



The South Asian



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Vol. 19

Issue 37

Friday 14 November to 21 November 2020

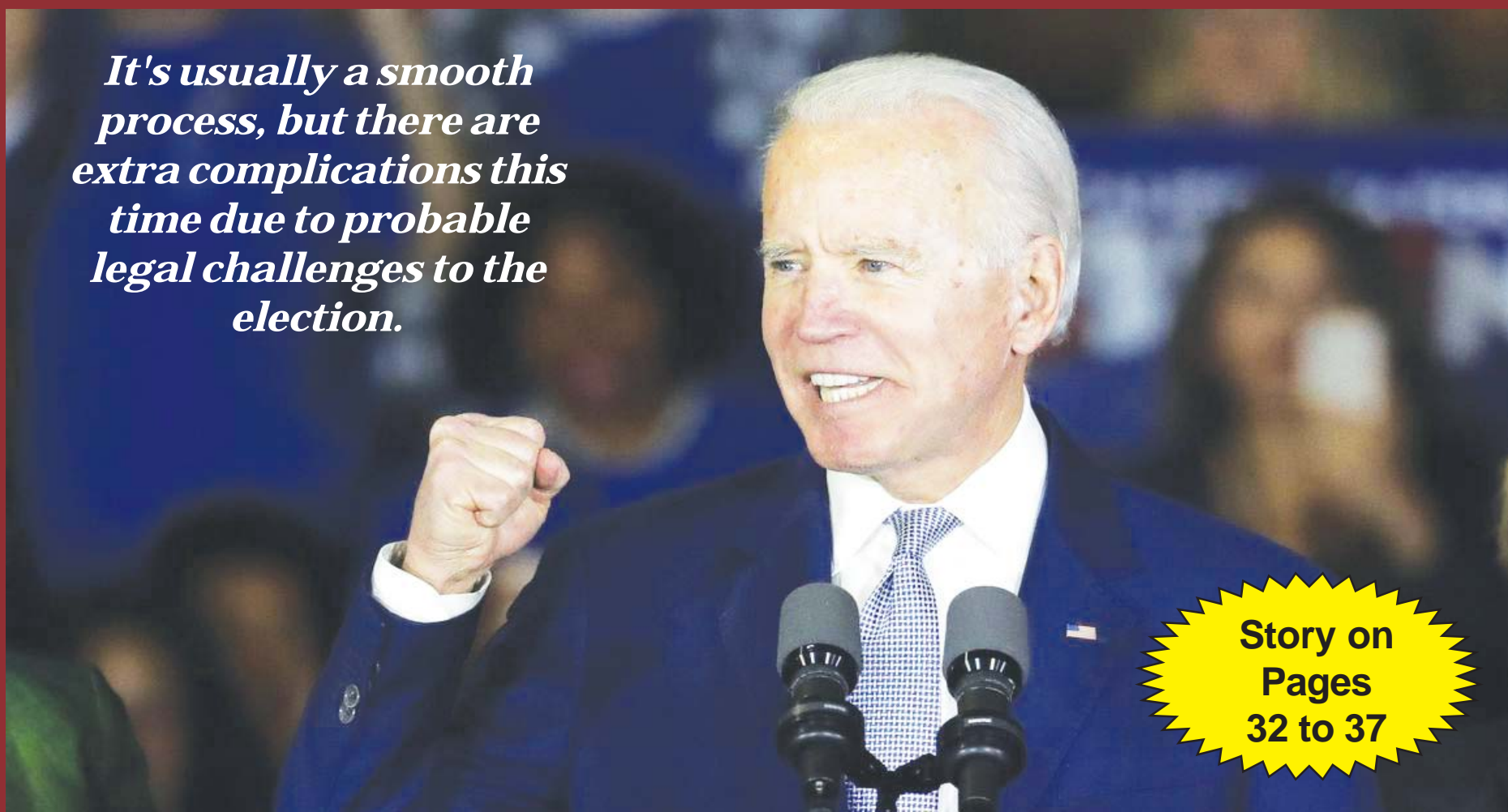
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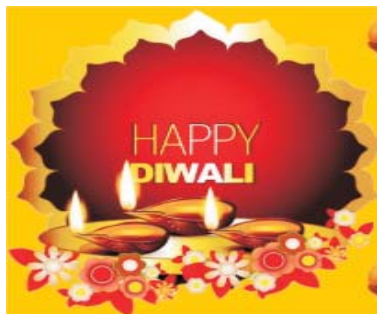
What Happens Now?

Joe Biden has been projected to reach the 270 electoral college votes needed to beat Donald Trump in the race to the White House. But the former vice-president does not get to move his furniture into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue straight away - there are a few things that need to happen first.

It's usually a smooth process, but there are extra complications this time due to probable legal challenges to the election.



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The South Asian Insider Weekly
Wishes Everyone

Happy Diwali



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DIWALI 2020....Ahhh, so different from any other Diwali we ever celebrated. No big celebrations, no card parties, no trip to the temple.

Ranju Batra "Chair, Diwali Foundation USA, Inc. (501C3)

Actually, it's not just this Diwali, that is how 2020 has been. "Thanks" to all bad things related to COVID-19. In March when I tested positive along with my husband, Ravi, and my DAUGHTER, Angela, with COVID-19, life alone became precious; not any of the things that give us pride. So, "Thank you God" now includes the very gift of life - separate and apart from the life our parents gave us. During these trying times, we must appreciate what we consider to be the metaphorical "light" now more than ever. With a global pandemic, rising hospitalizations, rising deaths, businesses closed, and so many more people in harm's way, we, as a society, are poised to endure so much more than what we already have. A lot more hurt awaits us. Whatever the "light" is in your life, concentrate on it now more than ever. Those of us who are lucky enough to have our health intact, a safe home, and family or loved ones around us, are already in such a privileged position. Yet, many of us are still surrounded by stress, because we have been programmed to be productive. I've found that just being able to stop has been one of the most difficult things to do. All of us have been programmed for the same thing in varying degrees: taking care of our kids,

spouses, family, friends, home, work, fulfilling our commitments, etc. Many of that remains, but during these times it can, and likely should, be cut down for many of us. So, we can spend more time with loved ones, and learning more about them and appreciating their uniqueness. Using this time to get in the best health we can with diet and exercise - even as Ravi remains as he was: perpetually happy and strong, passionately enjoying life itself. Learning or improving - which is what we always wanted to do, but could never find time for - is here and now. Diwali is the triumph of Light over Darkness. Darkness is undoubtedly upon us - hopefully not an Armageddon, given Denmark's recent "Cluster5" mutation that is "moderately" drug-resistant. For Light to triumph, we need to first recognize it before we can feel its brightness in our lives. Just as Lord Ram collectively conquered evil Ravan, let each one of us help conquer this cursed Virus - by following CDC guidelines - and Light up our lives.

Life, itself, is the ultimate Light. I wish everyone a most Happy and Blessed Diwali, full of life and love.



"Diwali Mubarak to all those who are celebrating this great festival on Long Island, in Queens, across the United States, and around the world. May we all join together in spirit to celebrate the triumph of good over evil and remember the importance of helping the less fortunate during these unprecedented times. While this year's celebration may look a little different, we can still come together virtually with loved ones and friends over Zoom, Skype, and Facetime to celebrate new beginnings. Over the years, I have had the chance to be a part of many Diwali celebrations to honor this great tradition. It is always a wonderful time filled with amazing food and the company of good friends. To all my friends in the Indian American community and others who are celebrating, I wish you all a very happy and blessed Diwali, and Naya Saal Mubarak!"

Tom Suozzi, U.S. Representative



More Than 20 Indian-Americans Named In Biden's Agency Review Teams

(Insider Bureau)- US President-elect Joe Biden has named more than 20 Indian-Americans as members, including three as team leads, to his agency review teams (ARTs) that are responsible for evaluating the operations of the key federal agencies in the current administration to ensure smooth transfer of power. Biden's transition team said this is one of the most diverse agency review teams in presidential transition history. Of the hundreds of ART members, more than half are women, and approximately 40 per cent represent communities historically underrepresented in the federal government, including people of colour, people who identify as LGBTQ+, and people with disabilities. Agency review teams are responsible for understanding the operations of each agency, ensuring a smooth transfer of power, and preparing for President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and their Cabinet to hit the ground running on Day One. At least three Indian Americans have been named as team leads

to various ARTs. Arun Majumdar from the prestigious Stanford University is the team lead for the Department of Energy ART. Rahul Gupta is the team lead for Office of National Drug Control Policy. Kiran Ahuja has been named Team Lead for Office of Personnel Management. Puneet Talwar has been named to the Department of State ART. Pav Singh has been named to two ARTs for National Security Council and Office of Science and Technology. Similarly, Arun Venkatraman has been named to two ARTs Department of Commerce and USTR. Other prominent Indian Americans named to ARTs are Pravina Raghavan, Atman Trivedi for Department of Commerce and Shital Shah for Department of Education; R Ramesh and Rama Zakaria for the Department of Energy; Subhasri Ramanathan for the Department of Homeland Security; Raj De for Department of Justice; and Seema Nanda and Raj Nayak for Department of Labour. Reena Aggarwal, and Satyam Khanna have been named to the Federal Reserve, Banking and Securities Regulators ARTs;

Bhavya Lal for NASA; Dilpreet Sidhu for National Security Council, Divya Kumaraiah for Office of Management and Budget; Kumar Chandran for Department of Agriculture; and Aneesh Chopra to US Postal Service. Almost all of them are volunteers.

These teams are composed of highly experienced and talented professionals with deep backgrounds in crucial policy areas across the federal government.

Our nation is grappling with a pandemic, an economic crisis, urgent calls for racial justice, and the existential threat of climate change. We must be prepared for a seamless transfer of knowledge to the incoming administration to protect our interests at home and abroad. The agency review process will help lay the foundation for meeting these challenges on Day One," said Senator Ted Kaufman, Co-Chair, Biden-Harris Transition.

"The work of the agency review teams is critical for protecting national security, addressing the ongoing public health crisis, and demonstrating that America remains the beacon of



democracy for the world," he said.

The transition team announced the agency review teams even as outgoing President Donald Trump's administration has yet to formally recognise Biden as the president-elect.

A formal recognition from the General Services Administration is needed to allow transition staff access to federal workers and much of the information they will need. Trump, a Republican, has declined to concede the closely-fought November 3 presidential race to Democrat Biden and is mounting legal fights in several key battleground states alleging voter irregularities or widespread fraud in the election -- billed as one of the most divisive and bitter in recent American

history. President Trump has made repeated and baseless claims that the Democratic Party has tried to steal the election.

Once the GSA Administrator ascertains the results of the election, the ART members will work directly with staff in federal agencies to ensure that the incoming Biden-Harris administration is able to effectively achieve the policy goals of the President and Vice President-elect. The ARTs will proceed by meeting with former agency officials and experts who closely follow federal agencies, and with officials from think tanks, labour groups, trade associations, and other NGOs.

25,000 Cubic Feet Of Stone Carved In India For Abu Dhabi's First Hindu Temple



(Insider Bureau)- The majestic stone facade of the first Hindu temple under construction in Abu Dhabi will be adorned with scenes from Hindu epics, scriptures and ancient stories from India, as well as motifs popular in the Gulf countries, the local media reported Tuesday. The temple management of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi has released the first images of the final design of the traditional stone temple and the

hand-carved stone pillars that have been taking shape in India, the Gulf News reported.

The visuals of the final design of the temple have been released through a video that chronicles the process of construction of the temple right from the inception of its concept till the pouring of the UAE's largest single pouring of fly ash concrete for the raft foundation of the temple. The foundation stone of the temple was laid in April last

year and work started in December.

Dubbed a spiritual oasis for global harmony, the temple's final master plan revealed in the video shows a massive amphitheatre overlooking the shrine, the daily reported.

A library, a classroom, a majlis and a community centre also feature within the compound in Abu Mureikhah area. Waterfalls flanking the steps to the entrance of the shrine, and water bodies circling the temple complex was seen in the video.

The design of the master plan was completed in early 2020, and optimised during the slowdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, a spokesperson of the temple told the Gulf News.

"This is the first time the visuals of the final design have been released through the video," said Ashok Kotecha, BAPS Hindu Mandir spokesperson. "The work

on the historic temple is progressing with the support of the community and guidance from leadership in India and the UAE. While navigating the challenges posed by COVID-19 and adhering to local practices during the pandemic, stone work has continued in India," Mr Kotecha said.

Ashok Kotecha said key values and tales of universal wisdom, and the authentic ancient art and architecture will be revived through the stone carvings used for the temple.

"The stories and carvings include diverse portions of India's geography and Hindu belief systems. This would include Mahabharata and Ramayana as well as the Puranas and regional histories. In fact, this Mandir will be uniquely identified by its intricate mandovar facade which will share many traditional tales from across India as well as

unique designs from the Gulf," he said.

The intricate carvings of the temple range from figurines only a few inches tall to statues many metres high. The towering facade of the ground floor of the temple has also been revealed.

Ashok Kotecha said artisans have carved a whopping 25,000 cubic feet of stone in different sites in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

"It is a substantial portion of the Mandir. The marble is from Italy, and the sandstone is from Rajasthan," he said.

Currently, Swami Brahmavihari Das, the head of the temple and BAPS international spokesperson, is visiting the UAE to oversee the next stage of the foundation on site in preparation for the arrival of the carved stones which will be shipped and assembled in the first quarter of 2021, the daily said.

Indian-Origin Man Jailed For Life After 4 Attempted Murders In UK

(Insider Bureau)- An Indian-origin man has been handed four life imprisonment sentences, to be served concurrently with a minimum term of 22 years and six months, after he was found guilty of four counts of attempted murder in the UK city of Leicester. Carlos Vinodchandra Racitalal, 33, was convicted following four separate incidents, including one of which included a 10-year-old boy being stabbed, after a trial at Leicester Crown Court last week. He was also found guilty of three counts

of possession of a bladed article.

"This was an extremely complex investigation with very distressing circumstances," said Detective Inspector Tim Lindley of the Leicestershire Police force. "Racitalal is an extremely dangerous man who had no concern, regard or remorse for any of his victims, who ranged from young children to an elderly man. Racitalal carried out his attacks with weapons including knives and a car, before then running away or driving off from the scene," he said,

as he praised the "dedication and commitment" of his officers, who had worked tirelessly around the clock to gather the evidence and find the person responsible. The judge presiding over the case also commended the officers involved in the police investigation during the sentencing hearing on Friday.

"What has struck me about this case: had there not been such a thorough and prompt police investigation, particularly regarding the work done in relation to the CCTV, the defendant would

most likely still be at large - as his victims were unable to identify their attacker. In all likelihood the thoroughness of the police work on the CCTV is likely the basis upon which the jury have convicted," said Justice Thomas Linden. All the incidents in question took place in Leicester during January this year. Three of the offences involved victims being stabbed - the 10-year-old boy, a woman in her 30s and a man in his 70s, while one of the incidents involved a five-year-old girl being hit with a car. The victims all



required hospital treatment before being discharged later. A large-scale investigation was launched soon after the attack on the boy, including speaking with the victim and the victim's family, carrying out CCTV analysis, forensic examination, house-to-house enquiries and issuing a public appeal for information. During these enquiries, the suspect of the offence was further linked to two other incidents, which involved similar circumstances.

Indian-American Named Co-Chair Of President-Elect Joe Biden's COVID Task Force



(Insider Bureau)- Indian-American Vivek Murthy on Monday was named one of the three co-chairs of the COVID-19 Advisory Board that will guide President-elect Joe Biden on dealing with the

coronavirus pandemic that has claimed over 236,000 lives in the country. Dr Murthy, a former US Surgeon General, along with two other co-chairs, would lead a team of leading public health

experts who will advise Biden, Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on the deadly virus. The US is currently the world's worst-hit nation from the pandemic.

"Dealing with the coronavirus pandemic is one of the most important battles our administration will face, and I will be informed by science and by experts," Biden said.

New cases are rising in at least 40 states, with more than 9.3 million total infections and more than 236,000 deaths, the media

release said. "The advisory board will help shape my approach to managing the surge in reported infections; ensuring vaccines are safe, effective, and distributed efficiently, equitably, and free; and protecting at-risk populations," he said.

Dr Beth Cameron and Dr Rebecca Katz are serving as advisors to the Transition on COVID-19 and will work closely with the Advisory Board, the Biden-Harris transition team said. Kessler is a former Food and Drug

Administration Commissioner from 1990 to 1997. Murthy served as the 19th Surgeon General of the US from 2014-2017. Dr Nunez-Smith is an Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, Public Health, and Management at Yale University and the Associate Dean for Health Equity Research at the Yale School of Medicine. President-elect Biden has pledged to focus on COVID pandemic, which continues to claim thousands of lives each week, by curbing the spread of the disease, providing free treatment to those in need, and elevating the voices of scientists and public health experts, it said. The COVID-19 Advisory Board will help guide the Biden-Harris Transition in planning for the President-elect's robust federal response, the media release said. Other members of the Advisory Board are Luciana Borio, Rick Bright; Ezekiel Emanuel; Celine Gounder; Julie Morita; Michael Osterholm; Loyce Pace; Robert Rodriguez; and Eric Goosby.

Biden's New Plan For H-1B Visas, Green Cards Likely To Benefit Thousands

With Kamala Harris as his deputy, Biden is expected to reverse the move of the outgoing Trump administration to revoke work permits to the spouses of H-1B visas

(Insider Bureau)- outgoing US President-elect Joe Biden plans to increase the number of high-skilled visas, including the H-1B, and eliminate the limit on employment-based visas by country, both of which are expected to benefit tens of thousands of Indian professionals impacted by some immigration policies of the outgoing Trump administration.

With Kamala Harris as his deputy, Biden is expected to reverse the move of the

Trump administration to revoke work permits to the spouses of H-1B visas, which had adversely impacted a large number of Indian families in the US. All these are part of a comprehensive immigration reform that the Biden administration plans to work on, either in one go or in separate pieces.

"High skilled temporary visas should not be used to disincentivise recruiting workers already in the US for in-demand occupations.

An immigration system that crowds out high-skilled workers in favour of only entry level wages and skills threatens American innovation and competitiveness," according to a policy document issued by the Biden campaign.

"Biden will work with Congress to first reform temporary visas to establish a wage-based allocation process and establish enforcement mechanisms to ensure they are aligned with the labour market and

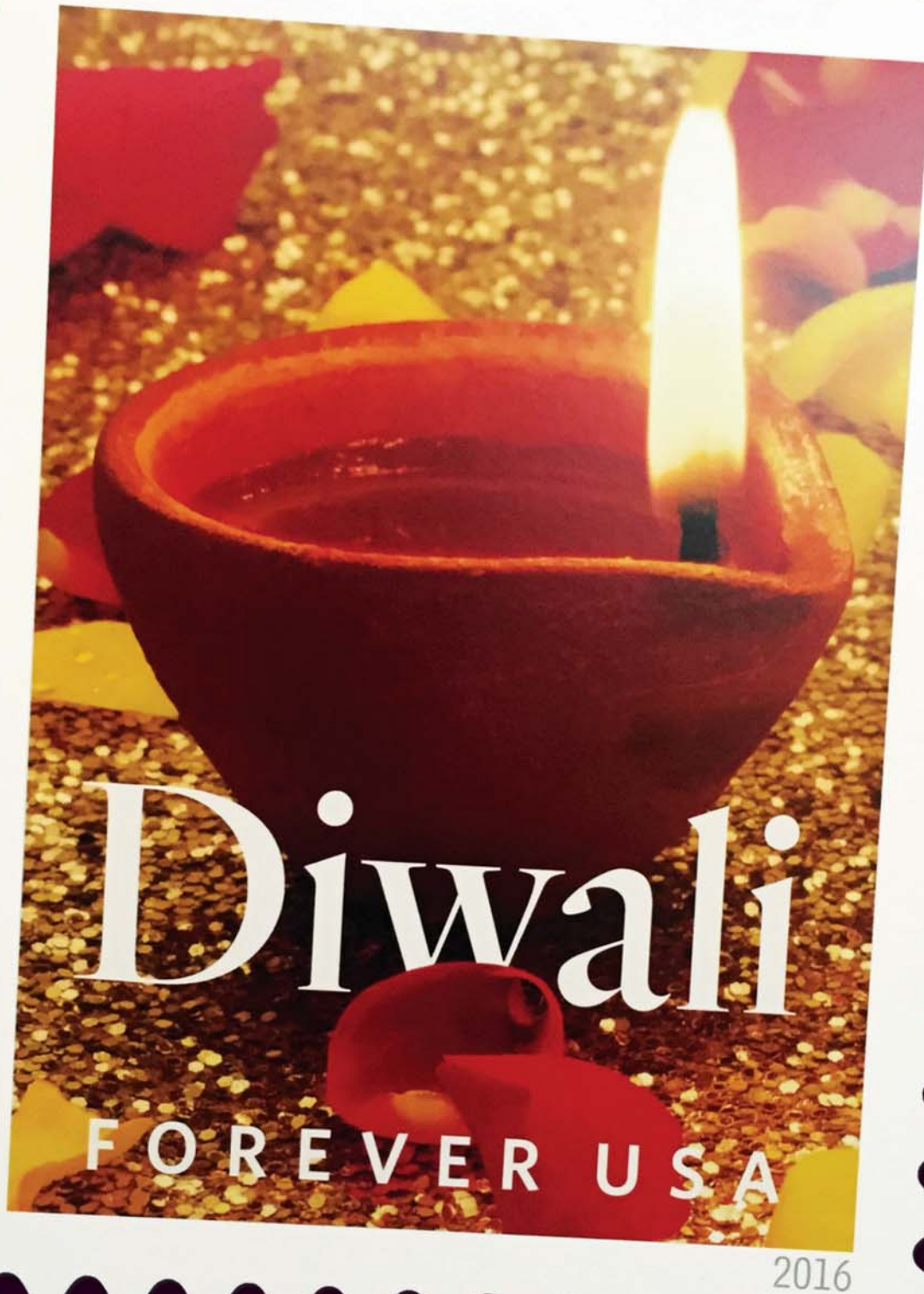
not used to undermine wages. Then, Biden will support expanding the number of high-skilled visas and eliminating the limits on employment-based visas by country, which create unacceptably long backlogs," it said. H-1B visas, which expand the available pool of high skilled workers in the US, is a non-immigrant visa that allows American companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The



technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. Employment-based visas, also known as green cards, allow migrants to gain lawful permanent residence in the US in order to engage in skilled work. Noting that currently, the number of employment-based visas is capped at 140,000 each year, without the ability to be responsive to the state of the labour market or demands from domestic employers, the policy document said that as president, Biden will work with Congress to increase the number of visas awarded for permanent, employment-based immigration - and promote mechanisms to temporarily reduce the number of visas during times of high US unemployment.

Happy Diwali!

An American Landmark



RAVI BATRA

"While my journey to our Diwali Stamp took seven years, the Diwali stamp is ours forever. Now, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists have a stamp to call our own. For over a billion Indians in India, for about 4 million Indian Americans, and for many more around the world, the festival of lights is here. My spirits uplifted, and from this year forward the Diyas will shine brighter! The Diwali stamp will be a matter of pride for generations to come."



Ranju Batra
Chair



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Bihar assembly election 2020 result in numbers: Which party won how many seats

Though the RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav led-grand alliance will not form the government in the state, his party that registered victory on 75 assembly constituencies emerged as the single-largest party.

(News Agencies)- The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and chief minister Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United) is all set for another term in Bihar by crossing the majority mark of 122 seats. According to data released by the Election Commission of India, all NDA partners- BJP, JD(U), Vikassheel Insaan Party, and Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular)- together won 125 seats of the 243 assembly constituencies.

Even as it took lead over

the NDA as early trends emerged, the Rashtriya Janata Dal-led grand alliance finally ended 15 seats behind. The five-party alliance of RJD, Congress, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation) together won in 110 constituencies.

Though the RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav led-grand alliance will not form the government in the state, his party that registered victory on 75 assembly constituencies

emerged as the single-largest party.

Also, even as Nitish Kumar, a leader whose survival skills have often prevailed over his political challenges, will retain his post as the Bihar chief minister, his party may not be able to retain its big brother status as it won 43 assembly seats while the BJP won 74 seats. "Don't underestimate how tough this was for us. Returning to power for a fourth time is not easy; many other chief ministers failed to do so. But Nitish Kumar succeeded despite the media narrative



against him," a senior aide to the chief minister said. Here's a look at which party won how many seats in Bihar:

All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen - 5
Bahujan Samaj Party- 1
Bharatiya Janata Party - 74
Communist Party of India- 2
Communist Party of India (Marxist) - 2

Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation) - 12

Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) - 4

Independent - 1

Indian National Congress- 19

Janata Dal (United) - 43

Lok Jan Shakti Party - 1

Rashtriya Janata Dal - 75

Vikassheel Insaan Party - 4

'Nitish to be CM, no confusion': Sushil Modi after NDA win in Bihar polls



"I thank the people of Bihar that they expressed their faith in NDA for the fourth time. It's not ordinary. In Indian politics there are very few CMs whom people trusted for the fourth time. They have given a clear mandate to NDA, there is no confusion," Modi told news agency ANI.

(News Agencies)- Bihar deputy chief minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Sushil Kumar Modi thanked the people of Bihar for giving National Democratic Alliance (NDA) another chance. He also made it clear who is going to be the chief minister. "Nitish Kumar will remain the chief minister, that was our commitment," he told NDTV.

Later, speaking to news agency ANI, Modi said there were few chief ministers in Indian politics who the people trusted for the fourth time.

"I thank the people of Bihar that they expressed their faith in NDA for the fourth time. It's not ordinary. In Indian politics there are very few CMs whom people trusted for the fourth time. They have given a clear mandate to NDA, there is no confusion," he said.

The NDA made a comeback in Bihar after it won 125 seats out

of the total 243 in this year's assembly election. Out of its constituents, the BJP won 74 seats and was the biggest contributor to the alliance's victory. Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal (United) won 43 seats and

other NDA allies - Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) and the Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) managed to win four seats each.

This victory turned the BJP into a senior partner, a major reversal in fortunes for the party.

Posters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and chief minister Nitish Kumar were pasted outside the offices of the BJP and the JD(U) as the NDA defeated Mahagathbandhan (grand

alliance), who most of the exit polls had given an edge ahead of the counting.

The grand alliance includes the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), the Congress and other Left parties. It secured 110 seats in total.

Though it suffered a defeat this time, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav who was also the alliance's chief ministerial face, made his mark.

The polling in 243 assembly seats were divided into three phases. The first phase saw

voting in 71 seats on October 28, the second phase in 94 seats on November 3 and the third and the final phase in 78 seats on November 7.

Despite the prevailing coronavirus (Covid-19) in the country, the voter turnout in Bihar for all three phases was high. The Election Commission of India (ECI) through its numerous Covid-19 related guidelines ensured that the electoral process is carried out smoothly.

On Pfizer's Covid vaccine announcement, Rahul Gandhi asks govt key questions



(News Agencies)- Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said the logistics for making

Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine available to Indian citizens need to be worked out adding that the central government has to define a vaccine distribution strategy.

"Even though Pfizer has created a promising vaccine, the logistics for making it available to every Indian need to be worked out. GOI has to define a vaccine distribution strategy and how it will reach every Indian," Gandhi

tweeted. The Congress leader has been vocal about the Covid-19 crisis and has criticised the Centre over testing, imposition of lockdowns, migrant exodus etc.

On being asked when India would start discussions with Pfizer, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said Tuesday that the national expert group on coronavirus vaccine administration was in dialogue with all vaccine manufacturers - including domestic and foreign.

Pfizer, a US-based pharmaceutical company, developed a vaccine to combat coronavirus in collaboration with German firm BioNTech. The data released from the late-stage human trials of the vaccine showed that it was found to be over 90 per cent effective, Pfizer said.

Governments across the world were satisfied with the results of the trial with a hope that it might bring a halt to the Covid-19 disease which has already killed over 1.2 million people across the globe.

But, the American and German firms pointed out that the vaccine would not be available for public use any time now since the data on safety is not released and would be out in the later days of November.

Meanwhile, India on Wednesday registered 44,281 fresh Covid-19 cases and 512 more related fatalities which pushed the overall tally to 8,636,011, according to the Union health ministry's website.

The active cases dropped below the 500,000-mark for the first time after 106 days and recoveries climbed to 8,013,783.

Contestants, campaigner, rebel: Dynasts don different mantles in UP bypolls

The BJP retained the six seats it had won in the 2017 UP assembly election while the Samajwadi party retained the Malhoni seat.



(News Agencies)-The Uttar Pradesh assembly bypolls saw dynasts essaying different roles. Some contested, others simply campaigned. The bypolls also had a dynast rebelling against the party and losing. Of the seven seats that went to the polls, the ruling BJP won six and the Samajwadi Party bagged one with both parties retaining the seats they had won

in the 2017 UP assembly election.

When Sangeeta Chauhan, a retired banker and the wife of former India cricketer and UP minister, the late Chetan

Chauhan, was named by the BJP as its candidate from Naugawan Sadat assembly seat in Amroha, many had dismissed her as an outsider. Despite a see-saw battle during the initial rounds of counting, when Samajwadi Party candidate Javed Abbas kept catching up with her and, at times overtook her, Sangeeta Chauhan finally prevailed. Immediately afterwards, an emotional Chauhan said she would strive to fulfil the promises and works initiated by her late husband, whose association with Amroha was over two decades old. Chief minister Yogi Adityanath had begun campaigning from Naugawan Sadat where deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya too had sought votes for the party. Far away from Amroha, another Sangeeta (Sengar), wife of former BJP MLA Kuldeep Sengar, who was

convicted in the rape of a minor and subsequently disqualified from the assembly, was at her residence in Unnao, watching the election results where the BJP's Shrikant Katiyar was elected as the new MLA from Bangermau.

The Sengar family had lobbied for a party ticket for Sangeeta from Bangermau but after the bid failed to materialise, Sangeeta joined the campaign for Katiyar, the party nominee. Sangeeta Sengar is also a local BJP leader and district panchayat chairperson.

"She campaigned as, despite his conviction, Kuldeep still has a considerable following in Bangermau and that is why even opposition parties refrained from attacking the BJP over the former MLA's conviction and disqualification," a local BJP leader from Unnao said.

Arnab Goswami bail plea hearing update: 'Power to re-investigate wrongly used', Supreme Court told



Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami has challenged the Bombay high court order which refused to grant him interim bail in a 2018 abetment to suicide case.

(News Agencies)- Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami on Wednesday urged the Supreme Court to order a CBI inquiry in a 2018 abetment to suicide case in which he has been arrested. Appearing for Goswami, senior lawyer Harish Salve said the power to re-investigate was wrongly used. As the hearing began, the vacation bench of Justices DY

Chandrachud and Indira Banerjee said they will only look at the petition seeking quashing of the FIR against the journalist. Before you begin, there is one aspect we look at in these matters where there is a challenge to the FIRs. The only prayer which survives is the quashing of FIR," the bench said. But Salve argued that overlay of malice and fact, abuse and conduct of state power is not something that happens on daily

basis. "We're past FIR stage. FIR was lodged in May 2018 and after this matter was probed. The power to re-investigate was wrongly used," he told the court. The hearing is still continuing. Goswami has challenged the Bombay high court order which refused to grant him interim bail in the 2018 case. Goswami, who is currently lodged in Navi Mumbai's Taloja jail, called his arrest and "illegal" detention a violation of his right to life and

personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, 1950.

Goswami, along with two other accused Feroz Shaikh and Nitesh Sarda, was arrested on November 4 in connection with the 2018 suicide abetment case of designer Anvay Naik and his mother Kumud. The designer, in a suicide note, had alleged non-payment of dues by firms of the accused.

Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, online news portals now under govt regulation

There is at present no law or autonomous body governing digital content or Over-the-top (OTT) platforms.

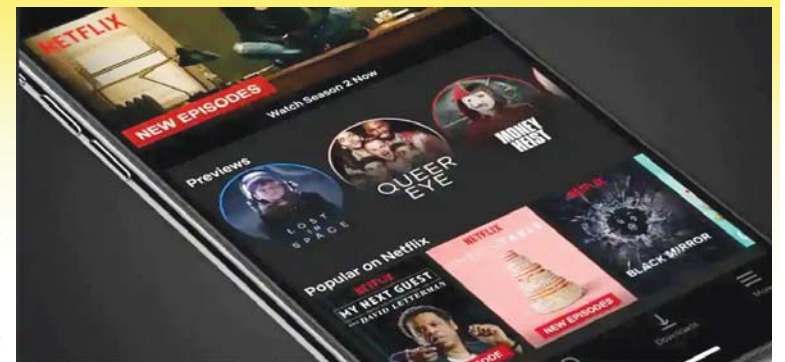
(News Agencies)- The government has brought online mediums, including films and news content, under the ministry of information and broadcasting. The I&B ministry will also regulate online audio-visual programmes and current affairs content, according to the amendment order signed by President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday. This means that digital content

providers such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Hotsar will now be regulated by the Union ministry headed by Prakash Javadekar.

While the Press Council of India (PCI) looks after the print media, the television news channels come under News Broadcasters Association (NBA). The Advertising Standards Council of India is for regulating the content of the advertisements and

Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) monitors films, but there is at present no law or autonomous body governing digital content or Over-the-top (OTT) platforms.

The Supreme Court had last month sought the Centre's response on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) for regulating OTT platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video by an autonomous body. The PIL



stated that digital content on these platforms is made available to the public at large without any filter or screening. A bench comprising Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna

and V Ramasubramanian had issued notices to the central government, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) and Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI).

BJP gets 19 seats in Madhya Pradesh, seals assembly majority

Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Scindia's influence was clearly visible in results in Guna, his own parliamentary constituency.

(News Agencies)-The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) achieved a major victory in bypolls held to 28 legislative assembly constituencies, winning and leading in 19; the Opposition Congress, which won 27 of these seats in the 2018 state assembly elections, could win or lead in just nine.

The bypolls were necessitated by 25 Congress MLAs resigning from the state assembly - 22 (all loyalists of Jyotiraditya Scindia, who quit the Congress in March to join the BJP) and three in July - and due to death of three more (two from the Congress and one

from the BJP). Of the constituencies that saw bypolls, 16 fall in the Gwalior-Chambal region.

Analysts said the results are significant for several reasons: one, the BJP has got a clear majority in the 230-member state assembly by increasing its strength from 107 to 126 MLAs; two, it is a victory for Scindia, who campaigned for many of the candidates; and three, the BJP's margin of victory on many of the seats was high.

Of the lawmakers who quit the Congress in March and

subsequently joined the BJP, 12 were made ministers in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led BJP government. The win allows them to remain ministers.

The BJP won nine out of 16 seats in the Gwalior-Chambal region, and six of the seven seats in Malwa.

Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Scindia's influence was clearly visible in the results in Guna, which is Scindia's own parliamentary constituency, where his party won all three seats.

This, experts said, was a repudiation of the personal and



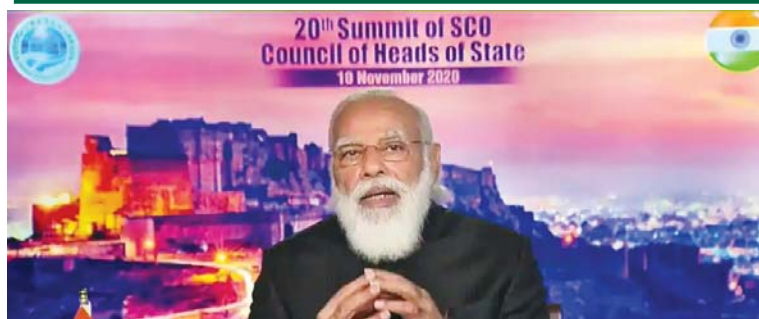
bitter campaign waged by the Congress against him.

"People have given a befitting reply to the policies of Kamal Nath and Digvijaya Singh and policies of corruption and anti-development. I bow to the people of Madhya Pradesh and the

workers of BJP for their blessings and support in this election," said Scindia.

Outside his area of direct influence, the BJP didn't perform as well. For example, in Morena, the BJP won two out of five seats.

PM Modi takes dig at Pakistan during virtual SCO meeting



(News Agencies)- Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a swipe at Pakistan at the virtual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on Tuesday, saying it is unfortunate that repeated attempts were being made to violate the grouping's charter by raising bilateral issues.

Modi also said connectivity initiatives should be built around respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, and reiterated that India stood ready to help all nations fight the Covid-19 crisis with its vaccine production and distribution capabilities.

PM says it is unfortunate that repeated attempts are being made to bring bilateral issues to the SCO agenda.

The SCO heads of state summit, chaired by Russian President Vladimir Putin, was held virtually owing to the pandemic. It was the first time that Modi and President Xi Jinping shared the same platform since the India-China standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) emerged in the open in May.

Modi, who spoke in Hindi, said India believes in peace, security and prosperity, and has always opposed terrorism, illegal arms smuggling, drug trafficking and money laundering, he added.

Without naming Pakistan, he said: "It is unfortunate that repeated attempts are being made to unnecessarily bring bilateral issues to the SCO agenda, which violate the SCO Charter and Shanghai Spirit. Such efforts are contrary to the spirit of consensus and cooperation that defines SCO." India has reacted sharply to Pakistan's repeated efforts, often with support from its traditional ally China, to raise the Kashmir issue at multilateral bodies such as SCO and the UN Security

Council since the special status of Jammu and Kashmir was scrapped in August last year.

In September, India walked out of a virtual meeting of national security advisers of SCO after the Pakistani representative projected a map that inaccurately depicted the borders of the two countries. Russia, which chaired that meeting, subsequently informed India that the Pakistani representative had gone ahead with the action despite being asked not to do so.

Ahead of Diwali, Delhi food safety dept destroys 3,200 kg of spurious khoya

The government has also deployed mobile testing vans that are being used to create awareness in people and quickly checking raw material that seem suspicious.

(News Agencies)- Ahead of Diwali, to ensure that the quality of sweets being sold in Delhi is up to the mark, the government has launched a special drive to maintain strict surveillance on the sale of Khoya and Mawa. The government's food safety department has deputed six enforcement teams and conducted raids to prevent sale of spurious khoya.

The government has also deployed mobile testing vans that are being used to create awareness in people and quickly checking raw material that seem suspicious.

The enforcement teams have so far conducted five raids at Khoya Mandi auction site at Mori gate from where the khoya is distributed across Delhi. During the surveillance, officers from the food safety department have collected 188 samples to check for the quality of khoya and 25 legal samples (the results of analysis of these samples can be presented in court as evidence). Around 3,200 kg of khoya that was either spurious or thought to be so was destroyed by the teams.

The government is strictly

monitoring and inspecting the premises of various food businesses to ensure that the sweets are prepared in a hygienic manner. Around 130,000 food business operators have been sent emails along with attached awareness materials on Covid-19 appropriate behaviour and food handling during festive seasons and check on common adulterants in sweets.

"The government is very serious about the health of the people of Delhi. We are keeping a vigil on the sale of Khoya and Mawa as these are used to prepare most



sweets that are in high demand during Diwali," said Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain.

The department is also

participating in creating awareness where over 2,500 food business operators were

sensitized through 10 webinars.

What Biden presidency holds for India

The US Presidential election was watched with keen interest across the globe. Now, with Joe Biden and Kamala Harris elected President and Vice-President, what does that mean for India and more specifically, for the future of India-US relations? Several debates are underway to understand the possible implications for core areas such as strategic/military, economy as well as political cooperation, especially on issues such as India's entry into the UN Security Council and so on.

Apart from these, there are also debates around human rights, visa regimes, multilateral cooperation and climate change. These discussions assume significance because the Trump administration and the Indian government had moved closer and clinched certain agreements and cooperative frameworks in recent times which generated an impression of stronger ties like never before, accompanied by the public display of camaraderie between President Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Such a projection of stronger ties gains importance in the wake of the China-India stand-off in Ladakh. Keeping the current trajectory of Indo-US relations in view, a few broader inferences on possible trajectories can be drawn on the direction that India-US relations will take under the Biden presidency. The current nature of Indo-US relations and its roots can be traced to the immediate period after the Cold War (early 1990s).

India's relations with the US have been buoyant ever since the Cold War binaries collapsed following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The improved relations with the US were partially due to India's own re-fashioning of the foreign policy, which included de-emphasis on the policy of non-alignment, a multi-dimensional engagement with the West, Japan and Southeast Asia, and so on, which were in tune with India's own domestic economic priorities under the newly introduced economic reforms. Furthermore, the strategic political consideration brought India and the US to work together while economic concerns such as access to investment, technology and market too clearly contributed to such engagements. The only major barriers that appeared was India's nuclear test in 1998, along with some strong disagreements in that decade over Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), trade related conflicts, especially the ones pertaining to the newly formed WTO mechanism. Since 2000, the major thrust areas of India-US relations changed considerably, especially with the US launching a strategy of War on Terrorism following the terror strikes on September 11, 2001. Among the major developments that followed included the Strategic Partnership Agreement (2004) and the Indo-US nuclear deal in 2008. Such agreements have had huge implications for India's relations with the US since it was for the first time that engagements in a formal way were taking place in strategic arenas. Following this, several agreements and treaties followed - among them

Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 and the Indo-US Defence Agreement in October 2020. To a large extent, the presidency of Barack Obama was instrumental for India-US relations to move into the next level of relations with its focus on issues including terrorism, economy and market access along with non-traditional issues such as climate change, cultural issues (for instance, Obama-Singh 21st century Knowledge Initiative). Parallel to this, the foreign policy initiatives of US such as the Trans Pacific pact (mainly with East Asian and Pacific countries), Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA, a nuclear deal between Iran and Permanent Member States of the United Nations), the US supported Agreement on Climate Change (Paris Convention) gave India enough scope for flexible strategic tie-ups, trade, improved relations with friendly states like Iran, while building linkages on non-traditional security issues such as climate change (close ties under Paris Accord on issues such as setting up Green Climate Fund). The Trump administration since 2016 has been focusing extensively on bilateral terms vis-a-vis its relations with India. There has been considerable improvements in engagements, especially in military and strategic arenas as evident from the increasing institutional linkages such as Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), although engagements on multilateral frameworks such as withdrawal of the US from Paris Convention on Climate Change and Trans-Pacific partnerships (TPP) have been avoided. The Trump administration's criticism of India's trade policies and the specific curbs on H-1B visas were certain complex sites of disagreements between India and the US. A new President taking over would not considerably change the trajectory broadly set in over a period of the last three decades, though certain new features can be expected, especially with a Democrat President.

The Biden administration will bring in more rule-based multilateralism, an idea that the Democrats have been advocating for, and this will be a key feature of its forthcoming foreign policy. This could mean opening up engagements with India's competitors like China (even though there is lesser possibility in the immediate present) and friendly states like Iran, which can be beneficial for India to reduce its tensions with China in the long run. Climate change issues will be taken up seriously by the US (by re-joining Paris Convention) in the international arena which in turn will promote renewed dynamism in human security areas.

A broader perspective on migration that factors in US economic interests will help India, especially in the high skilled employment market. Science and Technology cooperation has been an integral part of the Obama presidency, which is likely to echo in the upcoming India-US relations as well. Areas of disagreement could emerge, especially on matters such as human rights.

By S Shaji

2020 election reveals a Biden, Trump and an American problem

Historically speaking, defeated presidents and presidential candidates get off the stage to make way for the next generation of American leaders. Alas, 2020 is an exception to the rule: President Trump has not waved the white flag of surrender, nor is defeat in the DNA of his most ardent supporters. Setting up a re-election campaign immediately after Inauguration Day, President Trump bucked political norms. It was unprecedented, blurring the lines between governing and campaigning. Unfortunately for him, that campaign will officially end if and when Joe Biden is inaugurated in January. Due to legal challenges and recounts, the 2020 election is not over yet, but a Biden inauguration remains more likely than not. As a believer in American democracy, I love this country. My thoughts and prayers go out to the next president, whether it is a Democrat or a Republican. That is the American way. No matter the outcome of the legal challenges and recounts, the 2020 election still exposed three major problems: A Trump problem, a Biden problem, and an American one. First, the Democrats' problem: A presumed Biden victory has helped mask considerable problems within the leftist coalition. The hard-left shift by the Party played poorly in swing states, hence that's why the Republican Party is slated to retain its Senate majority and pick up House seats. Republicans also flipped the governor's mansion in Montana and both legislative houses in New Hampshire, meaning that they will enter 2021 with

control over most state governments. Assuming the Democrats' hard-left agenda remains unpopular, Republicans will make out well in 2022 and perhaps beyond. It will be difficult for Biden to hold together a tenuous coalition of socialists and traditional liberals. If he fails, the Republican Party will reap the rewards. You should bet on failure. President-elect Biden may be the most experienced man in U.S. history to win the White House (on paper), but his administration would be a continuation of the Obama presidency. His administration would feature many of the same players, which Americans overwhelmingly rejected in 2016. The world is also more complicated than it was when Biden checked out four years ago. Crippled by the coronavirus, the U.S. economy is not close to regaining its losses. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have lost their lives, and millions more are experiencing anxiety and fear about the future. At the same time, the country is more politically divided than ever before, by region and demographically. Second, the Trump problem: If there is anyone to blame for an impending loss, President Trump should direct his ire at the Washington swamp, which became a hallmark for a losing re-election effort. The Trump apparatus served the president poorly, wasting millions of dollars while failing to inspire the electoral support that could compete with historic Democratic turnout. Because of super PAC inefficiency, President Trump's winning coalition faced an uphill climb since Biden secured the nomination. (Contd on page 30)



ISSN No. 1554 06X

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A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

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The robustness of the US federal set-up

The US may want to import Indian election systems, but India needs to import genuine decentralisation from US



Joe Biden is the 46th President of the United States of America (US) after an arduous and messy presidential election. The American election has spawned many suppositions such as the "victory of Trumpism" or the "lingering death of liberalism", for pundits to debate intensely over the coming weeks.

But one supposition seems beyond debate - India, the world's largest democracy, runs elections better than the US, the world's oldest democracy.

Indian national elections appear much more efficient than the American national elections. In India, votes are counted fast and results are announced by the end of counting day. Disputes over

counting are few and rare. Never does an incumbent head refuse to vacate office after an electoral loss, at least not yet.

In contrast, the world has witnessed the chaos and disarray in the counting process of the US presidential election. It thus seems tempting for Indian commentators to offer some lessons to "big brother" and to export India's more efficient election process to the US. But the seeming mess in the US's electoral process is intentional and a small price to pay for a much larger good - federalism.

To elect their president in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, an American voter in the state of Pennsylvania could vote by mail

but a voter in the state of Texas needed an excuse beyond Covid-19 to vote by mail. A voter in the state of New York made a choice between Donald Trump or Joe Biden, but a voter in neighbouring Maine ranked both the candidates in their order of preference. When the voting process to elect the president is uniquely different across each of the 50 states of the US, then inexorably, the counting process will be complex too.

Electing a president is arguably the most significant event for American democracy. Yet, there is no one set of national rules for electing the president. Each state has the powers to frame its own rules. Fifty different rules are more complex to administer than one set of rules. Such extreme decentralisation with 50 state election commissions running an election for the US president is bound to be more inefficient than one centralised election commission with a uniform set of rules for all.

The US's intensely federal structure and its inevitable inefficiencies are a deliberate design and not an accident. A heavily decentralised model with

powers handed down to state and local governments has served the US extraordinarily well. When states frame their own rules for governance and compete with each other, the larger nation benefits. For example, in the current election, one state - Maine - decided that the current electoral system of plurality voting is obsolete and chose the rank choice voting system for all elections held in their state. If it works well, it is likely that the other states may adopt it too. Had there been one set of standard national electoral rules for all states, such a natural experiment would not be possible. Decentralisation enables a competitive marketplace among states and local governments that foster new ideas and innovation. Further, when the spectre of institutional capture looms large across many democracies currently, capturing one central institution is much easier than the ability to capture many institutions at the state level. The staunch decentralisation and devolution of powers in the country's system is perhaps a critical factor in the US's overall success as a nation, that is

much under-appreciated and recognised. Inefficiency is a small price to pay for much larger and more sustainable benefits.

In contrast, India is heavily centralised with a trend towards greater centralisation in recent years. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, supported by both national parties, is one glaring recent example of how we as a nation sacrificed federalism at the altar of economic efficiency. Let us imagine a situation where the American company, Apple, wants to make a big investment in India. It is better for various states such as Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh to compete with each other to attract Apple to their state than for a prime minister or a Union Cabinet minister to decide where Apple should invest. States can compete only when they have powers to frame their own rules over taxation, land, labour, environment and other areas. India's states have been slowly stripped of most of their powers, including the basic right of taxation, which is the exact opposite of the US's federal structure.

The message from Bihar

There is distress, but unless convinced of the quality of change, voters stick to status quo

The Bihar elections have thrown up a simple, yet complex, outcome. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is set to return to power with Nitish Kumar as chief minister - but the terms of the relationship between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Janata Dal (United) have changed in favour of the former. The Mahagatbandhan (grand alliance) of Opposition parties, will remain in the Opposition - but Tejashwi Yadav has put up a credible performance. And other forces have primarily played the role of weaning away votes from both major alliances.

There are five key messages from the results. One, despite the distress caused by the lockdown, which led to hundreds of thousands of Bihari migrants returning home, there is a fundamental trust that a large segment of citizens have in Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Make no mistake - if Mr Modi had not been the face of the alliance, it would have been difficult for the NDA to retain its base and offset the



resentment against Nitish Kumar. The fact that the BJP has emerged the senior partner in Bihar, and has also won a majority of by-polls across the country, including in Madhya Pradesh, also indicates that voters are not holding the party responsible for the economic and humanitarian crises caused by Covid-19. The BJP's hegemony remains intact. Second, social identities matter. There is

an evolution in caste-based identity politics, but it is clear from the contours of the outcome that Muslims and Yadavs largely consolidated behind the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). Both polls and media reports captured this energy and enthusiasm of the Opposition's base. But given the often adversarial and conflictual relationship between caste groups on the ground, if there is

consolidation on one hand, there is a counter-consolidation on the other. And there was a silent surge of sections of upper castes, extremely backward classes and Dalits behind the NDA - for they feared a return of their rivals to the power structure - supplemented by women voters across castes who reposed faith in Nitish Kumar for his gender-sensitive politics.

Third, economic distress is on the popular agenda. The RJD may have failed to oust the NDA - but Tejashwi Yadav, in his father Lalu Prasad's absence, ran an energetic campaign focused on "economic justice" and has emerged a key leader in his own right. The fact that the promise of government jobs became an agenda of competitive politics is a reflection of how young voters in Bihar are now seeking reforms that can generate employment within the state - this is what is being seen, including by the NDA voters, as the incumbent government's weakness so far.



People need to raise the bar for politicians

How seriously corruption in our system has influenced our lives is an issue that has not been documented properly.

Even as India is passing through multiple crises, the results of the Bihar assembly election have provided an opportunity to the people to ponder over the ways Indian politics is being conducted. Over the decades, the politics of vested interest pursued by political organisations of various hues have pushed aside people-oriented politics. While misleading sloganeering has overtaken real issues, the masses living in abysmal conditions are in a fix as to how to improve their plight. With every electoral exercise either at national or state level, the developmental agenda takes a back seat and all kinds of divisive agendas are pushed ahead. Bihar assembly election was no exception.

It is unfortunate that while the world is moving ahead, the Indian nation is caught in a quagmire of problems filled with hatred and acrimony against each other. At a time when the country has been facing immense socio-economic problems, corruption and mal-administration have been holding its octopus-like grip over the entire system. How seriously corruption in our system has influenced our lives is an issue which has not been documented properly. People generally complain about corruption but fail to gauge the real impact it has had on our lives. Time has

come that people are told about it in detail and not in general terms as has been done. The problem has assumed such alarming proportions that nothing less than a total war against this malaise is going to change the situation for the better.

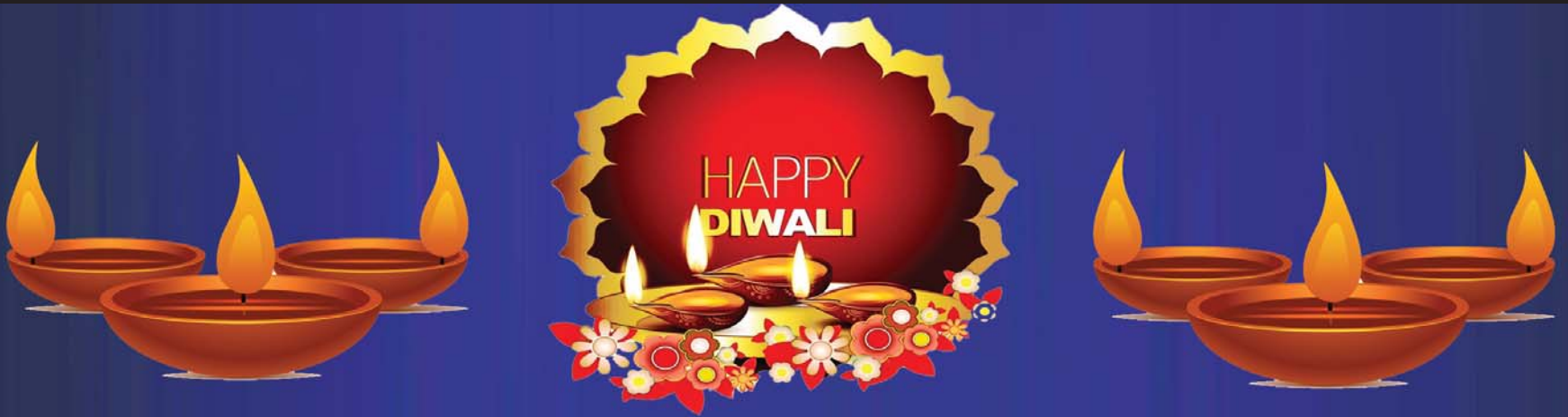
India is endowed with the most fertile land available anywhere in the world. We also have the largest arable irrigated land in comparison to any other country. Our water and other natural resources are comparable to the most advanced nations in the world. The quality of our human resource is second to none. We are a democratic country and freely exercise the power and authority to decide our own future. Despite all these positive factors, why do we not perform as well, if not better, than some of the other less endowed countries who became masters of their own destiny almost at the same time when we gained our independence?

One can, of course, argue that the country has made tremendous progress in self-sufficiency in food production; we have one of the biggest armies in the world; we have the technological capability of manufacturing everything from a needle to satellites; our trained manpower is compared to the very best in the world etc. No disagreement with the above except the preponderating fact: We should

have achieved much more than what we have done so far.

There are numerous questions that we must answer. Why should nearly 30 percent of our population still continue to be below the poverty line and be cut off from the progress we have made? Why did we fail to set up the required number of schools and colleges to enable every child to have access to proper education? Who is responsible for nearly 35 percent of our population remaining illiterate? Why are our roads and other basic infrastructure facilities so bad? Why does most of our population remain deprived of basic facilities of sanitation and have almost no access to electricity for a large part of the year? Why are our civic facilities almost non-existent in most of our 6 million villages? And why are millions homeless? We have even failed to provide safe drinking water to our population. These are just some of the crucial areas where we could have done much better like other countries which have performed admirably. In fact corruption, mal-administration, lack of transparency in governance are core issues haunting the country but no political party is ready to discuss them. It is high time that people focus on social, political, economic and administrative

reforms to abolish utter poverty and pave the way for all round development without compartmentalisation of various communities. For this to happen the central government needs to show leadership and take the state governments along and work together to get a roadmap prepared for developing our great nation. The Bihar results are indicative of people's yearning for change but they could not find a proper alternative. Hence, they seem to have fallen back on the ruling dispensation. The reduced number of Janata Dal (U) lawmakers led by chief minister Nitish Kumar has given enough indication about anti-incumbency against the chief minister but there appears to be no hostility against BJP which was a partner in the same government. Henry David Thoreau in his famous essay titled "Civil Disobedience" wrote, "I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step towards obtaining it." The time has come for people to unequivocally convey in no uncertain term that they only want development minus corruption and there is no place for caste, communal and such other divisive forces in politics any more.



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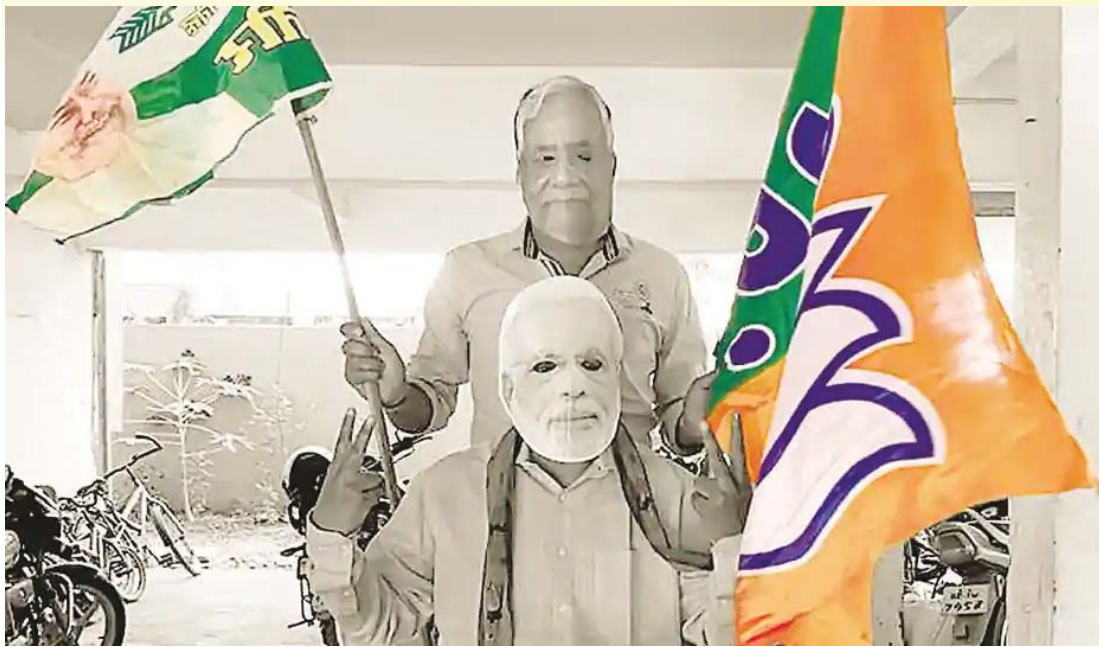
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Why Tejashwi failed to break the glass ceiling

How did the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), then, manage to turn the rising tide against Kumar? Why could Yadav not build on the groundswell of support evident in his rallies to trounce the NDA? And finally, where did the exit polls go wrong?



Exit polls predicted a landslide for the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)-led Mahagatbandhan (MGB) of Opposition parties. The only quibble was the quantum of the RJD victory. These findings gained greater credence since those covering the ground reported deep resentment and anger against the incumbent Nitish Kumar. We were told that Tejashwi Yadav's plank of economic justice that covered themes as kamai (employment), dawai (medical facilities), padhai (education), sichai (irrigation) and mehengai (price rise) found great resonance among the voters, and that the young voters in

Bihar were adamant for a change of guard.

How did the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), then, manage to turn the rising tide against Kumar? Why could Yadav not build on the groundswell of support evident in his rallies to trounce the NDA? And finally, where did the exit polls go wrong? These three questions are critical to understanding the 2020 elections in Bihar.

First, the analysis of provisional results from the Election Commission of the three phases indicates a clear pattern. Demographically, phase one, comprising 71 seats in south Bihar, had a higher concentration of Dalit voters. The 94 seats in

central Bihar polled during the second phase had a higher proportion of Extreme Backward Classes (EBCs). The remaining 78 seats that polled in the final phase had a larger share of the Muslim population. The MGB has outperformed the NDA in the first phase. It seems that the Dalit vote in this region got divided between the NDA, the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), and the Left Front (which, as an MGB constituent, contested a large number of seats in this phase). In addition, the pre-poll survey conducted by Lokniti-CSDS suggested that while the JD(U) voters were seamlessly transferring their support to NDA candidates and Nitish Kumar,

BJP voters were not wholeheartedly backing Kumar. This confusion within the BJP's rank and file was created due to the widespread belief that the party propped up Chirag Paswan as a front to dislodge Nitish Kumar. The LJP was largely contesting on seats that the JD(U) was a contender and it also fielded some high-profile ex-BJP members. There was a late realisation within the BJP leadership that if these rumors persisted, they may have a tough time retaining the state. So they left no stone unturned in reminding voters that no matter how many seats the BJP won, Nitish Kumar was going to be CM. And this is likely to be the most important reason that there was a turnaround in the second phase, in which the NDA managed a slight edge over the MGB. It then went on to completely dominate the third phase.

Second, while there was clearly some resentment against Nitish Kumar owing to his perceived non-performance in his last term, anti-incumbency sentiments were not sharp enough for the erstwhile NDA voters to switch sides. This may be because Yadav's promise of one million jobs and his focused campaign led the crowd to throng rallies, but they could not bring

themselves to trust him enough to vote for MGB. He does not seem to have inspired confidence outside his party's base among Yadav and Muslim constituents. Even the ticket distribution of RJD couldn't cast a wider social net; at least 50% of candidate nominations went to members of these communities.

In addition, the prospect of MGB sweeping in the first phase may have helped the NDA to consolidate its support base with the spectre of the return of a jungle raj of the Lalu Prasad era. The NDA succeeded in counter-consolidating non-Yadav and non-Muslim communities. While the RJD itself did not do spectacularly in the second and third phases, it was further pulled down by a very poor show by Congress as well as the fragmentation of Muslim voters in the Kosi-Seemanchal region. Finally, why were exit polls, especially Axis-My-India with an impeccable track record of correctly predicting outcomes in the past few years, off the mark this time? The most important reason seems to be women voters - a constituency carefully nurtured by Nitish Kumar over the years through various policies including the prohibition on the sale of liquor in the state.

Reading the mandate in Bihar's fragmented political landscape

There is a larger message here - voters are perfectly capable of making their political preferences clear, even as complicated political choices have to be registered under coalitions

Bihar's voters have reposed their trust in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) - despite the fact there were strong voices on the ground expressing discontent with the Nitish Kumar government, especially due to the hardships suffered by labour in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown. However, what is very evident is that the voters have disaggregated their choices within the broad fabric of a "coalition", and given to each political party only whatever seemed to be their due. So, overall, it is the Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) that has emerged as a senior partner within the NDA, with the Janata Dal (United) a distant second. While Nitish Kumar's poll propaganda banked on the plank of his return as chief minister, and this will happen, his party is not the leader of the coalition anymore, and has had a poor electoral strike rate well below the 50% mark. It is the BJP which saved the day for the NDA. For the other opposing coalition, the Mahagatbandhan (grand alliance), led by the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), it is the Congress that has registered an abysmal strike rate of around 25% of the seats allocated to it.

In terms of the number of seats, it is the Left parties that have performed almost as well as the Congress. The combined Left front has a high strike rate. Even here, voters have seen each component of the coalition for what they are, and rewarded them in proportion.

There is a larger message here - voters are perfectly capable of making their political preferences clear, even as complicated political choices have to be registered under coalitions.

The second important issue is that of poll promises. Here, the NDA went in two different directions. The JD(U) focused on



building on its governance agenda with skills, polytechnics, and improved job opportunities. The BJP took on the RJD's promise of a million jobs with its own promise of providing 1.9 million jobs, and setting up an IIT and AIIMS for high quality technical and professional education. As news of the poor performance of the NDA in the

first phase of polls began spreading, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appeared in posters with a personal appeal, asking voters to repose their trust in the BJP - "Bhajapa hai to bharosa hai". The message was simple - the BJP could be relied upon to deliver to the people, just as it had delivered on its welfare schemes.

Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW: If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

- **Stay home:** People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. Do not leave, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.
- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.



Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation

- **Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific “sick room” and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.
 - Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people with the virus limit contact with animals until more information is known.
 - When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick with COVID-19. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.



Call ahead before visiting your doctor

- **Call ahead:** If you have a medical appointment, call your doctor’s office or emergency department, and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



Wear a facemask if you are sick

- **If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider’s office.
- **If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live in the home should stay in a different room. When caregivers enter the room of the sick person, they should wear a facemask. Visitors, other than caregivers, are not recommended.



Cover your coughs and sneezes

- **Cover:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- **Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid sharing personal household items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.



Why the media needs to introspect

Opinion is divided over Arnab Goswami's arrest. Some feel that this is politically-motivated retaliation by the Thackeray government, while some say this is a criminal case which has nothing to do with press freedom or freedom of expression

The arrest of Republic TV chief Arnab Goswami is almost like the mythical samudra manthan which yielded both nectar and poison. Similar, in the churn in the media today, we get both genuine news and fiction dressed up as news. The lines have become somewhat blurred these days.

In the name of truth, some self-styled influencers have glossed over the distinction between news, opinion and hypothesis. They seem to believe that the louder people are, especially on television channels, the more authenticity there is to their arguments. But aggression and decibel levels don't change the truth. Which is probably why this period in time is being called the post-truth era.

Let us look at the case of the death by suicide of promising actor Sushant Singh Rajput. The uncertainty and drama surrounding his death had been going on for months until experts

ruled that it was indeed a case of suicide.

Initially, after registering a first information report in Bihar, the case was handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The CBI spokesperson did not issue any statement on the case at that time. But some television channels were determined to cast themselves in the roles of the plaintiff, lawyer and judge, all at once.

In the next chapter of the saga, his former partner and film actor Rhea Chakraborty was pilloried as a gold digger and as a person who may have had a role in his death. Other top agencies, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) also joined the investigations into the allegations. Chakraborty did not say much but that did not stop the channels from indulging in wild speculation. Some said the case was all about money laundering, others said it was

about drug peddling. Several actors and Chief Minister (CM) Uddhav Thackeray and his family were targeted.

For the first time, some of the actors and film-makers who were vilified moved the courts. They did so to stop some television channels from tarnishing their hard-earned reputations. One of the channels named as indulging in this mud-slinging was Republic TV of which Goswami is the editor-in-chief and owner. Goswami and some other mediapersons have gone against established norms under which the media has long functioned and have hurt people in the process. Many journalists have pushed the envelope in the past, but never crossed ethical lines.

To buttress his stand, he has cited the Television Rating Points (TRPs) as evidence that his offerings are accepted and liked by viewers. However, when the Mumbai Police arrested some



people on charges of rigging the TRP system, Goswami lost no time in alleging that this was part of a political conspiracy against him. He blamed some editors-in-chief and directors of certain media houses, publicly naming and challenging them. He did not stop here, he hurled accusations at the Maharashtra CM and the police commissioner of Mumbai. This had never happened before in journalism. But Goswami did not seem to care. It is this sort of behaviour which has led to an erosion of the media's credibility and has affected everyone in the media negatively in varying measures. Opinion is divided over his arrest. Some feel that this is politically-motivated retaliation by

the Thackeray government, while some say this is a criminal case which has nothing to do with press freedom or freedom of expression. The Mumbai Police have not handled the Goswami case well, but then that is what usually happens when law enforcement agencies begin acting against journalists. Many of these cases have taken place in remote areas, away from the spotlight. No one raised a hue and cry in these cases. This episode calls for serious introspection on the part of the media in India. As Thomas Paine, an 18th-century American political activist and philosopher said, "Character is much easier kept than recovered".

UN: When UK tried to protect Pakistan

Historically, the United Kingdom (UK) has exhibited a soft corner towards Pakistan possibly because of the size and influence of the Pakistani diaspora in the UK and a feeling that the Raj's divide and rule policy has benefitted them.



India will serve on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for two years, starting January 2021. We were last on the Council during 2011-2012. Permanent members of the UNSC (P5) exercise the veto and their pre-eminence in the scheme of things is there for all to see. However, to give non-permanent members a feeling of importance, some goodies are offered to them, including chairing of different Security Council committees.

The Security Council has two committees on counterterrorism

- 1267 deals with the UNSC sanctions regime, and the Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) on capacity-building. Given that India has been a major target of terrorism, chairing at least one of them was important for us politically, and our interest was made known to the other UNSC members in 2010 after we were elected.

This should have been no issue even if there were other members interested in working on counterterrorism, as there are several chairing opportunities for the 10 elected members of the

UNSC. But India's interest ran into strong headwinds with the British opposing it. Indeed, at a retreat for incoming elected members of the Council, the British permanent representative (PR) brushed aside the solid reasons for our interest in chairing one of the committees dealing with counter-terrorism and told me that as a P5 member, it was their obligation to see to proper running of things in the Council. It wasn't even a hint; one was bluntly told no, and this was, ironically, because India was a major stakeholder in countering terrorism.

Historically, the United Kingdom (UK) has exhibited a soft corner towards Pakistan possibly because of the size and influence of the Pakistani diaspora in the UK and a feeling that the Raj's divide and rule policy has

benefitted them. The obvious, but unsaid, subtext of the ambassador's position was that we would steer the work in the committee to the targeting of Pakistan. The hand of the Chinese, certainly pushed by Pakistan, can also hardly be ruled out. It is interesting to note that irrespective of its supposed strong resolve against terrorism, the UK found reason to support China and Pakistan, a main espouser of terrorism, against India, a huge and common stakeholder in the fight against terrorism.

It was the first time India had got elected to the UNSC after 9/11, when terrorism became a global focus. Therefore, any idea of giving up on the chair of a committee dealing with counterterrorism was not even an option for us. Of course, this set up a contest between P5

and the will of the General Assembly, which had sent India to the Security Council with a record 187 votes out of 192.

It is gratifying that after the diplomatic jostling in New York, New Delhi and London, India prevailed and ambassador (now minister) Hardeep Singh Puri (full disclosure; he is also a cousin) chaired CTC from 2011-2012.

Interestingly, seven years later, in 2017, India and the UK squared off again at the UN. And, once more, despite the P5 advantage with the UK, India succeeded in leveraging the will of UNGA when its candidate for judgeship at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) saw success against the British candidate who was forced to pull out. This resulted in a rare situation of a P5 nation not having a judge on ICJ.



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Modi and the politics of welfare

As credit for welfare schemes gets centralised, CMs are feeling the pinch



Coming into the Bihar election, most analysts predicted a one-sided victory for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). While the exit polls predicting an NDA loss turned out to be wrong, the NDA's razor-thin victory proved a surprise. We have now heard all of the narratives about the weak performance of the NDA. Chief minister Nitish Kumar was facing "anti-incumbency." Rebels from Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) ate into an otherwise comfortable victory. Tejashwi Yadav struck a chord with the electorate.

These are all, at some level, accurate portrayals of what happened in Bihar, but they are also excessively local explanations. An over-reliance on these sorts of explanations masks the changes we are seeing across the Indian electoral system. In the 2019 national election, the NDA won 53% of Bihar's vote. In the

recently-concluded state election, the NDA (admittedly minus the LJP) won around 37% of the vote. This continues a trend of the NDA performing at least 15 percentage points worse in state elections as compared to the 2019 national election - something witnessed in Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, where elections have happened either before or after the national polls. What explains this disjuncture? Why are voters increasingly choosing opposing parties in state and national elections (what political scientists call "split ticket voting")?

In a recent article written with my Centre for Policy Research colleague Yamini Aiyar, we have analysed the reasons for split-ticket voting. We boil it down to two conditions. One, voters must be able to separate what is given by the Centre and what is given

describing when split-ticket voting occurs, we need a theoretical model to understand why this has suddenly happened in India. In another article, I have argued that we need to understand the appeal of Prime Minister Modi through the prism of "vishwas" (trust/belief). There are three elements to this argument. First, voters have become increasingly frustrated with federal "accommodation" along multiple axes - whether it be between castes, between Hindus and Muslims, or between states - generating a demand for greater centralisation. Second, to bypass the institutional procedures of compromise, voters must place their faith in a leader (Modi in this case) to "represent" or make decisions for the nation as a whole. And, third, the political machinery, through advertising around central schemes and innovative use of media, must build a direct

by the state. And two, voters must distinguish between regional and national preferences. This is what allows a voter to support Narendra Modi at the Centre while supporting his political rival at the state level.

While these are characteristics

connection between Modi and the voter. Indeed, as Rajeshwari Deshpande, Louise Tillin, and KK Kailash have argued, voters have increasingly attributed welfare schemes to Modi and not their state leaders (as has often been the case). This phenomenon is perhaps best explained by the fact that welfare under the NDA is certainly louder than the United Progressive Alliance and this has kept the bureaucracy more alert.

How does this hurt state-level leaders aligned with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)? As attribution for welfare schemes have increasingly been given to Modi, the political appeal of state leaders and their welfare delivery has all but disappeared - leaving voters to stew about corruption and joblessness. Indeed, a quick look at recent elections shows that chief ministers such as Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Madhya Pradesh, Raman Singh in Chhattisgarh, and Nitish Kumar in Bihar - all aligned with the BJP, directly or in alliance, who built their reputations on broad-based welfare schemes - have been hit hard by "anti-incumbency" and voter anger. These are all CMs who no longer command much of an "independent" base of support beyond Modi, with one key exception being Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh.

Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than

in "coronavirus politics". In principle, India's crippling lockdown should have hurt both the ruling party at the Centre, BJP, and the ruling parties in Bihar, Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United) and BJP. But the BJP's immense popularity stayed largely intact with 67% strike rate in these elections by campaigning on the personage of Modi, while the JD(U) had a paltry 37% strike rate. We have a data point here.

As a Hindustan Times analysis piece showed, districts in which Modi addressed a rally had a strike rate of four to 12 percentage points higher in the final two phases of the Bihar election. In short, voters approved of Modi for his ability to protect Indians, and punished Nitish Kumar for his failure to protect them. The strike rate for the JD(U) dropped to 27% in constituencies in districts with higher proportions of male migrants.

The sheer popularity of Modi, and the "vishwas" that voters have placed in him, has changed the way the state-level leaders must do politics. No longer can they simply rely on state funds to curry favour with voters by using high social and development expenditure. In a strange twist of fate, no one is feeling the pinch more than state leaders allied with the BJP and Modi.

What happened to the protests?

We thought we'd ask on behalf of America's urban shopkeepers

Can we take down the plywood over the windows now? With Joe Biden on his way to the White House, can we show our goods again in the storefront, confident that "largely peaceful" protesters won't loot the place or burn it down? We thought we'd ask on behalf of America's urban shopkeepers, from Beverly Hills to Manhattan, who had boarded up their windows in anticipation of post-election violence. In the event, Mr. Biden has won the

election pending recounts and, what do you know, there was little or no violence. Instead the streets were filled Saturday with partisans celebrating the democratic result they wanted. The Trump supporters stayed home. No doubt they are disappointed, perhaps even angry. But perhaps they are also accepting the results as unfortunate though the price of living in a democratic republic. Sometimes your candidate

loses. Would it have been the same if Donald Trump had won? You know the answer. The protests would have been ugly, perhaps worse even than earlier this year. And the media and many Democratic politicians would have cheered them on, or at least not objected as they also failed to object this summer. They would have blamed the disorder on Mr. Trump.

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The Biden presidency and India-US ties

Hope has been rekindled in the participatory democratic process as the American voter has definitively chosen the Democratic candidate and former United States (US) Vice-President (VP) Joe Biden as the 46th President along with Senator Kamala Harris as his running mate. The latter's victory is particularly poignant for its many resonances - this is the first time that a woman, a person of colour, and an Indian-American will occupy the office of the vice-presidency. While it seems that Donald Trump will use every legal option to delay and defy the verdict of the Electoral College, the US is preparing for a new occupant in the White House on January 20. President-elect Biden is no stranger to India and played a valuable role as a legislator in the rapprochement over the nuclear issue when it was being steered by the George W Bush-Manmohan Singh combine. He is familiar with the essential continuity in the India-US bilateral relationship. Hence the road map for the next four years with Biden at the helm will, in all likelihood, strengthen ties in those sectors where progress was made (defence cooperation) on the Trump watch and repair

the damage done in areas such as trade where restoring the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) would enable Indian exports.

Under Trump, the India-US bilateral track retained the structural orientation that had been envisioned in the Bill Clinton-Atal Bihari Vajpayee years. It is instructive to recall the Biden approach to Indian sensitivities about how to frame the relationship with the US, for Delhi is reluctant to go down the path of a formal alliance, for good reason. In his July 2013 visit to India, the then Vice-President Biden noted: "There is no contradiction between strategic autonomy and a strategic partnership. Global powers are capable of both."

The current collective global challenge is dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the figures are stark. The US and India lead the list in the total number of cases, and the scale of the economic-fiscal haemorrhaging is yet to be estimated accurately. The pandemic is one of the many critical global challenges where the US leadership would have been desirable, and this is where the Biden-Trump contrast is striking. The climate crisis and

maritime pollution are huge (as Trump would put it) and some experts aver that the world has crossed the tipping point. It is irrefutable that sustained collective action based on credible scientific data and an equitable sharing of the mitigation effort is the way ahead but this is exactly what President Trump rejected.

The Biden presidency offers the hope that the US commitment to multilateralism will be back on track and here there are many areas where Delhi could be a relevant stakeholder in global load-sharing. It is encouraging to note that in his statements, Biden has promised to bring the US back into the World Health Organization (WHO)'s fold and focused on the need to give this challenge the highest policy priority in relation to Covid-19.

For all the opprobrium that the Trump presidency has elicited, his unpredictable China policy merits scrutiny from both the US and Indian perspective. Trump forced the US establishment and the world at large to acknowledge the predatory nature of China's global aspirations and its corrosive impact. How this policy shift towards Beijing will unfold in the Biden years will be extremely



relevant for the global strategic order and its regional/Asian implications will be even more acute for Delhi.

Post-Galwan, the China challenge looms large for India and the recent statement by Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat is pertinent. In relation to the current military stand-off in Ladakh, General Rawat asserted: "Our posturing is unambiguous. We will not accept any shifting of the LAC. In the overall security calculus, border confrontations, transgressions, unprovoked tactical military actions spiralling into a larger conflict therefore cannot be discounted." How the Biden team will frame the China challenge to Indian sovereignty in relation to abiding US interest

will be a critical indicator for the Narendra Modi government in mediating the Delhi-Beijing relationship. The more recent defence cooperation traction accorded to the bilateral track, by way of Delhi signing the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement and inviting Australia to be part of the Malabar naval exercises, is illustrative of the potential that needs to be explored. There are many areas/sectors in the multilateral basket relevant to India and paradoxically, China, that a Biden presidency could enable if it remains committed to a pragmatic and equitable global partnership. The post-Covid-19 era is yet to arrive and the immediate road ahead for the US President-elect will be to identify policy priorities and the manner in which they will be pursued.

Why The Media Fails The Arnab Test

Anyone seeking a political career would envy Arnab Goswami. He grabbed news headlines on a day when these belonged rightfully to the world's greatest political spectacle-the US presidential election. Thus, while his arrest may keep him down for a while, it is only a matter of time before he sheds the thin cover of journalism in pursuit of his political ambitions. Look at the impact of his arrest. The media, the Maharashtra police, and the political class are either under fire or stand discredited. The only long-term beneficiary of the police action is Goswami.

I do not recall in recent memory a single instance of practically the entire Union Cabinet and heavyweights of a ruling national party, including several chief ministers, coming out in defence of a "journalist" and condemning his arrest as an "attack on freedom of the Press". At the same time, some



journalists and professional media organisations-to whom he was no longer acceptable as a "journalist" or as one of their own in terms of values and principles-were constrained to defend him. Willy-nilly, these professional bodies of the Fourth Estate found themselves on the same side as the state, with high-sounding statements condemning Goswami's arrest as an attack on the

Press. His arrest, as well as political play around it, posed an intellectual challenge to media leaders and organisations-and they failed to rise to it by their inability to go beyond the simplistic, predictable positions.

Ranged against these powers and the powerful in media, were eminent and credible voices including renowned journalists, which held that Goswami's

rightful place was in jail as he was no journalist; he had single-handedly disgraced and wrecked the space for free, fair, and independent journalism in India; his platform, masquerading as a news channel, was a vile vehicle for media trial, vilification and persecution of people he picked upon and these had little to do with public interest or public service journalism; and, he had set himself up as the law, judge, jury, and executioner when it came to his targets. In short, he was a serial offender who deserved what he got in spite of his political masters doing their best to protect him. Between these two opposing viewpoints was a barely perceptible sliver that held to the sane ground and argued that while he deserves to be dealt with under the law of the land for any offence he may have committed, such action cannot be by way of vendetta or outside the limits of law.



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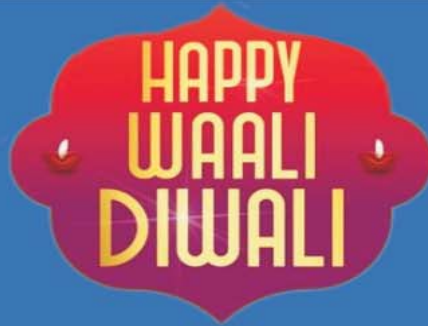
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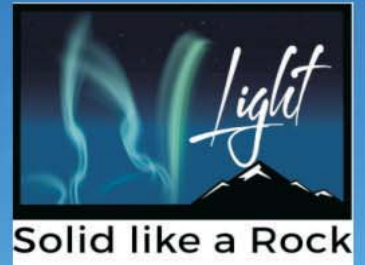
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Man lynched in Bangladesh for alleged Quran desecration: Police

Man beaten to death and his body torched in northern Bangladesh after villagers accuse him of desecrating holy books kept in a mosque.

(News Agencies)- Hundreds of people in a Bangladeshi town have beaten and lynched a man who had allegedly desecrated the Muslim holy book, police said.

The crowd on Thursday seized two men who had been in official custody after they were accused of stepping on a Quran in the main mosque of Burimari in Lalmonirhat district, more than 300 kilometres (186 miles) northwest of the capital, Dhaka. "They beat one man to death and then burnt the body," district police chief Abida Sultana told the AFP news agency.

Sultana said the two men told the imam at the mosque that hardline fighters might have stored illegal arms inside the building, the DPA news agency reported.

The two men then tried to search for the weapons on a shelf where the Quran and Hadith (sayings

of Prophet Muhammad) were kept, in a way the imam found disrespectful to the holy books. An altercation followed and the locals initially confined the two men to a room.

Several hundred people then rushed to the scene in the night and took away one of the men to a nearby area where they beat him and set his body on fire, said the officer. Police recovered the charred body of the man, local government official Abu Newaz

Nishat said. The footage of the attack went viral on social media shortly after the incident.

The 35-year-old victim was reportedly struggling with psychological problems after he recently lost his job as a librarian at a college in neighbouring Rangpur district, Nishat said.

Police did not find any weapons at the mosque and the second man was taken into protective custody by the police. Rumours and superstitions frequently lead



to violent incidents in beatings in 2019, according to Bangladesh. More than 50 rights watchdog, Ain o Salish people were killed in mob Kendra.

Pakistani al-Qaeda bomb-maker killed in Afghanistan

(News Agencies)- A Pakistani bomb-maker who trained Taliban members before switching allegiance to al-Qaeda has been killed in a security operation in western Afghanistan, the country's intelligence agency said.

In a statement on Tuesday, the National Directorate of Security

said Mohammad Hanif was a close aide to Asim Omar, who headed al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and was killed in a joint US-Afghan operation in 2019.

The agency said Hanif, originally from Karachi, had "close relations" with the Taliban and helped train fighters in making

car bombs and improvised explosive devices. It said he was initially a member of the Taliban, but joined al-Qaeda in 2010.

Officials have long accused the Taliban of maintaining close links to al-Qaeda, blamed for the deadly September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. Two Pakistani women

were also detained in the operation that led to Hanif's killing, the NDS said, without providing further details.

The Taliban have not commented. Hanif's killing came just days after security agents killed Abu Muhsin al-Masri, a top al-Qaeda member long-wanted by the US.

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Pakistan Cricket Board gets its first female director



(News Agencies)- Alia Zafar has been named as one of the independent directors on the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), becoming the first female to have been appointed to the post in the cricket-crazy South Asian nation. Zafar, a human resources executive, was included among four new PCB directors. The others are finance executive Javed Kurieshi, economist Asim Wajid Jawad, and corporate executive Arif Saeed. Zafar, who has worked in senior positions in the corporate sector, was appointed for a two-year term.

She has also had a stint with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The PCB's new constitution, which came into effect last year, makes it mandatory to include at least one woman among four independent directors on its board of governors. "I welcome the newly-appointed independent members, especially Ms Alia Zafar, the first female independent member, which is a giant step forward in enhancing the PCB's governance

structure," PCB chairman Ehsan Mani said on Tuesday. "The four new members bring with them a wealth of diverse knowledge that will only improve the professional outlook and working of the PCB." The revamped structure of the PCB has resulted in six provincial teams - Balochistan, Central Punjab, Southern Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Northern - competing in premier first-class cricket tournaments. For more than 50 years, banks fielded teams in first-class tournaments alongside city-based teams in Pakistan.

Pakistan army suspends troops for arrest of ex-PM son-in-law

(News Agencies)- Pakistan's military Tuesday announced the suspension of a number of intelligence officers and troops accused by opposition leaders of last month of abducting a provincial police chief to pressure him to arrest the son-in-law of exiled former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. The unusual action by the military comes three weeks after Sharif's son-in-law, Mohamud Safdar, was briefly detained after opposition parties held a rally in the port city of Karachi against Prime Minister Imran Khan. Safdar, a retired army captain who is also an opposition politician, was taken from a hotel room, where he was staying with his wife. The arrest came after he visited the mausoleum of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who led the movement for independence from Britain in 1947 and is a revered figure in Muslim-majority Pakistan.

While at the tomb, Safdar led a crowd in chanting: "Give respect to the vote!" The slogan is viewed in Pakistan as criticism of the country's military, which has ruled the country of 220 million people - directly or indirectly - for



most of its history. Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League opposition party at the time insisted Safdar was arrested only after troops abducted provincial police chief Mushtaq Mehar to pressure him to sign orders for Safdar's arrest. Neither Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence nor the paramilitary Rangers at the time commented and it was unclear how many intelligence agents and troops were suspended.

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There will be a smooth transition to a second Trump Administration: Pompeo

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has been declared the winner of the elections by major media networks, as is the tradition in the United States.

(News Agencies)- US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Tuesday asserted that there will be a smooth transition to a second Trump Administration, indicating that he believes Donald Trump has won the November 3 presidential elections.

"There will be a smooth transition to a second Trump administration. We are ready. The world is watching what's taking place here. We're going to count all the votes..." Pompeo said. He was responding to questions from reporters at the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the State Department if his department is preparing to engage with the Biden transition team and if not at what point does it delay or hamper a smooth transition or pose a risk to national security. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has been declared the winner of the elections by major media



networks, as is the tradition in the United States.

President-elect Biden has quickly moved on to the transition phase. Pompeo said that the world should have every confidence that the transition necessary to make sure that the State Department is functional today, successful today, and successful with the president who's in office on January 20th a

minute after noon will also be successful.

"I went through a transition on the front and I've been on the other side of this. I'm very confident that we will do all the things that are necessary to make sure that the government, the United States government will continue to perform its national security function as we go forward," he said.

Responding to questions if he believed there is widespread voter fraud, Pompeo said that he has been getting calls from all across the world. "These people are watching our election. They understand that we have a legal process. They understand that this takes time, right? It took us 37 plus days in an election back in 2000. We conducted a successful transition then. I'm very confident that we workout and we must count every legal vote," he said.

A 2,000-pound great white shark has been spotted near Miami

(News Agencies)- A 2,000-pound great white shark just took a pit stop near Miami in a journey already spanning 103 days, the shark has traveled 13,066 miles from the coast of Canada on a route that will eventually lead to the Gulf of Mexico. OCEARCH, a non-profit organization, has

"As a big mature female, Unama'ki has the potential to lead us to the site where she gives birth and exposes a new white shark nursery," OCEARCH said on its website.

What do we know about this shark?

The shark, first discovered in the Scatarie Island, is named Unama'ki, which means "land of the fog" to the indigenous people of Nova Scotia. Measuring at 15 feet and 5 inches, the adult female is the second biggest white shark



been tracking the shark's journey since it was discovered on September 29, 2019. In an announcement on social media, the organization confirmed the shark's spotting in Miami.

Researchers hope that the shark's travels will lead to more discoveries of great white sharks. They are classified as a vulnerable population by the World Wildlife Fund, just one step away from endangered.

OCEARCH has tagged in the northwest Atlantic, CNN affiliate WSOC-TV reported.

Unama'ki has been traveling down the east coast from her initial spotting in Nova Scotia. In October 2019, she was spotted 50 miles outside of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and has since been seen off the coast of North Carolina, Virginia Beach and near the Atlantic City in New Jersey.

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NYPD will now allow people to wear religious head coverings in booking photos



The New York Police Department will now allow people to wear religious head coverings during booking photos as part of a settlement with several Muslim women who said they were forced to remove their hijabs.

The policy change stems from two separate lawsuits filed in 2018 against the NYPD in which four Muslim women claimed that their civil liberties were violated when they were allegedly forced by officers, some in front of male officers, to take off their hijabs for their booking photos.

The hijab is a religious headscarf donned by Muslim women around the world that covers the wearer's head and neck but not their face. Muslim women who choose to wear the headscarf do not take it off in front of men outside of their immediate families. The police department's new guidance extends to all religious headwear, including turbans worn by Sikhs and yarmulkes and wigs worn by Orthodox Jews.

Laila Ibrahim, one of the women who brought the suit, was

arrested in 2018 and was asked to remove her hijab for the booking photo, but Ibrahim, who speaks limited English, said she tried to explain that she couldn't due to religious restrictions. Ibrahim told CNN she was denied a request for a translator because it was deemed unnecessary, and an officer then forcefully took off her hijab and took her picture in a public room full of men. Speaking through a translator, Ibrahim told CNN that said she felt humiliated and frustrated. "(The) hijab is part of someone's identity," she said. "Without it, I'm missing a part of my skin and body." Ibrahim said she hopes the department's new policy will mean the NYPD will respect people's right to their religious beliefs and not violate or oppress them.

Change viewed as 'meaningful step' The NYPD will still remove these religious head coverings temporarily during searches for any weapons and contraband. That removal and search will be conducted in a private area by an officer of the same gender.

For the booking photo, religious headwear can be kept on unless there is reasonable suspicion that the arrestee has a distinguishing feature of investigative value that is not fully visible, such as hair color or birth marks. Arrestees may also be required to take off their head covering during photos if there is reasonable suspicion the person was not wearing one when the crime took place outside their residence, NYPD spokeswoman Detective Sophia Mason told CNN. These uncovered photos will be taken in private by an officer of the same gender, Mason said.

Government agencies in New York and elsewhere generally allow people to wear religious head coverings in photographs. Hijabs may be worn in US passport photos, for example, and a majority of states permit religious exceptions for wearing a head covering in driver's license photos, according to the ACLU. Religious exceptions for booking photos, though, are less common. In June, an 18-year-old

Muslim woman arrested during a Black Lives Matter protest in Miami said she was forced to remove her headscarf for a booking photo.

Afaf Nasher, executive director of the New York chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations-New York, said the organization welcomes the NYPD change.

"For Muslim women who wear a hijab, this is a meaningful step in recognizing that they do not lose religious liberty even when detained by police," Nasher said in a statement.

Still, she said, the new policy should not have required two and a half years of litigation. "Until we see a shift in the NYPD that exhibits a willingness to implement reform that respects everyone's rights, there will be no victory celebration. Instead, organizations like CAIR-NY will continue to demand change, and brave women like those who brought this legal challenge will continue to inspire it," Nasher said.

Virginia governor conditionally pardons a young Black man with autism who was serving 10 years for a car crash



(News Agencies)-Virginia's governor this week conditionally pardoned a young Black man with autism who was serving 10 years in prison after being involved in two car crashes in 2019 that left two people seriously injured.

Matthew Rushin was on his way to pick up pastries at a Virginia Beach Panera on January 4, 2019, when he struck a moving vehicle in a parking lot and fled, authorities said. He then drove head-on into oncoming traffic and struck another vehicle, leaving two people seriously injured, according to the Virginia Beach Commonwealth's Attorney's Office.

The 22-year-old pled guilty to two counts of malicious wounding and one count of hit and run, personal injury, the prosecutor's office said. He was sentenced to 50 years in prison with a judge suspending 40 years from it, prosecutors said.

However, Rushin's family, as well as members of the the autism community, have been calling for his release, saying that authorities did not provide appropriate accommodations or consider his communication access needs.

This week, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam reduced Rushin's sentence, setting him on a clear path to be released by next spring. "Mr. Rushin was

sentenced for 50 years, despite sentencing guidelines that call for a sentence of 2 years 7 months up to 6 years 4 months," Alena Yarmosky, a spokesperson for the governor, told CNN's Joe Sutton. "Governor Northam's conditional pardon aligns Mr. Rushin's sentence with these sentencing guidelines."

Rushin's family says he did not have malicious intent.

Rushin's family and prosecutors differed on whether his mental state or suicidal intent played a role in the 2019 incident.

"When officers arrived on scene, Rushin climbed out of his vehicle and stated that he was trying to kill himself. Investigation revealed that he was driving approximately 65 m.p.h. right before the crash and did not apply his brakes," prosecutors said in a statement last year. Commonwealth's Attorney Colin D. Stolle, who said his office was notified of the governor's plans last week, extended his support to the crash victims and their families. He said the sentence imposed by the court

"appropriate." "Our hearts go out to the victims and their families in this case for the ongoing pain and legal process that they have had to endure," Stolle said in a statement. "While it certainly is within the Governor's authority to do so, this office believes that the sentence imposed by the court was appropriate, just and fair."

Rushin's mother, Lavern Rushin, has said the crash was not intentional, and her son was wrongly convicted.

"It's a terrible feeling to know that it wasn't an intentional crash and he's innocent," Lavern said during a rally in June, according to CNN affiliate WTKR. "He's sitting there enduring what he's enduring." For months, Rushin's family along with advocates and activists, including Black Lives Matter 757, advocated for his release.

His photo appeared in posters and social media posts, alongside the words "Black Autism Lives Matter." Camille Proctor, founder and executive director of The Color of Autism Foundation, which aims to educate and assist African American families with autistic children, said Rushin and

other people of color with disabilities usually don't get an opportunity to express their needs when interacting with police. "They see a Black person, they see a Latinx person, they see a brown person and they begin to make judgments and they move forward with their biases," Proctor said.

What the pardon means With the governor's pardon, Rushin could be released within months -- but he must agree to a series of strict guidelines. That includes: not being allowed to drive again, supervised probation for five years and taking part on "mental health treatment, counseling and a substance abuse evaluation," Yarmosky said. Miriam Airington-Fisher, an attorney representing Rushin, celebrated the governor's decision, saying her client's case "received a full and thorough review." "Today, we are thankful that Governor Northam granted Matthew Rushin's pardon in an expeditious manner," Lavern Rushin said in a statement. "This is the first step in proving that Matthew did not have malicious intent."

El Paso, Texas, is asking for 4 more mobile morgues as Covid-19 deaths spike

Despite new measures aimed at curbing the spread of Covid-19 in El Paso, Texas, the community remains one of the hardest hit across the country, with soaring infections and hospitalizations that continue to climb.

(News Agencies)-County Judge Ricardo Samaniego said the county has requested four more trailers in addition to the six mobile morgues already on the ground to handle a spike in deaths.

"It may be as much as 20 per day the next two to three weeks. There might be more and more an incline of deaths," Samaniego told CNN affiliate KFOX.

That's as county leaders have already been working with funeral homes and mortuaries on fatality management and government forces have arranged to begin assisting area hospitals,

according to Assistant Fire Chief Jorge Rodriguez of the El Paso Office of Emergency Management.

The state also sent nearly 1,400 personnel to assist hospitals in the area, and an alternate care site at the El Paso convention center is also up and running and currently treating about 40 patients. Another 56 ICU patients had to be air-evacuated to other facilities in New Mexico and Texas, Rodriguez said.

In late October, Samaniego ordered a two-week shutdown of nonessential services, saying the community had never seen "this

level of infections." The measure faced backlash from state officials, with the state's attorney general filing a motion for a temporary injunction to stop the judge's "unlawful lockdown order" and the governor calling the measure illegal.

That order is set to expire Wednesday, but unless local hospitals recover from the surge of patients in the next few days, Samaniego told KFOX he's planning on extending it. The hospitals are still not manageable. We're having an inability to manage fatalities," he told the affiliate. "It leaves me no choice



but to lean towards an extension of the order."

"We're just exhausted"

There are more than 26,000 active Covid-19 cases in El Paso and at least 1,028 people hospitalized, according to the city's Covid-19 dashboard.

Hospital workers who are battling the crisis on the front lines say they've been overwhelmed.

"We're just exhausted," Nick Rose, an El Paso registered nurse, told KFOX. "We have been working overtime."

New Zealand discovers 1,500 fraudulent votes ... in an election on birds

(News Agencies)-The candidates have feathers and the policy platforms are non-existent. It's New Zealand's Bird of the Year vote -- and just like a regular election, there are concerns over keeping the vote fair.

More than 1,500 fraudulent votes were cast in the early hours of Monday in the country's annual bird election, briefly pushing the Little-Spotted Kiwi to the top of the leaderboard, organizers and environmental organization Forest & Bird announced Tuesday.

Those votes -- which were discovered by the election's official

scrutineers -- have since been removed. According to election spokesperson Laura Keown, the votes were cast using fake email addresses that were all traced back to the same IP address in Auckland, New Zealand's most populous city.

"It's lucky we spotted this little Kiwi trying to sneak in an extra 1,500 votes under the cover of darkness," Keown said in a statement. "But they'll have to play by the rules like all of the other birds to win the competition." New Zealand's Bird of the Year competition has

been running since 2005, and was established by Forest and Bird as a way to encourage New Zealanders to learn about the country's native birds -- and inspire them to help protect the country's wildlife.

Already 35,000 votes have been cast in this year's election, which allowed voters to rank up to five birds of their choice. Each person can cast only one vote per email address, and international votes are also counted.

Voting opened earlier this month and closes this

weekend. This election comes only weeks after the country's general election, which saw Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern reelected in a landslide. Although the Bird of the Year vote is ostensibly an effort to raise awareness about New Zealand's native birds, many of which are struggling for survival, it has a history of turning heated.

Human political leaders and interest groups often back the feathered candidate of their choice -- this year, sex toy retailer Adult Toy Megastore endorsed the Hihi, which it said practices "consensual polyamory." There are dozens of

candidates beyond the Little Spotted Kiwi, which is extinct on mainland New Zealand, although around 1,200 live on Kapiti Island, a sanctuary off the coast of the country's capital, Wellington. Others include the Morepork or Ruru -- described by Forest and Bird as "somewhat of an enigma" -- and Piwauwau or Rock Wren, which demonstrates "true mountain bravery." And there's also the incumbent Hoiho -- also known as the Yellow-Eyed Penguin -- which is fighting for reelection (there are no term limits).

Archaeologists in Norway find rare Viking ship burial using only radar

Norwegian archaeologists have identified a previously undiscovered "high-status" Viking burial site, featuring a feast hall, cult house, and the remnants of a ship burial.

Researchers were able to discover the findings without having to dig into any land, instead using ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to see below the surface.

Key amongst the findings from the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research -- published Tuesday in the *Antiquity* journal -- is a Viking ship burial site located on the Jell mound in Gjellestad, southeastern Norway. Boats symbolized safe passage into the afterlife and were usually accorded to the elite of Viking society.

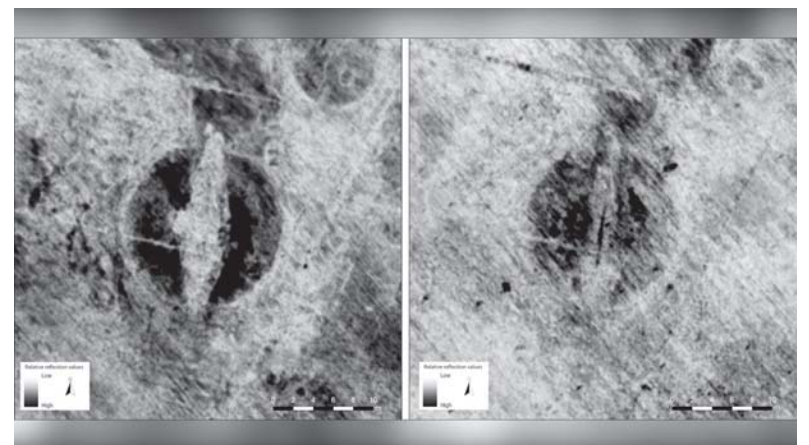
The GPR data showed that the Iron Age vessel measures around

19 meters (62 feet) long, with the ship buried between 0.3 meters to 1.4 meters (0.9 to 4.6 feet) beneath the ground's surface.

"When we're doing these kinds of surveys, it's normally just gray and black and white blobs -- but this data set is so visually striking," said lead author of the study Lars Gustavsen, a researcher at the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research. "We knew that there was something special there, but we had no idea that there was going to be a ship burial, that's pretty unique," he told CNN. After initial tests were conducted, efforts to fully excavate the ship are now underway. Gustavsen said that the mound was previously dug

up in the 19th Century, when a lot of the wooden remains of the ship were burned because people were unaware of what they were, meaning there is not a lot left for researchers to analyze today.

"It's a unique opportunity, it's just a shame that there is so little left of it," he said. "What we have to do is use modern technology and use it very carefully. By doing that, we're hoping that we can capture something from that ship, and be able to say something about what type of ship it was." Researchers found several burial mounds beneath the ground; including the ship, they discovered 13 mounds in total -- with some measuring more than 30 meters (98 feet)



wide. Several buildings were discovered using the radar data, providing an insight into the lives of those who came before. Researchers identified what they believe to be a farmhouse, a cult house and a feasting hall. According to Gustavsen, the land, which dates back to the 5th Century AD, was transformed into an elite "high-

status cemetery and settlement" during the Viking Age. Gustavsen hopes to secure more funding to find out more about the surrounding areas. "By doing a larger survey, we can get a more complete picture of Gjellestad, we could describe or explain why it came about and why it eventually failed or went out of use."

2020 election reveals a Biden, Trump and an American problem

Assuming the Democrats' hard-left agenda remains unpopular, Republicans will make out well in 2022 and perhaps beyond.

It will be difficult for Biden to hold together a tenuous coalition of socialists and traditional liberals. If he fails, the Republican Party will reap the rewards.

You should bet on failure. President-elect Biden may be the most experienced man in U.S. history to win the White House (on paper), but his administration would be a continuation of the Obama presidency. His administration would feature many of the same players, which Americans overwhelmingly rejected in 2016.

The world is also more complicated than it was when Biden checked out four years ago. Crippled by the coronavirus, the U.S. economy is not close to regaining its losses. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have lost their lives, and millions more are experiencing anxiety and fear about the future. At the same time,

the country is more politically divided than ever before, by region and demographically.

Second, the Trump problem: If there is anyone to blame for an impending loss, President Trump should direct his ire at the Washington swamp, which became a hallmark for a losing re-election effort. The Trump apparatus served the president poorly, wasting millions of dollars while failing

to inspire the electoral support that could compete with historic Democratic turnout. Because of super PAC inefficiency, President Trump's winning coalition faced an uphill climb since Biden secured the nomination.

The fact that the Washington swamp even became part of President Trump's coalition in 2020, when it wasn't in

2016, is part of the reason for his failure. Lastly, our American problem: While we may never know if voter fraud played a decisive role in this election cycle, America's electoral system is clearly flawed and fundamentally so. Every legal count vote must be counted and recounted so that America's faith in democracy can be restored.

Electoral reform needs to be swift and comprehensive. The process

should remain localized, but with a more standardized process that is secure and transparent. Whether you're a "winner" or a "loser," remember this: Even if your side got more votes than ever before, there were also more votes than ever against you. The "losers" are still out there and watching you. Congratulations, Mr. President-elect. May you unite an America divided.

The world's most powerful man

of fraud. He may never make a concession speech and will now issue a wave of executive orders to complicate the policy ground for Mr Biden. Mr Trump has a larger purpose: Embed the new administration into a larger narrative of illegitimacy. Mr Trump defied the pollsters and increased his fanatically loyal support base to 48%. He continues to hold his Republican Party by the

scruff of its neck. Mainstream party leaders may be attracted to Mr Biden's call for bipartisan cooperation, but Mr Trump is almost certain to force them to harry and attack the administration at every turn. Over the next several months it may seem like the US presidential campaign never ended. This political civil war will be both beneficial and

disadvantageous to India. A weak administration will have difficulty in widening the door for immigrants. Trade policy may be less vituperative but will not substantially change. Mr Biden will also struggle to fend off the Left wing of his party, many of whom want to belabour New Delhi with a human rights stick. India will hope a Biden administration will do as much about climate change as New Delhi would like.

On the positive side, Mr Trump will also hold Mr Biden to a harder line against China than the President-elect may prefer to take. These are largely about tweaks to ongoing policy streams. Much of the bilateral relationship is not a source of contention. India may even be among the few areas which will be outside any Biden-Trump policy feuds, a comment on how far the two largest democracies have come.

How Nitish Kumar returned to power

the Mahagatbandhan (grand alliance) of the Opposition on one hand, and the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) on the other, unlike the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had to fight only the Opposition.

What is the larger meaning of the NDA's win?

To begin with, Nitish Kumar's return only reiterates that anti-incumbency is not an unbeatable force, provided the incumbent government has performed well during its tenure - irrespective of the length of this tenure.

Competing political parties may have varying ideological orientations to attract voters, but more than anything else, citizens are interested in a rapid-and-inclusive development process. They opt for political change only when that basic agenda is left unserved. Although identity-based mobilisation is a part of Bihar politics, this election was essentially a referendum on Nitish Kumar's government of the last 15 years. The government's record, to be sure, has gaps - especially in the realm of employment generation that affects young citizens most deeply. But its overall performance was ultimately

appreciated, especially for a state that carries a huge historical burden of underdevelopment and is constrained by its poor financial resources.

During the campaign, the NDA focused on the key components of its good governance story, both in terms of the "minimal" function of the government (maintenance of law and order) and the developmental function of the government (economic growth and welfare programmes).

On the law and order front, Nitish Kumar's government convincingly argued that, thanks to its relentless effort, Bihar had come out of the so called jungle raj which characterised the previous regime. The present result indicates that the fear of jungle raj is still deeply embedded in the minds of the electorate. Indeed, once it became known that the Opposition alliance had performed well in the first phase, the NDA planned a conscious counter-mobilisation against the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), using the slogan of jungle raj. To be fair, one must

note that the law and order situation has deteriorated in the last five years, but citizens do realise that it has improved substantially since 2005, when Nitish Kumar started his regime.

On the development front, too, Nitish Kumar has performed more than satisfactorily. The Gross State Domestic Product growth rate in Bihar has not only been high over the last 15 years, but also been one of the highest (above 9%) in the last five years. This is the result of high-development expenditure of the state government, the consequent strengthening of the physical infrastructure, and a conducive environment for economic activities. Infrastructure development has included improvement in both road networks (including rural roads) and the power scenario, appreciated widely even by the chief minister's critics. Along with this process of economic growth, the state government has also implemented a number of welfare programmes, the most recent being those under "Saat Nischay", which

covers, among other measures, the provision of electricity, piped drinking water, approach roads and toilets for all households. This is actually micromanagement of the development process. Unfortunately, the state government has not been equally responsive to the need to improve the educational and health infrastructure of the state.

Besides the issue of development, the people of Bihar, particularly its disadvantaged sections, are also concerned about social justice. Admittedly, it is Lalu Prasad who first gave voice to the subaltern class, but Nitish Kumar consciously carried forward that agenda, sometime at the cost of offending his more socio-economically privileged supporters. He brought the Extreme Backward Classes (EBCs) or Annexure-I castes - they constitute over 30% of the state's population - into the governance and executive structure of the state. For example, for EBCs, he introduced 20% reservation in panchayats and 21% in judiciary. This consistent outreach led to decisive EBC support for the NDA. With an eye on empowering women, Nitish

Kumar introduced 50% reservation for them in panchayats and 35% reservation in government jobs. One should also remember here the historic decision of Nitish Kumar in 2016 regarding prohibition, just after the elections. It did harm the state's finances, but it was more than compensated by the benefit it brought to poor women, often victims of alcoholism of their menfolk. This has clearly drawn a large number of women voters towards the NDA.

In the next five years, the new government will face serious challenges. To meet urgent priorities - such as the creation of employment opportunities, strengthening the education and health sectors and other development needs - the state government has to mobilise additional resources, but here lies a problem. The negative economic impact of Covid-19 has not only meant depletion of the state's resources, but also affected transfers from the Union government. One has to wait and watch to find out how the state government negotiates this difficult path.

NASA's Perseverance rover getting closer to Mars, potentially finding evidence of life

10); and analyzing the Lander Vision System, performed Wednesday.

The next milestone for the mission will start on Nov. 16, when a five-day simulation of surface operations, including driving and collecting samples, is performed.

After that, another update will come on Dec. 18, when "the team plans to perform a trajectory correction maneuver, using the cruise stage's eight thrusters to refine the spacecraft's path toward Mars," NASA added. NASA has posted a real-time look to see where the rover is at any time.

NASA'S PERSEVERANCE ROVER CARRYING 'SPECIAL' HIDDEN MESSAGE TO MARS

The \$2.1 billion rover will also come with the first helicopter, known as Ingenuity, that will let researchers understand the viability and potential of heavier-than-air vehicles on the Red Planet. In August, NASA powered up

the six lithium-ion batteries on Ingenuity.

Once Perseverance lands at the Jezero Crater, it will join the still functioning Curiosity rover and the now-deceased Opportunity rover on the Red Planet.

The mission's duration on the Red Planet's surface is at least one

Martian year or about 687 days. While there, it will perform a number of tasks, including looking for fossilized evidence of extraterrestrial life. NASA's long-term goal is to send a manned mission to Mars in the 2030s.

PERSPECTIVE

The Opposition fails because it's dishonest



The Opposition should step out of the mindset of weaving false narratives, treating different sections of the society as mere vote banks and wake up to an era where every Indian regardless of religion, caste, creed or gender is an equal partner in the nation's progress.

Misinformation, disinformation and outright lies form the staple diet of fake and false narratives. These have, in turn, become the weapon of choice for some of our political parties, otherwise bankrupt of a mission and national purpose. Regrettably, some in our intelligentsia and media participate, perhaps out of choice, only to discover that "a lie can travel half way around the world while truth is tying its shoelaces". Fortunately, truth does get running and ultimately triumphs.

Why do some sections of the media participate in these narratives? Why do pollsters get it so wrong? The elections in Bihar are a testament to the fact that the silent majority prefers development-oriented governance. The National Democratic Alliance's win, despite 15 years of

incumbency, is also a testament to their unwavering trust in Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi. The resounding victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the by-polls is also a reaffirmation of the faith of the people in the PM. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)'s Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's recently recounted how Pakistan army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa was perspiring and his "legs were shaking" when foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said, during a meeting, that if Indian Air Force Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was not released, India would attack Pakistan "at 9 PM". This has destroyed the false narrative created by many leaders in the Indian Opposition. Some politicians questioned the strike and suggested that this was a ploy to win votes. They questioned the valour and professionalism of our armed forces and cast aspersions on the intentions and achievements of the Union government in times of a grave crisis. The people rejected their politics and

punished them. The allegation by the leader of an Opposition party that Indian democracy is being "hollowed out" reflects the deep sense of insecurity and frustration felt by a clique which ruled the nation for decades without any accountability. Even though this party couldn't even touch three figures in the two Lok Sabha elections of 2014 and 2019 elections put together, it leads the narrative on all nationally divisive issues. Before 2014, New Delhi was symptomatic of a culture of "family connections", power brokers and middlemen, who along with senior politicians were running their independent fiefdoms with impunity. Institutions, including even that of the PM's Office, were often reduced to a rubber stamp, subject to the extra-constitutional body of "activists" in a so-called National Advisory Council.

The selective outrage of some of these activists who were caught receiving funds illegally from abroad is not difficult to comprehend. Their partisan interests must not be confused with the legitimate interests of civil society or the Indian people. But to portray legal

actions on these vested interests as an attack on civil liberties is pure humbug, specially coming from a party which has a rich history of suspending civil liberties. The Emergency in 1975 is a case in point. They imposed President's Rule to summarily remove elected state governments over 75 times when they were in power and politicised enforcement agencies to such an extent that the Supreme Court had to refer to the Central Bureau of Investigation during their time as a "caged parrot". Even today, their governance in Maharashtra appears rooted in the brute use of State institutions to attack freedom of the press and speech and further narrow political ends.

Since 2014, the PM has transformed the working culture in the government with zero tolerance of corruption, and cut down of delays and bureaucratic inertia. To present his courage and his impatience with the debilitating status quo as an attack on Indian democracy is both cynical and dishonest. In case of the farm bills, which only implemented long-

pending reforms which were part of their own election manifestoes, the Opposition chose to mislead the farmers by spreading fear and canards while 33 out of their 107 members were not even present in the Upper House when the bills were being debated and voted upon.

They suggested that the Minimum Support Price procurement will be stopped. But in fact, the paddy procurement is up at a national level by over 20% from last year and over ₹3,8000 crore have already been transferred to our farmers. In case of Punjab, the procurement is up from last year by over 26%; we have already exceeded this year's target by 8%; and over ₹29,000 crore have been paid to our farmers.

In the case of China, they surrendered India's position and are now alleging falsehood of surrender. Whether it is the farm bill or the Goods and Services Tax or the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, all these measures were initiated during the time of the Congress government, but it did not have the gumption to implement these painstaking reforms.

Instead of a debate on real issues, unbridled hatred for PM Modi seems to be the cornerstone of Congress politics. The Opposition should step out of the mindset of weaving false narratives, treating different sections of the society as mere vote banks and wake up to an era where every Indian regardless of religion, caste, creed or gender is an equal partner in the nation's progress. A robust and vibrant democracy also requires an Opposition which is truthful and sincere. It is high time that the Opposition steps up.

Biden has won - what happens now?

Five viral vote claims fact-checked



As President Trump continues to dispute the result of the US election, false or misleading posts have been spreading on social media about the vote.

Some have been amplified by President Trump and his team, who have called into question the integrity of the election without providing evidence.

We've checked some of the main claims.

Dead people can't vote: Michigan rumour debunked

Viral tweets alleged that dead people were casting votes in the key state of Michigan, adding to a Trump-led chorus of unproven "voter fraud" claims.

Michigan authorities have hit back, calling the rumours "misinformation" - and noting that votes from dead people are rejected.

The viral tweets supposedly identified people who had cast an absentee ballot despite being born at the turn of the century and having passed away.

One of the men in the posts seems to have been mixed up with his father, now deceased. The men had the same name and address, according to the Politifact website. Local officials in Michigan told the site that the son's ballot was erroneously attributed to the father on the official voting system.

We've seen other isolated cases of allegations of "dead people" voting - most also explained by family members with the same name, or technical hitches, such as voters being instructed to enter a dummy

date of birth if they can't initially find their voter registration record online.

The rumours have been repeated by influential accounts, including those of the president's son Don Jr - who of course also shares a name with his father - and Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage.

No evidence for computer software glitch in Michigan

Posts are being widely shared online suggesting a glitch in the vote counting software used in Michigan led to thousands of ballots cast for Donald Trump being counted for Joe Biden.

The claims have made their way onto the president's Twitter - retweeting Republican Senator Ted Cruz suggesting there could be a problem with the software used across the state. There was a problem in one county where votes were initially incorrectly reported for Mr Biden, which Michigan's Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson said "was quickly identified and corrected". She added the initial mistake was a human error, not a software error.

Viral posts currently circulating claim there could be the same issue in 47 other counties in Michigan where the same software is used.

Mrs Benson said: "There is no evidence this user error occurred elsewhere in the state." "Sharpie" votes still count in Arizona Another widespread rumour emerged during the count in the battleground state of Arizona.

Tweets alleged there was a scheme to discount votes in pro-Republican parts of the state by distributing Sharpie pens - permanent markers - for people to fill in their ballots.

In one widely circulated video, a woman describes how voting machines supposedly can't read ballots marked with this type of pen. The person behind the camera says votes aren't being counted and that people are being forced to use Sharpie pens to skew the vote total. This led to a surge of activity on social media, claims of voter fraud and that large numbers of votes from Trump supporters were being invalidated.

CNN reported that a group of protesters that gathered in Maricopa County in Arizona were "shouting about the sharpie social media misinformation."

But the claims are false.

Maricopa County officials said Sharpies do not invalidate ballots.

The Arizona secretary of state, Katie Hobbs, confirmed on Twitter that if you voted in person "your ballot will be counted, no matter what kind of pen you used (even a Sharpie)!" Ms Hobbs later told CNN "even if the machines can't read them for some reason, a marker bled through to the other side, we have ways to count them. They're going to be counted. There is absolutely no merit to saying that this was

some conspiracy to invalidate Republican ballots." Erroneous Michigan vote map

A map of voting in Michigan from the election night - which shows a sudden increase of around 130,000 votes for Joe Biden, but none for Mr Trump - has gone viral on social media.

President Trump has tweeted the image, which is raising speculation about voter fraud.

It's commonplace that state authorities will add a big chunk of votes to a tally at once. But social media users were questioning why Mr Trump didn't have any votes added to his tally in this particular update. The explanation is simple - it was a data entry error that was later corrected. Decision Desk, the election monitoring website which created the map, said: "It was a simple error from a file created by the state that we ingested... the state noticed the error and produced an updated count."

The spokesperson added: "This sort of thing can happen on election night and we expect other vote tabulators in Michigan experienced this error and corrected in real-time like we did." Twitter has added labels to the tweets that raised suspicions, saying: "Some or all of the content shared in this tweet is disputed and might be misleading about an election or other civic process." Matt Mackowiak, the user whose post was picked up by Mr Trump, has deleted the tweet and apologised - although the image remains widely shared elsewhere. In the early hours of Wednesday, the map was propelled by supporters of the pro-Trump conspiracy theory QAnon and to a wider audience by conservative influencers online. When we contacted Michigan's Bureau of Elections, they said they didn't have a comment on the data discrepancy, but said the results were at this stage "unofficial" and not the final count. Wisconsin did not have more ballots than registered voters There have been widespread false claims that more people in Wisconsin voted than were registered. A user tweeted: "BREAKING: Wisconsin has more votes than people who are registered to vote. Total number of registered voters: 3,129,000. Total number of votes cast: 3,239,920. This is direct evidence of fraud."

Biden has won - what happens now?

Joe Biden has been projected to reach the 270 electoral college votes needed to beat Donald Trump in the race to the White House. What happens now?

The former vice-president does not get to move his furniture into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue straight away - there are a few things that need to happen first.

It's usually a smooth process, but there are extra complications this time due to probable legal challenges to the election.

When does Joe Biden become president?

First the votes need to be certified in each of the states. That's usually a formality and happens in the next few weeks.

It's written in the US Constitution that the new term of office begins on 20 January at noon.

It happens at a ceremony called the inauguration which takes place in the capital, Washington DC. The new president and vice-president take an oath of office administered by the Supreme Court chief justice.

So expect to see Joe Biden and Kamala Harris inaugurated on 20

January 2021. What is the presidential transition?

This is the period between the election result and the start of the new presidential term on 20 January. The incoming president assembles a group called a transition team who prepare to assume power immediately after inauguration - and the Biden team has already set up a transition website.

They will pick people to serve in the cabinet, discuss policy priorities and prepare to govern. Members of the team will go into the federal agencies to get briefed on things like looming deadlines, budgets and which career staff do what.

They will gather all that intelligence for the incoming staff and still make themselves available to help after inauguration. Some of them may stay on to serve.

In 2016, President Barack Obama met his successor Donald Trump and their Oval Office photos conveyed how little warmth there was - and remains - between them.

What has Biden done so far?

Joe Biden has spent months putting together his transition team and raising cash to fund it.

But the General Services Administration, which is tasked with formally recognising the president-elect, and providing the funds and access to federal agencies that his team needs, has so far held off on acknowledging Mr Biden's victory.

Its administrator, Emily Murphy, a Trump appointee, said no "ascertainment" on an election winner had yet been made.

The Biden team is reportedly preparing for legal action if the Trump administration continues to stall the handover.

What words will we hear a lot of?

President-elect: When a candidate wins the election but has yet to be sworn in as the new president on 20 January, this is what they are called. Cabinet: Joe Biden will soon start announcing who he wants in his cabinet, which is the top team at the highest

level of government. It includes heads of all the key departments and agencies.

Confirmation hearing: Many of the top government posts filled by the president require approval from the Senate. The people picked by Mr Biden are interviewed by Senate committees in a hearing, followed by a vote to approve or reject.

Celtic: As president-elect, Mr Biden gets increased protection from the Secret Service and his codename is Celtic. These names are chosen by the candidate. Mr Trump was Mogul and Kamala Harris has reportedly picked Pioneer.

What about legal challenges?

The Trump campaign has promised lawsuits in several states where Mr Biden has won or is narrowly ahead. Mr Trump has alleged fraud but offered no evidence.

What legal challenges is Trump planning?

Efforts to throw out some postal votes would begin in state courts but could end up in the Supreme Court. However, legal experts have suggested the lawsuits are unlikely to succeed in altering the results. There are also expected to be recounts in some states, requested by the Trump campaign, but they

are not expected to change the outcome. What if Trump doesn't concede?

By North America reporter Anthony Zurcher

Donald Trump has previously said he will contest the results. If his efforts to do so are unsuccessful, the pressure on him to publicly admit defeat will mount. But does he have to? The concession phone call from a losing candidate to the victor is a respected tradition of American politics. It is by no means obligatory, however. In 2018, for instance, Democratic governor candidate Stacey Abrams claimed voter fraud and intimidation and never conceded to Brian Kemp, her Republican opponent. That's never happened in a modern presidential race, however. But as in Georgia, as long as election results are legally processed and certified, the machinery of government will grind on, regardless of what Mr Trump may do. While Mr Trump doesn't have to concede, or even put on a good face and attend Mr Biden's inauguration, he does have some legal obligations. He must authorise his administration to make the

Does this compare to 2000 Florida recount?

Hours after polls closed in the US election, as votes were being counted, Donald Trump claimed fraud - without providing evidence - and said: "We'll be going to the US Supreme Court."

To date, the only election that hinged on a US Supreme Court decision was in 2000 when Al Gore was defeated by George W Bush.

So it's tempting to make comparisons between the two elections but they can be misleading.

The 2000 election came down to one state - Florida - where both candidates were separated by only a few hundred votes. By contrast, Donald Trump has filed lawsuits in several states, and the margins with his rival Joe Biden are far greater.

What happened in 2000? In one of the closest and most controversial votes in US history, Democratic Vice-President Al Gore was pitted against the Republican governor of Texas and son of a former US president, George W Bush. Opinion polls had suggested that the race would be close. As the night wore on, it became clear that the result rested on Florida and its 25 votes [now 29] in the electoral college (the system the US uses to elect its president). As ballots were counted, US networks initially called the state for Al Gore. However, they later retracted that, saying that the result was too close to predict. Then, hours later, networks one by one declared that George W Bush had won Florida. However it soon emerged that the vote was on such a knife edge that it was too close to call. The dramatic seesawing of the night was heightened when Mr Gore rang Mr Bush to concede - and then rang him back to retract his concession. Because of the close margin - on election night Mr Bush led by 1,784 votes - an

automatic recount was called under Florida law and began the next day. It reduced the margin to 327 votes. The Gore campaign then requested manual recounts in individual counties, which went ahead amid much legal wrangling.

With the nation's eyes turned on Florida, news networks carried footage of scrutineers examining "hanging chads" - the small pieces of paper created when a hole was punched in a ballot on the voting machines of the time.

When some voters had punched their ballots, the chad had not fully separated from the ballot, making their preference unclear. In other cases, an indentation had been made in the ballot but it had not been punched through, which was known as a pregnant or dimpled chad. The confusion over the chads was discussed at length by the highest lawyers in the land and around every kitchen table.

Some Republican supporters in Florida staged a violent protest in Miami, calling for the recount to be stopped. Although the protesters claimed to be "local", most were later identified as Republican aides from Congress in Washington. The protest became known as the "Brooks Brothers Riot" - a nod to the smart suits and ties worn by those involved.

"Witness History: The 'hanging chads' US election of 2000

The turmoil ended when the US Supreme Court ruled in Bush's favour, saying that the recount would cast "a needless and unjustified cloud" over his legitimate election. The final margin was 537 votes out of a total of almost six million cast in the state. Mr Gore conceded, saying that while he disagreed with the court's decision, he accepted it.

Do postal ballots lead to voting fraud?

President Trump has criticised the expansion of postal voting in the presidential election, claiming it leads to widespread fraud - but what evidence is there? The US is in uncharted territory during the coronavirus pandemic with a record number of Americans having voted by post. Election authorities and the postal service have been put under immense strain processing the millions of extra ballots. This has led to claims the system is unsafe and susceptible to manipulation.

Problems at previous elections? Numerous national and state-level studies have shown that although there have been isolated cases, electoral fraud is very rare.

There have been a few, well-publicised cases, such as in the 2018 North Carolina primary, which was re-run after a consultant for the Republican candidate tampered with voting papers. But the rate of voting fraud overall in the US is less than 0.0009%, according to a 2017 study by the Brennan Center for Justice.

And Federal Election Commission head Ellen Weintraub has said: "There's simply no basis for the

conspiracy theory that voting by mail causes fraud." Let's look at some specific examples where fraud has been claimed this year.

Virginia Speaking at a rally in mid-October, Donald Trump said: "In Virginia, 500,000 applications were made that were false."

And these applications, to apply for an absentee ballot form, were sent out with the wrong return address. But the electoral authorities in Virginia say there was no fraudulent intent and the mistake has been corrected. The Virginia Center for Voter Information (CVI) said: "We worked for weeks to make sure that no Virginia voter was inconvenienced as a result of our printing error."

Ohio President Trump tweeted: "In Ohio, 50,000 ballots were wrong, fraudulent - 50,000."

About 50,000 voters did receive the wrong ballot in the post, in Franklin County, Ohio, in early October.

But there is no evidence this was done fraudulently.

And the local elections board said everyone affected was sent the correct voter slip, with safeguards in place to ensure no one voted twice.

The hangover awaiting Biden: Deep wounds from Covid-19

When President-elect Joe Biden takes office in January, he will face a U.S. economy at a crossroads.

Positive vaccine news presents real hope for healing sectors battered by the coronavirus pandemic. But the nation still faces a dark winter of uncontrolled virus outbreaks that could spur a downward lurch in the economy, compounding the earlier damage. And the prospect of a divided Congress means the new administration may not be able to unleash the kind of sweeping, multitrillion-dollar fiscal stimulus it wants to triage the economy until Covid-19 is either vanquished or brought under control.

It's a circumstance with loud echoes of the Great Recession the Obama administration faced when it first took office - when a giant bank bailout had halted a total financial meltdown, but the recession left longer-run scars that took much of a decade to fade away. This time, Biden and his team are armed with a conviction that the government's response to that crisis was too small. But their ability to go big, at a moment when the economic outlook remains worrisome, may be constrained far earlier for Biden than it was in the first two years of the Obama administration. The environment could force the Biden team to wait for the Federal Reserve to lead the way just as the central bank did in the past decade - an approach that could again make investors richer, but only slowly help the types of workers Biden wants to support most. The Biden win and vaccine news already drove Wall Street to huge gains this week. But the economy is still over 10 million short of the number of jobs from before the epidemic hit. Small businesses that have survived are increasingly worried they may fail this winter without more federal help. "The jobs numbers have been positive over the last few months, but they are slowing and we are only about halfway back," said Beth Ann Bovino, chief U.S. economist at S&P Global Ratings Services. "The glass is really still half empty. Even if we get around \$500 billion in terms of new stimulus, that still wouldn't return the economy to its pre-crisis level until late next year."

Many Republicans maintain the bulk of the work has been done already, following trillions of dollars in relief earlier this year. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and others in his party have indicated the relatively strong October jobs report and other positive indicators mean more big stimulus is no longer needed. Most economists disagree with that assessment but are no longer confident that a large package will get through Congress and to Biden's desk.

"It seems likely that policymakers will be able to find a deal, but expectations are already being reined in," Jim Baird, chief investment officer at Plante Moran Financial Advisors, said in a note to clients. "A divided government will require compromise, which could extend the process of passing a bill, and also reduce its size and scope."

Meanwhile, the new president could feel compelled to back new state and local



lockdowns if virus numbers keep spiking. Those kinds of restrictions tend to disproportionately hit lower-income workers, who have already borne the brunt of the crisis. "It is very clear the pain of the Covid economic hangover is almost entirely felt in the bottom decile of wage earners," said David Bahnsen, managing partner and founder of investment firm The Bahnsen Group. "Advocate for stricter Covid rules with states and local municipalities? Hurt that demographic worse." With the current trajectory of the virus, it could be one of the toughest choices Biden faces in late January. The U.S. just passed 10 million Covid-19 cases with around 240,000 dead. The nation is adding more than 100,000 new cases a day, with Covid-19 hospitalizations also setting new records. Some states are already running out of hospital beds. Others are instituting new restrictions as their infection rates explode. In Texas, the city of El Paso just requested more mobile morgues as virus deaths mount. And while news of a vaccine arriving for the general public in the spring could boost spending, big sectors of the economy remain broken while large swaths of consumers and businesses hobble along with mounting debt. "With the virus still holding back hiring in retail, transportation, accommodation, food services, arts, leisure, recreation, and entertainment, we continue to see a more sideways movement in the labor market," Torsten Slok, chief economist at Apollo Global Management, said in research note. Much of Biden's early economic success will hinge on his ability to get Republicans - assuming they maintain control of the Senate after two Georgia run-off elections - to sign off on another large relief bill.

But hope for a large stimulus under divided government is not especially widespread, this year or next. Many Washington observers believe Biden will only get a smaller amount through a GOP Senate. My base case that I've told clients is we get a skinny stimulus, regardless of any potential outcome," said Tony Fratto, managing partner at Hamilton Place Strategies and a former White House and Treasury official under President George W. Bush.

Joseph Brusuelas, chief economist at consulting firm RSM, expressed optimism that the Biden administration would be able to boost the economy through some legislation early on in his presidency.

Beyond stimulus, he said the government could move on infrastructure, including by establishing an independent infrastructure bank to finance projects, as well as on trade policy.

"We hear one of the first things that is going to be done is to reach out and mend fences with trade partners" other than China, he said. "That's really important. We're all going to need the trade channel to grow our way out of the pandemic-induced recession."

"I think that chances are better than most people think around infrastructure," he added. "Insert joke here - infrastructure week has become a joke in Washington - but administrations in the first few months tend to get their way. This is a place of bipartisan convergence."

But Brusuelas said ultimately the most important factor in the recovery is controlling the latest wave of the virus, pointing to roughly \$4 trillion in economic activity that is still being held back by the health crisis, most of which should come back when the pandemic is over.

Biden should also continue to get significant help on the economy from the Federal Reserve. The central bank is expected to keep interest rates near zero for years and continue snapping up large amounts of U.S. government debt, which will bolster any efforts to increase the deficit to aid the economy. It's weighing new measures that could aid the economy even further.

One outstanding question, though, is whether the Fed will scale back any of its emergency lending programs, with Republicans such as Sen. Pat Toomey (Pa.) calling for those programs to wind down at the end of the year as currently scheduled.

Key debt markets have been working relatively smoothly since the Fed launched an aggressive suite of actions in March and April. But if those markets lose the reassurance that the central bank could step in to help municipal governments or corporate bonds, some jitters could return, particularly if default rates rise.

There is a lot of optimism in markets right now so the end of the facilities might not bring an immediate response," said Julia Coronado, president of MacroPolicy Perspectives. "But if the resurgence of Covid-19 dampens the recovery or the vaccine roll-out runs into

challenges, markets could tighten more aggressively than if the Fed's backstop were in place. We would be losing an insurance policy." Fed Chair Jerome Powell told reporters last week that the central bank and the Treasury Department were "just now turning to that question" of whether to extend the programs and had not made a decision. Meanwhile, Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Mark Warner (D-Va.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) called on the Fed to expand the central bank's programs for state and local governments - which have been slammed by budget cuts due to tumbling tax revenue, forcing widespread job cuts - as well as for small and midsize businesses. "We strongly believe that the Federal Reserve and Treasury should extend these critical facilities and that financial institutions should continue processing applications unabated for as long as these programs remain operational," they wrote in a letter last week.

The aid for small and midsize businesses is especially critical as the winter months descend and outdoor dining and drinking is no longer possible in many big northern states. For the moment there is no more emergency federal loan money flowing to smaller businesses through the Paycheck Protection Program. And uncertainty in the sector is rising.

A recent Goldman Sachs study found that 96 percent of those surveyed said it was critical for Congress to approve more relief. Only 60 percent of small businesses owners who have managed to survive so far said they expect to make through the end of the year, lower than the 68 percent who thought they could make it in the early stages of the epidemic back in April.

The worry is even higher among minority-owned businesses. Among Black business owners, 61 percent in the Goldman survey said they had to forgo paying themselves compared to 52 percent overall. And 49 percent said they had to lay off workers or cut pay compared to 42 percent overall.

The lack of new stimulus, increase in virus cases and fears about more small business damage have led economists to scale back hope for economic growth in the fourth quarter after a strong rebound in the third. The Atlanta Federal Reserve's model now expects growth of 3.5 percent on an annualized basis in the fourth quarter, down from the 33 percent annualized snap back in the second quarter. Even after that third-quarter surge, the economy was left with a hole not far from the one it had in the final year of the 2007-2009 recession.

It's not at all clear Biden is going to get much help from Republicans to try and quickly boost that growth rate. "I don't expect congressional Republicans to give him a grace period, but they should," said Fratto. "There are going to be people saying, 'This economy was roaring back under Trump, but then look at the fourth quarter, when it became clear Biden would win, it stalled.' We know that's not what happened, but that's partisan politics."

What legal challenges is Trump planning?

Democrat Joe Biden has been declared president-elect, but President Donald Trump is challenging the result, alleging electoral fraud. US election officials have said the 2020 election was the "most secure in American history". But the Trump campaign - yet to provide any strong evidence of fraud - is continuing to pursue lawsuits in several key states. Here's what we know so far.

Pennsylvania

Mr Biden is projected to have won here. On 4 November, the Trump campaign filed a lawsuit alleging a lack of access for poll watchers in the state. Poll watchers are people who observe the counting of votes, with the aim of ensuring transparency. They are allowed in most states as long as they are registered before election day. In some areas this year, there were restrictions put in place before election day, in part due to coronavirus. There were also capacity limits set to avoid intimidation. A 20-foot (six-metre) perimeter was set in the Philadelphia counting facility but this was challenged, and a court ruling on 5 November said it should be reduced to six feet - as long as poll watchers stuck to Covid-19 rules. On the same day, the Trump campaign accused election officials of violating the judge's order, and filed a federal lawsuit to stop the count in Philadelphia, which was rejected. Rudy Giuliani, a lawyer for the president, said: "Even when a court order was obtained to allow the Republican inspectors to get six feet closer, they moved the people counting the ballots six further feet away." Election officials insist they behaved properly, and have appealed to the state's Supreme

Court. Another challenge centres on the state's decision to count ballots that were postmarked by election day, but arrived up to three days later. On 6 November, Republicans appealed this, saying that all postal ballots received after election day should be disqualified. Matthew Weil, director of the Bipartisan Policy Research Center's elections project, says: "I do think there is a risk that some of those [postal] ballots that were cast by election day and not received until Friday may be discarded".

Pennsylvania state officials estimate that about 10,000 ballots were received in the three days after election day. They say these ballots are being kept on one side, in the light of on-going legal challenges. Counting of other votes is continuing, with the election tally on 13 November showing Joe Biden more than 60,000 votes ahead of President Trump. Another dispute is over how long voters should be given to provide proof of identification if it was missing or unclear on their postal ballots. The deadline was by 12 November, but the Trump campaign has got this reduced by three days.

Michigan

Mr Trump won the state in 2016 by his slimmest margin - just over 10,700 votes - and Mr Biden has been projected as the winner here in 2020. On 4 November, the Trump campaign filed a lawsuit to stop the count over claims of a lack of access to observe the process. A judge dismissed the lawsuit, saying there was insufficient evidence that oversight procedures weren't being followed. Another lawsuit was filed on 9 November, seeking to block the certification of results in Wayne County,

citing further complaints from poll watchers.

Nevada

The Nevada Republican Party tweeted saying: "Thousands of individuals have been identified who appear to have violated the law by casting ballots after they moved from Nevada." A lawsuit filed on 5 November, alleged "lax procedures for authenticating mail-in ballots and over 3,000 instances of ineligible individuals casting ballots." The president's legal team produced a list of people who it claimed had moved out of state but voted. But - as pointed out by Politifact - the list alone does not prove a violation of law. People who leave the state within 30 days before an election can still vote in Nevada. Students and military personnel from Nevada - living elsewhere - can also vote. The case is focused on voters in Clark County, but the county's registrar has said: "We are not aware of any improper ballots that are being processed."

In a separate case filed on 5 November, Republicans tried to stop the use of a signature verification machine at the count - but their attempt was blocked by a federal judge.

Georgia

A lawsuit was filed in Georgia's Chatham County to pause the count on 4 November, alleging problems with ballot processing. Georgia Republican chairman David Shafer tweeted that party observers saw a woman "mix over 50 ballots into the stack of uncounted absentee ballots". On 5 November, a judge dismissed this lawsuit, saying there was "no evidence" of improper ballot mixing.

Arizona

The Trump campaign filed a lawsuit in Arizona on 7 November, claiming some legal votes were rejected. The case cites declarations by some poll watchers and two voters who claim they had problems with voting machines. The lawsuit is under review, but Arizona's Secretary of State said it was "grasping at straws". Could it reach the Supreme Court? On 4 November, Mr Trump claimed voting fraud - without providing evidence - and said: "We'll be going to the US Supreme Court".

If the election result is challenged, it would usually first require legal teams to challenge it in the state courts - but US attorney general William Barr has allowed federal prosecutors to probe the allegations. State judges would then need to uphold the challenge and order a recount. The Supreme Court could then be asked to weigh in. Prof Briffault says: "There's no standard process for bringing election disputes to the Supreme Court. It's very unusual and it would have to involve a very significant issue." To date, the 2000 election is the only one to be decided by the US Supreme Court. In 2000, Democrat Al Gore lost Florida - and the presidential election - by 537 votes out of a total of almost six million cast in the state. This was followed by a highly controversial recount process that lasted over a month - until the Supreme Court ruled to stop recounting and in favour of Republican George W Bush who became president. **BBC News**

What Trump could do after leaving the White House

Donald Trump will remain in office until 20 January, when he'll hand the job over to his successor and join the exclusive club of former US presidents. So what next for the politician and business mogul?

There's a lucrative speakers' circuit, the penning of a memoir, the planning of a presidential library. Jimmy Carter took up humanitarian causes, and George W Bush a paintbrush. But Mr Trump has never been a traditional politician. "Donald Trump has broken many norms as president," says Tim Calkins, professor of marketing at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. "There's no reason to think that Donald Trump will act like any former president that we've ever seen." Here are some of the possibilities.

He could run again

It may not be the end of Mr Trump's political ambitions - he could always pull a Grover Cleveland and run for a second term. Cleveland is the only president to leave the White House and return four years later, taking on the top job in 1885 and then again in 1893.

The US Constitution stipulates that "no person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice", but there's nothing about terms needing to be consecutive. And former aides have



suggested Mr Trump may seek to do just that. "I would absolutely put him on the shortlist of people who are likely to run in 2024," former chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, recently said. Mr Trump clearly loves campaign rallies and he received 71.5 million votes in the election - a record total for a losing candidate, and one that clearly demonstrates a significant base of support among the American public. "He will leave the presidency with a brand in some ways just as powerful as it was when he came into the presidency," says Prof Calkins. There has also been speculation that the president's eldest son, Donald

Trump Jr, is interested in running for the top job, conjecture he hasn't tried to tamp down.

Get tied up in fighting legal threats

Mr Trump has rarely shied away from a legal fight - and there are a few on the horizon that could keep him occupied once he leaves office. Some investigations into the Trump Organization have already begun, including one in New York State. Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance launched an investigation into the Trump Organization, initially related to claims that hush money payments were made to two women who say they had affairs with Mr

Trump, though recent court filings have suggested the inquiry has broadened. Mr Trump has repeatedly dismissed the probe, calling it a "witch hunt" and it's unclear whether Mr Vance has any evidence to file criminal charges. The president also faces defamation lawsuits related to two cases of alleged sexual assault - both of which Mr Trump has denied - brought forward by two separate women. Mary Trump, the president's niece, has also filed a lawsuit, accusing him and two family members of fraud and conspiracy.

Rescue his business empire

Before he was a politician, Mr Trump was a real estate mogul, a reality television star and his own brand ambassador, using his name for lucrative licensing deals. He may be keen to pick up where he left off four years ago and get back into the world of business. The New York Times has reported that Mr Trump has over \$400m (£300m) in loans coming due over the next few years - though he has said that represents "a tiny percentage" of his net worth. The Trump Organization has numerous hotels and golf courses. There are Trump-branded properties in Mumbai, Istanbul and the Philippines - and of course, Washington, DC - and golf courses in the US, the UK, Dubai and Indonesia.

Inside Donald Trump's 2020 undoing

How Biden prevailed and Trump fell short in an unforgettable election, according to conversations with 75 insiders.

Brad Parscale was on the phone with President Donald Trump and top White House officials in mid-February when someone on the line asked the campaign manager what worried him the most.

Parscale, speaking from his Arlington, Va., apartment, had just told the president how good his internal poll numbers looked. But now he had an urgent message: The coronavirus was a big problem — and it could cost him re-election.

Trump was perplexed. The economy was strong. The president had built an enormous political infrastructure and was raking in hundreds of millions of dollars. That month, Trump's campaign conducted a \$1.1 million polling project showing him leading prospective Democratic challengers even in blue states such as Colorado, New Mexico and New Hampshire.

"Sir, regardless, this is coming. It's the only thing that could take down your presidency," Parscale told the president.

Trump snapped.

"This fucking virus," Trump asked dismissively, according to a person with direct knowledge of the exchange, "what does it have to do with me getting reelected?" That was exactly the attitude Joe Biden expected from the president. And Biden saw his task as unambiguous.

Create a contrast. Follow the scientists whom Trump ignored. Wear a mask, halt public events and reinvent campaigning to avoid putting people in harm's way. When Trump resumed megarallies in the midst of the pandemic — a move the Biden team viewed as reckless and unthinkable — the campaign was stunned by the questions it faced.

"Reporters were asking us why we weren't doing that?" Biden senior adviser Anita Dunn said of Trump's rallies. "Why aren't you traveling more? Aren't you a bad campaign?"

Biden was ridiculed for holing up in his basement. He was second-guessed by pundits and even his own allies. It was evidence of a Democratic Party consumed by paranoia that the reality TV star — seemingly impervious to scandal and immune to the normal



laws of politics — would manage to outmaneuver them once again. This account of the 2020 presidential campaign is based on conversations with more than 75 people in and around both campaigns. It is the story of two candidates with completely divergent views on how the nation would respond to a deadly virus outbreak — and acted accordingly, setting up a stark choice for voters.

Among the findings:

- Communication between the Trump campaign and the Republican National Committee broke down for much of the final stretch, and the two sides clashed over strategy. The RNC thought Trump's ads were of such low quality that it created its own commercials.

- A pro-Trump super PAC took months longer than expected to materialize, prompting anxiety at the highest levels of the president's cash-poor campaign. At one point, former top Trump strategist Steve Bannon was in discussions about helping to steer the group, an idea major donors would have rejected. By the time casino mogul Sheldon Adelson stepped forward to fund it, the president had been swamped by pro-Biden ads.

- Trump offered to cut his campaign a check heading into the final week of the race. His advisers told him it wasn't necessary — the campaign had enough resources. While people close to the president defended the decision, it ensured he would be overwhelmed by Biden on the air as voters headed to the polls.

- Senior campaign and GOP officials vented that Trump's finance team, led by former Fox TV host and Donald Trump Jr. girlfriend Kimberly Guilfoyle,

underperformed and was an HR nightmare. Trump couldn't compete with Biden's small-dollar fundraising machine, and some donors were horrified by what they described as Guilfoyle's lack of professionalism: She frequently joked about her sex life and, at one fundraiser, offered a lap dance to the donor who gave the most money.

- Biden aides clashed over a decision to refrain from door-knocking as part of a field operation, something campaign manager Jen O'Malley Dillon supported, to the disappointment of some staffers who feared they forfeited a major organizing tool to Republicans.

- The Biden campaign spent months pushing back on criticism of its "basement strategy," including from its own party. It would feel vindicated when Biden remained virus-free as infections spread through the White House.

- Democratic Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, whose late-February endorsement of Biden proved to be a transformational moment for his campaign, revealed that he informed Biden advisers months earlier of his decision. But Clyburn resisted pressure from the campaign to go public because he thought it would pack more punch just before the South Carolina primary.

Trump's campaign was dictated by the whims of the candidate — in other words, by instinct and impulse. Like the president's four years in the White House, there was constant disarray and no consistent strategy. Biden's campaign, by contrast, was orderly, disciplined, and leak-proof. But its extreme caution invited mockery — to the point that his basement became a symbol of his candidacy — as well as criticism

for keeping the candidate shielded from public scrutiny.

Ultimately, America would reject the tumult of the Trump presidency after more than 235,000 people died in a pandemic he proved unable or unwilling to contain. Instead, the country chose the model student, Biden, who spent months without leaving his home and whose campaign skipped door-knocking, swore off campaign rallies, and didn't even hold an in-person convention.

Biden would end up garnering more than 74 million votes, more than any presidential candidate in U.S. history. He reclaimed every "Blue Wall" state that Trump had won four years earlier and is on track to flip Georgia and Arizona. And he won on the strength of mail-in ballots, perhaps a sign that many voters didn't mind so much that he was in his basement because they, too, were stuck in their homes.

'Massive disconnect':

Trump's Covid denial

Trump was determined to play down the virus and demonstrate that it wouldn't hold him back. So in the spring he ordered his team to draw up a plan to resume his rally schedule.

President Donald Trump leaves a campaign rally in Rochester, Minnesota in October. | Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Parscale zeroed in on Florida and pitched the president on a few ideas: a drive-in rally in Tampa and an outdoor rally at a pier in Pensacola. Parscale also asked Vice President Mike Pence, who was leading the White House

"There is still a massive disconnect between what the public thinks POTUS is focused on — the economy, Fabrizio wrote, "and what they want him to fo-

cus on — fighting coronavirus." Parscale and Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel pleaded with Trump to stop his daily coronavirus briefings; at one of them the president infamously suggested injecting people with disinfectant to eradicate the disease. Advisers tried to focus the president by sitting him down for messaging briefings with pollsters Fabrizio and John McLaughlin.

Kushner, meanwhile, had been quietly talking to the president about possible personnel changes. On the evening of July 14th, he convened an off-the-books meeting with deputy campaign manager Bill Stepien and the president in the White House Dining Room. Twenty-four hours later, word began leaking out to reporters that Stepien was replacing Parscale as campaign manager. The shakeup underscored the degree of instability in the reelection effort with just a few months until the election. 'Don't be pushing him out': Biden's basement strategy

Biden policy director Stef Feldman remembers monitoring the news with Biden's top advisers, Dunn and Kate Bedingfield, when it became clear that the coronavirus was spreading at a dangerous rate. By March 11, a week after his Super Tuesday romp that put him on track to clinch the nomination, Biden was off the road. His team thought it would only be temporary. The campaign assembled a battery of medical professionals whom Biden peppered with questions as they all plotted their course. As the country shut down to grapple with overflowing hospitals, Biden set up a studio in the basement of his home. The criticism began to roll in. Why was New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo dominating the Democratic response to coronavirus, and not Biden? Some Democrats feared Trump would pull ahead at this moment, using his bully pulpit to drown out Biden. Instead, the president drowned out government scientists and the media at his briefings, and Biden and his campaign stuck to their plan of keeping a low profile.

US election security officials reject Trump's fraud claims



US election security officials reject Trump's fraud claims. US election officials have said the 2020 White House vote was the "most secure in American history", rejecting President Donald Trump's fraud claims. "There is no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes, or was in any way compromised," a committee announced.

They spoke out after Mr Trump claimed without proof that 2.7 million votes for him had been "deleted".

He has yet to concede to the president-elect, Democrat Joe Biden. The result of the 3 November election was projected by all the major US TV networks last weekend. Mr Biden is now projected to have won Arizona, extending his lead by 11 electoral college votes to a total of 290, with Mr Trump on 217. It is the first time the state has voted Democrat since 1996. Mr Trump has launched a flurry of legal challenges in key states and levelled unsubstantiated allegations of widespread electoral fraud.

In another development, a group of more than 150 former national security officials has warned that delaying the transition posed "a serious risk to national security".

In a letter, they urged the General Services Administration - the government agency tasked with beginning the transition process - to officially recognise Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris so that they could access "pressing national security issues". Meanwhile, China has finally extended its congratulations to Mr Biden and Ms Harris after days of silence. "We re-

spect the choice of the American people," a foreign ministry spokesman said. Russia has said it wants to wait for an "official result".

Why is the statement important?

The announcement from US election officials marks the most direct rebuttal from federal and state officials of President Trump's unsubstantiated claims of election fraud.

Thursday's joint statement was released by the Election Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council - which is made up of senior officials from the Department of Homeland Security and the US Election Assistance Commission as well as state-level officials who oversee elections and representatives of the voting machine industry.

"The November 3rd election was the most secure in American history. Right now, across the country, election officials are reviewing and double checking the entire election process prior to finalizing the result," the group said.

"While we know there are many unfounded claims and opportunities for misinformation about the process of our elections, we can assure you we have the utmost confidence in the security and integrity of our elections, and you should too," it added, without naming Mr Trump directly.

"When you have questions, turn to elections officials as trusted voices as they administer elections."

media caption Obama: Claims of election fraud are "delegitimising" democracy

The statement was posted to the website of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

(Cisa), which is part of the Department of Homeland Security. The head of Cisa, Christopher Krebs, has reportedly incurred the White House's displeasure over a Cisa website called Rumor Control, which debunks election misinformation.

Why 2020 is not the same as the 2000 recount

Election results state by state. On Thursday, Mr Krebs shared a post by an election law expert that said: "Please don't retweet wild and baseless claims about voting machines, even if they're made by the president."

Cisa assistant director Bryan Ware stepped down on Thursday. The White House had asked for his resignation earlier this week, Reuters reports. Mr Krebs expects to be fired, the news agency adds.

Hours before the statement was released, Mr Trump tweeted that voting software used in 28 states had deleted millions of votes for him, but presented no evidence for the stunning claim, which appeared to originate from the obscure TV network One America News and was flagged by Twitter.

The claim was linked to the miscounting of votes in one Republican-leaning Michigan county. Unofficial results initially favoured Mr Biden but were later corrected in President Trump's favour. State election officials acknowledged what had happened, saying human error was to blame, rather than a software malfunction.

For Trump's advisers it's business as usual

At the White House, President Trump's advisers discuss his trade policies and act as if he will remain their boss for the next

several years and they will still have jobs on the premises.

One of the president's economic advisers, Peter Navarro, said on Fox Business this morning that they are operating under the assumption that "there will be a second Trump term".

When I saw Navarro recently in front of the West Wing, he seemed equally confident about his future in the building. He refused to answer questions, and he insulted journalists, just as he had always done.

Then he waved vigorously at me as he slipped into the West Wing, a place where he was among friends.

People outside of the White House and in other parts of town say their time is almost over. But for those who are inside the West Wing, it's business as usual.

Are Republicans backing Trump? A small but growing number of Republicans are backing calls for the president-elect to be given daily intelligence briefings.

Senator Lindsey Graham, a key Trump ally, was among those saying Mr Biden should start receiving the secret presidential memo, as is usual with incoming presidents.

Republican Senators Chuck Grassley, John Cornyn and John Thune agreed, although House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy said Mr Biden was "not president right now" and should wait. Between 10 and 20 Republicans in Congress have now either congratulated Mr Biden or accepted there must be moves towards a transition. But most have yet to acknowledge the president-elect's win.

media caption "My message to Republican friends"

A chorus of senior Democrats have condemned this:

Former President Barack Obama said senior Republicans were undermining democracy by going along with President Trump's claims of fraud.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi meanwhile said the "absurd circus" meant the coronavirus pandemic was being neglected.

Senator Chris Coons told CNN some Republicans had been asking him to congratulate Mr Biden on their behalf because they did not feel able to do so publicly.

Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer said Republican politicians were "deliberately casting

doubt on our elections for no other reason but fear of Donald Trump".

Capitol Hill reporters say Republican lawmakers are anxious not to alienate the Trump base, given that the president just won more votes than any incumbent ever, even though he is projected to lose.

Party bigwigs are also said to be hoping that Mr Trump will help campaign for two Senate run-off elections in January in Georgia that will decide whether Republicans retain control of the upper chamber.

Mr Biden is 5.3 million votes ahead of Mr Trump - about 3.4%, and is well beyond the hurdle of 270 electoral college votes required to win the presidency.

Only the states of Georgia and North Carolina have yet to be called. Mr Biden is ahead in Georgia while Mr Trump has a narrow lead in North Carolina.

media caption Tony Blair: 'US democratic system is resilient'

President Trump has kept a low key public profile since the election. Reports suggest he has told friends he wants US election officials reject Trump's fraud claim to start a digital media company to take on the conservative network Fox News, whose full support he now feels to be lacking.

According to CBS News, Mr Trump is also openly discussing a possible 2024 campaign to retake the presidency.

What has Biden been up to?

On Thursday he spoke with Pope Francis, who offered his "blessings and congratulations". Mr Biden will be only the second Roman Catholic president of the US. He also spoke with congressional Democratic leadership about the need for a coronavirus stimulus package as the daily US caseload from the disease soared to a new record of more than 150,000.

media caption A transgender state senator and the youngest congressman are among the new faces making US political history. He spent the day huddled with his transition team in Wilmington, Delaware, where he had been planning cabinet appointments. On Wednesday he picked veteran Democratic operative Ron Klain to be his White House chief of staff.

BBC News

A chance to reset

What a Joe Biden-Kamala Harris administration in the United States presages for India and the world



When Joseph Robinette Biden Jr is sworn in as the 46th president of the United States on January 20, 2021, he will be 78 years of age, already the oldest ever leader to hold that office. He will also have the distinction of winning the highest number of popular votes in the US presidential elections, ahead of even Barack Obama. Not bad for a former vice-president who was regarded as a has-been till he overtook the Democratic party's frontrunners in the primaries to win the nomination. He then went on to win the presidency, defeating incumbent Donald Trump who had scornfully dismissed him as 'Sleepy Joe'.

On the flip side, Biden will be leading a country that is deeply divided and polarised by the vote itself, and along more enduring fault-lines of race, class and geography. This at a time when the global Covid-19 pandemic has hit America the hardest with 9.5 million cases and 234,000 deaths as of November 5. It has already severely diminished the country's economy, rendering over 20 million people jobless, a catastrophe that invites comparison with the Great Depression. Worse, Trump's boast to 'Make America Great Again' has been reduced to 'America Alone'. He quarrelled with America's trusted allies, broke away from treaties and agreements, declined to be the global super-cop and conducted disruptive, tweet-driven diplomacy



that has considerably undermined the status and stature of the world's premier power. And all this while the coronavirus crisis has accelerated the process of de-globalisation the world over, increasing isolation and eroding individual liberties and freedoms.

So, Biden's task for the next four years is pretty much cut out. But is he up to it? And what does his presidency mean for India and the world? Saving Home The answers to these questions lie in the forces that propelled Biden to the presidency. Before the elections, America faced what experts called the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: the pandemic and the physical toll it took on Americans, the steep economic downturn it caused, the deep racial divisions triggered by heavy-handed and often bigoted policing, and the growing sense of social injustice felt across the country. If Biden finally won the US election, it was not because people totally rejected Trump's policies, as the president did win a high percentage of the popular vote. The nation embraced Biden because he seemed to have a better

plan to pull the nation out of its health and economic woes and was regarded as more of a unifying force than Trump to heal some of the deep wounds across the country.

Biden, despite his penchant for and expertise on foreign policy, is likely to spend most of his tenure focusing on solving critical domestic issues. How strong a president he will make may be determined by whether the Democrats

can wrest control of the Senate from the Republicans and retain control of the House of Representatives. If the Republicans retain control of the Senate, it will considerably cramp Biden's style and speed of decision-making. That's because this important wing of the Congress confirms key appointments, including the president's cabinet secretaries and judges of the Supreme Court, apart from ratifying bills and approving treaties. Biden's advantage is that he has been senator for 36 years and has good rapport across the aisles as well as a reputation for securing bipartisan support on key issues. Biden is also seen as more of a restorer than a reformer or transformer.

Michael Krepon, co-founder of the Stimson Center, who had interacted with him when he held office, describes him as "a decent human being, more of a kind uncle rather than a bright shiny object. We know about him, what his limitations are and that he will try his best to do the job". A former Senate foreign relations committee chairman, Biden impressed most wonks with his prescience on key international issues confronting the US. As vice-president, he had pushed for a lighter footprint strategy in Afghanistan. Sameer Lalwani, Krepon's colleague at Stimson, says, "Those involved spoke highly of Biden's decision-making ability and strategic grasp of the big picture. They said it was not just instinctive but came from his deep study of a problem. His dispassionate assessment and his courage to pursue counter-conventional wisdom made him an effective leader."

Now, Biden will have to bring these skills to bear on the crucial domestic issues his country faces. On top of the list is containing the third wave of the pandemic. Unlike Trump, Biden is a passionate advocate of wearing masks and social distancing measures. There are concerns, though, that he may resort to frequent lockdowns to curtail its spread and hurt the economy. To provide better health facilities,

THE RISE OF KAMALA HARRIS

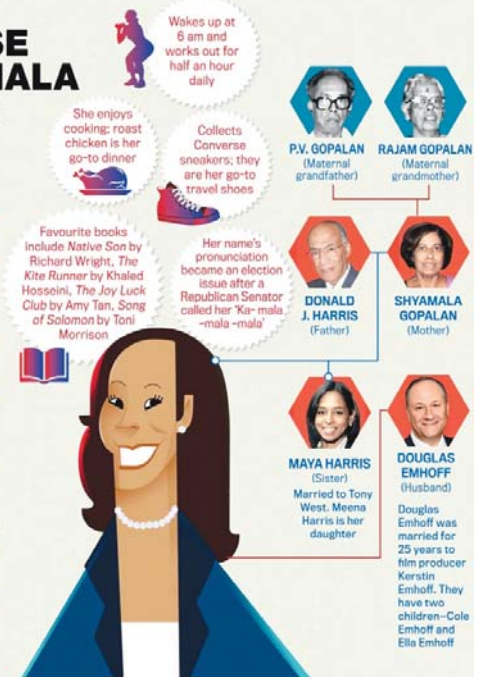
Born to Indian and Jamaican immigrants in California in 1964, Harris grew up in Berkeley but visited her grandparents in Chennai; learnt to wear a sari and even speak some Tamil

Studied politics and economics at Howard University, a historically Black college, and attained a law degree after that

Was California's attorney general from 2011-2017

Became the first Indian American and second African American woman to join the Senate in 2017; will be the first woman to become US vice-president

Harris has advocated for DREAMers (undocumented immigrants who arrived in the US as children), equal pay and abortion rights; faced some pushback for her allegedly overzealous record as California's prosecutor



Biden is likely to restore the Affordable Care Act, better known as Obamacare, which Trump negated while failing to provide an alternative. Biden's plan is to give the elderly better healthcare at lower cost, a move that won him support across an ageing nation where a third of the population is above 60 years of age. For the economy, Biden will focus heavily on improving the state of America's burgeoning middle class, which has emerged as the backbone of the country and is now considered his main support base. Unlike Trump, who favoured a fossil fuel-driven revival of the economy, Biden has boldly pushed for clean technology and promises an energy revolution that will create 10 million jobs, including a massive expansion in infrastructure. For boosting the manufacturing sector, the president-elect is championing a 'Buy American' programme (which sounds suspiciously like Trump's 'America First') that calls for \$400 billion worth of government purchases of US manufactured goods and services and an additional \$300 billion to fund new research and development in key technology areas. To fund his promised

\$700 billion expansion plans for the economy, Biden plans to raise taxes on the super-rich apart from corporate houses. To win over the big constituency of Left-leaning Democrats, Biden has also committed to double the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The Republican-controlled Senate refused to consider voting on such a bill passed by the House of Representatives last year, citing the higher costs it would impose on business. Biden also plans to strengthen labour-friendly laws. Both proposals are designed to attract the votes of the vast band of supporters of Bernie Sanders, a leader of the Democrats' far left, whom he defeated in the primaries.

Return of the Global Boss What is clear is that Biden's domestic economic plans will heavily influence his conduct of foreign policy. He is determined to undo the harm he believes Trump brought to America's international interests. On Biden's first day in office, he "will get on the phone to key allies and say that America is back and America has your back", Brian McKeon, his foreign policy advisor, told CNN in an interview in September.



Why Ganesha and Laxmi are worshipped together?

Worshipping Lord Ganesha and Goddess Laxmi is the on the eve of Diwali is the most important thing that no one can miss. People often wonder why both of them are worshipped together on the auspicious day of Diwali.

Well, it is for the reason that the festival of Diwali is celebrated to bring in prosperity in the family in all the spheres of life. It is considered that Goddess Laxmi is considered as the deity of wealth and Lord Ganesha is considered as the emblem of knowledge and intelligence. On this festival of lights, people wish to bring bright light in every sphere of their life. So, Lord Ganesha and Goddess Laxmi

are worshipped together to summon prosperity that is acquired with knowledge and intelligence.

Laxmi & Ganesha are worshipped together on Diwali. We all know that, everything gets to start on an auspicious node only if it starts by worshipping Lord Ganesha. Therefore, starting life afresh on an auspicious node on the day of Diwali, worshipping Lord Ganesha is obvious. It is believed that worshipping Ganesha removes all the obstacles on the way and makes it smoother to carry on the task.

On the other hand, Goddess Laxmi is worshipped with so much conviction and reverence

worshipped together only on the day of Diwali?

Let's explain it by illustrating with this story related to the same:

The Story behind worshipping Lord Ganesha and Laxmi together on the day of Diwali:

The story goes like, once there was a conversation between Goddess Laxmi and Lord Vishnu and the Goddess of wealth seemed very much arrogant for her power to bestow everyone with affluence and prosperity. The scriptures explain that she grew so very much big-headed about herself that Lord Vishnu had to think for a way to let her be generous even if she is powerful.

She got into a fierce conversation

of self-praise and started thinking that she is the wealthiest of all and she is the one who bestows upon all the wealth to people. Lord Vishnu did not find it good enough for her to be so much self-centred. As a result of this, her husband Lord Vishnu decided to find a way to make her realise her mistake.

Lord Vishnu, in a very benevolent tone said that, it does not matter if a woman has all the wealth; she is incomplete if she does not have the blessing of a child. Since, Goddess Laxmi does not have a child, this pinched her very much. He said that, is only the happiness of bearing a child that completes a woman and wealth does not play any role in that. This made Goddess Laxmi very disappointed!

She thought of going to Goddess Parvati, with a heavy heart, to get help from her. She asked Parvati to let her adopt one of her children. But, Goddess Parvati was not willing to give any of her children because she knew that, Laxmi does remains in a stable form at one place. This will make her child to suffer as Laxmi would not be able to take proper care of the child. Upon this, Goddess Lakshmi gave her the

assurance that in every possible way she will try to take proper care of the child and give him all the happiness possible.

This convinced Goddess Parvati and taking cognisance of the pain of Goddess Laxmi, she allowed her to adopt Ganesha as her son. On this, Goddess Laxmi became so very much ecstatic and promised that she will take all the care of Ganesha and whosoever will worship Goddess Laxmi have to worship Ganesha first. Wealth cannot be acquired without acquiring knowledge and intelligence. And, people will not be able to get the blessing of Goddess Lakshmi without worshipping Lord Ganesha.

And, this is the reason that Goddess Laxmi is always worshipped with Lord Ganesha! It has been established that without acquiring the adequate knowledge and intelligence to spend, wealth will only be useless. You can only be able to make most the wealth that you have acquired by any means if you have adequate intelligence to spend that wealth intelligently. So, we should never forget to worship Ganesha before the Laxmi Pujan at the time of Diwali.

10 FABULOUS FACTS ABOUT DIWALI!



It's time for vibrant colours, eye-popping fireworks, twinkling lights and delicious food! Ready? Then check out our ten facts about Diwali...

When was Diwali 2020?

The exact dates change each year but this year, Diwali 2020 falls on Saturday 14 November 2020.

Facts about Diwali

1) Diwali is an important religious festival originating in India. People often think of Diwali as a Hindu festival, but it is also

celebrated by Sikhs and Jains.* 2) Diwali takes place annually and lasts for five days, marking the start of the Hindu New Year. The exact dates change each year and are determined by the position of the moon – but it usually falls between October and November.

3) The word Diwali (or Deepavali as it's sometimes called) means "row of lights" in an Ancient language of India, called Sanskrit. During this festival, people decorate their homes with lights

and oil lamps, called diya.

4) For many people, Diwali honours the Hindu goddess of wealth, Lakshmi. The lights and lamps are said to help Lakshmi find her way into peoples' homes, bringing prosperity in the year to come!

5) It's also a celebration of good triumphing over evil, and different legends based on this theme are associated with Diwali. In northern India, Hindus celebrate the return of the deities (gods) Rama and Sita to the city of

Ayodhya, after defeating the evil king Ravana!

6) In the region of Bengal people worship the goddess Kali, the destroyer of evil forces, during Diwali. And in Nepal (a country bordering north-east India), people celebrate Lord Krishna's victory over the wicked king Narakaasura.

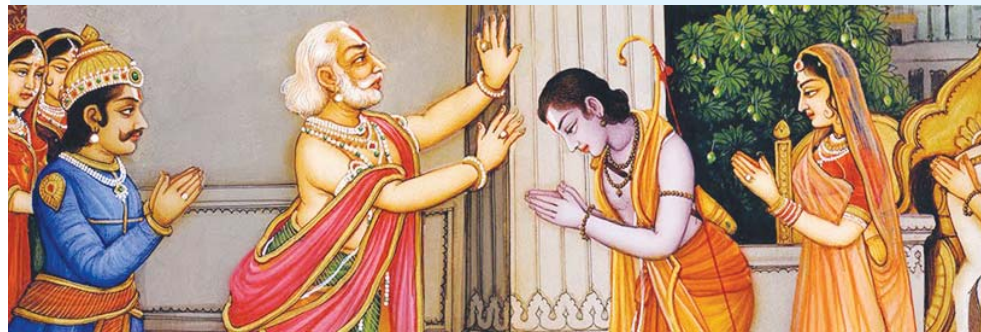
7) But it's not just about lights and legends — Diwali is a time to have fun with friends and family! People exchange gifts and sweets, enjoy delicious

feasts, watch firework displays and wear new clothes. It's a time to clean and decorate your home, too.

8) Rangoli is a popular Diwali tradition — beautiful patterns made using colourful powders and flowers. People draw rangoli on the floor by the entrance of their homes to welcome the gods and bring good luck!

9) Today, this fascinating festival is celebrated by thousands of people in countries all around the world. During Diwali, Hindus living outside India gather at places of worship called mandirs to leave offerings to deities, watch firework displays and eat yummy food together!

10) The city of Leicester, in the United Kingdom, holds the largest Diwali celebrations outside of India. Every year, tens of thousands of people gather in the streets to enjoy vibrant shows of light, music and dancing!



Diwali 2020 is approaching soon for a grand celebration among the Indians. It is the biggest Indian festival that celebrates the triumph of good over bad. Therefore now when Diwali 2020 festival celebration is round the corner, preparations for this biggest Indian festival is easily noticeable everywhere. In India, Diwali is undoubtedly the festival of lots of excitement, happiness, positivity and celebration of good over bad. It is a 5 days long festival in which friends, family and love ones gather together for a cheerful celebration of decorate home and illuminate home to eradicate darkness from everywhere as Diwali is

celebrated on 'Amavasya' which is no moon day. It heralds the dawn of a New Year as per the Indian Hindu calendar.

Diwali signifies different meanings for its grand celebration in India. It is the day of celebrating Lord Ram's victory over devil King Raavan. Also Diwali is the auspicious day for Lakshmi Ganesha Puja. So there is lot that signifies the cheerful festival of Diwali such as:

The Tale of Ramayan:

It is said that Diwali is celebrated on the account of Lord Rama's win and return to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile. In fact lighting and decorating of home is done actually to signify welcome of Lord Rama. The tale of Ramayan depicts all in detail.

Laxmi Ganesh Puja:

Like the importance of Ramayana in the celebration of Diwali, Laxmi Ganesh Puja is also of great importance on Diwali. It is been believed by the people of India that worshipping goddess Laxmi and lord Ganesh on Diwali is the way of respecting God and getting blessed with healthy, wealthy, happy and prosperous life.

Tradition Diyas:

The thing that best signifies the festival of lights, Diwali is Traditional Diya. In fact the most important part of Diwali celebration is lighting traditional earthen diyas at home and everywhere around. Thus when Diwali is round the corner, the one thing that is on high demand is beautifully carved Diyas. These

days, a lot new varieties Of Diwali Diyas have into the market.

Colorful Rangoli:

Another very beautiful symbol of Diwali festival celebration is Rangoli. It is the name for the beautiful and colorful decoration of floors done with colored powder. Diwali Rangoli is in fact the traditional symbol of Diwali which excel with creativity.

Delectable Sweets:

Like any other festival, sweets sharing with near and dear ones is an important ritual of the celebration of Diwali. Thus many days prior to Diwali celebration, amazing varieties of Diwali Special sweets is available everywhere around. In fact in the range of Diwali gifts, sweets are much preferred option. Just like Diwali

Messages, Diwali sweets are shared by all among near and dear ones.

The Ritual of Sharing Gifts:

On Diwali, the ritual that spreads happiness, love and cheerful moments around is the ritual of gifting which is of great significance among the people of India during Diwali. Just like every other important Diwali custom, the ritual of Diwali gifts sharing is of great importance among all. It is the way of strengthening the bond of love with near and dear ones, sharing happiness and love. In fact on Diwali, Corporate companies distribute Diwali gifts to staff. Diwali is one of the cheerful festival celebrations of Indians. So celebrate it with utmost zeal and with utmost safety with family and friends.



Here's Everything that Makes it a Special Celebration!



Diwali is a festival that fills our life with colours! With onset of the month of Diwali, whole of the India gets completely involved in the celebratory mode. The preparations kick start very earlier and people begin getting involved in making plans for the same.

India is often called as the country with chain of festivals and Diwali is the most enchanting of them all. Lights, crackers, delicious food, new clothes, Laxmi Pujan everything fills the surrounding of every household with galore of brightness.

And, it's fascinating to discover the plethora of fascinating things that makes this day a special celebration. We are here on the spree of explaining the various

aspects of Diwali celebration and the things that bring about charm in the celebration. Read below to find....

1. Lights & Diyas

Lights and Diyas are the most significant ingredients of Diwali celebration. Lighting all through the home brings a special kind of happiness and joy in our life. It's such an incredible feeling when the entire family gets involved in lighting up Diyas all around the home. This brightness has indeed something inexplicably amazing that is hard to explain in words.

2. Laxmi-Ganesha Pujan

It is believed in the Hindu mythology that Laxmi is the Goddess of prosperity and is worshipped with absolute faith on the day of Diwali. In fact

Laxmi and Ganesha are worshipped together in every household with Laddu, flowers, reciting Aarti and every related thing. This spiritual act is performed to bring about happiness and prosperity in every household.

3. Delicious Food

And, here's the alluring part of the celebration when the entire family sits together, giggles together, laughs and eats together that big fat Diwali dinner. In every household delicious food is cooked and especially every household cooks sweets of different varieties. Puri, Kheer, Gujia, and Namkeen are some of the common items that are cooked in every home.

4. New Clothes

And, who does not like wearing

new and beautiful clothes? Indeed everyone does! After kitchen related work, everyone in the family gets ready in new clothes and then everyone performs Ganesha-Laxmi Pujan and lights up Diyas in the entire home. This brings about a magical energy in everyone around.

5. Rangoli Making

Rangoli making is an important part of Diwali celebration! This not only is done to decorate the home but it is believed in the Hindu mythology that Rangoli brings about happiness and merriment in the surrounding. Most offices also organize for Rangoli making competition for fun!

6. Exchanging Gifts

Gifts are an integral part of any

celebration, but when it's about Diwali exchanging gifts cannot be avoided. People present enchanting gifts to their loved ones, colleagues, family members, friends, spouse, children and everyone. And, even if someone is away people send gifts online to make sure that no one feels alone on this festival of lights. So, these are some of the very fascinating ways of celebrating Diwali that makes this occasion a special one. All these rituals, along with burning crackers are fills the day with happiness and joy all through. The entire process of celebration makes it feel that there isn't anything to worry, and all is well in your world. On Diwali 2020, do everything that makes you happy; it's the beauty of life!

What is the Significance of Lighting Diyas on the day Diwali?

Deepawali is an exceptionally popular Hindu festival of India which is celebrated by the people of the Hindu community. The festival is celebrated every year either in the month of November or October. Deepawali 2020 will be celebrated on 14th of November.

The significance of Diyas at the time of Diwali is reflected in the fact that the word Deepawali has itself been formed from the word Deep and it means a row of glittering lamps. That makes us even more curious to find out about the extraordinary importance of lighting Diyas on Diwali.

Lights and Deepawali

Each and every household gets decorated with colourful and lovely lights on Diwali! From oils lamps to vibrant electric lights and candles, people never miss on a single chance to make their homes a glowing and lighting place. Traditionally, people celebrate the festival by lighting

earthen lamps with cotton wicks. Though, in most parts of the country the tradition of earthen lamps has gradually faded away but it still the concept of lights remains unchanged.

People often are eager to find out on how and why the concept of Diyas came for celebrating Deepawali. Let's get a clear view on what is the importance of lighting Diyas on the day of Diwali.

An earthen lamp or Diya is synonymous to the festivity of Diwali. Diyas decorate every nook

and cranny of the home and make it look as bright as the stars in the sky. To add to the spirit of Deepawali celebration delicious recipes are prepared and people wear new clothes. Legend of Lighting Diyas on Deepawali

The festival of Diwali is celebrated to summon more and

more love and prosperity in the house. In a way it also celebrates the triumph of the good over the evil. In Northern India it is celebrated as on this day, the

who had abducted Sita. This battle itself signifies the victory of good over the evil.

Other than that, there is much more to the lighting of Diyas. It

is a customary practice in the Hindu community according to which people light diya in their homes every evening. This not only is a customary practice but it signifies the surrender of one's soul to the almighty.

What Does the Oil in Diyas Represent?

The oil that is used to light the Diyas

represents all the negative human traits and that includes hatred, jealousy, greed, lust, anger and many more. And, the wick represents our inner self, the soul! The lighting of Diyas symbolises that we need our beautiful mind to clear from these negative things by enlightening our inner self. With the

disappearing oil of the Diyas, these negativities from the home get disappeared.

It has a hidden message that enlightening occurs only when we walk on the path of righteousness as Lord Rama did.

What Does Diya Symbolises?

A Diya is symbolic of knowledge! A person who is ignorant will often keep himself in a dark consignment. He will keep in touch with the positivity of the surrounding only when he realises to get access to the knowledge all around that he will understand the need to celebrate his existence.

A Diya symbolises that flame of knowledge will remove ignorance!!

And, a Diya not merely signifies the light that it spreads in the homes but in essence it signifies the one and only way to merge our souls with that of the God. It shows us the path of gaining knowledge and enlightening ourselves.



Diwali celebrations 2020: Scope of Diwali celebrations and how it has changed due to Covid-19 pandemic



One of the popularly celebrated festivals in India, Diwali is around the corner and this year the celebrations are not likely to be grand and exquisite. All celebrations have been muted this year in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. The usual meetings with relatives and friends to exchange gifts, huge

melas, bursting crackers- everything which is associated with Diwali and used to take place till last year will not happen this year.

Physical distancing in place: Since Coronavirus transmission fear is far from over, all physical distancing norms are in place. Last month, the government had

released guidelines for the festive season where it urged people to follow all COVID-19 guidelines and avoid crowding. Melas and other activities that will lead to crowding will be avoided and are strictly prohibited in the containment zones. Many haats like Hunar Haat that are being organised

around this time will now take place online. The ministry of minority affairs that backs the Hunar Haat, has started registering artisans as well as their indigenous products on GeM (Government e-Marketplace). This will allow people to explore and purchase products without actually visiting haat/ melas. Apart from this, people are avoiding going to their friends/ relatives houses to exchange Diwali gifts. Rather, the trend of e-gifts has emerged. E-commerce giants like Amazon have prepared Diwali gifts so people can send it directly to others. Companies like ITC have come up with gifting options for Diwali. ITC Hotels is giving gift cards and hampers. These services are expected to reduce physical contact between people and maintain the festive spirit.

Eco-friendly measures: Keeping in view the current situation of pandemic and increasing air pollution, many states are not in favour of burning crackers. In the National Capital, the use of

firecrackers has been banned. Following the decision of Delhi government, NGT today has also said that there will be no sales of firecrackers in Delhi starting today (November 9) till November 30. The decision has come as the air quality in the city falls into an extremely bad category. Neighbouring state Haryana has given permission to burn crackers for only a few hours on Diwali nights.

Similarly, other states in India have come up with their own norms for bursting crackers. It is to note that the crackers used are expected to be green crackers only that will contribute less in polluting air.

In addition to this, people are now inclined towards purchase of eco-friendly earthen pots and diyas. On Diwali, everyone lights diyas at their homes and surroundings. As there is not much to do this festive season, purchasing diyas and lighting it up remains an activity that has brought cheer among people. In Tripura, diyas are now being made from bamboo sticks.

'For Indian-Americans, Diwali came early': Celebrations erupt as Biden-Harris win 2020 US election

After days of waiting for results to trickle in from battleground states, New York City erupted in celebrations on Saturday after Joe Biden was announced as the winner of the US presidential elections by numerous media outlets – and congratulated by heads of state around the world, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

From the subway to the streets, people were cheering, banging pots and pans, waving flags, and singing songs. Scroll.in visited Columbus Circle, one of New York City's busiest traffic intersections which also happens to be opposite the luxury Trump International Hotel New York. For once, there were no complaints about traffic jams as cars and buses honked and celebrated with people on the streets while passing by.

"It's a big relief, we're really upset four years ago, and now we're crying tears of joy," said Nehal Siddiqui, a native New Yorker who, with her husband

Shehzad Siddiqui, had brought their two children to participate in the celebrations.

The celebrations are a reaction to the election results finally being declared by America's major news networks, days after voting ended, and amidst a backdrop of potential unrest with incumbent President Donald Trump continuing to insist that he had won and that Biden's victory was fraudulent.

Despite those claims, Biden – who is on track to win 4 million more votes than the incumbent did nationally, and to potentially pull in 306 votes in the electoral college, compared to Trump's 232 – has begun preparations to take over on January 20, as is customary.

Alongside him on the day will be Vice President Kamala Harris, the first woman to occupy the post. Harris is also the first woman of Black and Indian-American heritage to win a position in the White House and, with the 78-year-old Biden having suggested that he will only be in

power for one term, would be the front-runner to compete for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2024.

"She just broke so many barriers," says Anusha Kumar, an Indian-American PhD scholar at the City College of New York. "I was truly feeling hopeless that I may not be able to change anything, or that our immigrant communities might not be able to incite change. But Kamala Harris changes that... I feel powerful and I'm sure Kamala does too."

What does Kamala Harris mean to Nehal Siddiqui, who had brought her children to Columbus Circle? "A role model," she said, pointing her daughter in her pram. Kenny, a traffic policeman, was dancing with people on the street at every signal change. "As a lifelong New Yorker, he's the worst thing to happen to us," he told Scroll.in, referring to former President Donald Trump, whose hometown is New York. "He's gone, and we're celebrating!" The end of Trump's tenure, which



was filled with rhetoric that was often openly racist and anti-immigrant, may not signal the end of the politics that he embodied. Results show that Trump received millions more in votes compared to his 2016 total, and ran a far tighter race than polls had suggested. Moreover, Democrats did not capture the Senate as expected, which will be an obstacle for Biden's progressive agenda.

For many, those concerns and fears are very real – but don't need to come in the way of celebrations.

"It feels like our country has won independence," said Mohit Agarwal, a New York City resident, who was dancing to loud music in the street near Columbus Circle. "It's a brighter future for diversity, equality and inclusion – a brighter future for my daughters to look forward to." Shivani Mehta, a public health professional, did touch upon her hopes for what the new administration would signify.

"I'm very relieved that we got Trump out, but I hope that we use this energy to push for progressive change," she said.

The meaning of the American mandate

Biden's core challenge will be to heal the broken cultural, economic and democratic compact, all of which was reflected in the election

Elections are complex. Voting choices are dictated by a range of factors. And to read meaning into a mandate when an election throws up a situation where the challenger has won but not won as decisively as he would have hoped, and the incumbent has lost, but neither lost as resoundingly as expected nor acknowledged his loss.

Yet, despite the uncertainty, in what was probably the most consequential election in the recent history of the United States (US), key political, social and economic trends have become more apparent. And this matters because what happens within the US has such a profound impact on the rest of the world. There are three takeaways from the polling and the likely result.

One, US capitalism is in crisis and inter-class relations are broken. Over the past century and more, the economic model in the country has evolved - from a rather laissez faire climate to, broadly speaking, a system which also took into account the question of

welfare. The combination of entrepreneurial energy, a State-backed military-industrial complex, geopolitical dominance, a reasonable degree of employment creation, elements of social security, and a fierce commitment to individual rights and scepticism of the State worked in ensuring a certain kind of class compact.

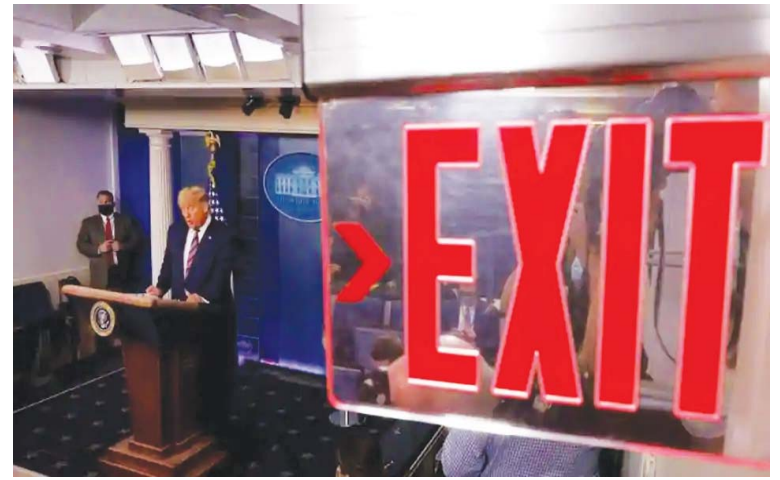
But the weak regulatory environment of the last three decades, trading arrangements which eroded employment in key sectors in the US (while benefiting its industry and consumers in many other ways), the shock of the 2008 financial crisis, the obvious structures of inequality even as basic services became more expensive, and the emergence of a political and economic elite - seen in conjunction with each other and seemingly disconnected from the rest of the country - broke the class compact in the country sharply.

It is deeply ironical that it was the Left - both in the US and globally

- which alerted us to the dangers of this economic model and its rising inequities, but it has been the Right - once again, both in the US and elsewhere - which has ended up benefiting from the emerging class wars of the 21st century. Despite being at the forefront of precisely the economic model that led to the disenchantment and anger, it is these forces which have become the voice of that disenchantment and anger. Donald Trump has been able to tap this resentment. And while 2016 provided an early indication of this, 2020 has provided evidence that this anger is here to stay.

Two, the cultural compact in the US is broken. Make no mistake. The country has been home to one of the most oppressive forms of identity-based discrimination ever witnessed anywhere in the world.

Race competes with caste in how an entire people have been systematically humiliated over centuries. But the US, substantively only after the civil



rights movement in the last five decades, has made efforts to create a more inclusive society. It has also prided itself on being a nation of immigrants, a melting pot of cultures, where specific and distinct forms of cultural and religious identity of individuals can coexist within a larger framework of constitutional patriotism.

But both race relations and broader ethnic relations are turbulent today. For those who believe in racial justice, the continued hegemony of White Americans across spheres, and the embedded discriminatory attitudes within law enforcement, which often result in the victimisation and killing of Blacks, is a matter of distress. But large sections of White America,

falsely, associate African-Americans with crime, conjure up the threat to order and peace, and rally around a leader who promises them security publicly but, in effect, dominance. There is also the discomfort with immigrants, with bigots systematically stoking fears about how outsiders steal opportunities, drain resources, and then even control politics. The proliferation of fake news, enabled by big tech platforms, allows this narrative to deepen.

This resentment, or to put it bluntly, bigotry has manifested itself in support for Trump - and is a partial explanation for why he has still got the votes he did despite his staggering incompetence.

A provisional conflict

China has been coaxing Pakistan to fully incorporate GB as a province in order to secure its \$60 billion (around Rs 4.48 lakh crore) investment in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through the region.

On November 1, Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan, while in Gilgit amid an election campaign there, announced: "Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) will be given provisional provincial status." Khan, though, did not indicate any time-frame. It was in September that his government's minister for Kashmir affairs and GB, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, had given indications of such a move. Yet, in an interview to an Indian platform in October, Moeed W. Yusuf, special assistant to the Pakistan PM on national security, had stated categorically that no such decision was being considered.

For over 70 years, Pakistan had kept GB out of its constitutional jurisdiction to ensure that its people voted in favour of Pakistan whenever a plebiscite mandated

by the UN is held. Why then is Islamabad contemplating changing the status quo of GB and making it a provisional province now?

Several factors have possibly dictated the timing. China has been coaxing Pakistan to fully incorporate GB as a province in order to secure its \$60 billion (around Rs 4.48 lakh crore) investment in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through the region. Pakistan is not in a position to resist such pressure. For one thing, it will be seeking a rollover of a \$3 billion (around Rs 22,400 crore) Chinese trade finance facility that it has actually used to repay maturing debt. If China does not extend the facility when it expires, Pakistan may find it extremely difficult to return the

sum, especially when its other benefactors, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are estranged.

The timing could also be dictated by the need to demonstrate to India an effective response to the events of August 5, 2019, when Jammu and Kashmir's special status was withdrawn. It could also be aimed at influencing the elections to the GB legislative assembly scheduled for November 15. Finally, it could be a tactic to divert attention from Pakistan's burgeoning domestic problems.

There are, however, several aspects to changing the status of GB. It will require delinking the region from the J&K issue, this will violate UN resolutions on J&K. So, Pakistan could well end up jeopardising its position on



J&K. There are also several pronouncements of the superior judiciary that GB is a part of J&K; these will stand violated if Pakistan makes GB its fifth province, even provisionally. Pakistan is trying to deflect such impediments by calling the decision a provisional arrangement, pending a final resolution of the J&K issue.

The decision is unlikely to be acceptable to the so-called Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) region since GB is considered to be a part of it. As it is, protests broke out in early October in Muzaffarabad, the capital of AJK, against any such decision. The president of AJK, too, has gone on

record opposing it. Several constitutional amendments, requiring two-thirds majority in both houses of Pakistan's parliament, will be needed to effect the change. It will require the support of the opposition given how the numbers stack up in parliament. The opposition, which has held a series of protests to remove Khan's government, may not extend such cooperation. To smoothen the process, Pakistan's army chief had to intervene since Khan, out of arrogance, refuses to engage with the opposition. In mid-September, the army chief held a meeting with leaders of political parties to build consensus on granting provisional provincial status to GB.



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Diwali



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What Planet Is AOC On ?

Left and center agree on something: Democratic leaders don't have a clue.

The crossfire between the Democratic Party's left and moderate wings, each blaming the other for the party's flaccid performance in congressional races, has been diverting enough that it has obscured a striking point of commonality. Both sides have similar descriptions of Democratic leadership on Capitol Hill - arrogant, bereft of creativity, generationally obsolete.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, in an interview with The New York Times, accused her party's leaders of losing elections by relying on "magical thinking" rather than grappling with changing power dynamics, and by being "blinded [by] anti-activist sentiment." Rep. Conor Lamb, a centrist who won reelection to his swing district in Pennsylvania, told the Times that "when push comes to shove the younger members who have come from these really tough districts and tough races don't always feel that the leadership takes our input as seriously as we would like." In a post-election report,

meanwhile, a coalition of influential progressive groups accused party leadership of "unforced errors" in the campaign and of recruiting "has-beens and cookie-cutter candidates" in the Senate. "We need a new generation of leadership grounded in a multiracial, working class experience and background," the report concluded.

Well, not yet. For now, the Democrats will rely on President-elect Joe Biden, who will turn 78 in eight days, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, who will turn 70 three days after that and 80-year-old House Speaker Nancy Pelosi,

to summon their decades of collective wisdom to try to prod 78-year-old Mitch McConnell into abandoning his usual strategy of remorseless obstructionism. Generational change will have to wait.

For the moment, it is not obvious that the younger generation of Democrats has more compelling ideas than their elders about the party's basic strategic problem.

Moderate Democrats are eager for an ambitious expansion of government's role in addressing health care and climate change. Democrats on the left are eager for something more ambitious still. Neither side has a credible answer to the central problem: The party does not have



sufficient power for half a loaf, never mind a full.

Ocasio-Cortez, on some occasions, counts as one of the party's freshest and most appealing new voices. Her sour interview Saturday with the Times' Astead W. Herndon was not one of these occasions. She said moderate lawmakers who blamed the left for losing their seats or having uncomfortably

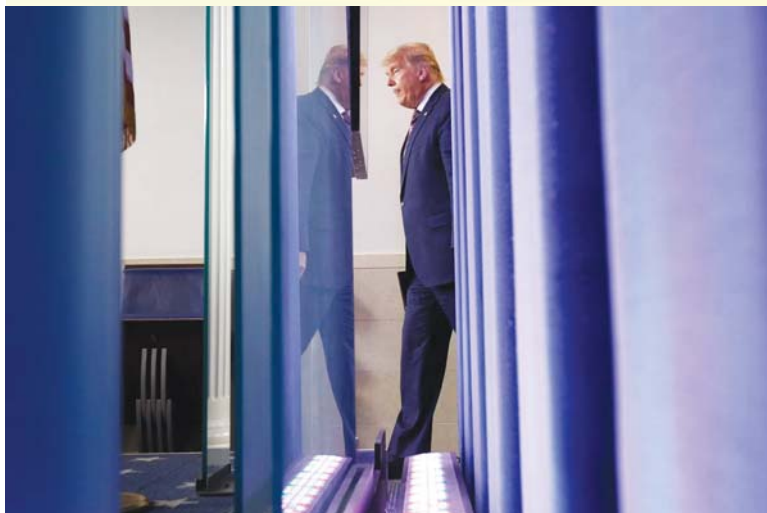
close calls have only themselves to blame for being "sitting ducks." She plausibly asserted that she knows a lot more than most members about effective use of social media. She implausibly suggested that if more members had used Facebook effectively, and accepted her help when she was practically begging to give it, the Democrats could have avoided the losses which leave Pelosi clinging to a narrow majority. "Every single [member] that rejected my help is losing," she complained, "and now they're blaming us for the loss." She gets so frustrated by the lack of support from fellow Democrats, she said, that she considered not running for reelection.

Self-referential commentary is hardly unusual for a politician of any stripe or any generation. More striking about AOC's interview was that she sounded less like a political visionary and

more like a campaign operative, boasting for reporters at some hotel bar as last call nears. This from the primary sponsor of the Green New Deal? This is the transformative future of the Democratic Party? In its own way the interview was emblematic of Democrats' larger post-2020 challenge. It was often said that this election was about "mobilization" - stimulating turnout among people whose minds are made up - rather than "persuasion," growing the pool of potential supporters through arguments to people whose minds are open. True enough. There has never been a better mobilization politician, or one whose style left fewer open minds in his wake, than Donald Trump. But 2020 showed the limits of mobilization politics. There is a near-term problem, and a long-term one. In the moment, the things that a candidate or party do to mobilize their side, even or especially when successful, typically also motivate the other side.

Two Ideas for Trump's Exit Strategy

It's rare for American politicians to refuse to go gracefully, but some have tried it before before. Here's how it went down.



Suppose you're President Donald Trump, slowly coming to grips with the likelihood that the election hasn't gone your way and that whatever your advisers are telling you about legal strategies-you have lost the White House. What do you say and do to acknowledge that fact? For most defeated

candidates, there's a rich history of gracious, even moving concession speeches. He could draw from John McCain, who spoke of the historic significance of the election of the first Black president, and give a nod to the first woman of color in the vice presidency. He could call for unity in the face of a close, disputed

election as Al Gore did in 2000. He could follow the path of the candidate he defeated in 2016. ("Donald Trump is going to be our president," Hillary Clinton said. "We owe him an open mind and the chance to lead.") He could display a sense of humor, and quote Lincoln's story about a man being ridden out of town on a rail ("If it wasn't for the honor of the thing, I'd rather walk") or Dick Tuck's assertion after losing a California state Senate seat in 1966: "the people have spoken-the bastards!"

He's unlikely to do any of these things. This is Donald Trump we're talking about. Given everything we know about his character and temperament, there are really only two examples from American politics that would appeal to him. One

was an incumbent who refused to leave the office and ended up an odd footnote in the history of his state. The other was Richard Nixon. First, he could just try to stay put. OK, the idea of a President Trump physically holed up in the Oval Office on January 20, 2021, is (almost surely) more likely to be a "Saturday Night Live" sketch than a real dilemma for the Secret Service. But in fact there is an example from our political history of just such a standoff; not in Washington, but in Atlanta. In 1946, Eugene Talmadge won the Democratic gubernatorial primary-back then, the only real contest in Georgia that mattered. He was also deathly ill; so much so that his allies, fearing he would soon die, produced enough write-in votes for his son Herman (several cast by

deceased citizens) that Herman Talmadge wound up in second place in the November election. The state Constitution gave the Legislature the power to fill a vacancy by choosing the second-place finisher, and when Eugene died in January, shortly before the inauguration, that vacancy opened up. The problem was that Georgia had also created the new position of lieutenant governor but hadn't bothered to clarify what would happen if the governor-elect died before the inauguration. Both Herman Talmadge and newly elected Lt. Gov. Melvin Thompson claimed the governorship. And just to make things more interesting, the outgoing term-limited Governor Ellis Arnall said he wasn't going anywhere until his successor was legitimately certified.

'Harris Has the Potential To Change the Face of U.S. Politics'

What difference will Kamala Harris actually make when she takes office? From justice reform to immigration, 25 experts lay out the concrete impact a pioneering vice president could have.

When Kamala Harris takes the oath of office on January 20, 2021, more than one ceiling will shatter: America will have its first female vice president, as well as its first Black and South Asian-American vice president. She will be second in line for the most powerful office in the world.

Once the presidential election was called for Joe Biden on Saturday, social media-and streets-erupted with enthusiasm from people who were even more thrilled about his running mate. These are Americans who now see new doors open for their daughters, their immigrant families, themselves.

The symbolic importance of Harris' ascent in the centuries-long story of America is undeniable. But just as important is what she could mean in concrete terms for the country that just elected her. The vice presidency carries powers both formal and implicit, and a President Biden is expected to delegate a significant portfolio to

the former prosecutor and senator who sits beside him, giving her a chance to shape policy as well as that sense of political possibility. POLITICO MAGAZINE invited a group of political observers, analysts, thinkers and cultural figures to project just why-and how-Harris is likely to change things for America in the job. Some of our experts highlighted her deep record on criminal justice reform, paired with her knowledge of how it affects Black communities; others pointed out that she arrives with a personal grasp of immigration dynamics that gives her a unique angle on one of the country's most contentious issues. And in politics, symbolism can be substance: The very fact of a woman of color occupying that office transforms the perception of donors, political kingmakers and the young women who will, someday, be on the ticket themselves. Their responses are below. 'She will be a perpetual reminder not to neglect the forgotten base' Tera

W. Hunter is a professor of history and African-American studies at Princeton University. When Vice President-elect Kamala Harris walks into Cabinet meetings and other important rooms, what will she bring with her as the second most powerful public voice in the nation?

There is a long legacy of Black women being unwavering advocates for expanding democratic rights for all Americans, going back centuries-long before mainstream political institutions embraced us. In 1948, Charlotta Bass, a newspaper publisher and editor from Harris' home state of California, had been a Republican for over 30 years. She left the party out of sheer frustration at not being able to find support for a racially and gender-inclusive agenda and joined the newly formed Progressive Party. Bass became the vice presidential nominee on the party's ticket in 1952, the first Black woman to be nominated by any national party. Twenty years later, Congresswoman Shirley



Chisholm of New York broke another barrier as a Democrat by becoming the first Black woman to run for president on a major party ticket. She was anti-racist, anti-sexist, pro-choice, pro-labor, anti-war, fiercely independent, and above all principled. But neither major political party has been eager to embrace women like Bass and Chisholm as legitimate constituents and agents, despite Black women's fierce dedication and loyalty to them. As the first Black and South Asian-American and the first female vice president, Harris will carry the weight of her ancestors into the second-highest public office in the land. This is a position of enormous privilege

and power. It offers an unprecedented opportunity to push our country closer to justice and equality for marginalized communities, and for all Americans. The expectations will be high even as we know the opposition to her, especially as a Black woman leader, will be hostile from some quarters. She is poised to be a pivotal player in international and domestic affairs, thanks to her service on the Homeland Security, Intelligence, and Judiciary committees. She can help direct big issues like criminal justice reform, voting rights protections, health care and wage growth for teachers and other workers, as the second most influential voice in the rooms she is in.

How Life-Sized Joe Biden Could Be a Larger-Than-Life President



Joe Biden did not quicken many pulses during his long march to the presidency. It was Donald Trump's job to supply the energy to Biden's campaign, just a shade more than he supplied to his own. Democrats last March, after months of fidgety comparison shopping, made Biden the guess-he'll-do nominee. In November, it seems evident to everyone but Trump the general electorate has

made Biden the fine-let's-give-him-a-try president. Now that his lifetime ambition has been achieved, the question is whether the former vice president can vault above adequacy to something more momentous: Can Joe Biden be a great president? Yes. He has a pathway to do so, one that would reflect the experience and values of a lifetime (he turns 78 in two weeks) and a half-century

in the public arena. But an understanding of Biden's pathway to greatness starts with an understanding of the usual pathways that are not open to him. There is no objective definition, of course, of presidential greatness. But there is a reasonable consensus among students of the office about what it generally involves. It is a presidency whose influence outlasts the occupant's tenure-changing the way people view the office, and, more importantly, changing the way people view the country. 2For nearly a century, since Franklin D. Roosevelt created the modern presidency-in which the executive branch dominates the federal government and the occupant of the Oval Office dominates national consciousness-there have been certain signatures of the most consequential presidents. FDR before he took office was dismissed as "an amiable boy scout" by Walter Lippmann, the

preeminent columnist of the day, but once there he achieved greatness by combining a capacious new vision of government's power to help ordinary Americans with a radiant personal presence. One has to squint hard to imagine Biden projecting that kind of outsize aura. John F. Kennedy used good looks, a natural wit, eloquent speeches and the new medium of television to change expectations again. The modern presidency was now supposed to fuse power with glamour and grace. Biden's fit-but-aging frame and sentences that sometimes wander into banality and sometimes wander nowhere at all do not make the JFK model promising for him. Ronald Reagan, of course, was a polished presence, but his outsize presidency was achieved through something else: A body of conservative ideas that he had spent decades

evangelizing for, and which echoed for at least a couple decades after he left the presidency. Biden spent 36 years in the Senate known as an energetic progressive legislator. But his ideas were practical and tailored to the moment, not the product of an ideological innovator. Biden's path to greatness, by contrast, depends on him making a virtue of the things he is not-and harnessing what he genuinely is to a larger governing strategy. Great presidents have an assignment from history. The lack of charisma as conventionally defined, the lack of intense ideological fixations-the lack of egotistical monomania as possessed by many presidents and preeminently by the current one-could be signal advantages for Biden with his historic assignment: To drain American politics of its malice and addiction to conspiracy theory and restore confidence that public life can work in some approximately normal way.



New Zealand's Chatham Islands might be the only place in the world experiencing overtourism right now

The coronavirus pandemic has decimated the travel industry, as hotels, restaurants and airlines in destinations around the world find themselves going broke or dramatically cutting back costs as they try to survive.

But there's one place on the planet where there are too many tourists right now: the Chatham Islands.

Haven't heard of them? It's okay; you're not the only one.

The remote Pacific Ocean archipelago near the international date line is technically part of New Zealand. And as New Zealand's borders remain mostly closed and locals are advised to not travel overseas at this time, the Chathams -- about 500 miles east of the country's South Island -- have become 2020's hottest getaway for Kiwis. Moving to the top of the list - In a typical year, the Chathams -- whose two main populated islands are Chatham Island and Pitt Island -- get about 2,000 tourists. That compares to about 700 full-time residents, most of whom live on Chatham Island, the largest of the archipelago.

But 2020 is no typical year. The Chathams' remoteness usually makes it a part of the country that New Zealanders never get around to visiting. Now, that remoteness is an

advantage, with travel-starved Kiwis turning to the islands as a way to feel like they're on a far-off holiday without having to quarantine or take a Covid test. "It happened quite quickly," Jackie Gurden, the islands' tourism manager, explains about the tourism spike in the Chathams. "It's a bit more expensive to get out here so you don't get young people looking for a cheap holiday, and there are no beach resorts or anything." But once the pandemic kept international borders closed, Tourism New Zealand -- the country's official national tourism board -- had to pivot from marketing their country to foreign tourists to encouraging domestic travel. That suddenly made the usually-sleepy Chathams a hot commodity. Demand, though, is far outstripping supply. Gurden

estimates that there are 150 beds on the islands in a mix of hotels, lodges, guesthouses and local residences that list themselves on sites like Airbnb. Most property is privately owned, and camping is forbidden.

The only airline serving the archipelago is Air Chathams, which operates just a handful of flights per week between Chatham Island and what the locals refer to as "the mainland." (Side note: most Kiwis only mean the South Island when they say "mainland," but to Chathamites both the North and South Islands fall under this category.)

Normally, tourism season lasts from about November to March, which is summer in the southern hemisphere. But now, all on-island accommodation is booked solid through June 2021. Even

Gurden, who lives on New Zealand's North Island, isn't sure she'll be able to find a place to crash when she next visits.

What to do there

In the past, most visitors to the Chathams were older travelers looking for a quiet place to get away from it all. Prices can be high, as much food and fuel for has to be shipped from mainland New Zealand. But once you're able to get there, the beautiful scenery is worth the trip. Pitt Island is believed to be the first inhabited place in the world to see the sun rise every day. The Chathams were the easternmost sliver of the Gondwanaland supercontinent, meaning it has a fascinating range of terrains, including basalt columns a la the Giant's Causeway and volcanic cones. The islands are also home to some of the world's rarest

birds, plus there's a large -- and adorable -- seal colony.

Where do we go from here?

Before she was the islands' tourism manager, Gurden was asked to work on a consulting project for the future of the hospitality industry there -- although no one could have guessed just how soon some of those initiatives would be tested. Luckily, some of those projects included the islands' tourism website and official brochure, which landed in the hands of would-be visitors just in time.

In some ways, an uptick in tourism is a major plus for the islands, where most people work in the farming or fishing industries and the absence of a high school sends students off to Christchurch in their teens.

The islands also got a grant from the New Zealand government to help with infrastructure projects, like public toilet facilities and updates at the airport. Even without a pandemic, 2020 was shaping up to be the Chathams' time to shine.

"It's not about driving growth, it's about managing growth," Gurden explains. "There's a need for growth in tourism to create jobs for young people. Young islanders can actually have a future on the island."

That said, she cautions would-be visitors to respect the delicate ecosystem and small-town feel that makes the Chathams so special in the first place. "There is a resistance on the island to tourists coming into their space," she says. "Tourism is about coming and taking but we made sure there's a way to give back." That means tour companies give \$25 per traveler to the Chathams, which uses the money to pay for projects that benefit locals, such as the construction of a swimming pool.



Laxmii movie review:

Akshay Kumar is intense, but he can't salvage a soulless film

Laxmii movie review: Despite Akshay Kumar's dependably strong performance, Raghava Lawrence's remake is neither particularly funny nor very scary. It's passable, and somewhat problematic entertainment.

Laxmii
Director - Raghava Lawrence
Cast - Akshay Kumar, Kiara Advani

A remake of Tamil film Kanchana (2011) directed by Raghava Lawrence, Laxmii stars Akshay Kumar and Kiara Advani in the lead roles and is directed by Lawrence himself. Attempting a remake of your own film can be a really daunting task, and full marks to the director for taking this risk, but sadly, he hasn't been able to recreate the magic of his original. It's rare for lightning to strike twice, anyway.

Given the Band of Babbar, the film had been generating, mostly around Kumar's transgender character, Laxmii had set a high benchmark. Was it crossed? Not entirely. Or maybe not as successfully as you would have liked. And with an actor of Akshay's calibre, the film should've been a lot better.

Laxmii starts with Asif (Kumar) trying to eradicate the superstitions around ghosts, by

offering scientific explanations for 'supernatural' events. But later, when this logical man eventually gives in to one such situation himself, you're left confused, and even worse, the story doesn't even establish what makes him change his stance so drastically. That's where the film starts to lose its plot. It makes you ask yourself what the film is trying to say. Is it telling us to not believe in superstitions or is it reinstating them? There's a lack of consistency to the characters and the plot.

There are also several in-your-face, Pankaj Tripathi roll the dice in years. Razaan Mishra, and her brother, played by Manu Rishi Chadha, add a tinge of wit and humour. Stealing the show in a 20-minute cameo is Sharad Kelkar. The second half does pick up when the tone shifts to revenge drama. But again, to attract attention, the violence is made to look excessively gory. Even the antagonist and the plot around him turns out to be quite dull.

leading to a lot of family comedy, reminding you of Kumar's Bhool Bhulaiyaa -- although this time around, the humour is stale, and at most places, forced.

The film has no business calling itself a horror-comedy. Neither is it particularly funny, nor is it all that scary. Lawrence might as well have called it a drama. Talking of comedy, it's of such poor quality that you crave for some genuine laughs. As a matter of fact, the expressions of supporting characters, including Advani's sister-in-law played by Ashwini Kalsekar; her mother, played by Ayesha Razvi, and her brother, played by Manu Rishi Chadha, add a tinge of wit and humour. Stealing the show in a 20-minute cameo is Sharad Kelkar.

The second half does pick up when the tone shifts to revenge drama. But again, to attract attention, the violence is made to look excessively gory. Even the antagonist and the plot around him turns out to be quite dull.

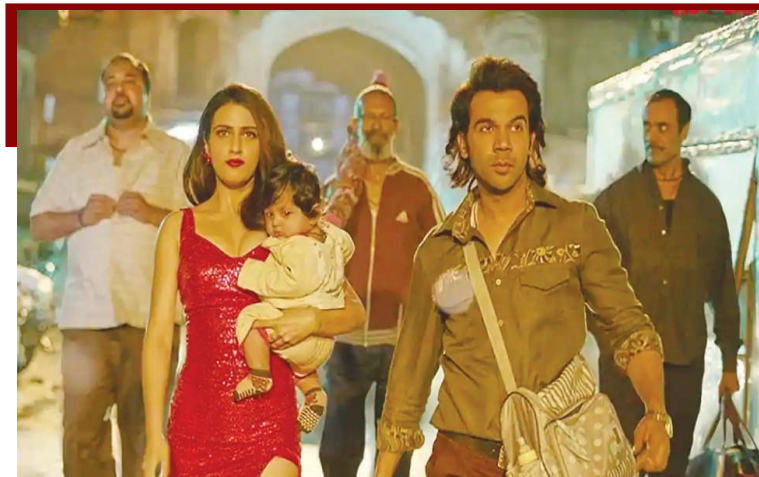


There's very little evidence to support the film's claims of being empowering to the trans community, other than maybe a few scenes where we see a transgender woman giving a speech up on the stage and sharing her plight. Though even that, to an extent, looked superficial. The last 40-minutes, however, somewhat make up for the shortcomings. Kumar's intense moves and the comfort with which he plays such an unusual character is commendable. Though his performance isn't enough to salvage the film. In terms of performances, while Kumar is in full form and dependably strong,

the portions in which he plays the transgender character are more impactful than his regular self. He's quite convincing as a trans person, especially when the story highlights the neglect that the community has faced. But the film rushes through these scenes, without allowing the audience time to connect. Advani looks gorgeous on screen and supports Kumar's character pretty well, without ever going overboard. She's particularly stunning in the Burj Khalifa song-and-dance number. Talking of the music, it's quite rare for an Akshay Kumar film to go wrong, but Laxmii doesn't really impress in this department.

Ludo movie review:

Abhishek Bachchan, Rajkummar Rao, Pankaj Tripathi roll the dice in an absurd, whimsical world



Ludo movie review: Anurag Basu brings to life an absurd world in his dark comedy, on Netflix. With Abhishek Bachchan, Rajkummar Rao, Pankaj Tripathi, Fatima Sana Shaikh, Sanya Malhotra and Aditya Roy Kapur in the cast, it delivers on its premise.

Ludo
Cast: Abhishek Bachchan, Aditya Roy Kapur, Rajkummar Rao, Pankaj Tripathi, Rohit Saraf, Fatima Sana Sheikh, Sanya Malhotra, Pearle Maaney, Inayat Verma, Asha Negi and Shalini Vats
Director: Anurag Basu
Ludo begins on a prophetic note. The local don of the area, Sattu (played by Pankaj Tripathi), celebrates a not-so-clean kill by singing along to Bhagwan Dada's

song, O Beta Ji, from perhaps the biggest hit of his career, Albela. The actor, whose dance steps reportedly inspired Amitabh Bachchan early in his career, found immense fame and wealth after the film - a 25-room sea-facing bungalow in Juhu, Mumbai, and a fleet of fancy cars. And then, as it happens in life and tragedies, he lost it all. The man who lived so lavishly spent his last days in a dingy chawl, doing bit roles in films,

forsaken by his famous friends. Anurag Basu uses the song many times in Ludo, to underline how fate is a cruel mistress. With word and in spirit, the song becomes a part of the metaphor that Ludo is intended to be. It is a strange metaphor to pick when your story is weighing good and evil, and cause and effect while throwing chaos theory in the mix by way of mythology. Yes, Basu is overreaching, which is perhaps his best and worst quality as a director. The befuddling but zany Jagga Jasoos is a case in point - few films are as polarising as that musical about a boy detective.

Ludo, despite its missteps, keeps it breezy, with its cast helping it to stay the course. With Pankaj Tripathi, Rajkummar Rao,

Abhishek Bachchan, Shalini Vatsa, Fatima Sana Shaikh, Sanya Malhotra and Aditya Roy Kapur, it takes some time to set its world, and reveal the connections.

Ludo explores the idea how our lives form a skein of action and reaction, often a random act defining our course. Keeping with the Ludo metaphor, all characters signify the four colours of the game with Pankaj's character playing the dice, or the catalyst. Just as the flap of a butterfly's wing can produce a typhoon half a world away, a murder by Sattu sets into motion a series of actions that will jeopardize the lives of several characters.

Sattu, the don of Ranchi, kills the local builder after delivering a crispy line about 'making a fres

start'. He kidnaps the sole eyewitness, a diffident mall employee (Rohit Saraf). On the way to his den, he also threatens the ex-wife (Asha Negi) of his former right-hand man Bittu (Abhishek Bachchan), who has just been released from jail.

Sanya Malhotra's character comes to meet a rich doctor as a prospective bridegroom, and finds Dr Akash Chauhan (Aditya Roy Kapur), who has a doctorate in Mongolian architecture and drops jokes about cows and capitalism as a part-time ventriloquist. Their tryst finds itself on a porn website with the dhoti-and-leather-jacket wearing Sattu as their only hope. Pinky's (played by Fatima Sana Shaikh) life has also been irretrievably changed after the incidents of that night.

Diljit and Fatima dance their heart out in Ladki Dramebaaz Hai song from Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari



The new song from Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari, Ladki Dramebaaz Hai, has been released by the makers. It features Fatima Sana Shaikh and Diljit Dosanjh. The actors are seen dancing their heart out in this peppy number. Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari stars Diljit Dosanjh, Fatima Sana Shaikh and Manoj Bajpayee in lead roles. Annu Kapoor, Manoj Pahwa, Supriya Pilgaonkar, Nehha Pendse, Abhishek Banerjee, and Vanshikha Sharma, among others will be seen in supporting roles.

DILJIT AND FATIMA LOOK RAVISHING IN NEW SONG

Ladki Dramebaaz Hai is a party number picturised on Diljit Dosanjh and Fatima Sana Shaikh. While the beats are peppy, the song serves the same dish on a new platter. There is nothing innovative in the new song. However, Diljit and Fatima's chemistry is refreshing. The song has been composed by Javed-Mohsin, while Mohsin Shaikh, Jyotica Tangri, Mellow D and Aishwarya Bhandari have lent their voices for the song. Danish Sabri has penned the lyrics.

WHAT DID MANOJ BAJPAYEE WRITE ABOUT THE SONG?

Manoj Bajpayee, who plays a private detective in Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari, took to social media to release the new song. Fatima Sana Shaikh is playing his sister

in the film. Sharing the song, Manoj wrote, "Sanskaar bhi, sassy bhi. Full-



on dhamaal hai. Get ready for her, yeh #LadkiDramebaazHai (sic)."

WHEN IS SURAJ PE MANGAL BHARI

RELEASING? - Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari is releasing in theatres after Diwali. Cinegoers can watch the film on big screens from November 15. Directed by Abhishek Sharma, the film is about Suraj Singh Dhillon, who is looking for a bride for himself. Manoj Bajpayee plays the role of detective Madhu Mangal Rane, who is hired to check the backgrounds of the groom and bride and their families before an arrangement of marriage is made. The film is expected to be a laugh riot as it sees Manoj Bajpayee and Diljit Dosanjh's characters at loggerheads. Ahead of the release of Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari, its songs are creating waves. The audience are loving the songs of the film that were released earlier. This is the first time Diljit Dosanjh will be seen romancing Fatima Sana Shaikh.

Actor Arjun Rampal to appear before NCB after being summoned in drug-related case

Actor Arjun Rampal has been summoned by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Wednesday in connection with a drug-related case. The summons were issued to the actor after the agency conducted raids at his premises on Monday. Rampal's girlfriend Gabriella Demetriades has also been summoned by the NCB to appear before it on November 11, reported news agency



ANI. The NCB carried out searches at Rampal's residence a day after arresting film producer Firoz Nadiadwala's wife Shabana Saeed. The sleuths of the agency had allegedly recovered 10 gm ganja at Nadiadwala's residence in suburban Juhu. It seized some electronic gadgets during raids at Rampal's house. The NCB has already questioned the 47-year-old actor's driver.

Hannibal star Mads Mikkelsen in early talks to replace Johnny Depp as Gellert Grindelwald in Fantastic Beasts 3

Danish star Mads Mikkelsen, known for films Casino Royale and Doctor Strange, is in early negotiations to play the dark wizard Gellert Grindelwald in Fantastic Beasts 3 after Johnny Depp's exit from the fantasy film series. Last week, Depp revealed that he will no longer play Grindelwald in the Warner Bros' franchise after he lost his libel case relating to abuse allegations by former wife, actor Amber Heard against a UK newspaper.

The studio had also confirmed that Depp's role will be recast before the film opens in theatres. The third film spin-off in JK Rowling's Harry Potter universe, which shut down shooting in March due to the coronavirus pandemic, is currently in production in the UK. A source close to the production told Variety, Depp had shot just one scene as Grindelwald before leaving the film, so Mikkelsen would not need to replicate much footage.

Mikkelsen is known for playing memorable

antagonists like Le Chiffre, a banker to terrorist organisations in Casino Royale, which was Daniel Craig's first outing as the iconic British spy James Bond, supervillain Kaecilius opposite Benedict Cumberbatch's Doctor Strange and the cannibalistic serial killer Dr Hannibal Lecter in the NBC series Hannibal.

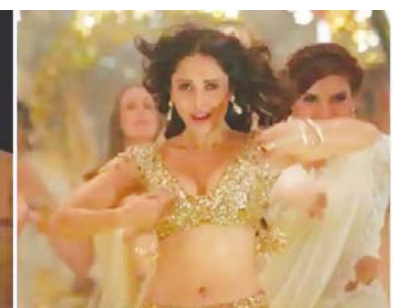
If the deal is finalised, the actor will join franchise stars Eddie Redmayne, Katherine Waterston, Jude Law, Dan Fogler, Alison Sudol and Ezra Miller. David Yates is directing the film from a screenplay by Rowling and Steve Kloves. Rowling, Kloves, David Heyman, and Lionel Wigram are producing.

Depp first played Grindelwald in 2016's Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them, taking over from Colin Farrell in the final scene. He reprised the part in 2018's Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald and was set to start shooting for the third part next year.

Fantastic Beasts 3 is currently scheduled to be released on July 15, 2022.



Vishal-Shekhar distance themselves from Deedar De remix



Music composer duo of Vishal-Shekhar distanced itself from the Deedar De remix that features in Hansal Mehta's Chhalaang, starring Rajkummar Rao and Nushratt Bharuccha. Vishal Dadlani and Shekhar Ravjiani said that they have been credited for the song as they composed the original track that featured in Anubhav Sinha's Dus. However, they conveyed their best wishes to the team. Taking to Twitter, Vishal wrote, "We have been very kindly credited here, only because we composed the

original #DeedarDe in 2004. However, we haven't done this 'remix'. That said, best wishes to the film and team. Thanks for loving our music down the years. #VishalAndShekhar @ShekharRavjiani." Shekhar also posted the same message from his account. When a fan suggested that the trend of remixing popular songs should be banned, Vishal agreed. "As we are in the era of ban and boycotting things. Can we please ban 'remix of 90's song' or remix of any song."



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Issue 37

Friday 14 November to 21 November 2020

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2020 election reveals a Biden, Trump and an American problem

(SAI Bureau)- Historically speaking, defeated presidents and presidential candidates get off the stage to make way for the next generation of American leaders. Alas, 2020 is an exception to the rule: President Trump has not waved the white flag of surrender, nor is defeat in the DNA of his most ardent supporters. Setting up a re-election campaign immediately after Inauguration Day, President Trump bucked political norms. It was unprecedented, blurring the lines between governing and campaigning. Unfortunately for him, that campaign will officially end if and when Joe Biden is inaugurated in January. Due to legal challenges and recounts, the 2020 election is not over yet, but a Biden inauguration remains more likely than not.

As a believer in American democracy, I love this country. My thoughts and prayers go out to the next president,

whether it is a Democrat or a Republican. That is the American way.

No matter the outcome of the legal challenges and recounts, the 2020 election still exposed three major problems: A Trump problem, a Biden problem, and an American one. First, the Democrats' problem: A presumed Biden victory has helped mask considerable problems within the leftist coalition. The hard-left shift by the Party played poorly



in swing states, hence that's why the Republican Party is slated to retain its Senate majority and pick up House seats.

Republicans also flipped the governor's mansion in Montana and both legislative houses in New Hampshire, meaning that they will enter 2021 with control over most state governments.

(Contd on page 30)

How Nitish Kumar returned to power



(SAI Bureau)- Ending the intense speculation of the past month, the results of the assembly elections in Bihar are finally out. Nitish Kumar has added yet another feather to his cap by winning the confidence of the people of Bihar for the fourth time, a rare feat in Indian politics. Of course, the strength of Janata Dal (United) is now reduced, but the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has performed well, thanks to the image of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi as an able leader.

The JD(U)'s relatively poor performance is easily understandable, as it had to fight two opponents -

(Contd on page 30)

The world's most powerful man



(SAI Bureau)- The title of the world's most powerful person will hang on the shoulders of a man who will be among the politically weakest people to assume the position. The United States (US) President-elect, Joe Biden, has a few months before he takes the oath of office. Even this interregnum will be fraught. The outgoing President Donald Trump is determined to make it a difficult transfer of power. The Republican Party will retain control of the majority of state legislatures and may yet hold on to the Senate. Because he is likely to only serve one term, President Biden's honeymoon period will last barely two years before the next election cycle will begin. Then there are the external challenges of the pandemic, the economy and an aggressive China. Mr Trump is surrendering the Oval Office under the cover of a barrage of lawsuits and claims

(Contd on page 30)

NASA's Perseverance rover getting closer to Mars, potentially finding evidence of life



(SAI Bureau)- NASA's Perseverance rover has less than 100 days until it gets to Mars and looks for fossilized evidence of extraterrestrial life, the space agency announced. In a statement made on Tuesday, NASA said the rover has 166 million miles left to go until it touches down on Mars' Jezero Crater on Feb.

18, 2021, at 3:43 p.m. EST. If the landing is successful, NASA's JPL will receive confirmation about 11.5 minutes later. "While we call the six-and-a-half-month trip from Earth to Mars 'cruise,' I assure you there is not much croquet going on at the lido deck," said project manager John McNamee in the statement. "Between checking out the spacecraft, and planning and simulating our landing and surface operations, the entire team is on the clock, working toward our exploration of Jezero Crater."

"How is the Mars Perseverance Rover Getting to the Red Planet ?

There were a number of achievements made on the rover this week, including confirming the system used to lower it on Mars is in "good working order" (Nov. 9); keeping up-to-date on the PIXL and SHERLOC instruments (Nov.

(Contd on page 30)

