sparked widespread anger, with critics including the United Nations and European Union saying that hanging someone with an

intellectual disability breaches international law. Singapore insists the death penalty has helped keep the country one of Asia's safest places. In the 34-year-old's hometown of Tanjung Rambutan, in northern Perak state, about 250 mourners gathered at his home to pay their final respects, according to an AFP reporter.

Nagaenthran was a member of Muslim-majority Malaysia's ethnic Indian Hindu minority, and the funeral followed the community's traditions, with sobbing relatives placing flowers on his

coffin. Prayers were read, drums banged and fireworks set off, before the body was carried to a hearse to be transported to a crematorium. "My brother was a wonderful

person and we will miss him dearly," his sister, Sarmila Dharmalingam, told AFP. "Our worst nightmares have come true." "My humble message to the world -- please abolish the death sentence," she added.

Nagaenthran was arrested aged 21 as he tried to enter Singapore with a bundle of heroin weighing about 43 grams (one and a half ounces) -- equivalent to roughly three tablespoons. Supporters say he had an IQ of 69, a level recognised as a disability, and was coerced into committing the crime. But Singapore has defended the enforcement agency saying Nagaenthran "knew what he

was doing" when he committed the crime and the courts had found he did not have an intellectual disability. Singapore resumed executions last month after a hiatus of more than two years, and activists fear authorities are set to embark on a wave of hangings. But there was relief Thursday for another Malaysian convicted of drugs offences, Datchinamurthy Kataiah, after he won a bid to delay his hanging. Datchinamurthy, who was found guilty of trafficking heroin into Singapore, had been scheduled to be executed Friday but it was postponed as he has another pending case in the courts.

Consulate General of India, NY & Embassy of India, WA, D.C to take up the illegal issue with the concerned US lawmakers

(Press Release) We condemn the so-called Citation of the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut in the USA regarding an illegal act. This is an attempt by some mischievous elements to use the name of the Assembly for their nefarious purposes. These vested interests seek to divide communities

and promote bigotry and hatred. Their agenda of violence has no place in democratic societies like the USA and India. The Embassy of India in Washington D.C. and the Consulate General of India in New York will take up this issue appropriately with the concerned US lawmakers.



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Steel core bullets, night sights

Terrorists in Kashmir valley using weapons left by US in Afghanistan



Terrorists operating in the Kashmir valley have started using steel core bullets, Canadian night sights and other weapons that were left behind by the US in Afghanistan

(SAI Bureau) Terrorists operating in the Kashmir valley have started using steel core bullets and Canadian night sights that were left behind by the American-led NATO alliance when it was forced to retreat from Afghanistan. US forces reportedly left behind weapons and equipment worth billions of dollars in Afghanistan.

Recently, it was found that some of the terrorists in the Kashmir valley used American armour piercing bullets in encounters with Indian security forces and were successful in breaching the bulletproof jackets of soldiers. Immediate measures are being taken to counter this threat,

top government sources told India Today.

The APBs along with the M-16 assault rifles and M-4 carbines have been left behind in huge numbers by the retreating American Army which quit Afghanistan, 20 years after it started the war against terror. Following its retreat, Afghanistan fell into Taliban control.

Indian security forces had feared that the weaponry left behind would definitely reach India through Pakistan. The Army is now looking to order level 4 jackets for soldiers in large numbers as they would provide protection against these steel core bullets.

PM Modi's gifts to Nordic leaders reflect India's rich, diverse traditions

Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted items reflecting India's rich and diverse heritage to various dignitaries from Nordic nations

(SAI Bureau) Items reflecting India's rich and diverse heritage and showcasing distinctive traditions of its various regions were chosen by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as his gifts to various dignitaries from Nordic nations he met during his three-day tour to as many European countries. Official sources said Modi gifted a rogan painting, an art of cloth printing practiced in Gujarat's Kutch, to Danish queen Margrethe, a silver meenakari bird figure from Banaras to crown princess Mary and a brass tree of life from Rajasthan to his Finland counterpart. He presented dhaal with koftgiri art from Rajasthan and a wall hanging with Kutch embroidery to prime ministers of Norway and Denmark

respectively, while giving a pashmina stole in a papier mache box from Jammu and Kashmir to his Swedish counterpart. Modi gifted a dhokra boat from Chhattisgarh to crown prince Frederik of Denmark, sources said, noting these products are in great demand in domestic and foreign markets because of primitive simplicity, enchanting folk motifs and forceful form. Dhokra is a nonferrous metal casting using the lost-wax casting technique, something in use in India for over 4,000 years. In rogan painting, paint made from boiled oil and vegetable dyes is laid down on fabric using either a metal block (printing) or a stylus (painting). The craft nearly died out in the late 20th century. Referring to

Banaras meenakari work, officials noted that the art of silver enameling practiced in Benaras (Varanasi) is almost 500 years old and has its roots in Persian art of Meenakari. Meena is the Persian word for glass. The tree of life, they added, symbolises development and growth of life, and this hand-crafted wall decorative art-piece is made of brass and is an example of the excellent craftsmanship and rich tradition of India. The roots of the tree represents connection with the earth, leaves and birds represents life and candle stand represent light. Tarkashi or koftgiri on metal is a traditional art of Rajasthan as a means of decorating arms and armour. Today it has been diverted to the

decoration of objects such as picture frames, boxes, walking sticks and decorative swords, daggers and war accessories like shields, they noted.

The Kutch embroidery is a handicraft and textile signature art tradition of the tribal community of Kutch district in Gujarat, the embroidery with its rich designs has made a notable contribution to the Indian embroidery traditions, the officials noted. A symbol of luxury and elegance, Kashmiri pashmina stoles have been treasured for their rare material, exquisite craftsmanship and reminiscent designs since time immemorial. The warmth and softness that these stoles offer is simply beyond comparison.

Desi grenade launchers growing concern for forces in Naxal areas

The forces have recovered several exploded and unexploded shells which have made the security agencies believe that the red soldiers may have improvised on the recovered UBGL

(News Agency) Security forces in Chhattisgarh have a new threat to deal with - "desi UBGLs". In the past months, the forces have stopped several Maoist attacks and recovered shells of Barrel Grenade Launchers (BGLs) and Under Barrel Grenade Launcher (UBGLs) in the state's Bastar region, sources in the security grid told India Today TV.

According to them, in the recent encounters in Bijapur and Sukhma, the forces have recovered several exploded and unexploded shells which have made the security agencies believe that the red soldiers may have improvised on the recovered UBGL. They are using this to attack several of the old and newly

established CRPF camps.

"Earlier, we would recover BGLs which were mostly stolen or seized from security forces. But recently, there has been a surge in attacks with desi BGL," a CRPF officer said. Another officer said that this allows the naxals to target forces from a safe distance.

Between November 1 and April 30, the security forces have established eight camps in Chhattisgarh despite the challenges posed by the pandemic - four established last year and four this year.

The forces, who faced resistance in one or two camps, said that over the years their outreach will help bring medical aid to far-reaching areas.

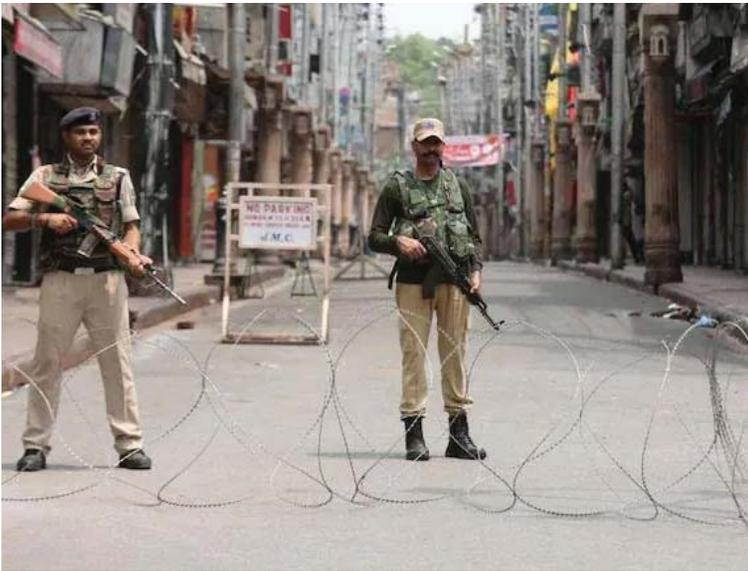
On April 26, Maoists fired eight rockets from an improvised barrel grenade launcher (BGL) targeting a Border Security Force (BSF) camp at Kamteda, about 380 km south of Raipur.

The security forces retaliated by launching an attack, following which the rebels fled into the nearby forest. Three of the rockets fell close to a BSF camp. On March 6, the ultras laid an ambush near Bastar's Tekameta Para and when the forces reached the area, they began firing indiscriminately and also lobbed BGL and UBGL shells. As security personnel launched retaliatory fire, the Naxals fled the spot by taking cover from villagers and the populated area. Recently in

Jagargunda, a local fete, or mela, was successfully organised after 24 years. Such events are a shot in the arm for people and the government. The Naxals over the years have used several innovative ideas, from explosive-laden bow and arrow to IEDs to launch attacks on security forces. But despite this, the security forces have managed to turn the tables around with the Union Home Ministry saying the Naxal-related violence or Left Wing Extremism (LWE) related violence was reduced by 77 per cent from an all-time high of 2,258 in 2009 to 509 in 2021. This year so far, seven Naxals have been killed and 220 were arrested while 212 surrendered.

Kashmiri Pandits to get representation in J&K Assembly with voting rights?

The Kashmiri Pandits have intensified their demand for representation in the J&K Assembly and, according to the sources, representation may also be given to displaced people from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir



(News Agency) The Delimitation Commission might recommend representation for Kashmiri Pandits as nominated members in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly with the right to vote, sources told India Today TV. This comes at a time when the BJP is trying to reach out to the community that was forced to leave their homes in the Valley to escape persecution in the 1990s.

The Kashmiri Pandits have intensified their demand for representation in the J&K Assembly and, according to the sources, representation may also be given to displaced people from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The Delimitation Commission visited Jammu and Kashmir in July last year to interact with political leaders and civil society

groups and get inputs on the exercise to redraw the electoral constituencies in the union territory. The decision to visit Jammu and Kashmir was taken after the panel held a meeting at the Election Commission's office in Delhi in June. The commission, whose term ends on May 6, will submit the final report in the next few days.

The redrawing of electoral constituencies was necessitated after Jammu and Kashmir was split into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019 with the abrogation of Article 370, which granted special status to the erstwhile state. The commission was set up on March 6, 2020, for a year and was granted a year's extension in 2021. In February this year, the commission was given an extension of two months till May 6, 2022.

Whatever the language, our culture is Indian: PM Modi

Speaking to the Indian diaspora in Copenhagen, PM Modi said due to India's vast diversity, people may have different food choices and languages but have the same Indian culture

(News Agency) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday interacted with the Indian diaspora on his visit to Denmark's Copenhagen and invoked inclusiveness and cultural diversity in his speech. Whatever the language, our culture is Indian, he said.

PM Modi said, "Inclusiveness and cultural diversity is the strength of the Indian community. We believe in 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' - one

world." He stated that due to India's vast diversity, people may have different food choices and languages but have the same Indian culture. "We stand together to defend the country, for nation building," he added.

PM Modi, who arrived in Denmark on the second leg of his three-nation Europe trip, also said whatever India is achieving today, it is the achievement of about one-fifth of humanity. In his address,

PM Modi also spoke about climate change, environment and the Green Strategic Partnership. He invoked 'Life' and said the focus should be on LIFE- Lifestyle For Environment, to tackle climate change.

"We have to give up the consumption-oriented approach. Our consumption should be determined by our needs, not the size of our pocket," he said.

The Green Strategic



Partnership, which PM Modi said was guided by the Danish PM's personal priorities and values, will focus on green hydrogen, renewable energy and wastewater

management. Further, PM Modi asked the Danish people to come to India to find answers and solutions to save the planet. I want to tell our Danish friends to come to India to jointly find answers to the problems of the planet, he said.

"India has been able to fulfil its Climate Action because, unlike others who put all the responsibility of saving the planet on multilateral organisations, we see it as a responsibility of each citizen to do their bit to save the world," he added. Before leaving for Paris, PM Modi will attend the 2nd India-Nordic Summit and will also meet Danish Queen Margrethe II. The summit will reportedly focus on subjects like post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, innovation and technology, renewable energy, the evolving global security scenario and India-Nordic cooperation in the Arctic region

CBI files another case against Mehul Choksi after raids

(News Agency) India Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday filed a case against Mehul Choksi who is wanted in the multi-billion dollar Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud along with Nirav Modi.

The case involves Choksi allegedly inflating the value of diamonds and jewellery as the CBI reportedly booked Choksi and his company Gitanjali Gems including valuers Surajmal Lallu Bhai and Co, Narendra Jhaveri, Pradip C Shah and Shrenik Shah.

Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI) Ltd had alleged that Choksi had approached it seeking Rs 25 crore



working capital loan as he pledged loan. However, after the company allegedly defaulted on payments as IFCI called in the shares and jewellery but it could sell 6,48,822 shares for just Rs 4,07 crore even as 20,60,054 shares were pledged but the client ID of Mehul Choksi was blocked by NSDL, according to the complaint. The incident was recorded in the FIR. Choksi along with Nirav Modi has been accused by Indian authorities of siphoning off over billions from Punjab National Bank (PNB) using fraudulent letters of undertaking and foreign letters of credit.

shares, gold and diamond jewellery. The valuers at the time had said the jewellery was in the range of Rs 34-45 crore on the basis of which IFCI sanctioned the

How Delhi managed power situation better amid ongoing coal crisis

Delhi gets a better deal for the allocation of power from different power plants and at the same time, the national capital is prepared in a better way to tackle the power crisis

(News Agency) Amidst the power crisis all over the country during the last few days, a question is being raised about why Delhi didn't face a similar power cut? Is there some special treatment given to Delhi being the national capital or better management that prevented the capital from cushioning its residents?

The answer is yes. Delhi gets a better deal for the allocation of power from different power plants but at the same time, the national capital is prepared in a better way to tackle the power crisis. It has become possible due to better management by private discoms and even government agencies, which have worked towards providing an uninterrupted power supply to the residents of Delhi for years now.

It is also a fact that the Delhi government raised its concerns over the ongoing coal crisis and even power minister Satyendra Jain wrote a letter to the Centre demanding sufficient coal supply to those thermal power plants from where Delhi gets the bulk of its power supply. That was based mainly on the assumption that if the coal crisis will get bigger in magnitude, then despite power agreements with different generation companies, the national capital will run into trouble. Here are some key factors

that saved Delhi so far from the ongoing power crisis, unlike the neighbouring states of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

LONG TERM POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENTS

The power distribution in Delhi is the responsibility of three discoms, including BRPL, BYPL, and TPDDL. While BRPL distributes power to the West and South Delhi areas, BYPL takes care of East and Central Delhi residents and TPDDL provides power supply to North and Northwest Delhi. Power distribution in the New Delhi area is taken care of by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC). All these agencies procure power on their own and then take care of the distribution as well in their designated areas.

Private power companies normally have long-term power purchase agreements with different power generation plants all over the country depending on the availability and power purchase cost. Normally, these agreements are for several years, in some cases up to 25 years as well. Long-term power purchase commitments provide extra cushion for the purchaser and seller both and

are hence beneficial for both parties. Delhi's discoms have arranged power according to the demands during peak and off-peak seasons. According to the sources in the private distribution companies of Delhi, the three companies have arranged for almost 7500 megawatts under different allocations. The major power generation companies that are providing an electricity supply to Delhi are the Gas Turbine Power plant located at Bawana in Delhi, from which an allocation of around 1100 megawatts has been given. The Dadri-II plant in Uttar Pradesh provides almost 725 megawatts of power supply to the capital, while the Jhajjar plant in Haryana has been allocated for almost 700 megawatts.

Earlier, Delhi surrendered power allocation from the Dadri-I plant as the power purchase cost was on the higher side. Even the central government decided to allocate Delhi's share of the Dadri-II plant to Haryana, which was challenged in the Supreme court and the court has stayed in favour of Delhi so far.

BETTER INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT AND UPKEEP OF THE ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT AND STATIONS

To ensure a non-interrupted power supply for the consumers, one of the

most important factors is putting investment in the existing infrastructure. At a time when the power demand rises to record levels, many a time the high load results in power outages. This year, as the summer arrived early, many states did not get a chance for the routine maintenance of the equipment, which normally takes place before the peak season. Mostly, the government-owned distribution departments don't care about the regular maintenance and overhaul of the existing system. Even the loads are not being augmented as regularly as they should be. Mostly, the transformers and cables do not cope with the rising heat and hence, power cuts have become a regular feature in many areas. It is not just about the investment in the power purchase but putting money into the infrastructure overhaul to keep the network in good health. Power substations are also an important part of the electricity distribution infrastructure and with time there is a need to establish new substations and even upgrade them to new technologies. In addition to this, grievance redressal in case of outages is also important, so that the power cut should be kept to the lowest possible duration.



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Indian Army recovers military equipment sent from Afghanistan in Kashmir



(News Agency) The Indian army recently said that there has been a rise in the recovery of military equipment from Afghanistan in the Kashmir region. General officer Commanding (GoC) of the Srinagar-based Chinar Corps, Lieutenant General Devendra Pratap Pandey, today said that the equipment weapon system which is used across the world had made its way into the Kashmir region. He said that it's definitely a challenge, but the Indian Army is all ready to tackle any such issue. According to the

Indian army, equipments from Afghanistan have been recovered near the Line of Control and in a few encounters as well. The Indian army had found some night vision devices and satellite phones. Sources in security said that traces of satellite phones being used by terror groups have been found in the Kashmir region and are sent to the National Technical Research Organisation for analysis. "There are equipment and weapon systems that are used around the world that have found a way inside. It's definitely a challenge, but we have also changed our rules of engagement and procedures to contest that point. They have

been found. They are not in large numbers, but there are signatures and we have recovered them in some encounters and some on the Line of Control, so it's not a big challenge. We have been able to work around that system." said General officer Commanding (GoC) of the Srinagar-based Chinar Corps, Lieutenant General Devendra Pratap Pandey. Indian army also says a lot of foreign terrorists in the valley were on the quiet and they were putting up local terrorists in the forefront. And as local terrorist numbers start coming down, the foreign terrorists are getting slowly

exposed. "These terrorists were quiet. They were putting the local terrorists as the face of terrorist activities." As the numbers of local terrorists started coming down, they are getting exposed and are compelled to come out of hiding to carry out terror activities against the locals and no locals of the valley. "Said General Officer Commanding (GoC) of the Srinagar-based Chinar Corps, Lieutenant General Devendra Pratap Pandey. The Indian army says there has been only one infiltration attempt made by terrorists from across the border, but it was foiled. The security grid on the LoC has been made full proof.

Coal crisis hits India in hot summer months

(News Agency) India is currently facing coal shortage and the government is increasing production and scrambling to supply stocks across the country. Power cuts in many parts of the country are being blamed in part on the coal shortage. State-run Coal India, which accounts for 80% of India's coal output, increased production by 27.2% in April, the federal coal ministry said. Federal government-run Indian Railways has cancelled 753 passenger train services, the government said.

Central government is urging Indian states to increase coal imports for next three years in order to build up coal inventories, said Reuters. Coal inventories are at the lowest pre-summer levels in at least nine years and electricity demand is seen rising at the fastest pace in nearly four decades. Hundreds of trains have been cancelled in India in order to free up railway tracks for its transport to corners of the country.

"The government has decided to cancel ... passenger trains in order to prioritize the movement of coal rakes (trains) across the country to deal with an unprecedented shortage of the vital input at thermal power plants," the government said. It did not say how long the train service would be cancelled for or how commuters would manage without it. Coal accounts for nearly 75% of India's power generation and power plants account for over three-fourths of the over one billion tonnes of annual coal consumption.

Mayawati has sold Bahujan Samaj to BJP, says Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad

Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad on Tuesday accused Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati of selling the party to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

(News Agency) Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad on Tuesday accused Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati of selling the party to the BJP. Speaking to reporters in Jharkhand's Garhwa district, Chandra Shekhar Aazad said Mayawati's actions have severely harmed Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar's ideals, which he will not allow to crumble. "To protect herself, her brother, and other

relatives, Mayawati has surrendered before Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP, which is treachery to Dalits," he said, adding that he and his organisation will not tolerate it. "Only through strength could the country's fascist powers be defeated. As a result, the Bhim Army is waging a campaign to unite the country's Dalits," he said. Aazad stated that he visited Palamu, Garhwa, and Latehar in

Jharkhand as part of this strategy. He alleged that the governments led by the BJP and the Congress have always worked to suppress the Dalit community. Since the BJP and other political parties oppose the Bahujan Samaj, the Bhim Army will continue to awaken the Dalits in the country as per Babasaheb's ideals and will always oppose attacks on democratic values," Aazad said.

Indian PM Modi quotes Rajiv Gandhi's '15 paise in one rupee' remark to attack Congress

(News Agency) Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a 'three-day, three-nation' tour to Europe, appeared to take a shot at the Congress on Monday, stating that no Prime Minister will have to bemoan the fact that he sends one rupee but only 15 paise reaches the intended recipient. "Woh kaunsa panja tha jo 85 paise ghis leta tha (which palm used to take away 85 paise)," he joked, without mentioning former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. During a visit to the drought-stricken Kalahandi district in Odisha in 1985, Rajiv Gandhi, India's youngest prime minister, remarked that barely 15 paise of every rupee spent by the government reached the intended beneficiary.

He claimed that his government had transferred more than Rs 22 trillion to beneficiaries through direct benefit transfers in the last eight years. PM Modi told the Indian diaspora in Berlin that a resurgent India had resolved to move forward with



determination, and he invited the Indian community to assist the country in making significant progress abroad.

He claimed that India's youthful and aspirational citizens recognised the need of political stability in achieving speedier development and that they had ended three decades of upheaval with the push of a

button. Recounting the success of the digital payment mechanism, the Prime Minister said India's share in real time digital payments world over is more than 40 per cent. He said the government was also using the digital payment mechanism to make payments to farmers directly in their bank accounts.

Charak Shapath row: Madurai MBBS students claim they followed NMC guidelines on medical oath

Madurai medical students, who took an oath of the modified 'Maharshi Charak Shapath' instead of the Hippocratic oath, said the circular by the Directorate of Medical Education came a day later. They said they were merely following the NMC guidelines on medical oath.



Kumaravel, students only read the English translation of Charak Shapath. He claimed that students were following the NMC's curriculum which was introduced in 2019 that recommended Charak Shapath. "We've been following the NMC guidelines that stated that Charak Shapath can be recommended to newly inducted students, but that is not mandatory. There was no communication to us that only Hippocratic oath should be taken and not Charak Shapath until yesterday," he said. Meanwhile, a video has surfaced of Ramnad Medical College students taking Charak Shapath on March 11, 2022. State finance minister PTR Thiagarajan was also in attendance. This has raised questions if Madurai Medical College Dean Dr Rathinavel was made a scapegoat.

(News Agency) Jyothish Kumaravel, president of Madurai Medical College Students Council, claimed that they followed the National Medical Commission (NMC) guidelines on medical oath and the circular stating only Hippocratic oath must be taken was issued only on Sunday, a day after the controversy erupted. On Saturday, April 30, the

induction ceremony of first year students of this Madurai college took a controversial turn when they ended up taking an oath of the modified 'Maharshi Charak Shapath' instead of the Hippocratic oath.

But the students now claim that a circular mentioning the medical oath was issued only on Sunday by the Directorate of Medical Education. According to Jyothish

Punjab Congress in-charge writes to Sonia Gandhi, seeks disciplinary action against Navjot Sidhu

The AICC in-charge for Punjab, in a written letter to Congress President Sonia Gandhi, sought disciplinary action against former Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu over 'anti-party activities'

(News Agency) All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge for Punjab and Chandigarh, Harish Chaudhary, in a written letter to Congress President Sonia Gandhi, sought disciplinary action against former Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu. The letter, dated April 23, stated, "Having been in-charge of the party's affairs in Punjab from November until now, it has also been my observation that Sidhu continuously criticised the functioning of the Congress government, terming it corrupt and hand in glove with Shrimoni Akali Dal (SAD)." Chaudhary added, "As the party was fighting election, it was inappropriate for Sidhu to set such a precedent. In spite of my repeated advice to him to avoid such activities, he continued to speak against the government relentlessly." On being asked about the complaint against former PCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, Chaudhary said to India Today, "It is our party's internal matter."

Chaudhary said that he was also forwarding the new Punjab Congress Chief Raja

Warring's detailed note regarding Sidhu's current activities. He explicitly mentioned that the former Punjab Congress Chief

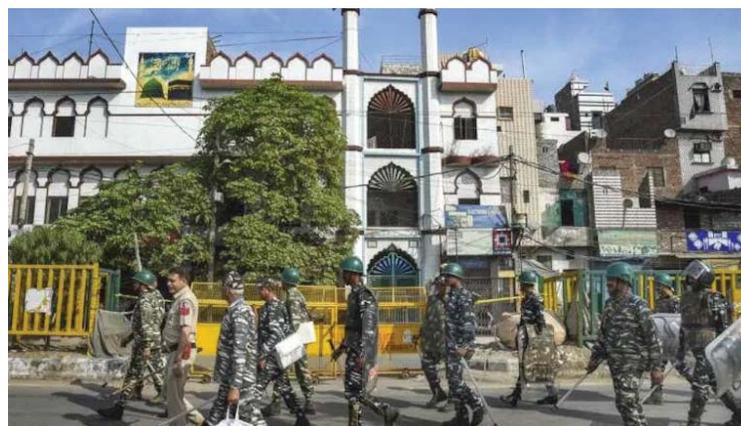
cannot be allowed to portray himself above the party and set an example for others to breach party discipline.

Delhi Police arrests two more accused in Jahangirpuri violence

The Delhi Police arrested two more people on Monday in connection with the Jahangirpuri violence

(News Agency) The Delhi Police on Monday arrested two more accused in connection with the communal clashes that broke out in northwest Delhi's Jahangirpuri on April 16 during a procession on Hanuman Jayanti. The police nabbed Yunus (48), brother of Salim Chikna who has already been arrested, and Sheikh Salim (22) on Sunday night. Both accused are residents of Jahangirpuri.

During investigation and analysis of footage from CCTV cameras, it emerged that Yunus was seen distributing swords to the crowd while Salim was seen receiving them from Yunus, police said.



including three juveniles, in the case so far.

WHAT HAPPENED IN JAHANGIRPURI?

On April 16, clashes erupted between

Let Eid be celebrated with joy, don't perform aarti: Raj Thackeray tells workers

MNS chief Raj Thackeray, who has issued an ultimatum for removal of loudspeakers from mosques in Maharashtra by May 4, appealed to his party's workers on Monday not to do anything to disrupt Eid celebrations on May 3



(News Agency) Amid the loudspeaker row, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray appealed to his party workers on Monday to not perform aarti or do anything that may disrupt Eid celebrations on May 3. He tweeted, "Tomorrow is Eid. I have already spoken about it. This festival of the Muslim community should be celebrated with joy. According to what was decided earlier, do not perform aarti on the day of this festival. The issue of loudspeakers is not religious but social."

He added, "Will tell you the next step tomorrow via a tweet. For now, that's all." This comes after he said at a massive rally in Aurangabad on Sunday that if loudspeakers are not removed from mosques in Maharashtra after Eid, he would ensure that the Hanuman Chalisa was

played 'at double power' outside Muslim religious sites. "Eid is on May 3. I don't want to spoil the festivities. But we will not listen after May 4. We will play Hanuman Chalisa with double power if our demands are not met. If you don't understand our request, we will deal with it our way. I am not going to keep quiet from May 4. If loudspeakers are not removed by then, let me show you the strength of Maharashtra," he had said. Raj Thackeray said he has "no interest in inciting riots" in Maharashtra. "But loudspeakers are disturbing public life. A Muslim journalist in Nashik told me his child suffered due to loudspeakers in mosques. If Uttar Pradesh can remove loudspeakers, why not Maharashtra? All are illegal," he said. Live TV

two communities during a Hanuman Jayanti procession in Jahangirpuri in the national capital, injuring eight police officers and a local resident. According to the police, there was stone pelting and arson during the clashes, and some vehicles were also set ablaze. Days after the violence, Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana wrote to the Enforcement Directorate requesting that money laundering charges be investigated against the main accused in the case. Five of the accused in the case have also been charged under the strict National Security Act.

Another 150 kg heroin worth Rs 900 crore recovered from UP hideout of Shaheen Bagh drug bust accused

Gujarat ATS on Monday recovered more than 150 kg of heroin worth Rs 900 crore from the Muzaffarnagar hideout of Haider, who was arrested in the Shaheen Bagh drug bust



(Staff Reporter) Gujarat Anti-Terrorism squad on Monday recovered more than 150 kg of heroin worth Rs 900 crore from the Muzaffarnagar hideout of Haider, the drug smuggler caught in the Shaheen Bagh drug bust. Earlier, Haider was arrested by Gujarat ATS and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in a joint

operation from his house in Jamia nagar, Shaheen Bagh on April 27. The NCB had seized about 50 kg of 'high-quality' heroin, 47 kg of other suspected drugs and Rs 30 lakh in cash. Besides the drugs and money, the NCB had also seized cash counting machines and other incriminating material during the raid.

During further investigation, it was revealed that Haider had kept more drugs at his sister's place in Muzaffarnagar. In addition to the drugs, huge quantities of chemicals were seized which are suspected to be ingredients for making narcotics. The officials suspect the whole syndicate is involved in narco terrorism and funding for terrorism is also suspected. Dnyaneshwar Singh, Deputy Director General, Northern Region, NCB, said, "We have arrested hawala trader Shamim from Laxmi Nagar. He was sending drug money to Shahid in Dubai. Till now, a total of 5 people have been arrested in this syndicate." Singh added, "The wires of this syndicate are connected to Dubai, Pakistan,

Afghanistan and Iran. The heroin recovered on the Attari border and Gujarat seems to be the same source, so our team will interrogate the arrested accused in Gujarat and the Attari border as well. The customs team has come to interrogate the accused whom we have caught." Out of the five arrested, two are Afghan nationals. All arrested are under NCB custody for further investigation in the case.

The Gujarat-Delhi connection Gujarat ATS and Indian Coast Guard had recently intercepted a boat called 'Al Haj' in Indian waters which had nine Pakistani crew members on board. The boat had attempted to return to Pakistan after throwing away several packets of narcotics into the sea. The packets were

recovered and the ICG boat began a hot pursuit of the Pakistani vessel. 56 kg of heroin worth 280 crores was seized by the authorities and the nine Pakistanis were arrested. During further investigation, ATS found that the parcel was to be dispatched to North India and, accordingly, teams were sent there. In a joint operation by ATS and NCB, four accused were arrested; Haider from Jamianagar, Shaheen Bagh, Imran Amir from Muzaffarnagar, Avtar Singh from Okhla and Abdul Kakad, original resident of Kandahar, Afghanistan. Till now, the Gujarat ATS has seized a total of 296 kg of narcotics and suspected chemicals, with a total estimated international market value of 1500 crore, from different parts of the country.

Hanuman Chalisa row: Mumbai court defers verdict on Rana couple's bail plea to Wednesday

The Mumbai Sessions Court has deferred its verdict on the Rana couple's bail plea to Wednesday morning

(Staff Reporter) The Mumbai Sessions Court deferred its verdict on the bail application of MP Navneet Rana and her husband MLA Ravi Rana till Wednesday morning during a hearing on Monday.

MP Navneet Rana and her husband MLA Ravi Rana filed for bail after they were arrested over their threat of reciting the

Hanuman Chalisa outside Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's residence.

THE CASE

Navneet and Ravi Rana were arrested on April 23 after they threatened to chant Hanuman Chalisa outside Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's residence, Matoshree. However, they had called off the protest citing Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's Mumbai visit.

Shiv Sena workers still laid siege to the building in suburban Khar where the couple was staying and said the Ranas would not be allowed to leave until they apologised for insulting Matoshree, their "temple".

Later, the Mumbai Police arrested the Ranas for



Indian Coast Guard saves all six crew members of sinking ship off India's west coast

(Staff Reporter) During the wee hours of Sunday (May 1), the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) rescued all six crew members of a sinking vessel, off India's west coast. The cargo vessel, MSV Malabar Light, was in distress owing to flooding in its engine room, as it was on a voyage from Beypore in Kerala to Androth in Lakshadweep.

According to the ICG, it was at 2 am that the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Mumbai intimated the Coast Guard Station in Beypore, Kerala about the situation. At 2.45 am,



the Coast Guard ship C-404 was deployed from Beypore, to render assistance. The distressed vessel MSV Malabar Light was ferrying construction materials, livestock, etc, and the flooding on-board had forced the crew to jump onto a lifeboat and drift in the open sea. Having reached the spot at 4.20 am, all crew were rescued onto the Coast Guard vessel, rendered first aid and found healthy. The lifeboat was then towed to Beypore harbour, where the rescued crew members disembarked and were handed over to local authorities, at 6:15 am.

allegedly "creating enmity between different groups" over their repeated threats to recite the Hanuman Chalisa outside Uddhav Thackeray's residence. They were also booked under section 124A (sedition).

The Rana couple's Hanuman Chalisa threat came amid a call for a ban on loudspeakers in mosques. MNS chief Raj Thackeray has been championing the cause.

ARGUMENTS IN COURT

During the hearing of their bail plea, the Ranas argued in court that only having an intent to commit a crime can't be punishable. They said giving a call to chant Hanuman Chalisa

outside a mosque could have fanned religious tensions, but giving a call to chant it outside 'Matoshree' doesn't fan any communal tensions. Representing the police, SPP Pradeep Gharat countered the Ranas' argument and said that taking the consent of the person outside whose residence the act of chanting is to be done is important. "If someone says that chanting Hanuman Chalisa is their right, it is. But we have to see if the act is legal, permissions and consent are taken by the person at whose residence chanting will be done," he said.

Rooftop garden to beat the heat?

Delhi autorickshaw driver adopts unique approach to keep passengers cool



(Staff Reporter) Mahendra Kumar, an autorickshaw driver in India's capital Delhi, has adopted a unique approach to keep his passengers cool. Amid a searing

warned about a heatwave across most parts of the north and said rainfall is expected in Delhi on May 3. Despite temperatures touching 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) in the Indian capital, the thick patch of green keeps Kumar's vehicle cool.

The 48-year-old's "moving garden" is attracting customers who stop and click pictures or shoot videos during their journey inside the autorickshaw. In an interview with French news agency AFP, Kumar said "Around two years ago I had this idea during the peak of the summer season. I

thought if I can grow some plants on the roof, it will keep my auto cool and give relief from the heat to my passengers." Although yellow and green autorickshaws are ubiquitous on New Delhi's roads but Kumar's vehicle stands out as he has installed two mini coolers and fans inside. Kumar, who is the father of three children, said he extra tips because of his fabulous customer service. "It is now like a natural AC (air conditioner). My passengers are so happy after the ride that they don't mind paying me an extra 10-20 bucks (\$0.13-.26)," he said. From shrubs to flowers,

Kumar has grown a variety of 20 crops and believes he is doing his "own small bit" for the environment. He acquired seeds from his acquaintances and roadside and planted them on his autorickshaw after putting a mat and some soil on its roof. According to Kumar, his fellow drivers have been asking him for tips to impress customers. Since 2010, more than 6,500 people have been killed by heatwaves in India. Climate change, which traps carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, is making them harsher and more frequent across South Asia.

BJP stoking communal flames: Ashok Gehlot passes the buck over Rajasthan clashes

Three events of communal violence were reported from the state within the span of a month: the Karauli clashes on April 2, the Alwar temple demolition on April 16-17 and the clashes in Jodhpur that began on the intervening nights of May 2 and May 3



atmosphere that is being created in the state, keeping in mind the upcoming elections, is a very dangerous thing."

"Leaders are getting instructions from the top. They are being told how to act, how to create this (tense) atmosphere."

Three events of communal violence were reported from the state within the span of a month:

the Karauli clashes on April 2, the Alwar temple demolition on April 16-17 and the clashes in Jodhpur that began on the intervening nights of May 2 and May 3.

Speaking about whether he should be made responsible for the grave collapse of law and order three times in a month, Gehlot said, "It is my government in the state.

That makes me responsible. But when the message from the leaders of the country is this I have been saying that the Prime Minister should address the country, condemn the communal incidents and say that violence will not be tolerated. Does our prime minister have any problems with condemning violence? I want to ask him this."

IIT researchers discover molecule that can be used to treat diabetes

(Staff Reporter) Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Mandi have identified a molecule that can be used to treat Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes.

The study, published in the Journal of Biological Chemistry, shows the molecule (PK2) triggers the release of insulin by the pancreas. According to the study's author Prosenjit Mondal, "Current drugs such as exenatide and

liraglutide used for diabetes, are administered as injections, and they are costly and unstable after administration. We seek to find simpler drugs that are stable, cheap, and effective against both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes." The molecule can act as a gamechanger as it can potentially be used as an orally administered medicine for diabetes. Interestingly, India is deemed the world's diabetic capital. Diabetes,

which is a chronic health condition, is associated with insufficient insulin release by the beta cells of the pancreas in response to blood levels. "We first tested the binding of

PK2 on GLP1R proteins in human cells and found that it is able to bind well to GLP1R proteins. This showed that PK2 can potentially trigger insulin release by the beta cells," said co-author Khyati Girdhar.

In Type 1 diabetes, the pancreas produces little or no insulin while Type 2 diabetes affects the way the body processes blood sugar or glucose. "Beyond increasing insulin release, PK2 was also able to prevent and even reverse beta cell loss, a cell essential for insulin production, making it effective for both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes," added Mondal.



(Staff Reporter) The BJP is stoking communal tensions across the country and especially in Rajasthan, which will go to polls next year, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot told India Today TV this evening, hours after communal clashes were reported from Jodhpur - his home turf. "It all began with Karauli (violence during a rally to mark Nav Samvatsar). Although Rajasthan was peaceful during Ram Navami, this (Karauli's) modus operandi was used across the seven states that reported violence on Ram Navami. I had said even then that it was the BJP's design to incite riots across the country," Gehlot said, not mincing words. "When the temple was demolished in Alwar, there was a BJP board. They had

passed the proposal (to demolish the temple). Yet they blamed Congress. And the third incident at Jodhpur which happened today was the result of rumours. There is already an atmosphere of violence in the country. BJP is just stoking the flames," he said in a scathing attack on the saffron camp.

Asked why the police didn't act to contain the violence in Jodhpur last night and allowed it to spill over to today, the chief minister said, "See, an incident could happen. Enquiries are conducted and actions are taken. But when you conspire to spread violence, when you polarize on the basis of religion, it becomes dangerous. The country is tense. Not just Jodhpur, the entire Rajasthan is my turf. But the

Sidhu throws googly at Congress, praises Bhagwant Mann, posts pic with Prashant Kishor

Navjot Singh Sidhu is upping the ante with each passing day as he hit out at the previous Punjab Congress government, calling it "mafia raj". Apart from this, he also praised AAP's Bhagwant Mann, as well as posted a selfie with Prashant Kishor, leaving political critics baffled about his next move



together, but he himself indulged in indiscipline. Be it Captain Amarinder Singh, Charanjit Singh Channi or the then home minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, Sidhu was never on the same page with his fellow Congress leaders. According to Sidhu, it was not the Congress which ruled in Punjab for five years but the mafia-raj. He even claimed that the Congress government was influenced by the Akali Dal and failed to fulfill poll promises. Sidhu's outbursts against the then Congress government and the state leadership were treated as acts of indiscipline. Sidhu made more foes than friends. He not only lost his party position, but is now facing action over his behaviour. A section of Congress

leaders who believe Sidhu was responsible for the party's defeat in the elections now want action against him. Present PCC chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring has also demanded action against Sidhu, saying his actions were weakening the party organisation. "Action against Navjot Sidhu will be deterrent to others and will stop factionalism" says the present PCC chief in a note sent to the party high command and state affairs incharge Harish Choudhary. Meanwhile, Sidhu continues to hog the limelight due to his outbursts against his own party. Although the Bhagwan Mann-led AAP government is also on his target list, Sidhu never misses a chance to hit out against the leaders of his own party.

On April 22, Navjot Sidhu left the party leaders fuming after he said Bhagwant Mann was his younger brother and he will support him if he fights against the mafia. Not only this, but Sidhu also termed the Congress government as the Government of the mafias. "The Congress has to reinvent itself. The party lost because of the five year rule of Mafia Raj" he advised. Organising parallel meetings against the party president, indulging in factionalism and openly challenging the party command may cost dear to Sidhu who has been accused of indiscipline. Sources say Sonia Gandhi may call the disciplinary committee meeting soon to take action against Navjot Singh Sidhu.

(Staff Reporter) Former Punjab Congress Committee chief Navjot Singh Sidhu seems to be at the crossroads once again. The rebellious Congress leader seems to be miffed with the party high command after he was removed as PCC Chief and was not re-considered for the post again. While 18 Congress candidates, including first timers, were able to win the Assembly election, Sidhu, despite being a political heavyweight, lost to AAP's Jeevanjyot Kaur in the recent polls. He could not even retain his own seat. A section of the Congress leaders say that as PCC chief, Navjot Singh Sidhu was expected to keep the flock

Jodhpur curfew to remain till midnight of May 6

A curfew was imposed in Jodhpur - Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's constituency - after clashes broke out over the hoisting of a flag a day before Eid



(Staff Reporter) The curfew imposed in Jodhpur, following the communal clashes over the hoisting of a flag a day before Eid, has been extended till midnight of May 6. At least 97 people have been arrested so far in connection with clashes in Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's constituency - Jodhpur, where curfew continued for the second consecutive day today. The situation is now under control and no fresh incidents of violence have been reported, the police said, adding that nearly a thousand-strong force has been deployed to maintain law and order. Besides the curfew, mobile internet services have also been suspended. Ashok Gehlot, while speaking to India Today TV on Tuesday, had pinned the

blame on the BJP for the three recent communal incidents in his state the Karauli clashes, the Alwar temple demolition row and the Jodhpur violence. The chief minister has also appealed to the people to maintain peace and harmony and has sent ministers and officials to Jodhpur. Tensions broke out Monday night after Islamic flags were put up at the Jalori Gate circle in Jodhpur, which soon escalated to stone pelting. Five policemen were injured in the violence. The situation was brought under control in the early hours of Tuesday with heavy police deployment, but only for a brief while, as tensions escalated again after prayers at an Eidgah - an open-air enclosure reserved for Eid prayers in the morning. Stones were thrown at shops, vehicles and houses near the Jalori Gate area. Members of a minority community were installing Eid flags and they put up a flag on a roundabout alongside the statue of freedom fighter Balmukund Bissa. This led to a confrontation as members of the other community alleged that a saffron flag, which they had put up there for Parshuram Jayanti, had gone missing.

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Marine world to face mass extinction: Scientists warn about impending climate event

Researchers have warned that if human-led emissions continue unchecked, the marine world will face mass extinction by 2100

While humans face the consequences of intense heatwaves, incessant rains, floods due to climate change, and unchecked emissions, they are not alone in suffering. The marine biodiversity is on track to face mass extinction if emissions remain unchecked by the end of this century. As global oceans warm and the melting of ice continues, biologists have revealed that marine biodiversity could be on track to plummet within the next few centuries to levels not seen since the extinction of the dinosaurs. Species losses from warming and oxygen depletion alone could push the marine world to the brink by the year 2100. The study published in the journal *Science*

The researchers solidified their findings by comparing their model to past mass extinctions found in fossil records linked to the geographic pattern of Earth's deadliest extinction event. The event, 250 million years ago, was driven by climate change and oxygen depletion. They found that their model projecting future marine biodiversity follows a similar pattern — as ocean temperature increases and oxygen availability drops, marine life abundance plummets.

states that drastically reducing global emissions, however, offers substantial protection, which emphasizes a need for rapid action to prevent possibly catastrophic marine extinctions. The paper stated that global warming threatens marine biota with losses of unknown severity. Polar species are at highest risk of extinction, but local biological richness declines more in the tropics. "Aggressive and rapid reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are critical for avoiding a major mass extinction of ocean species," Curtis Deutsch, a professor of geosciences at Princeton, co-author of the study said in a statement. Deutsch along with Justin Penn, a postdoctoral research associate in geosciences, initiated the study when they were at the University of Washington by combining physiological data on marine species with models of climate change to predict how changes in habitat conditions will

affect the survival of sea animals around the globe. They studied their survival in the coming centuries.

"The extinction magnitude that we found depends strongly on how much carbon dioxide [CO₂] we emit moving forward. There's still enough time to change the trajectory of CO₂ emissions and prevent the magnitude of warming that would cause this mass extinction," Penn said.

The researchers solidified their findings by comparing their model to past mass extinctions found in fossil records linked to the geographic pattern of Earth's deadliest extinction event. The event, 250 million years ago, was driven by climate change and oxygen depletion. They found that their model projecting future marine biodiversity follows a similar pattern — as ocean temperature increases and oxygen availability drops, marine life abundance plummets. Water temperature and oxygen availability are two key factors that will change as the climate warms due to human activity. Warm water holds less oxygen than cooler water, which leads to more sluggish ocean circulation that reduces the oxygen supply at depth. "Marine animals have physiological mechanisms that allow them to cope with environmental changes, but only up to a point," researchers said in a statement, adding that they found that polar species are more likely to go extinct globally if climate warming occurs.

The big concern is that climate change will make large swaths of the ocean similarly uninhabitable, Penn said adding, "extreme warming would lead to climate-driven extinctions that, near the end of the century, will rival all current human stressors combined."

PM Modi's Europe visit: New Horizon for India?

By Susmita Ghosh

The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi visits the three European countries in 2022. His official tour lasts from May 2 to 4, which includes Germany, Denmark and France. In troubled times with a chaotic global political scenario, India will look to have a fruitful international relationship equilibrium owing to this official visit.

India has remained calm during the Russian-Ukraine conflict whereas the European Union has taken a firm stance against Russia. The ultimate purpose of PM Modi's landing in these three European countries is to improve the friendly relations with India for

PM Modi's visit to the European countries will help in the development of new industries in India and strengthen the defense supplies in the future. This will also assist Europe to improve its bond with India and have a strong hold on the Indian overseas communities as well

the future. This includes the formation of bilateral and multilateral engagements with Denmark, France and Germany. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and co-chair met PM Modi at the 6th India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations in Germany. During the visit, PM Modi held talks with PM Frederikson in Denmark. He also took part in the 2nd India-Nordic Summit in Copenhagen. It helped India to get better exposure to the leaders of Nordic countries. The discussed topics covered post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, renewable energy sources and so on. In France, PM Modi's plan includes a discussion of the global issues with Emmanuel Macron to improve overseas trade with India. This development will help India to reduce conflicts and improve business relations with the European countries. PM Modi is also expected to discuss Ukraine crisis with the top business leaders that have been impacting the whole world. PM Modi's visit to the European countries

will help in the development of new industries in India and strengthen the defense supplies in the future. This will also assist Europe to improve its bond with India and have a strong hold on the Indian overseas communities as well. PM Modi also plans to visit the Indian communities in these three countries and hold an open discussion to improve foreign relationships in the west.

Modi also wishes to invest in British military hardware and technology with the target of negotiating a free-trade deal between the United Kingdom and India. It is apparently said that during the first visit of the year, Modi will have 25

hectic engagements and will spend a total of 65 hours discussing foreign matters and ending the economic crisis. After this meeting, India will get better exposure with the neighbouring foreign countries in Europe. This will help in the import and export of raw and finished materials overseas, hence improve the economic condition globally. It will also expand the technological infrastructure, help allow India to prepare in the field of defense and army. PM Modi's meet comes at a time when many countries face severe hardships and challenges. These meetings will also focus on India helping Ukraine to cope with the severe crisis and a mission to spread peace across the globe. PM Modi's talks and decisions come with diplomatic and strategic quotients that are useful to maintain healthy relationships with foreign countries in the long run. Moreover, this visit will be a boon for India which provide new growth opportunities across various sectors and allow the economy to flourish as well.


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Why Lanka's failed dairy experiment is glass half full

Crippled by an acute shortage of dollars, Sri Lanka has restricted all its imports, including essential food items. At the time Kurien ventured into Sri Lanka, the country's annual milk powder import bill was \$60 million

It was sometime in 1997. In Colombo, in the basement banquet hall of a five-star hotel, the "milk man of India" was addressing a press conference to announce a \$20 million joint venture between the National Dairy Development Board and Sri Lanka's state-owned MILCO. It would be called Kiriya — kiri being the Sinhalese word for milk. Varghese Kurien was upbeat about his new project. He had come at the invitation of then President Chandirka Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. He said the aim was to make Sri Lanka self-sufficient in milk. We want to replicate Operation Flood here, he said. By then, I had been about a year or so in Colombo as the Sri Lanka correspondent of The Indian Express, long enough to realise that fresh milk was an exotic commodity, and milk powder ruled the market — rows of neatly stacked packs of full-cream milk powder on supermarket shelves, and in the refrigerated sections, tubs of creamy yoghurt made with imported milk powder, and a full range of cheese, all flown in from Europe and Down Under. My lasting memory of a first meeting with a Tamil militant leader-turned-mainstream politician in Colombo is of him sitting in the basement of his well-guarded fortress-like home, his back to the wall with a clear view of the bunker's metal door, munching crackers with cubes of Kraft cheese. At the press conference, I had made bold to ask Kurien if he was aware of the import lobbies in Sri Lanka and how much of a fightback he expected from them. His reply was something to the effect that he had faced bigger challenges in India, and this was no problem at all. Many times during a recent trip to Colombo, my mind went back to that brief encounter as I heard about the milk powder scarcity, secretive WhatsApp tipoffs from groceries to loyal customers about fresh arrivals, the jacked-up rates for a 400 gm packet, children having to go without milk, and tea kades offering only black tea. Crippled by an acute shortage of dollars, Sri Lanka has restricted all its imports, including essential food items. At the time Kurien ventured into Sri Lanka, the country's



annual milk powder import bill was \$60 million. In 2021, dairy imports accounted for \$317 million of Sri Lanka's total consumer goods imports of \$1.6 bn (the total imports in 2021 were \$21 bn, of which non-fuel imports were \$16bn). Kiriya was never able to get off the ground. Union action over wages, hours of work, hirings and firings kept the three MILCO processing plants non-operational or functioning at levels much less than their capacity as to make them unsustainable. Influential ruling party politicians controlled the unions (as an aside, two decades later, it was again trade unions that ensured that the Rajapaksa government cancelled the tripartite agreement with India

and Japan for the joint development of the East Container Terminal by paralysing work at Colombo Port for weeks on end). Indian NDDB officials who had been sent over to run Kiriya were clearly unprepared for the extent of opposition. It was well understood by all that milk powder lobbies were hard at work to ensure there would be no "white revolution" in Sri Lanka. On one particularly bad day, the Indian managers at Kiriya had to hastily leave the premises as workers set up a menacing chant of "India Go Back". "All we know is that we are up against very powerful forces. The stakes are very high," one official told me at the time. Various other reasons were also forwarded for Kiriya's

failure — Sri Lanka does not have a pastoral tradition, its limited arable land cannot be used for growing fodder and grazing, and Sri Lankans love their coconut milk and have no special affinity to dairy milk, or cuisine that uses milk products. But Sri Lanka's milk consumption has steadily grown since the 1980s, when the country introduced free market policies that opened the doors to unrestricted imports, and as the demand for milk grew among the country's urban wealthy. According to an appraisal of the dairy sector commissioned by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Livestock Development and Estate Infrastructure and NDDB in 1998, the per capita consumption of milk and milk products in Sri

Lanka, which was about 13 kg in 1981, had increased to 36 kg by 1996, low compared to India and Pakistan, but at the time close to the medically recommended 41.6 kg. The dairy sector itself is tiny. There was some talk of strengthening it in the mid-2000s when the government's move to raise the price of milk powder to set off the huge import bill met with political opposition. The plan included refurbishing the three MILCO plants that Kiriya had taken over and failed to turn around. But nothing came of it. Imported milk powder continued to fill the gap. Sri Lanka is to this day a great milch cow for the world's milk multinationals. It is bitter irony that Colombo has put in orders for milk powder and dairy products under the emergency \$1 bn food and commodities credit line extended to it by India. That might be vindication for NDDB. In Sri Lanka, some see the present crisis as an opportunity to learn lessons about self-sufficiency at least in low-hanging sectors, including the dairy sector. It won't be easy but it is definitely worth a shot.

Here's what makes sea mines Russia's biggest challenge in Ukraine's Mariupol port

Sea mines are the biggest challenge Russia is facing in Ukraine's Mariupol port. To avoid Russian naval invasion, the entire seawater was mined

Russian forces completely captured the port of Mariupol, which is a key strategic and economic infrastructure in Ukraine. The port wears war wounds with half-sunken, destroyed and burnt ships; huge steel storage spaces bearing mortar holes, rusting rolls of iron sheets that were to be shipped, and the railway track to carry goods, destroyed. The roads and the dockyard tell the story of the late-night bombardment and shelling that destroyed this beautiful economic hub. But, the biggest challenge the Russian forces are facing is in the Sea of Azov, which is laden with sea mines. As part of a military strategy and to avoid Russian naval invasion, the entire seawater was mined. Now, it will take a long time even to make this port functional because the waters -- from the Sea of Azov to the Black Sea which banks the critical city of Odesa -- have been mined.

Read: 'Not living a life': Ukraine's Mariupol

residents struggle daily just to survive. The de-mining department has around 120 specialists. They are deployed across the captured territories which are heavily mined -- on land and in water. According to officials, deployment to specific areas happens as per the requirements. Speaking to India Today at the port, Sergei Neka, Commanding Officer of the de-mining operations, said, "Since we started the de-mining operations in the city of Mariupol, we have extricated upto 10,000 sea mines and other explosives so far. But, there is no way of estimating how many are still left." "When asked how much time will it take to clear the entire area for the port to become functional again, Sergei Neka said, "It is really hard to say, but it certainly is not going to be very quick. We need to be very accurate and thorough with clearing out the city block by block.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MARIUPOL

The shoreline of Mariupol was a strategic hold, but also one that had great economic

significance. All the wheat, steel and other items are transported from this port. Russian journalist Nikita Tretyakov, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Regnum News Agency, explains that it would take a long time to sanitise and clear the waters because some of the sea mines have come off their anchorage and have drifted far away, making the entire water in Turkey very dangerous. "This whole thing is very problematic. According to the Russian defence ministry, there are several hundreds of mines planted in the Sea of Azov in various regions, which creates different problems. Until the waters are de-mined, the port here cannot resume operations," Nikita said. "During the storms, some of the mines are torn from their anchors and pushed further into the sea. Some have been recovered as far as Turkish waters in the Black Sea," Nikita said. Nikita said, "Some of the mines are very outdated, dating back to World War II. (Contd on page 29)

Covid-19 worsens asthma in children, finds study

A study conducted among 62,000 children in the US with asthma revealed that Covid infected children had significantly more asthma visits



As cases of coronavirus rise again in several parts of the world including in India, a new study shows how SARS-CoV-2 worsens asthma in children. Researchers found that asthma in children worsens six months after they have tested positive for the deadly virus.

The study conducted among 62,000 children in the US with asthma revealed that infected children had significantly more asthma visits, hospitalisations, emergency inhaler use, and steroid treatments during the six months after their illness compared to children who tested

negative and to their own prior history.

The study has been published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice*.

The new study contradicts previous observations, which suggest that COVID-19 in asthmatic children does not worsen asthma outcomes. "Our study objective is to establish whether the SARS CoV-2 virus is an asthma trigger resulting in poor asthma control," the paper said.

Dr. Christine Chou of Children's Health of Orange County, in California, said, "Children who tested negative for the virus had improved asthma control for the next six months, meaning fewer

emergency department visits and hospitalizations for asthma, and less asthma treatment."

Researchers believe that results of earlier studies showing improvement in asthma control in the early part of the pandemic were likely due to public health measures like staying home and masking, which curbed exposure to asthma triggers, she said. Despite the overall impression that children with asthma did well during the first year of the pandemic, Chou added, the new study shows "longer-lasting harm of COVID on children's asthma control." While the data demonstrated that asthma outcomes were again improved for those who tested negative for

SARS-COV-2 PCR, asthmatic children who were definitively diagnosed with Covid-19 have worse asthma control in the first six months after infection.

Researchers said that the improvement in asthma control during the pandemic was seen due to hygiene and public health measures, decreased exposures to particulate matter, and viral triggers.

"The asthma-triggering effect of SARS-CoV-2 was likely masked by the overall decrease in asthma exacerbations during the stay-at-home measures when other asthma triggers were less present in the community," researchers said.

Why has Roe v Wade case raised concern over LGBTQ+ rights?



A leaked US Supreme Court opinion suggesting justices are poised to overturn abortion rights has left LGBTQ+ advocacy groups fearful that same-sex marriage could also be at risk. If finalized, the opinion would strike down the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case that established the right to abortion. LGBTQ+ advocates fear that it could open the door to legal challenges targeting gay marriage and other landmark civil rights rulings at the country's top court, which holds a six-to-three conservative majority. Some expressed concerns that after decades of advances in civil rights protections for LGBTQ+ Americans, the court could also overturn the prohibition on anti-sodomy laws. Here are the key facts:

Why has this case raised concern over LGBTQ+ rights?

Many key civil rights were secured through legal rulings.

The Supreme Court established the right of same-sex couples to

marry in the 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision, a historic victory for LGBTQ+ rights groups. Previously, the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* decision legalised gay sex by striking down state sodomy laws.

However, same-sex unions are still opposed by a substantial minority of Republicans, and some religious groups, who believe that marriage should only be between a man and a woman. Also in Explained |What an America without *Roe* would look like

The leaked draft ruling on abortion has raised fears that other landmark civil rights cases could also face legal challenges in the Supreme Court.

"A draft like this attacks abortion access, and also countless settled legal precedents on which generations of people in this country have relied," said Camilla Taylor, deputy director for litigation at the LGBTQ+ group Lambda Legal.

Overturning *Roe* will have "no

The leaked draft ruling on abortion has raised fears that other landmark civil rights cases could also face legal challenges in the Supreme Court

immediate impact" on any other case, said Sarah Warbelow, legal director for Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the largest U.S. LGBTQ+ advocacy group. "But it encourages state lawmakers pandering to (their political) base to test the limits of court recognized LGBTQ+ equality," she said in a statement.

How could same-sex marriage be overturned?

LGBTQ+ legal experts said that to overturn *Obergefell*, opponents of same-sex marriage could create a test case similar to the abortion restrictions in Mississippi that handed the Supreme Court the opportunity to overturn *Roe*. A conservative state legislature could pass a law banning same-sex marriage, or a governmental agency that provides spousal benefits could refuse to recognize the relationship.

This would leave the door open to a legal challenge by same-sex marriage supporters.

The lower courts would most likely rule in favor of same-sex marriage because they would be compelled to follow the *Obergefell* decision, which found that gay couples have a constitutional right to wed.

But once such a case reached the Supreme Court, the key *Obergefell* ruling would be

vulnerable to being overturned in a ruling by conservative justices.

Did the draft abortion opinion mention same-sex marriage?

The leaked opinion, written by staunch conservative Justice Samuel Alito, references a litany of landmark civil rights cases, from *Lawrence* and *Obergefell* to rulings establishing the rights to interracial marriages and weddings among prisoners.

Alito argued the question of abortion differs from the others because it involves the loss of a "potential life".

That distinction means overturning *Roe* does not undermine other civil rights precedents, including the right for same-sex couples to marry, he wrote.

Legal experts said that such a caveat – coming from a justice who dissented in *Obergefell* and who has a history of making statements opposing LGBTQ+ rights – offers little reassurance. "The artificial efforts to fence off certain precedents because they're not currently before the court is unconvincing; it is a fig leaf," said Taylor.

How might justices vote on a gay marriage case?

Of the current members of the nine-strong Supreme Court, the conservative Justices Clarence Thomas and Alito and Chief Justice John Roberts dissented

in *Obergefell*.

Liberal Justices Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor were in the majority of the landmark five-to-four decision.

Breyer is set to retire at the end of this term and will be replaced by Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, who has been hailed by HRC as a likely supporter of LGBTQ+ rights on the court.

These dynamics suggest a majority ruling would hinge on the decisions of the remaining three justices, all of whom were appointed by former President Donald Trump.

Potential justices often hold their cards close on hot-button legal issues during their confirmation hearings, leaving court watchers to read sparse tea leaves for clues.

Brett Kavanaugh's approach to gay rights was unknown when he was appointed to the court, but he dissented against a landmark 2020 ruling barring discrimination against gay and transgender workers. Fellow Trump nominee Amy Coney Barrett's appointment to the court was greeted with dismay by LGBTQ+ rights groups. She defended the justices who dissented against the *Obergefell* ruling in a 2016 lecture, suggesting the issue should have been left to legislators.

Blanket declassification of deemed forests in Karnataka is a bad idea

It will have adverse consequences not only on the future forest cover of the state but also on its climate and rain patterns

Last week, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai announced that he had signed a cabinet decision to release 6.5 lakh hectares from the deemed forest classification and will submit an affidavit to the Supreme Court accordingly. This measure will essentially declassify close to 67 per cent of the land in Karnataka that was otherwise classified as deemed forests under the Supreme Court's orders in 1996. The issue of declassification of deemed forests in the state is not new, but a longstanding and contentious one with far-reaching implications on the state's forest cover.

There is no comprehensive definition for "forests" in India. The ambiguity around this term was clarified by the Supreme Court in T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India and Others (Godavarman case) where it defined "forest" to include any piece of land that resembles the dictionary meaning of forest for the purpose of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. This case also conceptualised "deemed forests". Deemed forests were conceived as areas that have not been notified under the legislation, but are recorded as forests in government records. These are lands that have

characteristics of forests, irrespective of ownership. Once forests are "deemed", they cannot be de-reserved or utilised for non-forest purposes without prior approval of the Centre. The Godavarman case was significant also because the Court ordered the setting up of expert committees in each state to identify deemed forests to remove ambiguities with respect to the scope of lands that may receive protection under the Forest (Conservation) Act. This decision paved the way for the preservation of forest areas in India to be continuously monitored by the Supreme Court, mandating the state governments to obtain clearances for affecting or implementing changes to lands classified as deemed forests. In Karnataka, the state government constituted two expert committees. In 2002, the reconstituted expert committee in Karnataka identified 9.9 lakh hectares as deemed forests. However, the area identified as deemed forests in the state is shrinking due to subsequent governments incessantly filing affidavits in the Supreme Court alleging that the initial survey and identification by the expert committees was unscientific and covered areas that do not fall within the

definition of forests envisaged under the Godavarman decision.

The current government has stated that such declassification is necessary to give property rights to farmers who have been wronged by the alleged unscientific classification of private, non-forests lands as forests that deserve protection under the Forest Conservation Act. However, sweeping declassification of large swathes of possibly forest lands is also likely to legalise existing encroachments for non-agricultural purposes. For instance, a private resort in Sakleshpura cut a road through a deemed forest area for commercial purposes.

It is quite possible that declassification of some areas of deemed forests will provide security to farmers. In such cases, the government's declassification approach must show that it is meant to address this concern. The basic measures requiring identification of only agricultural land owned specifically by farmers must be undertaken prior to declassification to ensure that other illegal activities are not inadvertently legalised. The blanket declassification currently sought by the state government not only violates the object of the Forest

(Conservation) Act but vitiates the identification process undertaken by the expert committees under the Supreme Court order. The result of previous affidavits filed by the state government to the Supreme Court seeking declassification of different amounts of land, similar to the one filed by the current government, is unclear. Permitting blanket declassification in Karnataka sets a dangerous precedent, allowing other states to poke holes into their respective expert committee classifications.

It has never been clearer that accurate forest management is crucial for environmental and ecological sustainability. However, the current actions of the state government are likely to have adverse consequences not only on the future forest cover of the state but also on the climate and rain patterns of Karnataka. With temperatures rising across the country, and states experiencing unprecedented heatwaves, it becomes all the more important that the government exercises utmost precaution in doing away with any existing protections for forests in the state.

A defining moment for Indo-German ties

India-Germany joint statement shows congruence and commonality on UN, Afghanistan and terrorism

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Berlin for the sixth Indo-German Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC) is significant for its timing and substantial results. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, despite the shock of the Ukraine crisis, recently visited Japan and then hosted PM Modi. In public perception, the visit was about adjusting to the Ukraine crisis and whether Germany would try to persuade India to follow its line. The reality differed as both got down to serious business beyond Ukraine.

Germany is a reluctant player in the anti-Russian movement. It criticises Russia for invading Ukraine, which set back Germany's — and Europe's — search for strategic autonomy. This broadened their outlook towards neglected partners such as India. The timing of the IGC, which Germany chose not to delay, showed outreach to India and the Indo-Pacific. This is a necessity, both strategically and economically. The pandemic hit German economy and sanctions on Russia will further dent its prospects. The country requires new markets for trade and investment. India is an



important partner in this regard due to its sustained economic growth and market size. The Ukraine crisis created an urgency to engage with India as part of Germany's fledgling Indo-Pacific policy. For India, it was important to prevent Germany from being overwhelmed by the Ukraine crisis and bring its focus to the Indo-Pacific. This includes a reassessment of China's role in world affairs. There are signs that Germany will be doing this and therein lies an opportunity for India. The

Bundestag will discuss the situation of Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang on May 7. Any departures from China will bring business engagement to India. Germany and India do not have a traditional strategic partnership. It is a green partnership based on trade, investment, technology, functional collaboration, skill development, and sustainability. There are several initiatives like the Indo-German energy forum, environmental forum, partnership on urban mobility, skill development and

science and technology. The biggest gain from the IGC has been the Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) establishing the Green and Sustainable Development Partnership. This will raise the quality and quantum of the existing partnership between the two countries. Germany is reaching out with new and additional financing of €10 billion to fund green projects in India under public, private and PPP models. To support this, a ministerial segment is being introduced under the IGC. This biennial ministerial forum will review all the partnerships and provide "high-level coordination and political direction to the Partnership". This will prevent inertia. At present, partnership fora meet sporadically and the ministers meet for a few hours before the IGC plenary. A coordinated institutional mechanism is being created now. The IGC is the only such format that India has with any country. This presents a whole-of-government outlook and shows India's commitment to the climate agenda and support for the SDGs.

(Contd. on page 30)

The corruption cases that cost Nawaz Sharif the Pakistan PM post

The Pakistan SC disqualified Nawaz Sharif because it found him not "sadiq and ameen", and a subsequent trial saw debate on when the Calibri font was made commercially available. What was Nawaz accused of, and how do the cases stand now?

A Supreme Court ruling in 2017 cost then Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif his chair, and another SC ruling has brought his party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, back in power in 2022. The new government, under his brother Shehbaz Sharif, has now said it is considering quashing the corruption sentences against Nawaz and allow him to plead his cases afresh.

Pakistan's Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan said earlier in May that both the central as well as the Punjab government had the power to repeal or suspend a "wrong" sentence so the accused could approach courts again, and these "provisions might be used to provide relief" to Nawaz and others, according to a report in the Dawn. The Pakistan SC had disqualified Nawaz from holding the PM's post because it found him not "sadiq and ameen" (honest and righteous), as the country's religion-influenced constitution says public representatives should be. In the subsequent corruption trials that followed, matters debated included when the Calibri font was made available for public use, as the authenticity of a document depended on this.

A look at the corruption cases that brought down the longest-serving Pakistan PM in his third term.

Sharif family named in Panama Papers Nawaz Sharif's third term in office, which began in 2013, was going far from smoothly, with run-ins with the Army and opposition leader Imran Khan snapping at his heels. However, trouble for him began in earnest when his family's name surfaced in the Panama Papers leak in April 2016.

The Panama Papers claimed Nawaz's children — daughter and political heir Maryam Nawaz, and sons Hasan and Hussein — owned undeclared firms and assets offshore. The firms were British Virgin Islands-based Nescoll Ltd, Nielsen Enterprises Ltd and Hangan Property Holdings Ltd. The allegation was that these companies were used to launder money and buy foreign assets, including an apartment in a posh London neighbourhood.

Nawaz and family denied any wrongdoing. However, Imran Khan and other politicians used the scandal to demand the PM's resignation, soon approaching the country's apex court. In April 2017, a five-judge bench gave a

3:2 ruling that Nawaz could continue in office, but a joint investigation team should look into the allegations against him. The JIT submitted its report, and in July 2017, the SC disqualified the PM from holding public office.

What the SC said

The SC's decision, however, was not over the Panama allegations. While it directed that an accountability court hear those corruption charges — the Avenfield properties case and the Azizia Steel Company case — the SC based its disqualification decision over something else the JIT found.

The JIT had claimed that Nawaz served as chairman of a Dubai-based company, drawing a salary of 10,000 dirhams between August 7, 2006 and April 20, 2014, which he did not declare in his nomination papers. Nawaz's defence argued that while he did serve in that post and was entitled to a salary, he never drew it.

The court, however, reasoned, "...the statement that he did not withdraw the salary would not prevent the un-withdrawn salary from being receivable, hence [making it] an asset." The SC ruled that not declaring this asset meant

Nawaz was not "sadiq and ameen" and disqualified him, later clarifying the disqualification was for life.

So, what happened with the corruption cases against Nawaz?

The SC had directed the accountability court to hear the Avenfield and Azizia cases against the Sharifs, along with other Panama allegations.

What is the Avenfield Apartments case?

In July 2018, three members of the family were fined and sentenced to jail — Nawaz for 10 years, Maryam for seven, and her husband Captain Safdar for one year — in the Avenfield apartments case, as they could not show that the posh London property had been bought legitimately.

While Nawaz was sentenced for owning assets beyond income, the other two were held guilty of abetment and not cooperating with the probe agency.

It was in this case that Maryam had presented a trust deed dated February 2006, in Microsoft's Calibri font, which became commercially available only in 2007.

(Contd. on page 30)

With repo rate hike, RBI has done what's necessary

It may have surprised the markets, but the move was prudent. More hikes are likely to follow

The RBI has decided to take the bull by the horns. It has raised the repo rate by 40 basis points and the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 basis points to fight inflation. We believe these simultaneous policy announcements of adjusting both the rate and quantum of liquidity is a clever ploy. Interestingly, research clearly shows that the credibility and reputation of the central bank is best recognised only when the market response to central bank liquidity operations is stronger. To that extent, the RBI seems to have killed two birds with one stone and has emerged stronger as an inflation targeting central bank. In fact, the surprise mid-term announcement by the RBI Governor today is a clear departure from past practices. It also signals the extraordinary times we live in.

The most interesting aspect of the rate hike today is the continuation of the accommodative policy stance. While the markets seem to have been taken aback, we believe today's rate hike should be seen more from a strategy perspective, rather than as a change in the monetary policy stance. We believe this is a pragmatic decision as the CRR hike may be just an attempt to build up a war chest

on the liquidity front. To be more precise, liquidity inflows to the financial system could be either policy induced by the central bank (for example changes in reserves, open market operations etc) or non-policy induced (foreign exchange reserves, government cash balances, and currency in circulation). Given that non-policy induced liquidity inflows have been recently impacted (outflows of portfolio capital) and given the huge size of the government borrowing programme, the RBI also needs to support the market through some means. Impounding bank reserves through the CRR (Rs 87,000 crore) could give some space to the central bank to conduct open market purchases of bonds from banks and thus inject concomitant liquidity some time in the future if the need so arises. The RBI had followed a similar strategy during 2003-08 when the market stabilisation bonds were introduced, the CRR was also hiked. The CRR rate hike is thus an important tool to possibly manage G-sec yields. The markets may have missed the fine print of this move.

Across the world, major central banks have of late gone on a rate hike spree, waking up to the realisation of inflationary

pressures not being transitory in nature. The US Fed has been on the offensive battling a 40-year high surge in prices. It has tapered its bond purchase programme drastically while suggesting in no uncertain terms the pace of rate hikes needed to combat inflation. The European Union has been slow to respond but voices are growing to correct the path at the earliest. Banks like the Central Bank of Brazil or Russian Central Bank have almost jumped the gun (in keeping the benchmark or key rates in double digits.) Emerging economies have been doubly hit — the days of easy liquidity are well behind them even as their economic resources remain constrained to support an uneven proportion of population coming out of the strains induced by successive waves of the pandemic. To this extent, the decision by the RBI to frontload the rate hikes ahead of the Fed decision is again an attempt to stem capital outflows.

Including the RBI's decision today to push the benchmark rate to align with the current market realities, 21 countries have increased interest rates so far. Of these, 14 countries have hiked rates more than or equal to 50 bps.

Markets are also expecting a 50-bps rate hike by the US Fed in its policy meeting concluding today — the biggest since 2000. It would also be the first time in 16 years that the US Fed will hike borrowing costs at two consecutive meetings.

A historical disaggregation of India's retail inflation (as measured by CPI) to ascertain the various macro-factors that drove inflation dynamics, indicates that the inflationary pressures can be attributed mainly to adverse cost-push factors, coming from supply-side shocks in food and fuel prices, even as weak aggregate demand conditions continued to exert downward pressure on inflation. The RBI statement thus cites food inflation as a major source of discomfort. Additionally, nominal rural wages for both agricultural and non-agricultural labourers picked up during the second half 2021-22. However, such wage growth has remained soft. The weighted contribution of wage growth in CPI build-up remains modest and this is a good sign as far as anchoring of inflationary expectations is concerned.

(Contd on page 30)

How to vernacularise medical education in India

Countering the hegemony of English must be a gradual process

Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh recently declared their intention to provide the MBBS course in Hindi. This, if implemented, will help counter the hegemony of English in professional education. However, it is important to analyse the pros and cons of this measure in view of its historical timing and the contextual peculiarities of the country.

The measure would entail significant costs given the regulatory and administrative alterations that would be required. This would include translation of educational materials, training of trainers, and the like. The costs will depend on the scale of implementation and need not necessarily be a deterrent. Whatever be the scale, weighing the gains and losses will be imperative.

An argument advanced by critics is that this measure is fuelled by misplaced nationalistic sentiments, which would erode the competitive advantage Indian graduates have in the global scientific arena. In their rejoinder, the advocates state that countries such as Germany and China have long been doing so successfully, and so can India. It is necessary to recognise one crucial distinction in this respect. Unlike the countries that have traditionally upheld medical education in the local language, for India, this is in essence an innovation in

a context where English is firmly entrenched. The implications of this step are likely to be two-fold. First, the measure could face considerable resistance in assimilating into the existing ecosystem which, in turn, could restrict its scope to a few select institutions. Second, it is unlikely to spur enough demand from the masses who may not want to settle for a perceived inferior option. This has already been witnessed in the case of engineering courses.

The extent of systemic rearrangements that would be warranted cannot be underplayed. Medical education doesn't stop at MBBS alone, and sooner rather than later, postgraduate medical courses would also need to be conceived in regional languages. A considerable segment of medical graduates today are employed in allied sectors straddling research, business and administration, pharmaceuticals and the like. These sectors are firmly entrenched in English and are thus likely to be much less welcoming to regional language medium graduates. The response of the private sector is also unlikely to be brisk. There is a risk of engendering an implicit hierarchy among medical graduates



therefore, whereby non-English medium graduates are seen to be lesser than their counterparts.

The diversity and multiplicity of languages across and within states, while otherwise a highly celebrated feature, can comprise

a significant impediment to vernacularisation of medical education. Medical doctors are highly mobile professionals and often, English is a mutually-intelligible option in technical as well as routine dealings and interactions. Here, there are two aspects to consider. Envisioning a situation whereby medical education is provided in numerous local languages entails considerable chaos which, even if manageable, would be largely unnecessary. Going for a select few languages with a large following could be an optimum middle-path. However, this is unlikely to obviate the need for incorporating basic English skills in the

curriculum.

The present emphasis on expanding the private sector's scope in medical education also fails to vibrate well with this measure. If one of our intentions is to increase access to medical education beyond the English-knowing elite, one cannot be oblivious to the broad correlation between knowledge of English and socioeconomic status. The majority of those who opt for medical education in regional languages would be unable to afford private medical colleges. An incremental approach should be adopted to gradually make medical education in regional languages more harmonious with the current ecosystem. For example, before offering MBBS in an Indian language, it would be far more prudent to start paramedical courses in that language. Such paramedical workers are often less mobile and function closer to the patients and communities being served than doctors. This magnifies the utility of education in regional languages and thus its potential returns here could be much higher. At the same time, it is worthwhile to remember that vernacularisation is only one of many ingredients in the recipe to demystify medical education. Many other measures, for instance, selection criteria that is based more on aptitude than merit, require political attention today.

How to imagine and work towards a future

We must get comfortable with the sunk costs of planning

It is an uncertain world and the threats that emerge nowadays seem to be entirely unforeseen. First, there was the Covid pandemic, then the war in Europe. What can a society do to ensure its well-being in such uncertain times? Fortunately, humans have the ability to imagine a future and plan for it.

A future for society is the product of its collective imagination. It is generated through large numbers of people sharing ideas over long periods. It is, therefore, a matter of some wonderment that in India there is so little public discussion on what might be the shape of our future. Isn't it important that we foster an ability to imagine possible futures for our country? Imagining different futures also means planning for them. We cannot know precisely what crises are in store for us. But we can certainly strengthen knowledge resources and develop the ability to mine those resources for possible solutions as and when the need arises. As things stand, building up knowledge capital is a task that, even today, is seen in India as a costly exercise that doesn't bring immediate profit. For some decades now, there have been two perverse attitudes that obstruct the



creation and expansion of knowledge. One is the extreme belief, nurtured by those educated in modern institutions, that there is a political angle to all knowledge. The other is an obstinate commitment to demanding immediate, visible profit from everything. Both attitudes are harmful to any creation or dissemination of knowledge.

An obsession with immediate returns has consequences for everything; from public policy to technology development to social development and economic growth. It is one reason why India, despite a large presence in IT services, has had little to show by way of independent innovation. Even something as basic as creating a system for online payment of GST and income tax has been fairly difficult for Indians to develop.

It is unreasonable to expect individuals to plan several decades ahead for a collective goal. That is the mandate of social institutions. Institutions in India seem to work on a limited-time horizon. Recently, a vice-chancellor from one of the top Indian universities presented a five-year plan in a talk at Cambridge University. The university told the official that they were used to plans looking 30 years ahead. A short-term approach at the institutional level has serious social costs.

It was a series of short-term actions that led to the coal crisis some years ago. In 2014, when the Supreme Court cancelled the allotment of 204 blocks, which had been allotted since 1993, on the grounds of non-transparent processes, there was a major crisis. The coal ministry devised a transparent online bidding procedure for

auctioning the blocks rather successfully. The auctions not only met the demands of industry but also generated revenue for the government. The point is that well-structured rules and regulations are needed all the time not only for the regular business of government but across sectors. Devising those rules and regulations in a fair manner after considering the views of all stakeholders, is a sunk cost. Revising rules regularly to match changed realities is also a sunk cost. Following proper scientific methods, whether in science labs or in business or in government is a sunk cost. Yet social investment in good rules and regulations, documentation, building up knowledge capital, remains very low in India. The ability to imagine a future means a degree of comfort with sunk costs. Most of the technologies that we depend on today, whether the internet, mobile phone, electric cars, batteries or penicillin, took decades to develop; even centuries. A model of the electric car, for instance, was developed even before the petrol engine, but it wasn't practical to use. What is practicable at what point in time depends entirely on circumstances.

What to expect from India's new foreign secretary

Observing the minutest of details is first nature to Vinay Mohan Kwatra. Economic diplomacy can, therefore, be expected to be an important part of the new Foreign Secretary's agenda, given his personal experience in matters of commerce and business.



A diplomat who had the shortest tenure in history in Pakistan has become India's foreign secretary. Vinay Mohan Kwatra went to Karachi as Consul in May 1993 but returned after just five months.

It was one of the worst periods in India-Pakistan relations. Kwatra arrived in Karachi when tit-for-tat expulsions of each other's diplomats were routine. Abductions of High Commission staff also took place. In May 1992, Rajesh Mittal was dragged out of his car by a posse of 15 suspected Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) personnel in full view of his family. After being tortured for several days, the diplomat was expelled. The canard was that he was caught accepting classified documents from a Pakistani contact. The residence of Kwatra's boss, Rajiv Dogra, the Consul-General in Karachi was ransacked. Fourteen months after Kwatra's sojourn in Pakistan ended, the Benazir Bhutto government ordered the closure of the Indian Consulate in Karachi, calling it a "centre for sabotage, subversion and terrorism". When Narendra Modi was new to external affairs as prime minister in 2014, Kwatra was his unofficial interpreter for several months. The two had many occasions to discuss Kwatra's experiences at Indian missions abroad. His brief, but haunting, experiences in Karachi stood out, according to persons privy to those conversations.

Kwatra's subsequent three years as First Secretary at the Embassy in Tashkent interlocked with his work in Karachi. After the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 1996, Uzbekistan emerged as the most important centre of anti-Taliban planning and activity for the opposition Northern Alliance. Concurrently, Tajikistan was the source of support for Tajik Afghans. India became a strong supporter of the Northern

Alliance. Having heard his interpreter's accounts of those days, Modi considers Kwatra a fervent patriot with a worldview which is very similar to his own. The new foreign secretary's views also conform to those of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. Kwatra's final challenge was Nepal. When he brought around Nepali politicians as ambassador in Kathmandu, ending the turbulence of recent years in India-Nepal relations, he emerged as the front-runner to succeed Harsh

Vardhan Shringla as foreign secretary.

At the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie, Kwatra earned the nickname "KTP" — "keen type probationer". There were only four probationers in his batch who did not have degrees in international relations or humanities. As a post-graduate in science, Kwatra spent all his time in Mussoorie as a keen student of what he lacked among other probationers.

The nickname stuck. An all-consuming keenness to absorb even the minutest details of subjects remained first nature to him long after he left Mussoorie. In Washington, where this writer's posting as a foreign

correspondent overlapped with the three years that Kwatra spent as Minister (Commerce) at the Indian Embassy, only two IFS officers in recent years have been able to knowledgeably tell the Americans what their laws meant.

One is Kwatra, the other is Jawed Ashraf, who succeeded Kwatra in Paris and is the current Ambassador. I have watched Americans look at both Kwatra and Ashraf incredulously and in grudging approval, as they quoted American laws to defeat arguments from the US side that went against Indian interests. With the former, it was anti-dumping rules or the Generalised System of Preference, with the latter, it was US nuclear legislation when the

nuclear deal with the George W Bush administration was being negotiated.

In Tashkent, Kwatra lamented that India's private sector was risk-averse. Although New Delhi had a head start in Central Asia in the 1990s when the breakaway republics from the Soviet Union were formed, the Chinese have since got the better of Indian commercial interests, partly for this reason. Besides, the Chinese government backs their entities to the hilt in forays into new frontiers in a way the Indian government does not. Economic diplomacy can, therefore, be expected to be an important part of the new Foreign Secretary's agenda, given his personal experience in matters of commerce and business.

Wars as acts of cultural cleansing

War is more than the mere desire to conquer and occupy. It's fuelled by a revulsion towards difference

"There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism." — Walter Benjamin, Thesis on the Philosophy of History

Why are we witnessing a large number of Indians defend and celebrate the Russian invasion of Ukraine? We are a postcolonial nation-state with a long history of colonial domination that has caused irreparable damage to people at large. Despite this, if people cheer for the Russian invasion, it reflects perhaps the latent imperial ambition of Hindu majoritarianism in India and its desire for an "imagined" Hindu Rashtra. In addition to this, the current obsession with the image of a "strong and decisive leader" further cements these celebrations. It seems that urging for and waging war, and the celebration of it, is at the core of national identity. In the context of Britain, the cultural theorist Paul Gilroy has interpreted such aspirations as "after-effects of imperial domination, and responses to the loss of imperial prestige." They are key components in what Gilroy terms as the "melancholic cultural formations." And the present-day war on Ukraine by Russia is a classic example of this.

The desire for a monoculture is intricately linked to the dream of a "perfect" nation. There are no wars that are not nefarious. And needless to say, war consumes everything along its way. These are often categorised as collateral damages. Despite the sense of unintentionality that the word

"collateral" evokes, a close look at the way the mechanisms of war function makes it evident that these claims are made in order to exonerate the perpetrators of destruction from any liability. In other words, wars need to be understood in terms of their mechanistic nature, for their role in spearheading and accelerating the imperial ambitions of majoritarianism of various kind and degree.

Sometimes, wars are not declared, but transmitted as something omnipresent in our lives. For instance, let us consider a manifested form of undeclared war in our context — the destruction of Babri Masjid (1992). A war cry, which still has cataclysmic reverberations in our present. Why did the destruction of a historical monument become the most pleasurable visual metaphor for a large number of Hindus? The answer may lie in the fact that no nationalism can exist outside of cultural insularism or the obsessive desire for territorialisation. However, such a love for territory that even expunges the people, culture and nature, is antithetical to democracy as an ideal.

Culture and civilisational claims are the primary rallying point of any territorial imagination, which is what makes a cultural monument the trigger point for the war on people. When the imagined greatness of a past emerges as already lost, political work transforms itself into a war-machine, trapped in desperate, endless attempts to

bury the heterogeneity of past. But the war on the past is not an exorcism of its evil spirit; it is the process of transforming oneself into evil-incarnate. This incarnation signposts the everyday war that shapes our present-day cultural and political ethos.

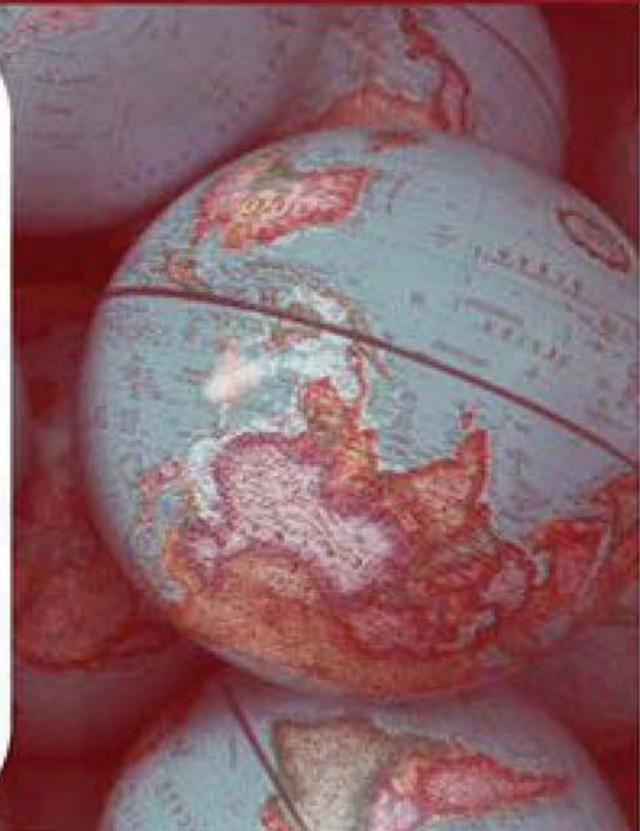
The repeated vandalism of Ambedkar statues — a symbol of Dalit reclamation of the public spaces — across India, for instance, is a local manifestation of such internalisation of war. As art historian Kajri Jain has noted, the construction of gigantic statues, both religious and "secular"—such as, for instance, the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Memorial — can be read as a violent reassertion by the majoritarian caste groups of their monopoly over public spaces. In that sense, these gigantic statues and monuments are camouflaged forms of war cries. They are erected monumental pillars of the monoculture, challenging the heterogeneity of both past and present. The militarisation of everyday life, particularly when associated with the comfort blanket of imagined monoculture, produces constant wars, vandalisations, and furthers the desire to destroy.

German philosopher Walter Benjamin, a direct victim of World War II and the Nazi war machine, in his now canonical essay "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935) analyses the manifesto of the Italian Futurists of 1909,

(Contd on page 29)

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10 killed in explosion at Kabul mosque, several wounded

An explosion ripped through Khalifa Aga Gul Jan Mosque in Kabul on Friday, killing at least 10 people and wounding 20

(Staff Reporter) A powerful explosion ripped through a mosque in the Afghan capital of Kabul on Friday, killing at least 10 people and wounding 20, a Taliban spokesman said. Hundreds of worshippers had gathered for prayers on the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the Khalifa Aga Gul Jan Mosque was packed, said local residents, fearing the casualty toll could rise further. The Taliban-appointed interior ministry spokesman, Mohammad



Nafi Takor, could not provide more details and Taliban security men cordoned off the area. The source of the explosion was not immediately known and no one has claimed responsibility for the blast. The explosion was so loud that the neighborhood of the mosque shook from the blast, the residents said, speaking on condition of anonymity, fearing for their own safety. Ambulances raced to the site, driving up to the end of a narrow street in an eastern neighborhood of Kabul to reach the mosque, which belongs to

Afghanistan's majority Sunni Muslims. The explosion was the latest in a series of such blasts amid relentless attacks across the country. Similar attacks on mosques have recently targeted the country's minority Shiite Muslims and were claimed by the Islamic State group's regional affiliate, known as Islamic State in Khorasan Province or IS-K. IS has stepped up its attacks across Afghanistan to become the primary

enemy of the Taliban since their takeover of the country last August. Kabul's Italian-run EMERGENCY hospital, which treats only the war-wounded, tweeted that its staff reported the facility has admitted at least "20 wounded people" following the explosion. Last week, 33 Shiite worshippers died in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, when a bomb struck their mosque and an adjacent religious school. IS has claimed responsibility for that attack.

Over 20 trapped, 39 missing in China building collapse, President Xi orders swift rescue

At least 39 people were missing and 23 trapped in a six-storey residential building collapse in China's central Hunan province. Meanwhile, President Xi Jinping has ordered all-out efforts to rescue the trapped and injured people



(Staff Reporter) At least 39 people were missing and 23 trapped in a six-storey residential building collapse in China's central Hunan province, authorities said on Saturday. Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered all-out efforts to rescue the trapped and injured people.

Five people have been rescued and admitted to nearby hospitals. The six-story building, which has a floor area of about 700 square meters, toppled at noon on Friday in Changsha city's Wangcheng district, state-run China Global Television Network reported. Rescuers

were searching for more survivors as 39 people were reported missing. At least 23 have been trapped. The owner of the building has been detained.

Huang Ming, minister of emergency management, in a video conference on Saturday called for an inspection of work safety to prevent further accidents.

"Related departments should launch a crackdown on illegal and irregular building activities such as unauthorised construction and unauthorised alteration of the main structure to prevent collapses and other similar accidents," Huang said.

On Saturday, Chinese State Councilor Wang Yong led a team to Changsha to guide rescue and emergency response. Live TV

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Sri Lanka President Rajapaksa urges political parties to set aside differences

Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has appealed to the protesting citizens to join hands to steer a "pro-people struggle" to meet the challenges

(Staff Reporter) Sri Lanka's beleaguered President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Sunday urged all political parties to set aside their differences and appealed to the protesting citizens to join hands to steer a "pro-people struggle" to meet the challenges, amidst growing demands for his government's immediate resignation over its failure to tackle the country's worst economic crisis. Gotabaya Rajapaksa's message to the people on International Workers' Day came a day after the powerful Buddhist clergy in the island nation warned that people would be influenced to reject all politicians if Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Gotabaya's elder brother, did not resign to make way for an interim government to resolve the political and economic crisis in the country.

"On this #InternationalWorkersDay, I

once again invite all political party leaders in #lka to come to a consensus on behalf of the people. It's my sincere wish to call on the people to join hands to steer a pro-people struggle setting aside political differences," Gotabaya tweeted. Sri Lanka is currently in the throes of unprecedented economic turmoil since its independence from Britain in 1948. The crisis is caused in part by a lack of foreign currency, which has meant that the country cannot afford to pay for imports of staple foods and fuel, leading to acute shortages and very high prices. On Thursday, nearly 1,000 trade unions staged a one-day nationwide strike, demanding the immediate resignation of the government, including President Gotabaya and Prime Minister Mahinda.

The unions from a number of sectors, including the state service, health, ports, electricity,

education and postal joined the strike under the theme 'Bow to the people - government go home', urging the President, the Prime Minister and the government to 'go home'. Meanwhile, quoting sources, the Daily Mirror newspaper reported on Sunday that while Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has refused to resign saying he had the majority support in Parliament, the President however has been privately been urging him to resign.

However, the Prime Minister has clearly informed the President that he would not vacate his seat at a time when he was trying to resolve the economic crisis, but if the President wanted to sack him, he could do so, the report said.

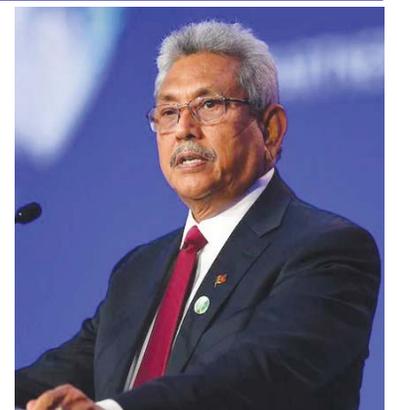
While one section is calling on the President to appoint a new interim government with a new Prime Minister, there is another

group that says that premier Mahinda Rajapaksa cannot be removed as he still holds the majority in Parliament. The Opposition however has been going all out asking for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down first.

Former Sri Lankan president and the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party Maithripala Sirisena on Sunday reiterated his demand that government has to accept the demands of the people and resign for leading the country into an unprecedented crisis.

Participating in the SLFP May Day rally, he pointed out that the President Gotabaya Rajapaksa took over a prosperous country. But the current situation is that over 200,000 300,000 people having to face hunger and starvation.

Emphasising that the demand of the people of the country is



that the leaders of this Government should step down and resign, Sirisena said that fresh elections should be held to elect a new government.

"People are dying inside houses. Some even collapse while on the road and die. And someone was shot dead during the protests. This situation could escalate if the Government continues to stay in power. The Government has to accept the demand of the people," he was quoted as saying by News First website.

Blasphemy case registered against ex-Pakistan PM Imran Khan, minister says he will be arrested

A blasphemy case has been registered against former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan in Faisalabad after Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif was allegedly hounded by his supporters in Saudi Arabia's Madina last Thursday

(Staff Reporter) A blasphemy case has been registered against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan and others in Faisalabad after Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was allegedly hounded by the former PM's



supporters in Saudi Arabia's Madina last Thursday. Pakistan's Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has vowed that Imran Khan will be arrested in a case related to "hooliganism and sloganeering against PM Shehbaz Sharif and his delegation visiting Madina", as per media reports.

WHAT HAPPENED?

In video clips that emerged on social media,

pilgrims - allegedly supporter of Imran Khan - shouted 'chor' (thief) and 'gaddar' (traitor) as soon as Shehbaz Sharif and other members of his delegation arrived at the Prophet's Mosque in Madina last Thursday. The Pakistani pilgrims also allegedly used

abusive language against the delegation. The Madina police have claimed that five Pakistanis involved in the sloganeering have been arrested. Meanwhile, in a TV interview on Saturday, Imran Khan distanced himself from the pilgrims and said he could "not even imagine asking anyone to carry out sloganeering at the sacred place."

Sri Lanka Crisis Will Last At Least 2 More Years, Says Government

(Staff Reporter) Colombo: Sri Lanka will have to endure its unprecedented economic hardships for at least two more years, the country's finance minister said Wednesday while warning of an imminent cash crunch. Months of blackouts and acute shortages of food, fuel and pharmaceuticals have brought widespread suffering across the South Asian island nation. Public anger has sparked sustained protests demanding the government resign over its mismanagement of the economic crisis, Sri Lanka's worst since independence in 1948. "People should know the truth. I don't know if people realise the gravity of the situation," Finance Minister Ali Sabry told parliament.

"We won't be able to resolve this crisis in two years, but the actions we take today will determine how much longer this problem will drag," Sabry said the country now has less than

\$50 million in usable foreign exchange reserves, needed to finance essential goods to keep Sri Lanka's import-dependent economy ticking over. Official data shows \$1.7 billion in reserves, but most of that figure includes a Chinese currency swap which cannot be used to pay for imports from other countries. Sabry said the government had erred by delaying an approach to the International Monetary Fund for a bailout. Negotiations with the IMF are ongoing but Sri Lanka's central bank chief has said any assistance from the lender is months away. The government will unveil a new budget soon and raise taxes to replenish state revenue. "It was a historic mistake to sharply reduce taxes in 2019," Sabry said, adding that the previous central bank chief had also blundered by exhausting foreign reserves to defend Sri Lanka's overvalued currency

Family of 5 Lankan Tamils arrive on Indian shores, flee island nation carrying infant



(Staff Reporter) A five-membered family of Sri Lankan Tamils arrived on Indian shores in the wee hours of Tuesday, after fleeing their home country and taking a dangerous boat ride across the seas. Hailing from Jaffna, in the northern part of the island nation, this family is

among several others who are being pushed to the brink amid the ongoing severe economic crisis in the island nation. Dayalan, the head of the family, his wife, their children, a two-month-old infant and a six-year-old girl, and their grandmother, were taken to the Marine Police

station, on receipt of information regarding their arrival. While being questioned by the Indian authorities, in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, the family is said to have cited the basic livelihood issues and the daily struggles faced by those in the lower economic strata of Sri Lanka's. Among the reasons that prompted their extreme decision to flee their homeland are the skyrocketing prices of essentials, a kilogramme of milk powder being sold at Lankan Rs. 2000 (5.7 USD), the unavailability of vaccines meant for infants, meagre daily wages, and the fear of starving to death. It is said that the five-member family has been sent to the Mandapam refugee camp in the

Ramanathapuram district. The illegal influx of Lankan Tamils into India began on March 22nd and families continue to arrive in batches of up to 18 people, in the hope of a better life across the Palk Strait. Recently, the Tamil Nadu Assembly passed a resolution to provide aid to Sri Lanka and provide succour to a country that is faced with its worst-ever economic crisis. The decision to provide aid to all of Sri Lanka is a volte-face by the Tamil Nadu government. Earlier, the Tamil Nadu government had offered to provide aid only to Lankan Tamils. This move had faced backlash from the island nation. Many Lankan Tamil voices were clear that they were not willing to accept aid from Tamil Nadu, if it was only going to help

Lankan Tamils. The Lankan Tamils were firm in their stance that any aid must benefit their entire country and not one community alone. However, the aid being sent from Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka could only be facilitated via the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian High Commission in Colombo. In this regard, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar asked the Tamil Nadu government's Chief Secretary to coordinate with the Government of India in supplying the relief material. It was also stated that the aid from Tamil Nadu can supplement what was already being provided by the Government of India and that the Government of Sri Lanka prefers inclusive distribution of relief material.

Beijing Halts Public Transport As China Continues To Fight Covid

Covid In China: China's capital city Beijing has shut more than 40 subway stations, about a tenth of the network, and 158 bus routes, service providers said

(Staff Reporter) Beijing: Dozens of metro stations and bus routes in Beijing have been shut down as COVID continues to spread and millions of residents in Shanghai still remain under strict lockdown even after more than a month. China's capital city Beijing has shut more than 40 subway stations, about a tenth of the network, and 158 bus routes, service providers said. Most of the suspended stations and routes are in the Chaoyang district, the epicentre of Beijing's outbreak, reported The Express Tribune. Beijing is also resorting to mass testing. Twelve out of 16 Beijing districts were conducting the second of three rounds of tests this week, having done three mass screenings last week. The city has also closed schools, some businesses and residential buildings in high-risk areas. Investment in China by international companies has also been badly affected which further undermines China's growth.

down in a campaign to stop the spread of COVID-19. A day earlier, on Tuesday, another city, Zhengzhou, announced work-from-home and other COVID curbs for the coming week. Home to 12.6 million people the central city of Zhengzhou also has a factory of Apple's iPhone manufacturer Foxconn. The city joins dozens of big cities in full or partial lockdown, as per the media outlet. Shanghai's lockdown has come under heavy criticism, with people unable to access essential medical care.

In a bizarre incident, an elderly person in a Shanghai nursing home was mistakenly taken to the morgue while still alive, local media reported, as the city's prolonged lockdown continues to put a strain on city health facilities amid renewed COVID-19 outbreak. The country's much-publicized "zero-covid" strategy that the government credited for bringing the country out of the pandemic till recently is falling apart as the rapidly mounting cases are again forcing mass lockdowns like those seen in 2020.

On Wednesday, metros and buses were shut



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Ousted Myanmar Leader Aung San Suu Kyi's Appeal In Corruption Case Rejected

Since a coup ousted her government in February last year, plunging Myanmar into upheaval, Aung San Suu Kyi has been in military custody and faces a raft of charges that could jail her for more than 150 years



case told AFP after the ruling.

She had "decided to continue till the end of the process to check the situation of the rule of law here," the source said. There was no date given for the fresh appeal, which will be heard in the Union Supreme Court in front of two judges. Before her corruption conviction, the 76-year-old Suu Kyi had already been sentenced to six years in jail for incitement against the military, breaching Covid-19 rules and breaking a telecommunications law. Appeals against those convictions are currently pending in the courts, the source said.

Suu Kyi will remain under house arrest at an unknown location in the military-built capital Naypyidaw while she fights other charges. She faces a raft of other trials,

including for allegedly violating the official secrets act, several counts of corruption and electoral fraud. Journalists have been barred from attending the court hearings and Suu Kyi's lawyers have been banned from speaking to the media. 'Sport in a court' The rejection of the appeal marked "another stage in the show trial," David Mathieson, an independent analyst working on Myanmar, told AFP.

"This is sport in a court, a form of mental cruelty." Under a previous junta regime, Suu Kyi spent long spells under house arrest in her family's colonial-era lakeside mansion in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city. Today, she is confined to an undisclosed location in the capital, with her links to the outside world limited to brief pre-trial meetings with

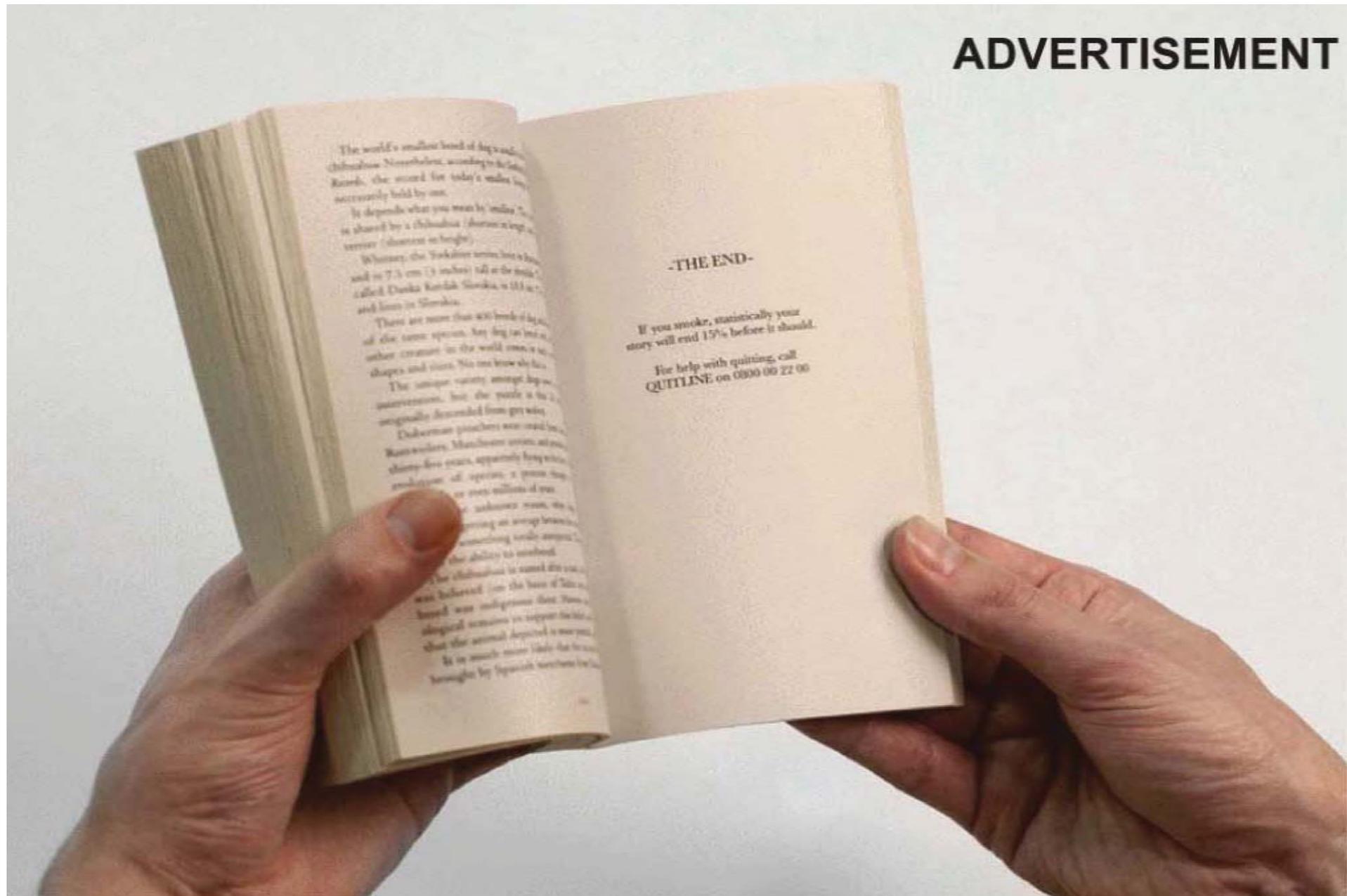
her lawyers. The junta has rebuffed requests by foreign diplomats to meet Suu Kyi while she is on trial.

The coup last year sparked widespread protests and unrest that the military has sought to crush by force. Fighting has flared with established ethnic rebel groups in border areas and across the country "People's Defence Forces" have sprung up to fight junta troops. According to a local monitoring group, the crackdown has left more than 1,800 civilians dead while over 13,000 have been arrested. Suu Kyi has been the face of Myanmar's democratic hopes for more than 30 years, but her earlier sentences already mean she is likely to miss elections the junta has said it plans to hold by next year.

(Staff Reporter) Yangon: A Myanmar junta court on Wednesday rejected an appeal by ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi against a five-year sentence for corruption handed down last week, a junta spokesman told AFP. Since a coup ousted her government in February last year, plunging Myanmar into upheaval, Suu Kyi has been in military custody and faces a raft of charges that could jail her for

more than 150 years. Last week, the Nobel laureate was convicted of accepting a bribe of \$600,000 cash and gold bars -- a charge she said was "absurd", according to her lawyer. The junta's "Union Supreme Court rejected the appeal of her sentence," junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told AFP. Suu Kyi will challenge the latest decision in a higher court, a source with knowledge of the

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US Supreme Court set to overturn Roe v Wade abortion rights decision

The US Supreme Court is set to overturn the Roe v Wade abortion law, a leaked draft majority opinion reportedly shows



disgrace."

Republican Senator Tom Cotton said: "...Roe was egregiously wrong from the beginning & I pray the Court follows the Constitution & allows the states to once again protect unborn life."

Four of the other Republican-appointed justices Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett - voted with Alito in the conference held among the justices, the report added.

After an initial vote among the justices following an oral argument, one is assigned the majority opinion and writes a draft. It is then circulated among the justices.

At times, in between the initial vote and the ruling being released, the vote alignment can change. A ruling is only final when it is published by the court.

FIRST MAJOR LEAK FROM THE SUPREME COURT EVER

In a post on Twitter, Neal Katyal,

a lawyer who regularly argues before the court, said if the report was accurate it would be "the first major leak from the Supreme Court ever."

The court, which has a 6-3 conservative majority, heard oral arguments in December on Mississippi's bid to revive its ban on abortion starting at 15 weeks of pregnancy, a law blocked by lower courts.

It appeared based on December's oral argument that a majority was inclined to uphold Mississippi's abortion ban and that there could be five votes to overturn Roe. The Roe v. Wade decision recognized that the right to personal privacy under the US Constitution protects a woman's ability to terminate her pregnancy. Christian conservatives and many Republican officeholders have long sought to overturn it.

The Supreme Court in a 1992 ruling called *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*

reaffirmed abortion rights and prohibited laws imposing an "undue burden" on abortion access.

Mississippi asked the justices to overturn both rulings and Alito's draft opinion largely adopts the Republican state's arguments. If Roe is overturned, abortion is likely to remain legal in liberal states. More than a dozen states currently have laws protecting abortion rights. Numerous Republican-led states have passed various abortion restrictions in defiance of the Roe precedent in recent years. Republicans could try to enact a nationwide abortion ban, while Democrats could also seek to protect abortion rights at the national level. Democrats said the draft opinion undermines the importance of this year's elections, in which they are seeking to maintain control of the House and Senate.

(Staff Reporter) The US Supreme Court looks set to vote to overturn the Roe vs Wade decision that legalized abortion nationwide, according to a leaked initial draft majority opinion published by Politico on Monday.

The unprecedented leak from the conservative-majority Supreme Court sent shock waves through the United States, not least because the court prides itself on keeping its internal deliberations secret and leaks are extremely uncommon. Reuters was not able to confirm the authenticity of the draft. The Supreme Court and the White House declined to comment.

"Roe was egregiously wrong from the start," conservative Justice Samuel Alito wrote in the draft opinion which is dated February 10, according to Politico, which posted a copy online.

Based on Alito's opinion, the court would find that the Roe v. Wade decision that allowed abortions performed before a fetus would be viable outside the womb - between 24 and 28 weeks of pregnancy - was wrongly decided because the US Constitution makes no specific mention of abortion rights.

ABORTION PRESENTS A PROFOUND MORAL QUESTION

"Abortion presents a profound moral question. The Constitution does not prohibit the citizens of each state from regulating or prohibiting abortion," Alito said, according to the leaked document. The news broke a little more than six months before the mid-term elections

that will determine if Democrats hold their razor-thin majorities in the US Congress for the next two years of President Joe Biden's term in office. Abortion is one of the most divisive issues in US politics and has been for nearly a half century.

"This decision is a direct assault on the dignity, rights, & lives of women, not to mention decades of settled law," said former U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton. "It will kill and subjugate women even as a vast majority of Americans think abortion should be legal. What an utter

Muslims being targeted with violence around the world, says US President

At the White House reception to celebrate Eid al-Fitr on Monday, US President Joe Biden said that Muslims are globally being targeted with violence

(Staff Reporter) Around the world, Muslims are being targeted with violence, US President Joe Biden said on Monday asserting that Muslims make America stronger every single day even as they still face real challenges and threats in the society that they live in. At a White House reception to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, Biden said he has appointed the first Muslim to serve as Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom.

"It's especially important because today, around the world, we're seeing so many Muslims being targeted with violence. No one, no one should discriminate against oppressed or be oppressed for their religious beliefs," he said to applause from the select gathering at the White House. Arooj Aftab, a Pakistani vocalist and composer, was one of the speakers at the event along with First Lady Jill Biden and Dr. Talib M. Shareef, Imam of Masjid Muhammad, known as 'The Nation's

Mosque' in Washington, DC.

"Today, we also remember all those who are not able to celebrate this holy day, including Uyghurs and Rohingyas and all those who are facing famine, violence, conflict, and disease," Biden said.

"And honour the signs of hope and progress toward the world we want to see, including the ceasefire, which allowed the people in Yemen to honour Ramadan and celebrate Eid in peace for the first time in six years," he added. "But at the same time, we have to acknowledge that an awful lot of work remains to be done abroad and here at home. Muslims make our nation stronger every single day, even as they still face real challenges and threats in our society, including targeted violence and Islamophobia that exists," he said. Biden said, making the US more equitable, more inclusive for Muslim Americans is an

essential part of the enduring work to form the more perfect union.

"We're the only nation in all the history of the world that's been organised not based on a religion, race, ethnicity, geography, but on an idea. Think about that. An idea," he said.

KAMALA HARRIS WISHES EID

In a tweet after the event, Biden said, "Jill and I were honoured to host an Eid al-Fitr reception at the White House tonight, and we send our warmest greetings to everyone celebrating across the world. Eid Mubarak!" Meanwhile, Vice President Kamala Harris too wished people on the occasion. Doug and I send our warmest wishes to all who are celebrating Eid al-Fitr. Muslims in the US and around the world celebrate after a month of deep reflection, helping those in need, and connecting with community. From our family to yours, Eid Mubarak!" she said in a tweet.

Supreme Court: Boston can't deny Christian flag if it flies other flags on City Hall flagpole

"This case is so much more significant than a flag," a representative for the Christian group said. "Boston openly discriminated against viewpoints it disfavored," when it excluded a Christian flag

(Staff Reporter) WASHINGTON – The Supreme Court on Monday ruled that Boston may not deny a Christian group the ability to raise a flag at City Hall alongside secular organizations that are encouraged to do so to celebrate the city's diversity. The unanimous decision was the latest in a series of rulings from the high court favoring the protection of religious groups, though in this case the issue was more about the First Amendment's protection of free speech than its promise that Americans may practice their religion without government interference. "We conclude that Boston's flag-raising program does not express government speech," Associate Justice Stephen Breyer wrote for the court. "As a result, the city's refusal to let (the group) fly their flag based on its religious viewpoint violated the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment." A mix of conservative and liberal justices joined the court's opinion, including Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justices

Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett. There were no dissents.

That vote appeared to reflect the fact that the religious group had support that transcended traditional ideological and partisan lines. The Biden administration, for instance, sided with the group and against Boston in the case. The religious group that made the request, Camp Constitution, said Boston's flagpole is a public forum, a concept in First Amendment law used by courts to help analyze when the government may regulate speech on public property. The government can't restrict speech based on a speaker's viewpoint in a public forum. "This case is so much more significant than a flag," said Mathew Staver, the founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, a Christian legal group that represented Camp Constitution. "Boston openly discriminated against viewpoints it disfavored when it opened the flagpoles

to all applicants and then excluded Christian viewpoints." "We are carefully reviewing the court's decision and its recognition of city governments' authority to operate similar programs," said Ricardo Patrón, a spokesman for the city. "As we consider next steps, we will ensure that future city of Boston programs are aligned with this decision." Boston said it worried that losing the case would mean it might someday be required to fly a flag from a neo-Nazi group or an al-Qaida flag. Another option: The city could avoid flying flags inconsistent with its views by not flying any third-party flags in the first place. Breyer, a former chief judge on the Boston-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, said the city had limited involvement in the flag program which he said undermined its argument that the flags were a form of government speech.

"Boston acknowledges it hadn't

spent a lot of time really thinking about its flag-raising practices until this case," Breyer wrote. "True to its word, the city had nothing – no written policies or clear internal guidance – about what flags groups could fly and what those flags would communicate." At times during the Jan. 18 oral argument justices from both ends of the ideological spectrum appeared exasperated with the fact that the case wasn't resolved before it reached the nation's highest court. Both conservative and liberal justices indicated the dispute could have been settled relatively easily with a few changes to Boston's policy, such as ensuring that city officials were more involved in the selection of flags. The Supreme Court has looked favorably on claims of religious freedom in the past. In 2019, the court ruled that a Latin cross on government property outside Washington, D.C., did not have to be moved in the name of church-state separation.



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The first signs of global warming are now clearly visible. We urgently need to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Nothing and no-one will be spared from climate change. This warning is therefore to all people, all countries and, in particular, to the Belgian Council of Ministers who, on the weekend of March 20 and 21, will have to decide what action to take regarding essential measures linked to the Kyoto Protocol.

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PM Modi meets German Chancellor Olaf Scholz; discusses regional and global developments

PM Modi on Monday met German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin for the first time since the latter assumed office in December 2021. The two leaders discussed key areas of bilateral cooperation under the overall strategic partnership, as well as regional and global developments

(News Agency) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday met German Chancellor Olaf Scholz here and the two leaders discussed key areas of bilateral cooperation under the overall strategic partnership, as well as regional and global developments. Modi arrived in Berlin on Monday morning on the first leg of his three-nation Europe trip that will also take him to Denmark and France.

Prime Minister Modi was received by Chancellor Scholz in a ceremonial welcome at the Federal Chancellery in Berlin upon his arrival for talks. He was accorded the Guard of Honour at the forecourt of the Federal Chancellery in Berlin. In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said that the discussions between the two leaders "covered key areas of bilateral cooperation under the overall strategic partnership, as well as regional and global developments." India was among the more than 50 countries that abstained from a United Nations vote to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council in April. Since January this year, India has abstained on eight occasions on procedural votes and draft resolutions in the UN Security

Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council that deplored Russian aggression against Ukraine. "Expanding India-Germany cooperation. PM @narendramodi and Chancellor Scholz meet in Berlin. @Bundeskanzle," the Prime Minister's Office tweeted. This was Prime Minister Modi's first meeting with Scholz as German Chancellor, who assumed office in December, 2021.

Later, they held delegation-level talks which was also attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. "Discussions continue between PM @narendramodi and Chancellor Scholz in Berlin. Both leaders are reviewing the full range of bilateral ties between India and Germany, including giving an impetus to trade as well as cultural linkages. @Bundeskanzler," the PMO tweeted. "PM @narendramodi and @Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz begin bilateral discussions. This is their first engagement since Chancellor Scholz assumed office in December 2021. The momentum of high level

exchanges with our Strategic Partner continues," Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said in a tweet. Later, Modi and Scholz co-chaired the 6th India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC). "The Inter-Governmental Consultation between India and Germany illustrate the special nature of this friendship. Prime Minister @narendramodi, Chancellor Scholz and top Ministers from India and Germany meet in Berlin. @Bundeskanzler," the PMO tweeted along with a photograph of the participating ministers from both sides. Bagchi said it is a unique biennial dialogue mechanism allowing the two governments to coordinate on a wide spectrum of bilateral matters. "For growth and resilience. For mobility and prosperity. For a greener and sustainable future. For an open and peaceful Indo-Pacific. The 6th edition of the India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations gets underway," he said in another tweet. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Jaishankar and NSA Doval were also present in the meeting. The 6th IGC will further strengthen the India-

Germany strategic partnership, the MEA had said. This is Modi's fifth visit to Germany after becoming Prime Minister. He had earlier visited the European country in April 2018, July 2017, May 2017 and April 2015.

In his departure statement, Modi had said that his visit to Berlin will be an opportunity to hold detailed bilateral discussions with Chancellor Scholz, whom he met at G20 last year in his previous capacity as Vice-Chancellor and Finance Minister. "I look forward to exchanging views with Chancellor Scholz on strategic, regional and global developments that concern us both," Modi had said ahead of his visit. In 2021, India and Germany commemorated 70 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations and have been strategic partners since 2000, Modi said. Germany is India's largest trading partner in Europe with a bilateral trade of over USD 21 billion. Modi is also scheduled to interact with the Indian diaspora in Germany. Germany is home to a thriving Indian diaspora of over 200 thousand. The visit will chart the future course for deepening Indo-German ties, the MEA said.

Biden announces 1.5-year extension for selected expiring immigrant work permits

"As USCIS (US Citizenship and Immigration Services) works to address the pending EAD caseloads, the agency has determined that the current 180-day automatic extension for employment authorisation is currently insufficient," said USCIS Director Ur M. Jaddou. "This temporary rule will provide those non-citizens, otherwise eligible for the automatic extension, an opportunity to maintain employment and provide critical support for their families, while avoiding further disruption for US employers," he said.

According to USCIS, non-citizens with a pending EAD renewal application whose 180-day automatic extension has lapsed and whose EAD has expired will be granted an additional period of employment authorisation and EAD validity beginning May 4, 2022, and lasting up to 540 days from the expiration date of their EAD. They may resume employment if they are still within the up to 540-day automatic extension period and are



otherwise eligible. Non-citizens with a pending renewal application still covered under the 180-day automatic extension will be granted an additional extension of up to 360 days, for a total of up to 540 days past the expiration of the current EAD. Non-citizens with a pending renewal application and a valid EAD on May 4, 2022, or who timely file an EAD renewal application before October 27,

2023, will be granted an automatic extension of up to 540 days if their EAD expires before the renewal application is processed. "The change will immediately help about 87,000 immigrants whose work authorisation has lapsed or is set to in the next 30 days. Overall, the government estimates that as many as 4,20,000 immigrants renewing work permits will be

protected from losing their ability to work for the duration of the policy," Indian-American community leader Ajay Jain Bhutoria told PTI. The policy is meant to address the unprecedented backlog of 1.5 million work permit applications at the nation's legal immigration agency, leaving tens of thousands unable to work legally and exacerbating labour shortages. Welcoming the change in policy, Bhutoria said this is great news for employers as most companies are facing staffing issues and will now be able to keep their eligible employees. "This policy change allows employers to continue their workers and eligible immigrants to work on expired documents for up to 540 days, rather than 180. That means even the tens of thousands of people past their 180-day window have as much as another year of work authorisation as of Wednesday," he said. "This is the right step in the direction to reduce the visa processing backlog," he said.

Here's what makes sea mines Russia's biggest challenge in Ukraine's Mariupol port

Most of them cannot be taken out safely so they have to be detonated in the water."

"In fact, it is not just in the waters, all across the Mariupol city, we found sea mines. The demining operation is underway in water and on land. It will take a long time for this port to be commercially viable," Nikita said.

"This port is the main transportation route for sending wheat...Even in the future, if Ukrainian farmers want to send wheat to other parts of the world, this is the route that they would have to take... there are steel plants here because of the port..."

MILITARY STRATEGY OF USING SEA MINES

Sea mines are self-contained explosives meant to destroy enemy ships and submarines. Sea mines have been extensively used in warfare, including during both

the World Wars and the Cold War era. According to Naval History and Heritage Command, the US laid more than 12,000 mines in Japanese shipping routes and harbour areas during World War II. The mines were laid using aircraft and they sank around 650 Japanese ships.

According to a report on DW.com, the mines in the Black Sea are reported to be sea anchor mines. These mines float just below the surface of the water, making them difficult to detect. These mines are connected by a steel cable, which connects them to an anchor and keeps the device below the water. When these mines come into contact with the hull of a ship, they explode.

DANGERS OF SEA MINES

Since the beginning of the Ukraine war, the presence

of sea mines in the Black Sea has been a cause of concern for merchant ships. The presence of sea mines in the sea means seafarers have to take different, longer routes to reach their destinations.

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) union and the Joint Negotiating Group of maritime employers have raised the concerns of the seafarers, saying that their vessels shouldn't become "collateral damage" in the Ukraine-Russia conflict. We strongly urge governments to do all in their power to mitigate the threat and secure safe passage for vessels trading near these conflict areas," Reuters quoted David Heindel, chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section, as saying.

"It is essential that the world's seafarers can continue to perform their duties safely and keep global supply chains moving," he added.

Wars as acts of cultural cleansing

which was one of the most unabashed celebrations of war in the history of Western modern art. Benjamin, in his characteristic style, not only criticised the content of the manifesto as a proto-Fascist document, but also was attentive to the language force of the text. A text which thrives on a sense of urgency, a desire for a definitive disruption, a call for catastrophe, as if that is the only way "progress" can progress. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the author of the manifesto, wrote: "For twenty-seven years we Futurists have rebelled against the branding of war as antiaesthetic... Accordingly we state... War is beautiful because it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated machinery by means of gas masks, terrifying megaphones, flame throwers, and small tanks. War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metalisation of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine guns..."

In his critique of the manifesto, Benjamin noted that such celebration of war by the Futurists is not only indicative of a proto-fascist aesthetical regime, but also reveals its inner logic which celebrates one's own destruction as the ultimate aesthetical experience – the sublime of the highest order. Benjamin noted, "Humanity that, according to Homer, was once an object of spectacle for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it is capable of experiencing its own destruction as an aesthetic enjoyment of the highest order."

War and Culture

War and the destruction of repositories of culture are intricately connected. War is much more than the mere desire to conquer and occupy. This desire is often fuelled by a repulsion towards difference. This is the primary reason that the planned destruction of traces of cultural difference became integral to the war machine globally. We have evidences across geographical areas and historical time periods of such acts of cultural cleansing. We can create an endless list of such destruction from the annals of history — be it the library of Alexandria, the Imperial library of Luoyang, or the Nalanda University, the destruction and conversion of Buddhist monuments in ancient and medieval India, and the Bamiyan Buddhas, to name a few. One of the most telling examples from recent history is the burning of the Jaffna Public Library in 1981 by the Sinhalese militia, which resulted in the destruction of over 97,000 volumes of books along with numerous culturally valuable and irreplaceable manuscripts. By burning the library, the majoritarian regime aimed to erase the cultural past of the Tamil community, and thereby attempted to push them out of the ambit of history.

The colonisation by various European empires also illustrates the fact that such acts involve looting and destruction of cultural properties. The British looting and burning down of the Royal Library of Burma in the late 19th century is an example in point. Ironically, some of the artefacts looted by the British army are still displayed as part of Victoria and Albert Museum collection. The world wars also

displayed similar tendencies of wilful destruction of repositories of culture. For instance, Poland — a neighbouring nation of Ukraine — faced an unconceivable loss of artefacts of its history and culture. The Zaluski library in Warsaw was repeatedly looted and vandalised, first by the Russian occupying forces towards the end of the 18th century, and later by Nazi German troops in 1944.

The American invasion of Iraq in 1991 may be the most relevant, recent instance of how war produces devastating and far-reaching impacts on cultural monuments, repositories, objects and archaeological sites. Legal scholar Marion Forsyth in her essay "Casualties of War: The Destruction of Iraq's Cultural Heritage as a Result of U.S. Action During and After the 1991 Gulf War" (2004) noted that prior to 1991, Iraq had one of the most successful cultural property protection schemes in the Middle East. Iraqi national law has considered all immovable and movable antiquities to be owned by the state. The trade in antiquities has been illegal, and it has also been illegal to "break, mutilate, destroy or damage antiquities whether movable or immovable. But once the war destabilised the region, these invaluable artefacts were looted by organised gangs and smuggled into the antique market of Europe and America." While assessing the impact of the American invasion on "the cradle of civilization" on behalf of UNESCO, Sue Williams in her interview with eminent archaeologist John Russell notes that:

"[T]he archeological site of Ur of the

Chaldees, reputed birthplace of Abraham, was bombed and strafed by Allied aircraft, with over 400 cannon holes reported in the temple tower and at least 4 bomb craters in the site. The unexcavated major site of Tell el-Lahm was trenched and bulldozed by American forces."

A cursory look at the various UNESCO reports on war crimes committed against cultural artefacts and sites reveals the extent of destruction and how war works as an enabler of the illegal global trafficking of artefacts into the international antiques trade. One may go so far as to say that destruction is the business of capitalism and war is its intimate companion, and every destruction opens up multiple market opportunities for capitalists and political opportunities for the capitalist class.

What remains?

Against these backdrops it may be worthwhile to think about present-day calls to decolonise museums and institutions, particularly in the contexts of erstwhile colonising/imperial nations. These calls for decolonising institutions go beyond token gestures of repatriation and restitution to more self-reflexive and critical examination of the culpability of cultural institutions in the imperialist-nationalist-war complex.

So what would a decolonial initiative in India look like? Would we, when the majoritarian Hinduism is clearly on a state-supported warpath towards homogeneity and monoculture, be remotely able to think along the lines of heterogeneity and restoring the ethos of pluralisation?

A defining moment for Indo-German ties

Another significant development is the JDI on Triangular Development Cooperation for projects in third countries. This will provide avenues to work together in the Indo-Pacific, Africa and beyond. Climate-friendly and SDG related training and projects, possibly drawing upon the successful implementation of similar versions in India, are envisaged.

India and the EU have agreed to restart, in June 2022, discussions on an FTA, an investment agreement. At this IGC, the focus was on harnessing the entrepreneurship and private sector of both countries to take the climate-friendly achievement of SDGs forward. The CEOs who met the leaders had a contemporary mix this time. Besides the large companies, there were newer investors on both sides, particularly from technology, digital, green infrastructure, and renewable energy.

The Indo-German Education Partnership, which the German Bundestag passed in 2016 as a New Passage to India, has borne fruit — from about 4,000 students in 2015, there are nearly 29,000 Indian students in Germany. New IITs like IIT-Indore have engaged with several technical universities in Germany for joint programmes. The Indo-German Science and Technology Centre has made valuable contributions. Now, under the energy partnership, the Green Hydrogen Task Force will develop a Green Hydrogen Roadmap. This will attempt to take R&D to the level of commercialisation.

The JDI on migration and mobility is an important step taken during this IGC. This will facilitate a larger number of Indian students to study and work in Germany. It may facilitate the movement of Indian professionals. This will lead to a larger trade in services and augment

the efforts for digital partnerships, which are among the focal points of Indo-German efforts.

The joint statement is long at 56 paragraphs and shows immense congruence and commonality on the UN, Afghanistan and terrorism.

With the new coalition government in Germany, a reorientation of the relationship with India was anticipated: It was mentioned in their coalition compact. Its direction and intensity were uncertain. The period of Angela Merkel, who started the IGC with India in 2011, and saw it through five editions, is over.

A new period is reflecting new priorities in view of crises like the pandemic, the economic downturn and now, Ukraine. The German response to India as evidenced through the IGC has been promising. Both sides may justifiably call it a defining moment in the Indo-German partnership.

The corruption cases that cost Nawaz Sharif the Pakistan PM post

Nawaz and his kin were jailed, but in September 2018, the Islamabad High Court ordered their release and suspended their sentence pending final adjudication of their appeals against it.

And, what is the Al Azizia case?

Months after the HC relief, in December 2018, Nawaz Sharif was sentenced to jail again, for seven years, in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills case. The accountability court held that the PMLN chief had been unable to show how he earned the money to set up Al-Azizia Steel Mills and Hill Metal Establishment (HME) in Saudi Arabia. The Sharifs had claimed that the funds came from some investments Nawaz's father, Mian Mohammad Sharif, had made with the Qatar royal family.

The court, however, found Nawaz innocent in a similar case about setting up Flagship Investment in the United Kingdom.

Nawaz Sharif flies to London

In October 2019, Nawaz had to be taken to a Lahore hospital from jail after his health deteriorated. His conviction was then suspended for eight weeks on medical grounds. In November 2019, he was allowed

to fly to London for treatment for four weeks. Nawaz has not returned to Pakistan since, but has been involved in the country's politics through video meetings and addresses since 2020.

Pictures of Nawaz appearing in good health surfaced on social media that year, prompting then PM Imran to say in August 2020 that his government "regretted" the "mistake" of letting the PMLN leader leave for the UK.

In December 2020, Nawaz was declared a proclaimed offender by the Islamabad High Court after he failed to appear for the hearings of his appeals against the Avenfield and Al Azizia convictions.

In September 2021, Pakistan's anti-graft body started the process of auctioning Nawaz's properties to recover the \$10-million fine in the Avenfield case.

Other cases against Nawaz Sharif

While serving time for his other convictions, Nawaz was in October 2019 arrested in the Chaudhry Sugar Mills shares money laundering case. Maryam had been arrested in the case earlier. Both later received bail.

In October 2020, the National Accountability Bureau approved another case against Nawaz Sharif and some

others, over the alleged illegal purchase of 73 high-security vehicles for foreign dignitaries. They are accused of favouritism and illegal use of vehicles, causing a loss of over Rs 1,952 million to the national exchequer.

In November 2021, a former top judge of Gilgit-Baltistan, Rana Shamim, purportedly claimed in an affidavit that he witnessed former chief justice of Pakistan, Mian Saqib Nisar, instructing a high court judge to not release Nawaz and Maryam in a corruption case in 2018. While Nisar denied the allegation, Maryam, as quoted in Dawn, cited it as "the third major testimony from within the judiciary" about the innocence of her and her father. The other two "testimonies", according to Maryam, were Islamabad High Court judge Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui claiming in 2018 that the ISI was manipulating judicial proceedings, specially those related to the Sharif father-daughter; and late accountability judge Arshad Malik saying in a purported video in 2019 that he convicted Nawaz unfairly due to "immense pressure". Judge Malik, who died in 2020, had claimed the video was "fake and based on lies".

With repo rate hike, RBI has done what's necessary

Measures to ameliorate supply-side cost pressures would be thus critical at this juncture, especially in terms of a calibrated reduction of taxes on petrol and diesel. On the policy side, however, it would mean that even after rate hikes, inflation may continue to remain high for some time. As retail loans have increasingly been benchmarked to the external rate (mostly to RBI's repo rate) with quarterly reset clause, the loans benchmarked to the repo rate may increase in the range of 35-40 bps, passing on the hike in full, as banks don't keep a wider spread in retail loans to remain competitive in the market. As of December 2021, around 39.2 per cent of the loans are benchmarked to external benchmarks, so the increase in repo rate will increase interest costs on consumers and may impact them from the next quarter onwards. The MCLR (Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate) linked loans have

a share of around 53 per cent in the overall loan kitty. With the rise in CRR and expected future hikes in the benchmark rates, there would be an increase in MCLR due to a negative carry. Furthermore, if banks raise the deposit rates then the cost of funds will also increase and subsequently the MCLR will increase too.

The RBI, in our view, has acted prudently in responding to market forces that could impact India's growth prospects if inflationary concerns were not addressed now. At the same time, by pledging to remain accommodative to spur, and reinvigorate growth, it has reaffirmed its commitment to being a trusted partner in the growth of the country. We also believe the rate hike will be beneficial for the banking sector as the risk will get re-priced properly. However, be prepared for a series of rate hikes now.

A popular Telegram channel General SVR made these extraordinary claims adding that its source is a well-placed figure in the Kremlin, the report added.

- Angelina Jolie's Surprise Ukraine Visit: Children, Cafe Stop And More From Star's Trip A popular Telegram channel General SVR made these extraordinary claims adding that its source is a well-placed figure in the Kremlin, the report added. Also Read - Russian President Putin May Declare 'All-Out War On Kyiv' On May 9: Report "I don't know for exactly how long (Putin will be incapacitated after the surgery)... I think it'll be for a short time," the insider source was quoted as saying. Putin was "unlikely to agree to transfer power" but was ready to put in place a "charge d'affaires" to control Russia and the war effort. "So, while Putin has the operation and comes to his senses, likely two or three days, the actual control of the country passes only to Patrushev," the source added.

Decades after war, Russia's relentless hunt of Chechens continues

Even two decades after the war in Chechnya, Chechens refugees in Europe live in fear of Russia's long arm



Tens of thousands fled the small Muslim-majority republic in the North Caucasus in the aftermath of two bloody wars with Moscow, the last launched by Putin in 1999 to bring the breakaway region to heel. Twenty years after Vladimir Putin flattened their capital Grozny in the same way that his forces are now destroying Mariupol, Chechens refugees in Europe still live in fear of Russia's long arm. Tens of thousands fled the small Muslim-majority republic in the North Caucasus in the aftermath of two bloody wars with Moscow, the last launched by Putin in 1999 to bring the breakaway region to heel.

The Russian leader later installed Ramzan Kadyrov as Chechnya's strongman. He has since ruthlessly suppressed all opposition, and never tires of declaring his ferocious loyalty to Putin.

Austria has one of Europe's biggest Chechen communities. Many of the 35,000 exiles live in nondescript post-war blocks in a working class district of northeastern Vienna. The men tend to work as security guards while women bring up the children.

But many on these streets dotted with Chechen grocery shops and wedding boutiques live in dread.

Dozens told AFP of the constant menace of being targeted by Kadyrov's notorious henchmen, the "Kadyrovtsy", who have been accused of hunting down his opponents abroad. Others are afraid of being sent back to be tortured and killed -- a fear that is far from unfounded according to human rights groups.

Before the war in Ukraine, extraditions of Chechens from Europe to Russia were being speeded up after the terror attack on the Boston Marathon and the gruesome murder of a French teacher by a young exile.

Despite the conflict, there are no signs the deportations will stop.

'REWRITING HISTORY'

Moscow's arm reached Zorbek Nazuev, a grandfather with a long grey beard who has lived in Austria for 18 years, last

February.

He had fled there with his children after the second conflict fearing retribution for fighting with the "boeviki", the Chechen rebels who defeated the Russians during the first war between 1994 and 1996, when Chechnya briefly won its independence. He had heard nothing from Moscow since he left until a letter from the Austrian prosecutor's office arrived accusing him of terrorism and murder.

According to a document seen by AFP, prosecutors claim to have intelligence that he took part in a massacre of Russian civilians in 1995.

Nazuev denies that he "killed innocent people", insisting that he and other Chechen fighters were only "defending ourselves from the Russian invader".

"They are rewriting history," said the thickset man in his 50s, whose name has been changed to protect him.

Nazuev wonders if the charges and possible extradition he is facing could be linked to the fact that one of his relations fought in Syria with the Islamic State group.

The Austrian authorities refused to discuss the case despite numerous attempts by AFP through police and judicial sources.

AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA

Hundreds of Chechens have been expelled from the European Union since it signed a 2006 agreement with Russia to ease the return of convicted suspects or those subject to an Interpol red notice. No official statistics on the extraditions exist, but the Council of Europe denounced the abuse of the Interpol system by some countries to "persecute political opponents abroad" in a 2017 report.

Exiles also believe European countries have toughened their line against them because of terror fears after Chechens were involved in a number of jihadist attacks.

"Clearly security services are on alert" to try to prevent future attacks, said Anne le Huerou, an expert on post-Soviet

conflicts at Paris Nanterre University.

Indeed, after the killing of French teacher Samuel Paty by a Chechen refugee in October 2020, Austria created a special force to tackle extremism and "parallel societies" within its Chechen community. A month after Paty's murder, Vienna suffered its first ever Islamist attack when four people were killed by a man said to be jihadist sympathiser, with authorities lambasted for surveillance failures in the run-up to the attack.

Just over a year later in December 2021, Austria chartered a flight to deport 10 people to Russia, boasting of its "efficient cooperation" with Moscow.

Questioned by AFP, the Austrian government admitted that currently "four Russian nationals are in custody awaiting deportation."

Despite commercial flights with Russia being cut by sanctions over the war in Ukraine, the expulsions are still live, according to the Austrian interior ministry.

TORTURED IN GROZNY

"I'd rather kill myself here than go back," said Nazuev, who claimed he was left handicapped after he was tortured with electric shocks before he fled Chechnya. Moscow has continually assured European governments that Chechen exiles sent back to Russia will be fairly treated.

However, several have been killed or disappeared, while others have been tortured or convicted on charges that human rights group say were "fabricated".

Last month the Russian rights group Memorial -- which has since been banned by Moscow -- criticised France for turning a blind eye to the death of 20-year-old Daud Muradov, who was sent back to Russia in December 2020 after being deemed a security risk. At the end of last year he was transferred to Grozny where he was tortured, they said. His relatives were told in February that he was dead. They have not been given his body nor the results of a post-mortem, Memorial added.

KILLED IN VIENNA

But even more than extradition, Chechen exiles fear the assassins that Kadyrov sends to liquidate his opponents in exile. The Austrian courts singled out the Chechen leader for being involved in the killing of one of his opponents who was shot in Vienna in 2009 after criticising Kadyrov's human rights record. The victim's lawyer, Nadia Lorenz, told AFP that the case "still stops me sleeping", claiming that "correspondence between the Austrian courts and Grozny" allowed the killers to pinpoint where her client lived. A few days before he was shot, father-of-four Umar Israylov had been refused police protection despite being followed in the street.

The case threw the spotlight on how Kadyrov's killers work, with prosecutors convinced he gave the order for Israylov's assassination.

According to Israylov's widow, the

Chechen leader called her husband twice before he was shot, demanding he return to Russia immediately.

But Kadyrov's role was never fully aired because Moscow ignored Vienna's calls for help with the investigation.

Chechen activist Rosa Dunaeva insists the "Kadyrovtsy" were responsible for another hit in Vienna in July 2020 as well as similar killings in Lille, France, earlier that year and in Istanbul in 2011.

HARASSMENT

"The media give the impression that we are involved in crime and religious extremism, when the vast majority of Chechens are living in fear and don't want anything to do with politics anymore," said Dunaeva at one of the regular protests against the deportations.

Indeed many Chechens are well integrated in Austria, like judo champion Shamil Borchashvili, who won a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics last year.

Or Zelimkhan Kazan. The 19-year-old -- whose name we have changed for his safety -- was born in Austria and has never been to Chechnya. He is studying programming and has already set up two start-ups. "I work and have everything I need but I don't feel 100 percent safe," said the mixed martial arts (MMA) fan as he worked out by the Danube Canal. "There is no way I could get away with the things an Austrian teenager might do -- for me it would be a death sentence," he insisted, meaning deportation to Russia. Kazan, who has no Russian papers, but only leave to stay in Austria, cannot be naturalised in the country he was born in because of Vienna's strict nationality laws. Which can make life difficult when Kazan says plainclothes police stop him "three or four times a month" to check his papers.

"Some call me a faggot, hoping that I will react violently," he added. All the Chechen refugees AFP talked to said they felt targeted by the police, with the slightest clash leading to a conviction that could see them being deported. Last July Austrian police officers were found guilty of beating a Chechen after being caught on security cameras.

KADYROV'S 'BRAINWASHING'

Kazan also has to run the gauntlet of the "Kadyrovtsy", who stand out because of their big cars and their swagger. When he sees them, he pulls down his hood so they don't ask him any questions. Activist Dunaeva is as worried about the growing grip Ramzan Kadyrov -- who has a vast social media following -- has on young Chechens born in Europe. "When he is not killing them, he brainwashes them and tries to turn them against the West," she said. Chechens also talk about cocaine dealing that is destroying the lives of young men who see no future and are easy prey for Mafia clans. And women complain of having their freedom curtailed by their "big brothers". Angered by the discrimination they face in Austria, some fall into the charismatic Kadyrov's trap, and are easy fodder for his macho posturing on social media, dividing families who had fled his grip.

Old woman with red flag is now the face of Russian loyalty in this war

This is a message that Putin wants to ring loud and clear during this year's 'Victory Day' celebrations

An old lady holding the Soviet flag (the Red Banner) has become a common artwork in captured territories across Eastern Ukraine. A few weeks ago, a video was shared multiple times on social media narrating an incident that took place in one of the Ukrainian villages about an old woman, Babushka in Russian, who still owes her allegiance to the Red Banner - the erstwhile Soviet Union. This is a message that Putin wants to ring loud and clear during this year's 'Victory Day' celebrations.

The video shows the old lady, reportedly from Ukraine, stepping out of her house upon seeing soldiers in camouflage. She greets them with a red Soviet flag, thinking they are Russian soldiers. Walking up to them, she says, "My dear sweet children, welcome, I prayed for you and I prayed for Putin, good that you came."

The soldiers turned out to be Ukrainian. They laughed and mockingly said, "Yes,



yes, come here, auntie, take this food and give us this red material." The woman tells them to keep the food since they will need it more than she. But, they persist, and hand over the food to her. In return, they take the red banner and begin to stomp on it. Disappointed, the 'Babushka' returns the food and asks

them to return the flag. She is heard saying, "You step on the flag under which my parents fought the Germans to liberate this country."

This is the story that is now being told everywhere, being spread through social media all across Russia, Crimea, the Donbass region (Donetsk and Luhansk)

and the rest of the captured territories in Ukraine.

Berdiansk and Melitopol in Zaporizhzhia Oblast have put up paintings of the woman with the red flag at major crossroads. Several 'Babushka' souvenirs, T-shirts, mugs, posters are now being sold to reassert Putin's idea of an undivided Soviet Russia. In fact, the Donbass Post has issued a post card with Babushka superimposed on the backdrop of soldiers in WWII uniform.



Life under Taliban rule: Afghan girls struggle for education

Even though the international community has made the education of girls a key demand for any future recognition of the Taliban administration, Afghan girls face an uncertain future under the new regime



When the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, the future of Afghan women and girls immediately became shrouded in question marks. Immediately after seizing power, the Taliban imposed harsh restrictions on the rights of women to be educated. A ray of hope came when the Taliban announced the reopening of secondary schools. However, the hopes were quickly dashed as the Taliban backtracked on their earlier promise and decided against opening schools to girls above the sixth grade. More than eight months after the

Taliban came back to power, India Today team visited schools and universities in Afghanistan to take stock of the ground reality in the war-torn nation.

All schools were closed because of the Covid-19 pandemic when the Taliban took over last year, but only boys and some younger girls were allowed to resume classes later. At a primary school in a remote village in Balkh province of Afghanistan, the children have returned to their classes. But the school not only lacks proper infrastructure, even the teachers working here are not getting their

salaries.

Most of the teachers who are working under the UN education programme have not been paid. Meanwhile, the barrier to girls' education remains with girls above 16 not being allowed to attend colleges and universities without covering their faces. The Taliban have also banned co-education in the country. Speaking to India Today, a college-going Afghan girl said, "We are facing lot of problems here. We are not being allowed without face and body cover in universities, and also co education is banned. Girls come to the college in the first half and boys are only allowed in the second half after girls have left the premises completely." The world

leaders have condemned the Taliban's stance on education of Afghan girls. But despite the criticism, the Taliban are adamant in making sure that the educational institutions follow the strict guidelines. Previously, when the Taliban were in power from 1996-2001, the group had banned female education and most employment for women.

After the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in August 2021, the international community has made the right to education for all, a sticking point in negotiations over aid and recognition of the new regime, with several nations and organisations offering to pay teachers.





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Russia cuts electricity supply to Ukraine after taking control of Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant

Power supply to Ukraine was cut after Russian forces took over Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant after heavy shelling in March this year. Read on to find out how operations are taking place at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant now

After taking control of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, Russia shut down electricity supply to the Europe's second largest country. Andrey Vladimir Shefchik, the Russia-appointed Head of Administration, said, "Electricity supply from this plant to Ukraine has been cut, but there's regular supply to all the 'liberated' [captured] territories in Eastern Ukraine."

ABOUT ZAPORIZHZHIA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Travelling through the war-torn Eastern Ukraine, India Today TV team reached the most hotly contested infrastructure in Ukraine, the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Located in South-East Ukraine in the city of Enerhodar, on the banks of the Kakhovka reservoir on the Dnieper river, the plant is about 200km from the contested Donbas region and over 550km South-East of Kyiv.

One of the most critical infrastructure, the nuclear power plant is now under the control of the Russian forces. However, it is said that Ukrainian officials and specialists who were employed by Kyiv are handling the operations there.

Earlier, there were reports about whether Moscow had sent officials to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant or not. Reacting to these reports, current Head of Administration Shefchik said, "The operations and controls of the reactors, and the station are under the personnel who were employed here by Ukrainian authorities as before. It is fully functioning. The Rosatom officials are only providing technical support. We are working with the international organisations according to protocols." "The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has six reactors -- each generating



950MW -- and a total output of 5,700MW. Normally, it produces one-fifth of Ukraine's electricity and almost half the energy generated by the country's nuclear power facilities.

ATTACK ON ZAPORIZHZHIA POWER PLANT

Several reports emerged in March that claimed that the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant had suffered damage because of the heavy Russian shelling. However, it was the training center outside the facility that had suffered major damage.

Ukrainian authorities had said that Russian shelling had caused a fire at a building in the plant complex, which was later put out. Russia blamed Ukrainian saboteurs for the attack, calling it a "monstrous provocation".

"There has been no damage inside the power plant. The only damage that you have seen is at the entrance of the plant,"

said Andrey Vladimir Shefchik.

Expressing concern, he said, "There is a threat to the station. Not long ago, Ukrainians sent 'Kamikazee' UAVs [Suicide Drones] to the administration building of the city and to the plant itself. But Russian forces took preventive action and intercepted it. They could do it in the future."

INSIDE ZAPORIZHZHIA POWER PLANT
When the India Today team tried to go inside the Zaporizhzhia power plant, it saw no sign of damage to the six blocks on the premises. But, due to security reasons, the team wasn't allowed to enter the facility. One official said that the Ukrainians operating the facility were "uncooperative" and "unfriendly". While there were some locals who were welcoming, many stayed away from the media and some even shouted 'Slava Ukraini' -- which translates into 'Glory to Ukraine'. But, the Russians and the pro-Russian people were determined to not go back to Russia.

ENERHODAR

Enerhodar, like the other cities in Zaporizhzhia such as Melitopol and Berdyansk, is also looking at a referendum. As of now, Ukrainians are stationed on the north banks of the Dnieper river, while the areas in the south have been taken by the Russians.

With the river in the middle, reclaiming this critical infrastructure has becoming difficult for Ukrainians with each passing day. Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24 with the aim to "demilitarise" and "denazify" the country.



FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution - First Degree Murder, Second Degree Murder, First Degree Assault, Second Degree Assault, Dangerous Weapon with Intent to Injure



Photograph taken April 2015

DESCRIPTION

Alias: Bhadreshkumar C. Patel	Place of Birth: Kantrodi Ta Viramgam, Gujarat, India
Date(s) of Birth Used: May 15, 1990	Eyes: Brown
Hair: Brown	Weight: 165 pounds
Height: 5'9"	Occupation: Employee of donut shop
Sex: Male	
Nationality: Indian	

REWARD

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$100,000 for information leading to the arrest of Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel.

REMARKS

Patel was last known to be in the Newark, New Jersey, area.

CAUTION

Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel is wanted for allegedly killing his wife by striking her multiple times with an object while they were both working at a donut shop in Hanover, Maryland, on April 12, 2015. A local arrest warrant was issued in the District Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County on April 13, 2015, and Patel was charged with first degree murder, second degree murder, first degree assault, second degree assault, and dangerous weapon with intent to injure. A federal arrest warrant was issued in the United States District Court, District of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland, on April 20, 2015, after Patel was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Baltimore

GST rules explained for MSMEs

Unquestionably, MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian economy, and therefore, the need to assist them to operate seamlessly is important. Its significance and impact on the Indian economy are often taken for granted



enterprises and the potential for employment, the government is aiding them in their endeavors and trying to create an environment for their unfettered operability through various steps.

ADOPTION OF GST

The MSME sector has mostly been credit-starved, with smaller units rendering it economically inefficient. The Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on this industry. Many people have lost their jobs and are unable to restart their businesses due to a lack of funds. Despite the quick adoption of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), many units in the MSME sector remain untaxed. Policymakers struggle to come up with appropriate policy reforms due to a lack of intelligent data.

While the digitalization of SMBs is unavoidable, cumbersome GST regulations may slow the rate of digitization. The GST

compliance process must be completed only via the online site. Small and medium-sized businesses often find it more difficult because compliance costs have gone up, and many people don't know about the most recent technologies, so it can be hard for them to keep up.

GST GUIDELINES

SMBs are hesitant to register under the GST statute, not to evade taxes, but to avoid the time-consuming and inconvenient registration and return filing processes. This deters MSMEs from exploring online marketplaces, slowing India's aim of becoming a digitally driven economy. That there should be a balance between online and offline retailers by eliminating the GST registration requirement for modest merchants who sell online and have a revenue of less than Rs 40 lakh. According to

Nasscom, such sellers should be able to take advantage of the composition scheme, whereby smaller businesses and merchants can authenticate warehouses of e-commerce operators across states based on a single physical place of business registration in the seller's home state. These proposals are pertinent to the problems being faced, and if embraced, they would help Indian SMBs expand.

CONCLUSION

The growth of a digitized economy would not be feasible without the engagement of MSMEs. Considering e-commerce has the potential to change smaller businesses via the use of technology, the government should take measures to minimize any compliance-related impediments.

A casual discourse about the direction of the Indian economy would always include within its purview the burgeoning rise of MNCs. The MSMEs have never been the cynosure of all eyes; they've always been underestimated in their value and contributions.

However, data from the MSME ministry suggests that India has over 6.3 crore micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which generate roughly 29 per

cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) through domestic and foreign trade.

MSMEs ARE BACKBONE OF INDIAN ECONOMY

Unquestionably, MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian economy, and therefore, the need to assist them to operate seamlessly is important. Its significance and impact on the Indian economy are often taken for granted. Considering the volume of individuals involved in small

ITC to launch app for Indian farmers

ITC is set to launch the 'ITC MAARS' app which seeks to offer a wide range of agricultural solutions to farmers and provide better markets for advanced agriculture and rural services



Business conglomerate ITC is set to launch the 'ITC MAARS' app, which seeks to offer a wide range of agricultural solutions to farmers, while creating new revenue streams and providing better markets for advanced agriculture and rural services. The company said that the app is set to benefit around 10 million farmers across multiple crop clusters. The company is also collaborating with farmers to develop robust models for the value-added segments, such as better quality and organic

chillies, mango pulp traceable to farms, specialty coffee certified for fair trade, wheat flours, and medicinal and aromatic plant extracts.

"ITC MAARS is a transformative business model, a very creative monetization model which will be built on the strength of e-Choupal 4.0. The physical aspects, whether it's the demonstration farms, the lead farmers and the information highway connecting all the players come from the e-Choupal.

K'taka signs MoU with ISMC for setting up Semiconductor fab plant worth Rs 22,900 cr

Israel-based ISMC Analog Fab Private Ltd has signed an MoU with Karnataka to set up a Semiconductor fabrication plant in the state at an outlay of Rs 22,900 crore

Taking a huge stride in its mission to emerge as a front runner in the semiconductor and IT hardware sector in the country, Karnataka signed an MoU with Israel-based ISMC Analog Fab Private Limited for setting up a Semiconductor Fab plant in the state with an investment of Rs 22,900 crore in the presence of Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

The company is set to fully implement the project over the next seven years with employment potential for 1500 people. The Additional Chief Secretary in the department of IT, BT, Dr EV Ramana Reddy, on behalf of Karnataka, signed the MoU with Director of ISMC Ajay Jalan.

Karnataka is already a pioneer in the IT, BT and R&D sectors. The MoU with ISMC would make Karnataka the place to look forward to in semiconductor technology, Bommai said in his address after the signing of the MoU. "Karnataka has signed this major MoU when many other states are competing to draw investments in the Semiconductor Fab sector. The state government understands that it is not just the concessions or incentives, it is the conducive ecosystem that is

needed to draw the investors. Karnataka has the best infrastructure and skilled human resources," Bommai said. He added, "It is a major stride in the semiconductor sector. There are challenges ahead. The MoU would drive us to turn those



challenges into opportunities."

He further added, "The Union government under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the Semiconductor Mission and it has spurred Karnataka to lead the march in this sector." The MoU has provided a forum for technology and cultural exchange between Israel and India, Bommai added, and requested the ISMC not just to set up the plant here, but to bring the latest developments in technology as it evolves with time to this plant in Karnataka.

Men and boys raped by Russian soldiers in Ukraine, say reports

Reports of rape of men and boys among alleged rape victims of Russian soldiers in Ukraine have emerged, UN officials said

Amid cases of sexual violence by Russian soldiers in Ukraine, reports now show men and boys among the alleged rape victims. Several such cases are already being investigated, the UN and Ukraine officials have said. "I have received reports, not yet verified about sexual violence cases against men and boys in Ukraine," said Pramila Patten, UN special representative on sexual violence in war, at a press conference in Kyiv, as quoted by The Guardian. Patten added that it can be even harder for male rape survivors to report the crime. "It's hard for women and girls to report [rape] because of stigma amongst other reasons, but it's often even harder for men and boys to report we have to create that safe space for all victims to report cases of sexual violence," she said.

TIP OF THE ICEBERG

She warned that dozens of cases under investigation "only represent the tip of the iceberg", as she urged survivors to come forward. She appealed to the international community to find the perpetrators and hold them responsible. "Today's documentation will be tomorrow's prosecution," she said. Ukraine's prosecutor general Iryna Venediktova said on Tuesday that her office had collected reports of sexual violence against men and women of all ages, from children to

elderly people by Russian troops. Speaking at a news conference, Venediktova said Moscow had used rape as a deliberate strategy to scare civil society. "This is, of course, to scare civil society to do everything to [force Ukraine to] capitulate." She said several survivors left the country, while many are afraid of speaking about their experiences. However, teams of prosecutors and investigators are collecting evidence of widespread sexual violence since the retreat of the Russian forces. "Gang rapes, assaults at gunpoint, and rapes committed in front of children are among the grim testimonies they have collected from victims and their families," she said. According to the report in the Guardian, the country's human rights commissioner, Lyudmila Denisova, has officially documented the cases of 25 women who were kept in a basement and systematically raped in Bucha, which neighbours Irpin. Forensic experts are conducting autopsies on the bodies of women in mass graves and have found evidence that some were raped before being killed by Russian forces. Some Russian soldiers have already been identified by Ukrainian investigators for war crimes including sexual violence, and an arrest warrant has been issued for one man accused of rape.

100-year-old man breaks Guinness World Record for working in same company for over 84 years

At a time when changing jobs has become the norm—be it for better pay or work environment—a 100-year-old man from Brazil has broken the world record for having the longest tenure at the same company. According to Guinness World Records, Walter Orthmann broke the record by working in the same company for 84 years and 9 days.

He was born in Brusque, a small town in Santa Catarina, Brazil which has a large German population, according to the press release. Undeterred by rain, mud or frost, Walter would walk barefoot to school to study and then practice at home. He was an exceptional student with a brilliant memory and attention to detail. But at the age of 15, Orthmann had to take the job to help support his family as they faced financial problems.

He started his career at the weaving mill, Industrias Renaux S.A, in 1938. Because of his strong proficiency in German, he was hired as a shipping assistant at the textile company. He continued to work at the same company

ever since. "Back in 1938, kids were expected to work to help support the family," he said, per the press release.

"As the oldest son of five, my mother took me to find a job at the age of 14." Orthmann was later promoted to a role in sales and, ultimately, to a sales manager position. The 100-year-old still goes to the office each day and last month celebrated his 100th birthday with family, friends, and co-workers. After all these decades, he says his best career advice is to find a good employer and follow your passions. "When we do what we like, we don't see the time go by," he said. Looking back on his life so far, Orthmann says he considers the record his "proudest achievement" despite "never having contemplated breaking a record." "I don't do much planning, nor care much about tomorrow," he said. "All I care about is that tomorrow will be another day in which I will wake up, get up, exercise and go to work; you need to get busy with the present, not the past or the future. Here and now is what counts."

Power crisis: Train cancellations continue to facilitate movement of coal rakes

Amid the looming power crisis in various states, the Indian Railways has cancelled even more trains to facilitate the movement of coal rakes. Several thermal power plants have hit critically low levels of coal that has reduced their capacity to produce electricity to meet the demand for only a few days



The Indian Railways has cancelled more trains amid the ongoing coal crisis in various states in India. At least 1,100 trains will remain cancelled till May 24 to facilitate the movement of coal rakes. The recent spell of heatwave has caused an increase in electricity consumption, leading to a coal shortage at thermal power plants. Around 500 trips of express mail trains and 580 trips of passenger trains have been cancelled. On April 29, the Railways had announced the cancellation of 240 passenger trains to facilitate the movement of at least 400 rakes across the country. The central government expects the electricity demand to rise

this month and hence wants to move as much coal as possible to the power production plants in various states.

The problem has been compounded by strikes by coal mine workers in various parts of the country. Among the states facing a power crisis triggered by acute coal shortages in their electricity production plants are Delhi, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh. Maharashtra, too, expects a surge in power demand soon. Recent reports stated that the coal stock at 108 of 173 thermal power plants has hit critically low levels, enabling them to meet the power demand for only a few days.

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APOLLO
FARMS & RESORTS

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Engages Investors in Silicon Valley; Confident for India to stay on-course as the fastest growing large economy over the next few years

(Staff Reporter) PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA, – The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC), co-hosted an exclusive roundtable for business leaders and investors with the Hon'ble Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Government of India, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman in Palo Alto today. The

roundtable was attended by senior executives, private sector business leaders, venture capitalists, institutional investors, and representatives of pension and endowment funds, representing combined assets under management of over USD \$1 trillion. Moderated by Ambassador (ret.) Atul Keshap, President, USIBC, this executive gathering was also joined by Dr. V Ananth

Nageswaran, Chief Economic Advisor, Government of India; His Excellency Shri Taranjit Singh Sandhu, Ambassador of India to the United States; Shri Rajat Mishra, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India; and Mr. Nilesh Shah, Chairman, CII National Committee on Financial Markets and Group President and Managing Director, Kotak Mahindra Asset

Management Co Ltd., and Member of the Prime Minister's Economic Council, who supported the roundtable. The roundtable highlighted India's emergence from the pandemic as one of the world's fastest growing major economies and outlined Government of India's efforts to support growth by a process of sustained reforms across sectors, increased capital expenditure especially in infrastructure, and measures to boost FDI.

What's in a surname? Alibaba loses billions after detention of 'Ma' in China

A mere confusion resulted in a loss of around \$26 billion in the market value of Jack Ma's Alibaba on Tuesday. Read on to know what exactly happened that led to a major dip in shares of the e-commerce giant

(Staff Reporter) The detention of a man surnamed 'Ma' in China led to losses of billion dollars for Jack Ma's Alibaba within minutes. In China's Hangzhou city -- where Alibaba is based -- a man with the surname 'Ma' was detained "on suspicion of colluding with outside forces and trying to subvert the state and split the country", the Global Times reported on Tuesday. The suspect was placed under "compulsory measures" on April 25, reports quoted China's

state broadcaster CCTV as saying.

Soon, netizens assumed the man was Jack Ma. As a result, the shares of Alibaba, co-founded by Jack Ma, plunged as much as 9.4 per cent in Hong Kong on Tuesday. The e-commerce giant faced a loss of around \$26 billion in market value within minutes.

Later, the Global Times clarified the man was not Jack Ma. The accused, indeed, was an IT department director born in 1985, whose name has three

Chinese characters. While, Jack Ma's Chinese name, Ma Yun, has only two characters and he was born in 1960s.

Following this, Alibaba's shares rose and "closed the trading day in Hong Kong just 0.83 per cent lower", reports said. "The clarifications led to a rebound, with Alibaba recovering the majority of its losses by the day's end," the CNN reported. Jack Ma's business empire was under scrutiny by Beijing after he delivered a controversial speech



two years ago. Chinese practices and Beijing fined the regulators had then reportedly company a with \$2.8 billion in opened a probe into Alibaba's April citing market dominance.

Central Bank of India to close 13% of its branches: Report

The bank is looking to reduce the number of branches by 600 by either shutting down or merging loss-making branches by the end of March 2023, according to the copy of a document reviewed by Reuters

(Staff Reporter) The Central Bank of India, a state-owned commercial bank, is planning to shut 13 per cent of its branches to improve its financial health, which has been under pressure for several years, according to a Reuters report. The bank is looking to reduce the number of branches by 600 by either shutting down or merging

loss-making branches by the end of March 2023, according to the copy of a document reviewed by Reuters.

BRANCHES TO CLOSE DOWN? It is the most drastic step the lender has taken to improve its finances and will be followed by the sale of non-core assets such as real estate, said a government source who did not want to be named. The closure of the branches has not been reported previously. The more than 100-year old lender currently has a network of 4,594

branches.

RBI ACTION

Central Bank along with a clutch of other lenders was placed under RBI's prompt corrective action (PCA) in 2017 after the regulator found some state-run lenders were in breach of its rules on regulatory capital, bad loans and leverage ratios.

Since then all the lenders except Central Bank have improved their financial health and come off RBI's PCA list. "The bank is struggling to come out of PCA of RBI due to poor performance on profit since 2017 and to utilise manpower in more efficient and effective manner," the document dated May 4 sent out by the headquarters to other branches and departments stated, detailing the rationale behind the move. A bank under PCA faces greater scrutiny by the regulator and may face lending and deposit

restrictions, branch expansion and hiring freezes and other limitations on borrowings.

The RBI introduced these norms at a time when Indian lenders were battling record levels of soured

assets, prompting the RBI to tighten thresholds.

LOSS MAKING ASSETS

"Central bank of India's move is in line with the set strategy of lowering loss-making assets in its books,"

the government official said. In the December quarter, the lender reported a profit of 2.82 billion Indian rupees (\$37.1 million) versus 1.66 billion rupees in the previous year in the same quarter.



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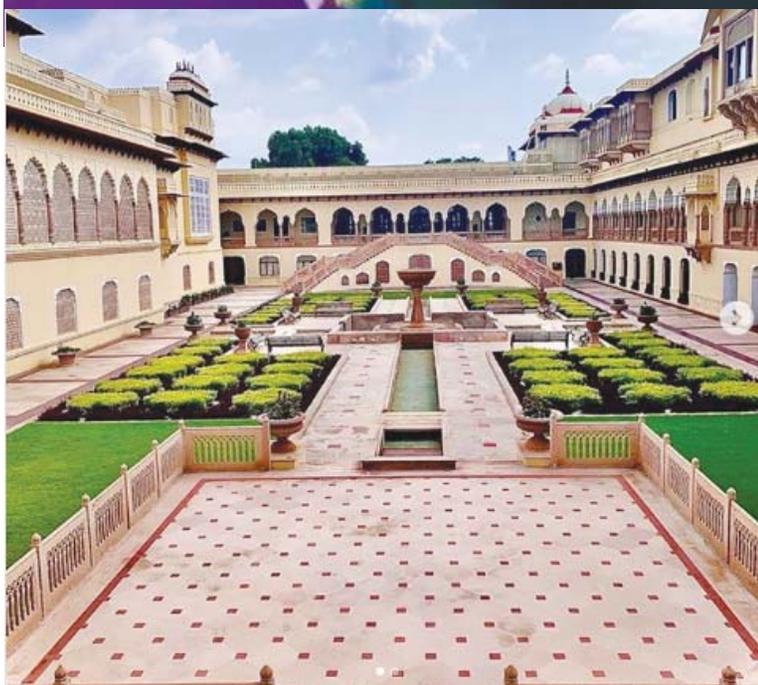
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The Taste With Vir: India's princely tradition works best as a fairytale

In this week's The Taste, Vir Sanghvi writes, "The selling point of the Rambagh as a luxury hotel is that it gives you a glimpse of what life in princely India must have been like," continuing, "In every sense that matters, the age of the maharajas is over. Even in the West, they are now seen as anachronisms from a bygone era (like Yugoslav royalty, perhaps) rather than serious glamour figures."



straight out of a European chateau or palazzo or even, an English country house. When Sawai Man Singh lived there, you had to wear white tie and tails for dinner.

In these more egalitarian times, most people have probably forgotten how glamorous the Jaipur royal family was when Sawai Man Singh (Jai to his friends) and his third wife Gayatri Davi (Ayesha to her friends) were alive. Unlike most Indian royals, Jai was on first name terms with the British royal family. When Prince Philip visited Jaipur for Holi, he mingled easily with others at the palace and had his face rubbed with gugal by everyone who attended the festivities. In his introduction to Quentin Crewe's book, Philip wrote, "I have met many people who could be described as charming but few, if any, had Jai's special brand of kindly charm and gentleness of character."

Jai and Ayesha spent nearly half the year abroad (both before and after independence) and in 1970, just before Indira Gandhi stripped the princes of their titles, he died on a polo field in England when he was still in his fifties. The glamour of the Jaipur family survived his death largely because Gayatri Devi (Ayesha) remained a well-known figure in global jet set circles and

maintained a residence in England. Till her death in 2009 her's was a name to drop in British aristocratic circles.

I have no idea if the Jaipurs did really manage to transfer vast portions of their considerable fortune abroad as critics of the family alleged during the Emergency (when Gayatri Devi was unjustly arrested) but there is little doubt that, without access to the substantial wealth of ruling princes, they would never have been able to maintain the Rambagh in a suitable style.

Recognising that times had changed, Jai turned the Rambagh into a hotel. According to Zubrzycki, the first that Ayesha heard of it was at a party hosted by the Oberois in 1956. Jai knew the Oberois and the original plan was that they would run the hotel. That didn't work out and the Jaipurs ran it themselves --- very badly. They spent no money on the property and perhaps, as a consequence, it never turned a profit. Just before he died, Jai asked the Taj (then just a single hotel in Mumbai, not the chain it is today) to take it over and it has been a Taj hotel ever since (the Jaipur family is represented in the management by two of Jai's sons). Even then, the Taj ran it like a circuit house. I stayed there as a teenager in the mid Seventies and was not impressed. Things improved

somewhat in the Eighties but the hotel only returned to glory in 2003/4 when crores were spent on a massive refurbishment programme. Today, it has the sparkle and glamour that the Rambagh must have had before 1947 in the heyday of Princely India.

I never met Jai but I sometimes bumped into Gayatri Devi. In 1977, when A Princess Remembers, her autobiography, came out, I interviewed her in a small suite at the Mumbai Taj where, rather than promote the book, she complained about the many mistakes that Santha Rama Rau who actually wrote the text, had made. In 1987, when I met her at the Rambagh and then at Lilly Pool, her residence, she told me to urge all my readers not to buy the book. (Some problem with the royalties, I think.) She could be imperious. During the 1989 election, two members of the Sunday magazine team (I was then the editor) went up to her at the Rambagh and said "Mrs Singh, we are from Sunday and we wondered if you would like to comment on the election...." She looked right through them as though they were invisible. (My guess is that she was not thrilled at being addressed as Mrs. Singh.) But she also had impeccable manners. I was once on a flight from Mumbai to Delhi.

By some co-incidence I ended up staying at Jaipur's Rambagh Palace just after I had finished reading John Zubrzycki's *The House of Jaipur*, an exhaustive account of the history of the royal family of Jaipur, which does not shy away from detailing the family's many current legal and financial disputes. And when I returned to Delhi, I reread Quentin Crewe's *The Last Maharaja*, a biography of Sawai Man Singh II which came out in 1985, apparently with the blessings of at least part of the Jaipur royal family.

The selling point of the Rambagh as a luxury hotel is that it gives you a glimpse of what life in princely India must have been like. The fluctuating fortunes of that hotel remind us how much

it costs to keep that kind of show on the road. The Rambagh is now a Taj Hotel, run to exceptional standards, but it only retains its allure because the Taj spends millions on staff and regular refurbishment.

Unlike many other palaces, the Rambagh has no ancient history --- a trait it shares with Jodhpur's Umaid Bhawan. There has been a structure on that site for ages but it never amounted to much more than a hunting lodge. The palace, as we now know it, is a 1920s phenomenon designed mainly by Brits. It was constructed by Sawai Man Singh, who was famously Westernised, to serve as a sort of Rajput Downton Abbey. The dining room (lovingly renovated by the Taj and still in use) is

Want to be healthy? Seven hours of sleep is ideal, reveals study

According to a new study, seven hours of sleep each night is the optimal duration for middle to old-age people.



(Staff Reporter) A good night's sleep is imperative for a healthy body and mind and there is no denying that. However, the duration of sleep also holds significance. According to a new study, seven hours of sleep each

night is the optimal duration for middle to old-age people. The study conducted among 5,00,000 adults aged between 38 and 73 revealed that both lack of sleep and oversleeping were linked to mental health problems,

and poor cognitive performance. The findings of the study published in the journal Nature Aging stated that sleep duration, psychiatric disorders, and dementia are closely interconnected in older adults. Researchers tried to understand the underlying genetic mechanisms and brain structural changes in the study. "For every hour that you moved away from seven hours, you got worse. It's very clear that the processes that go on in our brain during sleep are very important for maintaining our physical and mental health," Prof Barbara Sahakian, from Cambridge University's department of psychiatry told The

Guardian. She also added that a good night's sleep is as important as exercise. Deep sleep is important for cognitive performance and memory consolidation. Hence, disruption of sleep or insufficient sleep could prevent the brain from clearing toxins properly or lead to cognitive decline. The study used data from the UK Biobank and analysed brain imaging and genetic data for almost 40,000 of the study participants. It found that the brain area most affected by sleep was the region containing the hippocampus, the brain's memory center, with too much or too little sleep linked to a smaller brain volume. The

analysis found that people who slept seven hours a night performed best on average on cognitive tests for processing speed, visual attention, memory, and problem-solving skills. However, there is less clarity about why sleeping for over seven hours could lead to problems. One possible reason, as per the study, is that people who have poor quality sleep tend to spend more time sleeping (or trying to sleep) because they feel tired. The paper concluded that possible genetic mechanisms and brain structural changes may underlie the relationship between sleep duration and cognition and mental health.

Not a solution for Indian consumers: Health experts question FSSAI's 'star rating' for packaged food

The public health advocacy groups have raised questions over the FSSAI's decision to include Health Star Rating (HSR) in front of the packaged food

(Staff Reporter) What do junk food deserve- star ratings or warning signs? That is the question being asked by public health experts in India after the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) recently took a decision to include Health Star Rating (HSR) in front of the packaged food. The public health advocacy groups have claimed that the move to have HSR is counterproductive. "Health Star ratings measure healthfulness - doesn't measure unhealthy part of the food," said Dr Arun Gupta, Public Health Expert, Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPI). Speaking to India Today, Dr Gupta claimed, "There is not an iota of doubt that FSSAI is working under pressure from the food and beverage industry lobby and is avoiding health warning signs like danger warning signs on packaged food items." "Six of their meetings in the last one year to discuss health star ratings have been dominated by members of the industry," Dr Gupta added. India Today has accessed the minutes of the meeting last held by the FSSAI to discuss warnings signs and health star ratings on food items. Of the 46 participants, 26 were from the industry, including from Nestle, Haldirams, Danone,

Pepsico and CocaCola. IIM AHMEDABAD'S SURVEY Public Health experts have also pointed out that there has been over reliance on one report drafted by IIM Ahmedabad to show that health star ratings work. So what does the IIM Ahmedabad survey show? This survey concludes that health star ratings are much more effective than FOPL or Front of the Pack Labelling. The survey states, "For the group with a healthy prime, warning labels and HSR produce the same effect on purchase of chips and biscuits with warning labels being marginally ahead in terms of reducing purchase intention." IIM, Ahmedabad and Dexter Consultancy Pvt. Ltd. Carried out a survey On FOPL, study design, sampling criteria and findings/analysis of the data sets. The preference of FOPL models amongst respondents in terms of age, occupation, label-reading behavior and knowledge on morbidities of the respondents were also presented. Based on the analysis of the data, IIM Ahmedabad recommended HSR over other models for achieving a careful combination of the dual objectives of ease of identification and understanding; and change of purchase behavior of Indian

consumers. FSSAI'S DECISION The FSSAI, in consultation with the industry has decided to go ahead with Health Star Rating, which is not used in any other country of the world. But health experts have pointed out the flaws in the Health Star Rating system. "There is a problem with the symbol itself. The star, it has a positive connotation," said Dr Vandana Prasad, who is a community pediatrician, founder and secretary, PHRN, member NAPI. Speaking to India Today, Dr

Vandana said that clear danger signs, one for sugar, one for sodium, one for fats, should be displayed right in front of food packs. Experts are in favour of nutrient-specific warnings signs which is known to be effective to reduce consumption of junk foods. That is the only way to send the right message to a population that has low levels of nutrition literacy, say experts. "Health star warnings can't be a solution for Indian consumers," said George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International

"We should learn from the experience of New Zealand and Australian and be cautioned against the adoption of HSR. It is important that Indian Regulators adopt a simple and interpretive label that aids consumers to reject unhealthy foods" Cheriyan added. The health experts have expressed their concerns in a letter to the Prime Minister's office, but they have not received a response so far. "No word from the government or Prime Minister's office on Front of the pack labels" said Dr Gupta.

Pfizer reports record profits amid growth in vaccine, Paxlovid pill

(Staff Reporter) US drugmaker Pfizer reported a net income of \$7.86 billion due to the COVID-19 vaccine and the Paxlovid pill. The vaccine helped the drugmaker to report \$13 billion in sales in the quarter as the Paxlovid pill brought in \$1.5 billion helping to boost the company's revenue by 77 per cent. The profits of the company grew 61 per cent. The adjusted earnings of the company stood at \$1.62 per share in the first quarter which surpassed \$1.49 projected by industry experts. The company's revenue was \$25.66 billion which was above Wall Street's expectation of \$24.1 billion. Pfizer had launched its vaccine for adults in late 2020 in the US and later expanded it to include children. The pharmaceutical giant had said last month that a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine protection against the Omicron variant in children was meant for age group of 5 to 11. The vaccine maker had added that it will apply for US emergency use authorization for the booster dose for the age group.



Even honeybees can tell difference between even and odd numbers



Rest are called odd numbers (1,3,5,7,...). Learning this fact was quick and easy for us. But apparently, learning to differentiate between even and odd numbers (parity association) is apparently a fairly high mathematical ability. Humans demonstrate accuracy, speed, language, and spatial relationship biases when categorizing numbers as odd or even. There has been observed an innate ability in humans to associate

even numbers with right hand and odd with the left. It has been found that honeybees can differentiate between even and odd numbers and do that by associating this ability with something. This has been found in a research published in *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*. In their experiment, the scientists divided honeybees into two groups. One group of honeybees was taught to associate even numbers with sugar water and odd number with

quinine, a bitter testing liquid. The second group was taught to associated odd numbers with sugar water and even numbers with quinine. Then the groups were taught odd and even numbers (1-10) by using respective number of shapes. It was found that the group of bees that was taught to associate odd numbers learnt quickly than the other group. Hence, the learning bias was found to be opposite to that of humans.

(Staff Reporter) Even and odd numbers are fairly simple right? Numbers fully divisible by 2 are called even numbers (2,4,6,...).

Scientists find rocks similar to Earth on Mars, hinting at violent history of Red Planet

Mars had a violent past. New study hints at the explosive eruptions on the surface that shaped the Red Planet



Ruff of Arizona State University's School of Earth and Space Exploration said in a statement.

Ruff examined mosaics of images from the Mars rover Spirit's Microscopic Imager and noticed rocks with an unusual texture. He then compared them to images of rocks on Earth and came across some volcanic rocks with textures that looked remarkably similar to those in the mosaics from Mars.

"That was a eureka moment. I was seeing the same kind of textures in the rocks of Gusev crater as those in a very

specific kind of volcanic rock found here on Earth," he added.

The images were that of ignimbrite that forms as the result of flows of pyroclastic ash, pumice, and blocks from the largest volcanic explosions known on Earth. These deposits then slowly cool, leading to intricate networks of fractures known as cooling joints, which form as the thick piles of ash and pumice contract. Researchers identified similar fracture patterns in the olivine-rich bedrock deposits on Mars.

Ignimbrites, on Earth, are found in Yellowstone National Park in the Western U.S that date back to 2.1 million years old. "No one had previously suggested ignimbrites as an explanation for olivine-rich bedrock on Mars, and it's possible that this is the kind of rock that the Perseverance rover has been driving around on and sampling for the past year," Ruff said. The new study indicates how violent churning in the ground shaped the planet that we see today and the findings could pave way for a deeper understanding of our planetary neighbourhood.

(Staff Reporter) As humans vie to become an interplanetary species, their first destination in the cosmic neighbourhood will be Mars. Rovers trundling on the ground are readying the foundation as they delve into the geological history of the Red Planet. Observations by two biologists on wheels hint at the violent volcanic past of the neighbouring planet. A team of researchers from the Arizona State University has identified ignimbrite, an igneous and sedimentary rock that forms as the result of cataclysmic explosive eruptions from immense volcanic calderas. Analysing data from two Mars missions, the team studied enigmatic olivine-rich bedrock in Gusev crater and in and around Jezero crater, where the Perseverance rover is currently looking for signs of ancient microbial life.

The findings published in the journal *Icarus*, state that the bedrock is recognized as possible explosive volcanic deposits, but the nature of their eruption is poorly

constrained, limiting understanding of what may be a widespread volcanic process on early Mars. "If correct, this phenomenon may be applied to other occurrences on Mars and indicate a style of volcanism more common in its early history," the paper read. The researchers used data from Nasa's Spirit rover, which is nearly 16 years old, and from the Perseverance rover that is operating today. The location of both these rovers on Mars has the highest abundance of olivine yet identified on the planet. The similarities in composition and morphology of the widely separated olivine-rich rocks had not been investigated previously. Olivine is a silicate mineral that comes from magma generated in the mantle of Mars, similar to how it is formed on Earth.

"There are lots of ideas for the origin of olivine-rich bedrock that covers large portions of a region called Nili Fossae, which includes Jezero crater. It's a debate that's been going on for nearly 20 years," Steve

Omicron Covid subvariants can overcome natural immunity, trigger new wave: Study



(Staff Reporter) New Omicron variants can cause a fresh wave of the Covid pandemic, a study has said. The new variants have been able to bypass natural immunity from prior COVID-19 infections, the study conducted in South Africa added. A new cases of coronavirus are still

rising, it seems that it is not over yet. A spike in infection rates was witnessed among people, who had Omicron, but weren't vaccinated, in comparison to their vaccinated counterparts, scientists found while examining the Omicron's BA.4 and BA.5 sublineages. The blood

samples of 39 people, including 15 who were vaccinated, were also taken by scientists. In a preprint over the weekend, the scientists wrote, "The vaccinated group showed about a 5-fold higher neutralisation capacity ... and should be better protected." The preprints of these scientific papers haven't been peer reviewed yet. "Based on neutralisation escape, BA.4 and BA.5 have potential to result in a new infection wave," the study said. South Africa may enter a new COVID-19 wave, the officials said late last week. They have also pointed out the Omicron's subvariants as the likely reason behind it. So, it may be wise to keep following norms for keeping a check on the virus and stay safe.

1.8 kilometers wide potential hazardous asteroid to come close to Earth in May

The asteroid will come as close as 40,24,182 kilometers to the planet, which is dangerously close for a flyby by an object



around the Sun. The close encounter with Earth is set for the end of this month as the asteroid streaks past at a staggering speed of 47,196 kilometers per hour. While the asteroid will swoop past Earth without any harm, Nasa has still classified the alien object as potentially hazardous. Discovered in 1989 at the Palomar Observatory, the object named 1989 JA can be seen using a binocular as it comes close to the planet's orbit. The asteroid will come as close as 40,24,182 kilometers to the planet, which is dangerously close for a flyby by

an object. The last time it came this close to Earth was in 1996 when the asteroid swept past the planet from a distance of just over four million kilometers.

Characterised as an apollo asteroid for its year-long orbit around the Sun after crossing Earth, its next rendezvous with Earth after the May 29th flyby will be in September 2029. It will make two additional flybys in 2055 and 2062. The last such big asteroid to come close to Earth was 138971 (2001 CB21), which was 1.3 kilometers wide and came as

close to Earth as 49,11,298 kilometers on March 4. Following its close flyby, the object is on its way to the Sun, completing its orbit in just under 400 days. In April this year, a meteor exploded in the skies over US' Mississippi as people in Arkansas, Louisiana reported seeing the streaking fireball. The object, which scientists called a bolide, moved southwest at a speed of 55,000 miles per hour (88,500 kilometers per hour), breaking into pieces as it descended deeper into Earth's atmosphere.

(Staff Reporter) A 1.8-kilometer-wide potentially hazardous asteroid is set to come close to Earth as it passes in its orbit

Global warming: Satellites pick up methane from space as cows burp on land

Agriculture contributes 9.6% to US greenhouse gas emissions, according to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and about 36% of methane emissions, mostly from livestock

(Staff Reporter) Satellites have detected methane emissions from belching cows at a California feedlot, marking the first time emissions from livestock - a major component of agricultural methane - could be measured from space. Environmental data firm GHGSat this month analyzed data from its satellites and pinpointed the methane source from a feedlot in the agricultural Joaquin Valley near Bakersfield, California in February. This is significant, according to GHGSat, because agricultural methane emissions are hard to measure and accurate measurement is needed to set enforceable reduction targets for the beef-production industry. GHGSat said the amount of methane it detected from that single feedlot would result in 5,116 tonnes of methane emissions if sustained for a year. If that methane were captured, it could power over 15,000 homes, it said. Agriculture contributes 9.6% to U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, according to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and about 36% of methane emissions, mostly from livestock. The Biden administration late last year

announced its plan to crack down on methane emissions from the U.S. economy. The EPA unveiled its first rules aimed at reducing methane from existing oil and gas sources that require companies to detect and repair methane leaks. The Agriculture Department rolled out a voluntary incentive program for farmers. At last year's climate talks, more than 100 countries pledged to cut methane emissions by 30% and to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030. Much of this reduction would need to come from the livestock industry, according to the U.N. food agency, which said



that livestock accounts for 44% of man-made methane emissions. Several methods to reduce livestock methane emissions are being tested, including adding seaweed to cattle diets. GHGSat provides its data to the United Nations' International Methane Emissions Observatory program.

Claims of an ancient human in the modern era shake the scientific community. Here's what you need to know

Do you remember the Hobbits from the insanely popular book and movie series Lord of the Rings? Looked like us humans, but shorter.

(Staff Reporter) What if we were to tell you that humans actually had an ancestor that is pretty similar to J.R.R Tolkien's character? These ancient humans are still alive, according to claims. Yes, you read that right. As per claims presented by Gregory Forth, a retired anthropologist in his new book 'Between Ape and Human', the species called Homo Floresiensis is still alive and well. It lives on the

Indonesian island of Flores, surviving the modern era. Homo Floresiensis is a Lilliputian early human species that are believed to have existed approximately 60,000 to 700,000 years ago. The species had been nicknamed 'hobbit' because of its small height; it is believed to have stood at under 4 feet, an approximate guess is 3 feet, 6 inches or 106 centimetres tall.

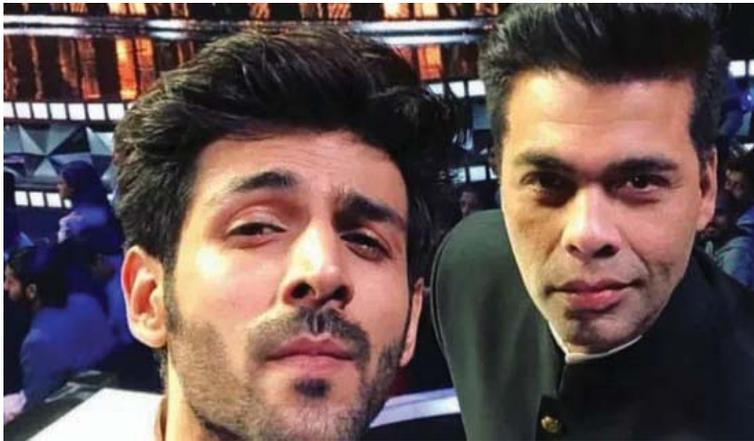
They were toolmakers and as

of now, not much is known about their evolutionary history. In the modern-day, there have been claims of sightings of Hobbit-like people in Flores and Forth argues that it could very well be our ancestors. Speaking to Live Science, he said that we simply don't know when this species became extinct or "dare I say -- we don't even know if it is extinct". However, experts are

sceptical about this claim. Some say that for a species to evade detection on an island of close to two million people is nearly impossible. Whether Homo Floresiensis actually exists today or not remains to be seen. It could just be another enigma like the sasquatch or bigfoot, but stories about odd, seemingly alien creatures have always piqued people's interest, and this is no exception.

Kartik Aaryan speaks about rumoured fallout with Karan Johar and Dostana 2 exit: 'People make baat ka batangad'

Dostana 2 was announced in 2019. In 2021, reports began circulating that Kartik Aryan and Karan Johar have had a fallout, leading to the actor's exit from the project



fallout between the actor and the filmmaker began circulating.

In a new interview with Indian Express, when Kartik was asked if his differences with the industry people, could cost him work as he is not from a filmy background, he said, "I just focus on my work. That's all I would like to say on this. Look at my (film) line-up (right now)." He was also asked about the rumours about a few industry insiders creating a lobby against him. He replied, "What happens, at times, is people make 'baat ka batangad' (make a mountain out of a molehill). There is nothing more to it. No one has so much time (to think so much). Everybody just wants to work, do good

work. Other than that, things are just rumours." Last year, when rumours about Kartik's 'unprofessional' behaviour were doing rounds, at that time, Dharma Productions released a statement. "Due to professional circumstances, on which we have decided to maintain a dignified silence - we will be recasting Dostana 2, directed by Collin D'Cunha. Please wait for the official announcement soon," it read. Kartik had previously said that controversies surrounding his professional life bother his family. Speaking with RJ Siddharth Kannan in November last year, Kartik said, "Many times when things are blown out of proportion, it affects to a point that why it is happening. But after that, I feel

bad for my family because they don't belong to this world. Since I am from this industry, I have seen that nothing matters and you just need to focus on your work. But many times families are affected. That's the only thing I get worried of, sometimes. Other than that, it doesn't matter," he said. Kartik is currently promoting his upcoming film Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2. The film is a follow-up to Bhool Bhulaiyaa, which was directed by Priyadarshan and featured Akshay Kumar as a psychiatrist tasked with uncovering the truth of an ancestral palace believed to be haunted. The sequel, directed by Anees Bazmee, stars Kartik playing a character similar to Akshay's. The horror-comedy also stars Kiara Advani and Tabu.

(Staff Reporter) Actor Kartik Aaryan has now opened up about his rumoured fallout with Karan Johar, which reportedly led to his exit from Dostana 2. Last year, rumours of Kartik's 'unprofessional' behaviour upsetting Karan Johar surfaced online and it was being said that he was no longer a part of Dostana 2. The film was supposed to star Kartik alongside Janhvi Kapoor and debutant Lakshya Dharma Productions' Dostana 2 was announced in 2019. The filming of the project, like many others, had come to a standstill due to the Covid-19 pandemic. While the production house was yet to resume filming, reports of the

Sushmita Sen poses with Salman Khan in new pic from Arpita Khan's Eid party, fans request them for Biwi No 1 sequel

Sushmita Sen attended Salman Khan's sister Arpita Khan's Eid party on Tuesday. On Wednesday, she shared a photo with Salman along with a sweet caption



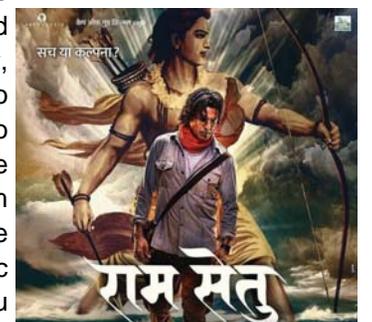
1 team was there last night... how about no 2? great to see you with Salman. 90s rocks!!! You guys entertained us fully. Love you both." Another one commented, "I can hear Chunari Chunari loud." While one wrote, "Should've clicked one with Karisma Kapoor also," many dropped heart emojis in the comments section. Other celebrities who attended, Arpita's Eid bash were, Kangana Ranaut, Deepika Padukone, Karan Johar, Sidharth Malhotra, Kiara Advani, Jacqueline Fernandez, Shanaya Kapoor, Sanjay Kapoor, Shehnaaz Gill, Sonakshi Sinha, Dia Mirza, Kartik Aaryan, Riteish Deshmukh, and Genelia D'Souza, among others.

Sushmita and Salman have worked together in the 1999

film Biwi No 1, which also in the 2002 film Tumko Na starred actor Karisma Kapoor. Bhool Paayenge and Maine They later appeared together Pyaar Kyun Kiya? in 2005.

Akshay Kumar gives first glimpse of Ram Setu ahead of Diwali 2022 release

(Staff Reporter) International megastar Akshay Kumar has shared a first look into the scenes of his highly anticipated Jacqueline Fernandez starrer, 'Ram Setu'. The film hero, who has enjoyed a very busy start to the year, took to his Twitter page to post the picture of him dressed in explorer attire as he teased fans of the cinematic release this Diwali. Ram Setu casts a stellar ensemble of India's finest names including Akshay himself alongside Jacqueline Fernandez and Nushratt Bharuccha as the strong female leads. The film is directed by Abhishek Sharma and will release in cinemas this October, in line with the celebration of Diwali. In addition to Ram Setu, Akshay Kumar's upcoming list of releases in 2022 include Prithviraj, Cinderella, Raksha Bandhan and Oh My God! 2.



(Staff Reporter) On Wednesday, actor Sushmita Sen shared a picture with Salman Khan on Instagram. The photo is from Salman's sister Arpita Khan's star-studded Eid bash that was held on Tuesday. Sushmita was spotted entering the venue with her daughter Renee Sen. In the photo shared by her, a smiling Sushmita is seen posing with Salman, as she holds his shoulder. She captioned the photo, "I hope you all celebrated Eid with your loved ones...well wishers...and in the company of goodness. I know I did @beingsalmankhan. Allah aapki saari jaayaz duaaiye qubool karein (May God fulfil all your justified wishes). My love & respect to all at home. I love you guys so so much." One person commented, "Eid Mubarak to you too, you are a doll." Another one said, "Just this bit stole my heart 'jaayaz duaaiye!' Dang.. half of the time we are asking for so much more forgetting that life is so simple and beautiful." Referring to their 1999 film Biwi No 1, one fan said, "Biwi No.

Anil Kapoor says son Harsh Varrdhan Kapoor is the star of Thar: 'Hum to aise hi supporting actor hain'

Anil Kapoor will be seen on screen this week with his son Harsh Varrdhan Kapoor in Thar, scheduled for a release on Netflix. The desi thriller also stars Fatima Sana Shaikh and Satish Kaushik



the second time in the Netflix original. The desi-Western thriller also stars Fatima Sana Shaikh and Satish Kaushik, but Anil said that the film belongs to Harsh. Anil will be seen as a cop in the film, while Harsh Varrdhan Kapoor will play Siddharth, an antique dealer who travels through a remote village that has been rocked recently by many violent killings. Anil, who plays local inspector Surekha Singh, crosses paths with Siddharth as he investigates these killings. Anil talked about

the film, which is scheduled for a release on May 6, after his recent "movie date" with Anupam Kher. He said, "It's a different kind of movie. The trailer has received good response." Anupam then said, "Harsh ki film hai (It's Harsh's film)," and Anil reiterated the same statement. He said, "Harsh ki film hai. Hum to aise hi supporting actor hain (It's Harsh's film. We're just supporting actors)." Anil also promoted the film ahead of his "movie date" with Anupam. After Anupam boasted about

his recent release The Kashmir Files being in the 300 crore club with its earnings, Anil replied with his hands folded, "Sir if at least I can beat ₹30 crores in my other films I would be very happy sir. Please give blessings sir." Anil had previously starred with Harsh in AK vs AK, in which he had a guest appearance. The black comedy thriller film was released on Netflix in December 2020. Thar, which will also have a direct release on Netflix, is directed by Raj Singh Chaudhary and produced by Anil and Harsh.

(Staff Reporter) Anil Kapoor has said that it's his son Harsh Varrdhan Kapoor, not him, who is the star of their upcoming film Thar. The father-son duo will be seen on the screen together for

Kabir Khan says Chicken Kuk-Doo-Koo is 'the most political song' in Bajrangi Bhaijaan. Here's why

Bajrangi Bhaijaan, directed by Kabir Khan, starred Salman Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Harshaali Malhotra, and Nawazuddin Siddiqui. Kabir says the Chicken Song from the film was the most political song in the film



Malhotra) lost in Haryana. He soon learns that the girl belongs to Pakistan and he sets out to the country to reunite her with her family. In the film, Pawan, a staunch vegetarian, is shocked upon finding out that the girl he calls Munni eats non-vegetarian food. His girlfriend Rasika, played by Kareena Kapoor, then convinced him to let the girl eat chicken at a Dhaba, where they sing and dance to Chicken Kuk-Doo-Koo. In a recent interview with Bollywood Hungama, Kabir Khan spoke about the importance of the intention and the politics of the film. He said, "I have often heard, and I get

very worried when I hear this-- people in the industry say we are apolitical...As human beings you cannot be apolitical, the way we frame a character is telling our politics...Sometimes saying apolitical only reeks of your privilege, because what's happening in the country doesn't affect you, you all with money can live in a bubble." Citing an example of how politics can be included in the film, without making it about your politics, Kabir said, "The Chicken Song at face value is actually the most popular song of the kids because of the way Salman and Kareena are dancing and all that. It's all

the most political song of the film because it came in the face of the beef ban. And that song is basically saying-- this is Chaudhary Dhaba, which is a metaphor for India. Aadha hai nonveg, aadha hai veg (half dhaba is non-veg, half is veg). You decide what you want to eat and all of us can sit together and eat. So that's the way you slip into politics." Writer KV Vijayendra Prasad had previously said that he will start writing the script of Bajrangi Bhaijaan's sequel around May. The second instalment, which is titled Pawan Putra Bhaijaan, will continue from where the first movie ended.

(Staff Reporter) Film maker Kabir Khan has said that Chicken Kuk-Doo-Koo, a song from his film Bajrangi Bhaijaan (Salman Khan), a devotee of Lord Hanuman, who finds a speech-impaired girl (Harshaali

Film body takes no action against Vijay Babu, actresses protest in 'Amma'

Kerala actresses Mala Parvathy, Shweta Menon and Kuku Parameswaran have resigned from the ICC claiming the film body 'Amma' did not take any action against rape case accused Vijay Babu

(Staff Reporter) Three Kerala actresses have resigned from the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in protest against the non-action by Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) against actor-producer Vijay Babu, accused in a rape case. Actresses Mala Parvathy, Shweta Menon and Kuku Parameswaran have resigned from the ICC. But they have not resigned from 'Amma'.

"The Internal Complaints Committee had asked 'Amma' to take action against Vijay Babu accused in the rape case. But the association took a soft stand on this issue,"

actress Mala Parvathy said.

"If the ICC does not have the power to suggest disciplinary action, what is the use of this committee? And some people are afraid of ICC in Amma," Mala Parvathy said, submitting her resignation.

After police registered a case against Vijay Babu, the executive committee of 'Amma' had asked the ICC for a report. ICC convened on April 27 and found that revealing the name of the rape victim on social media was a serious offence. ICC submitted a report to demote Vijay Babu from the official post of the Association of

Malayalam Movie Artists. An emergency meeting of the Amma's Executive Committee was convened on May 1 to take further action as the ICC has no authority to expel an elected member. As per 'Amma's order, Vijay Babu submitted his resignation. However, an official press release prepared by 'Amma' stated that Vijay Babu had submitted his resignation letter and the executive committee had discussed the matter and taken a decision. The three actresses resigned from ICC after pointing out that the press release is sending the wrong message and it could not be

considered disciplinary action against a member.

CC was formed by amending the constitution of the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists as per the suggestion of the Woman in cinema collective (WCC), a women's organisation in Malayalam cinema. Actress Shweta Menon was the chairperson of the committee. The other members were Rachana Narayanankutty, Kuku Parameswaran and Mala Parvathy. Rachana Narayanankutti said that she would not resign from the ICC.

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