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"Historical Win for BJP in Gujarat in a Generation"



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Saudi Arabia Leans Closer to China as Traditional Ties with US Come Under Strain

The fact is that, on the ground, there is a sense that the US is edging towards retreat from the region



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Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi Leads BJP To A Sweeping Victory In Gujarat

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) scored a landslide election win in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat on Thursday, in a boost for the leader and party ahead of the 2024 general election



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Indian PM Narendra Modi celebrates BJP's massive victory in Gujarat state, with Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh & J.P. Nadda [Photo Courtesy: Altaf Qadri/AP Photo]

Warnock beats Walker in Georgia, padding Dems' Senate edge



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India Could Soon Experience Heat Waves Beyond Human Survival Limit: World Bank



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Neena Gupta recalls friend didn't cast her in part that was perfect for her



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Anu Aggarwal recalls escaping her car after crowd of thousands began banging it



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Akshay Kumar gets trolled for his Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj look



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Vaishnav Temple of New York held their annual Annakut as part of Diwali Celebration, Over 2500 Devotess and New York city Deputy Commissioner Dilp Chauhan Attended



Chief Technology Officer Of Blockchain Company Charged With Scheme To Defraud The Company Of Over \$1 Million And Cryptocurrency

(South Asian Insider Bureau) Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York and Michael J. Driscoll, the Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), announced the unsealing today of an indictment charging RIKESH THAPA with operating a scheme to defraud a start-up technology company (the "Victim Company") of over \$1 million worth of United States currency, cryptocurrency, and utility tokens. THAPA used proceeds of his crime on personal expenses, including nightclubs, travel, and clothing, and falsified records and deleted evidence to

conceal his theft. RIKESH THAPA was arrested earlier today in the Southern District of California. The defendant is expected to be presented before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mitchell D. Dembin this afternoon. The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge John P. Cronan. U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "Rikesh Thapa allegedly betrayed his company's trust, as he was responsible for the safeguarding of substantial amounts of money. Thapa went to great lengths to cover up his frauds, but, thanks to the dedicated work of this Office and our law enforcement partners, he will now have to answer for his crimes."

FBI Assistant Director in Charge Michael J. Driscoll said: "As we allege today, the defendant repeatedly stole from and defrauded the victim company - which he cofounded - in order to fund a luxurious personal lifestyle. In an attempt to hide his crimes, he also deleted and falsified records. The FBI will

continue to work to ensure individuals willing to scam and steal from private businesses are held accountable in the criminal justice system."

As alleged in the Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:[1]

RIKESH THAPA co-founded and was the Chief Technology Officer

("CTO") of the Victim Company, which during the relevant period was involved in using blockchain and other technology to provide a ticketing platform for live events. Between December 2017 and September 2019, THAPA used his position to carry out a scheme to defraud the Victim Company.

Priyanka Chopra, The Red Carpet Chameleon

Looks From Red Sea Film Festival: Priyanka Chopra made back-to-back red carpet appearances



(South Asian Insider Bureau) Priyanka Chopra is one of the many Bollywood stars present at this year's Red Sea International Film Festival taking place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Priyanka Chopra, during her first red carpet appearance at the festival, wore an embellished gold outfit from the shelves of Tony Ward Couture. The actress greeted the shutterbugs with a namaste on the red carpet. For her second red carpet appearance, Priyanka Chopra wore a bright

yellow outfit designed by Nicolas Jebran. She accentuated the look with a statement neckpiece by Bulgari. Sharing pictures from both her red carpet looks, Priyanka Chopra wrote in her caption: "Thank you for having me Red Sea International Film Festival." Vaishnav Temple of New York held their annual Annakut as part of Diwali Celebration, Over 2500 Devotees, and New York City Deputy Commissioner Dilp Chauhan Attended.

New York Attorney General Letitia James addresses Ibrahim Khan's sex harassment scandal



New York Attorney General Letitia James addresses Ibrahim Khan's sex harassment scandal

(South Asian Insider Bureau) was "protecting the rights" of his Confronted by The Post Wednesday, embattled New York Attorney General Letitia James spoke out for the first time about the sexual harassment scandal engulfing her office. James denied to a Post reporter that she hid sexual harassment complaints against her chief of staff to win re-election — claiming that she

was "protecting the rights" of his accusers. And the powerful AG — under fire for burying the case despite having led the sexual harassment probe that forced ex-Gov. Andrew Cuomo from office last year — insisted that concealing her investigation of longtime aide Ibrahim Khan was "by no means" tied to her race for a second term in office.

Historical Win for BJP in Gujarat in Generation, Victory of Development over Dynasty

(South Asian Insider Bureau) The BJP's incumbency vote . Voters of shown clearly that emphatic win in Gujarat ,after being in power for six terms shows that people have voted for continuity, People have voted for development, People have voted for good governance. People of Gujarat are happy with performance of BJP government. Normally there is anti incumbency vote ; but this time it was pro



Socialist agenda of freebies will never work in Gujarat . Credit for this Historical win in Gujarat shows people of Gujarat's Love for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his credibility and hard work of millions of Karyakartas.

Jagdish Sewhani
President

The Americans India Public
Committee

Affairs

Hunter Biden Controversy: Two Indian-Americans At The Centre Of Laptop Story; Twitter To Release Details

Ro Khanna is the Democratic Congressman representing Silicon Valley in the US House of Representatives, while Vijaya Gadde, an attorney, served as general counsel and the head of legal, policy, and trust at Twitter, before she was fired by new boss and CEO Elon Musk



(South Asian Insider Bureau) Two Indian Americans – Congressman Ro Khanna and Vijaya Gadde – prominently figure in US President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden's laptop story whose full disclosure Twitter CEO Elon Musk has announced would be released on

the microblogging site. Musk, the world's richest man who purchased Twitter last month, said on Friday that he would release details about what he characterised as Twitter's "suppression" of a controversial story done by the New York Post

newspaper about Hunter Biden's laptop that was published before the 2020 US election

He also tweeted that it would be "awesome" and there would be a "live Q&A" on the topic.

What is the controversy all about?

The story claimed to contain emails retrieved from a laptop belonging to Hunter. The New York Post said it learned of the emails' existence from Trump's ex-White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, and obtained the emails from Trump's personal lawyer at the time Rudy Giuliani.

Twitter initially limited the distribution of the story, citing concerns that it could be the result of a foreign disinformation

campaign. But the social media company quickly backtracked on its response, with then-CEO Jack Dorsey calling the decision to block the link "unacceptable."

How the two Indian-Americans are associated with it?

Khanna is the Democratic Congressman representing Silicon Valley in the US House of Representatives, while Gadde, an attorney, served as general counsel and the head of legal, policy, and trust at Twitter, before she was fired by new boss and CEO Musk.

A series of tweets along with internal communications of Twitter was released by writer Matt Taibbi regarding the allegations that the social media platform during the 2020 election cycle had suppressed news and information related to the laptop of Hunter.

According to the information released by Taibbi, Khanna appears to have questioned the decision of Twitter to restrict access to an investigative report of the New York Post newspaper on the laptop of Hunter.

As the information started coming in, Musk in a tweet said: "Ro Khanna is great". Khanna in a confidential email to Gadde opposed the so-called censorship by Twitter. I say this as a total

Biden partisan and convinced he did not do anything wrong. But the story now has become more about censorship than relatively innocuous emails and it's become a bigger deal than it would have been," Khanna wrote to Gadde

"In the heat of a presidential campaign, restricting dissemination of newspaper articles (even if New York Post is far right) seems like it will invite more backlash than it will do good," Khanna wrote to Gadde and requested her not to share the text of their emails.

Khanna said that such a move by Twitter seems to be a violation of the 1st Amendment principles.

"If there is a hack of classified information or other information that could expose a serious war crime and the NYT was to publish it, I think NYT should have that right. A journalist should not be held accountable for the illegal actions of the source unless they actively aided the hack," Khanna said.

In response to Khanna's email, Gadde defended Twitter's policy and its decision on the Post story. "We put out a clarifying threat of Tweets earlier this evening to explain our policy around the posting of private information and linking directly to hacked materials," she wrote.

India responds to Nirav Modi's extradition appeal in UK court



confirmed. The High Court in London will now make a decision on whether to grant permission to appeal "on the papers", without a hearing. This process is likely to take some weeks and is not expected to be completed this year. If they refuse to certify a question and leave to appeal then that is the end of the road. If they certify a question but refuse leave, then he applies to the Supreme Court directly for permission," the CPS has said.

(By Staff Reporter) The Indian authorities have submitted their legal response to the application filed by fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi seeking permission to appeal against his extradition order in the UK Supreme Court. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which is appearing on behalf of the Indian government in the UK courts, had until Monday to file a response in the High Court in London on the 51-year-old diamond merchant's plea against being extradited to India to face charges in the estimated USD 2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) loan scam case. The further appeal was filed by his lawyers last month after he lost his initial High Court appeal on mental health grounds, after a two-judge bench ruled that his risk of suicide is not such that it would be either unjust or oppressive to extradite him from Wandsworth Prison in London to Arthur Road Jail in Mumbai to stand trial on fraud and money laundering charges. "We met the December 5 deadline," the CPS

Former Theranos COO Sunny Balwani sentenced to almost 13 years in prison

(South Asian Insider Bureau) The judge who presided over the criminal fraud trials of Theranos founder Elizabeth Holmes and her co-defendant and one-time boyfriend, Theranos COO and president Ramesh "Sunny" Balwani, sentenced Balwani on Wednesday to nearly 13 years in prison plus three years of probation. "They misled investors, they misled patients," U.S. District Court Judge Edward Davila said during Balwani's sentencing hearing in San Jose, California, according to NBC News. "I think it's just that enduring question of why did such a promising company come to an end," Davila added, according to a tweet from Law360's Dorothy Atkins. Balwani, 58, was sentenced to 155 months behind bars for a dozen wire fraud and conspiracy convictions tied to his role as chief operating officer in the collapsed blood-testing company. His convictions followed convictions against Holmes on four criminal fraud counts reached by a

separate jury in January. Davila based Balwani's sentence on a calculation that



figured he defrauded 12 Theranos investors out of a collective \$120 million, Law360 reported. Balwani's lawyers argued his sentence should be more lenient than Holmes' sentence because he was her subordinate, multiple news outlets said. Davila, however, challenged that contention, saying that Balwani was, at times, also a leader in the company. Government prosecutors asked Davila to impose a 15-year sentence. Balwani's

probation officer recommended a sentence of nine years. Following a three-month trial and deliberations over five days that ended in July, Balwani's jury returned guilty verdicts on all 12 charges brought by the Justice Department — seven counts of wire fraud for defrauding Theranos investors, two counts of wire fraud for defrauding paying patients, two counts for conspiring to defraud investors and patients, and one count for wire fraud related to Theranos advertisements to patients in Arizona. Balwani, who made millions as an executive during the dot-com boom and lost millions of dollars in investments in Theranos, started dating Holmes soon after she dropped out of Stanford University at the age of 19. His lawyers argued in court documents, as well as during the hearing, according to Law360's Atkins, that Balwani's sentence should not be enhanced for investor losses because he left the company before investors officially lost their money.

Behave like CM, not artist: Punjab opposition parties to CM Mann as Goldy Brar denies arrest claim

After a purported video of Goldy Brar surfaced where he denied Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's claim that he was detained in California, the opposition parties in the state slammed the CM

(By Staff Reporter) Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann is facing heavy backlash from the opposition parties in the state after a purported video of gangster Goldy Brar surfaced where he denied Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader's earlier claim that he was detained in California, US. In the interview given to a journalist on YouTube, Brar claimed that he was not held and nor was he in the US. The gangster claimed that he was somewhere in Europe. Shirmani Akali Dal (SAD) Chief Sukhbir Badal said Bhagwant Mann's statement was irresponsible and he should behave like a chief minister and not as an artist. "There are hundreds of instances when the reality was different from what was said by Bhagwant Mann. He is lying to convey that he got the gangster arrested. He should respect his position by not making irresponsible statements," said Sukhbir Badal. The Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal leaders also

sought a clarification from Mann and asked him to disclose the source of information on the basis of which he claimed that Goldy Brar was detained. Punjab Congress Chief Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, while taking a potshot at the chief minister, said that he should tell the people whether the Punjab police had established a hotline between Punjab and the US. "Normally, such information is shared with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The US was not answerable to the Punjab government. It seems the AAP government was in touch with Joe Biden", he said. Punjab Leader of



Opposition Pratap Singh Bajwa also criticised the AAP government and appealed to the MEA to clarify whether Goldy Brar was arrested or not.

Chief Spokesperson Malwinder Singh Kang alleged that the gangsters were under the patron of the then leaders of the ruling parties. Goldy Brar, on the other hand, seems to be avoiding posting on social media so that the investigative agencies do not get clues about his location. The gangster had previously used social media to claim he was behind the murder of Sidhu Moose Wala and Pradeep Singh, a Dera Sacha Sauda follower.

Punjab Police had issued two red notices against Goldy Brar - one each in the Sidhu Moose Wala murder case and the targeted killing of Pradeep Singh. Neither the US government nor the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had confirmed Bhagwant Mann's claim that Goldy Brar was detained in the US. It is still not known whether he had entered the US or not. There is also a question as to whether the person who interacted with the Chandigarh YouTuber was Goldy Brar or someone else.

5 MLAs who trumped top guns to secure wins for AAP in Gujarat

Four of the AAP's five MLAs have previous political histories with either the BJP, the Congress or the Bharatiya Tribal Party. Four of the MLAs are from Saurashtra, and one from south Gujarat.

(SAI Bureau) Surat At a time when the Aam Aadmi Party's poster boys in Gujarat -- from chief ministerial candidate Isudan Gadhvi to state president Gopal Italia to Patidar face Alpesh Kathiriya -- lost the elections, five lesser-known faces have been left flying the party flag. Even as the party conducts a review of its bittersweet performance -- it fell way short of expectations by being unable to supplant Congress as the second largest party -- the challenge will be to keep the small band of legislators together. Four of the AAP's five MLAs have previous political histories with either the BJP, the Congress or the Bharatiya Tribal Party. Four of the MLAs are from Saurashtra, and one from south Gujarat. Chaitar Vasava, 37, won from the Dediapada assembly constituency in Narmada district beating the BJP's Hitesh Vasava by a margin of 40,282 votes. Vasava is a former assistant to BTP president Mahesh Vasava, the son of party founder Chhotubhai Vasava. "For the past eight years, I have actively fought for the cause of the tribal community in Gujarat with my gurus, Chhotubhai Vasava and Mahesh Vasava. As the AAP MLA from Dediapada, I will speak out in

the Gujarat Assembly about the issues that the tribal community faces in Gujarat," Vasava said.

Vasava said that despite being with the AAP, he would continue to seek the advice and direction of Chhotu and Mahesh Vasava. The BTP was reduced to zero in the Gujarat assembly, down from the two seats it won in 2017. In Junagadh district's Visavadar town, the AAP's Bhupat Bhayani beat Harshad Ribadiya, who joined the BJP after quitting the Congress, by a margin of 7,063 votes. Bhayani said that he was a BJP member for five years, and served at both the taluka and panchayat level, and admitted he left the BJP after feeling ignored. "Despite my long tenure in the party, the BJP leaders failed to recognise my abilities, so I left to join the AAP." In Jamjodhpur assembly constituency in Jamnagar district, Hemant Khava, 38, an Ahir leader who was previously with the Congress, beat the BJP's Chiman Sapariya by 10,403 votes. Khava said that his family was connected with the Congress for more than five decades, but joined the AAP in 2021, four years after he was declined a ticket for the 2017 elections.



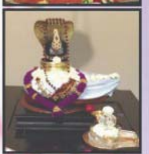
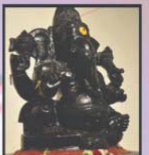
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Let's make a proposal, dispose court cases in 6 months: CM Arvind Kejriwal

Speaking at the event, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal put forth a proposal to implement a pilot project in Delhi wherein cases are disposed of within six months.

(SAI Bureau) Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday proposed a pilot project to implement a judicial system in Delhi under which court cases are disposed of within six months, while asserting that his government is ready to ensure that such a system becomes an example for other states. Kejriwal was speaking at an event organised for the inauguration of the 'S' block building of the Delhi High Court. On Kejriwal's proposal, Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri who was present at the event said that if the CM's purpose was to seek an ally, the Centre and the lieutenant governor of Delhi will support him in his endeavour. The event was also attended by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, and Delhi High Court Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma.

"If the purpose was to seek an ally, I think the lieutenant governor of Delhi and the Centre will support you in the endeavour to get more space. By the way, land is a state subject, so the chief minister you made promises today, we will hold you responsible to those," Puri said. The housing and urban affairs minister said that "the opportunity was not lost", without divulging the reference. However, on a lighter note, Puri offered to Kejriwal to rebuild 299 slum clusters that come under the city government's Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) if the AAP dispensation is unable to do so because 367 clusters under the DDA, which comes under the Centre, are being surveyed for rebuilding.

Puri also went on to say that he did not need to be told by someone about the condition of courts as he has grown up here. Speaking at the event, Kejriwal put forth a proposal to implement a pilot project in Delhi wherein cases are disposed of within six months.

"You see such a site rarely that the Centre, judiciary, Delhi government are all present together on one stage. I would like to put forth a proposal on behalf of the common man," he said. While noting that people go to courts for seeking justice, he said that several committees and

studies have said that procedures and rules have to be changed for ensuring timely delivery of justice. "I am not pointing fingers but I just want to propose that let's make Delhi a pilot wherein despite a case being civil or criminal, it should not go on beyond six months. It should be disposed of within a few days, but the least is that it should be disposed of within six months. Let's make a proposal," the chief minister said. He said that if this can happen, the government is ready to volunteer. "We can all sit together and prepare a proposal to make Delhi a pilot project for this. We have worked in education, health, and power sectors but our work is being praised. We hope that such a judicial system becomes an example for the country and the world," he stressed.

Recalling various events related to inauguration of judicial facilities, Kejriwal said that he had gone to the inauguration of a building at the Karkardooma Court Complex recently.

"At the event someone had jokingly said that Hindi films often show courtrooms in a dilapidated condition but after the inauguration of such facilities, it seems that Hindi films will have to modify their film sets," he recalled.

Asserting that the infrastructure of Delhi's judicial system is one of the best in the country, the Delhi CM said previous governments also worked in improving it and his government is also working to improve it. "Though there are less resources, our priority is the judiciary," he added. When his turn came to speak at the event, Puri said that "the opportunity was not lost", without divulging the reference. "If the purpose was to seek an ally, I think both the chief minister and the lieutenant governor of Delhi. All three of us will support you in the endeavour to get more space. By the way, land is a state subject, so Chief Minister you made promises today, we will hold you to those," Puri said. Puri said he wanted to place on record that he appreciated that kind of advocacy, saying that when he is invited to participate in the inauguration of any of building which conforms modern or reflects modern

sustainability norms, modern yardsticks of efficiency and it stands to reason if the higher courts are housed in buildings of this kind, the productivity level will go up.

"Arvind Kejriwal ji, of course, made a speech which I can always relate to but he is a close friend of mine. So, he said he is very proud of his Delhi, the education model, the health model and he also said he wants to make Delhi a pilot judicial model," he said. The Union minister said that according to the 2011 census, the population of Delhi was 1.67 crore and it may be about two crore now.

"Now, large parts of Delhi are



being rebuilt and the people who live in JJ (slum) clusters, I mean that there are around 367 of them under the DDA and they all are being surveyed and rebuilt under 'jahan jhuggi wahin makan'. The number of the ones which are under DUSIB (which comes under

Delhi government) is 299. I will suggest to the chief minister that he should also conduct a survey. By the way, I offered him that if you are not, we want to do it, that is on a lighter side," the housing and urban affairs minister said.

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Kolkata cops register FIR against Paresh Rawal after row over remark on Bengalis

Kolkata Police has registered an FIR against actor Paresh Rawal over an alleged hate speech against Bengalis



Bengalis came while he was happen if Rohingya migrants speech in a rally. On December campaigning for the BJP in and Bangladeshis start living 2, the veteran actor apologised Gujarat. "Gas cylinders are around you, like in Delhi? What for his take on the subject and expensive but the prices will will you do with gas cylinders? said that the statement was in come down. People will get Cook fish for the Bengalis?" reference to illegal employment too. But what will Paresh Rawal had said in his 'Bangladeshis and Rohingyas'.

TMC's Saket Gokhale detained by Gujarat cops over 'fake' tweet on Morbi bridge collapse

(SAI Bureau) Trinamool Congress leader Saket Gokhale has been detained by the Gujarat Police over a tweet endorsing an alleged fake news about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Morbi after a bridge collapse. Earlier in the day, the TMC had claimed that its national spokesperson was arrested when he landed in Jaipur. Gokhale was apprehended from Jaipur in Rajasthan during the early hours by officials of the Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Cell, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Cyber Crime, Jitendra Yadav said. "Based on a complaint we received from a citizen, an FIR has been lodged against Gokhale for spreading fake news about the PM's visit to Morbi. We detained him from Jaipur today morning and he is being brought here for further legal process," Yadav said, adding a formal arrest will be made after a Covid test.

'FAKE' TWEET

Gokhale recently tweeted a news clipping which appeared to have been published in a leading Gujarati newspaper. The news clipping claimed a query under the Right to Information (RTI) revealed the Gujarat

government had spent Rs 30 crore on PM Modi's visit to Morbi after a bridge collapsed there in October. But on December 1, the Press Information Bureau said that the claim that PM Modi's visit to Morbi for a few hours cost Rs 30 crore was fake.

"Quoting an RTI, It is being claimed in a tweet that PM's visit to Morbi cost Rs 30 crore. This claim is fake. No such RTI response has been given," the PIB said in a tweet.

The police contacted the Gujarati newspaper management, who informed the police that the news was never published.

TMC'S CLAIM

Earlier in the day, the TMC claimed that its national spokesperson was arrested by the police for a tweet. "TMC national spokesperson Saket Gokhale arrested by Gujarat Police. Saket took a 9pm flight from New Delhi to Jaipur on Mon. When he landed, Gujarat Police was at the airport in Rajasthan waiting for him and picked him up," O'Brien said. Calling it a "cooked up case", the TMC MP said the case was filed with the Ahmedabad cyber cell over Saket Gokhale's tweet on the Morbi bridge collapse.

(SAI Bureau) Kolkata Police remarks made by Paresh Rawal has registered an FIR against Rawal," Salim's complaint BJP leader and actor Paresh stated. A case has been registered against Rawal under against Bengalis. CPI(M) West IPC sections 153 (provocation Bengal State Secretary Md with intent to cause riot), 153A Salim had earlier lodged a (promoting enmity between police complaint against Paresh different groups), 153B Rawal for his "anti-Bengali" (propagates denial of rights to linguistic or racial groups), 504 Salim alleged Rawal's comment (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) was provocative and it could (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) incite "riots and destroy the and 505 (statements intending harmony between Bengali and public mischief). other communities". A large The complaint holds relevance number of Bengalis reside as Paresh Rawal drew flak over outside the limits of the State. I his statements linking inflation, apprehend that many of them gas cylinders, Bengalis and fish will be prejudicially targeted and during BJP's campaign speech. affected because of the vicious Paresh Rawal's comment on

2019 Punjab Blast Mastermind, Extradited From Austria, Arrested

Bikramjit Singh was arrested after his extradition process was completed by the authorities of Linz, Austria, in coordination with Interpol, officials said

(SAI Bureau) New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday arrested Bikramjit Singh, wanted in the 2019 Tarn Taran bomb blast case, at the Delhi airport after securing his extradition from Austria, an official spokesperson said. The official said Bikramjit Singh, alias Bikkar Panjwar, alias Bikkar Baba, was arrested after his extradition process was completed by the competent authorities of Linz, Austria, in coordination with Interpol. Singh had formed a terror group along with his close associates to carry out attacks in Punjab, the official said, adding that the NIA had sent a team to Austria to bring him back to India. After securing a non-bailable warrant against him from the NIA special court in Mohali and a subsequent red notice, Singh was detained in Linz on March 22, 2021, the spokesperson said.


The Linz Regional Court extradited him after completion of legal proceedings, the official added.

According to the NIA, its probe showed Singh not only instigated the co-accused



in the case and others to commit terror acts but also conducted training for fabricating improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and using them.

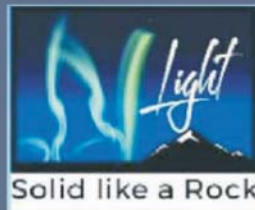
During various processions and agitations, he carried bombs and instigated other participants to attack government agencies to strike terror in the population at large, it said.

Singh is the key conspirator in the conspiracy to target Dera Muradpura, the NIA said. The agency had filed a charge sheet against nine "pro-Khalistan" people for their alleged involvement in the 2019 Tarn Taran blast in Punjab, in which two people, who were involved in the terror conspiracy, were killed. Those chargesheeted include Bikramjit Singh, Massa Singh, Harjit Singh, Gurjant Singh and Manpreet Singh, all residents of Tarn Taran; Chanddeep Singh of Gurdaspur; Malkit Singh and Amarjeet Singh of Amritsar and one juvenile. They were charged under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Explosive Substances Act.



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'Need PM's blessings to make Delhi better': Arvind Kejriwal after AAP wins MCD polls

After the AAP's victory in the MCD polls, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal said that they need "cooperation of the Centre and PM Modi's blessings" to make Delhi better.



(SAI Bureau) The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) election on Wednesday, ending the Bharatiya Janata Party's 15-year reign over the

SPECIAL REPORT

gratitude to the people of Delhi for "finding their son, their brother capable of handling MCD. The Delhi CM then appealed to the opposition parties to come together to work together for the growth and development of the national capital. "I appeal to all candidates and all parties, the politics was till today. Henceforth, we need to work together. I urge the BJP and the Congress to work together with the AAP. You are not BJP councillor anymore. You are councillors of Delhi," Arvind Kejriwal said.

AAP has won MCD polls but picture abhi baaki hai

Anti-defection law doesn't apply to corporations like MCD and councillors cannot face action for cross-voting.

(SAI Bureau) The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has won the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) election as it pulled ahead of the BJP, which has ruled the civic body for the past 15 years, after over five hours of vote counting. Arvind Kejriwal's party won 134 seats in the 250-ward MCD. The BJP won 104 and the Congress came a distant third with just nine seats. Others got it three. The

AAP needed 126 wards to win the polls and have its mayor elected. But here are some twists. The Delhi Lieutenant Governor (L-G), who reports to the Centre, the BJP-led government in the current case, is authorised to nominate 12 councillors to the MCD. Assuming these 12 councillors are from the BJP, the margin in the tightly contested election could narrow further. There's not enough clarity as of now if these 12 councillors will play a role in electing the mayor. But what is clear is this: the MCD is no legislature like a state assembly or Parliament. So, the anti-defection law doesn't apply here. No party can issue a whip to its councillors to vote a certain way.

No crossing-voting group has to have two-thirds majority to escape disqualification. So even when the AAP has won the polls, some of its councillors or those from the Congress can support a BJP mayoral candidate. Such councillors don't have to leave their parties or form their own. Confirming this, constitution expert SK Sharma told IndiaToday.in, "The game is wide



open. Councillors can cross-vote and MLAs, in a completely different scenario, won't face action for the same." The AAP have been seen resisting "poaching" can take comfort from the fact that its attempts by other parties.

Delhi will have five mayors in five years, starting with a woman

The relatively young AAP now has a new task at hand - electing a mayor for a unified civic body that came into existence after the Centre's recent delimitation exercise

(SAI Bureau) The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) broke the BJP's 15-year hold over the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, or the MCD, winning 134 of the 250 wards. The BJP, with 104 seats, came in second and the Congress a distant third with just nine seats. The win will help the AAP secure its grip over the national capital.

The relatively young AAP, which first came to power in Delhi in 2015 and returned to power in 2020, now has a new task at hand - electing a mayor for a unified civic body that came into existence after the Centre's recent delimitation exercise.

HISTORY OF MCD

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi was born in 1958. It was created under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 and had 80 councillors initially. The corporation was expanded to

include 272 councillors with time as delimitation exercises, to keep up with the growing population, broke Delhi into smaller units. Delhi had a unified MCD till 2012, when it was trifurcated into the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, the South Delhi Municipal Corporation and the East Delhi Municipal Corporation to manage the rising population.

The trifurcated MCD continued to be in place for a decade and in May 2022 the three bodies

were unified once again. In October, the Centre issued a delimitation order which reduced the number of wards from 272 to 250.

MAYOR'S ELECTION

The Delhi Municipal Corporation Act mandates the

MCD to hold elections every five years and elect a mayor when it meets for the first time at the start of each financial year. The Act commands the civic body to elect a woman as mayor in its first year and an elected councilor from the Scheduled Caste in its third year. The mayor is elected through a poll if the other parties disagree with the candidate chosen by the party in power. The opposition can field their candidates and the candidate

with the most votes is declared mayor. In case of a tie, the special commissioner appointed to oversee the election conducts a special draw of lots and the candidate whose name is drawn is named the mayor.



UP woman's U-turn on husband's claim she moved in with landlord after losing Ludo bet

A woman in Uttar Pradesh, addicted to the game of Ludo, put herself at stake as she ran out of all her money, her husband claimed. But now the woman has said that her husband is addicted to gambling and she has no such habit



prompted the police to launch a manhunt for the complainant. "My husband is addicted to gambling. I don't have any such habits. I am a domestic help by profession and work hard to make ends meet," the woman told the police. The incident was reported from the

Devkali locality in Nagar Kotwali. Renu's husband claimed that he used to live in a rented house in Devkali. Six months ago, he went to Jaipur to work and kept sending money to his wife, which she used for

money, she bet herself on Ludo and lost herself. According to the husband, the woman has now started living with the landlord. "I tried to make her leave him, but she is not ready to do it," he said. Police are now searching for Umesh to solve the peculiar case.

(By Staff Reporter) A day after a woman's husband posted a video on social media claiming that she used his money to place bets in Ludo, a new twist has emerged in the case. The woman, Renu, who reportedly put herself at stake as she had no money to bet on and lost to her landlord, told the police that her husband is addicted to gambling. A woman in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh district, who was reportedly addicted to the game

of Ludo, started living with her home owner after she lost a game to him. The woman's husband, Umesh, who works in Jaipur, has complained to the police about the incident. According to the complaint, he moved to Jaipur for work six months ago. His wife, who was addicted to Ludo, allegedly spent all the money he spent at home on gambling. But she is not addicted to gambling but her husband is, which has

Melinda French Gates, EAM Jaishankar discuss G-20, digital development

The Gates Foundation has been working in India for many years in areas of health and women empowerment among others

(By Staff Reporter) Philanthropist and co-chair of Gates Foundation Melinda French Gates on Tuesday called on External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

In a tweet, Jaishankar said issues relating to G-20, progress on global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and digital development

figured in the meeting. "Glad to welcome co-chair and trustee of Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, @melindagates. Discussed the G-20, global SDG progress and digital development," Jaishankar said. The Gates Foundation has been working in India for many years in areas of health and women empowerment among others.



Mumbai court grants bail to 2 men arrested for harassing Korean YouTuber

A Mumbai court granted bail to the two men who were arrested for allegedly harassing a South Korean YouTuber on the streets of Mumbai during her online live stream

(SAI Bureau) A court here on Tuesday granted bail to two men arrested for allegedly harassing a South Korean vlogger and YouTuber while she was live streaming on a street in Khar in the metropolis.

The Bandra metropolitan court granted bail to the duo on a cash bond of



Rs 15,000 each and directed them to cooperate with the investigation, their lawyer Zamir Khan said. The detailed order was not available yet. The accused have been booked under section 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the Indian Penal Code.

The duo were arrested hours after a video surfaced on social media last week showing the woman being

sexually harassed in Khar area of Mumbai. It showed a youth coming close to the vlogger and trying to

pull her by holding her hand even when she protested. As the woman started walking away from the spot, the man again appeared on a motorcycle with a friend, offering her a lift, which she refused.

The police took notice of the incident after receiving the video on their Twitter handle and registered an FIR. The duo, aged 19 and 21 years, were nabbed from nearby Bandra.

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Vote split not key factor behind BJP's win in Gujarat

Vote split alone cannot explain the results in Gujarat. It is likely the appeal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the efficient campaign the BJP ran, helped it more than vote cutting did.

The Congress's seat tally of 17 assembly constituencies (ACs) out of 182 in the 2022 Gujarat assembly elections is its worst ever performance in the state. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which was looking to at least displace the Congress as the main opposition party in the state, finished a distant third, winning just 5 ACs. On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has won the biggest ever victory in a Gujarat assembly election. Does this mean that AAP's entry in Gujarat was bound to benefit the BJP? At the outset, it does look like the AAP and Congress have ended up hurting each other. The number of ACs where these two parties have finished second and third suggests that their votes were split in a large number of ACs. The Congress has finished second in 118 ACs and third in 39, while the AAP has finished second in 35 and third in 114. The number of such ACS – where competing anti-BJP parties finished second and third – is important because it is in these seats where one of them could possibly have emerged a winner if they didn't cut into each other's votes.

Chart 1: Number of ACs by position



of Congress and AAP

To be sure, it is not necessary that it was AAP which finished third every time the Congress finished second or vice versa. Of the 118 ACs where the Congress has finished second, AAP was third in 99. Similarly, of the 35 ACs where the AAP has finished second, Congress was third in 31. However, this still adds up to 130 ACs, which is more than the 92 seats required to have a majority in the

Gujarat assembly. Does this mean that with only AAP or Congress competing against the BJP in an AC their combined seat tally would add up to a majority?

Counter-intuitive as it may sound, the answer to that question is no. This can be seen by computing the result of the election after adding up Congress and AAP votes at the AC-level. Then the result should look like the two parties had not split each other's votes. This

analysis shows that the BJP would still win the election. In fact, its seat tally turns out to be 123, just four ACs short of its 2002 tally of 127, its best performance in Gujarat before 2022. The combined Congress-AAP tally, on the other hand, would be just 55. While this is much better than their actual combined tally of 22, the tally of 55 ACs would still be the worst since 2007.

Chart 2: Seat tally of BJP, Congress, and AAP in Gujarat

These numbers imply that the AAP's entry in Gujarat is only one of the reasons for the poor performance of anti-BJP parties in the 2022 assembly election. HT had suggested this in a story published on December 8. The number of ACs which Congress or even BJP lost to spoilers (when parties finishing third have vote share greater than the victory margin) was not the highest historically in this election. Therefore, vote-cutting alone cannot explain the results in Gujarat. It is likely the appeal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the efficient campaign the BJP ran, helped it more than vote cutting did.

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Do Yourself a Favor: Be Crime Smart. How to stay safe from Common Scams and Crimes

Getting educated and taking a few basic steps may well keep you from becoming a victim of crime and fraud—and save you a great deal of time and trouble. You can also help us protect your families and communities by reporting suspicious activities and helping find wanted fugitives and missing kids. This series will publish some of the most common scams and crimes that the FBI encounters, as well as tips to help prevent you from being victimized.

Business and Investment Fraud

Investment or business fraud schemes will try to lure you in with the promise of low- or no-risk investments. Scammers often ask for upfront cash in exchange for guaranteed future returns. There is no such thing as a guaranteed return on investment. It's a scam.

Learn what to look out for, how to protect yourself and your family, and what to do if you're a victim.

Common Schemes

1. Advance fee schemes? ask you to invest upfront money for a larger return later, such as a loan, contract, or gift. Advance fee frauds ask investors to pay a fee up front – in advance of receiving any proceeds, money, stock, or warrants – in order for the deal to go through. The advance payment may be described as a fee, tax, commission, or incidental expense that will be repaid later. Some advance fee schemes target investors who already purchased underperforming securities and offer to sell those securities if an “advance fee” is paid, or target investors who have already lost money in investment schemes. Fraudsters often direct investors to wire advance fees to escrow agents or lawyers to give investors comfort and to lend an air of legitimacy to their schemes. Fraudsters also may try to fool investors with official-sounding websites and e-mail addresses.



Advance fee frauds may involve the sale of products or services, the offering of investments, lottery winnings, found money, or many other so-called opportunities. Fraudsters carrying out advance fee schemes may:

- Offer common financial instruments such as bank guarantees, old government or corporate bonds, medium or long term notes, stand-by letters of credit, blocked funds programs, “fresh cut” or “seasoned” paper, and proofs of funds;

- Offer to find financing arrangements for clients who pay a “finder's fee” in advance; or

- Pose as legitimate U.S. brokers or firms and offer to help investors recover their stock market losses by exchanging worthless stock, but requiring investors to pay an upfront “security deposit” or post an “insurance” or “performance bond.”

2. Nigerian Letter or 419 schemes ask someone to share in a percentage of millions of dollars that the author—a self-proclaimed government official—is trying to transfer illegally out of Nigeria. So what are Nigerian 419 scams? The number 419 refers to a section in Nigerian law concerning conspiracy and fraud that deals specifically with people requesting assistance with transferring money. This scam has been around for a long time, but

now more often than not, the scammer is contacting victims electronically.

What does this look like? An individual may contact

natural disaster in his country has affected his ability to transfer the money on his own. If you help him, he will allow you to keep some of the funds for yourself.

The scammer asks you to give him your financial information, including your bank account number, so he can complete the transfer. This allows him to access and steal from your accounts.

In another version of this scam, the fraudster may require that you pay a fee in order to facilitate the

transfer. Once you pay the fraudster, and he sees that you're willing to give him money, he continues to invent extra costs that he

needs you to cover. As long as you keep paying, he keeps coming up with more expenses.

Regardless of which method the fraudsters use, these victims never see the promised jackpot.

So, how can you protect yourself?

- * Don't give anyone your bank account number or other financial information that could allow him to access your accounts.

- * Don't send money to strangers, unsolicited contacts, or people you don't know face-to-face.

- * Don't transfer money on behalf of other people.

- * Don't trust anything that seems like an easy way to make a lot of money. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

How to Protect Yourself: If it sounds too good to be true, it is. Do your homework and thoroughly research any investment opportunity independently of what any salesperson provides you.

Never rush into an investment opportunity. If you are rushed or told not to discuss it with others, you're being scammed. There is no such thing as a guaranteed return.

Visit the FBI's White-Collar Crime and Cyber Crime webpages for information on more fraud schemes.



you, often through e-mail, explaining that he needs help transferring a large amount of money. He tells you that political turmoil or a recent



Poll Results Offer These Big Lessons For Congress, BJP And AAP

The dominant images from Result Day for Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, and of the Delhi MCD election, were of BJP workers celebrating by distributing laddoos. The BJP scored a massive win in Gujarat. In the Delhi MCD polls, the saffron party put in an unexpectedly strong performance, but was ultimately defeated by the feisty Aam Aadmi Party by a narrow margin.

The BJP's victory in Gujarat is remarkable. The fact that after six terms in office, it was able to get an astonishing vote share of over 50% reveals its bludgeoning dominance in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state.

The chemistry of Modi's emotional connect with the Gujarati voter, combined with the split in the Opposition vote between the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party, proved to be overwhelming. 'Moditva' rules in Gujarat. The combination of Hindutva, development promises, service delivery and strong regional identity have coalesced in the Modi cult to create visceral loyalty to the PM's persona. Posters and banners of Modi dominated the Gujarat skyline this time. The chant "Modi Modi" was heard at every BJP rally.

This time, the BJP has not only consolidated its hold over central Gujarat, but also won in Saurashtra and South Gujarat, vanquishing AAP challengers in Surat. Two AAP heavyweights who had been expected to win, AAP state president Gopal Italia in Katargam, and Patidar leader Alpesh Kathiriya in Varachha Road have both lost. AAP chief ministerial face Isudan Gadhvi has also lost. The BJP's Gujarat achievement is one that is rarely seen in democratic politics. The only comparable record is that of the Left Front in Bengal which in 2006 also won a three-fourths majority in its seventh successive election. The success of the BJP in Gujarat lies in the combination of the Modi personality cult, a formidable party machine and a hunger to fight zealously for every seat. The Congress has been decimated in Gujarat. It has fallen to its lowest-ever tally of a shocking 17 seats. After coming close to unseating the BJP in 2017, the Congress was mysteriously missing in action this time, invisible on the ground. Individual Congress leaders operate in their own pockets of influence - such as Arjun Modhwadia in Porbandar (who has won his seat) and Anantkumar Patel in Vansda (who has also won). But the party is unable to mount a united effort or rally behind a pan-Gujarat leader. The Congress's so-called "silent," localised door-to-door campaign has resulted in a near evaporation of the party. Only a few like the victorious Jignesh Mevani in Vadgam have shown the appetite for a fight. Tellingly, Mevani had to crowdsource funds for his campaign. But it would be a miscalculation to see the

results of these winter elections only through the lens of Gujarat. The fact is that just 24 hours before the BJP's Gujarat success, the Aam Aadmi Party was able to defeat the BJP in the MCD elections in spite of huge odds. The MCD elections were delayed from March to December, municipal ward boundaries were changed, several AAP leaders have been charged with corruption, and some have been thrown in jail. Several union ministers and the PM campaigned for the BJP. But AAP was still able to prevail, in what must be considered a big victory for the decade-old newbie.

Even more significant than the Delhi MCD results is the outcome in Himachal Pradesh. After four years, the Congress has defeated the BJP in a direct fight. The last time the Congress was able to pull this off was in 2018 when it won in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Since then, whether in Goa or Uttarakhand or Uttar Pradesh, the Congress has been repeatedly beaten by the BJP. Himachal Pradesh marks an important break from this pattern. Analysts will point to the Congress-BJP alternating pattern in Himachal Pradesh, seen since 1985 to explain the results. Yet the Himachal Pradesh result also shows that in some situations, the Modi factor is not enough and the "Modi model" of winning elections has its limits. The PM campaigned extensively in the hill state, even going so far as to tell voters that there was no need to remember the local candidate, and that a vote for the lotus would be a vote for Modi. The pitch did not work.

Local grievances such as government employees' worries about the pension scheme, the woes of apple growers, as well as the infighting and rebellion in the BJP ranks took a toll on the BJP. The side-lining of BJP stalwart leader former Chief Minister PK Dhumal by the JP Nadda faction led to serious rebellion. Congress ran a hyper-local campaign, fronted by state leaders, successfully mopping up the discontent. Rahul Gandhi did not go to Himachal even once, although Priyanka Gandhi Vadra did hold several rallies. The Congress victory in Himachal Pradesh reveals that anti-incumbency still exists and anti-incumbency sentiments can unseat an unpopular BJP government. The winter election of 2022 in a sense puts all three parties - BJP, Congress and AAP - on notice. All can draw lessons from these results. As far as the BJP is concerned, the lesson is that the "double engine government" model does not work in every state, and there are limits to the Modi personality cult. Yes, in Gujarat, Modi is larger than life but let's remember anti-incumbency in the state was offset by the wholesale sacking of the entire state government in 2021; as many as 44 sitting MLAs were ruthlessly dropped. Of course, in Himachal, Modi was not on the ticket, while in Gujarat he was.

By Sagrika Ghose

Musk revealed extent of Hunter Biden censorship by releasing Twitter Files

The censor's pen always grows thicker. That's what we learn from The Twitter Files. The Twitter Files are major revelations that show what we all suspected was happening at Twitter. What started as a content moderation system to stop child pornography grew out of control into a political viewpoint censorship operation. Even figures from the Steele dossier fiasco were critically involved. Elon Musk did a public service to reveal the documents behind Twitter's decision-making on the Hunter Biden laptop story in 2020. They clearly show that Twitter employees had the power to do whatever they wanted to user content, and they abused that power with weak justification. The files reveal that Twitter employees did censorship on call for political figures. In 2020, a Biden campaign official could just send a list of links and a Twitter employee would respond with two words: "handled these." Both sides could use this back door and make requests to take down links from ordinary users and celebrities, but the documents show that one side got its way a lot more. The files reveal just how many ways the platform could and did censor materials: Twitter went from removing links of the original New York Post story on Hunter Biden's laptop to blocking direct messages - a tool normally used to block child pornography from spreading. Twitter also limited visibility to similar stories. These were the most drastic measures Twitter could take, and the files reveal their flimsy defense. Employees repeatedly cited the "hacked materials" policy, but none of them could provide an official law enforcement finding of a hack - the kind of evidence the policy usually required. Some employees acknowledged the situation was developing and they needed more information as the situation - but they still advised to continue interfering with the story. They censored first, asked questions later. The absence of then-CEO Jack Dorsey's leadership in the files also shows the risk of letting employees run amok with the censor's pen. Dorsey often championed Twitter's founding ideals of allowing people to create and share freely. But in practice he abdicated responsibility of free speech to executives who come across in the files as much more politically minded. Mainstream media has ignored or downplayed these revelations. The one New York Times article, published over a day after the files were released, doesn't link to the files or provide screenshots of key documents. Much of the article discusses the reputation of the journalist who broke the story rather than the story itself. I'm optimistic that Americans will see through the media's ruse again. The attempts to paint the laptop story as Russian disinformation fall in the face of the evidence that has built up over the years. According to a recent Harvard CAPS/Harris Poll, 59% of Americans, including half of Democrats, now believe the laptop was real. It should be over 90% - nearly 40%, mostly Democrats, still believe in the Russia disinformation ruse. These voters are being kept in the dark about the content. I'm also cautiously optimistic that Musk can improve Twitter's free speech policies. Revealing the evidence behind Twitter's greatest censorship failure on Twitter itself was a necessary first step. Musk showed us how irresponsibly Twitter was using its censor's pen. Now he needs to put the cap back on and show how responsible content moderation can restore trust and confidence to a platform that was truly broken.

By Mark Penn



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Will India's G20 Presidency Emerge as a 'Bright Spot on the Dark Horizon' for a World in Crisis?



By: Pathikrit Payne

The year 2023 might emerge as a major watershed moment for the world. It might be a year when the resonance of the major events of last two years, including the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the supply chain related shockwaves, as a result of sanctions on Russia, and Zero Covid policy of China, might be felt even more profoundly across the world, and especially in the Western hemisphere. The ripple effects of cataclysmic rise in prices of energy may have political implications in many countries, while the possibility of the conflict between Ukraine and

Russia going out of hand and spreading beyond their borders can simply not be ruled out. A combination of potential natural calamities and an emerging food supply crisis exacerbated by rising interest rates and fear of an impending recession, may essentially make sure that the year 2023 might bring with it a series of challenges whose enormity is difficult to gauge right now, but would certainly not be less than what the world faced in last two years for sure. Yet, amidst all these, there is certainly a ray of hope. India's taking over of G20 presidency on December 1, for

the next one year, when the world's fastest growing economy and cradle to the world's oldest civilisation, would possibly usher in a new era by spearheading a new path for taking on the global challenges that is plaguing mankind today. For almost more than thirty months now, India has demonstrated unprecedented capacity in managing a cataclysmic pandemic which did not have a reference point from the past on what was the ideal way forward in terms of containing it.

Faced with no option but to impose a painful nationwide lockdown that was certain to plunge economic activities and result in loss of jobs, India's condition was exacerbated even further when it was inflicted with a border flareup by her northern neighbour. Thus, India had more than one challenge to deal with when the rest of the world was already finding it difficult to grapple with the pandemic alone. Yet India's political leadership under Prime Minister Modi, remained calm, poised and went ahead to deal with the

emerging situations without getting into any kind of a blame game or raising the rhetoric.

FROM FOOD SUPPORT, VACCINE INITIATIVES TO MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE BUILD-UP

In early 2020, when it became clear that the pandemic was here to stay and inflict heavy damage, the first task for Modi Government was to make sure that additional food rations were provided to more than 80 crore beneficiaries so that a large section of Indians, from lower middle class and underprivileged sections, had adequate food to eat and tide over the uncertain pandemic times.

Meanwhile, India silently went ahead with massive upgradation of military infrastructures and war fighting resources, to contain the situations emerging along her northern borders. And India had no respite from fighting cross border terrorism either that has a legacy to emerge perpetually from her western neighbour's womb.

Over the next thirty months, India continued with two record breaking government funded

initiatives. If one was world's largest food aid program, as mentioned earlier, the other was the roll out of the world's largest central government funded vaccination program that eventually resulted in India administering more than 200 crore vaccines to its eligible population with domestically manufactured vaccines. The roll out of vaccines itself had an enormous of logistical and collaborative preparations behind it, starting from vaccine development, maintaining highest quality of production to last mile delivery of vaccines, and maintaining records of the same through an application-based platform namely CoWin.

INDIA'S RESILIENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AMIDST PANDEMIC CHALLENGES

It is also important to mention here the manner in which PM Modi spearheaded critical economic and structural reforms over the last few years that continued even during the pandemic phase.

(Contd. on page 19)

Musk deserves a medal for revealing how the Biden campaign, FBI and media censored the Hunter Biden scandal

In the 'Twitter Files' Elon Musk is laying bare the secrets surrounding censorship at the social media giant and how far it went to suppress the Hunter Biden laptop story

By Gregg Jarrett

Just weeks before the presidential contest in 2020, the surfacing of Hunter Biden's laptop posed a mortal threat to Joe Biden's chances of getting elected. Incriminating emails contained therein offered compelling evidence that the father was complicit in his son's elaborate influence peddling schemes involving nefarious foreign actors who were paying millions of dollars for access and promises of favors.

So, the Biden campaign team and Democratic operatives—with a key assist from partisans at the FBI—applied pressure on the social media giant Twitter to block the story.

The predominantly liberal staff at the tech company happily capitulated. They invented a farcical pretext that the laptop was "hacked," strictly forbid any mention of it on their site, suspended the account of the New York Post that had broken

the story, and punished anyone who dared share it by banishing them from Twitter. These disgraceful actions constitute unwarranted censorship at its ugliest. And it worked. Like a charm. Biden was elected. Elon Musk, the new owner of Twitter, has now wisely resolved to pull back the veil of secrecy by releasing the so-called "Twitter Files." They expose the insidious machinations of those who suppressed the story at the behest and request of others. They are an important window into how powerful entities held sway over America's predominant social media platform to crush a scandal. Musk should be commended for his effort at transparency in order to rebuild squandered trust. The Twitter docs offer a damning indictment of how top executives at the company slanted content moderation decisions to favor and protect Biden to the disadvantage of his political opponent, whom they loathed.

Communications show that Twitter acted on a variety of censorship demands by Biden's presidential campaign. There was no credible evidence that the laptop was hacked, mind you.

Russian involvement was non-existent. The newly liberated files prove that Twitter officials well knew it and voiced concerns internally. Yet, they clung to that phony excuse, in part, because the company's deputy general counsel James Baker urged them to do so.

Baker, you'll recall, is the same biased character who helped fuel the Russia collusion hoax while serving in an earlier capacity as the FBI's general counsel. He was an eager conduit for the anti-Trump smears conjured up by Hillary Clinton and her confederates. Under the leadership of Baker, James Comey, Andrew McCabe, and Peter Strzok, the bureau became a cesspool of corruption. They spied on the Trump campaign, lied

to a federal court to gain lawless warrants, and pursued a relentless investigation based on specious allegations that the agency had already discredited and/or debunked, but concealed. Armed with lies, they worked sedulously to drive Trump from office. Baker was a natural to join Twitter. His employment there also gave the agency an insider to social media. You won't find any emails from the FBI in the Twitter Files exhorting the platform to jettison the laptop story. Bureau officials were smarter than that. Instead, they met privately with company executives warning them in advance to expect a bogus story involving Hunter Biden derived from hacked materials.

How did the FBI know to issue the sham alert? They were not prescient; they had special knowledge. The agency seized the laptop in December of 2019.

(Contd on page 19)

How Safe Is India's Economy? What's Working - And What Isn't

By Andy Mukherjee

It's not immediately obvious that the global slowdown has also arrived in India: Investments in factories, roads, and other fixed assets are just shy of 35% of domestic output; they haven't been this high in 10 years. Loan demand is growing so fast that deposits can't keep up.

What's driving India's animal spirits amid a worldwide malaise? Some of it is a result of the economy reopening fully. Contact-based services like travel and hospitality came back sharply from their pandemic funk in the first half of the year, fueling optimism. The other oft-cited reason is what multinational corporations refer to as their "China+1" strategy.

Global manufacturers have taken note of the violent protests by locked-down workers at Apple Inc.'s most important iPhone assembly plant in China. Their search for risk mitigation is bringing them to the second-most-populous nation, which is offering generous subsidies for making everything from semiconductors and solar panels to electric-vehicle batteries and textiles. It's a compelling combination of push and pull.

But China+1 is not going to be of much help in averting a near-term economic slowdown. For one thing, the ramp-up in capital expenditure has been driven by the federal government. Persistent above-target inflation gave it extra tax resources, and it pumped them into

infrastructure. The private sector followed suit, even though it faced a margin squeeze from not being able to fully pass on higher costs to consumers. India's banks, eager to bulk up their post-pandemic asset books, have been more than willing to help firms tide over their cash-flow crunch. As a result, the combined capital expenditure by the federal and state governments as well as large publicly traded companies this fiscal year may exceed 21 trillion rupees (\$258 billion), double the annual investment rate between 2016 and 2018, according to ICICI Securities.

There's a flipside to this happy story, though. Now that the pent-up consumption from the pandemic is exhausted, the double whammy of high inflation and indirect taxes - the source of buoyant government revenues - is starting to pinch average- and low-income households.

Nomura's consumption tracker fell from 11 percentage points above its pre-pandemic reading in the June quarter to below that level in October. It's hard to see 2023 as a great year for the urban middle-class as global tech-industry layoffs affect jobs and capital availability for startups. Rural demand is anyway sluggish, according to consumer-goods companies. "We believe India's growth rate cycle has peaked and a broad-based slowdown is under way," Nomura analysts wrote last week after gross domestic product expanded 6.3% in the September quarter, less than half the rate

of growth in the previous three months. In their estimate, the full-year rate at the eve of India's general election in the summer of 2024 may be 5.2%.

Leaving out the pandemic years, that will be the nation's second-worst rate of economic growth in more than a decade. It will put question marks around Prime Minister Narendra Modi's expensive industrial policy push. The country needs more public spending to narrow the severe learning deficits in students caused by Covid-19, fill large gaps in public health care, and tackle climate change.

Those challenges are immediate, whereas the supply chains India is hoping to set up from scratch by throwing subsidies at investors - and offering them the protection of high tariff barriers - are a long-term gamble. Only 15% of the \$33 billion in private investment approved by the government under its production-linked incentive program has fructified so far; fewer than 200,000 jobs were created as of September, compared with expectations of around 6 million, according to official data cited in an article on Quint, a news website. Even if the West's estrangement with China deepens, or if the much-anticipated end to President Xi Jinping's Covid-19 policies gets postponed, there's nothing to suggest that private investment will do much heavy lifting for India next year.

That's also because exports are starting to slow down for most Asian suppliers:

Shipments out of India hit a 20-month low in October. The recent GDP data shows clear signs of the country's industrial sector losing momentum. The unemployment rate has risen to 8%.

The policy playbook for New Delhi appears rather thin. Yes, local interest rates will top out in early 2023, but not before taking the total tightening in the current cycle to over 2 percentage points. Financial conditions could become harsher still. If the war in Ukraine escalates - or if China suddenly drops its stringent virus controls - a shortage of commodities relative to demand could again flare up. That will crimp cash flows for Indian firms, sending more of them to seek external financing to meet their stretched working-capital needs. Banks, under pressure to raise deposit rates to shore up their liquidity position, may not be as accommodating of credit risk as they have been this year. If they are, they'll only be storing up trouble for later.

The growth outlook for India next year is subdued. Just how tough it could get depends on how badly the global economy sputters. There will be long-term benefits from positioning India as an attractive second destination for producers trying to curb their China exposure. But the wisdom of staking \$24 billion of public funds over five years to accelerate a shift in global supply chains is bound to get questioned, especially if India in 2024 finds itself in the same low-growth rut that had propelled Modi to national power in 2014.

China, Russia emboldened following Biden's disastrous leadership on Afghanistan withdrawal

By Leif Babin

In its annual report to Congress last week on military and security developments in the People's Republic of China, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) admitted China capitalized on the disastrous U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 to undermine U.S. foreign policy and erode the confidence of America's allies.

"In 2021, the [People's Republic of China] employed multiple diplomatic tools in an attempt to erode U.S. and partner influence, such as highlighting the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and criticizing U.S.-backed security partnerships..." the report states. That shouldn't be a shocking revelation. The need to bring U.S. troops home after

two decades of war was a topic worthy of consideration. But it is difficult to envision a more calamitous manner in which to have accomplished it. Though incredibly, President Biden declared the Afghanistan withdrawal an "extraordinary success," it was obvious to anyone willing to see past the spin that the consequences of such a shocking American retreat would

embolden bad actors across the globe.

One can easily argue that the botched Afghan withdrawal was a major calculation in Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to launch a full-scale invasion

of Ukraine only five months later, in a major escalation of the war that had been ongoing for eight years. General Tod Wolters, then head of the U.S.

European Command, acknowledged in April that the Russian invasion was likely an attempt to "take advantage of the fissures that could have appeared in NATO as a result of the post-Afghanistan environment."

Now, the DoD's annual report to Congress only confirms what was obvious: the U.S. Afghan withdrawal weakened American national security

and emboldened China, a rival which the report states "presents the most consequential and systemic challenge to U.S. national security and the free and open international system."



Sadly, it seems the Afghan withdrawal was driven not by necessity or tactical military objectives but by political expediency. On the 20th anniversary of 9/11, the Biden administration saw a public relations opportunity to announce the war was over and that American troops were home.

So, they pushed the military into an accelerated timeline with tragic

consequences. Beyond this attempt for a poetic finish, bad actors across the world watched with satisfaction and maneuvered to take advantage. It may be decades before we fully understand the strategic impact of this decision.

In leadership, many desire a great victory story to share with the world. As a leadership consultant, we often see this common mistake when leaders focus on the narrative rather than the mission and strategic victory.

Good leadership requires strategic vision and honest, realistic assessment. Leaders must strive, not for short-term gain, but for the long-term good of the team and the mission. In Afghanistan, the narrative took precedent over the goal - a safer more stable world and eliminating a haven for terrorists who threaten the United States and the security of our people. History books will tell the story of the withdrawal from Afghanistan before the 20th anniversary of the worst terrorist attack in American history, but the negative repercussions of that misplaced leadership decision will continue to reverberate on U.S. foreign policy and world stability for years to come.

Why Rahul Gandhi's Latest 'Temple Run' May Lead Congress to Yet Another Slippery Path



By: Bhavdeep Kang

In the course of the Bharat Jodo Yatra, Rahul Gandhi has undertaken a 'Temple Run' reminiscent of his whirlwind tour of religious sites ahead of the 2017 Gujarat Assembly elections. The fresh foray into so-called 'soft Hindutva' is based on the premise that it undermines the BJP's strategy of Hindu consolidation.

So, we see Rahul Gandhi draped in saffron, sitting cross-legged on the banks of Maa Narmada, with mala and mauli, turban and tika. Lacking exposure to the religious-cultural traditions of the subcontinent for the most part, Gandhi is a bit out of his comfort zone. His spiritual pursuits so far have been of the vipassana-in-Cambodia kind. But the Gandhi scion is making brave attempts

to 'Hindu-ise' himself. Temple visits are a visible part of that exercise, which stems from the Congress effort to reshape its secularist dogma, in tune with prevailing political currents. The result has been utter confusion. How do you trump the icon of Hindu nationalism, given the Congress' legacy of Nehruvian agnosticism? Gandhi's Temple Run 1.0 involved visiting some 27 temples across Gujarat, from Ambaji and Akshardham to Unai Mata and Valinath. The party won in 18 of the 'temple' constituencies he visited, displacing the BJP in ten of them. Post-electoral analyses indicated that it was the Patidar agitation and agricultural distress, rather than temple-hopping, that helped the Congress improve its tally. However, pleased by its apparent success in wooing the majority community, the grand old party reprised the effort to acquire a saffron tint in 2018. Ahead of the Karnataka Assembly elections, Gandhi

made it a point to visit a number of temples — Chamundi in Mysuru, Malemahadeshwara in Chamarajanagar, Durgambika in Davangere and so on. He also met the heads of the powerful Lingayat mutts. But Karnataka's dominant community chose to go with the BJP. The Congress is hoping that its outreach to the majority community, in combination with 27 years of anti-incumbency, will improve its standing in Gujarat and prove the exit polls incorrect. On the Karnataka leg of his Bharat Jodo Yatra, the former Congress chief visited the Suttur Mutt to meet its head, Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji and paid homage at the Chamundeshwari and Srikantheshwara Swamy temples. In Madhya Pradesh, he participated in an aarti at Omkareshwar and paid his respects at Ujjain's famous Mahakal temple (he is a devotee of Lord Shiva, according to Rajasthan chief minister Ashok

Gehlot). He also met the Jain seer Pragyaaji Maharaj at his Tapobhumi ashram for 25 minutes. For good measure, he invited godman Namdeo 'Computer Baba' Tyagi to join him on his Bharat Jodo Yatra. The purpose of Temple Run 2.0 is to craft a counter-narrative to the BJP, which can be summed up as 'Hinduism vs Hindutva'. Gandhi, prompted by the Congress brains trust (Shashi Tharoor, Jairam Ramesh, P Chidambaram), is attempting to draw a distinction between 'real' Hindus who aspire to high ideals, and power-hungry 'Hindutvawadis' who owe allegiance to the RSS. After decades of embracing Nehruvian secularism, pandering to Left-leaning liberals and demonising the Right wing, the Congress finally woke up to the altered political reality of Hindu consolidation. But the party's efforts to distance itself from charges of minorityism and change its extreme ideological stance have been erratic.

(Contd. on page 20)

What the Tiananmen Protest Can Tell Us About China's Zero-Covid Unrest

The country's first anti-government protests in 30 years might be fading, but that doesn't mean they failed.

By TERRIL YUE JONES

The most shocking image to emerge from the protests engulfing Beijing, Shanghai and other Chinese cities recently was video of crowds in Shanghai shouting, "Gongchandang, xiatai! Xi Jinping, xiatai!" Those translate literally to "Communist Party, step down," and "Xi Jinping, step down," but a more forceful translation is more accurate: "Out with the Communist Party! Out with Xi Jinping!" They were not invitations to resign; they were exhortations to oust them from power. Those slogans brought back some intense memories for me. When I was covering the student-led protests at Tiananmen Square in 1989, there were frequent calls for senior leader Deng Xiaoping and Premier Li Peng to be done with. "Li Peng xiatai" was a common refrain, which students and citizens shouted with raised fists, and ebullient youths wrote on



banners they lifted from cars parading up and down Beijing's Chang'an Boulevard. The Tiananmen Square protest was violently suppressed, and similar public disdain for the

ruling party and party leaders has been unheard of in China for more than 30 years. But now, for the first time since 1989, Chinese citizens have rallied in public to call out the

country's top leader, in effect demanding regime change. The recent protests were ignited by intense frustration with Xi's draconian "qingling" or "zero-Covid" policy that has seen

frequent, widespread and long-lasting lockdowns with schools and restaurants closed, and residents unable to leave their compounds, or even their buildings, to shop for food. Chinese people are fed up with the measures at a time when much of the rest of the Covid-affected world has reopened. Chinese television broadcasting the World Cup competition from Qatar focuses on the action on the field, avoiding wider views that would show thousands of boisterous — and maskless — fans, which would outrage Chinese viewers, many of whom can't leave their buildings just to take a walk. The protests erupted after a fire last week in the far-west city of Urumqi that left 10 dead; videos seemed to show firefighters unable to go in the apartment building, and victims unable to escape, because of lockdown measures. Virulent demonstrations began there and soon spread to some 20 cities.

(Contd. on page 21)

After Declaring War On Apple, Elon Musk's Unilateral Surrender

Elon Musk found out where his limits were when he declared "war" on Apple Inc



If you run a large media company, and if that media company makes 90% of its revenue from advertising, a good baseline goal is to not alienate companies that buy the most ads. Elon Musk, on the other hand, used his first few days on the job as chief executive officer of Twitter Inc. to post conspiracy theories, goof around with an antisemitic rapper and generally do everything in his power to make the app unattractive to marketers.

Advertisers responded, predictably, by pausing their campaigns. Musk then threatened to sic his fanboys on

them, via "thermonuclear name and shame." He suggested that advertisers who'd quit spending money on Twitter—a group that includes Pfizer, General Motors and United Airlines—were bowing to "activists," who are "trying to destroy free speech in America." As the Financial Times reported, he followed up by personally calling the CEOs of big advertisers "in order to berate them," which caused some to further cut their spending.

This was coercive and gross. It also failed miserably. Tellingly, Musk found out where his limits were when he declared "war" on Apple Inc. His campaign started

on Nov. 28, when he complained that Apple, which has been his company's largest advertiser, had "mostly stopped advertising on Twitter," and asked, "Do they hate free speech in America?" The claim that Apple had cut off Twitter was false, at least according to data from Pathmatics, a research firm that tracks digital marketing spending.

Pathmatics data show that although Apple had cut back on its Twitter ad spending from the summer—Apple hasn't explained why, but a reasonable place to start might be headlines like "Elon Brings One of America's Most Prominent Nazis Back to Twitter"—it was still paying the company \$1 million or so per month. Neither Musk nor Apple responded to requests for comment.

Warning that the "future of civilization" was at stake, Musk attacked Apple CEO Tim Cook by raising what he seemed to perceive as Apple's major vulnerability: regulatory scrutiny of its App Store. Musk claimed, without offering evidence, that

Apple had threatened to boot Twitter from the platform.

He also accused the company of placing "a secret 30% tax on everything you buy." (The suggestion of secrecy was comical; App Store fees have been one of the most talked-about subjects in the tech industry for more than a year.) To support his position, Musk posted a parody video created by Epic Games, the maker of Fortnite, which had sued Apple in 2020 over the in-app purchasing scheme, and tweeted a meme suggesting that he knew going to war with Apple was reckless—and was willing to do it anyway.

For a day or so, it looked like Apple had stumbled into something serious. Musk fanboys fantasized about the ludicrous possibility of their alpha lord creating his own iPhone competitor, right-wing politicians released concerned statements, and Tucker Carlson Tucker Carlsoned. There were think pieces written: "Mr. Musk set the stage for a power struggle," the New York Times declared,

warning that Musk's growing clout among Republicans could mean trouble for Apple. At the DealBook Summit, Mark Zuckerberg, who's taken to blaming Meta Platform Inc.'s woes on Cook rather than his own decision to waste money on the metaverse, attacked Apple as monopolistic and "problematic." But on Nov. 30, Musk issued a unilateral surrender. He deleted the meme and proceeded to something approaching flattery, posting a serene video of Apple's "beautiful HQ" and thanking Cook for a tour and a "good conversation."

Musk chalked the entire thing up to a "misunderstanding." There was no mention of Apple's fee and nothing about the alleged advertising pullback. Musk later claimed that Apple had "fully resumed advertising." Pathmatics reports that Apple spent around \$235,000 over the seven days beginning on Nov. 28—in other words, the same amount it had been spending at the time Musk declared war.

(Contd. on page 20)

Going After Richa Chadha Won't Alter What Happened in Galwan, or Why

Just how did the Chinese manage to amass 50,000 troops in Tibet close to the Line of Actual Control in March-April 2020 and occupy areas that were supposed to be routinely patrolled by the army?

By Manoj Joshi

The world and their uncle came down on actress Richa Chadha when she reminded the Indian Army about Galwan. Chadha was reacting to a statement by the Northern Army Commander, Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi, that the Indian Army was ready to take back Pakistan-occupied Kashmir from Pakistan. Referring to an October statement from Union defence minister Rajnath Singh on reclaiming the territory, the general said that the army would be ready to act whenever the government ordered them to do so. An honest interpretation of Chadha's tweet is that she was reminding the army that the real world was different from the flights of fancy. To imply that she disrespected those who died in Galwan is patent dishonesty. Perhaps "Galwan says Hi!" may not have caught



the inherent sarcasm of her tweet; a simple "Remember Galwan?" would have been sufficient.

Anyone who has studied the history of the campaigns in the

western sector in 1947, 1965, 1971 and the Kargil mini-war ought to know that Rajnath Singh's fulminations should be taken with a tonne of salt. Pakistan may be in the midst of

a political crisis today, but the notion that the Indian Army can liberate PoK quick time is far-fetched. They would have to confront well-entrenched troops in defences prepared over

decades. There is nothing in the Indian Army's equipment, doctrine and organisation today that suggests that things could be different now. But then, such considerations do not constrain politicians or social media warriors, though a defence minister ought to have a better understanding of issues.

Gilgit-Baltistan is an old story. What should be of greater concern is the ongoing tussle between India and China in eastern Ladakh. There are many questions that remain unanswered when we speak of Galwan, Pangong Tso, Depsang, Charding Nala (Demchok) and the Kugrang river valley (Gogra-Hotsprings), where the Chinese suddenly established blockades in 2020. The government, the army and the intelligence services have provided little by way of information.

(Contd. on page 20)

Rest in Greenpeace: New York poised to become sixth state to legalize 'human composting'



They also liked the idea of loved ones being able to enjoy flowers and trees that their remains had helped create.

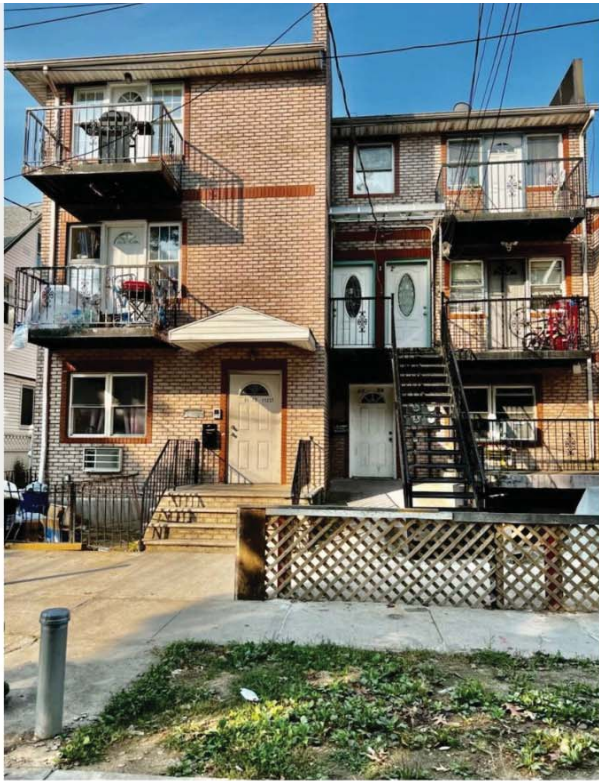
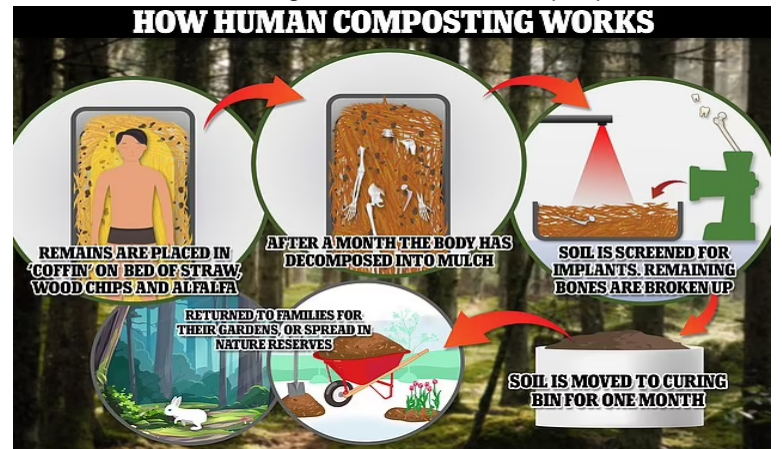
A bill to legalize the process in New York has passed the state's Senate and General Assembly in June. It now requires signature from recently reelected Gov Kathy Hochul to become law. It is unclear whether she will pass or veto the bill. She has until the end of the year to make the decision. Those waiting for the New York bill to become law include Bernard O'Brien, 65, who lives in Brooklyn Heights and works in New York City's Independent Budget Office. Asked why he wanted to sign up for human composting, Mr O'Brien told DailyMail.com: 'It's comforting to think of my body serving nature, flowers and trees rather than being in a box six feet underground or burned. 'I was raised a Christian and... if my body is distributed back to nature it gives me images of my loved ones enjoying flowers and trees from it forever.' He plans to

sign up once it is approved, and then have his soil scattered over a nature reserve in Indiana where he is from. Wes Dingman, 90, a retired physician and psychiatrist from Queensbury in upstate New York is also keen to see the bill passed. He told Times Union: 'That is how it was, long before we humans invented a whole bunch of things like embalming fluid.' He and his wife plan to give their remains to a medical school, before asking for them to be turned into compost. But opponents — namely the Catholic Church — argue the

practice 'disrespects' the human body and have called on state governors to veto the bills. The state's bishops said last month: 'We oppose this bill because composting is a process typically used for household or agricultural waste. 'It does not provide the respect due to bodily remains.' It takes about three weeks for flesh to completely rot away in a temperate environment. But skeletons can survive for years, only breaking down if they become damp or are trampled by animals, machines or people.

(SAI Bureau) New York is poised to become the sixth state to legalize 'human composting' — where people pay \$7,000 to be turned into soil after they die. The bodies are decomposed in above-ground containers that speed up the process of decomposing by ensuring the remains stay moist and are regularly moved. It has already been legalized in California, Colorado, Oregon, Vermont and Washington, with more than 200 Americans opting for the process to date. And the latest eco-craze

is surging in popularity with the center pioneering human composting — recompose — tripling in size in just two years. They now have 1,200 people on the 'waiting' list. Containers of remains are stacked in a wall, before soil from them is handed back to families months later. Many choose to have their remains sent to nature reserves or implanted into a personal garden. People wanting to get composted told DailyMail.com it is 'comforting' to think that their remains would help the Earth.



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(SAI Bureau) A U.S. judge on Tuesday dismissed a case against Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for ordering the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, following the Biden administration's decision that he held 'sovereign immunity.' Judge John Bates, a district court judge in Washington D.C., said the allegations were 'credible' and that he felt 'uneasiness in dismissing the case. The decision likely marks the end of attempts to hold MBS accountable in an American



US judge DROPS lawsuit accusing Saudi Crown Prince MBS of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi

court. It comes after President Joe Biden was accused of betraying the memory of Khashoggi when the State Department said the crown prince was immune from prosecution. Khashoggi was never seen again after entering the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018. Saudi officials are believed to have killed him and dismembered his body, before removing his remains in trash bags. In his written opinion, Bates said his hands were tied by the State Department's decision — even though MBS was only appointed prime minister six days before the Biden administration decided he had immunity. 'Despite the court's uneasiness, then, with

both the circumstances of bin Salman's appointment and the credible allegations of his involvement in Khashoggi's murder, the United States has informed the court that he is immune, and bin Salman is therefore "entitled to head of state immunity . . . while he remains in office," he wrote.

'Accordingly, the claims against bin Salman will be dismissed based on head-of-state immunity.' MBS has always denied any involvement. The case was brought by Khashoggi's fiancée Hatice Cengiz and DAWN, a group that promotes human rights in the Middle East, as they seek justice for his death. Khashoggi, a resident of the US, had walked

into the consulate on October 2, 2018, to collect documents that would allow him to get married. He never walked out.

Audio tape released believed to be from Khashoggi's Apple Watch captured his dying screams as he was allegedly dragged from the Saudi consul general's office to a table in a next-door study, injected with an 'unknown drug' and surgically dismembered. A team of 15 Saudi agents had flown to Turkey to meet Khashoggi inside the consulate. They included a forensic doctor, intelligence and security officers and individuals who worked for the crown prince's office. Turkish officials allege Mr Khashoggi was killed and then dismembered with a bone saw.

Biden was picture bumping fists with the de facto Saudi leader during a meeting in Jeddah.

The president insisted he was 'straightforward and direct' with the crown prince in telling him the killing was unacceptable when they spoke in July. Cengiz added later: 'We thought maybe there would be a light to justice from #USA But again, money came first.' 'Biden saved the murderer by granting immunity. He saved the criminal and got involved in the crime himself. Let's see who will save you in the hereafter?' she added. 'Biden himself betrayed his word, betrayed Jamal,' Cengiz told CNN in an interview Friday morning. 'History will not forget this wrong decision.' Saudi Arabia has



U.S. intelligence agencies believe MBS was responsible for the killing. When the State Department announced his immunity, Cengiz took to Twitter to express her grief. 'Jamal died again today.' It came months

stepped up imprisonment and other retaliation against peaceful critics at home and abroad and has cut oil production, a move seen as undercutting efforts by the US and its allies to punish Russia for its war against Ukraine.

Elon FIRES Twitter's general counsel James Baker for 'vetting internal files on Hunter Biden laptop scandal

Chief Twit Elon Musk has fired Twitter's general counsel James A. Baker, citing his alleged involvement in suppressing the release of internal documents regarding Twitter's censorship of the Hunter Biden laptop scandal. 'In light of concerns about Baker's possible role in suppression of information important to the public dialogue, he was exited from Twitter today,' Musk wrote in a tweet on Tuesday. Musk added that Baker's explanation of the events surrounding the laptop saga was 'unconvincing.' Journalist Matt Taibbi, who released the first batch of internal files about the Hunter saga on Friday, claimed that Baker had been fired in part for 'vetting the first batch of 'Twitter Files' — without knowledge of new management.' Also on Tuesday, Rep. James Comer, a Kentucky Republican, sent Baker a letter requesting his appearance before the House Oversight Committee next year,

when the GOP is set to take control of the House.

Before joining Twitter, Baker was former FBI general counsel under Director James Comey, and played a key role in the saga surrounding the Bureau's controversial probe into possible collusion between Russia and Donald Trump's 2016 campaign.

Baker's departure from the social media giant follows the publication last week of internal documents showing him and other executives discussing Twitter's October 2020 ban on a news report about Hunter's foreign business deals, based on emails from his abandoned laptop. On Friday, Taibbi published the batch of

internal documents, calling them the 'Twitter Files,' which included an exchange between Baker and former VP of Global Comms Brandon Borman. Borman asks, regarding banning an article about Hunter Biden under Twitter's 'hacked materials' policy: 'Can we truthfully claim that this is part of the policy?' Baker responded, appearing to argue in favor of maintaining the ban, because 'caution is warranted'.

In a new Twitter thread on Tuesday, Taibbi alleged that Baker had been fired after he was discovered 'vetting' the internal documents before

their release, and delaying the release of a second tranche of files to Taibbi and another journalist, Bari Weiss. Taibbi wrote that 'new management,' meaning Musk, was not aware of Baker's role in reviewing the files before their release. Taibbi tweeted: 'The process for producing the "Twitter Files" involved delivery to two journalists (Bari Weiss and me) via a lawyer close to new management. However, after the initial batch, things became complicated. Over the weekend, while we both dealt with obstacles to new searches, it was @bariweiss who discovered that the person in charge of releasing the files was someone named Jim. When she called to ask 'Jim's' last name, the answer came back: 'Jim Baker.' "My jaw hit the floor,' says Weiss.' Taibbi continued: 'Baker is a controversial figure. He has been something of a Zelig of FBI controversies dating back to 2016, from the Steele Dossier to the Alfa-Server mess.



Polygamist Bentley-driving 'Mormon prophet' offered his daughter, 14, a bag of Doritos and \$50 bribe to marry him

(SAI Bureau) The leader of an Arizona-based polygamist cult attempted to bribe his own 14-year-old daughter into marrying him with potato chips, \$50 and airplane tickets.

The shocking allegations against Samuel Rappylee Bateman, 46, came in a new FBI affidavit filed on Friday. Bateman was taken into federal custody in September.

Bateman is also alleged to have told followers that convicted child-rapist and cult leader Warren Jeffs was dead and that he 'spoke through' Bateman as a new prophet.

He was arrested after being pulled over by cops while transporting underage girls inside a squalid trailer furnished with a couch and a bucket for a toilet.

Bateman leads a splinter group of the radical Mormon offshoot Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or FLDS. His views are considered so extreme that even Jeffs disassociated from him. In 2019, Bateman was returning from a road trip to Canada with his 14-year-old daughter when he told her that he felt as though she was his wife. The teen told advocates in 2020 that her father's words made her feel scared.

While the pair were stopped at a gas station, Bateman gave his daughter two bags of Doritos,



\$50 and asked her type of car she would like to drive.

In the FBI documents, Special Agents Dawn A. Martin described that interaction as Bateman's attempt to bribe his daughter into marrying him.

The document goes on to say that Bateman gave his daughter 'sloppy' kisses which his daughter referred to as 'nasty.' He then discussed in graphic detail having a child with her. Bateman later disclosed to his wife that he wanted to marry their daughter, which prompted his wife to leave with the child.

Former followers of the FLDS told the Salt Lake City Tribune in December that following Warren Jeffs' conviction in 2011, Bateman seized upon the power

vacuum and became the group's leader.

He told followers that the reason that Jeffs were no longer speaking to members was because he was dead 'or translated,' Mormon speak for God transitioning a person's body from mortal to immortal.

Bateman said that Jeffs could only speak through him and that members should reward him with money and new wives.

In reality, investigator Sam Brower said that Jeffs has denounced Bateman in recent correspondence from his jail cell. Brower appeared in the Netflix documentary: Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey. The recent affidavit states that Bateman has since gathered 'approximately 50

followers and more than 20 wives, many of whom are minors, mostly under the age of 15.'

Evidence cited in the affidavit includes recordings of Bateman himself, speaking to a couple in Colorado City, Arizona, who do outreach to the polygamy

community there and are filming a documentary.

In one example cited in the document, Bateman told the couple that 'Heavenly Father' had instructed him in early November 2021 to 'give the most precious thing he has, his girls' virtue,' to three of his adult male followers. Bateman then allegedly watched as the three men had sex with his daughters, one of whom was just 12, according to the affidavit. Bateman allegedly commented that the girls had 'sacrificed their virtue for the Lord,' and went on to say: 'God will fix their bodies and put the membrane back in their body. I've never had more confidence in doing his will. It's all out of love.' The affidavit further alleges that in late 2020, Bateman drove to the Colorado City couple's home 'in a large SUV packed with women and girls,' where he 'introduced everyone as his wives.'



Man who took 40,000 ecstasy tablets and lived to tell the tale

(News Agency) A man who took 40,000 ecstasy pills over nine years has been deemed the person who consumed the amount of MDMA ever while living to tell the tale. Doctors estimate the 37-year-old, from Surrey, England, took 40,000 ecstasy pills over nine years after getting 'very much into the club scene'. He started taking the pills in party settings, but found that when he tried to stop he could not move and experienced tunnel vision as a symptom of withdrawal. His case was documented in a medical journal in 2006 that has only recently surfaced and circulated online. It comes after DailyMail.com revealed MDMA could be available in US hospitals in 2024 after showing promise as a powerful treatment for PTSD. Known as molly, MDMA is popular in the underground dance scene, where people take it to party through the night and to feel more connected to the music and fellow ravers. The British man, referred to only

as 'Mr A', used the drug heavily from the age of 21 until he was 30. He took five tablets every weekend for the first two years, but bumped that up to about 3.5 tablets daily for the next three. His use jumped even higher to an average of 25 tablets daily over the next four years. He had taken 40,000 pills before he quit, breaking the previous highest figure ever recorded for a single person of 2,000, which was published in a 1998 study.

Dr Christos Kouimtsidis, the psychiatrist who treated him, said there was so much ecstasy in his system that he was high 'for a few months' after he quit the drug. Dr Kouimtsidis was first connected to Mr A at age 37 to address his memory loss issues. The case report did not say whether Mr A was still on the drugs when he met with the doctor. Mr A stopped using ecstasy after 'collapsing' at parties

too many times. He experienced bouts of 'tunnel vision' and later developed severe anxiety, panic attacks, depression, muscle rigidity, hallucinations and paranoia. The drug



typically is not considered an addictive in the same way that benzodiazepines, a class of anxiety medications, and opioids are. Overdoses from MDMA are rare. Most are a result of multiple drug poisoning - when taking two different drugs that toxically mix in a person's

system - or outside circumstances such as dehydration. But too much of any substance can prove toxic and cause cardiac arrest, regardless of whether it is an illegal drug. Dr Kouimtsidis said: 'Typical use is not every day and not the amount of tablets he was taking. It was extreme, his use was really, really high.' Mr A may have started taking a staggering amount of ecstasy for fun, Dr Kouimtsidis explained. The raver 'was very much into the club scene, providing ecstasy for himself and others and so forth'. But at a later point he was likely taking so much of the drug to self medicate. The doctor added: 'It was more like a management of his mood rather than excitement and having fun.' He also had a history of using other harmful drugs including benzodiazepines, amphetamines, LSD, cocaine and heroin. Mr A stopped taking the drug at age 37 but researchers lost contact with him.

Will India's G20 Presidency Emerge as a 'Bright Spot on the Dark Horizon' for a World in Crisis?

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From implementing Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code Act to reforming indirect tax structure through enacting GST, followed by major push to Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan to boost domestic production and creating a resilient global scale domestic supply chain ecosystem, from corporate tax reforms to opening up of new sectors to greater private sector participation such as space and defence, from creating a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to push for making India a global hub for manufacturing, to National Logistics Policy and Project Gatishakti for removing institutional bottlenecks to boost productivity, from a massive push for renewable energy generation capacity, to following an independent foreign policy for management of energy procurement, each of these played a stellar role in making sure that even in the midst of severe economic challenges across the world, India continued with its economic momentum that resulted in it emerging as the fifth largest economy of the world. Today, with a near \$3.5 trillion economy, a healthy forex reserve in excess of \$540 billion, record gross tax collection and the third largest startup ecosystem of the world, India is poised to not just emerge as the third largest economy of the world in the next half a decade or so, but has also exemplified that economic growth and large-scale welfare schemes can go hand in hand if the intent is right. This is a template for the rest of the world to emulate.

MODI GOVT'S JAM TRINITY: A GAME CHANGING TEMPLATE

Amidst all these, one must remember the magnitude and impact of the policy initiatives that was taken by Modi Government through complete restructuring of the architecture through which Central Government provides subsidies to beneficiaries. Through the trinity of Jan Dhan, Aadhar and Mobile, popularly known as JAM, Modi Government revolutionised the concept of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of government subsidies to beneficiaries bypassing all kinds of middlemen that also resulted in weeding out crores of fake ration cards, fake LPG connections, fake MNREGA cards to name a few. Eventually, more than 44 crore Jan Dhan Accounts were opened. Today, the cumulative balance in those accounts stand at more than Rs 1.75 lakh crore. Had it not been for JAM trinity, supporting the

under privileged to tide over the difficult times of pandemic challenges would have been more problematic.

The combination of Ayushman Bharat that provides health protection to 10 crore underprivileged families, or almost 50 crore people, and DBT scheme have been gamechangers when it comes to last mile delivery of government welfare schemes and has made India one of the pioneers in using cutting edge IT systems for implementation welfare schemes, at a scale which many of the Western developed countries may find difficult to match.

INDIA'S STRIDES ON CLIMATE INITIATIVES: PIONEERING AND PIVOTAL

Next in line would invariably be India's efforts on the environmental front. The country stands at an unenviable position of having to take care of the aspirations and needs of nearly 140 crore people, and yet having its civilisational roots embedded in conservation rather than exploitation of nature, India, over the last few years, in spite of conflicting challenges have voluntarily taken some key initiatives to work on addressing climatic challenges as well.

From initiating the formation of International Solar Alliance, creating policy framework for making electric vehicles more viable and eventually the preferred option for transport, to working with the private sector to invest billions of dollars for creating a green hydrogen generation ecosystem that would eventually be cost effective and commercially viable, to banning single use plastics for commercial purposes, to setting stringent targets for renewable power capacity installation in the country, to altering rural lifestyle through Ujjwala Yojana to replace wood with LPG for cooking purposes, to India's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, India has been striving and setting newer benchmarks which are in sync with its sustainable development agenda to create the perfect rhythm of harmony between development imperatives and nature conservation.

Also, a critical aspect of the same has been the manner in which Modi Government through National Awards, has for the first time in India created an institutional framework to recognise the grassroots level conservators of environment.

BRINGING SPIRITUAL BALANCE IN A CONFLICT-

RIDDEN WORLD

Modi Government's success lies not just in the development matrix but also the manner in which it has revived the idea of spirituality and holistic approach in the realm of human development. From spearheading the internationalisation of the practise of Yoga to giving right kind of institutional support to traditional medicines, the efforts are now getting recognised worldwide. While 21st June has been declared as International Day of Yoga, the importance of traditional medicines and India's strides in that has been acknowledged by WHO when it recently laid the foundation of WHO Centre for Traditional Medicines in Jamnagar, Gujarat.

A NEW VOICE FOR GLOBAL SOUTH

A critical aspect of India's ascendancy under Modi Government has been India's strong defence of its independent foreign policy and its refusal to toe to any external dictums. Modi Government's stand on procurement of oil from Russia in the midst of sanctions imposed by the Western countries on Russia, its refusal to bend under threats of sanctions, and the manner in which India has exposed the double standards of some of the Western countries on the culture of sanctions, have made India gradually emerge as the natural voice for the Global South.

INDIA'S STRIDES FOR A 'NO WAR' WORLD BUT UNEQUIVOCAL STAND AGAINST TERRORISM

India, under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, has not only refused to side with the West on the issue of sanctions against Russia, but has reiterated its stand time and again, that issues should be resolved through dialogues. Also, the Prime Minister has taken a bold stand by stating 'Today's era must not be of war', a message that is for all the major powerhouses of the world, and perhaps also for the giant military industrial complexes of the world who have often been alleged of manipulating policies to facilitate conflicts that favours their fortunes in return.

Domestically as well, India remains one of the very few countries of the world which in spite of facing such vicious onslaught of cross border terrorism has still not lost faith in humanity and dialogue, even while fighting terrorism. India has time and again questioned the double standards of developed economies when it comes to dealing with terrorism. Prime

Minister Modi has reiterated at every forum the need for UN to define terrorism and the necessity for unequivocal condemnation of all kinds of terrorism.

It has also shown how long-standing disputes and contentious issues can be resolved, even in hostile situations, with administrative grit and without any major bloodshed. From amendment to Article 370, to resolving many of the long-standing disputes in Northeast India that drastically reduced footprints of violence, India is creating a new template for conflict resolution for others to emulate.

INDIA'S EMERGENCE AS THE NEW SOLUTION PROVIDER

The excitement surrounding India's presidency of G20 is not just in India but among many other countries, which are increasingly looking forward to India as a solution provider. From its successful template of Covid vaccination, direct benefit transfer or DBT framework, the largest food aid program during pandemic, economic management, strides in the realm of renewable energy development, as well as its success with frugal engineering in the realm of space technology

Musk deserves a medal for revealing how the Biden campaign, FBI and media censored the Hunter Biden scandal

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They examined it, knew it was legitimate, and were shocked by its incendiary value. They correctly feared that its contents, if fully disclosed, would ruin Biden's electoral prospects.

The FBI was also spying on Rudy Giuliani who had a copy of the laptop and was seeking to publish it. So, the agency contrived a preemptive deception to convince Twitter to censor the forthcoming story, which it promptly did. The FBI's unconscionable role in burying the details of the laptop is verified in a declaration signed by Twitter's former head of site integrity, Yoel Roth, and reported exclusively by the New York Post. It is also confirmed by FBI Supervisory Special Agent Elvis Chan during his testimony in a censorship lawsuit brought by two state attorneys general and, again, reported by the Post. Chan is the one who organized the surreptitious meetings with both Twitter and Facebook to spike the story.

It is a violation of the First Amendment for the government to engage in censorship either overtly or covertly. It infringes the freedoms of speech and the press embedded in our Constitution's Bill of Rights. While a publicly or privately held

or development of cutting-edge next generation 5G network, India has indeed many things to offer to the world.

India's G20 presidency is thus the celebration of the idea of India and India's emergence in the global arena. It does not mean India does no longer have its own set of problems. It only means India knows now better than most how to tide over and eventually mitigate the challenges to emerge more resilient than before.

SETTING THE NEW NARRATIVE FOR INDIA AND GLOBAL SOUTH

And finally, the year-long programs of G20 that would happen across various cities of India, would give India the opportunity to share the Indian story through the voice of Indians. For quite some time now, there has been a blatant bias that has been showcased by some, especially in the West, while narrating the Indian story. No matter what India does, they would attempt to pin down India through manipulation of data to project things which are far from reality. Now, it would be India's turn to correct those wrongs as well. It is not for nothing that IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva termed India as a 'bright spot on the dark horizon'.

company is under no such constraints, the government at all levels is. This includes the FBI manipulating or coercing companies to behave as proxies to accomplish otherwise prohibited censorship. While Twitter may not be liable per se for First Amendment violations, it is still culpable ethically for trampling on the spirit and foundation of our hallowed free speech rights.

To his great credit, Democrat Congressman Ro Khanna who represents Silicon Valley leveled this very argument to Twitter executives when the story emerged. He complained that the platform's censorship "seems a violation of the 1st Amendment principles." Khanna was right. Cherished principles were at stake. But Twitter dug in and refused to yield.

There were, of course, other witting accessories who actively covered up the laptop story. An unscrupulous group of 51 former intelligence officials that included John Brennan, James Clapper, Michael Morell, Leon Panetta, and Mike Hayden penned a public letter announcing that the laptop emails had "all the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation." The statement itself was disinformation.

After Declaring War On Apple, Elon Musk's Unilateral Surrender

Contd. from page 15

It was sensible that Musk, who has a well-documented reluctance to ever back down from a fight, would uncharacteristically reverse course. Not only does Apple hold power over Twitter's current business, but it controls what Musk has said is the company's future—a hastily conceived scheme to charge users \$8 a month for a blue "verification" badge, like the ones on the accounts of celebrities, journalists and politicians. Any revenue that Musk collects through the App Store will be subject to that fee, and any effort by Musk to go around the Apple system—say, with a link that sends users from the Twitter app to the web instead—would probably get the company banned. This means that Musk faces the same suboptimal choice he always did:

either accept about \$5.60 per subscriber each month or raise prices inside the iPhone app so there's \$8 left over for him after fees. Musk has other options. As my colleague Mark Gurman pointed out, he could pull a Netflix and try to sign up subscribers through Twitter's website, which would probably result in fewer subscriptions. He could choose to defy Apple, as Epic tried to do, though the Epic lawsuit ended in Apple's favor and Fortnite is still banned from its App Store. Another source of leverage for Musk—his ability to get right-wing politicians to follow his lead—is less robust than it might appear. Yes, he's been able to direct coverage on Fox News, but his allies in the Republican Party have positioned themselves, for the most part, as friends to the world's largest companies. Ohio

Representative Jim Jordan, likely the next chair of the House Judiciary Committee, opposed antitrust bills aimed at reining in Big Tech companies that passed the House of Representatives earlier this year. (The bills have yet to be brought up for a vote in the Senate; it's not clear Democrats have attracted enough support.) Looking ahead, Jordan seems mostly focused on reining in Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina Khan. After a recent meeting with Cook, Jordan declared that the dispute over the App Store had been "resolved." He then complained about Apple's operations in China, promising to "get to the bottom" of the potential influence that Beijing enjoys over large American companies. The line of inquiry could also be a serious threat to Musk, who's expanded

aggressively in China.

Of course, Apple's ability to push around a vituperative billionaire is indicative of the company's broader power in tech. While Musk was issuing his empty threats, the crypto exchange Coinbase Global Inc. said Apple blocked its latest app release over a feature that Apple claimed violated the 30% fee policy. Like Musk, Coinbase had no good options except to pull the feature and gripe about it on Twitter. Apple held all the cards: Its iPhone operating system runs on most US smartphones, the company brings in the vast majority of global smartphone profits, and there seems to be little organized constituency to undercut that power through regulation. If you want access to those lucrative iPhone users, you have to play by Cook's rules. But you are allowed to tweet all you want.

Going After Richa Chadha Won't Alter What Happened in Galwan, or Why

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Just how did the Chinese manage to amass 50,000 troops in Tibet close to the Line of Actual Control in March-April 2020 and occupy areas that were supposed to be routinely patrolled by the army? What happened in Galwan and those who died there was a consequence of this lapse and can hardly be attributed to Chadha. Surely Indian military satellites and technical reconnaissance should have picked up the Chinese amassing of forces in the Galwan river valley and elsewhere. Even commercial imagery was revealing that the Chinese were camped on the Indian side of the LAC on the river. More important, they had been telegraphing their intentions by raising the issue of Indian road construction in this valley earlier.

On May 18, 2020, a month before the clash, the Global Times had complained about India violating the "boundary line in the Galwan Valley". Indeed, the report

said that the Chinese had "bolstered border control measures" in the region and boasted about China's "military advantage in the Galwan Valley region". Yet, we were caught unprepared.

The government has acknowledged that India lost 20 dead and scores injured in the clash. Lesser known is the fact that the Chinese also took more than 100 officers and soldiers prisoner. In other words, the Galwan clash went worse for us than has been acknowledged. The army has yet to comment on some pictures on the internet showing Indian jawans in Chinese custody, but they have not denied them either.

India has never acknowledged any of our soldiers were in Chinese custody. But on June 17, two days after the incident, the New York Times cited two Indian military officials to say that "a number of Indian soldiers had been captured". There was no comment from the government. But 24 hours later after their release, the army spokesman blandly

stated that no Indian soldiers were "missing in action". This is part of the prevarication and obfuscation relating to eastern Ladakh, where points of Chinese blockades are conveniently termed "friction points".

The Indian and Chinese forces have disengaged in the Pangong, Kugrang and Galwan "friction points". But there is little known about the biggest blockade of them all which has denied India the right to patrol the 950 sq km Depsang Bulge, in the northernmost reaches of the border. Here the Chinese came in 18 km into the Indian side of the LAC to establish the blockade. Yet the government has studiously avoided referring to the region. In his statement to parliament in September 2020 providing the first authoritative version of the events in Ladakh, Union defence minister Rajnath Singh omitted any reference to Depsang or the Charding Nala area near Demchok.

Lt Gen Y.K. Joshi, Gen Dwivedi's

predecessor as Northern Army commander, claimed that the Depsang problem was different from the other blockades. It was, he claimed, "a legacy issue" alluding to the earlier blockade the Chinese had established in 2013, but later vacated. Fortunately, another senior army officer took up the issue with him. In an article, Lt Gen (ret'd) Rakesh Sharma, who had commanded the Leh Corps asserted that the army had been sending a minimum of eight to ten patrols per year from 2013-2019 and another news report confirmed that India had patrolled the region in January-February 2020.

Given all this, to make Richa Chadha the villain of the piece is a bit much. But with tweets from Akshay Kumar and BJP spokespersons weighing in, we know where the attacks were coming from. For them, papering over the serious setbacks we suffered in 2020 in eastern Ladakh seems to be the preferable option.

Why Rahul Gandhi's Latest 'Temple Run' May Lead Congress to Yet Another Slippery Path

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The mindset of the UPA years, where an oath to repudiate Hindu gods was reportedly administered. Karnataka acting Congress chief Satish Jarkiholi the 'Gujarat model' and courted controversy by describing the word 'Hindu' as still persists. Congress leaders Persian and with a 'dirty' meaning. Gandhi himself sends to go overboard in asserting their mixed signals. For example, he secular credentials. chose to invite hijab-wearing Rajnandgaon mayor Hema girls to join him on his march, Deshmukh, for instance, recently at a time when anti-hijab attracted flak for attending a protesters in Iran are being killed

or incarcerated. Nor did the Left-leaning individuals who joined his yatra add punch to Gandhi's 'Hindu' stance. So, while Gandhi's attempt to tap into the mainstream majority sentiment will please a large section of his party workers, voters are unlikely to respond to his brand of 'Hinduism lite'. They see the BJP — and Modi — as the real thing. The intellectual distinction that Gandhi is trying to make between the Congress and BJP

versions of Hinduism are lost on the majority. Local issues dominated the discourse in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, and with Gandhi virtually absent from the electoral scene, state level leaders concentrated on contentious subjects like restoring the old pension scheme. In Gujarat, the river-linking scheme, the Morbi bridge collapse and poor health and road infrastructure were the main

planks. Likewise, in Himachal Pradesh, unemployment, road connectivity and the apple farming crisis were leveraged to target the BJP.

If the former Congress president wants to take a leaf out of the BJP's playbook, he would do better to focus on the 'vikas' plank, because as of now, the BJP owns the Hindu nationalism theme, and no amount of paying obeisance at temples will change that.

What the Tiananmen Protest Can Tell Us About China's Zero-Covid Unrest



(Contd. on page 14)

The protests have taken all by surprise — China's leadership, police and aggrieved citizens themselves. And while the regime isn't sending in tanks, it's having police suppress the expressions of dissent.

But even if the protests fade away and Chinese leaders stay in place, that won't necessarily mean the uprising failed. The Tiananmen Square protests had significant long-term effects on China, even if they weren't always acknowledged as such. The same might turn out to be true of the anti-lockdown protests. They might just succeed, at least in part, even if they fail. Indeed, a handful of Chinese cities in the past few days said they were easing pandemic restrictions by loosening Covid testing requirements and allowing some markets and restaurants to reopen. And according to at least one newspaper report, Beijing is starting to allow some who test positive to quarantine at home instead of crowded, unpopular isolation centers.

There are a few distinct similarities between the 1989 and 2022 manifestations.

Both were sparked by mourning — this past week for the victims of the Urumqi fire, as well as other Chinese people who have died or taken their lives because of Covid-19, and in 1989 for Hu Yaobang, a widely liked former Party chief born into poverty and seen as an everyman ally of ordinary people.

Both protests spread quickly to other cities — in 1989 because of news media and their unabashed support for the hunger-striking students, and in 2022 because of social media that flashed messages and images online faster than

Chinese authorities could scrub them from the internet.

Both protests united students and the local citizenry with common goals — social liberalizations in the name of democracy in 1989, and rolling back "zero Covid" in 2022. Crowds in both cases sang the socialist hymn "L'Internationale" as a rallying cry. This suggests participation by older generations; when I was in Beijing during the 2008 Olympics, young people with whom I spoke had never heard the song.

Similarly, both movements grew to embrace additional goals: in 1989 the freedom to choose one's job and to own property, for higher wages, the right to strike and, presciently, for top leaders to end nepotism and to divulge their assets — issues that irk China's rank and file today. The recent protests similarly expanded to demands for freedom of speech and an end to censorship, freedom of media and journalism, and even freedom to see the movies people want most to see. (China tightly restricts the number of foreign films that can be shown in the country.) In Beijing a friend of mine posted a photo this week of graffiti that read: "Give me back my youth." But there are also stark differences that suggest 2022 is no 1989.

There is no centralized leadership for today's movement — no headquarters, no spokespeople. Thus, there are no negotiations toward any solution, as there were between Li Peng and student leaders. Any decisions are unilateral from the government. There was a dramatic split in the government in 1989 between hard-liners and those who favored a more measured, even sympathetic

approach to the students. The leadership today is tightly united under Xi, remaining committed to zero-Covid.

In 1989 there was also no internet and the mobile phone I used was as big as my shoe. People relied on newspapers, radio and television for their news and for their cues. Today of course every pedestrian has a video-capable device packed with social media apps. Many use VPNs to tunnel through China's firewalls and connect to the outside-world internet where their posts are immune to Chinese censorship, though most probably refrain out of fear of being identified as the source of such posts. Demonstrators frequently put their phones on airplane mode to avoid being geo-located to protest sites.

Technology can work in favor of protesters: plotting where to show up next, or sharing where police are gathering. Users can warn each other of areas of heavy ID checks. But technology can be demonstrators' foe as well. In the past week police have often been seizing protesters' phones to search for photos, videos and suspicious apps. Police are also deploying China's AI prowess and the nation's estimated more than half-billion surveillance cameras to identify demonstrators, even those wearing Covid masks. Tiananmen had its symbols — the square itself, the Monument to the People's Heroes, the plaster Goddess of Democracy Statue. The Covid protesters have the blank, letter-size paper they hold up to highlight censorship and their inability to say or post anything critical of the Party or government. This has led to the nickname "White Paper Revolution," or the "A4 Revolution" — referring to the

paper's size.

There was a lone protester who unfurled banners on a bridge spanning the capital's Third Ring Road just before October's Communist Party congress, demanding an end to incessant coronavirus testing and lockdowns, access to food, and for dignity, political reforms and elections. The man was quickly arrested and his fate was unknown, the circumstances prompting many outside China to dub him "Bridge Man" — evoking the still-anonymous "Tank Man" who faced down a line of tanks just off Tiananmen Square in June 1989. The impact of China's violent crackdown on the protesters of 1989 was to terrify the citizenry into not repeating — or even speaking of — the events of that spring. After weeks of dithering, the Party reasserted its authority with its violent suppression of the movement.

But oddly, although China is far from a democracy, the people nonetheless obtained much of what they had been seeking in 1989. When I returned to Beijing for a three-year stint a decade ago, Chinese people could own apartments and even sprawling villas. They could work for foreign companies in China and earn good salaries. They traveled internationally as tourists flush with cash and bought suitcases of luxury goods or studied abroad for coveted elite degrees. They even bought property overseas. Whether that is despite, or because of, the violent crackdown on Tiananmen Square is still debated. Today, however, the Party does not dither. It continues to arrest and pursue those it sees as committing or contributing to sedition. It does not want to send soldiers into the streets, but it is sending out legions of uniformed

and undercover enforcement, and Xi will do whatever it takes to maintain the Party's main pillar of control: ensuring social and economic stability.

The impact could be similar to 1989; citizens may finally be feeling some relief from zero-Covid. On Wednesday, Vice Premier Sun Chunlan, the top official in charge of China's Covid response, said the country faces a "new stage and mission" in pandemic controls — a possible hint at a course correction. Xi himself told visiting European Council President Charles Michel that the coronavirus' Omicron variant "is less deadly than Delta, which makes the Chinese government feel more open to further relaxing Covid restrictions," an EU official quoted the Chinese leader as saying. Both statements suggest Xi is considering easing the pandemic restrictions — possibly in response to the vitriolic protests. As in 1989, the latest round of protests is not likely to bring down the Party or its leadership. The machinery to control dissent is too strong and too omnipresent. There will be no defiant occupation of Tiananmen Square, and no need to send in tanks.

But all the same, the message of the protesters appears to have gotten through. With legions of businesses ruined, soaring unemployment and the agonizingly persistent uncertainty of lockdowns' length, Xi may have recognized that he must bring back some semblance of normalcy or he will risk the legitimacy he has spent more than a decade crafting.

The Chinese protesters who braved the system's repressions may appear to have lost, but like their forebears a generation ago, they may be starting to get some of what they want.

Warnock beats Walker in Georgia, padding Dems' Senate edge

ATLANTA — Sen. Raphael Warnock has defeated GOP challenger Herschel Walker in Georgia's Senate runoff, giving Democrats a 51-seat majority next year and capping off an extraordinary defense of the chamber that saw every endangered incumbent win reelection.

Warnock, who won a special election runoff in early 2021 and has now earned a full six-year term, finished narrowly ahead of Walker in the November general election. But because neither reached the majority mark, they advanced to this week's one-on-one runoff, extending one of the most expensive and hard-fought campaigns in the country. Warnock's win means that Senate Democrats protected every seat they had on the ballot this year, while also flipping the open seat in Pennsylvania to expand their Senate majority by one despite a tough political environment and sagging approval ratings from President Joe Biden. The results also mark another big defeat for former President Donald Trump's endorsed candidates — a sore spot for local Republicans around the country who say he saddled the party with unelectable candidates. Trump intervened in GOP primaries this year to boost

three hopefuls in tossup Senate races: Walker, a former football star, as well as celebrity physician Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania and investor Blake Masters in Arizona. All three lost, as did other Trump picks in swing House seats and gubernatorial battles.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, meanwhile, easily won reelection in November after seeing off a Trump-backed primary challenger earlier this year, after Kemp refused to aid Trump's efforts to subvert the results of the 2020 election. Warnock addressed a full ballroom of cheering supporters shortly after 11 p.m., walking out to chants of "six more years."

"After a hard fought campaign, or should I say campaigns, it is my honor to utter the four most powerful words every spoken in a democracy: The people have spoken," he said.

Walker took the stage at his election night event around the same time, giving a three-minute concession speech where he urged supporters not to stop believing in America — or voting in elections. "There's no excuses in life," Walker said. "And I'm not going to make any excuses now, because we put up one heck of a fight." It's Georgia's third Senate runoff election in the last two

years, after Warnock and fellow Democrat Jon Ossoff flipped control of the chamber with their dual wins in January 2021.

The win gives Senate Democrats more room to operate on nominations and legislation over the next two years — and it also provides a little extra breathing room ahead of a 2024 Senate map that gives Republicans significant opportunities to win seats.

Georgia won't be on the Senate battleground map next time — but it will be hotly contested in the presidential race after becoming a new Southern swing state in recent years. Democrat Stacey Abrams' close loss to Kemp in 2018 was soon followed by Biden's victory in the state and the pair of Senate wins months later.

This November saw a swing back to Republicans, with Kemp winning again in his rematch with Abrams and the GOP cruising across every statewide race — except for the Senate contest, where Warnock finished a point ahead of Walker but neither was able to capture a majority, triggering the runoff.

Both sides expect the runoff to be close as well, with high voter turnout, especially compared to past runoff elections. The early voting period saw several single-

day turnout records set. Walker was repeatedly dogged by scandal throughout the general election campaign. As a candidate, Walker declared that he was against abortion access and anything that weakened families, like absentee fatherhood. But before the general election, Walker was accused of encouraging and paying for several women to have abortions, allegations he denied. His son, in a Twitter video, accused Walker of domestic violence against his mother. And another ex-girlfriend accused him of domestic violence during their relationship. The Daily Beast also reported that Walker has three children out of wedlock, including one young son he hasn't seen in person in years. POLITICO has not independently verified that reporting.

But Warnock has also had missteps. The senator was criticized for using campaign funds to fight a lawsuit against him. And the Walker campaign has brought Warnock's church's business into the race. Ebenezer Baptist, where Warnock is a senior pastor, is the part owner of a low-income apartment building that filed to evict some tenants for low amounts of owed rent.

Warnock has said he's not

involved with the apartment building business and that no one has been evicted. Republicans have also highlighted Warnock's own domestic troubles, including featuring police body camera footage in ads of his ex-wife saying the senator behaved as an "actor" in public.

Warnock has enjoyed a steep advantage in fundraising and spending: He raised more than double what Walker brought in this election cycle, which translated to more advertising during the extended campaign season, including ads about the domestic violence allegations against Walker.

Walker has leaned on Kemp in the runoff, following Kemp's reelection win in November. The governor loaned out his field organizing team to Senate Leadership Fund, the GOP's Senate super PAC backing Walker, and he started to appear at campaign events with Walker. Kemp even cut a broadcast ad on his behalf.

After Trump-backed candidates challenging Kemp and other Republicans lost in Georgia in the primaries, the former president stayed clear of the state. In lieu of a runoff appearance, Trump did a tele-rally for Walker on Monday night to help pump up his base voters.

Neena Gupta recalls friend didn't cast her in part that was perfect for her: 'You have to be besharam...'

Neena Gupta recalls how a friend of hers did not cast her in a film even though there was a part that was 'perfect' for her. She said that being modest in the industry doesn't give work. Neena Gupta recalls how a friend of hers did not cast her in a film even though there was a part that was 'perfect' for her. She said that being modest in the industry doesn't give work. Neena Gupta was last seen in Sooraj Barjatya's Uunchai, alongside Amitabh Bachchan, Boman Irani, Anupam Kher, Danny Denzongpa, Nafisa Ali, Sarika and Parineeti Chopra. Neena will be starring with Sanjay Mishra in Vadh. During the promotional interaction, Neena shared how her friend opted for another actor in his film, instead of offering Neena a chance.

She told Bollywood Bubble, "Ek mera bohot acha dost film bana raha tha and mereko pata chala London mein gaye film banane, jiske saath maine woh ki thi, Ladies Special, uska writer. Toh mujhe pata chala uski movie mein ek role hai joh mere umar ka hai, and he took somebody else. I called him 'Aare tune mujhe nahi liya'. He was already shooting. He said

'Oh aare yaar, mujhe yaad nahi aya'. So ye bhi hota hai ki dhyani nahi aata (There's one good friend of mine. One day, he was making a film and I came to know about it. He was in London and with him I worked on Ladies Special. I got to know that in his film there's a role that is similar to my age, and he took somebody else. I called him 'You didn't take me'. He was already shooting. He said 'Oh, I didn't remember'. So, even this happens that they don't remember)" "So maine seekha hai itne saalon mein ki you have to be besharam. Modesty jo hume sikhata hai is not a good policy. Apna danka khud bajana padta hai. I am good. Take me (I've learned all these years that you have to be Shameless. Modesty is not a good policy. You have to toot your own horn. I am good. Take me)" she also added. In 2017, Neena Gupta had pleaded for work on social media and later bagged her breakthrough film-Badhaai Ho. "I live in Mumbai and working as a good actor looking for good parts to play," she wrote. She will be next starring in Vadh, which will release in theatres on December 9.

Anu Aggarwal recalls escaping her car after crowd of thousands began banging it: 'Unka haath mere pe pad jaata toh...'

Former actor Anu Aggarwal recalled an incident that took place in Mumbai's Marine Drive in 1991 when thousands of people surrounded her car and started banging on it. In a new interview, Anu spoke about how it was for the first time in her life that she experienced fear. She also talked about leaving her vehicle and taking a taxi to escape the situation. Anu said that she had cherry colour big car which was rare in India in 1991. Speaking on the incident, Anu said that when people saw her car they left their vehicles and ran towards hers at the traffic signal. She said that even though she had dark screens on the windows people recognised her car.

In an interview with Siddharth Kannan, Anu said, "They started banging my car, my windows shouting, 'Anu, Anu'. There was no driver, I was driving the car. I was thinking, 'They will break my car, pull me out.' I'm a fearless child, first time in my life I experienced fear. Thousands of people beating

my car, screaming 'Anu'. Unka haath mere pe pad jaata toh pata nahi kya hota mera (Had they got hold of me, what would have happened to me). That kind of madness."

"I jumped out of the car from another door, ran towards a taxi, got into the taxi, and left the car there. I was going to the Taj for dinner, I had a meeting there. They said, 'What happened? Where's your car?' I said, 'It's there, standing on Marine Drive'. Those days we didn't have cell phones. The people I was having a meeting with their driver went, picked up my car and dropped it at my home. It's like helplessness," she added.

Anu appeared in the Doordarshan serial Isi Bahane in 1988. She made her Bollywood debut with the blockbuster Aashiqui in 1990. She has been part of several films such as Ghazab Tamasha (1992), Thiruda Thiruda, Khal-Naikaa and King Uncle (1993), Janam Kundli (1995), and Return of Jewel Thief (1996).

India Could Soon Experience Heat Waves Beyond Human Survival Limit: World Bank

The World Bank report titled "Climate Investment Opportunities in India's Cooling Sector" said the country is experiencing higher temperatures that arrive earlier and stay far longer

Thiruvananthapuram: Severe heat waves, responsible for thousands of deaths across India over the last few decades, are increasing with alarming frequency and soon the country could become one of the first places in the world to experience heat waves that break the human survivability limit, according to a new report.

The World Bank report titled "Climate Investment Opportunities in India's Cooling Sector" said the country is experiencing higher temperatures that arrive earlier and stay far longer.

"In April 2022, India was plunged into the grip of a punishing early spring heat wave that brought the country to a standstill, with temperatures in the capital, New Delhi, topping 46 degrees Celsius (oC) (114 degrees Fahrenheit). The month of March, which witnessed extraordinary spikes in temperatures, was the hottest ever recorded", it said.

The report will be released during the two-day "India Climate and Development Partners' Meet" being organised by World Bank in partnership with the Kerala government.

Predicting that heat waves situation in India could break the human survivability limit, it said the recent heat wave supports what many climate scientists have long cautioned about with reference to rising temperatures across South Asia.

"In August 2021, the Sixth Assessment Report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that the Indian subcontinent would suffer more frequent and intense heat waves over the coming decade.

"The G20 Climate Risk Atlas also warned in 2021 that heat waves across India were likely to last 25 times longer by 2036-65 if carbon emissions remain high, as in the IPCC's worst-case emission scenario," the report said. It also warned that rising heat across India can jeopardize economic productivity. "Up to 75 percent of India's workforce, or 380 million people, depend on heat-exposed labor, at times working in potentially life-threatening temperatures. ...By 2030, India may account for 34 million of the projected 80 million global job losses from heat stress associated productivity decline", the report said.

It further said India showed the largest heat exposure impacts on heavy labor among South Asian countries, with more than 101 billion hours lost a year.

Analysis by global management consulting firm, McKinsey & Company shows that lost labor from rising heat and humidity could put up to 4.5 per cent of India's GDP- approximately USD 150-250 billion - at risk by the end of this decade. It said India's long-term food security and public health security will depend on a reliable cold chain network.

Transporting food and pharmaceutical goods across India requires a system of cold chain refrigeration that works every step of the way.

"A single temperature lapse in the journey can break the cold chain, spoiling fresh produce and weakening the potency of vaccines. With only 4 per cent of fresh produce in India covered by cold chain facilities, annual estimated food losses total USD 13 billion", it said.

It also noted that the third largest producer of pharmaceuticals in the world, pre-COVID-19, India lost approximately 20 percent of temperature-sensitive

medical products and 25 percent of vaccines due to broken cold chains, leading to losses of USD 313 million a year.

"As temperatures rise across India, so will the demand for cooling. However, in a country where two-thirds of the population live on less than USD 2 a day, and where the average cost of an air-conditioning unit can vary between USD 260 and USD 500, air-cooling systems are a luxury available only to a few." According to analysis presented in the India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP), only eight per cent of Indian households own air-conditioning units.

"Indoor and electric fans can help to maintain thermal comfort, but these too are expensive to buy and inefficient. As a result, many poor and marginalized communities across India are more vulnerable to extreme heat, living in inadequately ventilated, hot and crowded homes without proper access to cooling", the report warned. Staying cool during extreme heat is about more than just comfort - it can constitute the precarious line between life and death, it added.



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Is US Housing Bubble Ready To Burst?

"Collapse" in home prices is coming, experts say

The residential real estate market has screeched to a halt, and some economists believe home prices are about to drop significantly. The big picture: Existing home sales have fallen for nine straight months. The supply of single-family homes is growing. And with mortgage rates near 7%, experts say a large-scale housing slowdown is becoming increasingly likely. What they're saying: "In one line: Collapse in prices is coming," wrote Kieran Clancy, senior U.S. economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. Pantheon estimates that existing home prices will keep falling, ultimately dropping by about 20% from their June peak of around \$414,000.

Goldman Sachs analysts also recently cut their outlook for home prices, from roughly flat next year to down 4%, noting that "unsustainable levels of housing



affordability to continue weighing on housing demand."

Between the lines: Until recently, economists had pooh-poohed the

prospect of a nationwide price slump, suggesting that persistently low inventories of houses to buy would put something of a floor under the market.

Even if demand fell because of surging mortgage rates, they reasoned, there would still be enough buyers for the relatively small number of houses for sale, meaning prices likely wouldn't drop much.

Yes, but: While analysts are coming around to the idea that house prices could see a correction, they still don't expect an outright bust.

Unemployment remains low. And most homeowners who bought in recent years have locked in rock-bottom rates, making their payments affordable.

That means a surge in defaults — like the one that crashed the U.S. housing market in 2008 and 2009 — is unlikely, economists say.

Bottom line: Some decline in home prices is likely in the offing. It won't be a disaster. And lower prices will be welcomed by frustrated, would-be buyers.

What crash? Long Island home prices stronger than ever

Someone forgot to tell Long Island home shoppers the market was crashing. Sale prices hit new highs and bidding wars were up in Nassau and Suffolk counties last quarter. Homes sold faster than they have in the more than two decades that Jonathan Miller has been tracking them, according to his latest report for Douglas Elliman. More than half of all sales involved bidding wars, making the quarter the second-most competitive on record. Four of every 10 bidding wars were for luxury properties, a new high.

The numbers do not include the North Fork and Hamptons markets, which Miller reports separately because they are dominated by vacation homes. But the takeaway from the data is clear: No price collapse on Long Island is evident despite rising mortgage rates, fears of a recession, and notions that home prices must fall after their pandemic explosion. The median price of one- to three-family homes and condos sold last quarter was \$620,000, up from \$605,000 the previous quarter and \$585,000 a year ago. The average price was \$720,000, up from \$703,000 and \$693,000, respectively.

Available homes remain in short supply on Long Island, forcing buyers to compete. Inventory is at half of pre-pandemic levels, thanks to a period of low mortgage rates and pandemic-inspired home shopping that gobbled up listings.

"You had a lot of people scrolling Zillow all day," Miller said. Inventory hasn't bounced back because many homeowners now have low-interest mortgages and don't want to sell if it means buying a new home at a much higher rate. On Sept. 30, the final day of

the quarter, 6,241 Long Island homes were listed — an improvement over the record-low 4,280 three quarters ago but still about 20,000 fewer than in 2008, at the end of the housing bubble. That's another reason prices don't figure to crash like they did then.

With so little on the market, 57.4 percent of Long Island home sales last quarter were for above the last asking price, just off the record of 59.2 percent set the previous quarter. "You're looking at a fairly firm underpinning in terms of price," Miller said. "In 2008, inventory was piled to the sky."

Now, the caveats.

Sales in July, August and September represent buying decisions made in the spring, when mortgage rates were rising but still far lower than they are now. The average rate last week for a 30-year fixed mortgage was 7.16 percent, the highest since 2001. So home prices might well be leveling off, but it's just not reflected in the data yet. Rising rates typically push prices down, and although the shortage of listings has prevented that from happening, borrowing costs could go higher still. The inflation-obsessed Federal Reserve has pledged to continue pushing up interest rates, which usually brings mortgage rates along for the climb. While price growth has buoyed homeowners, for the brokerage and mortgage industries, it has been a rough year because sales are down. And with contract activity off about 30 percent from a year ago, transactions could be even lower in the fourth quarter. That said, Long Island sales were about the same as the third-quarter average over the past decade. Miller noted that annual comparisons are misleading because

last year was such an anomaly. "This is one of the few times in history that year-over-year [change] is skewed, because last year was a rocket ship," he said. The question now is whether that rocket will crash or parachute gently down

to earth. "Usually it's 12 to 24 months before housing prices would see any significant correction, if any, because the sellers are waiting for their number," Miller said. "And if they don't have to move, they're not going to sell."

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Where A U.S. Housing Crash Will Hit The Hardest

Home prices are declining across the United States. It's no longer a debate whether or not home prices will fall, the only question now is how much and where, because home prices are certainly not falling equally across the whole country. The Case-Shiller National Home Price Index has so far declined 2.2% from the peak in home prices which was roughly over the summer of 2022. So 2.2% over a several-month period. 2.2% may not seem like a lot, but as we all know, real estate is regional.

There are some major cities like Miami that are down less than 1% from the peak, and there are some areas like Seattle and San Francisco that have seen 10% declines in just a matter of months. In this article, I'm going to break down the trends in home prices across the entire country. I'll show you where home prices are completely crashing and where home prices are actually still rising. We'll also look at inventory trends, and at the end of the article, I'll make some comments about where the US housing market is heading in 2023.

Over the summer, as home prices were peaking, I wrote an article about my leading indicator of home price growth and showed why home prices were going to have sharp declines in the future, and that is now starting to unfold. Before discussing where the housing market is heading, let's start by looking at the national trends and then see what's going on in major cities around the country. As I mentioned, national home prices are down about 2% from the peak levels of this year, but there are a few things to note. First is that home price data, while reliable, is quite delayed. The Case-Shiller Home Price Index, for example, which is a very reliable index, is



updated for September. Some other data which I'll show is updated for October.

Second is that, as with everything in economics or the economy, the rate of change is the most important factor. While home prices have just started to turn down, it's the speed of the change that is quite alarming. In the past three months ending September, home prices nationally are declining at an 8.5% annual rate. A stunning change of direction, something we've never seen before in the history of home prices. Over the past 30-years, home prices haven't declined this rapidly on a 3-month basis outside of the 2008 crisis. In fact, some cities are showing declines even more rapid than the 2008 crisis.

In March, all 20 major US cities had home price growth that was positive, and most cities were rising at a ridiculous 20% or 30% rate. Today, every major city has declining home prices except Miami, which has been roughly flat over the last few months. Home

prices over the last three months aren't just flattening out as many people suggested; in some cities like Miami, sure, there has been a flattening of prices, but in many parts of the United States, a home price crash is the only word to describe prices falling at 20% or 30% annual rates. In March 2022, every major city had positive home price growth shown in this map. Red means home prices are falling, and blue means home prices are rising. In March, home prices were rising in all 20 major cities. Fast forward to today and home prices are falling everywhere, except Miami, with the worst declines, or the darkest red bubbles, clearly concentrated on the West Coast of the United States. Let's get a little more granular. This chart shows how much home prices increased from before COVID, January 2020, to the peak in April 2022. The two-year housing mania. Each dot represents a county within that state and you can see that almost every

single dot is blue, which means home prices rose in every state in every county with very few exceptions.

If we look at the same chart but measure home prices today compared to April of 2022, we can see more than half the dots are red, which means home prices are falling across a relatively large share of US counties.

Most of the very big problem areas that are seeing home prices crash at a speed even faster than 2008 are on the West Coast. Let's take a look at that now.

I keep looking at the data in two parts. From before the pandemic to the peak in March or April of 2022 and then from the peak through today or the most recent data.

I am doing this because inflection points are the most important thing in economics or the economy. You always want to be looking for the major inflection points in momentum, and the spring of 2022 was certainly the inflection point for the US housing market.

This next map shows the change in home prices from before COVID, January 2020, through April 2022, the peak in the bubble. Blue dots are everywhere, which means that home prices increased just about everywhere except a few areas, one for example, being NYC, which was uniquely impacted by the pandemic.

So the data is clear that home prices nationally are declining and at a relatively fast pace. This map really shows us just how regional the housing market is.

The West Coast is getting hit hard. San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland are some of the worst declines we've seen in the US housing market, falling 15, 20 and even 30% in some counties already.

Housing Market Recession: Home Builders Warn Collapse Is 'Unsustainable'—And Prices Could Tumble Another 20%

Home builder confidence plunged for a tenth straight month in October as rising interest rates continued to weaken housing demand—prompting economists to warn an unexpected rise in new home sales last month may be short-lived and prices may be on the brink of collapse, the National Association of Home Builders reported Tuesday. Builder confidence in the market for new homes dropped 8 points to 38—just half the level of six months ago and its lowest level since 2012—excluding the historic plunge at the start of the pandemic in 2020, according to the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index released Tuesday.

The NAHB called the ongoing collapse of confidence further evidence that rising interest rates, building material bottlenecks and still-elevated home prices continue to weaken the housing market, noting traffic of prospective buyers has also slumped to the lowest level in a decade, while the outlook for sales also worsened. In a statement, the association's chair,

Jerry Konter, said skyrocketing mortgage rates have created an “unhealthy and unsustainable situation,” noting this year will likely mark the first since 2011 to see a decline in the number of housing starts, or homes on which construction starts.

Others are similarly bearish: In emailed comments, Pantheon Macro chief economist Ian Shepherdson said the “disastrous” figures make it clear that the reported jump in new home sales last month “was much more noise” than indicative of a turnaround—especially as the latest surge in mortgage rates (to nearly 7%) threatens to further tank demand.

As a result, Shepherdson predicts construction and new home sales will continue to fall until early next year—pushing prices down by about 15% to 20%; the median price is already down to \$436,800 from a record \$466,300 this

summer.

Wells Fargo economist Charlie Dougherty agrees, projecting median new home prices will fall nearly 7% next year with “disproportionate” losses in some housing markets that were



particularly booming during the pandemic.

“While some analysts have suggested that the housing market is now more balanced, the truth is that the homeownership rate will decline in the quarters ahead as higher interest rates and ongoing elevated construction costs continue to price out a large number of

prospective buyers,” says NAHB chief economist Robert Dietz.

KEY BACKGROUND

Skyrocketing prices have forced central banks around the world to reverse pandemic-era policy measures meant to bolster markets—and the Federal Reserve's rate hikes hit the formerly booming housing market particularly hard. New home sales plunged to a six-year low this summer, and plunging mortgage applications suggest the collapse will only get worse. Fed Chair Jerome Powell has several times alluded to the housing market's “complicated situation” this summer, saying prices will cool as mortgage rates normalize at higher levels after remaining historically low during the pandemic.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

The home builder release kicks off a busy week for new data on the housing market. On Wednesday, the Census Department is slated to release its monthly report on housing starts, and the National Association of Realtors on Thursday will report existing home sales for last month.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi Leads BJP To A Sweeping Victory In Gujarat

(South Asian Insider Bureau) New Delhi: The BJP took 156 of 182 total seats in the Gujarat state assembly following voting earlier this month, marking the party's best-ever performance in the state, a longtime BJP stronghold. The main opposition Indian National Congress won 17 seats, while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) took five. The election – and the margin of victory – in the state of more than 60 million has been closely watched as a test of Modi's popularity ahead of India's next general election, when he is expected to seek a third term.

In a comment posted to Twitter Thursday evening, the Prime Minister thanked the people of Gujarat and said he was

“overcome with a lot of emotions” to see the results. “People blessed the politics of development and at the same time expressed a desire that they want this momentum to continue at a greater pace,” Modi wrote. He campaigned extensively in the lead-up to the election in Gujarat, where the BJP has ruled for more than a quarter century. Modi led the state as chief minister for more than a decade before coming to power as Prime Minister in 2014.

PM Modi looms large in India state polls

Mr Modi characteristically made the Gujarat poll a referendum on himself. He spoke at more than 30 campaign meetings and undertook miles-long road

shows to woo voters and grab saturation coverage on news networks. On the stump he invoked Gujarati asmita or pride and implored the voters to “trust” him and the BJP government. “You don't expect the prime minister to expend so much time and energy in a state election,” says an academic in India.

Mr Modi may have been made to work harder than usual. His ideology of strident Hindu nationalism, combined with promises of economic development, remains a big draw with voters. Gujarat outpaces most of India in investment and per capita income; and boasts the country's fourth-largest economy. What the BJP's sweeping win in Gujarat shows

is that the rainbow coalition - upper, lower and middle-ranking castes, also called the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) - that the party has stitched together continues to fetch dividends. OBCs alone make up about half of Gujarat's more than 60 million people and now form a bulk of the party's voters. Mr Modi's charisma and connect with voters remains the BJP's greatest strength. The BJP is now set to rule Gujarat without a break for 29 years - only the Communist Party of India (Marxist) ruled a state (West Bengal) for a longer time, a record 34 years. And Mr Modi, 72, continues to be a political outlier, defying anti-incumbency, both in his state and outside.

Saudi Arabia Leans Closer to China as Traditional Ties with US Come Under Strain

Ever since US President Joe Biden visited Saudi Arabia in July this year, there has been speculation that Chinese President Xi Jinping may soon visit Riyadh. As the year draws to its culmination, Saudi and Chinese officials are holding a summit meeting in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for Xi on December 9. A developing relationship between the Saudi Arabia and People's Republic of China in the backdrop of deteriorating US-Saudi relations has implications in terms of augmenting China's position in the broader West Asian region. West Asia is commonly referred to as ‘Middle East’ in the West.

The timing of this summit meeting coincides with the plummeting certitude in the future of the bilateral relationship between Washington and Riyadh. A series of geo-economic and political developments have led to this bilateral displacement.

Saudi rulers and the elite have always been very America centred, enjoying what diplomats call a “special relationship” with the US. Yet on a personal level Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (colloquially known as MBS), and President Biden failed to form a connection, with the former even making fun of the 79-year-old's gaffes, questioning his mental acuity and openly declaring his preference for former President Donald Trump.

This preference is easily understandable given Trump defence of MBS over the murder inside a Saudi consulate in Turkey of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a US-based critic of the Prince. Biden, on the other hand, campaigned on making Saudi Arabia a “pariah” state signing off on the release of a CIA document that blamed MBS for the murder of Khashoggi. The other reasons are geopolitical. The Biden administration's repeated attempts to engage with Iran, has created a major rift between the two leaders, and is in no small measure a reason for Riyadh's lean towards Beijing. When former President Trump called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA “the worst deal ever negotiated,” with his uncritical

support for the government of Saudi Arabia, he succeeded in keeping America's long term strategic allies assured that the status quo in West Asia would not be disturbed.

For Joe Biden, who was vice-president when the Obama administration successfully negotiated a nuclear deal with Iran preserving the JCPOA, is important for his foreign policy legacy. If the indirect negotiations with Tehran are successful and the JCPOA is revitalised, the Trump-era oil sanctions on Iran would be lifted. That arrangement makes the Arab states in the Persian Gulf uncomfortable.

While the sanctions relief would benefit the US most, allowing more oil to come onto the world market and lower gasoline prices for American consumers, the fear for Saudi Arabia is that Iran's new access to money would be used to fund proxies around the region, further destabilising West Asia.

Anxieties that the US is trying to extricate itself from the region, have existed amongst Saudi political elites. Last year when the Pentagon decided to draw down air defence assets from West Asia, including Patriot missile batteries, the US Defense Department tried to reassure the Kingdom stating that US air and marine capabilities are still in place to support US interests and partners.

But for Riyadh an assurance of American commitment would have looked “like, for example, not withdrawing Patriot missiles from Saudi Arabia at a time when Saudi Arabia is the victim of missile attacks and drone attacks – not just from Yemen, but from Iran,” according to Prince Turki Al-Faisal the Kingdom's former intelligence chief.

The US has begun working to transfer air defence systems from West Asia to Ukraine. While it has reassured its Gulf allies that these will be replaced over a period of time, for now this move implies that a major security cover for the region in terms of American presence has been decisively diverted to the European theatre.

Biden's speech in Jeddah during his July

trip was an acknowledgement that these anxieties do in fact exist amongst the Saudi elite. He said, “We are not going to leave a vacuum in the Middle East for Russia or China to fill. And we're getting results.”

But the fact is that on ground, there is a sense that the US is edging towards retreat from the region in the wake of the “normalisation” that the Abraham accords are ostensibly bringing about. Case in point is the pull back of US troops from the Red Sea islands of Tiran and Sanafir, a flashpoint at the heart of West Asia war. But the Arab peace arrangements may well be short lived without American presence. The US had played a crucial role in maintaining the demilitarised status of the Gulf of Aqaba. Already there is opposition in Israel to allowing UAE oil tankers to enter the Eilat for transport of crude oil from the Gulf to Europe, as planned under the Abraham Accords.

Any flare-up in the Israel-Palestinian conflict might force other Gulf nations to reconsider the ‘normalisation’ arrangements. Relations between Riyadh and Moscow are at a high point, with MBS choosing to deepen ties with Putin. The Kingdom's role in ignoring US demands for increase in oil production, and in fact raising oil prices by cutting global supply by 1-2m barrels a day has alienated Washington. As high oil prices are seen as helping fund Putin's war effort, in the US, there is loud clamour for “punishing” Saudi Arabia. delivering one of the strongest expressions of US anger, US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez called for freezing all US cooperation with Saudi Arabia.

Even though the “strategic competition” with China currently dominates American foreign policy discussion, spurning its most significant strategic partner in West Asia, neglects the simple fact that an eager China would try to fill the ensuing power vacuum.

After its ignominious exit from Afghanistan, use of punishing economic sanctions against dozens of countries, concessional attitude

towards human rights issues it exhorts, American credibility has been dealt a staggering blow. It is little wonder that Saudi Arabia doubts if the US will continue its commitments. It has refused Washington's demands for increased oil production to Russia's advantage, and is now willing to expand ties with China again regardless of the wishes of its Western allies.

Xi is scheduled to arrive in Riyadh on December 7. Leaders from other West Asian and North African nations will be attending the Chinese-Arab summit, and dozens of agreements and memoranda of understanding covering energy, security and investments, are expected to be signed. Accounting for 27% of Saudi Arabia's total crude oil exports, China is its largest trading partner. But Saudi-China trade remains narrowly based, consisting primarily of petroleum products and chemicals. As the Kingdom implements its blueprint for economic transformation by way of Vision 2030, China is figuring as a key provider of technical support. From supply of fibre optic services, to collaboration in Space technology, development of tourism infrastructure and sales of weapons systems, China has not wasted any time in making significant inroads into West Asia. The Kingdom has sufficient uranium reserves to produce nuclear fuel domestically, and according to some reports Beijing has even assisted Riyadh in developing a nuclear enrichment facility. The Chinese-Arab summit will explicate the extent to which their political-security arrangements might be expanded. Strategically Beijing would want to secure a hold over the largest of its energy sources, push for greater synergy between its Belt and Road Initiative and Saudi Vision 2030, and win more defence procurement deals. But beyond the bilateral strategic relationships, it will be interesting to watch how China navigates the region's traditional rivalries.

America, be very afraid: astonishingly, Canada is now euthanizing 10,000 of its citizens a year



Winston Churchill famously reassured the U.S. that its long northern border was 'guarded only by neighbourly respect and honourable obligations'.

And generations of US leaders have tended to agree – there's nothing to worry about from solid and reliably uncontroversial Canada. Anyone who ever thought that the compassionate response to extreme human suffering is a society that helps people find permanent release from their pain may want to look at some of the horror stories coming out of Canada recently. To be clear, euthanasia laws in the US are nothing like those of its neighbor to the north. But American acceptance of the practice has been growing for decades despite warnings that legalized suicide is a slippery slope toward a calamitous debasement of human life.

Canada, a country that prides itself on its open-mindedness and tolerance, has the most permissive rules on euthanasia in the world – and the results have been frankly terrifying.

Last year, more than 10,000 people in Canada – astonishingly that's over three percent of all deaths there – ended their lives via euthanasia, an increase of a third on the previous year. And it's likely to keep rising: next year, Canada is set to allow people to die exclusively for mental health reasons.

Only last week, a jaw-dropping story emerged of how, five years into an infuriating battle to obtain a stairlift for her home, Canadian army veteran and Paralympian Christine Gauthier was offered an extraordinary alternative.

A Canadian official told her in 2019 that if her life was so difficult and she so 'desperate', the government would help her to kill

herself. 'I have a letter saying that if you're so desperate, madam, we can offer you MAiD, medical assistance in dying,' the paraplegic ex-army corporal testified to Canadian MPs. Ms. Gauthier, who injured her back in a training accident in 1989, competed for Canada in the 2016 Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro and the Invictus Games the same year.

Despite being confined to a wheelchair with a musculoskeletal disorder which affects her legs, backs and hips, she is a gold medal-winning para-canoeist and won a silver medal participating in Canada's women's ice sledge hockey team.

She is very far from most people's idea of a hopeless case and yet her government's Department of Veterans Affairs didn't hesitate to suggest that she might like to end her life if the battle to get a ramp was proving too much for her.

Ms. Gauthier said she recently expressed her concerns about it in writing to Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau. Mr. Trudeau described what happened to her as 'absolutely unacceptable' even as his government admitted that her case wasn't unique.

Around five cases of military veterans being offered assisted euthanasia have been referred to Canadian police and officials urged others who'd received the same treatment to come forward. Veterans Affairs minister Lawrence MacAulay tried to blame a single female official, and yet even if that is the case she hardly dreamt up the appalling suggestion out of thin air but offered a fatal solution that experts say is becoming far too common in Canada.

Alan Nichols, for instance, was a 61-year-old British Columbian with a history of depression and other medical issues – though none of them life-threatening – who was hospitalized in 2019 over fears he might be suicidal. Although he asked his brother, Gary, to 'bust him out' as soon as possible, within a month of going into hospital he'd submitted a request to be euthanized. He listed only one health condition – hearing loss – as the reason but that was enough to satisfy his keepers and he was killed. 'Alan was basically put to death,' said his brother Gary.

Erin Smith said her 71-year-old father, Rod McNeill, went to an Ontario hospital after suffering a fall. A month later, he had been euthanized. She says the doctors responsible didn't even get hold of his medical records from his own physician.

He was subsequently euthanized for a condition – end-stage chronic obstructive pulmonary disease – that an autopsy shows he didn't have, she said.

Sheila Elson, the mother of a 25-year-old woman with cerebral palsy said a hospital doctor in Newfoundland actually told her she'd be 'selfish' if she didn't consider pursuing the euthanasia option. Roger Foley, a patient with a degenerative brain disorder, secretly recorded staff at his hospital in London, Ontario, mentioning euthanasia.

In one recording, the hospital's director of ethics told Mr Foley it would cost 'north of \$1,500 a day' to keep him in hospital, adding: 'My piece of this was to talk to you, (to see) if you had an interest in assisted dying.'

Mr Foley said he had never previously mentioned euthanasia, but the hospital said there is no ban on staff raising the issue. These damning accounts were obtained in an investigation by Associated Press and almost every other week has brought fresh controversy surrounding Canada's right to die policy and further evidence that a practice that was once intended as the last-ditch solution to only the most incurable and terminal

diseases is slipping dangerously out of control.

In America, long gone are the days when the US pathologist Dr. Jack Kevorkian and euthanasia pioneer served eight years in prison in the 1990s and 2000s after his life-ending assistance to dozens of terminally ill people was judged to be second-degree murder.

Kevorkian seemed to revel in the public spotlight and saw himself as a champion for assisted suicide. He enabled his first patient, Oregon school teacher Janet Adkins, to end her life in the back of a rusting Volkswagen van. That was in 1990.

Since that time, 10 states and the District of Columbia have elected to allow doctor-assisted suicide. They include California, Colorado, New Jersey, Hawaii, Maine, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, New Mexico and Montana.

Public opinion has also trended towards more acceptable of the practice.

In 1950, 37% of Americans supported euthanasia. By 1996, as Kevorkian made headlines, public support spiked at 75% support and remains at that level today.

Some states that have okayed the practice have subsequently passed additional legislation making it even easier to end one's life. In Oregon, patients no longer even need to be state residents, although they must still be 18 and have only six or fewer months left to live. They usually must make at least three requests, both oral and written, for doctor-assisted death. In California, after advocates complained that some patients were too weak or disoriented to sign a final attestation – declaring their desire to die – Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation eliminating that requirement.

Vermont removed a requirement from its law requiring that an examination of the patient by a physician be done in-person.

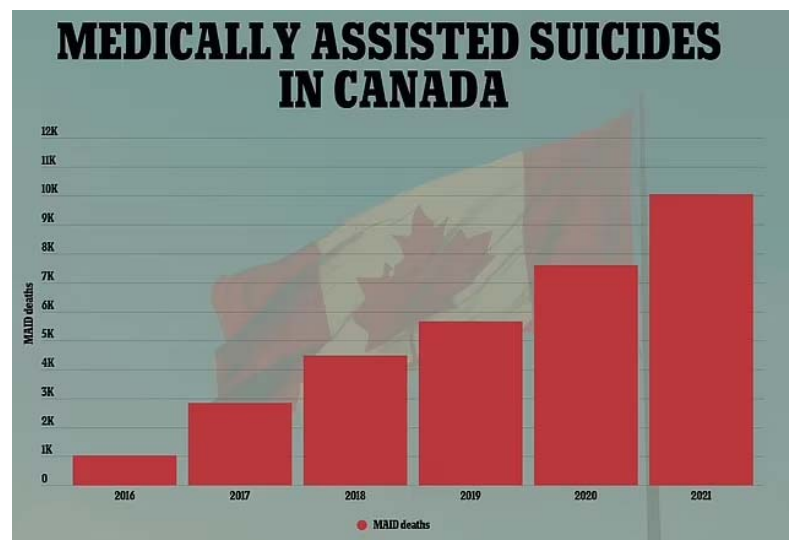
A New York state group supporting the 'Medical Aid in Dying Bill' is pushing for their measure to be considered in the next legislative session – the bill has 72 sponsors.

Doctors and other health experts have said they are deeply uneasy about the basic idea of death being offered as a cure for anything, but particularly for conditions or even situations (like Ms Gauthier's problem getting up and downstairs) that are very far from terminal or life-destroying. They note that suggesting suicide, as some have reportedly been doing as well as helping it happen, breaks doctors' Hippocratic Oath as the principal purpose of medicine is to prolong life and not foreshorten it.

Dr. Trudo Lemmens, University of Toronto professor of health law and policy, said the Canadian system might create an 'obligation to introduce [suicide] as a part of 'mental health treatment'.

He added: 'Imagine that being applied in the context of mental health. You have a person suffering severe depression, seeks help from a therapist and is offered the solution of dying,' he continued. How easy it would be, he said, to convince patients who weren't in their right mind that suicide was a good option.

Canada is also considering extending euthanasia to 'mature' minors – children under 18 who meet the same requirements as adults.



Balenciaga ads are a symptom of a deadly disease attacking our kids

We must no longer put up with the sexualization of our kids



KIDDIE BONDAGE: MEDIA GIVES BALENCIAGA A FREE PASS

TUCKER CARLSON • TONIGHT •

The high fashion brand Balenciaga recently released a shocking ad campaign sexualizing young children. These ads featured toddlers holding stuffed animals dressed in BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism) gear like harnesses and nets. There was even a court document about child pornography partially hidden in one image.

The ads were absolutely disgusting. After public outcry, Balenciaga apologized for the ads sexualizing children. They didn't provide an explanation or donate funds to child protection organizations, they merely removed the ads. Balenciaga's leadership team and anyone else responsible for these images should resign or be fired. Saying "We apologize for any offense," is not enough.

The Balenciaga embarrassment is merely a symptom of a deadly disease that pervades our culture: the "pornification" of our media, the horrific danger it poses, and the damage it causes to our children. It is our responsibility as parents, teachers, and reasonable adults, to stand up for the safety of children who cannot advocate for themselves.

Why would one of the best-funded and most highly regarded marketing teams in the industry, which targets the most affluent customers in the world, consider this to be a successful strategy to sell

purses? Who was this intended to appeal to, and why did they think it would sell a \$3,000 handbag?

The Balenciaga images were so galling that little defense was mustered on their behalf even in the most sexually deviant corners of the internet. But when money was on the line many lost their voice. Celebrities that make big money from the brand through endorsements like Kim Kardashian and Nicole Kidman were silent for days. Kardashian's reaction took a week, and even then she couldn't distance herself from the paycheck she receives from the brand. Her lackluster response was nothing more than a tacit endorsement of the pornification of our society.

Where is the outrage demanding security and retribution for these children? We have seen the power of cultural figures when they demand justice for a cause. People and brands are "canceled." Public figures are banished from public life. Individuals lose their entire livelihoods and reputations. But when a major fashion brand releases pictures that could flag an FBI investigation into possession of child sexual abuse material, the resounding clamor for justice from our culture becomes a muted whimper.

This is the moment for all of us to say no - we will no longer put up with the sexualization of our children. These are

precious, innocent lives being emotionally and physically damaged by the worst of society, who value greed and lust above human dignity.

We must speak up with one voice opposing the degradation of our kids. This cuts across the shallow divisions of our time. Democrat or Republican, urban or rural, religious or non-religious, we must all stand up to defend those who we have a duty to protect. The actions of the past week show how desensitized our society is to this madness. Silence is not an option. In this case, silence provides cover for child abuse. After the backlash, the ad's photographer claimed that he had no say in what props or models were used in the shoot. He claimed his only responsibility was "to [light] the given scene, and take the shots." The items were clear, and the age of the child was apparent. How the photographer could continue to capture these images and not speak up is mind-boggling. When we see an atrocity occurring, such as a crime against a child, and we say nothing, and do nothing - then we are part of the problem.

Speaking out means demanding justice. The hyper-sexualization of children must stop now. According to the United States Sentencing Commission in 2019, over

half (52.2 percent) of non-production child pornography offenses included images or videos of infants or toddlers, and nearly every offense (99.4 percent) included prepubescent victims. The sentencing enhancements for images depicting sadistic or masochistic conduct or abuse of an infant or toddler were applied in 84 percent of cases. Just to make it a bit more different.

Clearly, the expert marketers at Balenciaga think that our society values social status and sexual pleasure - including the deviant and violent kind - more than the safety and welfare of our children.

This mindset perpetuates our throw-away culture, whose worst consequences include the struggling state of our foster system, failing schools, and the dehumanization of children in the womb. When we devalue life at any stage, we devalue it all together.

The truth is, children can't advocate for themselves, they can't organize, vote, or lobby. They are totally defenseless. It is the civic obligation and moral imperative of reasoned adults to be their voice and refuse to give an inch of ground to those who want to destroy them.

Balenciaga should be ashamed and held accountable. Children deserve better than our pornified culture. We owe them safety and stability.

Pegasus spyware was used to hack reporters' phones. I'm suing its creators

When you're infected by Pegasus, spies effectively hold a clone of your phone – we're fighting back

I was warned in August 2020. A source told me to meet him at six o'clock at night in an empty parking lot in San Salvador. He had my number, but he contacted me through a mutual acquaintance instead; he didn't want to leave a trace. When I arrived, he told me to leave my phone in the car. As we walked, he warned me that my colleagues at El Faro, the Salvadoran news organization, were being followed because of a story they were pursuing about negotiations between the president of El Salvador and the notorious MS-13 gang.

This may read like an eerie movie scene, but there are many Central American journalists who have lived it for real. The suspicion you're being followed, ditching your phone before meetings, using encrypted messaging and email apps, speaking in code, never publishing your live location – these are ordinary routines for many in my profession. I wouldn't know until more than a year later what my source really meant. My colleagues weren't just being trailed as they investigated that story. They, and at least 18 other members of El Faro – including me – had been the repeated targets of a weapons-grade espionage software called Pegasus. Pegasus is the gleaming toy of the Israel-based spyware firm NSO Group. Forensic analysis by the Citizen Lab and others

found that Pegasus attacks in El Salvador started in June 2020 and continued until November 2021. In all, 35 journalists and members of civil society were spied on with this tool.

When you're infected by Pegasus, spies effectively hold a clone of your phone. They can see everything, from your personal pictures and texts to your

purchases and your selection and use of apps. When the spying was discovered I had to take measures that included exiting my family group chat and deleting my banking apps.

For journalists, this means spies can see every chat and phone call with our sources. I was hacked while I pursued and published private videos of two brothers of President Nayib Bukele negotiating over El Salvador's Bitcoin Law with foreign businessmen before it came into effect. My colleagues Gabriela Cáceres and Carlos Martínez were hacked as they continued to reveal more details about the government's dealing with gangs and a

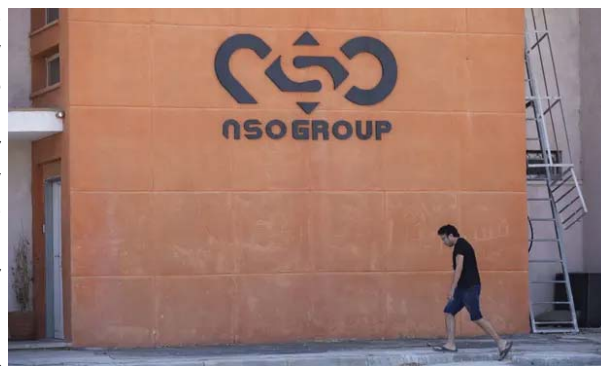
thwarted criminal investigation about it. I could go on and on. Journalism has become even harder after the attacks. When news of the hacking broke, a few

sources jokingly answered our calls by greeting the good people who might be listening. But many more picked up the phone only to say we should stop calling

them, and most simply didn't respond at all. In one instance, a source told me that he now understood why his wife had been fired from her government position. I felt horrible. Guilty. Powerless.

That's how Pegasus makes you feel above all: powerless. We believe the infections in El Faro happened through a "zero-click exploit", meaning we didn't even click on a phony link to open a door for the spies. They just broke in. Change your number, get a new device – they'll just break in there, too. And yet we refused to be powerless. We told our story to news outlets all over the world. In El Salvador, we held press conferences, went on TV

and filed a case before the attorney general's office. None of this brought any kind of accountability for the illegal spying. So, represented by the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, 14 of my colleagues at El Faro and I have decided to sue NSO Group. I can assure you we're not in this for the money: if we wanted to be rich, we wouldn't be independent journalists. We're doing this as a progression of our everyday work in El Salvador to expose official wrongdoing. We're doing this in the United States because we've exhausted all legal avenues in El Salvador's co-opted institutions. And we're doing this not just for us. In April, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz assembled a list of more than 450 law-abiding men and women around the world whose devices had been hacked by NSO Group's Pegasus. Many of them are not in countries or positions where they can sue. But someone has to. NSO executives shouldn't be able to wash their hands as their tools are used to persecute journalists. In a very real sense, NSO set the hounds on us. And now we're fighting back. Nelson Rauda Zablah is a Salvadoran journalist whose work has been featured in the New York Times, the BBC, the Los Angeles Times, and the Economist among other publications



GREG GUTFELD: When the truth 'bubbles up,' the media buries it

Gutfeld says Twitter has 'pulled the rug' out from under journalists

Happy Monday, everybody. So last Friday, with the help of journalist Matt Taibbi, Elon Musk revealed how facts were suppressed on Twitter in order to sway an election. It was fun to witness watching the left, losing its **** like a porta potty in a Category 5. It was everywhere and everything you assumed might be true about something. Well, it turned out to be true all along. And unless you're watching me work out, that almost never happens. But we found out that Twitter was indeed manipulated by liberals to amplify and suppress information in order to control public opinion and ultimately an election. It wasn't a smoking gun. It was a flaming howitzer. So where are those who say this is worse than Watergate? You know, like this jackass. Shut up. Finally, you have the real election tampering and this dope is like our President's teeth after 8 p.m. - nowhere to be found. And now Musk is pulling the curtain back and the truth is as plain as the powder covered nose on Hunter's face. And yes, we're covering it like we always covered it before. But everywhere else, the story disappeared like a half gallon tub of potato salad in Ana Navarro's fridge. I've moved on from Brian. I love potato salad. I don't begrudge her.

Just like this story did when it first

appeared. Remember, it disappeared too. It seems that the more the truth bubbles up, the more the media buries it. But with Elon's Twitter, you see everything, even the most honest back-and-forth between an ex-wife and husband ever. Here is one of Musk's angry ex-wives tweeting at him like, well, an angry ex-wife. Quote, "So let me get this straight. We're now supposed to step into the marketplace of ideas to debate and discuss if Hitler behaved poorly or if women should be raped and locked in cages. Because these are conversations the culture needs to be having." And she goes on and on from there.

So what's Musk, the ex-husband's response? It's amazing how a single emoji can convey everything. If you translated that face, it would say, "Now do you see why I nearly sawed off my hand to remove my wedding ring?" This is why emojis rule. Imagine how much faster any legal proceeding would be if both sides just submitted a single emoji. The whole Amber Heard versus Johnny Depp trial could have been reduced to this. It's a long way for a poop joke, but I'll go there.

Now, on Twitter, the only suppression comes from those a-holes who were always suppressing the news from the beginning. They hog the mic and turn Twitter into their

personal karaoke party. And now they've been exposed in trashing the whistleblowers for blowing the whistle on them. You have the media going after Taibbi for acting as the conduit that exposes their bias. Seriously, how dare he act like a journalist?

And like mindless little worker bees, their buzzing used all the same words. Here's a quick example. A Dem pollster tweets that Taibbi is, quote, "Doing PR for the richest person in the world", which sounds just like a tweet from NBC's Ben Collins, who said Taibbi is "throwing it all away to do PR work for the richest person in the world." Now look at all of these and almost entirely identical tweets from blue checkers in the media. You always knew this to be true. It's like they all called each other and asked, "What are you wearing to the party tonight?"

Or in this case, I should say funeral, because Musk is killing the old media with absolute daylight. You can see it. So now our journalists are no more than bots that vomit spam designed to overwhelm people into thinking there's more of them than there are of you. It's similar to moviemakers using CGI to shoot a scene that involves a crowd shot of 500,000 people. It's easier and cheaper than hiring 500,000 real humans.

Except that here, these aren't bots. These are reporters, in theory, humans.

But in reality, they're as programmed and predictable as a Roomba with a busted wheel. Except they spread dirt instead of cleaning it up. And their only defense is built on one sentence cut and pasted from who knows where, who gave it to them? But at least they admit that the story happened. I mean, good luck finding this story in The New York Times or on CNN. You'd have better chance of finding a picture of me in a heart-shaped frame on Chris Wallace's nightstand. I thought we ended amicably, but he doesn't. So. Much for the middle ground CNN.

So what's this all mean? Well, something's happening. When the hivemind of the media reacts like this, it's because someone kicked their nest and they're buzzing mad. They lost control of the spigot of information. And that means they can no longer suppress truth while amplifying hoaxes like they used to do. Before, they would bury real things from crime to COVID origins while amplifying false, divisive crap pitting Blacks against whites, gays against straights, rich against poor. But their powerful friends breaking the law, those stories vanish like a tray of cannolis in James Corden's dressing room.

Dark activities' of Russian-linked oil tankers have doubled, analysis shows

Dark activities' of Russian-linked oil tankers have doubled, analysis shows



The number of Russian-affiliated oil tankers "going dark" to avoid being tracked in the south Atlantic has doubled in recent months in a sign of clandestine means being deployed to avoid sanctions. By switching off their tracker systems on the high seas, the ships can quietly transfer oil on to tankers without links to Russia so as to avoid their oil exports being flagged.

A \$60 (£50) a barrel ceiling on purchases of Russian oil came into force on Monday. Companies in the EU, the UK, US, Canada and Japan as well as Australia are banned from providing services enabling maritime transport, such as insurance, in cases where the price cap has been breached.

The G7 nations – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and US – provide insurance services for 90% of the world's cargo while Greece, an EU member state, is a major player in the shipping industry. The cap is aimed at maintaining the flow of oil to countries such as China, India, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, which have not banned Russian oil imports, while maintaining economic pressure on the Kremlin.

A traffic jam of oil tankers built up in Turkish waters on Monday as Turkey's government demanded proof of insurance cover.

The monthly average of both so-called dark activities and ship-to-ship operations in the south Atlantic doubled in the September to November period compared with the previous three months, according to an analysis of movements by the maritime intelligence company

Windward. There were around 35 incidents of 'dark activity' in September, nearly 50 in October and numbers dipped to just over 40 in November.

Tankers able to hide any Russian links, by illicit transfers mid-ocean, would hope to avoid any price attestation of their cargo.

Ami Daniel, the chief executive of Windward, said Russia had been learning from Iran and North Korea over the past six months on how to circumvent sanctions.

He said: "We are seeing a growing cycle of learning and adoption of Russian fleet and

Russian connected parties."

The spike in dark activity in the south Atlantic had followed a smaller, and since reversed, period of activity in the north Atlantic, between May and August, he said.

Lloyd's List then published a report at the end of July suggesting that five Chinese-owned ships were being used to transfer Russian oil at a hub about 860 nautical miles west of Portugal's coast.

"Immediately we see a change of pattern," said Daniel. "That's when we see the uptick in the south Atlantic. These are known

methods to avoid sanctions."

Windward also published what it suggested bore the hallmarks of a live case of Russian oil being transported by a tanker under a Cameroon flag.

The vessel changed its registered owner to a Seychelles-based company in June 2022 along with its call sign before making a first visit to Cape Verde, where it met a few other vessels.

Two weeks later, the tanker moved to the north mid-Atlantic, where it stayed for three days, before heading to the south Atlantic, just outside Namibia's seas, according to the analysis.

It was said to have sent false signals about its location.

The ship then moved in mid-October to within Angola's seas, where the tanker transmitted from the exact same spot for six days,

in what Windward said was unusual behaviour for a tanker at sea, before heading towards Asia and its final destination, the Malaysian port of Tanjung Bruas.

Windward's analysis suggests that the vessel's report of a draft change on 20 November, the vertical distance between the waterline and the bottom of the hull, suggested that oil may have been taken onboard at that stage.



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Disney's 'core values'

New CEO Bob Iger must decide between identity politics and entertainment

Disney's 'core values': New CEO Bob Iger must decide between identity politics and entertainment

At a recent company townhall meeting, newly reinstalled Disney CEO Bob Iger told the employees that he wants to "quiet" down culture wars and "respect" the audience.

For conservatives and people of faith who worry that Disney has strayed too far left into deeply woke territory, that certainly sounds promising.

When asked about making "political statements," Iger added: "Do I like the company being embroiled in controversy? Of course not. It can be distracting, and it can have a negative impact on the company. And to the extent that I can work to kind of quiet things down, I'm going to do that..." Again, promising if you are in the camp which has grown up loving Disney the "entertainment" company but now feel increasingly pushed away by Disney the "social justice/identity politics" company. With regard to making political statements and venturing into identity politics, Iger was also asked about Florida Parental Rights in Education Act,

which some at Disney and many on the left falsely and deliberately labeled as the "don't say gay" law. To that question, the mega-powerful CEO gave a very nuanced answer: "When you tell stories, there's a delicate balance. You're talking to an audience, but it's also important to listen to an audience. It's important to have respect for the people you are serving, that you are trying to reach and not have disdain from."

Again, conservatives and people of faith should certainly be receptive to that answer. For they — previously loyal customers who have collectively contributed billions to the Disney bottom-line -- have long felt that Disney has not listened to their viewpoints and that certain leaders within the Disney executive branch have viewed them with "disdain" over the last number of years.

But then, Iger followed up those

hopeful comments with a declaration that can be seen as a wink and a nod to some on the left and far left. Said the CEO, in part: "We're not going to make everyone happy all the time, and we're not going to try to. We're certainly not going to lessen our core values in order to make everyone happy all the time."

Logically, it can be assumed that Iger is referring to complaints from

during the darkest of times.

I grew up in abject poverty and was evicted from 34 homes by the time I was 17.

As that child, and in anticipation of the next eviction into a car or a cockroach infested motel, I bought a small battery powered tape-recorder. And with it, I would only record the "Wonderful World of Disney" or Disney movies for my sister, brother and myself to

families has gotten exponentially worse these last few years. Quite sadly and tragically, children have been — sometimes purposely — swept up into that vortex of politics, poverty, and pain.

Iger and the greater Disney companies are certainly entitled to personal and corporate points of view. If they do dramatically differ from those of Disney's more conservative and faith-based

audience, why not make them known in documentaries across the Disney Universe rather than inserting them into the "entertainment" side of the company. Especially the entertainment side most seen by children.

Iger, along with the CEOs of a number of now fully-woke corporations, have tens of millions of dollars in their bank accounts. Most of the Americans they serve are living paycheck-to-paycheck through some of the most debilitating times in the history of our nation. They don't want lectures from those who believe themselves superior. They need a break. They need to be entertained. And they need it now. Walt Disney, the man, recognized and filled that simple and desperate need decades ago. Discussion and debate is fine and even healthy. But maybe Disney can get back to that "core values" mission and silo their "let's alienate half our audience with identity politics" mantra in the meantime.



conservatives and people of faith when he says "We're not going to make everyone happy all the time...we're certainly not going to lessen our core values in order to make everyone happy all the time."

That statement raises the obvious questions: What are the "core values" of Disney? What are the "core values" of Mr. Iger?

A couple of decades ago, when I was the director of communications for former Sen. Bob Dole, I had the pleasure of having a phone conversation with Iger. He could not have been more professional, courteous and non-political.

Of course, a great deal has changed in our nation and the "C-Suites" of corporate America since that long ago conversation. As a child of the '60s, there was no such thing as "wokeness" and Disney was a large part of my life. It literally helped to keep me sane

listen to during those massively dysfunctional and depressing moments.

The Disney of those years on those cassette tapes did bring us joy, did make us happy, and did help to decompress our troubled minds. No politics. No agenda. No partisanship. Simply pure entertainment for children. That is clearly not the Disney of today and Iger at least seems to be giving hints that he is aware that the company lovingly created by Walt Disney has moved too far into liberal politics at the direct expense of potentially half of the rest of its audience. As a fan of the Disney envisioned by Walt Disney, I am also a Christian who happens to believe we are all God's children born with the exact same rights. That said, I strongly believe children should be allowed to be children.

As Iger well knows, the world for working- and middle-class



Fear of the F-word: Somalia avoids famine declaration as hunger spreads



Government fears interference from foreign aid agencies could destabilise development policy in a country hit by conflict and the climate crisis – yet people are dying of malnutrition

In Somalia, the word for famine is so little used that few people know it or its meaning; the word they use is simply *abaar* – drought.

Now, as the fifth failed rainy season draws near, the drought is the country's worst in four decades, far worse than the one that had occurred by the time about a quarter of a million people died during the 2011 famine.

For months now, UN and aid agencies have been predicting that famine would be announced any day, in October, in December, and now early next year. "Famine is at the door," said UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths in September.

But the F-word has become a point of political contention, and is deeply divisive in Somalia.

There is no argument that 7.8 million people are without enough food or that 1.3 million have had to leave their homes because of the drought and the conflict between al-Shabaab insurgents and the Somali army. Or that people are dying as a result. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who was elected in May, has had Somali and African Union forces engaged in a determined offensive against al-Shabaab, the Salafi jihadist group. His government has been working to bring clan chiefs on side to halt the violence that strangles the country.

There is some optimism among Somalis that he has a good chance of achieving stability and there are already signs of a development strategy attracting investment into the capital, Mogadishu. Last month, Mohamud talked of a "risk"

in declaring famine, worried that the international aid community would skew the government's coordination capacity and see development money rerouted.

"Announcing or declaring a famine itself is a very difficult situation that does not affect the famine victims only but halts the development, changes the perspective on everything," he said. In October, Afyare Elmi, director of the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies in Somalia said the data was not there. "Nobody is saying people are not dying, people are dying. Don't focus on debating the technicality."

Around the town of Galkayo, which is split between two regions – Mudug to the north and Galmudug to the south – the population is rising steadily as a stream of families arrive at the 74 encampments for displaced people.

Drought turns people into wanderers, with little option but to leave dead animals and dried-up gardens behind to go in search of food and water. Conflict dramatically ratchets up that pressure to move, as fighting and killing envelop

villages, and as al-Shabaab, which controls about 20% of the country, brings extortion and forced recruitment to communities. Displaced people are among the most vulnerable and mostly make up the estimated 300,000 people in Somalia already living in famine conditions.

In Galkayo, the rate of acute malnutrition among under-fives is 52%. The three markers for a declaration of famine in a region are for malnutrition to exceed 30%, for at least 20% of households to face extreme food shortages, and for two people in every 10,000 to die as a result of this every day.

In the town's South hospital, Nimo Hassar rests on the mattress next to her tiny baby, Abdikadir. Their single bed faces the open door and a light but welcome breeze breaks through the heat. Hassar and her husband sold their last two surviving goats a few days ago to raise the money to get a ride here, where doctors may save their baby's life. In Bud Bud, her village 150km away, Hassar has already cradled five children as they

died.

"The oldest child I lost was two – he was Mohammed. The youngest was two months. The girls lost were Abshiro, Farhi, Noura and Habiba. Three died close to each other, then later two.

"Before the drought, I could feed my children, now there is no food and the animals have been wiped out," she says. This is not "normal drought", she adds. "The 2011 drought was bad but this is worse.

"I am aware that other children are dying in my villages and other villages, there are too many to count." The gathering of data on deaths and malnutrition levels is down to the UN's Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit-Somalia (FSNAU). A famine declaration carries no binding obligations, but serves to focus global attention on the problem. The UN wants that attention for Somalia, in the hope of driving up funding for the drought response for the region, which is only 50% funded.

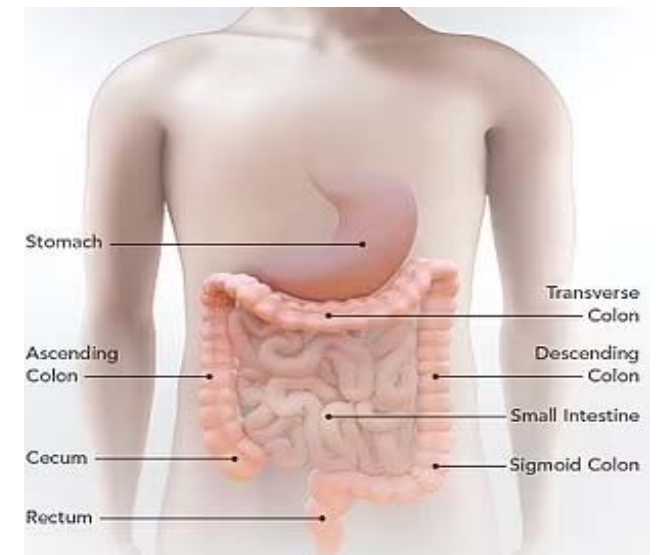
But many in Mohamud's government worry that being overrun by international actors, even those who want to save lives, will mean a loss of autonomy and bring political destabilisation, fearing that the money coming into Somalia to help development could be diverted to emergency programmes that both skew where people move to, and give the militias a new target. Foreign interventions can come at a cost to a new government trying to combat an insurgency from a group that is "the second biggest employer in Somalia", as one UN observer said wryly.

If they cannot regain the land controlled by al-Shabaab, people in those occupied areas will probably starve. In 2011, al-Shabaab did not let aid in or allow people out.



Colon cancer, the 'silent killer' that claimed the life of Kirstie Alley

Disease grows with little or no symptoms and will strike one in TWENTY Americans in their lifetime



Sitcom legend Kirstie Alley died at 71 this week after a short battle with a hard-to-spot cancer dubbed a 'silent killer'. Her family revealed the actress was recently diagnosed with colon cancer - the third most common form of the disease that affects one in 20 Americans in their lifetime. If caught early, more than 90 percent of Americans survive. But it often grows and spreads with mild symptoms easily passed off for other, less sinister ailments - such as stomach cramps, weight loss, change in toilet habits or bloating. According to her representatives, Alley had been undergoing treatments at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, near her home in Clearwater, Florida.

Ms Alley is not the first celebrity victim of colorectal cancer. Noted actor Chadwick Boseman died of colorectal cancer in 2020 at the young age of 43. He had been diagnosed four years prior and battled the disease privately. It had already reached stage III when it was diagnosed, meaning it had advanced quite far. Other high-profile victims of colorectal cancer include Charles M. Schulz, the man behind the legendary 'Peanuts' comic strip, screen icon Audrey Hepburn, Emmy-award winner Farrah Fawcett, and one-half of the Bee Gees Robin Gibb.

Ronald Reagan, the 40th US President, also had colon cancer but survived it. His early detection and treatment spurred advanced screenings nationwide. But it was Alzheimer's that claimed him at age 93. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg had colon cancer in the 90s but was cured before she was then diagnosed with another form of cancer, this time in her

pancreas. And Sharon Osbourne, outspoken TV talk show host and wife of rocker Ozzy Osbourne, was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2003 and was open with the public about her treatment plan. After being cured, she created the Sharon Osbourne Colon Cancer Program to help others living with the disease. Typically in early stages, the cancerous tumor can be removed surgically. But in later stages of the disease when the cancerous cells have spread, doctors have to take

other routes such as chemotherapy and radiation to kill them off.

When tumors have spread to different parts of the body, it makes treating the cancer without damaging vital organs. There are more than 106,000 new cases of colorectal cancer in the US each year making it the third most common behind skin, breast, and lung. That means about one in 20 Americans will be diagnosed with colon cancer in their lifetimes, though the risk is

slightly higher for men. Nearly 53,000 Americans die of colorectal cancer every year, giving it a five-year survival rate of 64 per cent.

Colon cancer almost always develops from precancerous polyps, or abnormal growths, in the colon or rectum. Screening tests such as colonoscopies can detect those polyps, vastly increasing the chance of survival. Doctors can then remove those cancerous polyps right on the spot. The

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises Americans to start when they turn 45. But according to the CDC, three in 10 adults aged 50 to 75 are behind in their screening. Colonoscopies, or the procedure in which a lighted tube called a colonoscope is inserted into the rectum and the entire colon to look for polyps or cancer, is one of the most common screening tools. You should have the exam again every 10 years.

How to shred for Christmas in 18 days

Fitness and diet pros share the secret to sculpting your dream festive body fast - and the one thing to eat before every event

A dietitian and personal trainer have shared exactly how you can shred for Christmas in the 18 days ahead of December 25, and why you should always eat a protein-rich snack an hour or two before an event. Susie Burrell, from Sydney, and Leanne Ward, said the most important thing to remember with Christmas is that 'it's a day or two, not an entire month' - and you need to think about what you're eating and doing accordingly. 'There are a few things we do each and every year to ensure we don't blow out hugely in the month of December,' Susie told FEMAIL. When it comes to diet in the silly season, the pair agree that the most important thing is you are aware of how much you are eating - and then 'buffer' in nutritious foods accordingly.

'Given that most of us will overdo the high calorie party foods and alcohol at some point, it's also a great time to buffer these days of over-indulgence with a focus on lower calorie, nutrient-rich veggies and salad and lean protein,' Susie told FEMAIL.

'Personally, I opt for days of vegetable juices, salad with prawns or chicken breast and plenty of roast vegetables and fresh

fruit with plain yoghurt.'

Susie said she is mindful when it comes to parties filled with canapés with little nutritional value - and will only allow herself one or two.

'Fried foods, fatty dips, chips, corn chips and pastry, they all pack a serious calorie punch with very little enjoyment,' she said.



Instead, her top trick is to eat a protein and vegetable-rich snack an hour or two before she goes to any party or function.

'This means that I never arrive hungry and so feel the need to gorge on poor quality food,' she said.

She also waits until she is 'genuinely hungry' before she eats a meal rather than eating by the clock, even if this means 'fasting for

a number of hours after a big day or a big meal'.

'Taste and savour the heavier foods at parties and events, rather than overeat them simply because they're there,' she said.

'Then, get rid of your leftovers quickly and remember Christmas is a day or two, not a month!' When it comes to exercise, both

Susie and Leanne agree that you might not have time for your regular workouts.

But that doesn't mean you should forget about exercise altogether.

'Get some incidental movement in whenever you can,' Leanne said.

'That might mean parking in the furthest carpark at the shops, taking the stairs not the lift when you take your kids to their after-school appointments and walking around the block rather than sitting and scrolling

on your phone.' Susie said movement, even walking, aids digestion, and something as simple as a quick walk with a friend with a takeaway coffee instead of catching up over an alcoholic drink will pay dividends for your body. 'If you do go to the gym, focus on big compound lifts like squats, deadlifts, chest presses, shoulder presses, pull ups and burpees,' Leanne said.

Chunky Panday on success of Karthi's Sardaar, Bollywood going through a dry spell

Chunky Panday played a pivotal role in Karthi-starrer Sardaar. In an exclusive chat, he opens up about the success of Sardaar and his new innings.

Chunky Panday was last seen in the Tamil film, Sardaar. The film starring Karthi crossed over Rs. 100 crore at the box office worldwide. The sequel to the film is already in works. Chunky played a pivotal role in the movie, which was released in October 2022. In an exclusive chat, Chunky said that he feels excited to see such an overwhelming response to a film he has been a part of. When asked if the response to the film has been overwhelming for him, Chunky told IndiaToday.in,

"Absolutely. I started working with different (film) industries back in the 90s when I worked in Bangladesh and then I did Saaho with Prabhas in 2019. There was a gap in between because of Covid. Later, I got an offer for Sardaar, where the role was very different. I was excited and I am very happy with the response." Playing a villainous character doesn't come naturally to Chunky. He shared, "Whenever I am on sets, I try to be as quiet as possible. I try to hold everything within me. I am very

different on sets, unlike my jovial self."

'I THOUGHT MY DAYS WERE OVER'

About his second innings, Chunky mentioned, "I'm so excited. I am getting offers for roles which are so different and I had never imagined it would come my way. Playing central characters in films or series, I thought those days were over for me, but I am glad the days are coming back." About the narrative of Bollywood going through a dry spell, Chunky replied, "Look at



the way Drishyam has fared even though it is a remake of a Malayalam film. I have been around since 1987, I have seen it all, theatres closing, the advent of television, but cinema has

always survived because it is the motherboard of entertainment." In Bollywood, Chunky was last seen in Liger alongside Ananya Panday and Vijay Deverakonda.

Akshay Kumar gets trolled for his Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj look

Fans took to Twitter to point out a possible error in the video shared by Akshay Kumar, where he gave a glimpse into his look as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Kumar will be making his Marathi debut with Vedat Marathe Veer Daudle Saat



Akshay Kumar today revealed his first look as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj for the film, Vedat Marathe Veer Daudle Saat. He had taken to his social media handles to share a small video as the film went on floors today, December 6. However, some fans on Twitter were not so impressed by the look, while some pointed at a possible factual error.

FANS POINT AT POSSIBLE ERROR IN AKSHAY'S VIDEO AS

CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ

Sharing a screenshot from the video shared by Akshay, a fan pointed at the light bulbs being shown in the small clip. The tweet reads, "Shivaji Maharaj ruled from 1674 to 1680. Thomas Edison invented light bulb in 1880. This is Akshay Kumar playing Shivaji. #AkshayKumar #ShivajiMaharaj.(sic)" Several other fans shared a similar tweet. See the tweet here: Fans also trolled the actor and

recalled his underwhelming performance as Samrat Prithviraj in the film with the same name. See the tweets here:

Netizens also remembered Sharad Kelkar's portrayal as the brave Maratha warrior and opened up about how he has set the bar really high with his talent.

AKSHAY TO MAKE MARATHI DEBUT WITH VEDANT MARATHE VEER DAUDLE SAAT

Vedat Marathe Veer Daudle Saat is about

the story of seven valiant warriors who had the sole aim of bringing Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's dream of Swarajya to reality. The film will release on Diwali 2023 in Marathi, Hindi, Tamil & Telugu. It is directed by Mahesh Manjrekar and bankrolled by Vaseem Qureshi. Besides Akshay, the film also has an ensemble cast of Jay Dudhane, Utkarsha Shinde, Vishal Nikam, Virat Madke, Hardik Joshi, Satya, Akshay, Nawab Khan, and Praveen Tarde.

Bhediya box office collection Day 12: Varun Dhawan's film hardly finds any audience

Varun Dhawan and Kriti Sanon's Bhediya released in the theaters on November 25. The film is not doing well at the box office collections.

Varun Dhawan and Kriti Sanon's film Bhediya had a great start at the box office. However, its collections have been dwindling now. On Day 12, the film hardly added Rs 1 crore to its overall collection. The film hit the screens on November 25. Bhediya features Varun in the role of a werewolf. It is competing with the Ajay Devgn's Drishyam 2 and Ayushmann Khurrana's An Action Hero.

BHEDIYA BOX OFFICE COLLECTION Varun Dhawan and Kriti Sanon's Bhediya hit the theatres on November

25 in multiple languages. The werewolf drama is directed by Amar Kaushik, who brought the horror-comedy genre back with Stree (2018). It looks difficult for Bhediya to enter the Rs 100 crore club as the film's collections have

been dropping rapidly since the weekend. According to trade reports, Bhediyasaw a drastic drop in its



collections on Day 12 in the theatres.

It's single-day collection on December 6 was hardly Rs 1 crore. The total collection now stands at Rs 54.88 crore.

A B O U T BHEDIYA

Bhediya is a comedy horror film directed by Amar Kaushik and produced by

Dinesh Vijan. The film stars Varun Dhawan and Kriti Sanon in the lead roles. This is Kriti's second film with Varun after Dilwale (2015). Bhediya is actually the third installment in Vijan's horror-comedy universe. It hit the theatres on November 25. Set in Arunachal Pradesh, the storyline of Bhediya follows a young man named Bhaskar who gets bitten by a wolf in the forest. Eventually, he starts transforming into a werewolf too. The music of the film is composed by Sachin-Jigar while the lyrics are written by Amitabh Bhattacharya.

Drishyam 2 box office collection Day 19: Ajay Devgn's film inches closer to Rs 200-crore mark

Ajay Devgn-starrer Drishyam 2 will soon cross the Rs 200-crore club. The film is totally unstoppable at the box office.

Ajay Devgn has scored a hit with Drishyam 2. Ever since its release on November 18, the Abhishek Pathak-directorial has been ruling at the ticket windows, leaving many Bollywood biggies behind. Drishyam 2 collected Rs 100 crore within a week at the box office! And now, it is all set to enter the Rs 200-crore club any day soon. The film, starring Ajay Devgn, Tabu and Akshaye Khanna, is also competing with Varun Dhawan's Bhediya and Ayushmann Khurrana's An Action Hero.

DRISHYAM 2 BOX OFFICE COLLECTION

Drishyam 2, directed by Abhishek Pathak, opened at the ticket windows on November 18 with a whopping Rs 15.38 crore. Gradually, the film saw a massive increase at the box office collection. After entering the Rs



100-crore club in just seven days, the film is all set to cross the Rs 200-crore club now. On Day 19, December 6, Drishyam 2 collected Rs 2.75 crore at the box office, which is comparatively

low. However, since it was a weekday, this fall was expected. The film has managed to mint a total of Rs 192.57 crore at the domestic ticket windows, according to trade reports.

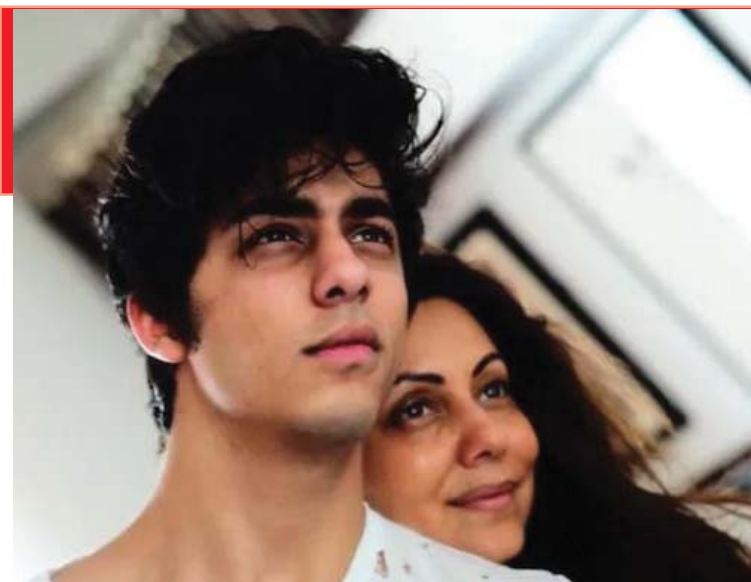
Meanwhile, Drishyam 2 had an overall 10.03 per cent Hindi occupancy on Day 19.

ABOUT DRISHYAM

Drishyam is an emotional thriller that deals with the story of a

cable operator, Vijay Salgaonkar (Ajay), whose life revolves around cinema and his family; wife Nandini (Shriya Saran) and daughters Anju and Anu. Tabu plays the role of IG Meera Deshmukh in the film. In Drishyam, Ajay played Vijay Salgaonkar, who protects his family at all costs after his daughter accidentally kills a boy. After disposing of the boy's body, Vijay removes all traces of proof and then takes a family trip to Panaji. They visit an Ashram, watch a film, and eat at a restaurant, creating their alibis. Drishyam is the Hindi remake of hit Malayalam flick of the same name, which was helmed by National-Award-winning director Nishikant Kamat. Drishyam 2, directed by Abhishek Pathak, follows the story after that.

Aryan Khan wraps writing his debut project with SRK's Red Chillies Ent, proud mom Gauri reacts



Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan has finished writing his debut project. According to reports, he was writing a series for Amazon Prime Video

emojis. Sanjay Kapoor's daughter Shanaya Kapoor wrote, "Wooooo!!!," while Sikander Kher posted a star emoji.

ABOUT ARYAN KHAN

Aryan Khan is the eldest son of Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan and Gauri Khan. On the work front, he is working on a web series for Red Chillies. Shah

Rukh Khan had reportedly got onboard Lior Roz, an Israeli actor, and screenplay writer, to train Aryan. Work on the project has already begun.

Shehnaaz Gill grooves with Salman Khan on 'Dil Diyan Gallan' as they reunite for BB16 'Weekend ka Vaar'

Singer-actor Shehnaaz Gill is all set to make an appearance on the latest season of the Salman Khan-hosted reality show Bigg Boss 16. In the promo for the upcoming 'Weekend ka Vaar' episode, Shehnaaz was seen reuniting with Salman. The duo even danced to 'Dil Diyan Gallan' from Salman's 2017 film 'Tiger Zinda Hai'. Reports suggest that Shehnaaz will be accompanied by MTV Hustle 2 winner and rapper MC Square in the upcoming episode as they will be promoting their new song 'Ghani Syaani' on the show.

Meanwhile, Shehnaaz is set to make her Bollywood debut with Salman's film 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan'. The film is directed by Farhad Samji, and also features Venkatesh Daggubati and Pooja Hedge. It will be out on Eid 2023.



Shah Rukh Khan and Gauri Khan's son Aryan Khan is set to make his showbiz debut. He took to social media to announce that he has wrapped up his debut script and 'can't wait to say action'.

Aryan Khan's writing project is backed by Shah Rukh Khan's Red Chillies Entertainment.

ARYAN KHAN WRAPS UP HIS WRITING PROJECT

Earlier, there were reports that Aryan Khan is writing a script for Amazon Prime Video and a feature film. Aryan took to

Instagram to announce that he has completed the writing of his first project, which is web series. He will be the director and the showrunner of the show. The project is expected to go on floors in 2023.

Sharing a picture of the script on Instagram, Aryan Khan wrote, "Wrapped with the writing can't wait to say action (sic)."

GAURI KHAN REACTS TO ARYAN'S POST

Gauri Khan took to the comments section and wrote, "Can't wait to watch (sic)," followed by several awestruck



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Is US Housing Bubble Ready To Burst?

"Collapse" in home prices is coming, experts say

*Housing Market Recession: Home Builders Warn Collapse Is 'Unsustainable'-And Prices Could Tumble Another 20

*What crash? Long Island home prices stronger than ever.



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