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Kidnapped Sikh family, including 8-month-old baby, found dead in California, cops say

The kidnapped Indian-origin Sikh family of four has been found dead in California



It's BJP vs Team Thackeray For Dussehra, Team Shinde Sidelined



(News Agency) From "Thank you, Modi-ji" letters from beneficiaries of central government schemes, to recruiting superstar Ranveer Singh to star in Dandiya celebrations in Lalbaug, the BJP is maxing out on its campaign for the municipal corporation election in Mumbai (BMC). The corporation runs a dreamy budget of 40,000 crores; operating it is a major prestige symbol. This year, even more so, because competing factions of the Shiv Sena are pushing to establish themselves as the original or 'real' party with the other relegated to a spin-off.

(Contd. on page 20)

India's Internet Bill Is Straight Out of Beijing's Playbook

(News Agency) One of the laws under which India governs its communications industry dates back to 1885 - when Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone was not even a decade old. If the colonial-era Indian Telegraph Act is hopelessly anachronistic, its proposed replacement may also be problematic: The telecom bill wants to retain sweeping powers of state surveillance, and apply them even to encrypted internet messages. If the draft law passes in the current form, citizens of the world's largest democracy will lose a further corner of what's already a fast-shrinking space for privacy and free speech.

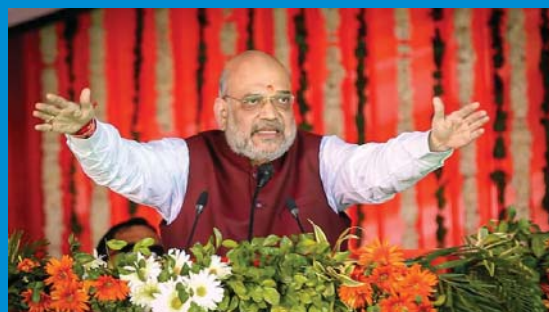
(Contd. on page 20)

Amit Shah rules out talks with Pakistan, says will wipe out terrorism from J&K

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday ruled out holding talks with Pakistan. Addressing a rally in Baramullah, Amit Shah said the BJP-led government at the Centre will wipe out terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir

(News Agency) Union Home Minister Amit Shah ruled out holding talks with Pakistan and vowed to wipe out terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir. Addressing a massive rally in Baramullah, Amit Shah said terrorism in J&K has claimed 42,000 lives since the 1990s. "Those who ruled for 70 years are saying talk to Pakistan. Why should we talk to Pakistan? We will not talk."

(Contd. on page 20)



Leicester, The New Epicentre Of Communal Tension

(News Agency) Here in India, Hindu-Muslim clashes that threaten houses of worship, force shops to close and inflame passions on social media no longer constitute news. It is noteworthy, however, when they break out not in Madhya Pradesh but in the English Midlands. Police in the city of Leicester have arrested dozens of people in recent days after what authorities described as "serious disorder." Weeks ago, a game of cricket between India and Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates raised tensions, as such matches often do. Subsequently, Hindu revivalists marched through a Muslim-dominated part of Leicester, chanting religious slogans. A Muslim mob surrounded a Hindu temple and burned its saffron flag. Scuffles between the two groups broke out across the city.

(Contd. on page 19)

Durga Puja celebrations by Bengali Hindu Community

New York City Mayor Eric Adams and New York City Deputy Commissioner Dilip Chauhan celebrated with Devotees



New York Puja Association's Board of Directors with NYC Mayor Eric Adams and Deputy Commissioner Dilip Chauhan Jagdish Sewhani President, The American India Public Affairs Committee & others (Photo Courtesy @NYCMayor Twitter)



Audience Enjoying Program (Photo Courtesy @NYCMayor Twitter)

(By our staff reporter) New York - This year NYPA hosted their 25th annual Durga Puja Celebration September 30th - October 2nd in Queens after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. The community had a

chance to meet and honor two very special guests on Saturday – New York City Mayor Eric L Adams along with Deputy Commissioner Dilip Chauhan. "Their presence and support boosted morale within our South Asian

community. We left the weekend festivities with renewed inspiration and hope to continue to serve NYC in whatever way possible for years to come." Puja Association's Board of Director Biswajit Chakraborty said The New York Puja Association (NYPA) is a non-profit social and cultural association that has been serving the

greater NYC area for the last 27 years. On Sunday, Mayor took to Twitter and posted a few images from the event and wrote, "Durga Puja celebrates the triumph of good over evil. That's something we can all appreciate in these challenging times. What a joy and honor to join our city's Bengali Hindu community in Queens tonight".



Exclusive pictures from the recently organized 2nd Annual Jagran by Deepak Bansal of IAAC & other community volunteers in Hicksville, New York



AAPL Expands Adopt-A-Village Program, Initiating Digital Integrated Prevention and Management Program (DIPAM)



(News Agency) Continuing the motherland by the members of excellent efforts to help their the American Association of

Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPL), building on the successful program, ADOPT-A-VILLAGE with the goal of adopting 75 Villages in India, commemorating India's 75th Independence Day, AAPL has now initiated Digital Integrated Prevention And Management Program (DIPAM), a Rural Health Initiative in India in a virtual launch event on Gandhi Jayanthi. Sunday, October 2nd, 2022 In his welcome address, Dr. Ravi Kolli, President of AAPL, said, "While

India has made substantial progress in health care as evidenced by the fact that life expectancy in India at birth now is 71 years as opposed to 58 years in 1990 and 41 years in 1960, there are significant gaps and divergence in health metrics in different regions in India. India needs to redouble and continue its efforts and dedicate resources to tackle these perennial challenges. The post-graduate training of physicians specializing in Family Medicine in every

teaching institution will create motivated and well-trained family physicians to address these deficits and deliver accessible, affordable, economical, and continuous preventive and primary care to rural as well as urban poor populations to raise health outcomes across India," he said. Chaired by, Dr. Satheesh Kathula, the much needed and popular program has Dr. Anupama Gotimukula, Dr. Jagan Ailani and Dr. Murthy Gokula as members of the Committee.

LILC Gala Dinner was recently organized by Pinky Jaggi of Long Island Ladies Circle in Hicksville



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Peace dividend up in J&K after strong action against terror

For the first time, the local terrorist numbers have touched around 60 and the number of Pakistani terrorists is also come down to two figures after 47 were neutralized by the security forces till September 30, 2022



(By Staff Reporter) Over the past three decades, violence and killing of innocents in Jammu and Kashmir is directly proportional to the number of Pakistani and local terrorists operating in the erstwhile state. Data collated from the Jammu and Kashmir Police and the security agencies and shared with the Home Minister Amit Shah during his security review meeting in Srinagar last Wednesday shows that the total number of local terrorists have touched an all time low of around 60 with the foreign terrorist numbers also coming down from three to two figures after 47 of them were neutralized by the security forces.

The success of the security forces is partly due to synergy between the law enforcement and central intelligence agencies. The coordination between the two has resulted in actionable intelligence and precise counter-terror action with awareness of the agencies on the social media and

terror channels.

Counter-terror data reveals that the total number of terror related incidents has come down from 417 in 2018 to 110 up to September 30, 2022, with 255 incidents in 2019 (the year the Modi government abrogated article 370), 244 in 2020, 228 in the entire 2021 and 90 up to September 30, 2021. The dip in the terror related incidents is due

to activated counter-insurgency grid and efficient action by the JKP, Security Forces and the Special CT forces of the Indian Army. The law-and-order situation in the terror hit UT has vastly improved with total number of incidents drastically coming down from 825 in 2018 to 24 up to September 30, 2022, with no incidents in the Jammu sector. There were 584 incidents in 2019, 147 in 2020, 77 in 2021 and 65 up to September 30, 2021, for direct comparison.

The total number of terrorists killed by the security forces remains in three figures with 257 neutralized in 2018; 157 in 2019; 225 in 2020; 182 in 2021; 120 up to September 30, 2021, and 167 up to September 30, 2022. The figure of 167 killed till last month includes 120 local terrorists and 47

foreign terrorists. Even though the security forces label them as local terrorists, these youth are radicalized or recruited by Pakistan based terror factories in Lahore, Bahawalpur, or in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. These youth first brainwashed in the name of Islamic jihad and then armed with area weapons to cause mayhem and violence in the UT. The Pakistani intent to cause mayhem in Kashmir continues at the same pace with its deep state continuing with its objective to hit India. The total number of terrorists/ suspects arrested by the security forces remains high with 847 (including 71 terrorists) booked in 2018; 609 (49 terrorists) in 2019; 781 (75 terrorists) in 2020 and 741 (71 terrorists) in 2021. The figures up to September 30 in 2021 and 2022 shows that 595 (49 terrorists) and 600 (128

terrorists) were arrested by the security forces respectively.

Figures show that the number of terror modules busted by the security forces has gone up to 111 till September 30, 2022, as compared to 82 during the same period last year. The terror hideouts busted till last month were 20 as compared to 23 during the same period last year.

The terror recruitment level has also come down to 89 this year as compared to 108 during the same period last year. But the recruitment numbers were a high of 206 in 2018, 143 in 2019, 172 in 2020 and 137 in entire 2021. While the Modi government focus is on socio-economic empowerment of the UT people, the counter-terror action ensures that peace is maintained in the entire troubled land. The two go hand in hand.

Ex-Air India pilot among 6 arrested, inter-state drug racket busted: NCB

(By Staff Reporter) The agency said Sohail Gaffar Mahida, who was trained in the US and worked for AI as a pilot from 2016 to 2018, Muthu Pichaidas, SM Chowdhury, M I Ali, and MF Chisty were arrested from Mumbai and Bhaskar V from Gujarat's Jamnagar. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence earlier arrested Pichaidas, a history sheeter, in 2001 in another drug case. He was out on bail since 2008. An NCB official said the arrests were made after the naval intelligence unit in Jamnagar reported suspicious activities of a few persons. NCB's zonal director, Amit Ghawate, said they worked on the information and learnt Mephedrone was being transported from Gujarat to another state before seizing 10.35 kg of the drugs. Bhaskar V, Mahida, Chowdhury, and Pichaidas were arrested on October 3.

Drones are new terror tools of Pak jihadist groups



(By Staff Reporter) Home minister Amit Shah has asked Border Security Force (BSF) to lead an inter-agency group that will seek to counter drones transporting weapons and explosives across the 182 km long international border in Jammu, from Pakistan. The increased drone activity across the border was brought to the notice of Home Minister Amit Shah in the security review meeting in Srinagar on Wednesday with top security and intelligence chiefs in attendance. While BSF, which mans the international border with Pakistan in Jammu sector, believes that it has been able to repel drones carrying arms, ammunition and explosives from Pakistan, the state police and the intelligence agencies differ with this assessment. Union home minister

Amit Shah held a security review meeting in Srinagar on Wednesday. Data from security agencies shows that in 2020, there were weapons recovered from six incidents of drone activity in Jammu (1), Samba (2), Kathua (1) and Rajouri (2) but the total number of drones that crossed the IB is anybody's guess. The weapons recovered in 2020 were: seven AK series assault rifles, nine pistols, 2 MP4 carbine, five carbine magazines and 10 high explosive grenades. In 2021, there were 12 activities of drones detected including five in Samba, six in Jammu and one in Rajouri sector. Recoveries included seven AK series rifles, 27 pistols, 25 high explosive grenades and 22 improvised explosive devices in boxes.

Ambala SGPC members march towards Amritsar to oppose validation of Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Management Act

The members are unhappy with the decision of forming a separate gurdwara committee for Haryana



(By Staff Reporter) Members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and supporters from Haryana gathered at Gurdwara Shri Manji Sahib here and left for Sri Akal

Takht, Amritsar, on Friday.

They are holding a protest march against the validation of the Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Management Act. Led by senior vice-president Raghuji Singh Virk, the members were unhappy with the decision of forming a separate gurdwara committee for Haryana.

Virk said the government should not interfere in the management of the gurdwaras. Attempts were being made to divide the SGPC, he added.

India abstains on resolutions on Sri Lanka and Xinjiang at UNHRC

The Indian side didn't offer an explanation on its decision to abstain on the draft resolution seeking a debate on the human rights situation in China's Xinjiang region

(By Staff Reporter) India on Thursday abstained on a resolution at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) promoting human rights in Sri Lanka but urged the government in Colombo to deliver on commitments towards the Tamil minority. India also abstained on a draft resolution at the UNHRC calling for a debate on the human rights situation in China's Xinjiang region.

While explaining India's vote on the resolution on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, Indra Mani Pandey, the country's permanent representative in Geneva, said that the progress made so far by the Sri Lankan government to meet the aspirations of the Tamil minority "remains inadequate". "In finding a lasting and effective solution for peace and

reconciliation in Sri Lanka, India has always been guided by the two fundamental principles of support to the aspirations of the Tamils for equality, justice, dignity and peace and unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka," Pandey said. While we have taken note of the commitments by the government of Sri Lanka on issues of implementation of the commitments in the spirit of the 13th Constitutional Amendment, meaningful devolution and the early conduct of provincial elections, we believe that the progress towards the same remains inadequate," he said.

"Accordingly, we urge the government of Sri Lanka to work meaningfully towards early implementation of these commitments," he added. Pandey also noted that India has "substantively contributed" to the relief, rehabilitation, re-settlement

and reconstruction process in Sri Lanka since 2009. Since January this year, India has "provided unprecedented assistance" to the people of Sri Lanka to face the challenges of the recent economic crisis, he said. Achieving prosperity for all Sri Lankans and "realising the legitimate aspirations of Tamils of Sri Lanka for prosperity, dignity and peace are two sides of the same coin", Pandey pointed out.

Twenty members of the 47-strong UNHRC voted in favour of the resolution on Sri Lanka, while seven opposed it. Twenty members, including India, Japan, Indonesia and Malaysia, abstained. The Indian side didn't offer an explanation on its decision to abstain on the draft resolution seeking a debate on the human rights situation in China's Xinjiang region. The ultimate vote went in favour of China, with 19 members of the UNHRC opposing the



resolution and 11 members, including India, Malaysia and Ukraine, abstaining. The resolution was supported by France, Germany, Japan and the Netherlands. People familiar with the matter said India has traditionally voted against of abstained on such country-specific resolutions at the UNHRC. It is understood that China's presence within the UNHRC was a factor in the decision, since any backing for the Xinjiang issue by India could have led to similar moves by China on other issues. The draft resolution on the situation in Xinjiang was presented by a group comprising Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the US, and was co-sponsored by other countries such as Turkey. The resolution was a follow-up to a recent report by former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet that exposed a wide range of human rights violations in Xinjiang.

Vande Bharat Express train hit by cattle gets its nose replaced

(By Staff Reporter) The front part of the engine got damaged after it hit 3-4 buffaloes who suddenly came on the railway track. No passengers were injured and the train made it to the destination on time. The Vande Bharat Express running between Mumbai Central and Gujarat's Gandhinagar which was by cattle on Thursday morning has been repaired at the coaching care centre within a day. No functional part of the train was damaged, only the front part of the engine suffered the hit. The photo of the



cattle-hit Vande Bharat express went viral on Thursday soon after the accident took place at around 11.15am. The front part of the engine got damaged after 3-4 buffaloes came on the railway line. But the accident did not stop the train which moved right after removing the carcasses within eight minutes and reached Gandhinagar on time. The Vande Bharat Express train suffered damage after it hit cattle on the track. "The nose cover is designed to absorb the impact without

transmitting the same to the functional parts of the train. Therefore, it is sacrificial by design and hence replaceable," an official said. "Railway keeps a sufficient nose-cones as spare. It was replaced with a new one in the

Mumbai Central depot in no time during the maintenance and the train is put back to service without any extra down time," the official said adding that the train departed from Mumbai on Friday without any inconvenience to the passengers. The accident started to take a political turn with some Congress leaders questioning the durability of the India-made Vande Bharat Express. Congress's Nitin Agarwal posted the photo of the inauguration of the Vande Bharat Express by PM Modi and the

viral photo after yesterday's accident. "Ghar se nikalte hi...kuch door chalte hi..." Agarwal wrote. The Vande Bharat train between Mumbai Central and Gandhinagar was inaugurated by PM Modi on September 30. "The Vande Bharat express running between Mumbai Central and Gandhinagar Capital stations had left Mumbai this morning. The front portion of the train's engine got damaged after it hit some buffaloes that came on track around 11.15 am. The incident took place between Vatva and Maninagar areas of Ahmedabad," Western

Railway spokesperson Jitendra Kumar Jayant said. "The driver of the train was fully alert. He immediately blew the train's whistle and also applied brakes, but the reaction time was less," Western Railway chief public relations officer Sumit Thakur said adding that the Western Railway is going to undertake fencing work on the Gandhinagar-Ahmedabad section to increase the speed of the train to 160 kmph and avoid such incidents in the future.

Chief Justice of India UU Lalit asked by govt to name his successor: Sources

(By Staff Reporter) Chief Justice of India Uday Umesh Lalit, who is set to retire on November 8, has been asked by the government to name his successor, people familiar with the matter said. The union law ministry has written to CJI UU Lalit over the matter to name the 50th chief justice of India. CJI UU Lalit had taken oath in August as the 49th CJI. President Droupadi Murmu had administered him the oath at the Rashtrapati Bhavan as he succeeded Justice NV Ramana, who had retired on August 26. The law minister, as per the standard protocol, writes to the chief justice of India to name his or her successor. Justice D Y Chandrachud is the senior-most judge in the Supreme Court after the CJI. The CJI, as per protocol, names the senior-most judge as his or her successor. CJI UU Lalit, who was designated as a senior advocate by the top court in April, 2004, was enrolled as an advocate in June, 1983. He has been a member of the Supreme Court of India Legal Services Committee for two terms. He was appointed as a judge in the top court in 2014. Meanwhile, Justice D Y Chandrachud had earlier served as the Additional Solicitor General of India in 1998. He was sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court in 2013. He has been associated with the Bombay High Court too. He was elevated as a judge in the top court in 2016. He is scheduled to retire in November 2024.



Uttarkashi avalanche: Toll rises to 19 with recovery of 3 more bodies

A rescue operation in Uttarkashi continued days after the avalanche hit a 41-member team of mountaineering trainees and instructors from Nehru Institute of Mountaineering



in the day as a rescue operation in Uttarkashi continued days after the avalanche hit a 41-member team of mountaineering trainees and instructors from NIM. Ten members of the expedition remained missing. Twelve people have been rescued so far. Four bodies, including that of ace mountaineer Savita Kanswal, 26, who set a national record by climbing Mount Everest and Mount Makalu within 16

days earlier this year, were recovered on Tuesday. The NIM statement said the search and rescue operation was in progress at the disaster site and that dead bodies will be flown on helicopters on Friday depending on the weather conditions. It added the search for 10 missing trainee mountaineers and instructors was underway. Only four of the 19 bodies at NIM's advance base camp (13,600 feet) have been flown out. "Efforts are on

to bring them to Uttarkashi through the road. Bad weather prevails at Draupadi Ka Danda peak," said district disaster management officer Devendra Patwal. Of the 19 people found dead so far, 17 were trainees and two instructors.

The 41-member group was hit near the Dokrani Bamak glacier when it was returning from high-altitude navigation from Mount Draupadi ka Danda-2 peak (5,670 m) on Tuesday.

(News Agency) The toll from the Uttarkashi avalanche rose to 19 as three more bodies were recovered late on Thursday, the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) said in a statement on Friday. Twelve bodies were recovered earlier

Raids At 35 Places Across Delhi, Punjab, Hyderabad In Liquor Policy Case

The Delhi Excise Policy, implemented from November 17 last year, was scrapped by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal government in July this year following a CBI probe recommended by Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena into its implementation

(News Agency) New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate today launched fresh raids at 35 locations in Delhi, Punjab and Hyderabad, deepening its money laundering probe into alleged irregularities in the now-scrapped Delhi liquor policy. The searches are being conducted at premises linked to liquor companies, distributors and supply chain networks in these states. The action started early morning with agency teams seen leaving the Delhi headquarters for the raid locations.

Arvind Kejriwal, the Chief Minister of Delhi, attacked the centre and termed the raids as "dirty politics". "More than 500 raids, since 3 months more than 300 CBI/ED officers are working 24 hours – one to find evidence against Manish Sisodia. Can't find anything. because nothing was done," Mr Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi. Time of so many officers is being wasted for their dirty politics. How will such a country progress?" he added. The money laundering case in the excise policy - the latest flashpoint between the ruling

AAP and the BJP - stems from a CBI FIR in which Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and some Delhi government bureaucrats have been named as accused. The CBI is investigating if the policy aided liquor cartels. The BJP alleges huge corruption in the policy that allowed retailers to offer big discounts to attract buyers. The AAP, however, says that its policy was aimed at curbing corruption and accuses the BJP of misusing central agencies for political goals. Liquor businessman Sameer Mahendru was arrested last

week by the probe agency which has conducted several rounds of raids in the case. His arrest came a day after Vijay Nair, AAP's communications chief and a close aide of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, was arrested by the CBI. The Delhi Excise Policy, implemented from November 17 last year, was scrapped by Arvind Kejriwal government in

July this year following a CBI probe recommended by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena into its implementation. Mr Saxena alleged that the policy was implemented "with the sole aim" of benefiting private liquor barons by causing huge losses to the exchequer.

The Lieutenant Governor also suspended eleven excise officials in connection with the case.

Punjab Police AIG arrested in Rs 1 cr bribery case

(News Agency) The Punjab Vigilance Bureau on Thursday arrested Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) Ashish Kapoor, posted as the Commandant of 4th IRB in Pathankot, for allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 1 crore from an undertrial.

Along with Ashish, DSP (Intelligence) Pawan Kumar and ASI Harjinder Singh have been nominated as accused in the case. A Vigilance Bureau (VB) spokesperson said a case under Sections 7 and 7-A of the Prevention of Corruption Act and 420 and 120-B of the IPC had been registered against the accused. The spokesperson said Ashish, during his posting as Superintendent at the Amritsar Central Jail in 2016, had got acquainted with a

woman, Poonam Rajan of Kurukshetra, who was in judicial remand in some case. When Poonam, her mother Prem Lata, brother Kuldeep Singh and sister-in-law Preeti were in police remand at the Zirakpur police station in some case, Ashish arrived at the police station and allegedly convinced Prem Lata in helping her secure bail and acquittal from the court.

The spokesperson said Ashish in connivance with Pawan, then Zirakpur SHO, and ASI Harjinder got Preeti "declared innocent" in the case. In lieu of the favour, Ashish allegedly obtained Prem Lata's signatures on cheques amounting to Rs 1 crore and encashed these in the names of his acquaintances through the ASI.

National Herald case: Karnataka Cong president Shivakumar appears before ED in Delhi

(By Staff Reporter) Karnataka Congress president D K Shivakumar on Friday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate here for questioning in the National Herald money laundering case. Shivakumar, 60, told reporters before stepping into the ED office at A P J Abdul Kalam Road that he was a "law abiding citizen" and hence he was deposing before the federal agency despite not knowing why he was exactly called. The senior Congress leader has been looking after the arrangements for the Bharat Jodo



Yatra that is traversing through Karnataka and walked along with party leaders Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi on Thursday. Shivakumar had appeared before the ED last on September 19 in Delhi where he was questioned with regard to another money laundering case linked to alleged possession of disproportionate assets. The latest round of questioning pertains to Shivakumar and his MP brother D K Suresh donating an unspecified amount of money in the past to Young Indian, the company that owns National Herald.

Twitter's Odd Victory Over Elon Musk Putin's Nuclear Threat Is Real

The company succeeds in forcing itself into the hands of an unwilling owner

The conflict isn't only about Ukraine. He's waging a global war on the U.S.-led order

Congratulations are due Twitter for sticking it out against the master con-jurer Elon Musk, who on Tuesday surrendered and agreed to proceed with his promised \$44 billion acquisition after all. Twitter persisted when others might have struck a deal to let Mr. Musk off the hook, given his social-media influence and his legion of stock-trading fans, who provide ample means for him to make trouble for a vulnerable public company that annoys him.

Then again, maybe congratulations are due Delaware Court of Chancery Chancellor Kathaleen McCormick, who apparently was unwowed by Mr. Musk's aura and perhaps realized that if Delaware companies can't expect enforcement of solemn legal contracts, they may be less keen in the future to place themselves under jurisdiction of the court she represents.

Of course, Mr. Musk has only signed another piece of paper, a letter to Twitter's board saying he wants to proceed. What is his written commitment worth? Presumably less than before he made a global spectacle of himself by reneging on the original deal. Perhaps explanation of his reversal will be soon forthcoming from Mr. Musk himself on his favorite medium—Twitter. For now, sufficient must be the reporting of Bloomberg News, which broke the story and attributed Mr. Musk's white flag to the realization by his "legal team . . . that the case was not going well."

Duh. Mr. Musk's case was far from strong, as pointed out here in July, and furthermore the dispute threatened to pop the mystique that upholds Tesla's all-important share price, a likelihood that only grew with the prospect of Mr. Musk being questioned on the stand about his now-released antic private text messages. Mr. Musk might well have hoped that the Musk aura that so confounded, for instance, the Securities and Exchange Commission when it tried to make him behave like a normal CEO would also work with the Delaware court and Twitter. They would shrink from forcing the mercurial entrepreneur to proceed with the purchase of an important public company that he had turned to ridiculing and accusing of fraud.

Which brings up a question: If you're Twitter, what do you do now? Your shareholders presumably want you to hold Mr. Musk to the deal, which would get them \$54.20 a share for a stock that might be worth single digits if not for moneybags Musk. A conscientious management, though, might balk at delivering the company to a man who doesn't want to own it, has bad-mouthed it, and is plainly surrendering

only to legal force majeure to become its apparently unenthused proprietor. This could be another case for the Delaware court down the road. Twitter's board right now says it's keen to go ahead, as you would expect, but if you truly doubted Mr. Musk's stewardship, you might prefer an outcome in which he pays a large sum in damages and goes away. Once upon a time, in a controversial 1989 case, the very same Delaware court ruled that a board could reject even a top-dollar takeover offer for just such a "strategic" reason.

Twitter's share price soared on the news, to within \$2 of Mr. Musk's \$54-plus offer, a valuation that Twitter shareholders might not expect to see again in their lifetimes. Tesla's stock was down for the reciprocal reason: Mr. Musk may be forced to sell more of his stake to fund his Twitter purchase. How much more may be affected by a wrinkle yet to be seen: So far Mr. Musk's once-willing partners and lenders claim to be on board, but they have lawyers and every reason to find in Mr. Musk's behavior grounds to renege now on such an unfavorably priced takeover. Weighing on Tesla as well is the distraction if Mr. Musk must start devoting his time to running Twitter to protect his forced investment in the company.

That said, Twitter remains every bit the important and widely used "public square" that Mr. Musk once described it, even if it's no great shakes as a business. Since the Musk drama started, Twitter has demonstrated as much again by serving as a clearinghouse for news and analysis of the war in Ukraine, making a new class of worthy thinkers into public figures beyond their previous imaginings. Never doubt Twitter's considerable intellectual value even if, by simple volume, most of what crosses the platform is dreck from no-account attitudinizers, bots and scam artists.

Interestingly, in 1989, it was thought the Delaware court ruled as it did partly because the deal in question would have delivered into the hands of the late corporate swashbuckler Martin Davis the then widely read Time magazine, seen as a national asset and pillar of democratic discourse. Mr. Musk may yet prove the innovative owner Twitter needs, but it will be a curious outcome for the courts to have forced the controversial kibitzer to become the steward of an important global institution that he seems unglad to have responsibility for.

Even as poorly trained, poorly led and poorly supplied Russian forces retreat on the battlefield, the danger that the war in Ukraine will erupt into a wider conflict continues to grow. Vladimir Putin has responded to the weakening of his military position by "annexing" four contested regions inside Ukraine, declaring that the conflict in Ukraine is a war for the survival of Russia, and raising the specter of a nuclear strike. The West is taking note of these moves and the sabotage of Baltic pipelines connecting European consumers to Russian gas. National security adviser Jake Sullivan has warned Russia that any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic consequences for Russian forces, and Jens Stoltenberg, secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, repeated that message Sunday morning.

As the Biden administration scrambles to manage the most dangerous international confrontation since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, it must see the world through Mr. Putin's eyes. Only then can officials know how seriously to take the nuclear saber-rattling and develop an appropriate response. While American presidents going back to George W. Bush have failed to appreciate the depth and passion of Mr. Putin's hostility to the U.S., the Russian president isn't that hard to read. Like a movie supervillain who can't resist sharing the details of his plans for world conquest with the captured hero, Mr. Putin makes no secret of his agenda. At Friday's ceremony marking Russia's illegal and invalid "annexation" of four Ukrainian regions, he laid

out his worldview and ambitions in a chilling and extraordinary speech that every American policy maker should read. Mr. Putin sees global politics today as a struggle between a rapacious and domineering West and the rest of the world bent on resisting our arrogance and exploitation. The West is cynical and hypocritical, and its professed devotion to "liberal values" is a sham. The West is not a coalition of equals; it represents the domination of the "evil Anglo-Saxons" over the Europeans and Japan. Mr. Putin sees this American-led world system as the successor to the British Empire, and he blames the Anglo-Saxon or English-speaking powers for a host of evils, from the Atlantic slave trade to European imperialism to the use of nuclear weapons in World War II. This attack on "Anglo-Saxon" greed, brutality and hypocrisy is not original to Mr. Putin. He is reading from a script developed by opponents of British and American liberal capitalism and geopolitical power over hundreds of years. Napoleon could have delivered large swathes of this speech. Very different figures such as Kaiser Wilhelm II, Adolf Hitler as well as Joseph Stalin, Imperial Japanese leaders like Hideki Tojo, Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and Osama bin Laden shared much of Mr. Putin's critique. One can hear versions of it on many college campuses, and it plays a significant role in the intellectual and cultural life of many postcolonial countries and movements around the world.



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The Missiles of North Korea

Another launch over Japan shows the need to reinforce deterrence

As if the world didn't have enough threats, North Korea is again firing ballistic missiles. There isn't much opening for diplomacy here, so the best response is to strengthen the credibility of the conventional and military deterrent in Northeast Asia.

Tuesday's test of an intermediate-range ballistic missile over Japan triggered air raid sirens and instructions to take shelter. Think of Cuba sending a missile over Florida. The missile test was the 23rd this year, the highest annual pace ever. It follows a threat to respond to the recent resumption of U.S.-South Korea military drills. Tuesday's launch was also the longest to date at more than 2,800 miles, a reminder that North Korean missiles have the range to threaten the U.S. territory of Guam some 2,100 miles away.

President Trump suspended the allied military exercises as he fruitlessly courted Mr. Kim, and President Biden deserves credit for resuming them as a sign of U.S. resolve. Mr. Kim usually acts up this way when he wants to frighten Western countries to return to talks so

he can coerce more money from them. The U.S. and Seoul have tried the bribery route many times, but the North isn't going to give up its nuclear threat, which is the only reason anybody pays attention.

The North has made strides toward developing a missile that could reach U.S. cities. It is also developing missiles to carry multiple warheads to be able to evade missile defenses.

In September North Korea reaffirmed its commitment to being a nuclear power, listing five conditions it would use for a pre-emptive strike, including if an attack on military or strategic targets were "imminent." The U.S. has asked for a United Nations Security Council meeting on Wednesday, but don't expect more than pro forma denunciations. North Korea's patrons in China and Russia,

which hold permanent seats on the council, would veto any meaningful effort to punish the North. The same goes for the resumption of the "six-party talks" with the North that have



failed many times.

The original sin was letting the North get the bomb, and now the best response is deterrence. As Vladimir Putin's Ukraine invasion and nuclear threats show, the U.S. conventional and nuclear deterrent isn't as credible as it once was. Mr. Biden on Tuesday called the U.S. commitment to the

region "ironclad," which is important after Mr. Trump's uncertain trumpet. But the words have to be backed by credible military deployments and clear communication about the response if the North stages a pre-emptive attack. That has to be understood in Pyongyang and Beijing as the annihilation of the Kim regime.

The U.S. defense budget needs a major spending increase from 3% toward 5% or more of GDP, where it nearly was in 2010. Japan is gradually moving to increase its military budget to 2% of GDP from the 1% cap rooted in the country's post World War II pacifist constitution. South Korea can also do more.

The post-Cold War era is over, and a new axis is forming against allied democracies. China seems to view Pyongyang's nuclear posturing as a useful irritant and won't block the provocation. Russia is happy to have the U.S. worry about a front other than Ukraine. Mr. Biden and other leaders have to explain to the American people the reality of this dangerous new world and what is required to meet it.

Is College Worth It? Not for Everyone

A degree should signify an education, not only a credential

I will have the pleasure on Wednesday of speaking to students at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. What will I tell them? The best way for the next generation of public service leaders to give back is by diminishing the artificial value of their expensive college degrees. It's time to debunk the fiction that a prestigious degree is the only key to the American dream.

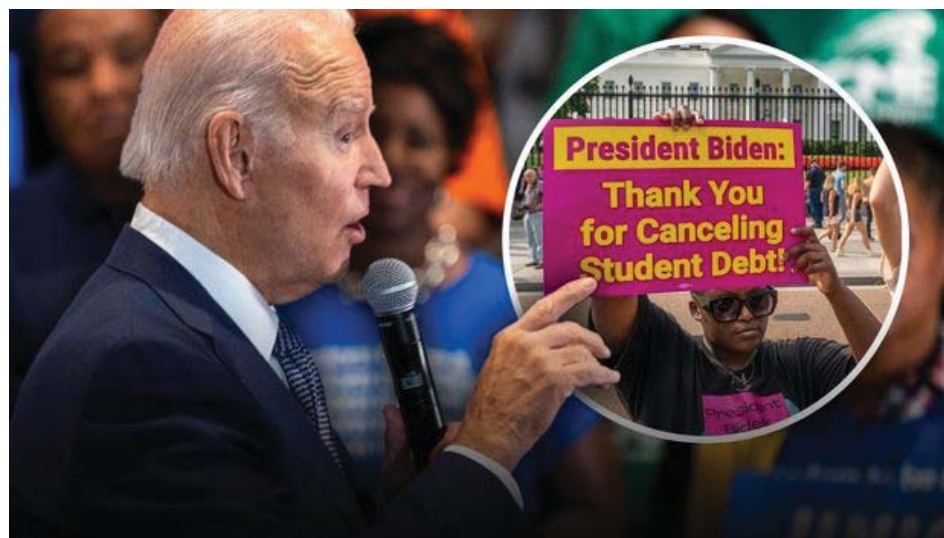
President's Biden's move to cancel federal student-loan debt showcases the higher-education system's brokenness. It will make already crippling levels of inflation even worse, raise the cost of college, and burden future generations with even more debt.

The outrageous cost of college is a crisis in its own right. Years of throwing public money at the problem has yet to solve it. But the skyrocketing cost of energy, housing and healthcare is also a crisis that disproportionately harms Americans who didn't attend college. It's unfair and counterproductive to force hardworking men and women to pay off other people's college debts.

Historically, higher education has played a part in developing civic virtue in public life. But more and more, higher-

education institutions, enabled by increasingly bloated administrations,

adversaries while defending the values of the American founding.



are leading the charge to tear down what makes this nation great. Some elite academic institutions are openly hostile to core American values such as freedom of speech, which undergirds our success as a nation.

We must reorient the education system to fit the economic and cultural needs of the 21st century. A patriotic and skilled workforce, unencumbered by unbearable levels of debt, will allow the U.S. to compete with China and other

To begin the hard work of reconfiguring the broken higher-education system, there are three critical steps we can take immediately. First, employers should stop requiring college degrees for jobs that don't need them. In Maryland, we've led the charge by announcing that thousands of state jobs will no longer have such requirements. If more states follow our lead, the trend could spread to the private sector. The federal government should also expand Pell

grant subsidies for short-term skills-based training, not only expensive four-year degrees.

Second, the federal government and states must drastically ramp up apprenticeship programs to create alternative pathways to careers like cybersecurity, healthcare and the skilled trades. Maryland's innovative EARN program has successfully created partnerships with these kinds of industries to develop job-training programs, generating \$17.32 of economic impact for every \$1 of state funding. Third, Congress should limit executive power to forgive student loans unilaterally. To deal effectively with the aftermath of Mr. Biden's reckless action, we must make it clear to the next generation of leaders that this won't ever happen again, whether they pursue their educations at Harvard, at another university, or through alternative pathways. A good education is the foundation to a successful career and a healthy civic society. But a good education doesn't necessarily require a four-year degree, especially when such excessive credentialism falls on the taxpayer's dime.

When Muslims Are Demonised At Garba Events

Today, October 5, there will be numerous events to declare the triumph of good over evil in Dussehra celebrations with the burning of the effigy of Ravana. Elsewhere, there will be elaborate preparations for the immersion of the clay images of Goddess Durga after celebrating her victory over the demon king Mahishasura. These festivities traditionally involve crores of Indians within and outside the boundaries of India. The beautifully-decorated puja pandals are visited by people across communities, just as the audiences at the performances of the Ram Leela are inclusive of people across communities. This is how it has been in the past.

But will it remain so? Will we soon have signboards outside the pandals that state "Hindus only", much like the signs in British India that forbade the entry of Indians into many public places? If a pandal in Kolkata can actually portray the demon king killed by the Goddess in the form of Gandhi-ji, is the idea of "Hindus Only" signboards so outlandish? The Vishwa Hindu Parishad spokesperson Chandrachud Goswami, responsible for the abomination, was not shy or defensive. He said, "Gandhi does not deserve respect. We want to send a clear message that we want a Gandhi-mukt Bharata Varsh."

India needs to ask itself some hard questions - in our own times, in our own society, is evil triumphing over the good? Perhaps not. The people of India, the working poor, the workers, the kisans, have historically, more often than not, chosen the path of acting for what is right, fighting back the forces that want to enslave us, to divide us, to perpetuate injustice. But today, it is not an ordinary fight. Every day brings new examples of why the question is relevant. Look at the recent developments over the "garba" celebrations.

The beating of Muslim men at or even around the vicinity of "garba pandals" by private armies of the Hindutva brigade are akin to lighting bonfires of the Constitution. The attacks constitute a level of crude religious profiling that is quite unprecedented. It is a shameful demonizing of a whole community as potential trouble-makers, as harassers of women, as 'love jihadists'. In all these attacks, the police have admitted that there have been no complaints of harassment by any women attending the garba events. The charge against Muslim men as "luring women" is insulting to Hindu women, too, who must be considered brainless if they can be so easily "lured".

Such attacks are taking place in centres in BJP-ruled Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Instead of arresting the attackers led by the Bajrang Dal and, in some cases, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the police have arrested the

victims. Since there is no evidence of any crime against those arrested, the police have used Section 151, an open-ended clause, which gives police the right to arrest without any evidence or proof of crime committed but to "prevent the commission of cognizable offences". It reads "(1) A police officer knowing of a design to commit any cognizable offence



may arrest, without orders from a Magistrate and without a warrant, the person so designing, if it appears to such officer that the commission of the offence cannot be otherwise prevented. "The Hindutva brigade have made known their intention to use the present religious festivities to target Muslims, they are the people 'so designing'." But not a single one of them, not even those easily identifiable in the videos shown on national television, have been booked by the police. It is known that sections of the police force have been communalised. But the blatant bias in their actions in these cases is because of the public support to the Hindutva gangs by the governments of both Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

The leader of the Bajrang Dal in Indore, Tannu Sharma, stated that Muslims would not be allowed into garba pandals. He was quoted as saying "Pehle rokenge, pair tokenge, phir thokenge" (we will stop them, then threaten them, then beat them). Pragya Thakur, Member of Parliament and accused in the Malegaon bombing case, stated, "Muslims should not be allowed into garba pandals", and further, "shops owned by Muslims near the pandals should be shut down". The Minister of Culture, Usha Thakur, echoing the Bajrang Dal, stated that "Garba pandals are becoming the medium for love jihad". This was followed by the statement of the State's Home Minister Narottam Mishra that "identity cards would be required to enter pandals". In compliance with his statement, orders making ID cards mandatory were issued by district administrations in Ujjain, Bhopal,

Indore, Narmadapuram and Khandwa. So, what started with the Bajrang Dal ended with the official approval of the government. Let's not fool ourselves that these are "fringe elements".

Madhya Pradesh has a high crime rate in sexual assaults against women. If there are goons, as there

often are, at such public events where large numbers of young women may be present, the police have to ensure their arrest and the protection of the women. Identity cards do not show records of criminal history - they only give the name and address of the person concerned. The order for identity cards was not to protect women, but only to humiliate members of the minority community. Many of the pandals are on public thoroughfares, so at any given time, there may be members of the Muslim community passing by. They too were reportedly subjected to harassment and physical attacks. In Indore alone, 14 members of the Muslim community were arrested.

In Gujarat, the Hindutva brigade issued orders to organizers of garba pandals assuming the authority of the government. Hitendrasinh Rajput, the spokesperson of the Bajrang Dal and the VHP, declared that "Bajrang Dal in advance has instructed all organizers to ensure that no security person is hired belonging to the Muslim community as they have malafide intentions of luring Hindu girls. If it is done, then such clashes will happen." This was his justification after his gangs attacked Muslim security guards at a garba function in Surat. The Bajrang Dal announced that its men would be 'checking' to ensure that there are no Muslims at the pandals. If the Hindutva brigade can act with such impunity, it hardly needs a political scientist's analysis to point out that this is a clear example of state support for wholly illegal actions.

All these decades, "garba" celebrations like those associated with other

religious festivals have been celebrated by members of all communities. But after the advent of the BJP government in 2014, the trend has increased of religious festivities becoming occasions to create and deepen fault lines between communities. In Gujarat, where the garba tradition originates, Muslim musicians have long been associated with the festivities. In 2015, there were incidents in Ahmedabad of Muslims being excluded from garba celebrations. At the time, it was not "love jihad" but "beef eaters" who were to be kept out of the pandals. Achyut Yagnik, a well-recognized author and analyst of Gujarat society in an interview (Economic Times, Oct 10, 2015) had said "The Muslim 'Mir' or 'Langa' community was traditionally associated with music in Gujarat and their members participated and played music in Hindu temples and festivals. In recent times, Mir singers, male and female, have become very popular and are invited to sing during Navaratri in various towns and cities. " He criticized the trend of keeping Muslims out of the celebrations.

Since 2015, the situation has worsened with attacks taking different forms. With the commercialization of the festivities, huge garba events inviting Bollywood stars are organised by professionals, many of them Muslim event organizers. They are not being allowed to organise such events. The events require security arrangements. Some of the guards are Muslim workers earning an honest living. This too is stopped. Shops to be shut down because they are owned by Muslims, workers to be prevented from going to work because they are Muslim, event organizers prohibited from providing professional services because they are Muslim - this is a direct attack on livelihood.

A few months ago, at the time of Ram Navami, we saw a concerted plan being put into action when aggressive processions of slogan-shouting members led by the same organisations - the Bajrang Dal and the VHP - deliberately provoked clashes outside mosques at a time when the Muslim community were observing ramzan. Hundreds of Muslims were arrested and many are still in jail. Bulldozers were used to raze Muslim-owned properties to the ground while the provocateurs got away scot-free through government patronage. Today, navratri or puja celebrations are sought to be used to fulfil the same aim of demonization of a community, division of society and destruction of pluralist cultures.

Symbolic actions of the ritual burning of effigies representing evil will have more meaning when we have the will and determination to identify, recognize and fight back the forces of darkness in our midst.

Mixing Religion With Politics And Invoking Ram's Name

Hinduism is now going through a tectonic change, becoming more Abrahamic in its nature, invoking god's name as an aggressive slogan, insisting on one holy place and the supremacy of one expression of god

When Gandhiji was asked who Ram is, he responded that Ram is the name of the truth in his conscience. There is no name in Indian culture, religion and civilisation that evokes so many emotions and meanings as his name. Before modern-day politicians hijacked the term and used it as a tool to grab power, Ram was never a divisive figure in Indian culture, until Periyar Rama-swamy Naicker and his Dravidian movement made him into one. The Dravidian movement identified Ram with Brahminical dominance and the Ramayana as a propaganda tool of Brahminism to rule over all other castes.

On August 1, 1956, Periyar planned a march on Chennai's Marina beach to burn pictures of Sri Ram. He was arrested, and his followers were lathi-charged. In 1974, Ravan Leela was organised by the Dravidar Kazhagam, under the leadership of Periyar's widow, according to the wishes of Periyar, who died in 1973. Periyar wanted to conduct Ravan Leela in response to Ram Leela. It is ironic that Ram, a kshatriya prince, became associated with Brahmanical hegemony and the Brahmin king Ravan became the victim in Periyar's Dravidian movement.

The Hindutva movement of the 1980s and 1990s was the next to use Ram's name. The Ram Janmabhoomi movement became the second occasion in which Ram inadvertently became a divisive figure in our country. From the rural North Indian's heartfelt greeting of "Ram-Ram" or "Jai Siya Ram", the name got associated with the war cry "Jai Sri Ram". Just as an innocuous "Allahu Akbar"—which means God is great—started invoking disturbing associations with religious fanaticism and even terrorism, Ram, a name associated with truth for Gandhiji, became associated with the uncharacteristic aggression of a supposedly gentle religion. This is what politics does to cultural symbols. In my childhood, Ram was never depicted alone in calendars or temples. Ram without Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman was considered inauspicious and incomplete. The stock calendar



picture that adorned the puja rooms was of Ram's coronation. It invoked tranquillity and benediction. When posters of an angry Ram—an arrow notched in his bow, glaring at an angry sea, ready to annihilate some imaginary enemy—started appearing, the elders in the village were disturbed. This was against tradition and culture. It boded ill luck and misfortune, claimed some. But they didn't know that the very nature of the civilisation was changing, and India was becoming a place where there was no place for Gandhiji's Ram, or those of Tulsidas or Ezhuthachan or Kamban.

But is it the first time Ram's name was used for propaganda in our history? Didn't Gandhi use Ram's name with a political agenda? The song Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram was written much before his time, but it was Gandhi who made it synonymous with his vision of Independent India. He insisted that Allah was another name for Ram. Though it resonated with many, such assertions are not potent enough to overcome the training of Abrahamic faiths, which insist on the supremacy of One God—their God, as their book defines Him. Once you bring religion into politics in a multicultural country, there is no escaping it. Gandhi insisted on the ideal of Ram Rajya for the India of his dreams. But the concept of Ram Rajya had never invoked images of an ideal state in any place other than the Gangetic belt. Hinduism is a diverse religion with no idea of one supreme god or supremacy of one single book. The strength of Hinduism was that it never depended on one holy place, one

god or one holy book. Hinduism was and is still primarily an agglomeration of innumerable ways of life, countless legends and village deities. This diversity helped it to withstand bloody religious invasions over centuries. The Islamic invasion of medieval India is perhaps the bloodiest in human history. Yet, the civilisation, albeit with all its wars and wounds, survived and flourished. Not many polytheistic religions have so successfully resisted the onslaught of Abrahamic faiths in the medieval era. It was challenging to destroy Hinduism because of its mind-boggling localisation of faith and the freedom of thought it propagated. The Bhakti era, which brought Ram into prominence in our traditions, is owed to the crisis that followed the Islamic onslaught. But the Bhakti saints didn't restrict themselves to one popular god. There was space for different faiths, and the devotional cult of Krishna, Shiva, Ganesh, Ayyappa, Murugan, Durga or localised forms like Jagannath, Balaji or Kama-khya, made sure that the faith was freed from the clutches of priests and became inclusive, cutting across divisions of caste, gender and social hierarchy. It didn't matter the invaders had destroyed some temples or holy places, or whether the priests allowed others to read the sacred texts, for such faith did not need any readers. The god one prayed to resides in the local temple, in the puja room of one's home, under the village banyan tree, in the grove at the edge of the village or in one's heart. Such a culture need not fear any religious bigot or a tyrant to destroy its faith. Such a religion

does not depend on one book, god or temple.

Gandhiji broke this delicate balance when he invoked Ram Rajya and started using Ram's name in politics. His intention may have been pure, but it destroyed the strength of India and its deeply-rooted Hindu culture. To act fair, he had to support the religious movement of Muslims too, and his bizarre support for the Khilafat movement—a move to restore the Islamic caliphate in Turkey, triggered a chain reaction, including the infamous religious genocide of Malabar in 1921.

The seeds of the Partition owe their roots to such mixing of religion and politics. The Dravidian movement was a reaction to the invoking of Ram's name in vain. And the origins of the Hindutva movement are also in this potent mix of religion and politics that Gandhiji started. Hinduism is now going through a tectonic change, becoming more Abrahamic in its nature, invoking god's name as an aggressive slogan, insisting on one holy place and the supremacy of one expression of god, etc. Insisting that the Gita—one among thousands of sacred books of Hinduism—is the pillar of its faith, like the Bible or the Koran, is indicative of its changing nature. Unfortunately, Ram, one among the many gods that Bhakti saints invoked—to reform, unite and soothe a broken society—has now become a tool of aggression and a chariot of political ambition.

If Hinduism becomes a mirror image of Abrahamic faiths, then, with its lingering caste system and social inequality, it will end up as a culture with all the negatives of Semitic religions, but with none of their virtues. Perhaps, the antidote to this mutation lies in the nature of Ramayana itself. No text has so many variations and versions. There are countless Rams. By telling and retelling their stories, as has been done for millennia, we may hope that Hinduism will survive its most significant challenge, from its most dangerous challenger. It is essential for the world that our ancient civilisation preserves its nature of celebrating diversity of views, faiths and perspectives.

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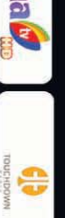
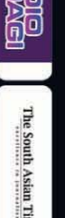
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Two Russians sail to Alaska seeking asylum in US

(By Staff Reporter) Two Russian nationals have been detained by US officials after arriving in a small boat on St Lawrence Island in Alaska.

According to the two US senators who represent the state, the men landed at a beach in the village of Gambell and requested asylum in the country. A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spokesperson said the duo's asylum claim was currently being processed. Thousands have fled Russia to avoid being conscripted for war in Ukraine. Gambell - home to less than 500 permanent residents - sits on the north-western cape of St Lawrence Island. The island is located some 36 miles (56km) from Russia's Chukchi Peninsula, meaning it is closer to Russia than it is to the Alaskan mainland. According to local media, Gambell residents can see the Russian territory of Siberia across the sea.

A local town clerk told the KTUU news station that the men had sailed there from the city of Egvekinot in north-eastern Russia, a journey of about 300 miles (480km) by sea, and have since been flown off the island. DHS said the men came ashore "in a small boat on Tuesday" and had been flown to Anchorage,



Alaska's largest city, for "vetting and screening". At a news conference on Wednesday, Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy said their arrival "was a surprise to us". "We don't anticipate a continual stream of individuals or a flotilla of individuals. We have no indication that's going to happen, so this may be a one-off," he added. Alaska Senator Dan Sullivan said community leaders in Gambell had contacted him about the men's arrival on Tuesday.

Mr Sullivan said he was urging federal authorities "to have a plan ready... in the event that

more Russians flee to Bering Strait communities in Alaska". "This incident makes two things clear: First, the Russian people don't want to fight Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine. Second, given Alaska's proximity to Russia, our state has a vital role to play in securing America's national security," he wrote in a statement on Thursday. His colleague from the state, Senator Lisa Murkowski, said the incident "underscores the need for a stronger security posture in America's Arctic". Both have pushed for expanding strategic defence capabilities and infrastructure in the state to combat threats Russia poses in the region. Citing a Kremlin source, a Forbes Russia report this week claimed as many as 700,000 men may have left the country since President Vladimir Putin announced a partial troop mobilisation on 21 September. The mass exodus comes as Russian troops have faced heavy losses and morale-crushing defeats on the battlefield. But while most men have fled over land to neighbouring Kazakhstan, Georgia and Finland, as well as other European countries, the arrivals in Alaska mark a first.

Thailand is mourning a horrific gun and knife attack at a childcare centre in the north-east that left 37 people, including 23 children, dead



(By Staff Reporter) Parents gathered outside the centre on Friday morning, weeping and clutching their children's toys.

A former policeman had stormed the building on Thursday, killing children as young as two as they slept.

Flags across Thailand are flying at half-mast as a devastated nation grapples with the tragedy.

Police say the 34-year-old attacker killed himself and his family after a manhunt. The motive for the attack is not yet known. But police said the attacker was fired from his job in June for drug use.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, and Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn, together with the Queen, are expected to visit the community in Nong Bua Lamphu province later on Friday.

Overnight, pink and white coffins adorned with gold, bearing the bodies of the children, were brought to a hospital morgue in Udon Thani and laid out in rows. Rescue workers had earlier brought the

victims' bodies to the police station, where families of the dead had gathered. Distraught relatives had also waited outside the daycare centre well into the night.

"I don't know what to do next"

Police said the armed attacker broke into the building just after lunch time on Thursday, shooting his way past a teacher and parent outside.

Witnesses said he first shot staff - including a teacher who was eight-months pregnant - before forcing his way past teachers into a room where children were napping.

Police said he stabbed most of his victims before fleeing.

Headteacher Nanticha Panchum told the BBC she had just sent the children off for their nap when she heard gunshots.

Usually the centre looked after 92 children on site but because of poor weather and a bus breakdown, there were only 24 there at the time. Only one child survived, Ms Nanticha said. "This is something I

never dreamed of... I don't know what to do next. I really can't think of anything at the moment," she told the BBC. The attacker's son went to the centre but hadn't been attending for a month, she said. He was recognised by one of her colleagues when he burst in.

Soon after news of the attack emerged, Thai Police published an online manhunt appeal - identifying the man as Panya Kamrab, a local man. He was a former officer who had been fired in June for drug use, police later said. Officers who rushed to the nursery were confronted with the bodies of adults and children, some of them very young, lying inside and outside the building.

"We found that the perpetrator tried to break in and he mainly used a knife to commit the crime by killing a number of small children," said Police Chief Damrongsak Kittiprapat.

"Then he got out and started killing

anyone he met along the way with a gun or the knife until he got home.

"We surrounded the house and then found that he committed suicide in his home." Police said Kamrab returned home, killing his wife and son before taking his own life.

He had appeared in court the morning of the attack on charges related to the use and possible sale of methamphetamine. He had been due to face a verdict on Friday.

Mass shootings in Thailand are rare, although gun ownership rates are relatively high for the region. Illegal weapons are also common in the south-east Asian country, according to the Reuters news agency. The nursery attack comes less than a month after an army officer shot dead two of his colleagues at a base in Bangkok. In 2020 a soldier killed 29 people and injured dozens more in the city of Nakhon Ratchasima.



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Canada: Supreme Court weighs if US is 'safe' for migrants

(By Staff Reporter) Canada's Supreme Court has heard for the first time a Canada-US asylum pact case that will weigh whether the country can consider its southern neighbour "safe" for those seeking refugee status. The outcome could determine whether Canada can trust that the US treats migrants properly, and could answer whether Canada holds any responsibility for migrants turned back at its border. At the heart of the matter is the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) - a pact between the two countries in place since 2004 that requires refugee claimants to request protection in the first "safe" country they reach. Campaigners in Canada have long argued that the STCA should be struck down on the grounds that migrants are at risk of mistreatment in the US and that the agreement violates their constitutional rights. On Thursday, Canada's Supreme Court judges questioned if there was enough evidence to suggest widespread systemic issues in how



the US treats migrants that would deem the agreement unconstitutional.

In response, refugee lawyers argued the detainment of some migrants is quick and inhumane, and violates the "right, liberty and security of the person" as outlined by Canada's charter. Refugee lawyers and advocates say some of migrants sent back were imprisoned in "freezing cold" detention centres or subject to solitary confinement. Meanwhile, lawyers for the Canadian government argued the US is a democratic country that

has a robust and fair system for processing asylum claims. Experts say the outcome of the case could also determine the future of "irregular" land crossings into Canada, which reached a record high this year. Canada and the US share a 5,525 mile (8,891 km) border - the longest between two countries in the world. The STCA was put in place to better manage refugee claims at the US-Canada land border and to avoid asylum seekers making claims in multiple countries, or so-called "asylum shopping". The agreement applies to almost all refugee claimants

coming through the US, except if they have a family member in Canada or if they are an unaccompanied minor. The US is the only nation designated as a "safe third country" by Canada - a designation based, in part, by Ottawa's belief that the US meets a high standard in protecting human rights. Canadian campaigners have mounted successful legal challenges in the lower courts to the STCA, the first one in 2005 shortly after it was signed. But those outcomes were challenged by the Canadian government and overturned on appeal. Most recently, in 2020 a federal court ruled the STCA unconstitutional citing the possibility that the US could imprison migrants. The matter will now be decided by Canada's highest court. In a statement to the BBC, Immigration and Citizenship Canada said they believe "the STCA remains a comprehensive means for the compassionate, fair, and orderly handling of asylum claims in our two countries".

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Ram And The Many Ramayanas Outside India

Maharishi Valmiki's Ramayana—the Sanskrit treatise that chronicles the victory of Ram against the 10-headed Lanka king, Ravan—is a much-loved tale of good triumphing over evil, the world over. While Valmiki's version is recognised as the original one, over 300 Ramayana versions are known to exist, especially in South East Asia, when around the 12th and 13th centuries, the region received and imbibed many of the cultural traits, along with goods and services, travelling from Indian shores. The Ramayana adaptations have inserted their own folklore and culture beliefs, changed plots, character traits, attire, choice of weaponry, and locations, and in turn offer an array of refreshing perspectives on the original treatise. Many of these versions do not ascribe to the Brahmanical values in the original Ramayana that was predominant among upper caste Hindus. In the Indian versions too, there are new characters introduced, especially in Jaina texts, and writers across Asia, especially took note of these influences. It is why Ram was also a respectable figure for even Buddhists of Southeast Asia. The Buddhist version of Ramayana, called Dasarata Jataka, has two major differences—One, king Dashrath sends Ram, Sita and Lakshman to reside in the forest only to protect them from his third wife; and secondly, the plot does not include Sita's abduction. The epic and its versions grew so popular that even their kings started legitimising of their kingship through Ramayana. The earliest instance is of a 11th-century Burmese stone inscription in Mon language, in which King Kyanzittha of Bagan dynasty proclaims he is an incarnation of Ram's close relative.

A majority of the population in Cambodia, like Thailand and Burma, practice Theravada Buddhism. But before that Mahayana Buddhism was dominant, and even before that, it was Hinduism. Odia and Tamil sea merchants were responsible for the proliferation of these three India religions to Southeast Asia, when they would undertake an annual voyage, and along with the goods exchanged stories. In some Southeast Asian versions, Hanuman is depicted as some playing mind

games, who charms and outwits especially the female characters. He makes Ravan's mermaid daughter Suvarnamaccha steal rocks that are then used by his monkey army to build the Lanka bridge, and tricks sorceress Benjkaya to masquerade as Sita, dead, in order to make Ram return. Still, Ram is the dominant character in most versions here. Cambodia's Ramayana version is called Reamker (Ramakerti—Ram + Kirti/glory), a text of Khmer literature that takes from both Hinduism and Buddhism to demonstrate the balance of good and evil. Here, Ram is called Phreah Ream and Sita, Neang Seda. Within the 12th-century Angkor Wat ruins, there's a corridor with carved episodes. Ramayan murals also grace the walls of Phnom Penh's royal palace complex. Here, Hanuman is shown expanding his body to fit the vacuum between India and Lanka so that Ram and his monkey army can cross the sea, which is similar to Jataka tale where a monkey king stretches himself between two trees so that his monkey followers can flee from the king's hunters.

The last line of monarchs, when Thailand was erstwhile Siam, claimed to be Ram's descendants, and their names had Ram either as a prefix or suffix. Even the capital city then was Ayutthaya, a similar sounding name to Ayodhya. In the 18th century, Burmese soldiers invaded this city, and their king, changed his name to Rama I, despite being a practicing Buddhist. He wrote the Thai version of the epic, called Ramakien, which today is the national epic. Murals of reimagined scenes from this version grace the edifice of Wat Phra Kaew (Emerald Buddha Temple). Myanmar (Burma) has an unofficial national epic called Yamayana; Yama or Zatdaw (an enactment of Jataka Tales), introduced during King Anawratha's reign in the 11th century CE. In this version, Ram is called Yama, Sita is Thida and Ravan is Yawana. Ram is portrayed as a Bodhisattva. The narrative is mostly the same as Valmiki's Ramayana, except for localised names of places and characters. In Laos, the national epic is Phra Lak Phra Ram. Lao devotees believed that their ruler King Lava was Ram's son, and that

Lava gave Laos its name. This is viewed as a Jataka story helmed on a story about a previous life of Lord Buddha.

In Malay literature, the Hikayat Seri Rama is strikingly similar to the original Sanskrit epic. In the versions of storytellers in Malaysia, Laksman (Lakshman) is the central character, not Ram; that is similar to the Phra Lak Phra Lam, where Laksman takes centre-stage for his courage and Ram is comparatively perceived as the weaker one. Moreover, the text sympathises with Ravan. To gauge the sheer variety of Ramayanas in Southeast Asia, Indonesia makes for a good case study. Here, the versions of Ramayana differ from island to island. In Bali, it is Ramakavaca, in Java its Kakawin or Yogesvara Ramayana, and in Sumatra its Ramayana Swarnadwipa. In the latter version, Tamawaka (Ram) rescues Himegini (Sita), from Baramon (Ravan). The Javanese Kakawin is a Sanskrit-metre-poetry composed during the Medang kingdom era. The plot in the first half is similar to Valmiki's Ramayana, but changes thereafter, in fact introduces wry humour, by focusing on god Semar and his three sons. In some Indonesian versions, Sita is anything but demure as portrayed in Ramayana, but is fierce and daring enough to fight the Asuras on her own. The indigenous Kecak fire dance, themed on Sita's abduction by Ravan, is performed with no musical instruments but only a choir of vocalists.

The Maranao version in the Philippines is called Maharadia Lawana that lists completely new events and characters that chronicle the adventures of the monkey-king, Maharadia Lawana, who was blessed with immortality by the gods. In one tale, Princess Gandingan is kidnapped by the devatas of the Bumbaran kingdom, but rescued by Prince Bantugan; similar to the abduction story of Sita by Ravan. The Singkil dance form is helmed on this epic. The relevance of Ramayana in South East Asia can be gauged by the fact that the opening ceremony of the 2017 ASEAN summit involved a staging of the musical version of Ramayana. However, other countries in Asia, especially the ones bordering India, also have their own

Ramayanas.

All the Ramayana versions of Southeast Asia, one can find bravery, romance, and adventure. But in China, part of Eastern Asia, only picked up the orthodox and ethical values noted in the Indian epic. Jataka Tales of Ram are quite popular with the Chinese. There's Buddhist text Liudu ji jing that is an elaborate account of the Ramayana, while in Sun Wukong, Hanuman finds some representation in the form of a monkey-king. Japan has two versions namely, Hobutsushu and Sambo-Ekotoba. Hanuman has a diminutive role in another adaptation titled, Ramaenna or Ramaensho, and in the Bontenkoku version, Tamawaka (Ram), a flute player rescues his wife Himegini (Sita) from King Baramon (Ravan). In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on his return from Japan this year, made a special mention of the 1993 Japanese animated film Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama that combines manga and Indian classical painting, in his 89th episode of Mann Ki Baat, informing audiences that the film is being re-mastered in 4k resolution. Closest to home is Sri Lanka author Kumaradasa's Sanskrit text of Janakiharan, translation for J?nak?'s abduction; J?nak? being Sita. The book, Ramayana as Shadows of South Asia's Proto-History by Wijaya Dissanayake, notes that in a bid to prevent Sinhalese from taking up Hinduism, Buddhist monks would discourage them from reading the epic. In recent history, traditional Sinhala-Buddhists do not ascribe to Ravan's portrayal in the Valmiki's version, and believe his defeat was because his brother Vibhishana joined forces with Ram. In the 1980s, literary texts such as Ravanavaliya hailed Ravana as a Sinhala hero. On April 17, 2019, the island nation launched its first satellite Ravana-1. In Nepal, Mahakavi Siddhidas Mahaju Amatya wrote Siddhi Ramayana in the Nepal Bhasa renaissance era. There's also Bhanubhakta Acharya's Bhanubhaktako Ramayana in Khas language. However, the revelry of Dussehra called Dasain or Mohini in Nepal is more about the goddess Durga, than Ram's triumph over Ravan.

Ramayan: Who Is Ram And What Is His Story?

Ramayana is a story of struggle against society's imposed morality, of kings and queens who are products of their circumstances and choices

Ravan went up in flames that evening at Gandhi Maidan in Patna. This was many, many years ago. A stampede ensued. That was the only time I went to witness this violent act. Mother had told me once that Ravan was building a ladder that would make heaven accessible to everyone. Was he a socialist? I asked. My mother said you could say so.

They say Ravan got tired midway and the project was shelved. But that was a fantastic idea. An idea that espoused egalitarianism and broke the myth of heaven as a place reserved only for the pious—a kind of gated colony. The haves and the have nots. The old, persistent divide.

What constituted dharma then? This, I asked my mother several times. She said beyond the ideas of sin, piety and moksha, there was this enduring idea of love and hope. She then cautioned me not to trust narratives, but to ask questions. Always. That's why I am telling you these stories," she said.

When I asked her who Ram is, she said he was Vishnu's seventh avatar who came to earth to establish Utopia. He was a man who followed dharma, went to exile, and later, denounced his wife Sita, because he was the king and his people doubted her character after she had been abducted by Ravan. Did Ram miss Sita? My mother said she thought he did.

"He shouldn't have left her," she said. That was a woman's re-reading of the Ramayana. My mother's. This was in the 80s in Bihar, when stories were the only way to entertain ourselves. TV wasn't so pervasive and the world wasn't so small. In that great big world, there was space for many renditions of this mythological tale that seem to have become "history" now. In order to understand how we interpret literature, including the epics, it is imperative to understand where we come from. Sita, my mother told me, was born in Bihar. She said she was born from the earth when a drop of Ravan's sweat fell. There was an accompanying prophecy—Ravan's end would come when he would desire Sita.

"Did Ravan know Sita was his

daughter?" I asked. "He didn't," she said. None of the girls I knew in school or college were named Sita. The name, my mother said, can bring that fate of abandonment to the bearer. Hence, there are no Sitas. But in Bihar's Sit-a-marhi, there is a temple dedicated to Sita, perhaps the only one anywhere. That's how we preserve the memory of a mythological character. Bihar has never let go of Sita even in the face of the Ram campaign. My mother still writes Jai Siya-Ram in a notebook. In the temple in the neighbourhood, women congregate and sing bhajans and prefix Sita before Ram. Ram's abandonment of Sita is a story we never forgot. Her sacrifice was bigger than any. That's how we enter the Ram-ayana. Through Sita. She said there are many stories and points of entry. Like in the Mahabharata. It could be the story of Karan, Draupadi or Shikhandi. "I'm telling you the possibilities I know of," she said. My Ramayana is then a composite of many stories told to me by men and women around me. It was a beautiful story. Like magic realism. Ravan had an aeroplane too. He could even order the moon to change its position. Ram touched a stone and it became a woman called Ahalya.

But all this was challenged by the reductive reading and broadcasting of a TV serial called Ramayan in the late 80s that reiterated a single narrative that limited the scope of any other interpretation. That was the time when mythology entered the political sphere and Ayodhya became the geographical node for the preservation of "nation" and "culture". That's how "othering" became a norm. Not that it wasn't there before all this, but it gained momentum and eventually, got State sanction. The Hindu right wing utilised the reverential power of the epic, reduced and appropriated. The question is, how are we asked to read it and interpret it?

When I asked my mother, she said nobody reads. Neither the various Ramayanas, nor the Constitution or anything else. You have your own Ramayana, she said. Nostalgia is power. The TV

serial showed us a grand court in Ayodhya, a way to become the ideal man, a way to conquer with the ashwamedha horse let loose, a way to sacrifice everything to protect dharma, to even build a bridge so that a kingdom could be destroyed. They showed us the promise of the past and we bought the idea. We paid a cost. We lost our Ram somewhere in the frenzied reimagining of his character. I remember the calendars back then that showed him with his palm facing us, as if he was blessing us, unlike the weaponised version that's so omnipresent now.

This was our most-loved story. The story of good over evil. Like a Dickensian plot. Like a morality play. The truth, my mother said, is never absolute. Ram is a tragic hero. Ravan a rebel, Sita a feminist, and so on. All this and Ram came to us packaged in a 78-episode TV series telecast on Sunday mornings from January 25, 1987, to July 31, 1988, on the national broadcaster. Directed by Ram-anand Sagar, it appeared around a time the country was witnessing a resurgence of Hindu nationalism. Ramayana instantly became an important focus of devotion for millions. I remember the old Bush TV set we had on which we watched the serial on Sundays and neighbours came to watch Lord Rama's good deeds with folded hands. They would have taken a shower before and even offered flowers to the TV set.

My mother would later subtly embark on a course correction. She would say Ravan didn't touch Sita. He waited for her consent. He had been angered because his sister Surpanakha's nose, ears and breasts had been cut by Lakshman, because she had wanted either him or Ram to marry her. That was a case of disproportionate punishment, I said. The way Sagar portrayed Surpanakha, where the actor had been padded to look big and had black paint all over her face with protruding teeth to give us a version of asurs—demons who knew no morals—differed from my mother's rendition. She said Surpanakha was very beautiful and a widow. "Are widows

supposed not to remarry?" I asked. Patriarchy is our inheritance. Like the epics. In school, we were beginning to read about reform movements like widow remarriage. The world order was changing. "Morality, too, is a question of time," my favourite writer Marquez had once said. That's how we formed our versions of Ramayana. In our eras. In our contexts. There are many Ramayanas out there. Of scholars, poets, saints and those that belong to us. They say ideas aren't copyrighted. Ramayana is also an idea.

To me, the melancholy of Surpanakha was also the story of Ramayana. She opposed the prescribed ways of life for women. She wanted revenge because she had been punished. Her desire to remarry hadn't been so outrageous after all. Ramayana, the TV serial, presented an idea that the Hindu world was menaced by demons.

The Babri Masjid, on the site of the alleged birthplace of Ram in Ayodhya, was demolished by Hindu nationalists on December 6, 1992. The resulting riots left thousands dead.

That year, I encountered my first curfew. That year, I saw fear firsthand. That year, I saw how easily we alienated others. I remember that from the loudspeakers, the names of gods blared through the days and nights. Jai Sri Ram instead of Jai Siya-Ram that we used to say. Fire, smoke and a lot of police.

In 1990, L.K. Advani had started his Rath Yatra in Somnath, Gujarat, and planned to end it in Ayodhya by laying a foundation stone for the construction of a Ram temple at the Babri Masjid site. On October 23, the Rath, an AC bus, entered Bihar despite warnings from the then CM Lalu Prasad Yadav, who had been sworn in just seven months earlier. The slogan had been "Kasam Ram ki khaten hain, Mandir wahin banayenge." Lalu's argument was that the Rath Yatra would incite riots. In the wee hours of October 24, 1990, Advani was detained in Samastipur by Lalu's government. The 11-month-old National Front government, led by V.P. Singh, collapsed after BJP withdrew support. Many

things happened in the aftermath. But who is Ram? That, we forgot to ask ourselves. We took the version of Ram in the serial. The appropriation began with the previous Congress government broadcasting the serial, when the Muslim Women's bill was being drawn up after the Shah Bano case, and with the opening of the Babri Masjid in 1986. The BJP profited from what the Congress had started.

I remember the visuals of the kar sevaks dressed like Ram, Lakshman and Hanuman in the TV serial. The Rath was modelled after what was shown in it. The serial was telecast again during the Covid-19 lockdown. Millions again watched it. There is an insistence on that Ramayan. We live in an era of Hindu awakening. It doesn't take time to transform from devotional to political as we have witnessed with the serial—the first major departure from the secular consensus. Is this Ram Rajya? This, I asked my mother. "There's a lot of inflation and other bad news on TV," she said. I am retelling a story from childhood in the hope that it might alter the present. I am being ambitious. They say don't take the name of god in vain. But I grew up with Ram. I don't fear my god. I remember I had wanted Marni, her mother, our neighbourhood tailor Idhries miyan and his children to go to heaven. They were poor and never had enough to eat. Heaven would have food at least. Many years later, Idhries miyan killed himself by laying down on rail tracks. Marni worked at our house. They were Dalits. There would be no stairway to heaven. There is no heaven. Or hell. I finally found my answers when I found myself in a remote village of the Asur tribe in Jharkhand recently. Them and us. Us over them. All this and more. Gods and demons. Aryans and Dravidians. Men and women. Pitched against each other in eternal battles. Is there any redemption? The tribals gave me an answer.

Leicester, The New Epicentre Of Communal Tension

Almost 40% of Leicester's residents are of South Asian origin and the city has often been held up as a successful model of integration. Even now, official statements and media reports about the violence have taken pains not to puncture that reputation. Some have blamed "outsiders," especially from nearby Birmingham, for the trouble. Police have complained that disinformation spread through social media fired up the mobs. And many observers have stressed the pacifying influence of "community leaders."

There's some truth to all those statements. But they miss the larger story, which is that the sectarian politics of the Indian subcontinent can no longer be contained within the subcontinent. Such divides are being globalized, spreading alienation, disinformation, political partisanship, radicalization and violence in their wake.

Take social media. Today, political mobilization in South Asia is driven largely by online content - and, increasingly, by made-to-order misinformation. This is true for Hindus, Muslims and even Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka. Indeed, the subcontinent is making new and

innovative advances in hate speech. Bigots are no longer content to relabel and retweet incendiary videos; they are creating their own fake content and labeling it as "entertainment."

Just last week, a viral video - retweeted by, among others, a spokesman for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party - appeared to show a Muslim clergyman abusing a young woman. The video was in fact created specifically for "educational" - rabble-rousing - purposes. The scenes it depicted were imaginary, according to a portentous disclaimer, "because the reality is too bitter to be told or shown."

Social media has also dissolved boundaries between locals and "outsiders." Technology makes it easy for angry co-religionists to collaborate and egg each other on, even if they aren't physical neighbors. Until a decade ago, for instance, riots in India were predominantly an urban phenomenon.

Then, in 2013, the advent of social media allowed mobs from different villages to launch a coordinated attack on Muslims in rural Uttar Pradesh, displacing tens of thousands of them.

The uneasy peace that has long held in places such as Leicester - negotiated by

local faith leaders and maintained by separating the different communities - cannot survive this new age. If Leicester has more Hindus than Muslims, then a provocative march will be organized in a Muslim area. If the Midlands as a whole have more Muslims than Hindus, then they will in turn combine to intimidate Leicester's Hindus. And on and on, to the level of the nation itself.

Nor will politics-as-usual solve the problem. Rather than speaking directly to minority voters, too many British politicians and administrators still rely on "community leaders" of doubtful opinions and increasingly limited authority. Why would a young British Asian man listen to his local imam or pandit when he consumes media from the subcontinent that is full of far more entertaining, and incendiary, voices?

Besides, it is too easy for politicians, in the UK as well as India, to exploit these sectarian divides. Priti Patel, until a few weeks ago the cabinet minister in charge of law and order, recently described her Tories and the BJP as "sister parties." At least one Hindu Labour MP has accused his own party of employing a "divide and rule" policy in which, he implied, Hindus

were at the bottom of the pile.

The worst possible outcome would be for Hindus and Muslims in the Midlands and the wider UK to start voting for different parties based on their religion. Then adoption of the subcontinent's divisive politics would be complete.

That "divide and rule" comment - a reference to how the British supposedly controlled a diverse and divided subcontinent for two centuries - gets to the heart of the problem. Over the past fortnight, some in the UK have tried to examine how the echoes of empire still animate aspects of national identity. Yet they have failed to see how actual policies in today's Britain, in what the state does and does not do, in its acceptance of ghettoized communities and its dependence on "faith leaders" as interlocutors, eerily reflect how the Raj once kept the peace half a world away.

The modern British state cannot afford to continue ruling distantly through community leaders, allowing Hindus and Muslims in the UK to live separately and build up grudges against each other. Those policies no longer work in South Asia - and they certainly won't work elsewhere.

Kidnapped Sikh family, including 8-month-old baby, found dead in California, cops say

(News Agency) The kidnapped Indian-origin family of four, including an 8-month-old baby, was found dead Wednesday in California, authorities said. "It's horribly, horribly senseless," Merced County Sheriff Vern Warnke said. The bodies of the victims were found in the same area, he said.

Warnke said the bodies of 36-year-old Jasdeep Singh, 27-year-old Jasleen Kaur, their eight-month-old child Aroohi Dheri and the baby's uncle, 39-year-old Amandeep Singh, were found on Wednesday evening in an orchard near Indiana Road and Hutchinson Road. Warnke said that a farm worker near the orchard found the bodies and immediately contacted authorities. All of the bodies were found close together. "There are no words to describe the anger I feel," Warnke said during a press conference Wednesday evening. "There's a special place in hell for this guy," he said about Jesus Manuel Salgado, the suspect, who attempted to kill himself. 48-year-old

Salgado, considered a "person of interest" in the kidnapping of the four-member Sikh family, had been taken into custody and was in critical condition after he tried to kill himself, authorities said. The family,



originally from Harsi Pind in Hoshiarpur, Punjab, was kidnapped at a business in Merced County, California, on Monday. A

vehicle owned by one of the family members was found on fire late Monday, which led law enforcement to determine that the four had been kidnapped. According to a news release, detectives received information on Tuesday morning that one of the victim's bank cards was used at an ATM in Atwater in Merced County. "Investigators obtained the surveillance photo of a subject making a bank transaction where the person is similar in appearance to the surveillance photo from the original kidnapping scene," the Merced County Sheriff's Office statement says.

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 FARMS & RESORTS

It's BJP vs Team Thackeray For Dussehra, Team Shinde Sidelined

The feuding factions consist of the branch led by Uddhav Thackeray, and the other led by Eknath Shinde, who replaced Uddhav Thackeray as Chief Minister after partnering with the BJP.

The aggressive and big bucks campaign of the BJP was launched with huge fanfare on September 5 by Amit Shah, who addressed party workers in the financial capital and exhorted them to "teach Uddhav Thackeray a lesson". On Dussehra (October 5), the competing Senas are both holding rallies. The festival has big significance for the party. Eknath Shinde lost the legal battle to hold his rally in Shivaji Park, where, on every Dussehra, Sena founder Bal Thackeray would address the cadres. The Chief Minister has been forced to redirect his rally to another public park.

In his Dussehra speeches, Bal Thackeray would launch strident attacks on enemies with his trademark high-octane speech. His son, Uddhav, and his grandson, Aditya, shared the stage. In fact, Uddhav Thackeray was introduced by his father

as the new chief of the party at Shivaji Park on Dussehra.

Eknath Shinde has already inspected thrice the location allotted to his rally. Significantly, he has not yet invited his deputy Devendra Fadnavis and others in the Maharashtra BJP to his event. Senior leaders I spoke to across the Maharashtra political spectrum make two points. Neither Bal nor Uddhav Thackeray allowed BJP leaders at their Dussehra events while their parties were allies; this was based on the Sena making it clear that the BJP was to stay away from trying to infiltrate areas of heavy Marathi domination (core Sena vote in Mumbai). But with Eknath Shinde, who it props up as Chief Minister, the BJP has made it clear that no-go areas stand bulldozed - so, the BJP has launched "Marathi Garba" with singer Avadhoot Gupte to connect to the Marathi vote; then came the Ranveer Singh spectacle. The BJP has planned many such "events" in the run-up to the vital BMC elections. Both editions of the Sena - Team Thackeray

and Team Shinde - are urban parties drawing their strength from the Mumbai voter. And Eknath Shinde is discomfited with the ingress of Devendra Fadnavis into the former's turf. Meanwhile, team Thackeray which is fighting for its survival has to ensure that it wins the BMC elections - its traditional stomping ground and an upcoming electoral face off with Shinde Sena in Andheri (East). Erstwhile MVA allies, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress party have indicated that they will support team Thackeray in the election.

The face-off between the two Senas is fierce. On WhatsApp and social media, both camps are releasing videos about Dussehra deriding the other. Sources say Uddhav Thackeray, who oversaw Sena videos when Bal Thackeray was alive, is reviewing the new videos to make sure they deliver as propaganda. The date for the BMC election has not yet been announced. The Sena has won it for the last 25 years. Significantly, the BJP has

decided to use Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a mascot for the BMC election. In 2020, the BJP placed top leaders like Yogi Adityanath, Amit Shah and party President JP Nadda in the campaign for the Hyderabad civic polls. The party was keen to use those local elections to begin a wider initiative for a foothold in Telangana.

"We need Maharashtra for 2024 (Maharashtra has 48 Lok Sabha seats) and we win every poll using Modi-ji's face, so we are promoting him to show how seriously we take the BMC polls". Amit Shah is expected to up his visits to poll-bound Gujarat and give similar attention to Maharashtra.

Team Thackeray, say sources, will play the regional card and accuse the BJP-Eknath Shinde alliance of betraying the "Marathi Manos". As evidence, they will continue to highlight the state's hard luck story - that Maharashtra lost a 20-billion-dollar chip-making project to Gujarat. The BMC has turned into election gold. Nothing local about it.

India's Internet Bill Is Straight Out of Beijing's Playbook

Activists, dissidents and whistleblowers will find themselves particularly exposed; pressure will build on services like Meta Platforms Inc.'s WhatsApp, which has sued the Indian government for asking it to break end-to-end encryption, to fall in line.

Eventually, India will move a little closer to a more Chinese-style, controlled internet.

The anticipated telecom law is actually all about the internet. It seeks to bend the industry to the government's will by imposing a license requirement on everything from Gmail to FaceTime and Skype. Licensed services will have to "unequivocally identify" their customers. Senders of messages will have to be similarly identifiable to the recipients. "These provisions essentially strip away the user's right to stay anonymous," said the New Delhi-based Internet Freedom Foundation, a think tank. "Such a broad and excessive requirement, in the absence of a data protection law, fails to prioritize user safety and security."

Just last month, the Indian government junked a personal data protection bill that had been in the making for five years, and decided to replace it with "a comprehensive legal framework." Going by the tenor of the draft telecom law, it's unrealistic to expect India to lean toward European-style privacy safeguards. Both the public and the private sector are happy to see everything from banking services to state subsidies linked to a controversial national repository of biometric identification. Monitoring the daily lives of 1.4 billion Indians with databases - to extract

profit or wield power - is a leaf taken straight out of Beijing's playbook.

Given a general lack of awareness of digital harm, fitting the model to local conditions isn't difficult. Recently, 50 million Indians geotagged their homes, and uploaded their pictures with phone numbers to a culture ministry website after Prime Minister Narendra Modi told them that this is how they needed to celebrate the 75th year of India's independence. Only some security researchers found the idea outrageous.

On the other hand, there were howls of protests when Razorpay, a Bengaluru-based online payments gateway, was forced recently by the police to give up confidential user data that could be exploited by authorities to harass donors to Alt News, a fact-checking website that finds itself increasingly at odds with the Hindu right-wing Modi government. As a regulated financial service provider, Razorpay had no choice. Now the same threat of being

finned - or losing the right to operate - could be brought to bear on technology services firms.

When it comes to wanting to control the worldwide web, India is already something of a world leader: There have been more than 660 instances since 2012 when mobile or fixed-line internet was shut down in one part of the country or the other, according to the Software Freedom Law Centre, an advocacy group. The draft telecom bill simply seeks to formalize this arbitrary power, which is now used by various state governments - not just to stop the spread of misinformation during riots but also to prevent students from cheating in examinations.

That can hardly be the right blueprint for a rapidly modernizing economy where the private sector aspires to lead the world in digital businesses ranging from retail to finance and entertainment. But having seen and utilized the power of social media in winning elections, the Modi

government is unlikely to take a hands-off approach - not when the China model of heavy-handed control already exists.

Business interests will support what works for them. Twitter Inc., which is suing the government over what it terms as "arbitrary" and "disproportionate" directions to block handles or take down content, won't want its fate in the country to hang by a license it can lose any time. But across industries like social media, messaging and e-commerce, new local players will rush to support New Delhi. They'll proclaim a nationalist motivation, though in reality they will just want India to go behind a Chinese-style firewall so they can become its Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. and Tencent Holdings Ltd.

In this confusing cross-connection of power and profit, the voice of the consumer and the citizen, whose interests are best served by a free and open internet, will struggle to be heard.

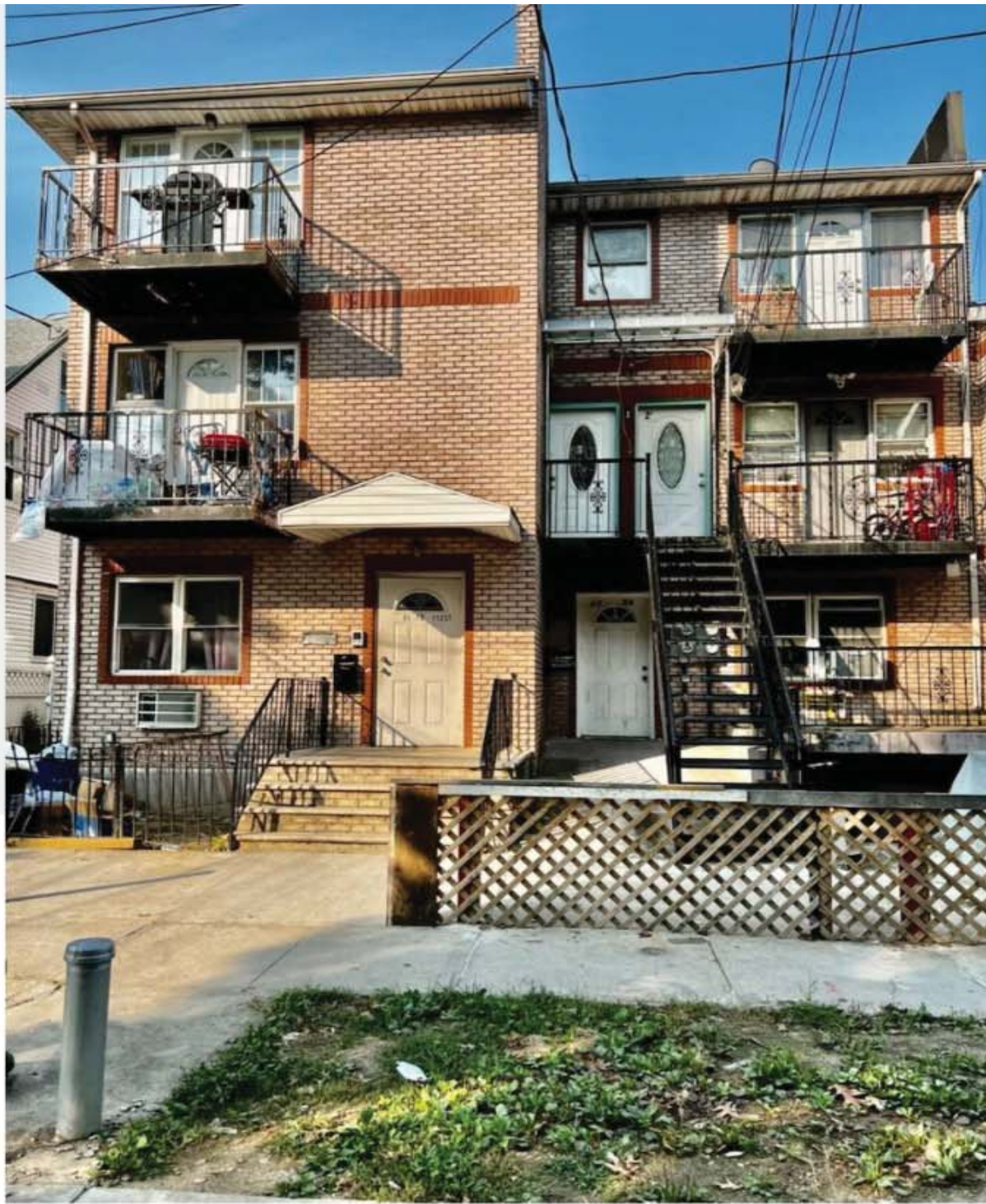
Amit Shah rules out talks with Pakistan, says will wipe out terrorism from J&K

We will talk to the people of Baramulla, we will talk to the people of Kashmir," Amit Shah said. "We want to make Jammu and Kashmir the most peaceful place in the country," he added. The Union minister also tore into the families of the Abdullahs (National Conference), Muftis (PDP) and Nehru-Gandhi (Congress) for the alleged underdevelopment of Jammu and Kashmir as they ruled the erstwhile state most of the time since the country's independence in 1947. "Mehbooba Mufti and Farooq Abdullah built four medical colleges. We have built nine since 2014. We have built one lakh houses since 2014.

We have ensured, in the last three years, that all villages in Kashmir (including villages in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) have electricity connection," Amit Shah said.

A day earlier, Home Minister Amit Shah declared in Rajouri that the Pahari community would soon get reservations in education and jobs as Scheduled Tribe (ST). In Baraullah, Amit Shah said the reservation was not possible earlier due to Article 370.

On elections in Jammu and Kashmir, the Union minister said as soon as the work of compiling the voters' list is completed, elections will be held with full transparency.



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How Pornhub - one of the world's biggest sites - caused untold damage and pain

Last week, on 11 December, the credit card giants Visa and Mastercard announced that they would no longer allow cardholders to make transactions on Pornhub, the online giant of user-uploaded pornography that is one of the most-visited sites on the internet. The companies' decision came just days after the New York Times published a lengthy investigation by the opinion columnist Nicholas Kristof on 4 December, which found large numbers of videos on the platform depicting rape, the molestation and abuse of minors, violent sexual abuse of women and other nonconsensual content. Like other social media sharing platforms, such as YouTube, Pornhub has historically allowed any user to upload any video they want to the site. But unlike other such platforms, Pornhub also allowed users to download the material and re-upload it elsewhere on the internet. The Times investigation found that the company's under-prioritized and understaffed content moderation division was often slow to taking illegal content down and ineffectual at preventing it from being re-uploaded, either to Pornhub or to other pages. This combination of factors had made the site into a harbor for rape tapes, child sexual abuse images, revenge porn and spycam videos, and a wellspring from which such content was spread across the internet. Almost immediately following the publication of the Times report, Pornhub and its parent company, the Montreal-based pornography conglomerate MindGeek, announced changes to the platform. Users would now need to be verified in order to upload videos, making it easier to hold those who upload to the site accountable for the way the videos are obtained and produced. The "download" button was also removed, making it harder for videos of rape and

child molestation to be reuploaded or spread. These changes will hopefully go a ways toward mitigating future harm from the child sexual abuse images and taped assaults that will inevitably still get uploaded to the site. They will make it harder to upload illegal content with impunity, and harder to steal and spread it. But the changes come a bit too late for the women Kristof interviewed for his investigation. They include Serena Fleites, who at 14 sent nude videos to an older boy she had a crush on; he distributed the videos to his friends, and they wound up on Pornhub. She petitioned the company to take the images down, but they would quickly get re-uploaded; one video of her at 14 has more than 400,000 views. The cascading effects of the harassment and trauma that followed led her to leave school and fall into addiction to cope; she is now sober and living in her car.

Another woman, known only as Taylor, was secretly taped by a boyfriend performing a sex act when she was 14; he also sent the video to his friends, and that also wound up on Pornhub. Taylor is now 18. In the intervening four years, she has attempted suicide twice. A British teenager named Nicole says that she was blackmailed into sending more and more nude content to a boy when she was 15; the videos have been posted and reposted to Pornhub. She's now 19; she, too, says she has had multiple suicide attempts. Like the other survivors, Nicole is caught in a dark game of whack-a-mole with the company. She can report the videos of herself to the content moderation department, and often, they are eventually removed. But then they are re-uploaded again. And again. All the while, Pornhub profits from the hurt and indignity imposed on these women, who were not only abused, but who now have

to live with the knowledge that images of that abuse are enjoyed by strangers as entertainment - strangers who often know or suspect that the videos are nonconsensual or depict minors, and who find that to be a significant part of their appeal.

In a parallel but less morally urgent trend, Pornhub's historic policies surrounding uploads from unverified users and free downloads have also created a strain on consensual porn performers. These women are in a different class, both morally and legally, from the nonconsensual sexual abuse victims whose images reappear on Pornhub again and again.

But these workers, too, stand to benefit from Pornhub's proposed changes: the download and unverified user upload features on Pornhub created a widespread piracy issue that made it difficult for these women to control and monetize their own image. As a performer called Dee Siren told Rolling Stone, the changes will "stop pirated content from being allowed and it will make sure people have to pay to download content from models ... We have been pushing to have this happen for over 10 years." Neither of these groups' concerns was unknown to Pornhub: survivors and consensual sex workers alike have advocated for verified-user only uploads and the removal of the download button for years. But until last week, the company was resistant to the change. Since the problems with Pornhub's platform have been known for years, why was the company so slow to implement the necessary changes? Perhaps because before the Kristof piece was published early this month, those outside the sex worker and survivor communities were disinclined to push them. Pornography has been a touchy subject for those on

the left for years, despite the various labor and gender justice issues that the industry presents. Sex workers do an admirable job of advocating for themselves, but outside their movement, feminist and workers rights advocates have been reluctant to criticize the porn industry. Part of this is because porn embarrasses people; part of it is because many men can be fiercely defensive of pornography, and aggressively hostile to those who criticize it. For their part, feminists often do not want to interrogate the porn industry for fear of being seen as regressive, puritanical, or anti-sex. And more delicately, people of all genders can be sensitive and defensive around the areas of private sexual life that they feel have been subjected to unfair and damaging stigma. The result is that there are a mosaic of worker and gender exploitations in the industry that have gone largely ignored by left wing advocates too timid to confront them. The rightwing has no such squeamishness, and has monopolized public conversation around the need to regulate and reform the porn industry, spouting theories about trafficking, sexual exploitation and moral degradation with little basis in fact. Lawmakers like the archconservative Josh Hawley have been at the forefront of pushing for investigations of the company; Republicans have been eager to partner with anti-trafficking organizations that depict taped sex and sex trafficking as violations perpetrated by shadowy, faceless strangers, rather than what experts, and Kristof's investigation, have revealed it to be: a much more intimate violence, inflicted not by strangers but by friends, boyfriends, and family members of the victim - people, usually men, who she trusted not to treat her as cruelly as they did.

Updated Vaccines: How to Update Your Protection Against COVID this Fall

From the We Can Do This COVID-19 Public Education Campaign

"Been there, done that." People are feeling like they've heard enough about COVID-19. But staying on top of the facts, vaccinations, and level of spread in the community is still important to keep your family and communities safe. In fact, updated vaccines that can better protect against the highly transmissible Omicron variant and its subvariants are now available in the United States.

Here is what people should know about the updated COVID vaccines:

First, complete the primary series of a COVID vaccine. While more than 224 million Americans have been vaccinated, many could still get protection by completing a primary series with any of the available vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax. COVID vaccines are available to everyone age 6 months or older living in the United States at no cost.

Updated vaccines provide extra protection. Recently, both Pfizer and Moderna have updated their vaccines to target the Omicron strains of the COVID virus that are causing nearly all COVID infections in the United States. The updated vaccines also provide protection against the original COVID virus. Updated vaccines are available to anyone age 12 or older who has already completed the primary vaccination series. As the virus continues to change, vaccines will be updated annually to target the dominant variant.

Updated vaccines are now available. Updated

vaccines are available for free and they are easy and convenient to get. Tens of thousands of sites including pharmacies, doctor's offices, community health centers, and other places have the updated



vaccines available. Most people will now be able to get one COVID vaccine, once a year, each fall. Just like your annual flu shot, get an updated COVID vaccine sometime between Labor Day and the end of October.

It doesn't matter how many or few boosters you've had before. Anyone age 12 or older who has completed a primary series can get an updated vaccine regardless of whether they previously had

zero, one, or more boosters. As long as at least two months have passed since the last dose, it is safe to get an updated vaccine.

Community spread matters. While being up to date on vaccinations provides the best protection from severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID, additional actions can further lower the risk of these complications, especially when COVID is increasing in your community. Paying attention to the level of COVID transmission locally can help make decisions about what actions to take. For example, when there is an increased level of spread of COVID in your community, wear a mask in public indoor spaces, regardless of whether you've been vaccinated. People who have not been vaccinated against COVID are at increased risk of severe illness and death. Vaccines, including the updated COVID vaccine, provide strong protection against

hospitalization and death from COVID. Vaccination also reduces the spread of COVID and the emergence of new variants, further reducing risk for the entire community, especially those most vulnerable to COVID risks. This means that everyone can stay healthier and enjoy spending time with their loved ones during this fall and upcoming holiday season. For more information and to find a vaccine, visit www.vaccines.gov.

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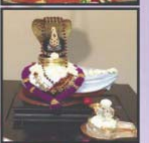
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Biden says nuclear risk highest since 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis



US President Joe Biden has said the risk of a nuclear "Armageddon" is at its highest level since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

Mr Biden said Russia's President Vladimir Putin was "not joking" when he spoke of using tactical nuclear weapons after suffering setbacks in Ukraine.

The US was trying to discern Mr Putin's way out of the war, Mr Biden added.

The US and the EU have previously said Putin's nuclear sabre-rattling should be taken seriously.

However, the US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan last week said that despite Moscow's nuclear hints, the US had seen no signs that Russia was imminently preparing to use a nuclear weapon.

Speaking at a private fundraising event, President Biden said the Russian leader was "not joking" when he talked about using tactical nuclear, biological or chemical weapons - "because his military is, you might say, significantly underperforming".

"For the first time since the Cuban Missile Crisis, we have a direct threat to the use of nuclear weapons, if in fact things continue down the path they'd been going," Mr Biden told fellow Democrats.

"We have not faced the prospect of Armageddon since Kennedy and the Cuban missile crisis."

In 1962, the US and the Soviet Union - under President Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev - came close to a nuclear showdown over the deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Cuba.

The confrontation is considered by many experts to be the closest the world has ever come to a full-scale nuclear war. Mr Biden told fellow Democrats the use of tactical nuclear, biological or chemical weapons could quickly spiral out of control.

"We're trying to figure out what is Putin's off-ramp," the president added. He was speaking at the New York home of James Murdoch, son of media mogul Rupert Murdoch, for the Democratic fundraising event. For several months US officials have been warning that Russia could resort to the use of weapons of mass destruction, if it suffered setbacks on the battlefield in Ukraine.

Mr Putin has also threatened to use every means at his disposal to protect Russian territory. He has also made it clear that he regards the four Ukrainian regions illegally annexed by Moscow as "new territories" of the Russia Federation. During a speech last Friday, the Russian leader said the US had created a "precedent" by using nuclear weapons against Japan at the end of World War Two. A comment that would not have gone unnoticed by Western governments, our Russian Editor Steve Rosenberg points out.

Mr Putin is facing a very difficult picture on the battlefield. Even as he signed the final papers formally annexing four regions of Ukraine - Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson - Kyiv's forces were advancing inside those areas he had claimed.

Hundreds of thousands of men have been fleeing Russia rather than wait to be drafted to fight in Ukraine.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has previously dismissed Moscow's nuclear threats as a "constant narrative of Russian officials and propagandists".

While Paul Stronski, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace told the BBC that Russia's "destabilising rhetoric" is aimed at deterring the West, even though the

West appears resolved to push back on it.

There has also been some pushback against Moscow's nuclear threats in Russia itself. An editorial in the country's mainstream Nezavisimaya Gazeta newspaper was heavily critical of "senior Russian officials" for "talking about the nuclear button". "To allow, in thoughts and words, the possibility of a nuclear conflict is a sure step to allowing it in reality."



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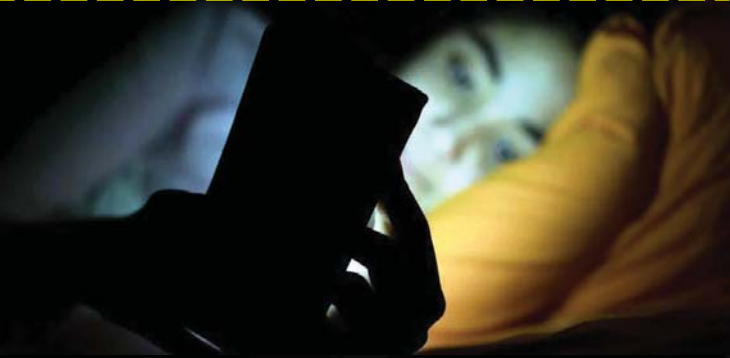


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Excessive social media use reduces sleep among children

The research was conducted among the Canadian students aged between 11-20 years which revealed a dose-response relation between the over-use of social media.



(News Agency) According to a recent study published in a journal named Acta Paediatrica, the excessive use of social media can lead to reduced sleeping hours among children. The research was conducted among the Canadian students aged between 11-20 years which revealed a dose-response relation between the over-use of social media and the shorter sleep duration among the students.

There were in total 5242 participants in the study out of which 63.6% slept less than recommended and 73.4% students reported that they used social media for at least an hour per day. "The impact social media can have on sleep patterns is a topic of great interest given the well-known adverse effects of sleep deprivation on health," said senior author Dr. Jean-Philippe Chaput, of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute. He further added that electronic screen devices are pervasive in today's society and they are just starting to understand their risks and benefits.



Are you rich?

It's likely that you'll prefer short affairs over long-term relationships

Being wealthy may cause people to prefer having flings or short term relationships, a study has found.

(News Agency) Researchers studied the relationship preferences of 151 heterosexual male and female volunteers (75 men and 76 women) by asking them to look at pictures of 50 potential partners, and to indicate whether they would prefer a long or short-term relationship with each.

Then, they were shown a series of images of luxury items related to wealth, including fast cars, jewellery, mansions, and money. Finally, the participants revisited the images of their potential partners, and sorted them by their preferred relationship type again.

After viewing the wealth images, both male and female participants selected more partners for a short-term relationship compared to the original result - an increase of about 16%. "Evolutionary psychologists believe that whether someone prefers a short-term relationship over a long-term one depends partly on their circumstances, such as how difficult it might be to raise children as a single parent," said Andrew G Thomas, from Swansea University in the UK.

"When those circumstances change, we expect people to change their preferences accordingly. What we have done with our research is demonstrate this change in behaviour, for the first time, within an experimental setting," said Thomas, who led

the research.

After participants were given cues that the environment had lots of resources, they became more likely to select individuals for a short-term relationship. "We think this happened because humans have evolved the capacity to read the environment and adjust the types of relationships they prefer accordingly," Thomas said.

For example, in environments which have lots of resources, it would have been easier for ancestral mothers to raise children without the father's help. This made short-term mating a viable option for both sexes during times of resource abundance.

"We believe modern humans also make these decisions," Thomas said. The researchers also found that participants changed their relationship preferences after being shown a slideshow of dangerous animals, and videos of people interacting with infants.

"When the participants were given cues that the environment contained young children, they were more likely to select individuals for a long-term relationship," said Thomas. "Dangerous environments seemed to cause both men and women to choose more long-term partners, though some women chose more short-term partners instead," he said.

Questions a person should ask a partner before getting married



(News Agency) Before marrying a person, most of us discuss a lot of things related to money, future and family. But very few musters the courage to ask anything related to sex life. Maybe, the still associated taboo related to sex hinders people from speaking about that aspect of married life, but we need to accept the fact that problems in the bedroom can shake the foundation of a conjugal life. Hence, it is very important to be on the same page sexually (not just emotionally) with your life partner. Here are six sex-related

questions you should ask your partner before taking the plunge... Do we really need to explain why it is important to get an idea of your partner's sexual health? Ask your partner if he or she had any sexually transmitted diseases (STD) in the past, and share your own history as well. Surprisingly, some people may not even have a clue if they are suffering from any STDs. Hence, it is a great idea to get a medical test done by both partners before tying the knot. Not all have compatible sex drives and if the difference is too great, it may

sometimes create problems in a relationship. Ask your partner a simple question: How important is the role of sexual compatibility in a marriage? This simple question will help both you approach a topic, which many are uncomfortable talking about. Having this conversation will definitely help you understand each other better.

For some, the past sexual experience of a partner may not

matter but a few might still be apprehensive about it. It's always a good idea to clear these doubts so that you can start your married life without any baggage from the past. You can always ask your partner if he or she wants to know about your past. In case, you too want to have an idea about your partner's past, let him or her know this. Most of us have some sexual fantasies that we

would love to indulge in some day. Some might even have kinky fetishes which might not be agreeable to another? It's a good idea to have an idea about a partner's sexual preferences and fantasies. However, don't judge a person based on his or her sexual preferences, but take your relationship to the next level only when you are comfortable to be

part of such fantasies or fetishes.

Did you catch your partner lying?

(News Agency) While love just happens, it takes time to 'build' trust. Would not it be a wonderful world if we could trust people easily? Or, better still, once the trust is built, if it can never be broken? Between these 'ifs' and 'buts', we have to admit that trust is as fragile as a dream. So, when we catch the person we love most lying to us, our world comes to a halt. We may cry or keep mum, but the struggle to accept this fact is beyond anyone's imagination. So how should you deal with such a situation? Here are a few thoughts that you might like to ponder upon: Sometimes we fight to accept the fact that someone we love can lie to us. So, many people take the easy way to deal with it by feigning ignorance. But that's a big mistake. Acceptance is the first hurdle, after crossing which you will come across the next big

hurdle—confrontation. Once you are ready to confront the person, how should you approach the issue? Never use an accusatory tone. Instead of focusing on why your partner lied to you, you should tell the person how the lie had affected you and the relationship.

Doing so would encourage your partner to participate in a constructive conversation because when a couple starts playing the blame game, the guilty will only take a defensive stance. Be patient, listen and then speak. Although it's difficult to ask direct questions, but the road to discovery, be it anything, is never easy. Don't beat around the bush. Take a deep breath and ask whatever is troubling your mind. But be prepared that the answers could be very different from what you might be expecting.

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Where the Possibilities are Endless

'Salon under the sea' submarine dives to 1,000 meters



(News Agency) It is the stuff of a James Bond blockbuster: a young, attractive woman lures a rising political star into a romantic web, all the while collecting critical information to trickle back to her handler or big bosses back home. Axios revealed this week that more than six years ago Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif., began a relationship with a woman suspected of being a Chinese espionage operative. He was alerted by federal investigators in 2015 and given a "defense briefing," which resulted in him breaking off ties to the suspect.

However, Swalwell wouldn't be the first or last political figure to be "honey-trapped" - with multiple former intelligence officials surmising that such schemes carried out by Chinese spies have long played out on U.S. soil, and remain ongoing. "I can say with a high level of confidence that there are many more of these women out there," Daniel Hoffman, a retired CIA Senior Clandestine Services Officer, told Fox News. "China's MO is to flood the zone." While several current and former intelligence and security officials and experts interviewed by Fox

News said that it was impossible to put a number on just how many honey trap scenarios might be in motion at present, one former defense and intelligence operative noted that it could be well into the hundreds - if not thousands. Such spies are assumed to be at top universities, known to speak perfect English, and routinely use social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook to connect with their prey. But it is not only about enmeshing big names - it is about having an eye for talent, and starting when one's star is about to begin rising.

In Swalwell's case, he was seemingly ensnared by a woman named Christine Fang or Fang Fang, who helped raise money for his 2014 congressional re-election campaign and recruited at least one intern in his office. However, U.S. investigators in the northern California Bay Area believe Fang was also circling close to numerous up-and-coming politicians between 2011 and 2015, engaging in sexual relationships with at least two mayors in other states. According to the report,

Fang was sent to gather information and attain influence on those rising in the ranks at the direct behest of China's Ministry of State Security, with a "handler" based out of the San Francisco consulate. In 2015, her most high profile associate - Swalwell - became a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. However, around that time, Fang abruptly fled the U.S. as the FBI was homing in. But unlike Fang, whose communications with the consulate came under scrutiny, Hoffman asserted that there are likely many more who have zero links to any officials. "The goal is to become a trusted Indeed, the California Democrat is seemingly not alone in having fallen for the bait. "The females who are employed in this tactic place themselves in a position where they come into contact with the targeted individual.

Thailand partners with Tinder for matchmaking trips



(News Agency) Summer flings have long been a happy, occasional perk of travel. But the Thai tourism authority is partnering with dating app Tinder to offer tour packages specifically for matchmaking purposes. Emmanuel is a civil engineer who worked extensively on one of the most transformative infrastructure projects in Nigeria. Watch what

happened. Though Thailand's borders are technically open to foreign tourists -- at least those who are willing to quarantine in a hotel room for two weeks and pay for a visa application -- the "Single Journey" initiative is aimed at locals as a way to encourage domestic travel. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the country's

official travel body, is planning nine itineraries throughout the country and is launching with three pilot trips. The first, which will take place on December 20, is a cruise along Bangkok's Chao Phraya River for up to 100 singletons. The day-long experience includes sightseeing, dinner and a talk from a Feng Shui expert "who will share tips on

how to pay homage to Buddha and ask for blessings," which should invariably give tongue-tied daters something to talk about. The other two pilot experiences are a beachside party and concert in Phuket and a train trip to the Pa Sak Jolasid Dam in Lopburi, both in January 2021 and accommodating up to 50 people each. Bookings

open on December 15 and can be made through the Sneaksdeal website (in Thai). "The 'Single Travel Route' targets solo travelers who prefer to travel alone to various destinations in Thailand," TAT Governor, Mr. Yuthasak Supasorn, said in a press statement. The "Single Journey" initiative is just the latest idea to stimulate domestic tourism amid the coronavirus pandemic. In November, Thai Airways -- Thai Smile's parent company -- operated a one-off "flight to nowhere" that departed from and returned to Bangkok and flew over 99 sacred Buddhist sites across the country along the way. Elsewhere, Taiwan's EVA Airlines had a similar idea of its own. The "Love Is In the Air" promotion has scheduled three flights -- on Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day -- with on-board speed dating, followed by a romantic afternoon tea or candlelight dinner back on solid ground. Just one question -- if a couple makes a love match while on one of these trips, will the tourism board also sponsor their future honeymoon?



Sexual arousal makes a woman's brain react differently than a man's. Here's how
A recent McGill University attempted to study how men and women's brains reacted when aroused. Read on to know what they found.

(News Agency) Turns out, a woman's mind is much more complex than a male's when it comes to intimacy. According to a recent McGill University study, a female mind reacts much more and is more stimulated than a male one when aroused.

In the study conducted on 20 men and 20 women, each of the individuals

was shown erotic film clips while their brain vitals were scanned by two scanners. One of the scanners was an MRI machine that tracked stimulation in their brains. The other was a heat-seeking camera that measured levels of arousal through participant's genitals. While not massive, the recorded difference

between stimulation levels between male and female brains highlighted the consistent disparity between the two counterparts. "There were no brain regions in men with stronger brain-genital correlations than in women", the study stated, according to the Independent. While interesting, the sample size for the study was too

small, according to Qazi Rahman, a psychology lecturer at King's College London. He further added that more detailed research would be required to draw such certain conclusions. However, he did not deny the complexity of female arousal. The findings are published in the Journal of Sexual Medicine.



How to make someone fall in love with you

Five ways

According to science

(News Agency) You can't cast a spell on your would-be-lover. But you can take a cue from these researches and potentially up your chances of developing romantic feelings. After all, science knows best.

Look, we'll say up front that you can't 'make' someone fall in love with you. The feelings are either there or they aren't.

However, there are some scientific studies out there that explain how certain techniques or behaviours can actually increase your chances of falling in love with somebody. So, no, you can't cast a spell on your would-be-lover. But you can take a cue from these researches and potentially up your chances of developing romantic feelings. After all, science knows best.

1. Play hard to get

In a dream world, you could approach your crush, declare your love for them, and receive an honest appraisal of their feelings in return. But, unfortunately, things are never that

simple in real life. That's why people play games; specifically they play hard to get. According to the 'scarcity principle' invented by Robert Cialdini, objects that are rare, unique, or limited in time will make people desire them more. In one study of college students, four women were shown pictures of men they were told either liked them 'a lot,' 'an average amount,' or who 'were uncertain of their feelings,' and then we're asked to rate how attractive they found each photo. If you guessed that they found the 'uncertain of their feelings' guys the most attractive, you'd be correct!

2. Make googly eyes

We've all heard that 'eyes are the windows to the soul.' Never underestimate the power of eye contact. According to a 1989 study, participants who exchanged mutual and unbroken eye contact for two minutes reported increased feelings of passionate love for each other, even if they were total strangers.

3. Notice what hobbies and interests they have

While it's a romantic notion that opposites attract, science tells us that people tend to fall in love with those who are very similar to ourselves. Studies have linked similar backgrounds and similar levels of physical



attractiveness to the process of falling in love. So while it's a terrible idea to try to change yourself in order to have more in common with or please somebody else, if your crush is, say, a big GoT fan, and you've always been curious about watching that show, perhaps it's time to finally figure out what everyone means when they quote 'Winter is coming.'

4. Bond over an adrenaline rush

In 1973, a study found a connection between adrenaline rushes and sexual attraction. Test subjects were put in a scary situation (a shaky bridge), and then had to rate their feelings toward other participants. Compared to the control group who were on a safe, non-rickety bridge, the people who thought

their lives were in danger were much more attracted to their fellow test subject. Now, don't go finding a rickety bridge to stand on with your crush. But a roller-coaster date might be a perfect (and much safer) choice.

5. Try the '36 questions'

If you are friendly with the person you have your heart set on, why not try the '36 questions' made famous by Mandy Len Catron's modern love essay in the New York Times from 2015. In it, she describes love researcher Arthur Aron's 1967 study of interpersonal closeness that resulted in 36 questions that can make anyone, even two strangers, supposedly fall in love.



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Veteran actor Arun Bali dies at 79 in Mumbai, fans pay tribute: 'He was so good in every role'

Veteran actor Arun Bali died at the age of 79 on Friday in Mumbai. He was seen last in the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer Goodbye, which released on Friday



(News Agency) Veteran actor Arun Bali, known for his role as Kunwar Singh in Swabhimaan, died at the age of 79 on Friday. As per the news agency ANI, the actor died in Mumbai. His last film, Goodbye, released in theatres on October 7. Following the news of his death, fans paid tribute to the late actor on Twitter. A person wrote, "God bless his soul. He was so good in every role." Another one tweeted, "He was such a natural actor. RIP." A fan also said, "Saw him battling for life, and surviving in the reel, but he bids us goodbye on the day of the release." Arun Bali was last seen in the film Goodbye, released on Friday. Directed by Vikas Bahl, the

film also stars Amitabh Bachchan, Rashmika Mandanna, Neena Gupta, Sunil Grover, Pavail Gulati, Ashish Vidyarthi, Elli AvrRam, Sahil Mehta, Shivin Narang and Abhishek Khan. The film revolves around the death of a family member. Earlier this year, Arun was diagnosed with a rare neuromuscular disease and hospitalised. Member of CINTAA, Nupur Alankar, told ETimes then, "I was on call with Arun Bali sir when I sensed something is majorly wrong with his speech and pointed it out to him. After that I tried contacting his son Ankush, but couldn't get through. Then I called up Rajeev Menon who is Ankush's colleague and got his other number and I advised him to take Arun sir to

the hospital immediately." Arun Bali's daughter told Nupur that he has been diagnosed with Myasthenia Gravis. Nupur had said, "Today I received a call from Arun ji's number... he couldn't speak clearly at all. His daughter Itishree informed me about his condition. I am truly concerned. I pray for his fast recovery." Arun worked in several films and television series including the 1991 period drama Chanakya where he played King Porus. He also essayed the role of chief minister of undivided Bengal, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, in the film Hey Ram (2000). He is known for playing Harshvardhan Wadhwa in Kumkum. He is known for his roles in 3 Idiots, Kedarnath and Panipat among others.

Priyanka Chopra says she stands with Iranian women speaking out against Mahsa Amini's death: I'm in awe of your courage

(News Agency) Priyanka Chopra has shared a post speaking about Mahsa Amini and supporting Iranian women protesting over her death. She also asked people to join the 'critical movement'. Actor Priyanka Chopra has extended her support to women in Iran protesting over Mahsa Amini's death saying that she is in 'awe of' their courage and purpose. Taking to Instagram, Priyanka said that the voices that 'speak after ages of forced silence', 'must not be stemmed'. The actor also urged people to join the 'critical movement' as 'numbers matter'.



Priyanka also shared a black-and-white art piece dedicated to Mahsa. In the picture, Mahsa looked on as several women, placed on her hair, protested. Priyanka captioned the post, "Women in Iran and around the world are standing up and raising their voices, publicly cutting their hair and many other forms of protest for Mahsa Amini, whose young life was taken away so brutally by the Iranian Morality Police for wearing her hijab 'improperly'. The voices that speak

after ages of forced silence, will rightfully burst like a volcano! And they will not and MUST not be stemmed." "I am in awe of your courage and your purpose. It is not easy to risk your life, literally, to challenge the patriarchal establishment and fight for your rights. But, you are courageous women doing this every day regardless of the cost to yourselves. To ensure that this movement will have a lasting effect, we must hear their call, understand the issues and then join in with our collective voices. We must also get everyone who can influence others to join as well. Numbers

matter," she added. Priyanka concluded, "Add your voice to this critical movement. Stay informed and be vocal, so these voices can no longer be forced to stay silent. I stand with you. Jin, jiyan, azaadi... Women, life, freedom." She also added the hashtags--Mahsa Amini, Iran protests and woman life freedom. Reacting to the post, fans thanked her. A person wrote, "Thank you for being our voice! We really appreciate it and need all the possible supports! #MahsaAmini."

Mouni Roy reacts to fans saying her role is more important than Alia Bhatt's Isha in Brahmastra: 'I don't think...'

(News Agency) Mouni Roy spoke about the love and appreciation she's been receiving for her film Brahmastra. The actor was seen as Junoon, the antagonist in the Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt-starrer. In a new interview, Mouni was asked about some fan comments on social media that said her role in the Ayan Mukerji film was 'more important' than Alia Bhatt's role in the fantasy drama Brahmastra released on September 9.

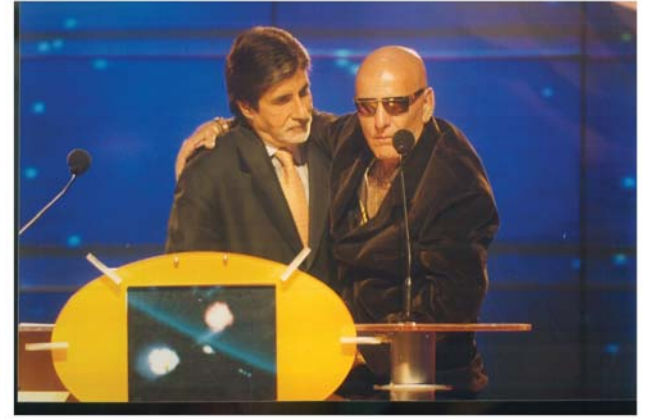
certain, quiet confidence and power, the audience reacted to her in a way that even I did not anticipate or expect... My role was only mine, I had to play the role of the antagonist in the film. That was my responsibility. I had to focus on my character



film also stars Amitabh Bachchan and Nagarjuna, and features Shah Rukh Khan in an extended cameo. Mouni said her character in the film, Junoon, had a quiet confidence and power, and the audience received it in a way that even she did not anticipate. She also spoke about fans praising her work, with some even saying that she played a bigger role in the film, than Alia. I don't think anything is more important or less important, I just think that because of Junoon having a

and that's what I did. It feels very nice to hear the audiences' response... I think my hard work over the years has paid off. It feels great. But I feel I am being honest when I say that Brahmastra is everyone's film. The world Ayan has created, it is a story about heroes and VFX. In this ensemble cast, every character is very important, and made has this film what it is today. You cannot negate anybody's contribution to the film," Mouni told Siddharth Kannan in a recent interview.

IIFA TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE GREATEST SUPERSTAR OF INDIAN CINEMA AMITABH BACHCHAN ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 80th BIRTHDAY!



(News Agency) Bollywood's biggest celebration of Indian Cinema, the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Weekend & Awards, which brings together the very best of the Indian film industry, has never left any opportunity for their fans to get closer to their favorite stars. Over the past 22 years IIFA has travelled the world to showcase and highlight the very best in Indian Cinema. During this time through the journey of IIFA, the brand has taken Indian Cinema to the world; and has been working to bring the world together through cinema and entertainment. IIFA has been

renowned for uniting fans from across the globe by creating magical and memorable experiences by bringing them closer to Bollywood. It has created a tremendous growth in the business of Indian films and the stars internationally. Global Icon and Superstar Amitabh Bachchan who is popularly known as the SHAHENSHAH of Indian Cinema has been entertaining us with his marvelous performances and all-time classics films. Over the years along with his unbeatable acting performances Amitabh Bachchan has also donned the hat of a film producer, television host, and occasional playback

singer excelling in each role like none other and is one of the most influential actors in the history of Indian cinema. As the shahenshah turns 80 this year, IIFA is all set to pay tribute on the momentous occasion of his birthday! Amitabh Bachchan who has won multiple awards at IIFA was also awarded the first ever Bollywood wax figure at Madame Tussauds which was facilitated ironically also at the first IIFA in London in 2000. There are so many wonderful memories and moments that IIFA has witnessed with the superstar himself in many editions of the IIFA Weekend. He is

currently one of the actors who has been awarded with the most best actor awards in IIFA. IIFA is all about celebrations and as a tribute, this year IIFA will celebrate the global icon's birthday, spread over 10 magical days. Bringing together the global community that IIFA has amassed over the years to allow people from all around the world to enjoy the specially created content and reliving those moments at IIFA; as well as a unique opportunity for fans to get involved. Over the next 10-days, the IIFA celebration will continue with polls, quizzes and trivia highlighting his much-celebrated work and achievements.

Alia Bhatt-Ranbir Kapoor's baby shower: Watch mommy-daddy-to-be rock in ethnic outfits



(News Agency) Bollywood couple Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt is expecting their first child together. The two recently hosted a baby shower for which Alia's sister Shaheen Bhatt, Ranbir's mother Neetu Kapoor, his sister Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, cousin Karisma Kapoor and Shammi Kapoor's wife, Neila Devi, arrived at their Vastu home in the Pali Hill area of Mumbai. Vastu is the same place where the two tied the nuptial knot on April 14, this year. Ranbir's sibling, Riddhima took to her Instagram and shared pictures from the baby shower. She captioned

the pictures with Alia and Ranbir as 'Mommy to be' and 'Daddy to be'. For the occasion, Alia chose a beautiful yellow ensemble while Ranbir donned a peach-coloured Kurta and white pyjamas. The director of 'Brahmastra' - Ayan Mukerji also attended the event while Alia's close friends Anushka Ranjan and Akanksha Ranjan were also in attendance. Ranbir's mom, Neetu Kapoor too, shared a group picture featuring Alia, herself, Karisma Kapoor, Shweta Bachchan, Alia's mother Soni Razdan and others.

The selection of The Storyteller at the Busan International Film Festival in Competition is indeed prestigious & a big step forward for Indian cinema - says director Ananth Mahadevan



(News Agency) , 3rd October: Jio Studios today unveiled the trailer of its upcoming film The Storyteller starring powerhouse actors Paresh Rawal, Adil Hussain, Tannishtha Chatterjee and Revathy. The Storyteller produced in association with Purpose Entertainment and Quest Films has been selected in Competition at the prestigious Busan International Film Festival, South Korea and the film will have its World Premiere at the Festival and will be contending for the revered 'Kim Jiseok' award.

An elated Ananth Mahadevan shares, "The selection of The Storyteller at the Busan International Film Festival in Competition is indeed prestigious and is a big step forward for Indian cinema in meeting global standards. The filming

of an original story by Satyajit Ray has been both challenging and rewarding and will bring to the world a first feature top lining him in the credits after his demise. It will be a befitting tribute to the master as we commemorate his centenary year." Based on a short story by the legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray and hailed as the Original among all Originals, the film tells the story of a wealthy businessman who hires a storyteller to help get over his insomnia; turning more intriguing as twists are added to it. The original Bengali short story Golpo Boliye Tarini Khuro is one among the series of stories written by Ray, based on the enigmatic character Tarini Khuro, that he created. The 27th Busan International Film Festival will take place from 5-14 October 2022.

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Ram And The Many Ramayanas Outside India

Over 300 Ramayana versions are known to exist, especially in South East Asia, when around the 12th and 13th centuries, this region received and imbibed many of the cultural traits, along with goods and services, travelling from Indian shores



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Story on
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