



The South Asian



INSIDER

Looking to Buy/Sell ?

We know the difference between Home & House



**Nlight
Real
Estate**

Sharanjit Singh Thind
Real Estate Broker/Notary Public

Tel: 516 NLIGHT8

Vol. 20

Issue 19

Friday 09 July to 15 July 2021

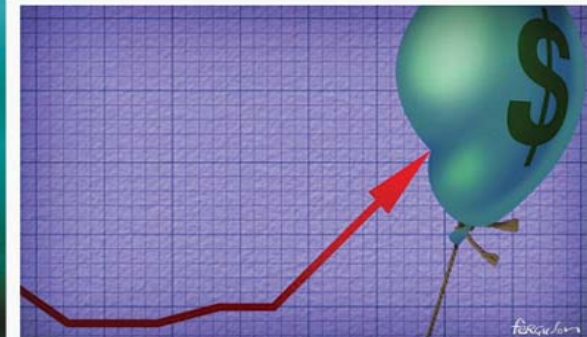
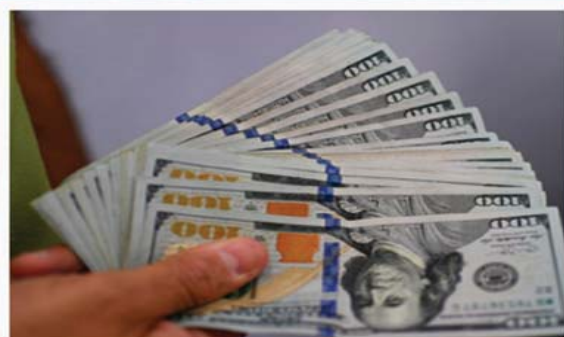
\$1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Why Is Inflation Rising Right Now?

These days, Americans can't escape rising prices. When you go to the grocery store, you'll pay nearly 5 percent more than you did last spring. Go to the gas pump, and filling your tank will damn near empty your wallet. Check out that open house down the street, and you're liable to see an asking price 15 percent higher than you thought it would be. Take a drive down to the lumber yard to buy yourself a new pet log, and it might cost you 400 percent more than last year's. And if you turn on the TV to escape thoughts of such sticker shock, you're liable to see newscasts full of inflation talk.

Some economists suggest the government may be misunderstanding the size of the problem.



Story on
Pages
28-33



Solid like a Rock

Insurance

Tel : 516 NLIGHT 8 (516 654 4488)

WeChat deletes Chinese university LGBT accounts in fresh crackdown

WeChat, a social media platform in China, deleted dozens of LGBT accounts run by university students. WeChat said the groups "had violated regulations on the management of accounts offering public information service on the Chinese internet".

Chinese tech giant Tencent's WeChat social media platform has deleted dozens of LGBT accounts run by university students, saying some had broken rules on information on the internet, sparking fear of a crackdown on gay content online.

Members of several LGBT groups told Reuters that access to their accounts was blocked late on Tuesday and they later discovered that all of their content had been deleted.

"Many of us suffered at the same time," said the account manager of one group who declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of



the issue.

"They censored us without any warning. All of us have been wiped out."

Attempts by Reuters to access some accounts were met with a notice from WeChat saying the groups "had violated regulations on the management of accounts offering public information service on the Chinese internet".

Other accounts did not show up

in search results.

WeChat did not immediately respond to emailed questions.

Homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder in China until 2001, when it became legal. However, this year, a court upheld a university's description of homosexuality as a "psychological disorder".

The LGBT community has repeatedly found itself falling foul

of censors. The Cyberspace Administration of China recently pledged to clean up the internet to protect minors and crack down on social media groups deemed a "bad influence".

"Authorities have been tightening the space available for LGBT advocacy and civil society groups generally. This is another turning of the screw," said Darius Longarino, a senior fellow at Yale

Law School's Paul Tsai's China Center, who focuses on LGBT rights and gender equality.

The loyalty of LGBT university groups to the government and Communist Party was discussed in meeting in May between student groups and university representatives of the Communist Youth League - a department in charge of student affairs run by the Chinese Communist Party, according to three sources with knowledge of the matter.

The sources declined to be identified or say at which universities the meetings took place but said LGBT student groups were asked if they were anti-Party or anti-China, and whether any of their funds had originated from abroad.

"We explained that our LGBT education work was within campus only," one university student told Reuters. "After our meeting in May we were dismantled."

Nassau County

Free Entry!
Free Parking

PUNJABI AMERICAN NIGHT 2021

TUESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2021, 7:00 PM ONWARDS
EISENHOWER PARK EAST MEADOW, LONG ISLAND

Mohinder Singh Taneja
(Chairperson)

Free Refreshments, Pad, Cell Phones, Ladies's Suit, Saree and many other prizes.

Tel : 516-840-7968 Email : mohindertaneja@gmail.com

Virsa and Culture of Punjab,
Bhangra, Gidha, Gatka,
Live Music, Dhol,
Celebrity Entertainment

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ
PUNJABI DUNIYA

The South Asian
INSIDER

Josh India WebTV

Geeta Saxena
Show Host (Prime Time News)

joshindiatv@gmail.com

Amarinder Singh's meeting with Prashant Kishor raises eyebrows within Congress

Punjab CM Amarinder Singh met poll strategist Prashant Kishor in Delhi, a day after his meeting with Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

(News Agencies)- Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh's meeting with poll strategist Prashant Kishor at his official residence, Kapurthala House in Delhi, has raised eyebrows within Congress party circles.

Amarinder Singh met Prashant Kishor before returning to Chandigarh. Sources, however, have told India Today TV that the meeting between the two has not gone down well with a section of party leaders who see Kishor with suspicion.

After meeting with Congress

president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday, Amarinder Singh had announced that any decision by her to address the crisis in the party's Punjab unit involving party leader Navjot Singh Sidhu would be acceptable.

But his meeting with poll strategist Prashant Kishor, appointed principal advisor to the Punjab Chief Minister in March, has raised questions.

The meeting is significant as it follows the West Bengal poll verdict and Prashant Kishor's claim of quitting poll management. Reports say

Prashant Kishor's Indian Political Action Committee (IPAC) has begun collecting data for conducting surveys and related groundwork to prepare for the Punjab poll campaign due to begin by the end of 2020.

A group of leaders close to the Gandhi family dislikes Prashant Kishor for working with breakaway leaders from the Congress Party like Jagan Mohan Reddy, Mamata Banerjee, and, most recently, Sharad Pawar who formed splinter groups. They also accuse the poll strategist of creating friction with its ally DMK



during seat distribution talks ahead of the Tamil Nadu assembly election concluded recently.

The leaders blame Kishor for advising DMK leader MK Stalin against giving a larger chunk of seats to the Congress Party. The Congress Party had to settle for

just 25 seats against 39 demanded by it in the state.

Earlier, in an interview to India Today TV, Congress data cell chief Praveen Chakraborty had cautioned against outsourcing core poll-decision making to poll strategists like Prashant Kishor.

Dilip Kumar funeral: Amitabh Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan arrive to pay final tributes.



(News Agencies)-Actors Amitabh Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan, Ranbir Kapoor, Shah Rukh Khan and many others paid their final respects to Bollywood icon Dilip Kumar, who died on Wednesday. Amitabh Bachchan and Abhishek Bachchan were seen at the Juhu Kabristan, where Dilip Kumar was laid to rest. They were surrounded by

their body guards as photographers took their pictures. Ranbir Kapoor and Karan Johar were also seen at Dilip's house. Shah Rukh Khan wore a face mask and swiftly made his way inside the house. Actor Vidya Balan was also seen holding her film producer-husband Siddharth Roy Kapur's arm as they walked in. Actor Dharmendra greeted the

Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Ranbir Kapoor and many other stars arrived to pay final respects to Dilip Kumar.

photographers with folded hands as he arrived in his car. Police personnel at Dilip Kumar's home. Dharmendra at the funeral. (Varinder Chawla) Actor Anil Kapoor, politician Sharad Pawar, Uddhav Thackeray and his son Aditya Thackeray were also seen at Dilip Kumar's residence. Dilip Kumar, who had struggled with ill health in recent years, married actor Saira Banu in 1966 when she was 22 years his junior. He died in a Mumbai hospital early on Wednesday.

Born Mohammed Yusuf Khan in 1922 in Peshawar -- now part of Pakistan -- Dilip Kumar became a major star in Indian cinema's golden age between the 1940s and 1960s, starring in nearly 60

films in a career spanning 50 years.

"Dilip Kumar... will be remembered as a cinematic legend," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Twitter.

"He was blessed with unparalleled brilliance, due to which audiences across generations were enthralled. His passing away is a loss to our cultural world," Modi added.

President Ram Nath Kovind said: "Dilip Kumar summarised in himself a history of emerging India. The thespian's charm transcended all boundaries, and he was loved across the subcontinent. With his demise, an era ends." He "will live forever in the heart of India", he added. Vidya Balan and Siddharth Roy Kapur at Dilip Kumar's home. (Varinder Chawla)

Brawl triggers caste clash in Tamil Nadu's Theni, security tightened

(News Agencies)-Security has been tightened in Theni district after a 'drunken brawl' between two men turned into an alleged 'caste clash' on Monday.



First, a heated argument occurred between a youth and a Dalit man which turned into a fist fight.

Hearing of the incident, a group entered the Dalit neighbourhood and allegedly began attacking residents and severely wounding two youths even while women were seen pleading.

Residents held a road roko at the Periyakulam-Aandipatti stretch demanding action against the perpetrators.

beefed up in Melmangalam village in Tamil Nadu's

ਆਓ ਕਰੀਏ
ਗੱਲ ਸਿਆਸਤ ਦੀ
ਗੱਲ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀ
ਗੱਲ ਸਾਂਝੇ ਸਾਰੇਕਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ
ਆਓ ਕਰੀਏ

ਗੱਲਬਾਤ

Gagandeep Singh
Deputy News Editor
+91-9592398822
/www.youtube.com/c/JoshIndiaTV

Modi 2.0 cabinet: 43 ministers, new and old, to take oath today

India Today has been able to obtain exclusive information about the new look of Team Modi. According to highly placed sources in the government, 43 ministers, new and old, are expected to be inducted into the Union Cabinet.

(News Agencies)-At least 43 ministers, new and old, from the BJP and its allies are expected to be inducted into the Union Cabinet on Wednesday, sources told India Today. This will be the first reshuffle of the Union Cabinet under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second term after winning a decisive mandate in 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

India Today has been able to obtain exclusive information about the new look of Team Modi. According to highly placed sources in the Modi government, the new Union cabinet will have seven PHDs, three MBAs, thirteen lawyers, six doctors, five

engineers, seven civil servants and 68 ministers with graduate degrees -- showcasing the level of emphasis that has been placed on the educational qualifications of the new team Modi.

A lot of effort has been made, according to government sources, on ensuring that the marginalised communities get adequate representation in the reshuffle. Follow Cabinet reshuffle LIVE Updates

The new cabinet will have 12 ministers from the Dalit community, sources said. Each of these ministers are from a different SC community. Two of

these SC ministers will have full cabinet rank.

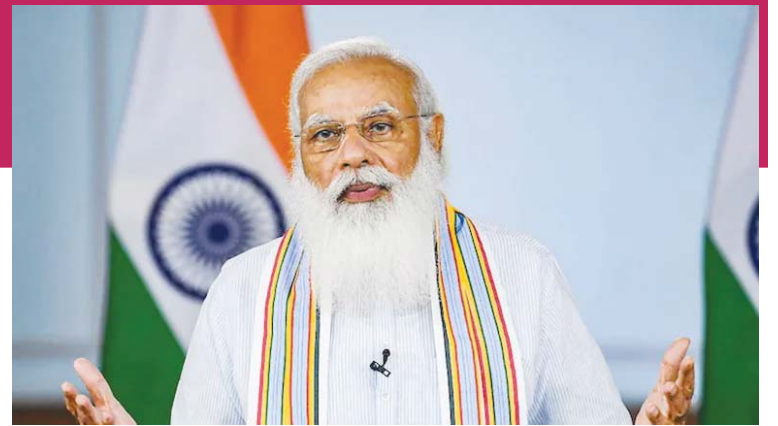
There will be a record 27 OBC ministers according to government sources from 19 backward caste communities, including Yadavs, Kurmi, Jat, Darji, Koli and Vokkaligas.

Five members of the OBC community will have full cabinet rank.

There will be eight tribal ministers from seven different ST communities.

There are five ministers representing the country's various minority communities.

At least 29 ministers will represent other communities, like



the Brahmin, Bhumihar, Kayasth, Kshatriya, Lingayat, Patel, Maratha and Reddy castes.

There are 11 women ministers, including two with cabinet rank. A lot of effort has been made to give the Modi 2.0 cabinet a young look. There are 14 ministers below the age of 50, including six in the cabinet.

After the reshuffle, the average

age of the ministers in the Modi government will be 58 years.

The new look Team Modi carries vast administrative experience.

There are 46 ministers with experience of being ministers in state governments.

At least 23 ministers have been MPs for three or more terms, and have more than a decade of

Parliamentary legislative experience.

As Harsh Vardhan resigns, a look at rows he created with his soundbites



Dr Harsh Vardhan has resigned as a cabinet minister ahead of the major reshuffle scheduled. Here's a look at some controversies during his tenure as the Union health minister.

(News Agencies)-Harsh Vardhan began his tenure as the Union health minister in the Narendra Modi government with a huge reputation of having successfully pioneered the polio eradication programme in India, and implementing the first anti-

tobacco laws in the country.

However, Harsh Vardhan - often referred to as the good doctor - appeared faltering and losing his cool during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of his statements and positions that he took became controversial.

'States to be blamed'

The second wave of Covid-19 started picking pace in March-end and early April when suddenly demand for vaccines increased sharply. When Maharashtra complained about vaccine shortages, Harsh Vardhan hit back alleging "repeated failures" of the state to contain Covid-19 spread.

On April 7, Harsh Vardhan said, "Throughout last year, as the Health Minister of India, I have been a witness to the misgovernance and utter casual

approach of the Maharashtra government in battling the virus. The lackadaisical attitude of the state government has singularly bogged down the entire country's efforts to fight the virus."

Harsh Vardhan also accused the Opposition-led governments of Punjab, Delhi and Maharashtra of being slow in vaccinating healthcare and frontline workers that began in January.

Attacking Manmohan Singh Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi

suggesting him to take a few immediate measures to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. On April 19, Harsh Vardhan responded to Manmohan Singh as the health minister in a letter full of jibes.

"History shall be kinder to you Dr Manmohan Singh ji if your offer of 'constructive cooperation and valuable advice was followed by your leaders as well in such extraordinary times," Harsh Vardhan wrote on Twitter prefacing his reply to the former PM.

Modi cabinet reshuffle: Why Bengal remains in focus ?

(News Agencies)-West Bengal is one of the prominent states that will see crucial changes in the Modi cabinet reshuffle. The reasons are obvious. The BJP received unprecedented success in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, grabbing 18 seats which prompted the party to go all out in the 2021 Assembly poll. Sighting 2024, the party thinks that West Bengal should get importance in the reshuffle.

West Bengal may get four ministers. John Barla and Dr Subhash Sarkar apart from Shantanu Thakur and Nisith Pramanik can also be inducted into the Modi ministry. Subhash Sarkar

represents Jungle Mahal where the BJP was successful in 2019 and John Barla represents North Bengal. Follow cabinet



reshuffle LIVE Updates

Initially, BJP sources from Bengal were confident that four MPs from Bengal are

getting ministries. Even names of Shantanu Thakur, Nisith Pramanik, Dilip Ghosh and Arjun Singh were floated.

Now sources are saying that Shantanu Thakur's name is almost final for obvious reasons. Shantanu represents the Matua community in Bengal which comprises almost two crore voters in districts bordering Bangladesh. The Matua community backed the BJP in

the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and if the party wants to retain the lead in 2024, representation from the Matua community

is essential. Another name who is in talks is Nisith Pramanik. Nisith Pramanik is said to be close to PM Narendra Modi and represents North Bengal which gave 7 MPs in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Even Dinesh Trivedi's name is also doing the rounds, but sources in the Bengal BJP say it's unlikely that he will get a chance as he is a newcomer and will send a wrong message in Bengal if he is given a chance. Union Minister of State Babul Supriyo has resigned ahead of the Cabinet reshuffle on Wednesday evening. MoS Debasree Chaudhuri is all set to resign as she may replace Dilip Ghosh as the party president in Bengal.

Elgar Parishad accused demand probe into Stan Swamy's death, stage hunger strike in jail

The Elgar Parishad case accused, who are awaiting the beginning of their trial and are currently lodged at the Taloja Central Prison, held a daylong protest over the death of Father Stan Swamy.

(News Agencies)-The Elgar Parishad case accused, who are awaiting the beginning of their trial and are currently lodged at the Taloja Central Prison in Navi Mumbai, held a daylong hunger strike on Wednesday in protest of the "institutional murder" of tribal activist, Father Stan Swamy. The protesting Elgar Parishad case accused have also sought a judicial enquiry on the death of Stan Swamy, for which they plan to request Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Jesuit priest Stan

Swamy, an 84-year-old activist, had been shifted to a hospital after the Bombay High Court got to know about his depleting health conditions. He was picked up by the National Investigating Agency (NIA) in the Elgar Parishad case last year. Stan Swamy was the last of the 16 people to be arrested in the Bhima Koregaon case. Suffering from Parkinson's disease, he was the oldest and the frailest among those arrested, friends and family of the Father had said. He was brought to

Maharashtra from Jharkhand while NIA sought his judicial custody. Since October 2020, he was at the prison where his health kept deteriorating and he appealed to the court that he was unable to feed himself or even walk, do anything without a help.

Looking at his condition, the court ordered his treatment at a private hospital. He had tested positive for Covid-19 and recovered from it when he suffered a heart attack and



passed away on Monday. Activists and politicians had raised protests against Stan Swamy's arrest, the subsequent incarceration and then death. Apart from Stan Swamy, there are others in the case who are still waiting the trial to begin.

The other accused in the Elgar Parishad case held a hunger strike against the NIA and the Taloja Jail superintendent who they said are responsible for Stan Swamy's death. They have claimed that it is a planned murder by the institutions.

2 Zambian Men Arrested For Smuggling Heroin Worth 7.36 Crore At Delhi Airport: Customs



Drug & Narcotics Smuggling: Customs officers have seized heroin worth over ₹ 600 crore while being smuggled into the country at Delhi's IGI airport in the last six months.

worth ₹ 7.36 crore, according to an official statement issued today.

The accused were intercepted after their arrival from Johannesburg via Addis Ababa on June 27.

"During X-ray of their abdomen at RML hospital, New Delhi, some capsule-like substance were detected. Subsequently,

total 106 capsules containing 1.05 kg of light yellowish colour powdery substance ingeniously concealed inside their abdomen, suspected to be narcotics were recovered," it said. "When this material was subjected to field drug test, it prima facie appeared to contain heroin," said the statement issued by the Customs

department. The passengers have been placed under arrest, it said, adding that "the value of the seized contraband is approximately ₹ 7.36 crore". Customs officers have seized heroin worth over ₹

600 crore while being smuggled into the country at Delhi's IGI airport in the last six months.

(News Agencies)-Two Zambian men have been arrested by Customs officials at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport in Delhi for allegedly trying to smuggle into the country heroin

Why Dilip Kumar changed his name from Yusuf Khan

Dilip Kumar was born on December 11, 1922, to Lala Ghulam Sarwar Khan and his wife Ayesha Begum of Peshawar (now in Pakistan). His parents had named him Muhammad Yusuf Khan.

(News Agencies)-Dilip Kumar, the Tragedy King of the silver screen, was known by many names. For some, he was Salim of Mughal-e-Azam. For others, he was Deva as he became the second actor to play the role of Devdas in an adaptation of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's novella of the same name. Then there were Ram, Shyam, Rana Vishwa Pratap Singh and Veer Singh, among many others. But what was his real name? Dilip Kumar was, in fact, the late actor's screen name given by producer Devika Rani. The actor was born as Muhammad Yusuf Khan in an

Awan family in Pakistan's Peshawar.

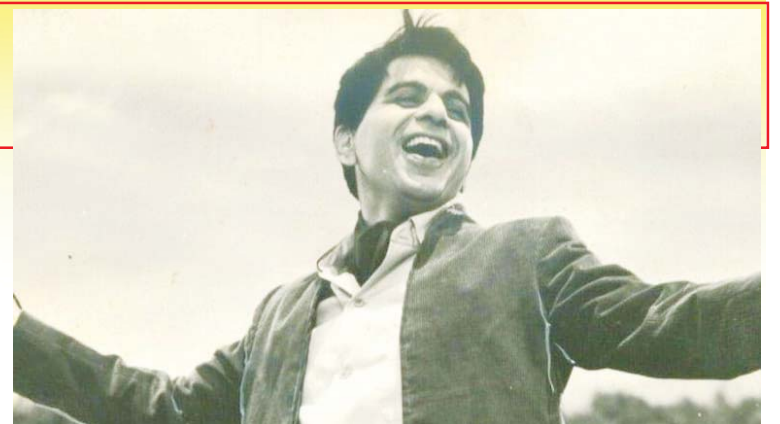
Dilip Kumar breathed his last at Mumbai's Hinduja Hospital on Wednesday (July 7).

WHY DID MUHAMMAD YUSUF KHAN CHANGE HIS NAME TO DILIP KUMAR?

Born as Muhammad Yusuf Khan on December 11, 1922, to Lala Ghulam Sarwar Khan and his wife Ayesha Begum of Peshawar (now in Pakistan), Dilip Kumar opted for a screen name on producer Devika Rani's request. The producer later gave him his lead role in the 1944 film Jwar Bhata. In his autobiography, Dilip Kumar: The Substance and the

Shadow, the veteran actor revealed why he changed his name from Muhammad Yusuf Khan to Dilip Kumar.

He wrote, "She (Devika Rani) said, quite matter-of-factly: 'Yousuf, I was thinking about your launch soon as an actor and I felt it would not be a bad idea if you adopted a screen name. You know, a name you would be known by and which will be very appropriate for your audience to relate to and one that will be in tune with the romantic image you are bound to acquire through your screen presence. I thought Dilip Kumar was a nice name. It just popped up in my mind when I



was thinking about a suitable name for you. How does it sound to you?"

FEAR OF THRASHING FROM FATHER

It was not just Devika Rani who influenced Dilip Kumar to change his name. In an interview with Mahendra Kaul in 1970, Dilip Kumar had said the real reason he changed his name was the

'pitayi ka darr' (fear of thrashing) from his father. The late actor had said that his father never liked his acting career and called it 'nautanki'. Interestingly, his father never appreciated his friend Dewan Basheshwarnath Kapoor's grandson Raj Kapoor doing films either. Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor were neighbours in Peshawar.

HC judge imposes Rs 5 lakh fine on Mamata, recuses self from hearing Nandigram case against Suvendu



Justice Kaushik Chanda during the hearing on Wednesday.

He further said, "A deliberate and absolute attempt was made to affect my decision even before the case was heard."

"It is preposterous to suggest that a judge who has an association with a political party for a case. A judge cannot be seen to be biased because of the litigant's view," the judge said.

According to the Bar and Bench, Justice Chanda had served as the Additional Solicitor General for the BJP government before he was elevated to the Calcutta HC bench.

The court took objection to the manner in which the demand for the judge's recusal was made. "Immediately after June 18 hearing, TMC leaders were ready with my photos and put out tweets of my association with BJP," observed Justice Chanda.

(News Agencies)-The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who had appealed to the court to remove Justice Kaushik Chanda from hearing her case against BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari's election win in Nandigram. Mamata Banerjee's counsel had appealed for transfer of the case from Justice Kaushik Chanda's

bench citing bias as they claimed that Justice Chanda has often been seen with BJP leaders.

Calcutta High Court's Justice Kaushik Chanda later recused himself while also imposing a fine of Rs 5 lakh on the petitioner.

"If a person appears for a political party, it is uncommon but he lays aside his bias while hearing a case. In this case, pecuniary interest does not arise," said

Kerala announces more relaxations, categorises regions based on Covid positivity rate

(News Agencies)-The Kerala government has issued orders to re-categorise the local self-government institutions on the basis of a 7-day average Test Positivity Rate (TPR) of Covid-19 cases. The Kerala government has also announced more relaxations of the Covid-19 restrictions allowing gyms, indoor games and tourism destinations to reopen while following specific norms. Government offices will now function with full strength in regions where the Test Positivity Rate (TPR) is low in Kerala. At the high-level meeting chaired by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, it was also decided to amend the classification of local bodies based on TPR. The government has now decided to classify local bodies into four zones A, B, C and D. The regions with TPR below 5% will be classified

in the A category, those with TPR between 5-10% will fall under the B category. All government offices in the A and B categories can function with full staff strength while the local bodies with TPR between 10-15% and those above 15% will be classified as C and D, respectively. The review meeting has also decided to grant permission to hotels, resorts and homestays in the state to function while abiding by the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of the Union Health Ministry and guidelines of the Ministry of Tourism. Only those who have been vaccinated or have a Covid-19 negative certificate, will be allowed at these properties. The government will also consider providing further relaxation only when the TPR comes down. Gathering of any sorts will continue to be restricted in these areas.

After Srinagar, Drone Use Now Banned In J&K's Kupwara

(News Agencies)-Days after explosive-laden drones attacked the Jammu airbase, Kupwara district administration has imposed restrictions on the storage, sale, possession, use, and transport of drones and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). "Keeping in view the security situation apart from concerns of breach of privacy,

decentralised airspace access has to be regulated in view of recent episodes of misuse of drones posing threat to security infrastructure as reported by the media and other reliable sources. Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has provided draft guidelines/standard operating protocols to regulate the use of drones in terms of



weight classification, generation of unique identification numbers, height/altitude restrictions, speed restriction, enforcement/panel action, etc," the administration noted. It said that with a view to

nuisance and trespass, it is extremely dangerous to let unmanned aerial vehicles wander around in the skies within the territorial jurisdiction of district Kupwara," District Magistrate Imam Din said in the order. The order further states that a person already having drone cameras or similar kinds of unmanned aerial vehicles in their possession should ground the same in the local police station under proper receipt. "The

secure the aerial space near the vital installations and highly populated areas, it is imperative to discontinue the use of drones in all social and cultural gatherings to eliminate any risk of injury to the life and damage to property. Earlier, Rajouri, Srinagar, Baramulla and Kathua district administrations had also issued similar orders to ban the storage, sale, or possession and use and transport of flying objects after the Jammu airbase attack.



Josh
India WebTV

Facebook Twitter WhatsApp YouTube Google+ Instagram LinkedIn Snapchat



The South Asian
INSIDER

News Analysis & Commentary



Susmita Ghosh

Bureau Chief, India
7044077233
[/www.youtube.com/c/JoshIndiaTV](https://www.youtube.com/c/JoshIndiaTV)



Why both the Russians and Americans got nowhere in Afghanistan

The story of two superpower invasions of Afghanistan is all about the similarities that end up erasing the undeniable differences.

As the Soviet Union prepared to leave Afghanistan in 1988, it stepped up economic and military aid to the government of Mohammad Najibullah, even though it knew the requests for more weaponry were often larcenous, based on wildly inflated numbers of Afghan servicemen. Mikhail Gorbachev and his Politburo felt guilty about the withdrawal and wanted to compensate their "Afghan friends," as official documents of the era referred to Najibullah and his people, for leaving them alone to face the fury of the U.S.-trained, -armed and -funded opposition. Gorbachev was also conscious of a certain dignity issue. "He said several times that we cannot just pull up our pants and make a run for it, like Americans in Vietnam," his foreign policy adviser Anatoly Chernyaev recalled in 2009.

The Soviets took more than three years to leave after the decision was made. As they handed over garrisons and military equipment, the proceedings were elaborate, with the new local owners receiving spruced-up barracks and freshly tested weapons, all signed off on receipts. General Boris Gromov, who presided over the withdrawal, recalled in his 2019 memoir, "The Limited Contingent," how

the Jalalabad garrison left its barracks: As the U.S. pulls out in 2021, it aims to finish the withdrawal mere months after President Joe Biden made the decision to leave. It appears somewhat more concerned than the Soviets about having its weaponry fall into the hands of Afghanistan's possible new masters, so it's destroying some equipment. Some of what U.S. troops do leave is, deliberately or not, unusable — for instance, cars and trucks abandoned without keys. Nor does the U.S. appear to believe in elaborate goodbyes, at least if one judges by its unannounced nighttime departure from the Bagram Air Base; the Americans shut off the power (which cut off the water supply) and were gone. And yet the more things seem different, the more they stay the same. The spotless Soviet garrison town in Jalalabad was looted hours after the Russians left, and "all the more or less valuable property — televisions, audio equipment, air conditioners, furniture, even army beds — was sold through the city's market stalls," Gromov wrote. The same happened to Bagram minutes after the Americans went — looters went in and grabbed anything they could find of value. The Soviet Union went into Afghanistan to prop up a Communist-led coup as part of an expansionist Cold War strategy. The U.S. did so in an attempt to purge al-Qaeda in the wake of 9/11

(Contd on page 26)

US exits Bagram, Afghans regret decades of war, What's next?

By Susmita Ghosh

American troops exit Bagram, unexpectedly after 20 years of their largest military base in Afghanistan. Marking a representative end to the extensive war in US history, locals living in the shadow of the base and near Kabul were left repenting the past and bracing for what comes next.

Violence has been strong all over Afghanistan in the weeks since President Joe Biden announced to withdraw all the forces completely from Afghanistan by September 11, the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attack.

In 1980 it was run by the Soviet troops and in 1990, was disputed by the Taliban and the northern alliance. In 2001 the NATO took over Bagram. New York City firefighters and police buried a piece of the World Trade Center in December 2001, days after the Taliban tumbled for protecting Osama bin Laden.

According to the worried locals, American troops came with bombing the Taliban and got rid of their rule. With the presence of Americans, there were lots of people working, but now there are no jobs. Resentful Afghans can foresee the unstable local economy.

Some say the presence of foreign troops

distorted Afghanistan's economy and with their departure the Taliban will definitely take over any time soon.

Fearing the return of the Taliban, it will be a repeat of 1996. Taliban hasn't changed at all - they don't care about democracy or peace. They only need 'Power.' According to the activists in North East Afghanistan, if they return to Kabul they will impose new laws like men will be asked to grow beards and the women won't be allowed to step out, unaccompanied. Dowry rules are set for marriage and will insist trials without evidences.

The Taliban will definitely be behind capturing Bagram as it will be their win on two reasons - the symbolism of taking over former American base and the strategic value of Bagram. It's a fortress 40 km north of Kabul. So there are chances that the Taliban will be trying to draw a plan, the Americans seem to have predicted this. Based on United Nations records, more than around 3,500 foreign troops were killed in a two-decade war, which has claimed over 100,000 civilians since 2009 alone. President Biden said that even if the troops' departure is on track, some American forces will still be in Afghanistan in September.

(Contd on page 27)

Could Ransomware Become a Geopolitical Weapon? Game Theory Says Yes.

Over the weekend, the REvil ransomware gang locked up the data of more than 1,000 businesses in an unprecedented supply-chain attack on the software firm Kaseya, demanding \$70 million for the data's release. While it's unclear which, if any, of the individual businesses have paid the group anything, just a month ago JBS and Colonial Pipeline paid nearly \$11 million and \$5 million, respectively, to resume operations after a ransomware attack. The fact that attackers can mount these attacks so frequently and extort large sums of money from victims shows that encryption has emerged as a really good way to hold hostages. What if an adversary state or a terrorist group starts using the same tool to demand something more than money? Today, ransomware is treated mostly as a criminal problem, but it may also soon be a geopolitical issue. I use game theory to study ransomware, and I've also examined how adversaries like North Korea use cyber tools for strategic goals. My research suggests it's only a matter of time before encryption is used for geopolitical gains. The incentives built into ransomware attacks - for both the attacker and the victim - will make it easier for smaller, poorer players to extract concessions from more powerful adversaries. But the good news is that two can play at that game: In the future, encryption might also become a way for countries to proportionally respond to cyberattacks without causing all-out war in cyberspace. Throughout history, state and nonstate actors have sought to hold an enemy's valued assets at risk to

bargain for political gains. Land invasions that captured capital cities have been used to compel governments to surrender, threats to close critical maritime chokepoints have been used as bargaining chips, and hostages have been taken to negotiate political or monetary concessions. In other cases, adversaries have kidnapped each other's princes or held one another's cities at risk with nuclear weapons, creating mutual hostage relationships to ensure neither side upsets the status quo. Ransomware - or the underlying encryption algorithm that locks up data - is just another chess piece in this game. But the game theory that drives the attacker and the victim in a ransomware attack may sometimes make this a more attractive way of coercing the enemy than bombings, blockades or nuclear threats.

The nature of encryption increases the incentives for attackers to attack and for victims to concede. First, once the victim's data is locked up, the attacker can keep it that way for as long as it takes to get their demands met, at no extra effort or cost. Compare this to other methods of holding enemy assets at risk - laying a siege, blockading a port - which can be as costly to maintain for the attacker as they are to endure for the defender. Even after a siege starts, the attacker needs to be able to credibly commit to applying force for long enough to convince the defender to acquiesce.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

Editor in Chief & Publisher :

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) :

Aruna Singh

Susmita Ghosh (Dy Managing Editor India)

Anusha Syed (Legal Columnist)

Special Correspondents:

Gagandeep Singh (India)

Geeta Saxena (Insider Show Host)

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Disclaimer The South Asian Insider is a weekly newspaper published every week by The South Asian Insider. It's available in community & religious centers, ethnic grocery stores and also available by mail, email & online to subscribers. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers, authors and forum participants in The South Asian Insider do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editor. All advertisers advertising in The South Asian Insider assume responsibility for accuracy of their advertisements. The South Asian Insider and/or people associated with it are not responsible for any claims made by the advertisers and don't endorse any product or services advertised in The South Asian Insider. We strongly urge consulting your lawyer before buying/contracting/hiring through the ads published in the newspaper. We are in the business of selling space and claims made by the advertisers are not authenticated or confirmed by an independent source

How India and China are shaped by the idea of national humiliation



Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes: While China uses it to legitimise authoritarian rule, India's lack of egalitarianism makes it harder for national humiliation to be owned equally.

One striking fact about the projection of Chinese nationalism is the centrality of the idea of humiliation. The century of national humiliation, from the First Opium Wars to the Nanjing massacre, is an organising principle of historiography in China. It is central to education policy. Even a casual glance at public monuments shows how the Chinese state goes out of its way to remind people of sites of national humiliation. But the idea of humiliation has a legitimising function. The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 marks the overturning of the century of national humiliation. The Communist Party makes a claim for its fitness to rule, in substantial measure, on its ability to position itself as the agent that overcomes

China's humiliation. President Xi Jinping's address at the Party centenary begins by a reminder and resolve that China will never be humiliated again. Arguably, a deepening authoritarianism requires the concept even more. A lot of Chinese foreign policy is framed with reference to the idea. A colleague in China once asked me how the concept of humiliation worked in Indian nationalism. This is an intriguing question. After the Rowlatt Bills, Gandhi declared April 6 1919 as National Humiliation Day, but that was almost a one-off event. China has a continuous history of marking its humiliation. At one level, all post-colonial states feel the trauma of being "Wronged by Empire," to use the evocative title of Manjari Chatterjee Miller's book on the subject. India and China, of course, have vastly

different histories. Nevertheless, the question of how humiliation works in Indian nationalism is an interesting window on how the national subject might be constituted in China and India. In India's post-colonial trauma, the psychological sense of humiliation is present. But it has to be articulated discreetly and sotto voce. There are several reasons for this. The Gandhian imprint on Indian nationalism means that it went out of its way to eschew any tropes of resentment against the West; the pathologies that the West brought were pathologies of modernity. So resistance to the West had to be the creation of an alternative social imagination, not the avenging of humiliation. But there is a more cynical reason: Modern India's ruling class and identity was created as much by collaboration with colonialism as resistance to it. Almost all elements of India's ruling structure come out as being embedded in the colonial project. The great families from the Tagores to the Tatas, the Indian Army, the Indian civil

service, the legal profession, and pretty much any part of the ruling establishment displayed more continuity than discontinuity. Even post-Independence, the persistence of English and enculturation of new elites only reinforced this. It was prudent for this establishment to mark India's subjugation, but not to harp on the theme of humiliation too deeply, without exposing its own complicity in it.

There are other reasons as well. At an ideological level, the onset of colonialism was also welcomed by many constituencies. For some Hindus, it was an opportunity to come out from under the yoke of the Mughal Empire. For many Dalits, it was an opportunity for shaking up oppressive social structures. The idea of colonialism as liberating has much more of a subterranean presence than we acknowledge. Indian political ideologies and cultural practice, while less politically authoritarian, are also far less egalitarian, for national humiliation to be owned equally. It also has some bearing on what

we take to be signs of national humiliation. It is no secret that the real source of India's humiliation is still abiding and crushing poverty. But it is still seen, for the most part, as an embarrassment to be negotiated rather than the project that should be an object of our single-minded attention.

The nature of traumas was different. The Chinese construction of humiliation was directly structured around military defeats: First, the opium wars and then the brutal Japanese invasion. Because both the West and Japan were implicated, the theme of humiliation could become an organising frame for foreign policy. The Chinese Communist Party was both a military force and a political party; the fusion of the two in narratives of national resistance, unification and regeneration, perhaps makes possible a singular construction of national humiliation. India's traumas, at least in terms of the scale of political violence and significance, turned out to be more self-inflicted.

The many US blunders that contributed to looming disaster in Afghanistan

On Friday, the last US soldiers left Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, which was once home to tens of thousands of American troops. In addition, 7,000 NATO troops are pulling out, as well as approximately 6,000 American contractors, some of whom have been critical to maintaining the helicopters and planes of the Afghan air force. With only 650 US troops remaining to guard the US embassy in Kabul, the United States is leaving the Afghan government to fend for itself against Taliban forces. The headline in Saturday's New York Times trumpeted, "US departs last Afghanistan base, effectively ending 20 years of war." But this headline is a classic example of the misguided idea that withdrawing American troops will usher in peace. In fact, the Afghan War is likely

about to escalate. Even the commander of US troops in Afghanistan, Gen. Austin "Scott" Miller, said publicly on Tuesday that Afghanistan faces the possibility of a disastrous civil war. The withdrawal of US troops effectively hands the Taliban a long-awaited victory as it gains increasing control in Afghanistan. More than a quarter of the country's 421 districts have already been captured by the Taliban, and the US intelligence community has concluded that the Afghan government could collapse just six months after the American forces are gone. In the words of the French statesman Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, "This is worse than a crime, it's a blunder." But this blunder has been a long time coming; every US president since George W. Bush has either tried to limit the American role in Afghanistan, or to get out

entirely.

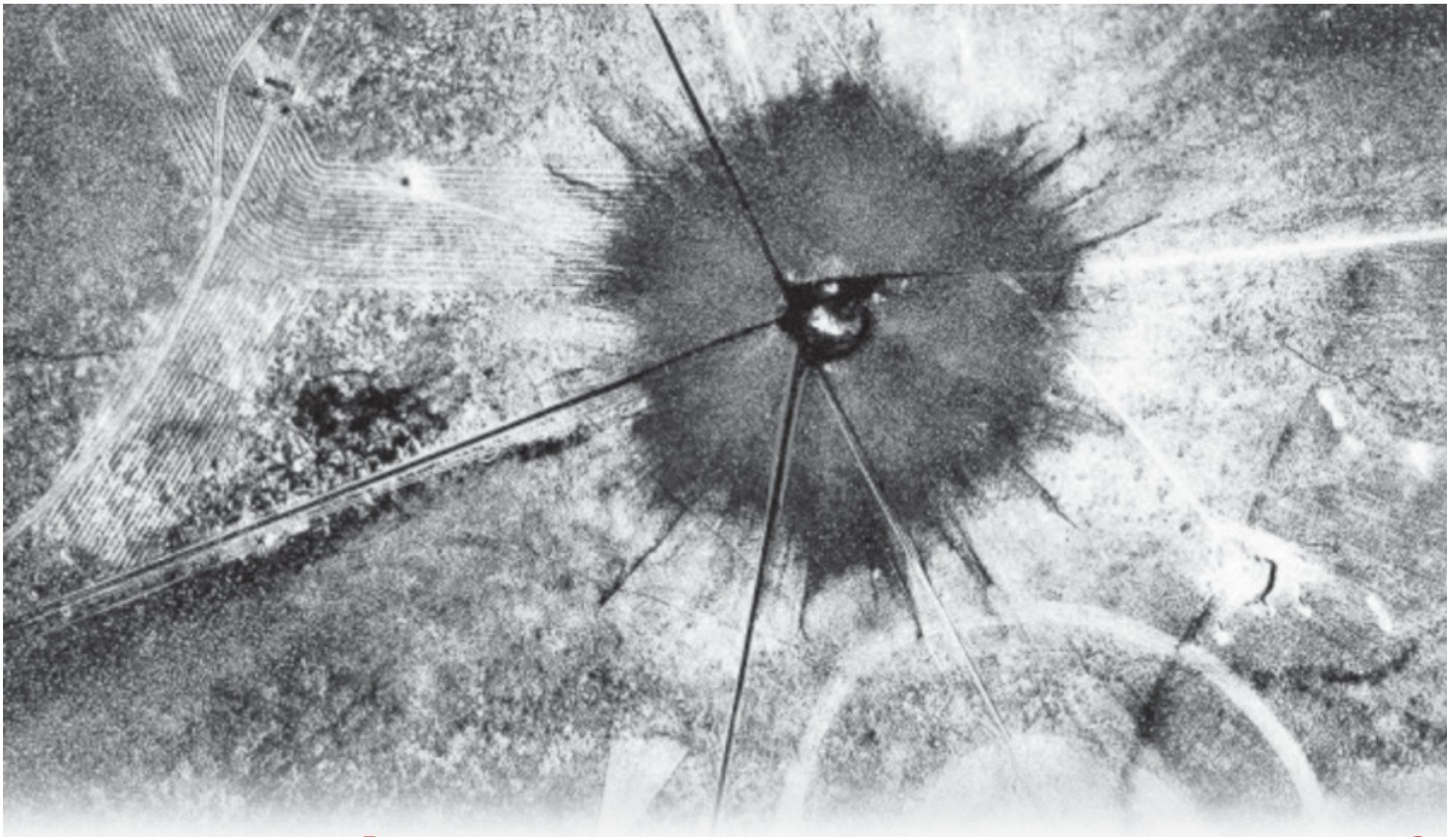
The only thing that's been consistent about the US approach in Afghanistan has been its inconsistency. There have been well-publicized talks within the White House about pulling out of Afghanistan for more than half a decade. And there have been years of futile "peace" talks with members of the Taliban, who have gained more at the negotiating table than they ever won on the battlefield. Those negotiations were also conducted almost entirely without any input from democratically elected Afghan governments. And now, after 20 years of war, the US leaves Afghanistan on the brink of where it all started: with the Taliban seemingly poised to control much of Afghanistan. Shortly after 9/11, the Bush administration sent a small contingent of US Special Forces



and CIA officers into Afghanistan to root out the al-Qaeda leaders who'd planned the attack on the US. Backed by massive US airpower and allied to large Afghan militias, they overthrew the Taliban in just three months. It was one of the great victories of American unconventional warfare, but securing the peace proved harder than overthrowing the regime, a lesson that the US would relearn in Iraq in 2003 (Bush again) and in Libya in 2011

(this time, President Barack Obama).

After the overthrow of the Taliban, then-US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who died on Tuesday, wanted to keep a small footprint in Afghanistan. The initial deployment of American soldiers to Afghanistan was one of the smallest per capita peacekeeping forces of any US post-conflict deployment since World War II. Rumsfeld was also fixated on Iraq.



Peace Prize For The Nuclear Bomb?

The nuclear bomb has contributed to peace for over 75 years where the United Nations has failed.

The nuclear bomb was first used for one of the biggest terrorist actions in the history of humankind. As per the definition given by the UN panel, on March 17, 2005, terrorism is as any act "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants to intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act." The purpose of bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and 9th of 1945, that killed millions of civilians instantly, and killed many more painfully over the years, was only to intimidate the Japanese government into submission. It was indeed the most gruesome act of terrorism in the history of humans. So then why should I be seeking a global recognition for the contributions made toward world peace by the nuclear bomb? It is because the Bomb (referring to the nuclear bomb) was arguably the key deterrent for stopping the outbreak of any large scale global conflict since 1945. There has not been a repeat of the intense savagery of World War II that was played out in Europe and in other places of the world, driven by power-hungry western nations. We have had smaller conflicts around the world, but we have not had any major global flare-ups. Even at the peak of the cold war between the USA and its allies and the Russian bloc, the Bomb ensured that the war stayed cold, and never heat up, except for small proxy wars in places such as Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and so on. The closest that the world came to a global war breaking out, was the Bay of Pigs - Cuban missiles crisis incident, and there too, the threat of mutual destruction due to the Bomb, ensured that better senses prevailed. One may argue, that it was not the Bomb but the effective operationalization of the United Nations that really prevented any major conflicts. That would be naïve at best. The United Nations was conceived from the ashes of the League of Nations that was formed after World War I, to prevent another World War. The institutional structure of the League of Nations itself ensured that all nations do not have an equal voice, and hence it fell like a house of cards as the Japanese representative walked out with a single phrase - "Japan rejects". This was the rejection of the commission of inquiry report that found Japan to be in violation of the League's Covenant for its invasion of Manchuria. Also, the then powers were reluctant or incapable of imposing any sanctions on Japan. The Japanese rejection of the commission of inquiry report led to a series of events that led to the collapse of the League of Nations, coinciding with World War II. If we look at the United Nations as it stands today, tiny nations such as UK and France are permanent members of the supposedly powerful UN Security Council, while nations such as India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Brazil, which together constitutes over a quarter of global population, are pretty much kept at the fringes. Even from a GDP perspective, it leaves out India and Japan, who have two times and three times the GDP of Russia respectively. There are clearly fault lines in the institutional structure of the UN. The UN bodies are also susceptible to "capturing", as has been the murmurings on the various bodies of the UN, with the WHO being a case in point. The WHO's dealing of the Wuhan pandemic, and its unnatural pandering to China's untenable narratives on the Wuhan virus, exposed how a UN body can be compromised. Scrutinizing the report card of the UN more closely, it was unable to stop the annexation of Tibet, by China. It was unable to stop the Iran-Iraq wars or the North Korea-South Korea wars or the Ethiopia-Somalia conflicts or the Kosovo conflict or many of the smaller wars all over the world. It was also unable to stop the marching of US troops twice into Iraq and once into Afghanistan. The only pattern that one sees in these wars is that they were all between either non-nuclear nations or where one of the nations involved in the conflict was non-nuclear. Nuclear nations did not go to war with each other, till we had the Kargil war between Indian and Pakistan. And even the Kargil war did not flare up to a full-fledged war due to the overbearing threat of a nuclear war. So clearly, the UN has not been able to fulfil its role of preventing conflicts, whereas the nuclear bomb appears to have been extremely effective in preventing conflicts. In fact, had it not been for the nuclear bomb, perhaps the UN itself would have collapsed by now, pretty much like its predecessor, the League of Nations. Thus, we have not had any hot World War for over 75 years, perhaps thanks to the terrible nuclear bomb. Even the recent aggression by nuclear China on nuclear India, which led to many soldiers dying on both sides in hand-to-hand combat, has possibly been brought under control due to the threat of the conflict escalating into a nuclear conflict. In fact, China's strategy of snatching territories from its neighbours through salami cuts, is designed to keep the conflict below the nuclear threshold and be able to get away with the territory snatching. Had it not been for the nuclear bomb, we would have seen bigger misadventurism from irresponsible global powers such as China, which would have quickly degenerated into another world war.



Looking to Buy/Sell ?

We know the difference between Home & House

Honesty, Integrity & Experience



Specializing in Investment & Income Producing Real Estate

Nlight Real Estate

Tel: 516 NLIGHT8



Sharanjit Singh Thind
Real Estate Broker/Notary Public



180 Broadway, PH 3A, Hicksville NY 11801

Email: homes@nlightrealestate.com

www.nlightrealestate.com





Why India Needs A Plastic Recycling Revolution

The huge volumes of leakages in plastic wastes demands a clarion call for a recycling revolution in the country.

The huge volumes of leakages in plastic wastes demands a clarion call for a recycling revolution in the country. India launched a nationwide awareness campaign on Single Use Plastics on World Environment Day this June. The message from the environment minister was clear, "Plastic per se is not a problem, it is uncollected plastic waste that is". While India prepares to phase out single use plastics, the message from the environment minister made an important point. Plastics are going to stay with us as not all plastics are bad. Only certain plastics which cannot be recycled gets dumped un-managed. Same is true for any material that has little recycling potential in the region in which it is generated. India's recycling rates are low viz-a-viz the volumes of waste it generates. As per Material Recycling Association (MRAI) India's recycling rates stands at 30%[1]. The data associated with this recycling rate is largely dominated by highly recyclable materials such as ferrous & non-ferrous scrap, paper,



rubber, and tyre etc. Recycling of materials such as plastics is not very well documented. The litter that we see around and India's policy focus on plastic waste are indicators of the fact that this resource is at the bottom of the chart in recycling rates. Recycling of plastics is largely informal. The Number of plastic

recyclers is small in the country and not very well documented. India's apex authority on pollution control, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in its annual report of 2018-19 estimated that India generated about 13 Lakh tonnes of plastics annually. Same report said that the country has about 5000 registered plastics

manufacturing/recycling units and about 1000 unregistered units. Many states did not report number of recyclers available and none of the states reported what is the installed capacity of these plastic recycling units[2]. There is a saying that what gets measured, gets managed. The huge volumes of leakages in plastic wastes

demands a clarion call for a recycling revolution in the country. India historically has been a resource smart country. Technology to convert organic waste to biogas dates back 70-80 years in the country. More recent example is recycling of Construction and Demolition Waste. The first C&D waste recycling plant came into operations about 7 years before the C&D waste rules were notified in 2016. The long history of poverty and thrive to develop from limited available financial resources has made the populace doing more with less. Recycling supports this frugal approach. Policy wise India is very well placed. The 2016 rules and subsequent amendments were made in the right direction. All that is needed is the right implementation of these rules. India needs to shift its focus to seeing waste as a resource and develop technology around utilisation of these resources which are leaking in the environment and haunting us back with diseases.

The price of petrol crossed 100 per litre in Delhi on July 7; it is now more than 100 in all metros

The price of petrol crossed ₹100 per litre in Delhi on July 7; it is now more than ₹100 in all metros. It is true that crude prices have increased significantly over the last one year. The average price of Brent crude has increased from \$43.3 per barrel in July 2020 to \$75.29 on July 7. However domestic taxes, especially the ones imposed by the Union government, are also to blame. Of the ₹98.87 per litre cost of petrol in Delhi on July 1 (latest date for which price data is available), the price charged to dealers and their commission accounted for only ₹43.15 per litre. Union excise duties and state value-added tax contributed ₹32.9 and ₹22.82 per litre respectively. The actual tax component, once customs duties are included, will be higher. Both the Union and state governments raised taxes on petroleum products when international crude prices crashed due to the pandemic

A negative stimulus



last year. This was a wise thing to do back then. Other sources of revenue collapsed due to the 68-day-long national lockdown, imposed to curb the spread of the pandemic. But since crude prices were lower, the retail price burden did not increase. Neither of these conditions holds anymore. The Union government has been claiming that the economy is recovering. Crude prices have risen

significantly, leading to a sharp spike in prices, pushing inflation and economic distress. Contrary to perceived wisdom, rising petrol-diesel prices do not just impact the rich. A 2014 petroleum ministry survey shows that 60% of petrol is used by two-wheelers. The price of diesel has a cascading impact via transportation cost and cost of cultivation in agriculture. With the prevailing

uncertainty around the OPEC+ deal on increasing crude production and surging demand in advanced economies, oil prices are expected to remain high, even rise further. So, unless the government decides to bring down taxes, there will be even higher retail prices, surging inflation and greater economic hardship. The government might be tempted to not cut taxes due

to revenue considerations. However, it will do well to realise that its current fiscal approach is tantamount to a negative fiscal stimulus, as high petroleum prices are squeezing household budgets. This will generate headwinds for both future growth and tax collections. Cutting taxes on petrol-diesel to bring down prices at the moment is not just good politics, it is good economics as well.

Abide by the SC's verdict on Section 66A

In 2019, the SC asked the chief secretaries and director generals of police of all states and Union Territories to publicise the judgment.

But the Act continued to be used to deny citizens their constitutional right of free speech



The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday said it was "shocking" and "distressing" that

there was a fivefold increase in the registration of cases under Section 66A of the Information

Technology Act though it quashed the provision in 2015. The petitioner, People's Union for

Civil Liberties (PUCL), informed the court that while there were 229 cases pending in 11 states when the law was scrapped, in the next seven years, 1,307 cases were added. Section 66A authorised the police to arrest people for social media posts construed as "offensive" or "menacing". Attorney General, KK Venugopal, appearing on behalf of the Centre, said that the section is still there in the statute, with only a footnote saying that it has been struck down, and, so, police officers fail to notice it. He suggested the section be marked as "struck down" next to where it is mentioned in the Act, and the footnote must also read that the provision does not exist anymore. The registration of cases under the scrapped

section is indeed shocking, and could not have continued without the indirect support of the State. In 2019, the SC asked the chief secretaries and director generals of police of all states and Union Territories to publicise the judgment. But the Act continued to be used to deny citizens their constitutional right of free speech.

In his dissenting judgment in the Sabarimala case, Justice Rohinton F Nariman said that it is not the judicial authorities alone that must act in the aid of the SC; all authorities, judicial and non-judicial that exercise powers over citizens, are mandated to act in the aid of the SC. The State must now abide by the letter and spirit of the SC's order on Section 66A.

Thinking of Buying/Selling ?



WINZONE REALTY INC.



Baldev Singh

Associate Broker/Notary Public

146-20 34 av. Flushing NY 11354

Cell : 917-224-7395

Email : josanbaldev@yahoo.com



It's time for political decisions

A little over two years after the 2019 elections, which delivered a resounding verdict in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and dealt yet another blow to the Congress, both the government and the Opposition have tough political choices to make

A little over two years after the 2019 elections, which delivered a resounding verdict in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and dealt yet another blow to the Congress, both the government and the Opposition have tough political choices to make. For Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, based on political considerations and governance requirements, expanding and reshuffling his council of ministers has become imperative. For the Congress, any further delay in deciding on the leadership question, in the party organisation as well as the parliamentary grouping in Lok Sabha, will only erode its already depleted political standing. Events of the past year have shown that while the BJP's national political hegemony is largely intact, it is increasingly facing questions about its governance capabilities in the backdrop of the pandemic. The party also has to get back to the political chessboard, with an eye on the Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat assembly elections in particular. The BJP is also keen to portray the National Democratic Alliance as a more inclusive platform to dispel the impression that the party is bereft of allies. All these considerations will be weighing heavily on the PM. But given that there has been a buzz about cabinet expansion for weeks now, and this has generated uncertainty among sitting ministers as well as the larger political ecosystem, it would be prudent to act soon and infuse India's governance apparatus with a new lease of energy. For the Congress, the challenge is more acute. Sorting out organisational leadership is essential. The party president, Sonia Gandhi, wants to opt out of active politics. Rahul Gandhi is in charge in practice but not on paper. While there are murmurs that he is now willing to come back as party president, some in the Congress believe status quo can continue till next year. This would be a mistake, and irrespective of who the party chooses, an early decision will help. A more immediate concern is the appointment of the party's leader in the Lok Sabha, amid reports that the incumbent, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, is on his way out. The new leader must have the ability to work with other Opposition parties but also be able to command respect and effectively articulate the party's position, in Parliament and outside. What is clear is that decisions taken by both the government and the Opposition in the next few weeks will have an impact on national politics in the run-up to 2024.

Stan Swamy: A systemic failure

Eight months after he was arrested under the Unlawful (Activities) Prevention Act (UAPA), Father Stan Swamy, an activist who worked with tribals in Jharkhand, died on Monday. The 84-year-old died of cardiac arrest, but had a history of illness, including Parkinson's and a recent Covid-19 infection. But this must not be treated as a natural death. His death is an outcome of India's disturbing political climate, where civil society activists are painted as anti-national and the law is abused for partisan purposes. It is an outcome of politicised investigative agencies, which now face allegations of having planted evidence in the broader case (Bhima Koregaon-Elgar Parishad) where Swamy was an accused. And it is an outcome of a broken judicial system which has developed its own extreme brand of bail jurisprudence, where even those who are entitled to it on humanitarian grounds and pose no threat are kept in prison. The fundamental problem is political illiberalism. And this spans ideological lines. The Congress came up with the draconian anti-terror legislative frameworks, did not hesitate to charge protesters with sedition (remember Kudankulam), and deployed State surveillance on political rivals and civil society leaders. But the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government has built on this, making UAPA even more draconian and showing a deep distrust of civil society. Politically uncomfortable with assertive Ambedkarite and subaltern politics, the government often clubs activism on Dalit and tribal issues within the democratic framework with being a Maoist. The Bhima Koregaon case, where some of India's finest public-spirited individuals such as Sudha Bharadwaj (arrested in August 2018) and Anand Teltumbde (arrested in April 2020) have been in prison, rests on weak evidence. The National Investigative Agency (NIA) is India's premier counter-terrorist body. But in this case, despite no incriminating evidence of Swamy's complicity in violence, and based on flimsy charges, NIA not just arrested him but opposed his bail and didn't factor in his age and health. The NIA special court rejected his bail petitions, including on the grounds that "collective interests of society", a vague, legally untenable category, must prevail over personal liberty and didn't enable his medical care early on.

Insurance



**Are you paying too much for Auto,
Home, Business, Workman
Compensation, Contractors,
General Liability, E&O ?**

Call us today for complimentary analysis of your policy.



Sharanjit Singh Thind
Licensed P&C Insurance Broker/ Notary Public
(Service with Honesty & Smile, Since 2012)

Tel: 917 671 9262

insure@nlightfin.com www.nlightfin.com

Dilip Kumar's tryst with life, death and the camera

In an industry where actors and stars work in thousands of films and still go into oblivion, Dilip Kumar's trajectory was unique. He acted in just 62 films in his entire career spanning over 54 years, from Jwar Bhatta in 1944 till his last film, Qila, in 1998

"Hum ghar aai gyee, Munna, I am home Munna", these final words uttered by Dilip Kumar in Ganga Jamuna, released in 1961, have been etched into the heart and soul of his fans, and remains one of the most iconic death scenes of Bollywood. Kumar's fans were taken by surprise to see him as a playful village bumpkin who turns into the first angry young man of Indian cinema. But even before Ganga Jamuna, Dilip Kumar had an association with death. As the ill-fated, doomed lover of Devdas, released in 1955, Kumar gets down at Pandua Station and pleaded with the bullock cart driver: "Maanik pur chaloge, will you go to Maanikpur?" The bullock cart driver refuses and tells him to go in the morning as the night was dark, the road was rough, and the village was quiet far. But Devdas has to see his Paro, his sweetheart, before breathing his last. "Mere pas itna samay nahin hai Bhai, I don't have so much time,"

Kumar insists, aware that he was suffering from tuberculosis and had only a couple of hours left to live. As he sits in that bullock cart, he moves towards death at every passing moment, and finally dies at the Paro's doorstep, early in the morning. The audience was left heartbroken in cinema halls seeing their hero die in such a painful manner. That was reel life. The eternal moments of death got frozen in real life on the morning of July 7, 2021 at Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai when Dilip Kumar's flirtations with death ended after a long illness of many years. Only this time, he was unable to feel the consternation of death as he was suffering from Alzheimer's. In an industry where actors and stars work in thousands of films and still go into oblivion, Dilip Kumar's trajectory was unique. He acted in just 62 films in his entire career spanning over 54 years, from Jwar Bhatta in 1944 till his last film, Qila, in 1998.

Despite a limited body of work, what was it about Dilip Kumar that made him earn so much reverence? Why do we call him a thespian? Why is he known as an institute of acting? What made him reach the zenith of his craft leaving an indelible mark on the history of Indian Cinema? These were the questions which triggered me to watch his films again and again, and begin writing a book decoding his craft. In my understanding, the magic of his enigmatic personality lies in his chosen path of a renegade actor who deviated from the theatrical stiffness of his predecessors to realistic method acting. Method acting is a technique in which an actor emotionally inhabits the role he plays on screen. Few people might know that years before the debut of Hollywood's pioneering method actor Marlon Brando, Dilip Kumar had treaded on the path of method acting in Mela and Shaheed in 1948. In Devdas, he would spend his nights on the studio bench



after pack-up to look as tired and worn out as a dejected lover on the next day while shooting. Dilip Kumar evolved himself into a brand of acting school of sorts and this is something even his contemporaries acknowledged without hesitation. While shooting for Premroo, Rishi Kapoor was unable to give a particular expression that his father-director Raj Kapoor wanted from him. After many retakes, Raj Kapoor screamed from behind the camera, "Chintu, mujhe yahan Yusuf Chahiye, Yusuf...I want Yusuf (Dilip Kumar) here, Yusuf." Rishi Kapoor, who was called Chintu, understood what his father wanted and the shot was finally okayed. What a creative tribute from one legend to another, and a salute to Dilip

Kumar's acumen as an actor that earned him the titles of thespian, tragedy king, Abhinay Samrat (the emperor of acting) and Shahnshah e Jazbaat (the emperor of emotion). Apart from cinema, Dilip Kumar also conducted himself as a responsible Indian citizen. He organized many processions to raise funds for flood victims. During the India-China War in 1962, he not only helped in raising funds but also reached the border to entertain our soldiers along with Mohammed Rafi. During the India-Pakistan war in 1965, along with Dev Anand and Raj Kapoor, he raised funds for war widows. Apart from running an NGO for the blind, Dilip Kumar was an active supporter of film industry workers and junior artists.

The key to getting all eligible Indians vaccinated

The need of the hour is to implement a comprehensive, coordinated, and coherent strategy - anchored in the principles of social and behaviour change communication



A submicroscopic infectious agent - Covid-19 - has shaken our planet. The world watched in horror as the second wave wreaked havoc in India - with people gasping for oxygen, funeral pyres in makeshift lots, bodies buried on the banks of the holy Ganges. The unfolding narrative brought into sharp focus an ill-prepared nation - marked by stark disparities and inequities; a befuddled citizenry whipped by the vortex of grieving devastation, longing for coherence, and not finding it. The past aside, India's need of the hour is to implement a comprehensive, coordinated, and coherent strategy - anchored in the principles and practices of social and behaviour change communication (SBCC). For this, India is aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) - it has the experience, ability, and vital capacities to implement an SBCC strategy, creating an informed and engaged citizenry that seeks vaccinations, while

complying with all Covid-19 appropriate behaviour (CAB) - hand hygiene, masking, distancing, and others. However, across the country, there remains the issue of vaccine hesitancy. A quick dipstick exercise was co-facilitated by the Advisory Group on Community Action (AGCA) members and the AGCA secretariat team housed at Population Foundation of India. Conducted in 37 districts across seven states - Bihar, Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan - it brought to light various misplaced beliefs and myths. One, many community members believe that vaccination can lead to extreme sickness and death. Two, tribal communities

believe that Covid-19 is a problem of the urban elite, and so, they will be unaffected. Three, some communities believe that vaccination is a measure to control the population, falsely believing that it leads to infertility and impotency. Four, the government is paying huge sums of money to Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) to get people vaccinated. To tackle falsehoods, bust myths and ensure that the entire eligible population of the country is vaccinated, what considerations should drive its SBCC strategy? Here are some ideas that are concrete, implementable, and have the potential for success. First, any SBCC strategy should identify "positive deviants" - i.e; communities or individuals that

have already solved a Covid-19 problem with no extra resources, and while overcoming great odds. Janefal, a village in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district, represents a positive deviant (PD) case. "Positive" since National Geographic reported that it has vaccinated 100% of its eligible citizens with the first dose, and "deviant" because it represents a statistical exception. How did Janefal counter rumours to vaccinate all its residents? A task force was established of local stakeholders, including government officials, the village head, village council members, ASHA workers, and volunteers. All eligible citizens were identified and mapped, and a micro-plan was prepared to guide home visits.

Governance needed urgently



Tavleen Singh writes: It is intriguing that recent polls give Narendra Modi higher approval ratings than any other leader in the world, but when you actually talk to ordinary Indians, they say that they no longer trust him

mother got sick, so he had been forced to buy oxygen from 'private sources' because he was afraid that his mother would not survive without it. To all the people I interviewed, I asked one question: Who did they blame for what had happened? With one exception in Delhi, they said: Modi. The exception was a BJP supporter who blamed Arvind Kejriwal.

It is intriguing that recent polls give Narendra Modi higher approval ratings than any other leader in the world, but when you actually talk to ordinary Indians, they say that they no longer trust him. Many said that they had voted for him in both general elections because they believed him when he said that he would bring change and prosperity to India. Their faith that this will ever happen has died.

Is this the reason why BJP spokesmen and Modi devotees sound so hysterical these days? Last week a BJP spokeswoman

ordered Rajdeep Sardesai on his own show to 'not interrupt' as she shrieked 'India had now vaccinated more people than the entire population of the United States.' He was 'interrupting' to point out to her that India has a population that is more than three times larger. It is not just BJP spokesmen who seem gripped by hysteria, it is also senior ministers. They seem not to realise that shouting frenziedly in defence of the Prime Minister makes their case worse, not better.

Modi himself appears to live on some higher plane like those rishis of yore. It is not just his new long hair and beard that give this impression, but his demeanor. Except that one time when his eyes welled up, he comes across now more like a religious leader than a Prime Minister. When he shares his thoughts in his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' it is more often these days to speak in sage-like tones of

how mankind should find spiritual strength. If he came out of virtual reality into the real world, he may find that people are not hurting spiritually but mentally and physically. When things get as bad as they have been for the past three months there is little time for the pursuit of spiritual strength. Instead of worrying about our spiritual wellbeing, the Prime Minister needs to worry about how his government can help people who have lost loved ones, their savings, their businesses and their jobs. Every time the Finance Minister pops up virtually, she announces grandiose sums of money that have supposedly been spent on helping those who have been devastated by the pandemic. But if she stepped into a real village she may find that most people have been forced to fend for themselves without any help from the government. In the cities there are at least hospitals, even if they are short of beds and oxygen.

From the time I started writing this column nearly 35 years ago, I have tried to mix reportage with comment and analysis. Reporting became almost impossible in the past 18 months, especially after the ferocious second wave hit in April. I was trapped in a village on the Konkan coast and the Delta variant made its way into my village and other villages on this coast, so I was unable almost to leave the house at all. Last week, I managed after weeks to get to Mumbai and the first thing I did was to try and meet people in real life to find out how they had survived and what problems they now face.

A shopkeeper said that business was so bad that his expenses

were more than his sales. A taxi driver said his daily earnings had halved and he worried about how he was going to support his family. A young man employed in the service sector said that he managed to work only 15 days in a month because his employers could not afford to pay him fully. He added that he was among the lucky ones because he knew so many who had lost their jobs. For the first time since February, I managed to take a flight and when I got to Delhi, I continued my inquiries only to find deep anger among those who had got and survived Covid. This was because of what they said was the 'criminal' shortages of oxygen and hospital beds. One young man said both he and his

Cuccinelli & Roberts: Texas tackling Biden's border crisis to save lives

Numbers matter. Illegal immigration into the U.S. - particularly across the Texas border - is at levels we haven't seen for two decades.

But the heartbreaking video that emerged earlier this month of human smugglers abandoning a 5-year-old child at the border sums up the crisis better than any statistic can. As the child screams for help, one of the people who brought him this far - for a hefty fee - simply walks away. The crisis at the border is a humanitarian one. Even as Vice President Kamala Harris continues to laugh off the crisis, far more children languish in detention centers than were ever "caged" by the Trump administration. Families remain separated, women and children continue to be trafficked into prostitution, and deadly drugs continue to flow into our country. That's why it's entirely appropriate for Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to step up, just as the Biden

administration stands down. Abbott has pledged a \$250 million down payment on the border wall in the Lone Star State. But a wall takes time and Texans need action now. Human smuggling is so lucrative for the cartels they will risk anything and anyone to keep the money flowing. If the Biden Administration won't engage, Texas should begin detaining and returning illegals back to their point of entry. Much like President Trump's "Remain in Mexico" policy, it should have a deterring effect. It could discourage many from initiating the dangerous journey in the first place, thereby saving countless lives.

This could be done by DPS troopers and local law enforcement with the assistance of Texas state military assets. Charging those who enter the U.S. illegally with aggravated trespassing - as Gov. Abbott has announced - would also protect Texans and migrants alike.

Texans bear the brunt of President Biden's negligence. During a recent trip to the border town of Del Rio, Texas, a delegation which included colleagues at the Texas Public Policy Foundation heard the story of a young woman who answered a knock at her door one morning. It was a migrant who had just crossed into the United States; he asked for water. Upon ascertaining she was home along with just some small children, he came back later and broke into the home through the back door.

Property crimes are on the rise in Val Verde County. So are high-speed chases, which are dangerous for everyone involved - even children just playing in their yards and on their streets. The Cotulla school district sent a letter home to parents warning them to "be watchful of children playing outside" because of an increase in chases and "bailouts." One Texas county



official says the border crisis constitutes a kind of invasion. "Kinney County law enforcement is overwhelmed with human smuggling and high-speed pursuits occurring along our highways and throughout our residential streets," says Kinney County Attorney Brent Smith. "Our homes are broken into in the middle of the night. Residents can no longer walk outside after dark because it is no longer safe. Words cannot adequately

describe the conditions on the ground that have resulted in the deaths of our citizens and tremendous amounts of property damage." We must stop the criminal actions at our border. Any deterrence on illegal immigration - a border wall, detention and return, criminal prosecution, the real threat of failure to cross - will save lives. And that's what our focus must be: preserving life, liberty, and the Rule of Law.



The **ONLY** temple in the world outside India
dedicated to Shri Shani Maharaj

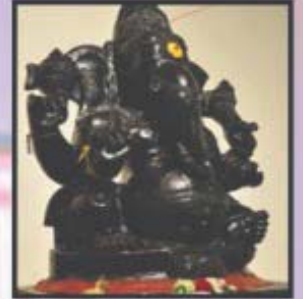
Shri SHANI DEV Mandir, New York

Sarvamangala Shri SANEESWARA Temple, New York

Regular Poojas' and Homas' are conducted on daily basis:

Special Poojas:

- + Sri Saneeswara homam
- + Sri Saneeswara - parikara pooja
- + Sri Saneeswara harati
- + Sri Navagraha Homa
- + Poornima: vrata Pooja
- + Pradosham Pooja
- + Sri Sankatahara chaturthi Pooja
- + Sri Satyanarayana Vratha
- + Birthdays / Weddings / Upanayanam & More... ..



**1616 Hillside Avenue, Temple Suits
New Hyde Park NY 11040**

Ph: 718 740 9400 / 516 358 9400

Email: temple.navagraha@gmail.com

Temple Hours: 8.00 am to 9.00 pm

The Temple entrance is in the western side parking lot behind Hot Breads & Maharajas in New Hyde Park NY

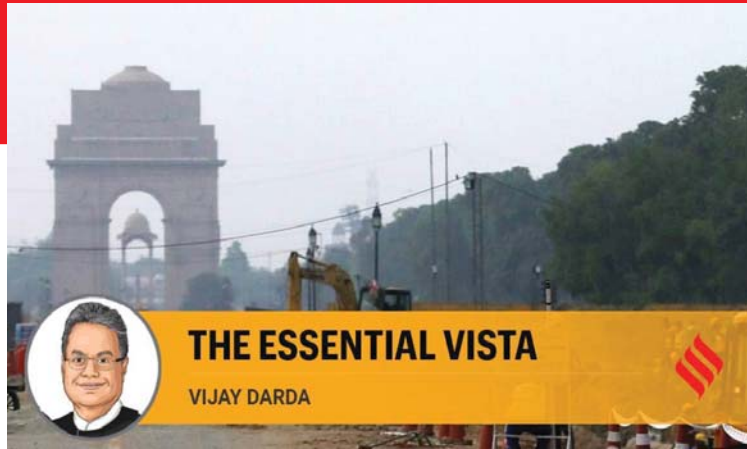
Functions of the space:

*Temple / Community Events / Senior Social Day Care Center /
Art & Music School / Library / Spiritual Lounge / Gift Shop*

www.NavagrahaUSA.com

Let's not politicise the Central Vista project

Vijay Darda writes: It's carrying out much-needed improvements, with an eye on the future.



If the Opposition just keeps trying to prove Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrong on everything, it will only weaken its own existence. The voice of the Opposition will carry weight only if its criticism or protest is constructive. Today, some people are protesting against the Central Vista project, but they should understand that the initiative to build a new Parliament building was taken by the then Lok Sabha speaker Meira Kumar during the Congress-led government in 2012. The leaders of other parties, including Atal Bihari Vajpayee, supported it. Under the Central Vista project, the offices of the vice-president, the prime minister and the 51 ministries will be housed under

one roof. MPs will have offices. All the buildings will be connected to each other. This will be an advantage from the security point of view and help get rid of the problems that people face during VIP movement. The project will cost about Rs 20,000 crore and PM Modi wants to complete most of the important work before the end of his second term in 2024. The rest will be done later. A section of society is questioning the need to spend such a huge amount on the project during the pandemic when the economy is badly hit. People are also questioning its purpose and benefits. Normally, this logic may be sound, but the completion of the Central Vista

project is important from the administrative point of view. I have been a part of the Parliament for 18 years so I have seen and understood the requirements closely. Many of these buildings are dilapidated and difficult to work in. The legislature sits in the Parliament House whereas the president, vice-president, prime minister and the officials of 51 ministries sit in different places. Rashtrapati Bhavan, Parliament House, North Block and South Block, and the National Museum building were built in 1931. After that, Nirman Bhawan, Shastri Bhawan, Udyog Bhawan, Rail Bhawan and Krishi Bhawan were constructed between 1956 and 1968. Today, 39 ministries are housed in different buildings in the Central Vista area while 12 ministries are occupying rented premises outside. The annual rent for these buildings is about Rs 1,000 crore and they are located far from the PMO and other ministries. Obviously, the administrative work gets hampered. So, is spending such

a huge amount on rent justified? Another important point is that when the buildings were built in Central Vista and its surrounding areas, there was no digitalisation, unlike today. Now, along with the security of Parliament House and the ministries, the protection of digital files also matters. Building a new complex will ensure better security for both. India is a rising power in the world today. Our priorities are changing, so it is very important that the entire central government should be accommodated in a cluster of buildings equipped with modern technology, so that ministers can easily reach out to each other, meet and interact. If the 51 ministries are closer to each other, it will definitely be a benefit from the administrative point of view. We also have to keep in mind that our population is growing, so the number of MPs will have to be increased too in the future. Keeping this in mind, the new building of Parliament House will be built on about 65,400 square metres of land,

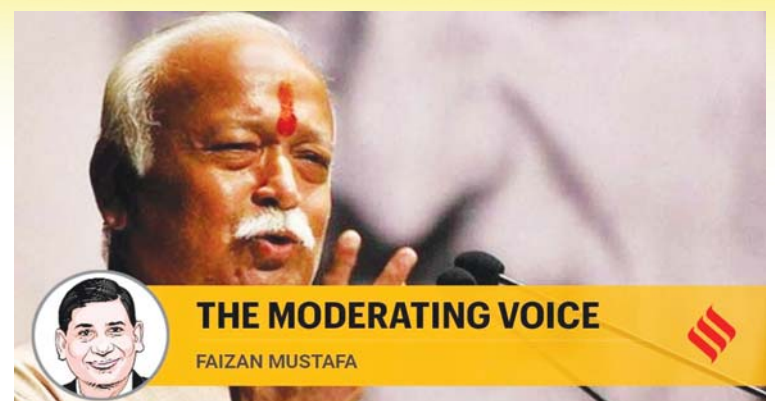
with a large Constitution Hall, a lounge for MPs, a library, offices of several committees, etc. The Lok Sabha chamber will have the capacity to seat 888 members and the Rajya Sabha chamber will be able to accommodate 384 members. Along with this, there will be ample space for the National Museum, National Archives and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and our heritage will also be displayed in a dignified manner. Those who are critical of this project say that Rs 20,000 crore should be spent on helping the poor and providing healthcare facilities during the pandemic. But is the government executing this project by diverting the funds meant for the poor or the needy? Of course not. The government is not rolling back any welfare scheme meant for the poor. All schemes are running as before. The poor must be helped and every government has been doing this. The point is that we have to plan for the future too.

Are Mohan Bhagwat's recent remarks a sign of moderation in Hindutva?

On a day when BJP's Haryana spokesperson and Karni Sena chief Suraj Pal Ammu called for Muslims to be "thrown out of this country," RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat repeated several positive statements about Muslims. Whether the consistency with which he makes such statements shows a radical change in his or the Sangh Parivar's thinking is still difficult to say. But if there is someone who can initiate perestroika in the RSS, it is Bhagwat. In a gradual manner, he has been trying to change the Sangh's attitude towards Muslims. Let us try to understand this vital and now clearly visible change. Bhagwat is an outspoken person. He speaks his mind and that, too, without any fear of retaliation from the extreme Hindu right. Lately, he has addressed the question of minorities in general and Muslims in particular. His comments do not reveal an

abrupt change of heart. In fact, the Rashtriya Muslim Manch (RMM) was formed in December 2002 under the patronage of the RSS chief K S Sudarshan and is currently led by Indresh Kumar, who, like Bhagwat, believes that when Hindus and Muslims share ancestors, culture and the motherland, there is no scope for confrontation. He rightly believes that once Hindus and Muslims understand and realise the spirit and soul of India, all the artificial barriers between the two communities would vanish. As a matter of fact, 15-17 crore Muslims cannot be thrown out of India. No NRC can exclude all of them. No country can accept them. Pakistan did not even accept the Bihari Muslims who chose to migrate to East Pakistan in 1947. How then can it accept those Indian Muslims who chose to live in a liberal and secular country rather than a feudal and theocratic Pakistan? The RMM's primary function is to

have a meaningful dialogue with the Muslim community. In order to do so, it should engage with those Muslims who are widely respected by the country as a whole. It should try to appreciate the Muslim perspective on several contentious issues. It must gain some credibility in the eyes of liberal Hindu activists and intellectuals, who enjoy much greater respect in the eyes of ordinary Muslims than their own clergy or political leaders. Speaking at an RMM event on Sunday, and, in a way, acknowledging that many Muslims today indeed live under fear, Bhagwat urged them not to get "trapped in the cycle of fear" that Islam is in danger in India. The RSS chief should also simultaneously tell Hindutva's foot soldiers and BJP leaders that Hindus, too, are not in danger at all, even if recent electoral compulsions have tried to make it a dominant political theme. Bhagwat condemned instances



of mob lynching in the strongest words, saying that such incidents "are against Hindutva" and those who indulge in it are not Hindus. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, had used similar words against acts of lynching. The RSS chief went on to assert that "the only solution to Hindu-Muslim conflict is dialogue, not discord". Snubbing those who celebrated the coming of the Modi government as the accession of a Hindu ruler after 800 years, the RSS chief boldly reiterated, "We are in a democracy. There cannot be a dominance of Hindus or

Muslims." A few months ago, in an interview to a Hindi daily, he had also asserted that the Constitution nowhere says Hindus alone can live in India or that only Hindus will have a say in this country or to live in India one has to accept the supremacy of Hindus. He also pointed out that in the battle of Haldighati (1576), fought between Mughals and Rajputs, a large number of Muslims were on the side of Maharana Pratap Singh and fought bravely against the Mughal army led by another Rajput Raja Man Singh.

Sri Lanka becomes first South Asian country to receive US-made Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines

(News Agencies)-Sri Lanka on Monday received the first batch 26,000 doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, becoming the first South Asian country to get the US-made jab.

The consignment was part of the 800,000 COVID-19 jabs to be delivered to the island nation in the next few weeks.

Health officials said that the 26,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine was the start of the 5 million Pfizer jabs expected by year end.

"Great news this morning as #SriLanka becomes the first country in South Asia to purchase a contingent of #Pfizer vaccines. I am proud of the work that is being done by my government

to ensure vaccines for all Sri Lankans. Vaccination continues throughout the country," President Gotabaya Rajapaksa tweeted. A total of five million vaccines financed through the World Bank's Sri Lanka COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Project will be supplied by December 2021, the World Bank said in its statement. "The delivery of this first batch of vaccines reflects the joint work of the government



of Sri Lanka and its partners to ensure fair access to safe and effective vaccines for Sri Lankans," Faris H. Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka said in a statement. "More vaccines are under review and will arrive by year's end," the statement said. The global financial body is giving Sri Lanka USD

298.07 million dollars through its COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Project, including an additional 80.5 million for vaccines. The vaccines are procured through the procedure established in the loan agreement signed with Sri Lanka in May 2021, the statement said. "Patient treatment capacity will be improved through the planned district-level oxygen generating plants, ensuring oxygen supplies are available to patients," the agency said. "New isolation units and ICU/High Dependency Unit facilities have been set up in secondary and tertiary hospitals. World Bank funds have also helped provide essential supplies and services to 70 COVID-19 treatment centers," it said.

COVID-19: Bangladesh extends 'strict' nationwide lockdown till July 14



(News Agencies)- Bangladesh on Monday again extended the ongoing 'strict' nationwide lockdown until July 14 in order to control the spread of COVID-19.

In a notification, the Cabinet Division said that the ongoing restrictions will remain effective until July 14 midnight. Bangladesh extended the lockdown, a day after the daily coronavirus deaths reached a record high.

On Sunday, the health authorities reported 153 deaths in a single day, the highest since the

pandemic broke out in Bangladesh last year. With the latest tally, the countrywide death toll now stands at 15,065, Dhaka Tribune reported.

Meanwhile, another 8,661 people tested positive over the 24-hour period, raising the total caseload in the country to 944,917. The daily test positivity rate in the country now stands at 28.99 per cent, Dhaka Tribune reported.

Earlier on June 30, the Cabinet Division issued a gazette notification imposing a number of restrictions as part of the lockdown measure from July 1 to July 7.

Invest in First Mortgages

**EARN 8-15%
ANNUALLY ON WELL
SECURED, SHORT TERM,
1ST MORTGAGE LOANS.
MONTHLY DIVIDENDS**

Learn about Investment Opportunities

B-1 Business Visas

EB-5 Investor Visas

Hotel - Land - Business

Investment/Partner Opportunities

For details & disclosures

WREAM

Whitestone Real Estate Asset Management Corp.

Phone: 917 612 3158 Email: whitesone1979@gmail.com

Real Estate Broker/Investor/Private Lender Since 2009



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



**Some Call us a Media House
Others call us an Institution to learn from**



**Delivering News,
uncompromised
& Unbiased for the
Last 19 years**

**Email: editor@thesouthasianinsider.com
www.thesouthasianinsider.com**

International Flights to Services to Maldives From Next Week | Check Date, Latest Guidelines

(News Agencies)-International Flights Latest News Today: Air passengers, who are waiting for a long time to fly abroad for vacations, here comes a piece of good news for you. The international flight services to Maldives will resume from next week that is July 15 as the island nation is reopening its international borders to many South Asian countries including India. Also Read - International Trip to Maldives: Flight Services to Begin From THIS Date - Check Flight Schedules, Timings And More

Giving further details, Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih had earlier said that his government will review the situation periodically between 1 and 15 July in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also Read - Planning to Travel to Canada? All You Need to Know About Latest COVID Guidelines

It must be noted that the island nation depends on tourism for



its economy and it comes as relief to many resorts and hotels across the country which rely on international travellers for their business. If you are planning to fly to Maldives this month, then here's all you need to know to plan your holiday and travel. Go First, which was known as GoAir, will operate flights from Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai to Malé starting from July 15. From these cities, Go First will

start with a twice-weekly schedule (Thursday and Sunday), add two more flights (Wednesday and Saturday) from 4 August and finally go daily from 3 September. As per the latest updates, the flight will leave Delhi at 09.50 AM, arriving in Malé at 13.20 PM. The return leg will leave Malé at 2.35 PM, landing back in Delhi by 7.05 PM. From Mumbai, the flights land in Malé

at 12.05 PM and from Bengaluru at 1.05 PM.

Visa requirement
For every tourist, Maldives offers visa on arrival. To enter Maldives, Indian nationals visiting the country as a tourist do not require any pre-arrival visa, just a valid passport is enough. The passport of Indians must have at least 1-month validity from the date of expected departure in the

Maldives. A confirmed pre-booking at a registered tourist facility is a prerequisite for the visa. Moreover, tourist visa extension facility is also available for long-stay tourists without the imposition of any further fees.

Vaccine requirement
As per the updates from the Maldives tourism ministry, international passengers are required to carry a negative RT-PCR test. Tourists will also have to submit health declaration form on the Maldives immigration portal 24 hours before departure. No mandatory quarantine or test on arrival. Those who show symptoms of COVID-19 will have to undergo a PCR test. The island nation had earlier imposed a temporary suspension of tourist visas for visitors travelling from South Asian countries since May 13. Apart from India, other countries included Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

www.humhindustanusa.com

हम हिंदुस्तानी Weekly, U.S.A.

संस्थापक संपादक : जसवीर 'जे' सिंह

Price: 50¢

फरवरी 22-28, 2019

वर्ष 9, अंक-8

मोदी का एलान-ए-जंग

बूंद-बूंद को तरसेगा पाक

नई दिल्ली ■ हम हिंदुस्तानी

गुरुवार को मोदी सरकार ने एक बड़ा ऐलान किया है। इस ऐलान के तहत मोदी सरकार ने पाकिस्तान को एक बड़ा झटका दिया है। मोदी सरकार ने पाकिस्तान को एक बड़ा झटका दिया है। मोदी सरकार ने पाकिस्तान को एक बड़ा झटका दिया है।

जहाँ बूंद आ रहा पाकिस्तान, तैयार दिग्गजों की गोलीबारी, भारत ने दिया कटाई गवाह

जसवीर सिंह

पाकिस्तान के अंतर्गत मोदी सरकार ने एक बड़ा झटका दिया है। मोदी सरकार ने पाकिस्तान को एक बड़ा झटका दिया है। मोदी सरकार ने पाकिस्तान को एक बड़ा झटका दिया है।

भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी द्वारा धर्म निंब

आइएस में शामिल हुई महिला को अमेरिका ने एंटी देने से किया इंकार

नई दिल्ली ■ हम हिंदुस्तानी

भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्युनिटी द्वारा धर्म निंब। आइएस में शामिल हुई महिला को अमेरिका ने एंटी देने से किया इंकार।

ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਅਤ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾਨ

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ PUNJABI DUNIYA Weekly

Since April 2005 Editor : Sharnjit Singh Thind

Vol. 14 Issue 15 Wednesday 02 Jan to 08 Jan, 2019 www.PUNJABDUNIYA.com Published Weekly from New York

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

ਸੱਜਣ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਸਿਧਾਂ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਚਾ-ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖੇਗਾ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ

ਨਵੇਂ ਸਾਲ ਮੌਕੇ ਅਮਰੀਕੀ ਫੌਜ ਨੇ ਬੰਬ ਦਾ ਟਵੀਟ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮੰਗੀ ਮੁਆਫ਼ੀ

ਗੁਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਖਾਲਿਸਤਾਨ ਲਿਬਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਫੋਰਸ ਦੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਾਈ

Insurance Business, Liability, Disability, Workers Comp., E & O, Auto, Home, 917-612-3158 www.whitestonecorpusa.com

Rajapaksa family tightens grip on crisis-hit Sri Lanka

(News Agencies)-A cent contraction for 2020, the worst since independence from Britain in 1948. Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Thursday (July 8) became finance minister, tightening the family's grip on power in the South Asian nation as it confronts growing economic troubles.

Mr Basil Rajapaksa, 70, took over the finance portfolio from another brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.

The 72-year-old President has put Mr Mahinda Rajapaksa in charge of a newly created but lower level economic policies and planning ministry.

Mr Mahinda Rajapaksa, 75, was the country's president for a decade up to 2015, and Mr Basil Rajapaksa, who is known as the family's political strategist, managed the economy then. Mr Basil Rajapaksa takes charge now after the economy recorded a coronavirus-inflicted 3.6 per



cent contraction for 2020, the worst since independence from Britain in 1948.

With his entry, the cabinet

headed by Mr Gotabaya Rajapaksa now has five members of the Rajapaksa family.

Eldest brother Chamal Rajapaksa, 78, is minister of irrigation while the prime

minister's eldest son Namal, 35, is the youth and sports minister. Several Rajapaksa family members hold junior minister positions and other key positions in the administration.

Mr Basil Rajapaksa was described as "Mr Ten Per cent" in a 2007 United States Embassy cable published by the WikiLeaks organisation because of commissions he allegedly took from government contracts. He has denied any wrongdoing and inquiries failed to find any evidence to back charges he syphoned off millions of dollars from state coffers.

As a dual US-Sri Lankan citizen, Mr Basil Rajapaksa was prohibited from standing in the 2020 election, but Mr Gotabaya Rajapaksa removed constitutional provisions that prevented his entry to the legislature.

Taliban launch assault on Afghan provincial capital Qala-i-Naw



(News Agencies)-The Taliban on Wednesday (July 7) launched their first assault on a provincial capital in Afghanistan since waging a major offensive against government forces, local officials said.

Fierce fighting erupted in the western city of Qala-i-Naw, the capital of Badghis, after the militants captured all the surrounding districts of the province.

"The enemy has entered the city, all the districts have fallen. The fighting has started inside the city," Badghis governor Hessamuddin Shams told

reporters in a text message. Badghis provincial council chief Abdul Aziz Bek confirmed the fighting in the city.

He told AFP that some security officials surrendered to the Taliban during the night.

Provincial council member Zia Gul Habibi said the Taliban were inside the police headquarters of the city and local office of the country's spy agency National Directorate of Security.

"The provincial council officials have fled to an army camp in the city. Fighting continues in the city," she added.

**TEXT AND
WHATEVER
JUST
DON'T
TEXT
AND**



STOPTEXTSSTOPWRECKS.ORG



WE THANK OUR CUSTOMERS FOR THEIR TRUST & LOYALTY

28 YEARS OF EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE



INDO US EXPRESS, INC.

HICKSVILLE, NEW YORK

WORLDWIDE COURIER FREIGHT-FORWARDER

DOMESTIC & LOCAL DELIVERY

CALL US AT: 212-447-5720 or FAX 516-932-3750

ALTERNATE NUMBER: 347-538-7041

OR EMAIL US: INDOUSEXPRESS@GMAIL.COM

www.indousexpress.com

GREAT SERVICE, 7 DAYS A WEEK, 365 DAYS A YEAR!

AUTHORIZED AGENT FOR:

UPS - FedEx - DHL - USPS - Amazon

CALL ABOUT OUR SPECIAL RATES

TO & FROM INDIA/WORLDWIDE



Joe Biden to deliver major policy speech on Afghanistan: White House

The White House has said that US President Joe Biden will deliver a major policy speech about the drawdown of troops from Afghanistan on Thursday.

US President Joe Biden will deliver a major policy speech on Afghanistan on Thursday and an update on the drawdown of troops after a meeting with his national security team on the conflict-ridden country, the White House has said.

"Tomorrow morning, President Biden will meet with his national security team to receive a periodic update on the progress of our military drawdown from Afghanistan," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Wednesday.

"Early tomorrow afternoon, the President will make comments on our continued drawdown efforts

and ongoing security and humanitarian assistance to the ANDSF (Afghan National Defence and Security Forces) and the Afghan people," Psaki said.

Biden told reporters at the White House that he would talk about the drawdown of troops from Afghanistan on Thursday.

One of the reasons that the President made the decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan is because he does not feel there's a military solution for a 20-year war, Psaki told reporters aboard Air Force One.

"He has long felt there was not a military solution. Diplomatic negotiations," she said.

"Two, as he reiterated when Afghan leaders were here just a couple of weeks ago, we will continue to provide humanitarian assistance, security assistance. We intend to continue to have a diplomatic presence on the ground in Kabul, even after we bring the servicemen and women home at the end of August. So, that is a mechanism for that," she said. The United States will continue to work with partners in the region to plan for its own counter-terrorism preparations. State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters that the US is aware that Iran hosted talks with the Taliban.



"We are of course aware that Iran has hosted a meeting between the Taliban and the Islamic Republic. Negotiating teams, this is what we've always said, that Afghanistan's neighbours and countries in the region, they too have a stake in Afghanistan's future. They need to use their influence in ways that are

positive, in ways that are constructive, in ways that promote the cause of peace, in ways that support the people of Afghanistan," he said.

"We know that regional consensus and support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process, it's important for an enduring peace.

Bangladesh sees record 201 single-day COVID deaths as cases surge



(News Agencies)- Bangladesh reported 201 COVID-19 deaths on Wednesday, the highest single-day toll since the pandemic started in March last year. It was for the first time that

the death toll had crossed the 200-mark in a 24-hour cycle in the South Asian nation of some 165 million people, taking the total death count to 15,593.

The previous single-day high of

164 deaths was recorded on Monday. The first week of July saw 1,090 deaths, which is also the highest in any week during the pandemic in the country.

A total of 11,162 people were also diagnosed with the disease in the past 24 hours, taking the total tally to 9,77,568, officials said on Wednesday.

With coronavirus cases and deaths hitting new records, Bangladesh extended on Monday a strict nationwide lockdown by another week.

The Delta variant of the coronavirus, first identified in neighbouring India, is behind the surge in infections in Bangladesh, overwhelming its healthcare

system and raising fears of a medical oxygen crisis.

The variant hit Bangladesh's border regions in the northern and southwestern regions last month and is now spreading fast in urban and rural areas across the country. Tahmina Shirin, director of capital Dhaka-based Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) told Al Jazeera that they found the Delta variant in 78 percent of the total samples they sequenced in the past month. The IEDCR first detected the Delta variant in Bangladesh on May 8. In the next month, they found that the variant already had community transmission in the country.

While the bordering districts with India, including Dinajpur, Chapainawabganj, Pirojpur, Khulna and Satkhira first witnessed the proliferation of the Delta variant, it has now started dominating the transmission in Dhaka, as well, said Shirin.

"We believe the strict lockdown has helped to slow down the spreading of Delta variant but it has not been able to stop it completely," she said.

Shirin said people who had taken two vaccine shots against the coronavirus were also found to be infected with the Delta variant. "Still our best chance against fighting this variant is to get fully vaccinated," she said.

'Baseless propaganda': India on Pak claim on Lahore attack role

India on Thursday dismissed as "baseless propaganda" Pakistan's claim that a bombing in Lahore last month was masterminded by India's Research & Analysis Wing, and said that Pakistan should instead focus on rooting out terrorism emanating from its soil. Pakistan's National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf contended on Sunday that the "main mastermind" of the car bomb attack near Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) founder Hafiz Saeed's home in Lahore on June 23 belonged to RAW. Yusuf also accused India of sponsoring terror activity on Pakistani soil.

Asked about these allegations at a weekly news briefing, external affairs

ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said: "It is not new for Pakistan to engage in baseless propaganda against India."



Bagchi added, "Pakistan would do well to expend the same effort in setting its own house in order and taking credible and verifiable action against terrorism emanating from its soil and terrorists who

have found safe sanctuaries there." The world community, he said, is "well aware of Pakistan's credentials when it comes to terrorism". Bagchi said, "This is acknowledged by none other than its own leadership which continues to glorify terrorists like Osama bin Laden as martyrs." The remark was an apparent reference to Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's refusal to answer a question during an interview last month on whether he considered slain al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden a "martyr". Three people were killed and more than 20 others injured in the car bombing near Hafiz Saeed's home at Johar Town in Lahore last month. No

group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack. Pakistan's NSA Yusuf told a news conference on Sunday that there allegedly links to India in the financing and execution of the attack. However, he didn't provide any detailed information to back up his contentions, and only said that Pakistan had gathered "concrete evidence and intelligence" in this regard. Yusuf, who addressed the media along with Pakistan's information minister Fawad Chaudhry and Punjab police chief Inam Ghani, further claimed that reports of a drone attack on the Jammu air force station last month were an apparent attempt to deflect the world community's attention from the car bombing in Lahore.

Biden faces 'moment of reckoning' over sprawling Russian cyberassault

senior Biden administration officials face a more daunting challenge: pressuring Russian President Vladimir Putin to crack down on criminals such as the REvil gang that took credit for infecting Kaseya with ransomware.

After two ransomware attacks snarled the U.S. gasoline and meat supplies in May, Biden vowed to "take action," potentially through the United States' "significant cyber capability," if Russia continued to shelter ransomware gangs in violation of international norms. But REvil's holiday-weekend breach of hundreds or thousands of companies, from Kaseya to its own customers to those firms' clients, suggests that Putin didn't take Biden's threat seriously.

As details continued to emerge about the range of companies hacked through the Kaseya operation, Biden and his appointees declined to say whether the attack had crossed any sort of red line and remained vague about the administration's next steps.

"It appears to have caused minimal damage to U.S. businesses but we're still gathering information to the full extent of the attack," Biden told reporters Tuesday, while promising to "have more to say about this in the next several days."

"I feel good about our ability to be able to respond," he added. Earlier Tuesday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters that U.S. and Russian officials have discussed the Kaseya attack at a "high level" and plan to meet next week to discuss ransomware.

"If the Russian government cannot or will not take action against criminal actors [residing] in Russia, we will take action ... on our own," she said.

Biden on Wednesday will "convene key leaders" from multiple agencies, including the departments of State, Justice and Homeland Security and the intelligence community, "to discuss ransomware and our overall strategic efforts to counter it," Psaki said.

That response is unlikely to



satisfy policymakers who say only bold action can deliver the wakeup call that Putin needs to receive.

"We're facing a moment of reckoning when it comes to deterrence," House Homeland Security ranking member John Katko (R-N.Y.) told the Daily Mail on Monday. "Adversaries like Russia are creating safe havens for bad actors and we must project strength."

So far, the Kaseya attack appears to be different from May's digital strikes on Colonial Pipeline and the meatpacking giant JBS, at least in one key aspect: it has not affected the critical infrastructure facilities, such as power plants or hospitals, that Biden declared off-limits in his June 16 meeting with Putin in Geneva.

In fact, no major U.S. business has yet been identified among the many victims of the Kaseya breach. The most visible impact to date has been the shutdown of a Swedish supermarket chain. That also sets this attack apart from past major global ransomware outbreaks, which in recent years have crippled targets ranging from Pfizer to the shipping giant Maersk.

"In terms of critical function consequences we aren't seeing anything at this stage," said a U.S. official who requested anonymity to discuss an ongoing cyber incident.

The RNC said Tuesday, as it had over the weekend, that one of its tech vendors was among the victims of a cyberattack. But the

committee insisted again that a probe found no sign that hackers had gotten ahold of any data from the Republican Party organization.

"Over the weekend, we were informed that Synnex, a third party provider, had been breached," RNC chief of staff Richard Walters said in a statement. "We immediately blocked all access from Synnex accounts to our cloud environment. Our team worked with Microsoft to conduct a review of our systems and after a thorough investigation, no RNC data was accessed. We will continue to work with Microsoft, as well as federal law enforcement officials on this matter."

The RNC had made a similar comment in a statement to Bloomberg on Saturday.

A second U.S. official said the attack probably didn't cross any administration red lines, both because it didn't appear to target critical infrastructure and because there was no clear link to the Kremlin. But this official also said the administration needs to be clearer with the Russians about what its red lines truly are.

In remarks to reporters Saturday during a trip to Michigan, Biden appeared to focus on whether the Kremlin was directly responsible for the attack. "The initial thinking was it was not the Russian government, but we're not sure yet," the president said.

Still, some cyber researchers quickly labeled the Kaseya

operation a major cyberattack - and an insidious one, given that, once again, the hackers exploited a trusted software provider to deliver their malware. The government is "still trying to understand the extent of the

issue," according to a DHS official, who likewise requested anonymity given the matter's sensitivity. "There's not currently a good way for CISA to know who is affected and how badly."

Kaseya has been "very responsive" to federal inquiries, the first U.S. official said, calling the relationship "very good thus far."

Even so, the attack is likely to fuel congressional efforts to mandate more reporting of cyber incidents, which experts say is vital for improving the government's understanding of evolving threats. A bipartisan group of senators is preparing to introduce legislation after the upper chamber returns from its recess next week, and in the House, Democrats on the Homeland Security Committee are preparing their own bill.

Nintendo Switch OLED model with 7-inch display launched at \$350, to be available starting October 8



of Switch and Switch Lite, at a price point higher than both.

Here is a look at what the new Nintendo Switch (OLED model) promises to offer. Nintendo Switch (OLED model) price and availability Nintendo has launched the new Switch (OLED model) for a price of \$349.99 (roughly Rs 26,000). That is slightly more than the \$299.99 for the regular Nintendo Switch and \$199.99 for Nintendo Switch Lite. The company says that the gaming console will be available for purchase starting October 8, 2021. It will be available in two colour options - a "White set" featuring a black and white design and a "Neon Red/ Blue" set featuring the classic Nintendo red and blue colours. For now, Nintendo has not announced the markets in which

the new Switch (OLED model) will be available from the mentioned date. The sale might be limited to a few countries for now. Nintendo says that the latest Switch console is equipped with a 7-inch 720P OLED screen for more vivid colours and crisp contrast than before. The new model also features an upgraded Nvidia chip that allows a TV output of 1080p when the handheld is connected to a TV. The new Nintendo Switch comes with a wide adjustable stand for easy viewing in Tabletop mode other than the upgraded display. There is also a dock with a wired LAN port that can be used to connect the console online when playing in TV mode. Gamers will get 64 GB of internal storage to save their games right on the new Nintendo Switch OLED.

Adams waxes national in post-primary interviews as Garcia and Wiley concede

the problems that fed violence in our country. And I say we need to stop doing that. New York is going to show America how to run cities."

Adams again touted his record as both a former police officer and an outspoken critic of the department while he was employed there. He continued to press his campaign message that "public safety equals prosperity" as his biggest rivals, Kathryn Garcia and Maya Wiley conceded following Tuesday night's results.

Adams argued Wednesday that he is uniquely positioned to balance reform and safety in a way that could be a model for other metro areas suffering from increased shootings and concentrated, generational poverty.

"I know how we can turn around not only New York, but America," he said. "We're in a terrible place."

The Brooklyn borough president and former NYPD captain said he would like to sit down with mayors past and present across the country to discuss a new urban agenda for the Democratic Party. And he hoped that some of the political

infighting could be quelled by his ascension to the mayoralty.

"We have reached a point where we are allowing the dialogue to get in the way of moving us in the right direction," he said in a separate interview on CNN.

In addition to national concerns, Adams addressed local issues as well, indicating for example that the nighttime revelry in Washington Square Park, where he said drug use occurs in the open, cannot continue. He also touched on the specter of NYPD officers being more reluctant to go on patrol because of reform measures at the city and state level.

"I say to my officers: If you don't want to be on the streets anymore, then get off my streets," he said. "I don't want to hear someone say because they don't like what government is doing, they are not going to protect my public."

Adams said that he has spoken with all of his competitors in the primary and that he would soon begin poring over resumes for his administration-in-waiting.

Some of those primary foes, along with Adams himself, had taken legal action

after the city's Board of Elections botched the initial ranked-choice tally last week and threw the race into chaos. On Wednesday, Adams' team said in a statement it had withdrawn its suit, which was designed to preserve the right to litigate once the final count is certified.

"The election is clear and the people have spoken, and so there is no longer a need to preserve our legal right to a court-supervised review," the campaign said in a statement.

Former sanitation commissioner Kathryn Garcia, who came within 8,400 votes of defeating Adams, congratulated him as she conceded Wednesday outside the Women's Rights Pioneers statue in Central Park.

"When I began this race after 14 years at the helm of some of the city's largest and most complex agencies, I was told I should set my sights lower, that I should set my sights on deputy mayor," she said.

"With nearly 400,000 votes to show it, I am proof that outsiders without the backing of the political establishment, and determined women, are a force to be reckoned with. We proved that you

can compete, even without decades of being in the political machine, with no help from powerful interests, political favors or big donors - just hard work, dedication and strong grassroots support."

Garcia gave a shout-out to her fellow female candidates - Maya Wiley, Dianne Morales and Joycelyn Taylor - for hard-run races. "There is much to celebrate in this election. We will have a female majority on the City Council, and I extend my congratulations to all of them," she said. "While women have a seat at the table, we have yet to sit at the head of it, but I know that day is coming soon and I encourage my fellow women to run for office. I will support you, I'll stand with you, and I will help you in any way I can."

Wiley also conceded defeat during a press conference in Manhattan Wednesday, congratulating Adams on his victory. "I stand here today first to congratulate Eric Adams," Wiley said, vowing to keep pressing the issues she campaigned on. "This is not a movement this is a mission ... This is gonna continue beyond today."

Pfizer, Moderna vaccines cut Covid-19 risk by 91 per cent : Study

Our immune system then builds an immune response against the spike protein, and learns how to fight off the coronavirus if we encounter it in future. "One of the unique things about this study is that it measured the secondary benefits of the vaccines," said study co-author Sarang Yoon, an assistant professor at the University of Utah, US.

The study was designed to measure the risks and rates of infection among those on the front lines of the pandemic -- doctors, nurses, and first responders.

"These are the people who are getting exposure to the virus day in and day out, and the vaccine protected them against getting the disease. Those who unfortunately got Covid-19 despite being vaccinated were still better off than those who didn't," he added. The study found that mRNA COVID-19 vaccines were 91 per cent effective in reducing risk for infection once participants were "fully" vaccinated, two weeks after the second dose.

The researchers also found that the vaccines are 81 per cent effective in reducing risk for infection after "partial" immunisation, two weeks after the first dose was given.

The study recruited 3,975 participants at eight sites in the US. Participants submitted samples for Covid-19 testing on a weekly basis for 17 weeks between December 13, 2020 and April 10, 2021.

Only 204 (5 per cent) of the participants eventually tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. Of these, 156 were unvaccinated, 32 had an

indeterminate vaccine status, and 16 were fully or partially vaccinated. The fully or partially vaccinated participants who developed breakthrough had milder symptoms than those who were unvaccinated. In those who developed a breakthrough infection, the presence of fever was reduced by 58 per cent per cent among vaccinated

people, and the days spent sick in bed were reduced by 60 per cent. Detection of the virus was reduced by 70 per cent percent among those with breakthrough infections, from 8.9 days to 2.7 days. These findings also suggest that fully or partially vaccinated individuals who get Covid-19 might be less likely to spread the virus to others. The researchers found

that infected study participants who had been fully or partially vaccinated when infected had 40 per cent less detectable virus in the nose and did so for six fewer days compared to those who were unvaccinated. "I hope these findings reassure the public that mRNA Covid-19 vaccines are safe and protect us from this severe disease," Yoon added.

Why both the Russians and Americans got nowhere in Afghanistan

arguably a more honorable justification. The Soviets lost some 15,000 personnel in less than 10 years, the Americans (the Pentagon and private military companies together) fewer than half of that number over twice the time. The USSR achieved nothing by getting into its Afghan war — pouring resources into the conflict's bottomless pit only quickened the end of the Communist superpower; the Americans, who spent a mind-boggling \$2.26 trillion on the war, can live with that, and they did at least manage to break al-Qaeda's back and kill Osama bin Laden, albeit not in Afghanistan itself. But again, it's hard to focus on these differences when the similarities are even more powerful. In early 1989, according to Gromov, the "opposition" — a catch-all term for various Islamist groups and self-serving warlords — controlled "207 out of 290 districts." The number of districts is rather fluid in Afghanistan, and it's being reported that the Taliban now controls about a third of the country's "421 districts and district centers"; that number keeps growing. So both superpowers knowingly left behind beleaguered governments and a feeling of gloom and doom on the territories these governments still controlled. When the Taliban emerged as a righteous force pledging to end warlords' internecine fighting and seized control of Kabul in 1996, they hanged

Najibullah, by then long out of power; Afghan leaders who cooperated with the U.S. could well face the same fate if they fail to flee.

And in both cases, Pakistan played a critical role in thwarting the superpowers' ambitions of holding back Islamist radicalism. As the former high-ranking Central Intelligence Agency officer Bruce Riedel wrote bluntly for the Brookings Institution earlier this year,

In 1989, Pakistan was the party that flouted the agreements on Afghan national reconciliation, which served as the basis for the Soviet withdrawal. The Afghan rebels, including fighters who would end up with the Taliban, maintained bases in Pakistan and recruited Afghans in local refugee camps. Weapons and cash also flowed from the neighboring country into the fighting areas, facilitated by the U.S. and its Western allies; like the U.S. today, the Soviet Union was unprepared to take on Pakistan militarily.

In other words, no matter what your values, no matter how much time you spend or how many soldiers you lose, no matter whether you're on the winning or the losing side in geopolitical battles, what you'll leave behind in Afghanistan is scenes of looting, a weak regime too dependent on your support and unlikely to hold out much longer, tough local fighters who feel vindicated for years of

hardship, and gloating Pakistani generals across the border. Another constant: Afghanistan's flourishing opiate industry, which neither the Soviets nor the Americans could undermine.

These enduring circumstances have less to do with the stubborn magic of the place than with the simple fact that, as much as the Soviets of the 1980s and the Americans of this century's first two decades differ from one another, both stepped into Afghanistan with too little forethought and too much arrogance and confidence — and knew from the start that they couldn't stay. Both were certain of their superior military might and their superior values. Both found evidence that some locals liked what they brought — each their own brand of secular progressivism — and took that to mean those values could take root. But neither could stick around forever; colonization just isn't done anymore, and Gorbachev was no more prepared to entertain it than Joe Biden. Afghanistan hasn't been worth holding on to for either of them, given its hefty human and financial cost.

To the Taliban, though, just as to the assorted Afghan rebels before them, their entire purpose and meaning were in staying there forever. The local fighters felt in 1989, and still feel in 2021, that they stand for the country and its way of life.

Political maths behind cabinet expansion

dropped ministers, and an astute political calculation with regard to key states and the BJP's allies. Here's a look at five political messages emerging from the expansion of the council of ministers:

ALLIES ONBOARD BUT

When PM Modi began his second term in 2019, his government had ministers from four BJP allies: the Shiv Sena, the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Lok Janshakti Party and the Republican Party of India (Athawale).

Over the past two years, two allies - the Shiv Sena in 2019 and the Shiromani Akali Dal in 2020 - jumped off the coalition ship. LJP founder Ram Vilas Paswan passed away in 2020, leaving the Modi government with one minister from its allies.

The BJP and the Modi government, meanwhile, faced strong criticism of 'not treating allies with respect'. The expansion of the council of ministers addresses that criticism by making four allies partners in the central government. The Lok Janshakti Party got back one portfolio. The Apna Dal (Sonelal) and Janata Dal-United came in for the Shiv Sena and the Shiromani Akali Dal. The Janata Dal-United had not joined as its leader and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who was once a rival of PM Modi, sought greater representation at the Centre. PM Modi evidently insisted on following the same rule as applied to other BJP allies: one ally, one berth. Reports before cabinet expansion claimed the Janata Dal-United might get up to four berths - signalling a political victory of Nitish Kumar over Narendra Modi - but the prime minister maintained his ally-berth rule.

DELIVERY REWARDED

The cabinet expansion held out an important message to the BJP cadre: delivering results for the party will be rewarded. Two examples from the extreme ends make this

very obvious: Pratima Bhoumik and Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Pratima Bhoumik is "Didi" of Tripura. She is one of the earliest members of the BJP in Tripura, having associated with it in 1991, when the party had only a handful of members with no prospect of political power in sight. Her relentless party work in Tripura paid rich dividend to the BJP. She is now the Union MoS for social justice and empowerment.

Jyotiraditya Scindia joined the BJP only in March 2020 with a 'promise' of delivering Madhya Pradesh, then ruled by the Congress, to the party. He led a band of about two dozen loyalist MLAs who followed suit in resigning from the Congress to join the BJP.

Scindia later delivered substantial results in the bypolls making sure the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh survives its full tenure. He is now a cabinet rank minister in charge of civil aviation.

KRA SUPREME FOR INCUMBENTS

At the beginning of his second tenure, PM Modi had held a meeting of his council of ministers advising them to beware of "chhapas" (the lure of getting media space) and asking them to focus on the key responsibility/result areas (KRA) of their respective portfolios.

This is where the RSS's role came in, say people in the know of internal dynamics. It gave feedback on each and every ministry and minister of political significance.

This shows why PM Modi overhauled important ministries such as those of education, IT and social justice. The ministers of both the cabinet and state ranks were dropped from these ministries. Health ministry is another case in point.

Ravi Shankar Prasad and Harsh Vardhan headed ministries that came in for sharp criticism in recent times over social media rules and Covid-19 management respectively. Their exit from the council of ministers was shocking as they were

earlier considered part of the core team. The RSS, sources say, was apparently not happy with Prakash Javadekar over handling of various ministries that he headed over the years.

Santosh Gangwar, on the other hand, lost his job over the crisis caused by migration of labourers during Covid-19 lockdown and following the Supreme Court's remark saying, "The lackadaisical attitude of the Ministry of Labour [that Gangwar headed] was unpardonable."

YOGI, BSY STRENGTHENED

Uttar Pradesh is going to hold assembly polls early next year. The ruling BJP recently saw some rumblings within the party and veiled attacks were launched at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. A flurry of meetings between the RSS leaders, top BJP leadership and Yogi Adityanath and Uttar Pradesh BJP leaders made it clear that the chief ministerial face would not change in the 2022 assembly polls.

Now, seven ministers have been drawn from Uttar Pradesh including Anupriya Patel of the Apna Dal (Sonelal). Caste equation - important in every election in Uttar Pradesh - has been taken care of. Three ministers - Anupriya Patel, Pankaj Chaudhary and BL Verma - are from the Other Backward Classes (OBC), estimated to be 50 per cent of Uttar Pradesh's population. Three others - Kaushal Kishore, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma and SPS Baghel - are from the Scheduled Caste category comprising over 20 per cent of Uttar Pradesh's population. Ajay Kumar is the lone Brahmin face among the newly inducted Union ministers from Uttar Pradesh. Brahmins constitute around 10 per cent of UP population. This caste arithmetic in Union cabinet expansion works in favour of Yogi Adityanath as he seeks reelection in about seven months. Now, Uttar Pradesh has 15 Union ministers. Similarly, Karnataka Chief

Minister BS Yediyurappa's position has strengthened after cabinet expansion. Four of the inducted ministers are from Karnataka, which lost one as Sadananda Gowda was dropped.

Yediyurappa recently faced some challenge within Karnataka BJP giving rise to speculation that he could be replaced. After all, he is the only BJP chief minister above 75, an unofficial retirement age in the party. The new inductees are from influential Vokkaliga, Lingayat (same as Yediyurappa's) and Dalit communities.

DOORS SHUT ON SHIV SENA

And finally, with the induction of Narayan Rane, the former Maharashtra chief minister and a

former Shiv Sena leader is a message to Uddhav Thackeray-led ruling party. The message is that the BJP is looking to contest the next Maharashtra Assembly election in 2023 on its own. Narayan Rane is an influential leader in Maharashtra with access across party lines. He also turned into a staunch rival of Thackeray.

His induction came in the backdrop of chatter that the BJP and Shiv Sena were getting closer particularly after reports of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's reported discomfort with Maha Vikas Aghadi allies - the Congress and particularly the Nationalist Congress Party. That chatter might just have been silenced by PM Modi with the cabinet rejig.

US exits Bagram, Afghans regret decades of war, What's next?

He thinks the government of Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani has the capacity to withstand recent Taliban advances. The US Embassy in Afghanistan informed that Washington was firmly committed to provide Afghanistan, security assistance of US\$3 billion in 2022. The United States has requested Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to offer a temporary home to around 10,000 Afghans who worked with either US or allied forces. Several European nations also provided shelters to hundreds of Afghan employees and their families, directly threatened by the Taliban.

Long back, the US had reached to an inference the war was unwinnable. Presidents, starting from Barack Obama, had planned to bring American troops back home from Afghanistan. But they always wanted a face-saving exit. President Joe Biden permitted the Trump-Taliban deal, but pushed the deadline to September 11. The terms of the Trump-Taliban deal dealt with four aspects — violence, foreign troops, intra-Afghan peace talks and the use of Afghan soil by terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. The Taliban decreased conflicts against the foreign troops but continued to attack Afghan forces even after the agreement was signed.

Afghanistan also saw a series of targeted assassinations of journalists, activists and other civil society figures over the time, which the Afghan government believes to be Taliban act. Bagram's new commander, Gen. Mir Asadullah Kohistani appreciated 20 years of US and NATO's involvement in Afghanistan. But the time has come for the Afghans to step up, secure and build their own country thereby solving every problem.

Global Covid deaths hit 4 million

The global death toll from Covid-19 eclipsed 4 million Wednesday as the crisis increasingly becomes a race between the vaccine and the highly contagious delta variant. The tally of lives lost over the past year and a half, as compiled from official sources by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the number of people killed in battle in all of the world's wars since 1982, according to estimates from the Peace Research Institute Oslo.

The toll is three times the number

of people killed in traffic accidents around the globe every year. It is about equal to the population of Los Angeles or the nation of Georgia. It is equivalent to more than half of Hong Kong or close to 50% of New York City.

Even then, it is widely believed to be an undercount because of overlooked cases or deliberate concealment.

With the advent of the vaccine, deaths per day have plummeted to around 7,900, after topping out at over 18,000 a day in January. But in recent weeks, the mutant

delta version of the virus first identified in India has set off alarms around the world, spreading rapidly even in vaccination success stories like the U.S., Britain and Israel.

Britain, in fact, recorded a one-day total this week of more than 30,000 new infections for the first time since January, even as the government prepares to lift all remaining lockdown restrictions in England later this month.

Other countries have reimposed preventive measures, and authorities are rushing to step

up the campaign to dispense shots.

At the same time, the disaster has exposed the gap between the haves and the have-nots, with vaccination drives barely getting started in Africa and other desperately poor corners of the world because of extreme shortages of shots.

The U.S. and other wealthy countries have agreed to share at least 1 billion doses with struggling countries.

The U.S. has the world's highest reported death toll, at over

600,000, or nearly 1 in 7 deaths, followed by Brazil at more than 520,000, though the real numbers are believed to be much higher in Brazil, where President Jair Bolsonaro's far-right government has long downplayed the virus. The variants, uneven access to vaccines and the relaxation of precautions in wealthier countries are "a toxic combination that is very dangerous," warned Ann Lindstrand, a top immunization official at the World Health Organization.



Why Is Inflation Rising Right Now?

Inflation is here. As with the April report, the May CPI inflation report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) highlighted that prices rose across the board by a lot. Overall, prices in May climbed 5% year over year, the biggest such gain in the headline CPI data since August 2008. Even when you strip out volatile food and energy prices—so-called core CPI inflation—prices rose by 3.8% year over year in May.

Certain components of the May CPI report saw enormous gains. Used cars and trucks were 7% more expensive in May than in April, which itself saw a historic 10% increase month over month. Gas prices are slightly down this month compared to last—but still up more than 56% from this time last year.

The Federal Reserve, whose job it is to keep price growth stable, has been telling anyone who'll listen to expect higher inflation in the near term as the economy gets back to normal. The Fed is also saying that near-term inflation increases should give way to more healthy price growth over the longer haul.

Still, the May CPI numbers came in slightly higher than

many analysts were predicting, though these jitters don't appear to have sizably impacted the stock market's pre-trading values. Major indexes futures remained slightly in the black following the report dropping.

But what's going on with these rising prices and what does it all mean for you?

Brothers from Another: Inflation Gains and the Covid-19 Recession

To get a sense of what's happening, let's look at airfares. Once the Covid-19 pandemic began last spring, demand for travel plummeted. Folks canceled tickets en masse, delayed vacations and hunkered down as stay-at-home orders took effect. This, of course, led to airfare prices to drop precipitously.

In April 2020, for instance, airfares fell 24% year over year, and they would spend most of the rest of 2020 at these depressed levels. When you compared airline ticket prices in the time of Covid-19 to prices from the before-times, they were typically about 25% less expensive.

But once a year passes, these year-over-year comparisons turn: The April CPI report, for instance, compared vaccine-era

airline prices to what they were after Covid-19 struck. So it's not terribly surprising that April 2021 airline prices were almost 10% higher than a year before, if only because so few people were buying tickets then. This is one of the key points that the Fed has been pounding away at: You must pay attention to these so-called base effects. Now that vaccines are widely available and Covid-19 cases are dropping, more people will fly. Yes, airline prices are much higher than a year ago, but they remain considerably cheaper than where they were pre-pandemic.

This is a point the White House reiterated after the numbers were released in April.

Still, these base effects don't explain everything. Take used cars and trucks: While prices declined going into the recession, it is not the case that used cars and trucks became less expensive than they were in February 2020. In fact, they've never been more expensive than they are now.

The reasons for that hike are tied to the pandemic, to be sure. Supply is limited thanks to new car production being stymied by an ongoing chip shortage, people hanging onto their leases for longer and

rental car companies—a major source of used cars—having fewer to unload after limiting their inventory when the pandemic struck.

The Fed has warned the public over these and other supply-chain issues, too, saying that it'll take time for sectors of the economy to get back to normal. Once these kinks are worked out, the Fed asserts, inflation will stop growing so quickly. Should You Be Worried about CPI Inflation?

That's cold comfort for families in the market for a used car, and consumers will need to be judicious with how they allocate their budget over the next few months. But weird price movements were an inevitable side effect of closing down the economy to quash the virus, so they shouldn't be totally unexpected. Luckily, they're likely to be short lived though may persist while the Fed works to get people back to work, notes Nancy Davis, founder of Quadratic Capital Management.

"I believe the Federal Reserve is more focused on the employment part of its dual mandate and will remain accommodative for as long as it takes to ensure the economy returns to full employment," she

said. In short, the Fed's low interest rates and bond buybacks, so-called "easy money" meant to encourage economic activity, likely aren't going anywhere for the time being and businesses (and their stocks) may continue to grow.

This kind of support is likely needed as recent jobs reports have disappointed many. Fewer jobs have been added than expected in both April and May, and many millions remain out of work. Fed Chair Jerome Powell has said repeatedly that he is focused on getting back to full employment and that he won't be swayed by temporary rises in inflation. In fact, the Fed announced last August that it would tolerate higher inflation than its target rate for a modest period of time since inflation has been too low for the last 10 to 15 years. That said, the Fed doesn't expect higher inflation to stick around once more people are back at work. "[F]or inflation to move up in a persistent way that really starts to move inflation expectations up, that would take some time, and you would think that it would be quite likely that we would be in very strong labor markets for that to be happening," Powell said in an April 28 press conference.

An inflation storm is coming for the U.S. housing market

Fast-rising housing costs have helped to push inflation to a 13-year high. But the way that government statisticians track the price of consumer goods may be missing just how explosive home-price growth has been in recent months.

Housing costs rose by 0.4% between April and May, according to the latest edition of the monthly consumer price index released Thursday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Compared with last year, housing prices for renters and homeowners alike were up 2.2%.

Altogether, the rise in housing prices accounted for over a quarter of the overall increase in inflation in May, a reflection of how heavily government economists weight this spending category.

But if that 2.2% figure seems off based on your own experience of buying or selling a home, it's not a surprise. Not everyone agrees on the rate of house-price growth.

Other data suggested a much faster pace of home price appreciation and rental growth, well in excess of that level.

The most recent report from the Case-Shiller Home Price Index for March showed that home prices were up more than 13%, the largest rate of growth since 2005.

So how does the CPI calculate housing? Firstly, housing units themselves are not included in the CPI market basket.

Secondly, rental data to establish how prices are changing are collected every six months. The calculations for most other CPI items are collected monthly or bimonthly. "Like most other economic series, the CPI views housing units as capital (or investment) goods and not as consumption items," the Bureau of Labor Statistics says. "Spending to purchase and improve houses and other housing units is investment and not consumption."

"The cost of shelter for renter-occupied housing is rent. For an owner-occupied unit, the cost of shelter is the implicit rent that owner occupants would have to pay if they were renting their homes," it adds.



The government pollsters ask homeowners: "If someone were to rent your home today, how much do you think it would rent for monthly, unfurnished and without utilities?"

And they ask renters: "What is the rental charge to your [household] for this unit including any extra charges for garage and parking facilities? Do not include direct payments by local, state or federal agencies. What period of time does this cover?"

Housing isn't like other goods. "The rate of house price appreciation is not akin to inflation," said Mark Fleming, chief economist at title insurance company First American Financial Services FAF.

For a start, housing is a very basic necessity. "Demand for shelter doesn't go away - it just moves around," Fleming said. In other words, if the price of airfares skyrockets 7%, as it did over the past month, families could decide against going on that summer getaway.

That choice isn't so simple when it comes to housing. As the cost of shelter increases it can have a "cascading effect on extremely low-income renters," said Andrew Aurand, vice president for research at the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Research from Aurand's organization has shown that more than 9.2 million "extremely low-income" renters

are cost burdened by their housing, meaning they spent more than a third of their income on shelter-related expenses. Many of these households spend upwards of 50% on housing, leaving little money behind for other purchases.

The alternative for these households would be losing the roof over their heads. In recent years, that has become the reality for many Americans. A 2019 study released by the Trump administration estimated that more than 500,000 people sleep outdoors each night across the country, while many more couch surf or utilize shelters for unhoused people. Meanwhile, for people who own their homes, buying a property isn't the same as buying, say, a banana. Owning that banana won't benefit you financially in the long-run, whereas with a house you can expect to see its value increase and to profit off that. But a home isn't a pure investment asset like a stock - it's a mix of both.

Home prices can rise both because the actual structure itself may be worth more - thanks to the rising cost of labor and lumber - but also because people see value in it as a capital investment.

As a result, there can be a mismatch in the way economists or government statistician view rising home prices, and what that means to a consumer.

"In a market environment where prices are rising so quickly to buy a home the economist would say that's the increase in the price of the capital good," said Robert Dietz, chief economist at the National Association of Home Builders. "But to the buyer, it represents a higher cost of living."

Why housing inflation is different. People experience inflation vis-à-vis housing differently to most other products, and that makes it a challenging to measure.

For the typical homeowner, their housing costs likely haven't changed too much over the past year.

"If you have a fixed mortgage, on your home, year over year, how much does your cost of living in that home change? Not very much," Fleming said. "The only things that change year over year are your escrows for taxes and insurance."

Even with renters, the price of housing doesn't shift higher or lower from month to month. That's why the Bureau of Labor Statistics collects housing data more infrequently than most other items in the CPI basket of goods.

For renters and buyers, you encounter the changing cost when something about your living arrangement changed: When you move to a new home, sign a new lease or refinance your mortgage.

But Americans do need to know how much housing costs are rising or falling - not the least of

which because residential real-estate makes up such a huge portion of the nation's economy. The government's Consumer Price Index calculates the "imputed rent" - essentially the amount a homeowner is paying for their housing rather than paying a landlord.

If it did not do so, GDP would actually fall, Dietz said, "because money that would be a rental payment in the marketplace paid by a renter suddenly disappears."

To bridge this challenge, the government relies on survey data to produce its estimates of housing costs for renters and homeowners. In renters' cases, they are simply asked how much they pay for housing.

But owners aren't asked what their mortgage payment is - after all, not everyone has a mortgage. Instead, that's why they are asked to estimate how much they would be able to charge for rent to lease out their current home.

Government statisticians survey the same cohort of Americans periodically to produce their findings and track changes over time to estimate housing costs. "Inflation and [changes in] housing prices have generally been matched up," said Jonathan Needell, President and Chief Investment Officer of KIMC, a private real-estate investment company. He added that rising housing prices has "exceeded inflation in some circumstances."

Some researchers have argued, however, that this approach can also understate and/or be slow to identify true inflation occurring in the housing market.

A new analysis from Fannie Mae FNMA, -3.57% showed that there is typically a lag between when home prices are actually rising, and when that price growth is reflected in inflation reports like the consumer price index.

The role played by COVID-19. The shifts in housing preferences and needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has also complicated our ability to gauge the effect of inflation in the housing market.

Wealthier Americans, many of whom suddenly found themselves able to work

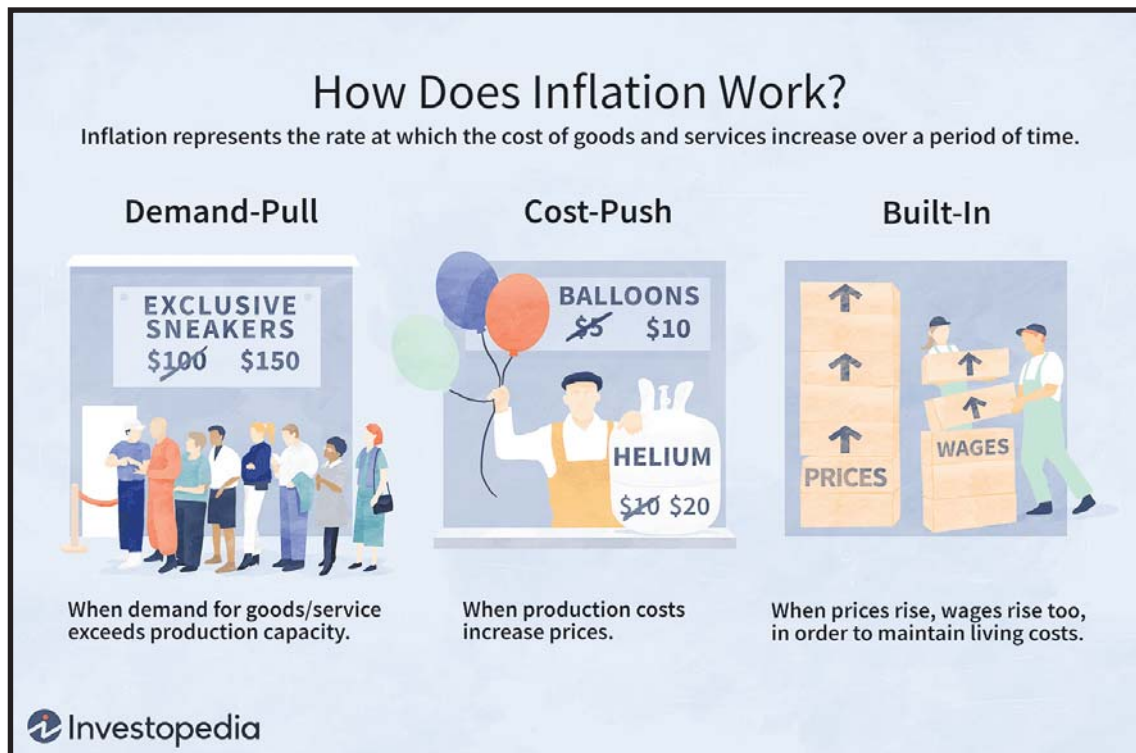
Inflation: Prices on the Rise

Inflation measures how much more expensive a set of goods and services has become over a certain period, usually a year

By Ceyda Oner

It may be one of the most familiar words in economics. Inflation has plunged countries into long periods of instability. Central bankers often aspire to be known as "inflation hawks." Politicians have won elections with promises to combat inflation, only to lose power after failing to do so. Inflation was even declared Public Enemy No. 1 in the United States by President Gerald Ford in 1974. What, then, is inflation, and why is it so important?

Inflation is the rate of increase in prices over a given period of time. Inflation is typically a broad measure, such as the overall increase in prices or the increase in the cost of living in a country. But it can also be more narrowly calculated for certain goods, such as food, or for services, such as a haircut, for example. Whatever the context, inflation represents how much more



government agencies conduct household surveys to identify a basket of commonly purchased items and track over time the cost of purchasing this basket. (Housing expenses, including rent and mortgages, constitute

current CPI is 110, inflation is 10 percent over the period.) Core consumer inflation focuses on the underlying and persistent trends in inflation by excluding prices set by the government and the more volatile prices of

over time for consistency, but is tweaked occasionally to reflect changing consumption patterns—for example, to include new hi-tech goods and to replace items no longer widely purchased. Because it shows how, on average, prices change over time for everything produced in an economy, the contents of the GDP deflator vary each year and are more current than the mostly fixed CPI basket. On the other hand, the deflator includes nonconsumer items (such as military spending) and is therefore not a good measure of the cost of living.

The good and the bad

To the extent that households' nominal income, which they receive in current money, does not increase as much as prices, they are worse off, because they can afford to purchase less. In other words, their purchasing power or real-inflation-adjusted-income falls. Real income is a proxy for the standard of living. When real incomes are rising, so is the standard of living, and vice versa. In reality, prices change at different paces. Some, such as the prices of traded commodities, change every day; others, such as wages established by contracts, take longer to adjust (or are "sticky," in economic parlance). In an inflationary environment, unevenly rising prices inevitably reduce the

purchasing power of some consumers, and this erosion of real income is the single biggest cost of inflation. Inflation can also distort purchasing power over time for recipients and payers of fixed interest rates. Take pensioners who receive a fixed 5 percent yearly increase to their pension. If inflation is higher than 5 percent, a pensioner's purchasing power falls. On the other hand, a borrower who pays a fixed-rate mortgage of 5 percent would benefit from 5 percent inflation, because the real interest rate (the nominal rate minus the inflation rate) would be zero; servicing this debt would be even easier if inflation were higher, as long as the borrower's income keeps up with inflation. The lender's real income, of course, suffers. To the extent that inflation is not factored into nominal interest rates, some gain and some lose purchasing power.

Indeed, many countries have grappled with high inflation—and in some cases hyperinflation, 1,000 percent or more a year. In 2008, Zimbabwe experienced one of the worst cases of hyperinflation ever, with estimated annual inflation at one point of 500 billion percent. Such high levels of inflation have been disastrous, and countries have had to take difficult and painful policy measures to bring inflation back to reasonable levels, sometimes by giving up their national currency, as Zimbabwe has. Although high inflation hurts an economy, deflation, or falling prices, is not desirable either. When prices are falling, consumers delay making purchases if they can, anticipating lower prices in the future. For the economy this means less economic activity, less income generated by producers, and lower economic growth. Japan is one country with a long period of nearly no economic growth, largely because of deflation. Preventing deflation during the global financial crisis that began in 2007 was one of the reasons the US Federal Reserve and other



expensive the relevant set of goods and/or services has become over a certain period, most commonly a year.

Measuring inflation

Consumers' cost of living depends on the prices of many goods and services and the share of each in the household budget. To measure the average consumer's cost of living,

the largest component of the consumer basket in the United States.) The cost of this basket at a given time expressed relative to a base year is the consumer price index (CPI), and the percentage change in the CPI over a certain period is consumer price inflation, the most widely used measure of inflation. (For example, if the base year CPI is 100 and the

products, such as food and energy, most affected by seasonal factors or temporary supply conditions. Core inflation is also watched closely by policymakers. Calculation of an overall inflation rate—for a country, say, and not just for consumers—requires an index with broader coverage, such as the GDP deflator. The CPI basket is mostly kept constant

central banks around the world kept interest rates low for a prolonged period and have instituted other monetary policies to ensure financial systems have plenty of liquidity. Most economists now believe that low, stable, and-most important-predictable inflation is good for an economy. If inflation is low and predictable, it is easier to capture it in price-adjustment contracts and interest rates, reducing its distortionary impact. Moreover, knowing that prices will be slightly higher in the future gives consumers an incentive to make purchases sooner, which boosts economic activity. Many central bankers have made their primary policy objective maintaining low and stable inflation, a policy called inflation targeting.

What creates inflation?

Long-lasting episodes of high inflation are often the result of lax monetary policy. If the money supply grows too big relative to the size of an

economy, the unit value of the currency diminishes; in other words, its purchasing power falls and prices rise. This relationship between the money supply and the size of the economy is called the quantity theory of money and is one of the oldest hypotheses in economics.

Pressures on the supply or demand side of the economy can also be inflationary. Supply shocks that disrupt production, such as natural disasters, or raise production costs, such as high oil prices, can reduce overall supply and lead to "cost-push" inflation, in which the impetus for price increases comes from a disruption to supply. The food and fuel inflation of 2008 was such a case for the global economy-sharply rising food and fuel prices were transmitted from country to country by trade. Conversely, demand shocks, such as a stock market rally, or expansionary policies, such as when a central bank

lowers interest rates or a government raises spending, can temporarily boost overall demand and economic growth. If, however, this increase in demand exceeds an economy's production capacity, the resulting strain on resources is reflected in "demand-pull" inflation. Policymakers must find the right balance between boosting demand and growth when needed without overstimulating the economy and causing inflation.

Expectations also play a key role in determining inflation. If people or firms anticipate higher prices, they build these expectations into wage negotiations and contractual price adjustments (such as automatic rent increases). This behavior partly determines the next period's inflation; once the contracts are exercised and wages or prices rise as agreed, expectations become self-fulfilling. And to the

extent that people base their expectations on the recent past, inflation would follow similar patterns over time, resulting in inflation inertia. How policymakers deal with inflation - The right set of disinflationary policies, those aimed at reducing inflation, depends on the causes of inflation. If the economy has overheated, central banks-if they are committed to ensuring price stability-can implement contractionary policies that rein in aggregate demand, usually by raising interest rates. Some central bankers have chosen, with varying degrees of success, to impose monetary discipline by fixing the exchange rate-tying the value of its currency to that of another currency, and thereby its monetary policy to that of another country. However, when inflation is driven by global rather than domestic developments, such policies may not help. In 2008, when

inflation rose across the globe on the back of high food and fuel prices, many countries allowed the high global prices to pass through to the domestic economy. In some cases the government may directly set prices (as some did in 2008 to prevent high food and fuel prices from passing through). Such administrative price-setting measures usually result in the government's accrual of large subsidy bills to compensate producers for lost income. Central bankers are increasingly relying on their ability to influence inflation expectations as an inflation-reduction tool. Policymakers announce their intention to keep economic activity low temporarily to bring down inflation, hoping to influence expectations and contracts' built-in inflation component. The more credibility central banks have, the greater the influence of their pronouncements on inflation expectations.

IMF chief sees risk of sustained rise in U.S. inflation

The International Monetary Fund on Wednesday said further fiscal support in the United States could fuel inflationary pressures and warned that the risk of a sustained rise in prices could require raising interest rates earlier-than-expected.

Higher U.S. interest rates, in turn, could lead to a sharp tightening of global financial conditions and significant capital outflows from emerging and developing economies, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in a blog published Wednesday with the IMF's surveillance note for G20 countries.

The IMF's assessment of U.S. inflation risks comes amid sharp criticism by Republican lawmakers of President Joe Biden's multi-trillion-dollar plans to boost spending on infrastructure, child care, community college tuition and expanded coverage of home care for the elderly and disabled.

Georgieva said an accelerated recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, where growth is seen reaching



7% in 2021, would benefit many countries through increased trade, but rising inflation could be more sustained than expected. The IMF forecasts global growth of 6%.

Other countries face rising commodity and food prices, which are now at their highest level since 2014, putting millions of people at risk of food insecurity, the IMF said in its report.

Market expectations suggested commodity prices would remain

contained over the next few years, but inflation developments varied within advanced economies and were picking up more rapidly in Britain, the United States and the euro area, while remaining subdued in others, like Japan. The IMF said the global economic outlook remained uncertain given questions about the evolution of the pandemic and progress on vaccinations, as well as the possibility that the pickup in inflation would

prove "more persistent" than expected. "While further fiscal support in some major advanced economies, including the United States, would benefit growth more broadly, it could also further fuel inflationary pressures," the IMF said.

A more sustained increase in prices could necessitate earlier-than-expected tightening of U.S. monetary policy, which could hit emerging and developing economies particularly hard, widening the

divergence in recovery prospects.

Georgieva repeated her call for urgent action by the G20 countries to accelerate vaccinations to high-risk populations, warning of a "worsening two-track recovery" that is leaving a large number of countries behind while the United States, China, the euro area and a few others are recovering quickly.

Acting quickly could save more than half a million lives in the next six months alone, she said. The IMF was working with the World Bank and other institutions to move forward on its \$50 billion plan to end the pandemic, she said, arguing that quicker progress could result in trillions of dollars of added global economic output. The IMF urged countries to continue accommodative monetary policies, while closely monitoring inflation and financial stability risks. In countries where the recovery was accelerating, such as the United States, it would be "essential" to avoid overreacting to transitory increases in inflation, Georgieva said.

remotely, chose to move away from major cities into larger and cheaper homes in the suburbs, often saving money in the process. As a result, rental rates declined in pricier neighborhoods.

But in more affordable areas, rents actually increased. Americans who lost their jobs because of the pandemic rushed to find cheaper housing, pushing rents higher for the least expensive apartments and homes in the suburbs.

Those effects are beginning to dissipate, but will continue to weigh on official measures like the consumer price index given the time lags that occur. So is housing quickly becoming more

expensive? The answer, economists agree, is yes. First American Financial Services has its own measure, the Real House Price Index, which compares nominal-price gains with Americans' ability to afford to purchase a property based on the prevailing interest rates and household income.

For a period of time between 2018 and the beginning of 2020, the Real House Price Index was falling, because Americans' buying power was rising faster than home prices, Fleming said. That's not the case anymore. "Deflation has turned into inflation, not because interest rates have gone up - they've only gone up a little bit -

but because house prices are just crazy," Fleming said.

The reason home prices are rising so fast is fairly simple. After the Great Recession, home-building activity all but drew to a standstill as the construction industry worked to recover. As a result, the construction of new homes did not keep pace with population growth and the formation of new households. That left the housing market with a serious shortage of homes, just as millennials have begun getting married and having kids - traditional hallmarks of home-buying interest. With the pandemic, the shift to remote working and low interest rates

have only exacerbated things. The primary solution to address runaway inflation in housing will be to build more homes - something that's easier said than done. "Some of the challenges that we face on the supply side of the residential construction industry are going to persist well into 2022," Dietz said. Those challenges run the gamut from the high cost of lumber to the lack of skilled workers to complete construction projects. Another factor: Zoning regulations across the country prevent the construction of more dense housing in many cities, effectively driving up home prices and rents in the process.

Finally, new-home construction alone won't make matters easier for all Americans. Because of the high costs, it's easier for builders to construct more expensive homes, even though the demand and competition is strongest for entry-level properties.

Over time, that increased concentration in the bottom-tier of the housing market is driving up prices for those who can least afford it. "There's this argument that if you just build more supply to meet the demand, it will eventually help extremely low and very low-income renters," Aurand said. "But the market is not going to adequately serve mostly extremely low-income renters."

Inflation is continuing to rise-here's how it could affect your money

This is an excerpt from CNBC Make It's weekly newsletter. [Subscribe here.](#)

Last month, the U.S. consumer price index, a survey of a variety of goods, rose 5% compared with a year ago. The gain was a bit more than anticipated and the largest increase since the summer of 2008, according to the Labor Department.

That has Wall Street buzzing about what inflation means for markets and the economy. But what does it mean for, you know, normal people? Mostly, higher prices.

But first, it's important to understand what inflation is and where it comes from. Essentially, inflation is the rise in prices you'll pay for goods and services. You'll have to spend more to get the same things. Some level of inflation - around 2% - is normal.

"While inflation has a negative connotation for many people, inflation itself isn't inherently good or bad," says Jill Fopiano, president and CEO of O'Brien Wealth Partners. "Some level of inflation is a sign that the economy is healthy."

Inflation is a feature of economic recovery. In the U.S. right now, it's being driven by a few overlapping factors resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic: low interest rates set by the Federal Reserve, several rounds of direct government stimulus to both consumers and businesses, and pent-up consumer demand that is being unleashed as the U.S. reopens. All of this has led



to demand outpacing supply, causing shortages and price spikes in categories of goods including semiconductor chips, used cars and housing, among others.

"It was just 12 short months ago that many were afraid to even emerge from their homes," says Deron McCoy, chief investment officer at investment advisory firm SEIA. Meaning: People weren't spending. But now they plan to make up for lost time, as we discussed a few weeks ago.

With that in mind, many economists and other financial experts say that the current rate of inflation is nothing to worry about - it's temporary and expected, even if it is unclear when it will eventually fade. And today's increase is nothing compared with the 1970s, when several unique shocks led inflation to hit double digits, says McCoy. However, there will be sticker shock this summer,

says McCoy, as supply chains catch up with consumer needs post-pandemic.

For the time being, here's how higher inflation could cost you and what you should do about it.

Consumer goods

Inflation erodes the average person's purchasing power. Everyone's true inflation rate is different, because we all buy different products and services. You can expect to pay more for used cars and car rentals, furniture, airline fares, hotels and everyday essentials like groceries and gas. Used car prices rose 29.7% compared with last year, for example, while clothing costs 5.6% more. Housing and remodeling supplies are also sky high.

"All of this means your paycheck is not going as far as it once did unless your wages are increasing at the same pace, which has not been the case for most

individuals," says Steven Saunders, director and portfolio advisor at Round Table Wealth Management. That's no reason not to spend money, though, especially after the past 15 months, says Marguerita Cheng, certified financial planner and CEO of Blue Ocean Global Wealth. "You just want to be mindful of the increased prices."

Savings accounts

With interest rates on savings accounts already hovering just above 0% nationwide, inflation can make your cash worth even less. But that's no reason to move it around, especially your emergency fund, says Cheng.

"Savings is not designed to make you rich," she says. It's meant to provide a financial cushion, should you need it. That said, if you have more idle cash than you need in an emergency fund (experts

recommend having three to six months' worth of expenses stashed away, sometimes more), then you might consider investing some of it, she says.

Investments

It's impossible to predict how inflation will affect all of your investments, but it will decrease the value of long-term bonds, which generally pay a fixed income amount every year, says Brian Spinelli, certified financial planner and senior wealth advisor at Halbert Hargrove. Higher inflation means that fixed amount doesn't go as far. Gen Z, millennial and younger Gen X investors don't really need to worry about these short-term impacts, experts say. They should be fine sticking with their current investment plan, which is probably stock-heavy. Stocks can provide a decent hedge against inflation, because they can generate returns in excess of inflation.

With that in mind, long-term investors should continue investing in a broadly diversified portfolio of low-cost stock index funds, says Tony Molina, certified public accountant and senior product specialist at Wealthfront. If you have a 401(k) or IRA invested in a target-date fund or other stock index fund, then you don't need to do anything. "It's human nature to want to react in times of uncertainty, but it's best to not get too caught up in the news around inflation," says Molina.

U.S. consumer confidence at 16-month high; house price inflation heating up

U.S. consumer confidence jumped to its highest level in nearly 1-1/2 years in June as growing labor market optimism amid a reopening economy offset concerns about higher inflation.

The survey from the Conference Board on Tuesday also showed a healthy appetite for long-lasting manufactured goods such as motor vehicles and household appliances, suggesting strong momentum in the economy as the second quarter ended.

Consumers were also keen to purchase homes, a sign that house prices will continue to rapidly increase as supply lags. Many intended to go on vacation, mostly in the United States, over the next six months, which should boost demand for services and add fuel to consumer spending.

"Consumers have plenty to be cheerful about after being cooped up at home for more than a year," said Oren Klachkin, lead U.S. economist at Oxford Economics in New York. "Looking ahead, low COVID infections, rebounding employment, and elevated savings will buoy confidence and push consumers to spend at a breakneck pace over the summer."

The Conference Board's consumer confidence index raced to a reading of 127.3 this month, the highest level since February 2020, from 120.0 in May. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index



at 119.0.

The survey places more emphasis on the labor market, which is steadily recovering. More than 150 million Americans have been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, allowing for broader economic re-engagement.

The survey's present situation measure, based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions, increased to 157.7 from 148.7 last month. The expectations index, based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business and labor market conditions, rose to 107.0 from 100.9.

Consumers'

inflation

expectations over the next 12 months rose to 6.7% from 6.5% last month.

Stocks on Wall Street rose, with the S&P 500 hitting a record high for the fourth straight session. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices were lower.

STRONG LABOR MARKET VIEWS

The Conference Board survey's so-called labor market differential, derived from data on respondents' views on whether jobs are plentiful or hard to get, vaulted to 43.5 in June. That was the highest level since 2000 and was up from 36.9 in May.

This measure closely correlates to the unemployment rate in the

Labor Department's closely watched employment report. The jump in the so-called labor market differential augurs well for June's employment report due out on Friday. There are a record 9.3 million job openings.

"This could indicate one million new nonfarm payroll jobs in Friday's report if the consumer is right," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at FWD BOND in New York.

According a Reuters survey of economists, nonfarm payrolls likely increased by 690,000 jobs in June after rising 559,000 in May. The unemployment rate is forecast falling to 5.7% from 5.8%. Though job growth has picked up, a shortage of willing workers is frustrating companies' efforts to ramp up hiring.

The worker shortage has been blamed on generous unemployment benefits, including a weekly \$300 subsidy from the federal government. A lack of child care facilities as some centers which shut during the pandemic never reopened, is also keeping some parents home.

At least 26 states are terminating federal government-funded unemployment benefits before the Sept. 6 expiration date. This, together with school districts expected to resume in-person classes in the fall, is seen expanding the labor pool. This month, more consumers planned to buy homes, cars and

major household appliances over the next six months, relative to May. That suggests demand for so-called durable goods will remain strong even as spending shifts back to services such as air travel, dining out and hotel accommodation.

Economists are forecasting another double-digit rise in consumer spending this quarter, which is expected to lead to the economy growing at about a 10% annualized rate. Gross domestic product expanded at a 6.4% pace in the first quarter.

Accelerating home prices are curbing sales, which will likely limit the housing market's contribution to GDP growth this quarter. Demand for housing is being driven by historically low mortgage rates and shift to home offices during the pandemic. Other parts of the economy are also experiencing shortages and high prices because of bottlenecks in the supply chain.

A separate report on Tuesday showed the S&P/Case Shiller composite index of 20 metropolitan areas accelerated 14.9% year-on-year in April, the largest gain since December 2005. That followed a 13.4% increase in March.

Soaring house price inflation was corroborated by another report showing the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) house price index shot up a record 15.7% in April from a year ago after rising 14.0% in March.

Economists do not believe another housing bubble is developing as the surge is being mostly driven by a mismatch between supply and demand, rather than poor lending practices, which triggered the 2008 global financial crisis.

"We often get asked if we are in a housing bubble, but that is not necessarily the case," said Jordan van Rijn, senior economist at the Credit Union National Association.

"There are structural factors at play, such as lower supply of existing homes, a shortage of materials and labor, and higher cost in materials."

Consumer confidence: the present vs the future



Source: Refinitiv Datastream — Reuters graphic/Stephen Culp 29/06/2021

Biden admin hosts high-level Saudi visit first time since Jamal Khashoggi's killing

Top Biden administration officials on Tuesday hosted a brother to Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, in the highest-level such visit known since Jamal Khashoggi's killing.

(News Agencies)-Top Biden administration officials on Tuesday hosted a brother to Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, in the highest-level such visit known since the US made public intelligence findings linking the crown prince to the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The Biden administration did not publicly disclose the visit by Prince Khalid bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's deputy defense minister, in advance.

President Joe Biden had pledged to make a "pariah" of the kingdom's crown prince during his presidential campaign over Khashoggi's killing and other abuses, but his administration has instead emphasized U.S. strategic interests with Saudi Arabia.

The high-level sessions with Prince Khalid, a younger brother and confidant to Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince, revived complaints that the administration was giving the Saudis a pass in the Khashoggi

killing, given that country's strategic importance as a Middle East power and top oil producer. "US still has their back, no matter how awfully they terrorize their citizens," Sarah Leah Whitson, who leads the Arab rights group Democracy for the Arab World Now, tweeted Tuesday in a criticism of Biden administration policy.

Biden has pledged a foreign policy that follows human rights and American values. But after the February release of the U.S. findings on Mohammed bin Salman's role in Khashoggi's death, Biden told ABC News there was no precedent for the U.S. punishing the acting head of a country with which it has a partnership.

National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told Prince Khalid in one of Tuesday's meetings about the need to improve human rights in the kingdom, according to a U.S. readout of their talk. But the two also discussed strategic matters where Saudi Arabia's cooperation is important for Biden

administration aims, such as the global economic recovery, where the kingdom is leading a push to step up OPEC pumping and calm rising oil prices. The U.S. also is trying to reassure Saudi Arabia on security matters as the Biden administration seeks to reenter a nuclear deal with Iran, among other issues.

Khalid bin Salman met at the Pentagon with officials including Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, one official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss a meeting that the Pentagon did not detail publicly. Prince Khalid will meet with State Department officials Wednesday. White House press secretary Jen Psaki indicated in a briefing with press that officials might raise the killing of Khashoggi. Khashoggi, a columnist for The Washington Post who had written critically of Mohammed bin Salman, was killed by Saudi officials in October 2018 at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

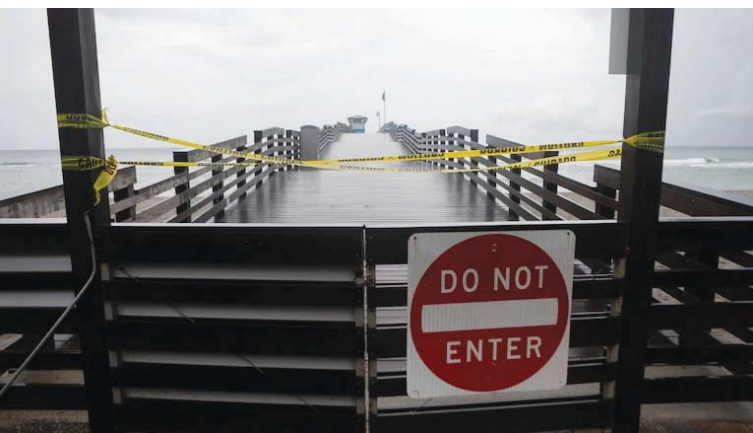


Khashoggi, who was based in the Washington, D.C., area, had gone to the consulate to get documentation for his upcoming wedding. The Biden administration in February released a declassified intelligence report concluding that Mohammed bin Salman, son of the aging King Salman, had authorized the team of Saudi security and intelligence officials that killed Khashoggi. Prince Khalid was the kingdom's ambassador in Washington at the time of Khashoggi's killing. He was recalled soon after amid bipartisan U.S. outrage over the death of the widely known journalist. When Khashoggi vanished after going to the Saudi consulate in Turkey, Khalid bin Salman insisted for days that accusations of official Saudi involvement in his disappearance

were groundless.

The Washington Post reported that it was Prince Khalid who told Khashoggi to go to the consulate in Turkey to pick up his wedding papers and said it would be safe to do so. The prince's official travel to Washington comes as the kingdom's rulers still keep numerous members of the royal family and advocates for more rights in detention or under travel bans that sometimes apply to their relatives as well. "Prince KBS can travel although he is working for the Crown Prince, directly involved in the murder" of Khashoggi, tweeted Lina al Hathloul on Tuesday. She is the sister of Loujain al Hathloul, whom Mohammed bin Salman imprisoned for more than two years following her high-profile campaign for the kingdom to allow women to drive.

Tropical Storm Elsa becomes hurricane, expected to make landfall on Florida Gulf Coast



(News Agencies)-Tropical Storm Elsa strengthened into a Category 1 hurricane on Tuesday, hours before an expected landfall on Florida's northern Gulf Coast, the US National Hurricane Center said.

The center of Elsa was about 100 miles (165 km) south-southwest of Tampa, Florida, and was moving north at around 9 miles per hour (15 km per hour), with maximum sustained winds of 75 mph (120 kph), the NHC said in

an 8 pm ET (0000 GMT on Wednesday) advisory.

A hurricane watch was in effect from Egmont Key, in the Tampa Bay region, to the Steinhatchee River some 180 miles north along the Gulf Coast, with Elsa due to make landfall on Wednesday morning. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said the storm was expected to come ashore between 8 am and 9 am ET (1200 and 1300 GMT) around the

Tampa Bay area.

The sky was gray but conditions dry on Tuesday afternoon in Venice Beach, about 70 miles south of Tampa.

Michelle and Amador Diaz were there from Albuquerque to celebrate their 32nd wedding anniversary and were enjoying a walk along the beach.

We're not scared of the storm," Amador Diaz said. "I'd rather have this than the sun out." After landfall, the storm is forecast to move north-northeastward across the southeast of the United States through Thursday, dropping 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 cm) of rain across the Florida peninsula. Tornadoes were possible on Tuesday across Florida and on Wednesday in north Florida, southeast Georgia and the low country of South Carolina, the NHC said.

Imports severely weakened US automotive industry, reveals Trump-era report on foreign auto threat

(News Agencies)-The US Commerce Department on Tuesday released a confidential Trump administration report that was the basis for the former president's threats in 2019 to impose tariffs on imported automobiles on grounds of national security.

Then-US President Donald Trump in May 2019 declared that some unidentified imported autos posed national security risks. He refused to release the report to Congress or the public, which prompted a lawsuit seeking its disclosure. Republican Senator Pat Toomey, who drafted legislation to require the report's release, said in a statement that "a quick glance confirms what we expected: The justification for these tariffs was so entirely unfounded that even the authors were too embarrassed to let it see the light of day." Trump threatened but never imposed tariffs of up to

25 per cent on imported cars or auto parts. Automakers said tariffs would result in the loss of hundreds of thousands of auto jobs, raise vehicle prices and threaten industry spending on self-driving cars.

The redacted 116-page report said research and spending by the largest foreign-owned automobile producers reflected de facto subsidies in their home markets, citing Volkswagen AG and Toyota Motor Corp. "Significant import penetration over the course of the past three decades has severely weakened the US automotive industry," the report said. This "jeopardizes US military leadership and its ability to fulfil America's defence requirements," it said.

American-owned producers are General Motors, Ford Motor Co, and Tesla Inc, the report said. It did not include Chrysler which is part of Stellantis NV.

Taliban wins close consulates; Tajikistan reinforces border with Afghanistan

As Taliban gains ground in Afghanistan, several countries have either closed their consulates or reduced their services. Meanwhile, the Tajik government mobilized 20,000 military reservists to strengthen its border with Afghanistan.

(News Agencies)-Asurge of Taliban wins in northern Afghanistan has caused some countries to close their north Afghan consulates, while across the border in Tajikistan reservists are being called up to reinforce its southern border, according to officials and reports on Tuesday. Nearly 1,000 Afghan soldiers have fled the Taliban advances by crossing the border into Tajikistan, according to reports from Tajikistan.

A statement on Monday from the Tajik government said President Emomali Rakhmon has ordered the mobilization of 20,000 military reservists to strengthen its border with Afghanistan.

The Afghan military exodus comes as Taliban overrun most districts in northeastern Badakhshan province. Many of the districts collapsed without a fight but along the province's northern border with Tajikistan, hundreds of Afghan National Security and Defense Forces crossed the border seeking safety.

The consulates of Turkey and Russia have reportedly closed in Mazar-e-Sharif, the capital of northern Balkh province, and Afghanistan's fourth-largest city. Iran said it has restricted activities at its consulate in the city. There has been fighting in Balkh province, but the provincial capital has been relatively peaceful. The consulates of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, India and Pakistan have reduced their services, Balkh provincial governor's spokesman Munir Farhad said Tuesday. He said Turkey and Russia had closed their consulates and their diplomats had left the city. The Tajik government said Afghan troops were being allowed to cross on humanitarian grounds but the border posts on the Tajik side were in control of Tajik forces and there was no fighting with Taliban from the Tajik side.

Moscow also weighted in on Monday with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying there is "heightened concern" over the fighting but

Russia has no plans to send troops to assist its former republic.

"We have repeatedly said many times that after the withdrawal of the Americans and their allies from Afghanistan, the development of the situation in this country is a matter of our heightened concern," Peskov said.

"We're monitoring it very closely and are noting that destabilization (of the situation) is taking place, unfortunately." Meanwhile, Tajikistan's state news agency Khovar counted 1,037 Afghan military personnel who entered Tajikistan while fleeing for their lives. It said Monday they used seven of the crossings along the countries' shared 910-kilometer (565-mile) border.

The Taliban have made relentless territorial wins since mid-April, when President Joe Biden announced the last 2,500-3,500 US soldiers and 7,000 allied NATO soldiers would leave Afghanistan. Most have left



quietly already, well before the announced deadline in September.

The US last week evacuated Bagram Airfield - the epicenter of its nearly 20-year war waged to hunt the al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks on the United States and to unseat the Taliban who had harboured them.

The evacuation of Bagram was a sure sign that most US troops had left, although the full withdrawal is not expected to be completed until the end of August while agreements to protect Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport are settled. PEACE TALKS AT A DEAD-END Meanwhile, the months-old peace talks being held in Qatar between Taliban and a fractious Afghan government have all but stopped even as both sides say

they want a negotiated end to the decades-long conflict.

With their victories in northern and southern Afghanistan, the Taliban are putting pressure on provincial cities and gaining control of key transportation routes. The Afghan government has resurrected militias mostly loyal to Kabul-allied warlords but with a history of brutal violence that has raised the specter of civil war similar to the fighting that devastated Kabul in the early 1990s. The Taliban wins in northern Afghanistan are particularly significant because that part of the country is the traditional stronghold of US-allied warlords and the scene of the Taliban's initial widespread losses in 2001 when the US-led coalition launched its battle to unseat the religious movement.

Indian migrant worker's traditional martial arts moves win him top prize in Singapore contest



Ganesan Sandhirakasan, who hails from Tamil Nadu, took home the SG 4 Migrant Workers top prize of SGD 1,000 for garnering the maximum number of likes and views on his video showcasing traditional Indian martial art form Silambam.

(News Agencies)-An Indian man in Singapore has won the top prize in a government-initiated competition for migrant workers for choreographing and performing a sequence of Silambam - a traditional martial art form practised in India since the 4th century BC.

Ganesan Sandhirakasan, 33, who hails from Tamil Nadu, secured the first place with the most number of likes and views for his video on the @sg4mw (SG 4 Migrant Workers) TikTok account, beating 19 other shortlisted individuals. He took

home the prize money of SGD 1,000 (USD 743).

The series was made for migrant workers in Singapore and the final episode was aired on Monday night.

The competition is part of the Tamil variety series Chill Pannu Maappil, commissioned by the Ministry of Communication and Information and produced by Cosmic Ultima Pictures for migrant workers.

Migrant workers were invited to send in video submissions of their talents and the show received

more than 600 entries, said executive producer of the show SS Vikneshwaran. Ganeansan started practising martial arts at the age of 12 and won a silver medal for India at the first Silambam World Championship in 2010. "(I decided to take part) after seeing the advertisement (for the competition) on the website. My workplace was closed during the Covid period," he said of the first talent competition held in Singapore. I wanted to use the time on something. Therefore, I choreographed (a demonstration of) the Indian martial art Silambam," the Channel New Asia quoted Ganesan as saying. Ganesan said he submitted his video with the intention of making the martial art form known to

more people, and to encourage others to keep fit. "It takes concentration, fitness, and practice to perform a continuous sequence of Silambam. Learners benefit from both physical, health and mental health," he added. Ganesan has been living in Singapore for the past seven years, and teaching Taekwondo here for the past five years. The second place in the competition went to Vignesh Sathish, whose video of him performing a traditional dance form known as the Karagattam in costume won him SGD 500 (USD 372). The winner of the third position - with a prize money of SGD 300 (USD 223) - was Saran Raj, an assistant supervisor with a cleaning company who submitted a video of himself

singing. Ganesan said he was "happy and excited" to win the first position. He plans to keep half of the prize money for his own use, and donate the other half to a foundation in his hometown in Mayiladuthurai in Tamil Nadu to provide at least 500 meals for the elderly. Ganesan said he hopes the money will help individuals who are facing "challenging times" due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The reception for the show and the competition segment has been "pretty good" so far, Vikneshwaran said, adding that both migrant workers and Singaporeans enjoy the series.

"They seem to love the idea of being able to connect with familiar faces that they know from back home. They enjoy the dance, the

US to reach 160 million fully vaccinated Americans by end of week, says Biden

US President Joe Biden on Tuesday said the US is predicted to reach the mark of 160 million fully vaccinated Americans by the end of this week.



(News Agencies)-US President Joe Biden on Tuesday said the US is predicted to reach the mark of 160 million fully vaccinated Americans by the end of this week and asserted that the country is closer than ever to declaring its independence from the deadly virus.

Noting that COVID-19 cases and deaths are down by 90 per cent since January, he said millions of fully vaccinated Americans are now living their lives as they did before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Today after receiving a briefing from my entire COVID-19 team, I'm proud to announce that we're getting even closer, because of our wartime effort, to administer

300 million shots in arms in just 150 days. More than 182 million Americans have received at least one shot, including nearly 90 per cent of seniors and 70 per cent of adults over the age of 27," Biden said.

"By the end of this week, we'll have reached the mark of 160 million fully vaccinated Americans. That's a goal I set in March that I'm thrilled we're going to hit just a few days after July the Fourth. So, we will have 160 million fully vaccinated Americans -- up from roughly three million when we took office five months ago," he said after receiving a briefing from his entire Covid team.

Biden said businesses are

reopening and projected economic growth is the highest it's been in four decades.

"The bottom line is: The virus is on the run, and America is coming back. We're coming back together. This is one of the greatest achievements in American history, and you, the American people, made it happen," he said.

At the same time, the president said America's fight against the virus is not over as a large number of people are still unvaccinated because of which their communities are at risk.

"This is an even bigger concern because of the Delta variant," he said, adding that the Delta variant is already responsible for

half of all cases in many parts of the country.

Biden said it's more easily transmissible and potentially more dangerous.

"It seems to me that it should cause everybody to think twice. And it should cause reconsideration, especially in young people who may have thought that they didn't have to be vaccinated, didn't have to worry about it, or didn't have to

do anything about it up to now," he said.

The president said the good news is that vaccines are highly effective. "Fully vaccinated Americans have a high degree of protection, including against this Delta variant. Study after study after study has shown that, since early May, virtually every COVID-19 hospitalisation and death in the US has been among the unvaccinated," Biden said.

Iran begins process to make enriched uranium metal, draws criticism from US, European powers

(News Agencies)- Iran has begun the process of producing enriched uranium metal, the UN atomic watchdog said on Tuesday, a move that could help it develop a nuclear weapon and that three European powers said threatened talks to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Iran's steps, which were disclosed by the International Atomic Energy Agency and which Tehran said aimed to develop fuel for a research reactor, also drew criticism from the United States, which called them an "unfortunate step backwards."

2015 NUCLEAR DEAL

US and European officials made clear that Iran's decision would complicate, and potentially torpedo, indirect US-Iranian talks seeking to bring both nations back into compliance with the 2015 deal, which was abandoned by former President Donald Trump. The deal imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear programme to make it harder for Tehran to develop fissile material for nuclear weapons in return for the lifting of economic sanctions. After Trump withdrew, Iran began violating many of the



restrictions.

Tehran has already produced a small amount of uranium metal this year that was not enriched. That is a breach of the deal, which bans all work on uranium metal since it can be used to make the core of a nuclear bomb. PRODUCTION OF ENRICHED URANIUM METAL

"Today, Iran informed the Agency that UO₂ (uranium oxide) enriched up to 20% U₂₃₅ would be shipped to the R&D laboratory at the Fuel Fabrication Plant in Esfahan, where it would be

converted to UF₄ (uranium tetrafluoride) and then to uranium metal enriched to 20% U₂₃₅, before using it to manufacture the fuel," an IAEA statement said.

A confidential IAEA report seen by Reuters said the agency had confirmed that Iran had taken steps to begin the process of producing enriched uranium metal. EUROPEAN POWERS Britain, France and Germany said on Tuesday they had "grave concern" about Iran's decision, which violates the nuclear deal, formally named the Joint

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Iran has no credible civilian need for uranium metal R&D and production, which are a key step in the development of a nuclear weapon," they said in a joint statement issued by Britain's foreign ministry.

"With its latest steps, Iran is threatening a successful outcome to the Vienna talks despite the progress achieved in six rounds of negotiations," they said, and urged Iran to return to the talks in the Austrian capital,

which began in April and adjourned on June 20. No date has been set for a next round.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's ambassador to the IAEA, noted the agency's report on Iran's latest violation of the 2015 deal as well as the Biden administration's decision to maintain the Iran sanctions reimposed by Trump, also violations of the accord.

"The only way out of this vicious circle is resumption of #ViennaTalks without delay and full restoration of #JCPOA," he wrote on Twitter.

'WORRYING': USA

US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said Washington was not setting a deadline for the talks, but noted "that as time proceeds Iran's nuclear advances will have a bearing on our view of returning to the JCPOA."

Price said the United States found it "worrying" that Iran was continuing to violate the agreement "especially with experiments that have value for nuclear weapons research.

"It's another unfortunate step backwards for Iran," he said.

Enormous Antarctic lake disappears in three days, dumps 26 billion cubic feet water into ocean

(News Agencies)-Global warming and climate change have triggered the melting of ice in several parts of the polar regions, leading to ice shelves collapsing. A massive ice-covered lake in Antarctica vanished within days, raising alarm bells in the scientific community over the dangerous trends of climate change and global warming. The event that occurred in 2019 on Amery Ice Shelf in East Antarctica was only noticed in satellite images. Scientists believe that an estimated 21 billion to 26 billion cubic feet of water that drained into the ocean could raise sea levels. The lake vanished within three days after the ice shelf underneath collapsed. In a paper published in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, researchers said that surface melting over Antarctica's floating ice shelves is predicted to increase significantly during the coming decades, but the implications for their stability are unknown. The Antarctica peninsula has been witnessing significant melting driven ice shelf collapses as researchers try to understand how meltwater forms, flows and alters the surface, and that rapid water-driven changes are not limited to the summer season alone.

WITNESSING A COLLAPSE

Researchers captured high-resolution satellite images showing an abrupt change on East Antarctica's Amery Ice Shelf in June 2019, where meltwater stored in a deep, ice-

covered lake drained through to the ocean below, leaving a deep, uneven 11 square kilometre depression of fractured ice. "We believe a large crack opened briefly in the floating ice shelf and drained the entire lake into the ocean within three days. The lake held more water than Sydney Harbour and the flow into the ocean beneath would have been like the flow over Niagara Falls, so it would have been an impressive sight," Roland Warner, a glaciologist at the University of Tasmania and lead author of a new study said. The event was also captured by a laser instrument on NASA's ICESat-2, which detects individual photons reflected back from the ice surface to make high-resolution elevation



measurements. The team also used surface elevation maps generated by the Polar Geospatial Centre at the University of Minnesota to explore the full extent of the changes, stretching across 60 square kilometres. **MELTING ICE A CAUSE OF CONCERN**

In recent decades, some Antarctic ice shelves have experienced greater surface melting with rising air

temperatures, and the most recent projections of the consequences of future warming for Antarctica show that trend continuing and creating more melt lakes.

This could lead to more such collapses in the future. The effects of global warming are also visible in the Arctic, where recently the "last ice area" showed signs of melting earlier than expected.

Chinese researchers propose deflecting 'Armageddon' asteroids with rockets

Chinese researchers want to send more than 20 of China's largest rockets to practice turning away a sizable asteroid - a technique that may eventually be crucial if a killer rock is on a collision course with Earth.

The idea is more than science fiction. Sometime between late 2021 to early 2022, the United States will launch a robotic spacecraft to intercept two asteroids relatively close to Earth.

When it arrives a year later, the NASA spacecraft will crash-land on the smaller of the two rocky bodies to see how much the asteroid's trajectory changes. It will be humanity's first try at changing the course of a celestial body. At China's National Space Science Center,

researchers found in simulations that 23 Long March 5 rockets hitting simultaneously could deflect a large asteroid from its original path by a distance 1.4 times the Earth's radius.

Their calculations are based on an asteroid dubbed Bennu, orbiting the sun, which is as wide as the Empire State Building is tall. It belongs to a class of rocks with the potential to cause regional or continental damage. Asteroids spanning more than 1 km would have global consequences. The science

center cited a recently published study in *Icarus*, a journal on planetary science. Long March 5 rockets are key to China's near-term space ambitions - from delivering space station modules to launching probes to the Moon and Mars. China has successfully launched six Long March 5 rockets since 2016, with the last one causing some safety concerns as its remnants reentered the atmosphere in May. "The proposal of keeping the upper stage of the launch rocket to a guiding spacecraft, making



one large 'kinetic impactor' to deflect an asteroid, is a rather nice concept," said Professor Alan Fitzsimmons from the Astrophysics Research Centre at Queen's University Belfast. "By increasing the mass

hitting the asteroid, simple physics should ensure a much greater effect," Fitzsimmons told Reuters, although, he added, the actual operation of such a mission needs to be studied in greater detail.

This instrument could detect water on Moon as countries return to lunar surface

As countries return to the Moon, this time with plans to stay and create a long-term presence, one of the biggest explorations will be the search for water on the lunar surface. A team of scientists working to look for the occurrence and behaviour of water on Earth's natural satellite have designed an instrument that can detect water molecules from the surface.

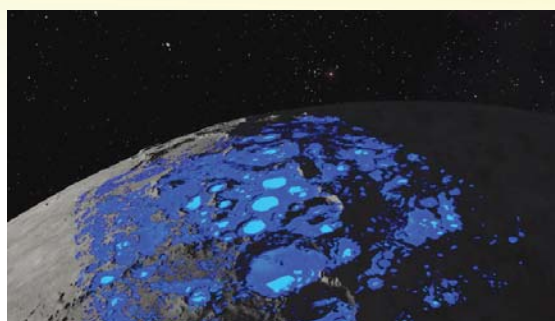
The team from The Open University (OU) and RAL Space have assembled the Exospheric Mass Spectrometer (EMS), referred to as the "heart of a lunar sensor", that will study the

abundance of water and ice for upcoming missions to the Moon. This spectrometer, part of the PITMS instrument, is being delivered to Nasa for its launch to the Moon later this year.

The instrument will arrive on the Moon as part of the ambitious Artemis mission by Nasa, which will see the first woman and the next male astronaut returning to the lunar surface decades after the Apollo mission.

"The instrument will measure the water and other molecules in the

very thin atmosphere of the Moon throughout a lunar day, probing the emerging concept of a lunar



water cycle. The instrument will also prove some of the detection technology that will be used by the OU on subsequent missions," The Open University

said in a statement. **HOW DOES IT DETECT WATER ON MOON?**

According to ESA, the instrument allows researchers to identify and quantify sample atoms and molecules in gas by chemical analysis. Lunar molecules entering the sensor are bombarded by electrons that create ions, which are stored within an electric field. These ions are then released into the detector that identifies and quantifies their chemical makeup.

The instrument will measure water and other molecules in the very thin atmosphere of the Moon throughout the lunar day to study a lunar 'water cycle' concept. The instrument will be part of a lunar lander that will arrive on the Moon on Nasa's Astrobotic mission in the Valles Mortis region in 2021. The team had previously designed a sensor to identify lunar volatiles. The Ion Trap Mass Spectrometer (ITMS) is part of an instrument that will detect lunar volatiles from both the extremely thin atmosphere of the Moon and from the lunar soil.

Sensex, Nifty end higher as metal stocks rise; cabinet reshuffle in focus

The blue-chip NSE Nifty 50 index closed 0.39% higher at 15,879.65, while the benchmark S&P BSE Sensex ended 0.37% higher at 53,054.76.

Indian shares closed higher on Wednesday after a volatile day of trading as investors parsed through some early earnings data while details of an upcoming central government cabinet reshuffle trickled in.

The blue-chip NSE Nifty 50 index closed 0.39% higher at 15,879.65, while the benchmark S&P BSE Sensex ended 0.37% higher at 53,054.76.

India's Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has resigned ahead of a cabinet reshuffle planned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

later on Wednesday, a source close to the minister told Reuters.

In Mumbai trading, the Nifty Metal index ended 2.2% higher, boosted by gains in steel producing giants Tata Steel and JSW Steel.

Tata Steel closed 4.4% higher as it seeks to increase annual capacity in India to 55 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) from 34 mtpa by 2030. Shares of JSW Steel ended 2.7% higher.

Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) parent Tata Motors had warned on

Tuesday of a hit to a key margin metric at JLR in the second quarter and flagged chip supply constraints. Its shares erased losses to close 0.06% higher after falling over 3% earlier in the day.

Jewellery sales at Titan Co, excluding bullion, rose almost 107%, the company said. The watchmaker's shares, however, ended 2% lower as sales from stores that stayed open in May were muted. Investors expect strong results from Tata Consultancy Services, which is



set to report its earnings on from recent record levels as Thursday. Real estate firm Sobha investors awaited minutes from Ltd surged as much as 9.1% after the Federal Reserve's latest it reported a higher total sales meeting to see if they confirm a value for the first quarter. Global hawkish turn in U.S. monetary stocks dipped on Wednesday policy.

India's richest men face off in race to green energy domination



Just a few days ago, Reliance Industries Limited chairman Mukesh Ambani's said the conglomerate will invest \$10 billion in green energy.

Reliance's renewed interest in the sector may lead to a high-profile face-off between Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani. Indian tycoon Mukesh Ambani's \$10 billion entry into renewable energy could drive solar tariffs further to the ground and ignite bidding wars with fellow

billionaire Gautam Adani, industry analysts say.

India's two richest men are vying to be at the forefront of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambition to ramp up green energy capacity in the world's second-most populous country more than four-fold to 450

gigawatts (GW) by 2030. They have mostly avoided operating in each other's space and the renewable energy push by Ambani's flagship Reliance Industries and the Adani group of companies will be the highest-profile faceoff between them.

Ambani, 64, built up his family-owned petrochemicals and textiles business into a sprawling empire including telecoms and retail. Adani, 59, is a self-made billionaire who has focused on electricity generation, transmission and distribution,

and the operation of ports and airports. The two billionaires - and Modi - are all from the western Indian state of Gujarat. Ambani announced last month he will build 100 GW of solar energy capacity over the next nine years. He said his group would spend \$10 billion over the next three years on building solar manufacturing units, a battery factory for energy storage, a fuel cell factory, and a unit to produce green hydrogen. Three days later, Adani announced that his green energy venture would add 5 GW every

year this decade, from a current level of about 3.5 GW. IMPACT ON GREEN ENERGY SECTOR- Analysts say there is sufficient space for multiple companies to grow as a part of India's ambitious green energy target, but tariffs could fall further as companies try to outdo each other in aggressive bidding wars to win projects. Solar tariffs in India are already among the lowest in the world, having fallen below 2 Indian rupees (\$0.0269) per kilowatt-hour in auctions conducted in Gujarat.

Pentagon move cements Jeff Bezos's position as world's richest person

The world's richest person Jeff Bezos has further cemented his position in terms of net worth after Amazon shares jumped sharply. Bezos, who recently stepped down as Amazon CEO, saw his net worth rise to \$211 billion.

It may be noted that Jeff Bezos is still the executive chairman and biggest shareholder of the world's largest e-commerce firm. With the fresh jump in net worth, he is now \$30 billion richer than the world's second-richest man, Elon Musk.

The 57-year-old's net worth rose after Amazon shares jumped 4.7 per cent following the Pentagon's announcement that it was cancelling a cloud-computing contract with rival Microsoft Corp, reported Bloomberg News. The Pentagon said it was scrapping a \$10 billion cloud-



it planned to split the work between Microsoft and rival Amazon's cloud computing business, Amazon Web Services (AWS). The rally in Amazon's shares raised Bezos's net worth by a whopping \$8.4 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Earlier in January, Elon Musk's net worth had briefly hit \$210 billion but has dropped significantly since then. Meanwhile, Jeff Bezos reclaimed his position as the world's richest person since mid-March as Amazon shares climbed nearly 20 per cent during that time. TECH TITANS DOMINATE

The surging prices of stocks over the past few months have helped boost the fortunes of a group of tech titans

including Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk. While Musk had lost his position to French luxury goods magnate Bernard Arnault for a brief period, he has again become the world's second-richest person. Arnault is the third richest person in the world with a net worth of \$169 billion. However, Jeff Bezos has gained even higher than Elon Musk this year as Amazon's stock kept rising since the pandemic. Though he has officially stepped down as Amazon's CEO, he owns about 11 per cent of the company. Meanwhile, Bezos's ex-wife and the 15th-richest person in the world Mackenzie Scott also gained from the recent rally in Amazon stocks. Her net worth jumped \$2.9 billion on Tuesday, more than the \$2.7 billion she has given away so far this year.

Let's go to explore a magical place

*Come into the lap of
Nature, Explore Hiking,
Day Camping, *fishing &
*Hunting on 100 Acres of
Unexplored & Beautiful
land backing to
thousands of
acres of state land.*



Email: whitestone1979@gmail.com

Catskill, New York

** Limited spots available,
Terms & Conditions apply.*



APOLLO
FARMS & RESORTS

Biden's new dilemma: How to slash housing costs for low-income borrowers

A long-awaited Supreme Court decision last month gave President Joe Biden the ability to remove the Trump-era leader of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, and he wasted no time.

President Joe Biden's move to fire the top U.S. mortgage regulator is triggering calls from fellow Democrats to use the agency to expand access to loans for lower-income people, who have struggled to buy homes since the financial crisis.

That's setting up a clash with Republicans over how far the government should go in shaping an industry that makes up one-fifth of the U.S. economy.

A long-awaited Supreme Court decision last month gave Biden the ability to remove the Trump-era leader of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, and he wasted no time. The president installed as interim director an agency veteran who says she'll make affordable housing and

nominee?"

The pressure from the left poses a tough choice for Biden. Democrats for years have pushed the agency responsible for Fannie and Freddie to expand homeownership and narrow the racial wealth gap. But making mortgages cheaper and more accessible could also raise the risks of defaults and increase the odds that the companies would need another bailout in the future. Fannie and Freddie were seized by the government in 2008 to avert their failure during the subprime mortgage crash.

Industry analysts also say cheaper mortgages would do little to solve the fundamental problem in the housing market, which has seen skyrocketing prices because the supply of

prevent their failure during the housing market crisis. They have remained under government conservatorship ever since. Attempts by Congress to revamp their operations have repeatedly foundered, with tensions over housing affordability creating a political fault line.

The Trump administration had worked to shrink Fannie and Freddie's footprint and build their capital buffers so they could be released as private entities and withstand another housing downturn. Democrats opposed those efforts, saying they would raise mortgage costs for consumers. Biden could draw opposition from Republicans if he picked a regulator who reversed course in an attempt to double down on housing affordability.



combating discrimination a top priority, but who has underwhelmed those on the left, who say she is a mere caretaker. Progressives are concerned that Biden will be too timid in changing course at the powerful agency overseeing Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the two companies that stand behind half of the \$11 trillion U.S. mortgage market. Top Democrats are calling on Biden to quickly name a permanent leader - a position that Senate Banking Chair Sherrod Brown's spokesperson said is "vital to the administration's goals of building an equitable economy and must be filled quickly."

"They knew this moment was coming," said Jesse Van Tol, CEO of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, a housing advocacy group. "Why don't we already have a

homes is too small to meet demand.

"There are real questions about what FHFA can do on affordability given that we're in a supply crisis," said Isaac Boltansky, policy research director at the investment firm Compass Point. "How much does moving the dial a little bit do when we just don't have enough homes?"

Fannie and Freddie, which operate as government-sponsored entities, are critical to American homeownership because they buy mortgages from lenders and bundle them into securities for investors, underpinning mortgage market liquidity and ensuring affordability.

The Bush administration took control of Fannie and Freddie in September 2008, when the companies were loaded down with risky subprime loans, to

"Our housing finance system remains in urgent need of reform," said Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, the top Republican on the Senate Banking Committee. "I look forward to working with the next FHFA director to enact legislation that finally addresses the flaws in the structure of the housing finance system, ends the conservatorships, and protects taxpayers against future bailouts."

While Biden has proposed a raft of home-affordability measures, having control of Fannie and Freddie might be his most effective tool.

The FHFA director "is the most powerful and consequential job on housing in America," said David Dworkin, president and CEO of the National Housing Conference. "There is no close second."



Dworkin and other housing advocates want FHFA to allow Fannie and Freddie to take on more financial risk - meaning more government intervention backed by taxpayers - in the name of expanding access to mortgages.

Among their ideas: Giving Fannie and Freddie free rein to purchase mortgages with lower credit scores, allowing private lenders to make more of those loans; cutting fees; and expanding investment that supports the construction of multifamily rental properties.

Advocates want FHFA to immediately do away with Trump-era limits on Fannie and Freddie's purchases of "high-risk" loans - characterized as having some combination of low credit scores and high debt-to-income or loan-to-value ratios. Allowing the companies to purchase and guarantee more of the loans could lead to lenders issuing more of them, which would extend credit to more low-credit-score, low-income borrowers without requiring higher down payments to compensate for the risk. Fannie and Freddie would pick up the tab if the loan defaulted.

Dworkin said the companies today have "almost no measurable risk in their book of business," which includes borrowers who hold "extraordinarily high" credit scores and very few first-time homebuyers with low down payments.

"Their job is not risk elimination," he said. "It's risk management. Their mission is to add liquidity to the mortgage markets, not reduce it, and they need to get back in the liquidity business and add liquidity to underserved markets."

Biden was given the opportunity to change the direction of the

FHFA when the Supreme Court ruled that the agency's leadership structure was unconstitutional and that the president should have greater authority to remove its director. Hours later, Biden fired then-Director Mark Calabria, a libertarian economist nominated by President Donald Trump who had made it his mission to shrink and shore up Fannie and Freddie so they could stand on their own as private companies.

The Biden administration then appointed another senior FHFA official, Sandra Thompson, to serve as acting director. Thompson has served at FHFA since 2013, and she earlier worked for 23 years as a bank regulator at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., which polices lenders for safety and soundness concerns.

On her first day at the helm of FHFA, Thompson said she was committed to ensuring that the housing finance system operated "in a safe and sound manner" while keeping a "laser focus" on community investment. She said there was a "widespread lack of affordable housing and access to credit, especially in communities of color."

Erika Poethig, special assistant to the president for housing and urban policy, said the administration is "committed to expanding access to affordable homeownership, especially for low-wealth borrowers and communities of color that face challenges in the housing market." "In the coming months and years ahead, we look forward to working with FHFA leadership to use the levers of housing finance to address the racial wealth gap, expand housing supply and ensure housing affordability," she added.

What America Didn't Understand About Its Longest War



As the United States leaves Afghanistan after 20 years of war, there can be little doubt that we lost the war - or to put it more gently, did not attain our objectives. In recent weeks, the Taliban have advanced across the north of the country. Bereft of U.S. support, the Afghan army and police have reportedly lost more than two dozen districts over the course of a month and are now fighting on the outskirts of key cities such as Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif. Senior U.S. officials have warned of a civil war, while intelligence reports are said to forecast the fall of the Afghan government - which the United States has worked to strengthen for two decades - within a year. Why did we lose? I've been trying to answer that question for 12 years, starting in 2009 when I was a civilian officer in the far-off district of Garmser in Helmand Province. I continued to ponder the question in 2013 and 2014, when I served as political adviser to Gen. Joseph Dunford, commander of all U.S. forces in Afghanistan, and later as Dunford's senior adviser when he was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As I traveled the country with senior U.S. military commanders, I saw that in battle after battle, numerically superior and better-supplied soldiers and police were being defeated by poorly resourced and unexceptionally led Taliban - a dynamic certain to eventually doom the Afghan government unless the United States were to stay indefinitely.

I have found no single answer to why we lost the war. While various explanations address different parts of the puzzle, the one I want to highlight here can perhaps be

seen most clearly in the conversations I've had with the Taliban themselves, often in their native Pashto. "The Taliban fight for belief, for janat (heaven) and ghazi (killing infidels). ... The army and police fight for money," a Taliban religious scholar from Kandahar told me in 2019. "The Taliban are willing to lose their

The very presence of Americans in Afghanistan trod on a sense of Afghan identity that incorporated national pride, a long history of fighting outsiders and a religious commitment to defend the homeland. It prodded men and women to defend their honor, their religion and their home. It dared young men to fight. It sapped the



head to fight. ... How can the army and police compete?" The Taliban had an advantage in inspiring Afghans to fight. Their call to fight foreign occupiers, steeped in references to Islamic teachings, resonated with Afghan identity. For Afghans, jihad - more accurately understood as "resistance" or "struggle" than the caricatured meaning it has acquired in the United States - has historically been a means of defense against oppression by outsiders, part of their endurance against invader after invader. Even though Islam preaches unity, justice and peace, the Taliban were able to tie themselves to religion and to Afghan identity in a way that a government allied with non-Muslim foreign occupiers could not match.

will of Afghan soldiers and police. The Taliban's ability to link their cause to the very meaning of being Afghan was a crucial factor in America's defeat.

This explanation has been underappreciated by American leaders and experts, myself included. We believed things were possible in Afghanistan - defeat of the Taliban or enabling the Afghan government to stand on its own - that probably were not. That doesn't necessarily mean that we should have abandoned Afghanistan long ago, given what we knew at the time. It does mean that the strategy could have been better managed to avoid expending resources on objectives that were unlikely to be attained. Less money could have been spent. Fewer lives

could have been lost. But that America couldn't have done much more than muddle along for years in the face of a relentless enemy is the unsatisfying, sometimes frustrating coda to our longest war.

In 2009, I went to Garmser to serve on a district support team, working alongside a Marine infantry battalion. President Barack Obama's surge was underway and we were trying to drive the Taliban out of most of Helmand Province. I was hopeful, but also interested to understand why violence had returned after the initial calm that had followed the 2001 U.S. invasion. My instinct based on earlier studies of Afghanistan, including Sarah Chayes' classic *The Punishment of Virtue*, was that a main driver of the violence would be grievances - locals driven to fight by mistreatment at the hands of the government or its warlord allies. Indeed, I found ample evidence of grievances - land issues, oppressive policemen and government exploitation of the poppy trade. Pakistan was also a tremendously important

factor for Garmser. The country was already notorious in U.S. government circles for its unwillingness to cooperate against the Taliban, and indeed hundreds of fighters had come from Pakistan to attack the district. Another reason for violence was infighting within the government, its military forces, and its tribal and warlord allies, who failed to unite against the common Taliban threat.

After I left Garmser, I got the chance to view the country from a wider vista as adviser to Dunford. I felt something more was going on. Grievances, Pakistan and infighting could not explain every incident of battlefield defeat. The surge was now over and it was time for the Afghan government to stand on its own so that we could depart. But too often, police and soldiers were giving up in battle. The average soldier and policeman simply did not want to fight as much as his Taliban counterpart. As a result, the government was losing ground on the edges of what we had regained in the surge. At the time, the losses were a trickle. But we knew if they continued, the government

would be unable to control key cities and would be in danger of falling. That trickle of losses would eventually become the flood we are witnessing today.

Corruption was part of the problem. As is well-known, the effectiveness of soldiers and police suffered because government officials or military commanders pocketed their pay, hoarded their ammunition and diluted rosters with ghost soldiers. Yet even after accounting for corruption, the police and army were usually still numerically superior to and better equipped than the Taliban in any given battle. A stronger explanation was that the police and soldiers did not want to put their lives on the line for a government that was corrupt and prone to neglect them. Still, I knew a number of Afghan commanders who took great pains to care for their men. Could we really rest blame on corrupt, uncaring government leaders when Taliban were fighting for less pay, with fewer heavy weapons, far worse medical care, and leaders that for years hid out in Pakistan while their soldiers fought? Moreover, the Afghan special forces - which far and away have better leaders than the Taliban and are exquisitely supported - still had great difficulty fighting without U.S. air support and advisers.

The question nagged me as I left Afghanistan in August 2014. All of these factors were clearly important, but their sum amounted to something less than the hardship that was playing out before my eyes.

A few months after returning home, I attended a discussion at the State Department with Michael McKinley, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. We were having a lively debate about why the Taliban fight when the ambassador interjected. "Maybe I have read too much Hannah Arendt," he said, referring to the 20th-century philosopher who argued that human action was spurred by fears and past experiences, "but I do not think this is about money or jobs. The Taliban are fighting for something larger." McKinley captured what I was feeling but had not articulated, and what the Taliban scholar would reiterate for me five years later. The Taliban exemplified something that inspired, something that made them powerful in battle, something tied to what it meant to be Afghan.



Why this July Fourth feels like a celebration

What a difference a year and a president can make. Last July 4th was anything but a celebration. Our country was being ravaged by Covid. The daily death toll was nearly 500 a day and climbing -- on the way to over 3,000 daily deaths by January 2021. The national unemployment rate in June 2020 was over 11%, with record jobless numbers in Massachusetts (17.4%), New Jersey (16.6%) and New York (15.7%). Beyond the health and economic pain was the jarring lack of hope epitomized by how July 4th looked and felt in 2020. Covid concerns meant the cancellation of most of the fireworks, parades and other live festivities that typically marked the anniversary of the signing of our nation's Declaration of Independence. We couldn't even turn to one of America's favorite pastimes for distraction given that Major League Baseball would not start up again until late July -- and even then with no fans, which on some level summed up the loneliness

many of us felt during the time of Covid closures.

Making it worse was then-President Donald Trump. His tsunami of lies about the virus confused and misled people. He even used his Independence Day national address to mislead American with the dangerous and false claim that 99% of coronavirus cases in America are "totally harmless."

Trump also marked the July 4th weekend doing what he had done so often: modeling irresponsible Covid behavior by holding a packed event on the White House lawn that violated US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines on mask wearing and social distancing. Apparently, Trump's need for people to cheer him was more important than saving lives from a deadly virus.

Contrast all that with where we are as a nation today. While we're not as close to vaccinating all Americans as we'd like, we are closer to emerging from the pandemic. On July 3, there were

86 new deaths from the virus -- compared to over 4,000 dying on January 20, Trump's last day in office. The June jobs report released on Friday indicated that the national unemployment rate had dropped from 11.1% in June 2020 down to 5.9%--with over 850,000 new jobs being created in June alone, far exceeding economists' predictions.

We are also experiencing the sheer joy of the return of fireworks displays and parades across the nation. America's game is back, with the stands filled with people cheering for their favorite baseball team. Even the traditional Nathan's Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest in New York's Coney Island is back with a live audience. Why anyone wants to see people attempt to frantically jam hot dogs into their mouths is beyond me -- but if that is how you celebrate the 4th, enjoy!

None of this is happenstance. It's because of Biden and his "war-time" effort to roll out the vaccine with his announced goal in March "of getting the nation closer to

normal by July 4th, Independence Day."

When Trump left office, we only saw about 900,000 vaccines administered per day. Under Biden, there were over 3.3 million injections a day at the peak of the rollout. And while Biden didn't meet his goal of 70% of all US adults being vaccinated by July 4th, the CDC says about 157 million Americans -- just 3 million shy of Biden's 160 million target -- are fully vaccinated. By setting this goal, Biden pushed Americans on a path that benefited all of us as a nation. And Biden -- in sharp contrast to Trump, who irresponsibly mocked people for wearing a mask during the worst of the pandemic -- constantly modeled mask wearing and social distancing to encourage people to follow suit. That all played a role in getting us to where we are today, with the Bidens able to celebrate their biggest party yet at the White House on Sunday. Then there's the intangible that helped us all cope with this

collective trauma: Biden's compassion. One stand-out example came on the eve of Biden being sworn in as 46th president. He and then Vice President-elect Kamala Harris marked the nation reaching the gruesome death toll of 400,000 with a moving tribute at the Washington Monument, telling Americans, "It's hard sometimes to remember, but that's how we heal," adding, "It's important to do that as a nation."

What a contrast to Trump, who when asked about the Covid death toll last year, coldly stated, "It is what it is." Trump always made it feel like he was the biggest victim of Covid -- not the families mourning a loss of a loved one.

Many people played a role in getting our nation to this point. But it was having Biden in the White House and Trump out of it that played an oversized role in our nation's success. That's why this July 4th feels like more than just about a return to normalcy. It feels like a celebration.

July 4 is the time to remove the asterisk from US citizenship

July 4th is always a moment to consider what it means to be an American -- and who counts as a citizen -- but this year also offers a unique opportunity to consider the holiday's legacy and how we might live up to its potential. As the country continues to grapple with the systemic racism inherent in so many of our political and social institutions, we cannot overlook the persistent second-class status of Puerto Rico, Guam, the American Virgin Islands and other US territories. From 1898 to 1917, the United States acquired territory in Puerto Rico, Guam, the American Samoan islands, and the Virgin Islands through peace settlements ending the Spanish-American War, military conquest, and a purchase from the Kingdom of Denmark. Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam all remain unincorporated territories. The history of US White supremacy lingers at the center



with nearly 700,000 citizens living in the Federal District. They pay federal taxes, yet they are not fully represented in Congress. The District has one delegate, with limited voting privileges, and no senators representing its interests.

Washington has advocated for full statehood as well and has found

citizenship for residents of these territories. The Biden administration is, an official told CNN, introducing a strategy to "encourage US citizenship" for eligible immigrants. What about those living in these territories? Meanwhile, voting rights are very much also in the news with state legislatures around the country

presidential elections, nor can they elect representatives or senators for Congress.

As nationals, American Samoans have a looser legal relationship with the United States, but no less commitment to patriotic service. American Samoans enlist in the military at a higher rate than citizens from any other US state or territory. The territory is largely self-governing by its own governor and legislative body but remains under the auspices of the secretary of the interior, who retains the power to approve constitutional amendments, override the governor's vetoes and reject the nomination of judges.

Why do these weird, antiquated territorial designations even still exist? White supremacy. In 1899, the United States began to seek additional territories beyond the continental borders, scooping up imperial acquisitions in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. But these acquisitions provoked an identity crisis. Historian Daniel Immerwahr, in his book "How to Hide an Empire," has demonstrated how three core values dominated the political landscape at the turn of the 20th century: imperialism, White supremacy, and republicanism (not the Republican Party, but rather the belief in self-government). Those three values proved to be incompatible with one another. In the 19th century, the federal government lured White settlers to new territories with the offer of cheap land seized from Native nations. Once enough settlers had arrived, they formed a provisional government and a proposed

state constitution, which Congress usually accepted as a new state.

For example, in 1820, Congress accepted a compromise that admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state to retain the balance of power between the North and the South. But that same process didn't apply to the territories acquired beyond US borders. White settlers weren't interested in residing in many of the more tropical regions, nor did most officials think natives could manage self-government.

For example, Secretary of War Elihu Root argued that Puerto Ricans couldn't be trusted with republican government until they learned "the lesson of self-control and respect for the principles of constitutional government;" a process he expected to take some time, as "they would inevitably fail without a course of tuition under a strong and guiding hand." As Immerwahr writes in his book and discussed with me in a podcast interview, many congressmen also didn't want brown or Black colleagues sitting in the storied desks in the Senate chambers. Accordingly, the US government had three options: they could maintain their White supremacy and imperial designs but would have to abandon their republican values; they could retain their White supremacy and republican values but would have to abandon their dreams of empire; or they could still expand their territorial holdings and encourage republican self-government but would have to welcome new governments run by non-White citizens as their equals. Perhaps unsurprisingly, republicanism was the easy target. Over a century later, these warring impulses still divide this nation. The federal government still wants to retain control and access to territories across the world, but many political figures oppose including them in the Union as equal members. If we share the streets of DC with fellow Washingtonians, we trust American Samoans to serve in our military, and we expect Puerto Ricans to contribute to the national budget, surely, we can extend the benefits of citizenship. We can acknowledge our imperial past and grant full independence or complete statehood.



of these territories' legal status. Nothing is more fundamental to citizenship than equal rights under the law, but for the last century, citizenship in these territories has been limited and conditional -- an institutional vestige of imperialist decisions made in the past because of race and ethnicity and reinforced by politicized racism today. The federal government must offer full and complete statehood or independence to the residents of these territories. The choice of whether to accept it should be theirs, as it should have been 100 years ago.

Washington DC is another key example that comes to mind,

strong support among some Democratic lawmakers. Efforts to obtain DC statehood have stalled in the Senate, however, largely because of Republicans' fear of losing political power, since the District's predominantly Black population reliably swings overwhelmingly Democratic. But it's not the only territory with limited status. Guam, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Northern Mariana Islands are all technically affiliated with the United States or part of the Union but exist as second-tier territories.

This week is the perfect opportunity to consider full

passing restrictive voting laws which will make it more difficult for communities of color to access the ballot boxes. Look no further than Thursday's Supreme Court decision upholding voting restrictions in Arizona. These measures and recent developments have been met with appropriate outrage on the left, but deafening silence largely persists about those in US territories and limitations on their citizenship.

In all, over 3.5 million people live in these territories but don't enjoy the full rights and benefits of citizenship. For example, many Puerto Ricans pay federal taxes, but they can't vote in US

The show must go on... on screen and off it too



THE SHOW MUST GO ON... ON SCREEN AND OFF IT TOO

RICHA CHADHA

The economic impact of the pandemic on the film industry has been quite huge and has many layers to it. Personally, I was not affected financially. I have always been picky about my projects, working six-nine months in a year, and I have a habit of saving. But it's not the same for people who rely on daily wages, such as junior artists, light men, gaffers, technicians, assistants and spot boys. Everybody's income has been hit in the past year as shootings have stopped completely. Actors like us have had to sustain support staff - spot boys, drivers etc - on our own, which was not the case before the pandemic, at least not through the year. The

production house behind the projects we worked for paid the dues of our staff members for the duration that the film was shot. Last year, there were some provisions to support this section financially, including measures by the association for spot boys. Many in the industry also made donations for Covid relief. We are the largest film industry in the world, and I have always maintained that there needs to be some syndication of resources to help out industry workers in difficult times. We have many unions - the producers' union, directors' union, writers' union - they all exist, but it would help if they had more power. I know of big producers who haven't paid

people who have worked for them. A sum of Rs 25 lakh may mean nothing to a big producer, but for many it is a matter of survival.

That said, I know everyone is suffering. It's possible that people have lost money. Fortunately, we have a captive audience in the OTT space. Every day I'm grateful that I don't have to worry about paying my bills or desperately wish for more work to come in, but I sometimes wonder if that would have been the case had I been a new actor in the industry right now. Everything is shut and it's quite demoralising at the moment. If you go to Versova or Lokhandwala, the usual hubs for newcomers, they are empty. Many have left the city to avoid paying exorbitant rents. Even many successful people have given up their residences in posh addresses and moved to Madh Island, where rent is a bit cheaper. Everyone is trying to adjust and adapt. I hope work picks up after this for everyone. Last year, when the situation improved, I had shot something in October. I remember the entire crew being grateful to be just back at work. One member even

thanked actors for being back on the set and agreeing to give takes without a mask. While actors are the face of the film industry, it also supports tens of thousands of people who are not seen on screen.

I could sustain my support staff, help them out with vaccination and their medical bills, but I also know of people who - even if they want to - have been unable to do so. Their present financial situation does not allow it. Crew members who collect wages at the end of a day's work have been pushed into poverty as there is no work right now. We need to do something about this. Perhaps some senior members of the fraternity could all sit down and devise a plan - like what Javed Akhtar saab has done for lyricists.

I'm sorry, but we also cannot ignore the link between recent suicides by actors and these financial problems. People who work on pre- and post-production can continue to do so from the safety of the studio or their homes, but for actors, ground technicians and the larger workforce of the industry, we have nothing to fall back on. It's a question of sheer survival. I keep

hoping that people get together in the industry and demand more in terms of incentives. Maybe lessening the GST burden on cinema halls is also a step in that direction, because they are paying huge rents. I read somewhere that you can rent a small screen in a mall for a child's birthday party. Cinema halls are doing everything that they can to stay afloat. They have salaries to pay for ticket checkers, popcorn vendors, security, apart from maintenance costs of the property.

It's not that people are not doing anything. Production houses such as Yash Raj Films and Dharma Productions have organised vaccination drives and launched initiatives for providing meals. Maybe we can use this ongoing catastrophe to create lasting, long-term change. Maybe an older, wiser, person will find a way to make it sustainable for everybody. Entertainment is going to be here, even when everything else shuts down. It's an important industry in the country's ecosystem and a big soft power globally. It is a good time for us to learn and rebuild.

The real meaning of Belarus' kidnapping of American citizen

Remember the dictator who sent military fighter jets to force a commercial flight to land so he could arrest one of his critics? That dictator was Alexander Lukashenko, the president of Belarus and one of the world's longest-ruling autocrats. Now, we learn, a month earlier he kidnapped an American citizen. Youras Ziankovich, a lawyer with American citizenship, has been in Belarussian hands since April. He has long been a critic of the Belarussian strongman and he, too, thought he could protect himself from a repressive regime by staying beyond its borders. But Lukashenko is proving once again that tyrants don't respect national borders. Transnational repression is becoming increasingly common, further evidence of the global threat posed by authoritarianism.

Transnational repression often moves quietly, below the radar, as when Russia sent killers into

the UK to assassinate critics of President Vladimir Putin's regime, when Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, according to US intelligence, approved an operation in Istanbul to kill the Saudi journalist and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, or on the many occasions when Iran sent squads to Europe to kill regime dissidents.

This time, it was different. Ziankovich was apparently kidnapped in Moscow, with full support of Russian President Vladimir Putin's government.

Ziankovich's wife, Alena Dzenisavets, says she has not seen or spoken to her husband since April 11, shortly before four men in plain clothes, who were waiting for him at his Moscow hotel, threw a hood over his head and stuffed him in a car. She says she put together a sequence of events by speaking to his lawyer and hotel witnesses in Moscow.

The kidnapers drove him more than 400 miles from Moscow to the Belarussian capital, Minsk, where he was sent to the Belarus KGB's pretrial detention center. Six days later, Lukashenko announced he had uncovered a plan to kill him, abduct his children, and topple his regime, part of a coup attempt by "foreign intelligence services, most likely the Central Intelligence Agency and the FBI." US authorities say the allegations are "absolutely untrue."

It may all sound complicated, but it really isn't.

Lukashenko is an illegitimate president, searching desperately for ways to discredit the opposition. He almost assuredly lost last year's election, but declared victory and stayed in office with Russia's support.

In his quest to snuff out calls for democracy, Lukashenko enjoys the support of Putin, who would feel his own position endangered if pro-democracy forces succeed



in neighboring nations. This supposed plot is an attempt to paint the opposition as a tool of foreigners, rather than a genuine representation of a population fed up with Lukashenko's seemingly endless rule (he's been at the helm of Belarus since 1994).

In addition, the alleged conspiracy paints anti-Lukashenko forces, so far scrupulously non-violent, as prepared to kill him. And, as a bonus, it puts the Belarussian president and Putin on the same side of a crisis, potentially strengthening their bond. After all,

without the support of the Kremlin, Lukashenko and his Moscow-dependent economy and security, might not last very long in power.

The plot claim gives Lukashenko an opportunity to get rid of well-known critics. Ziankovich is a longtime opposition member. He was granted political asylum in the US in 2011 and became a US citizen in 2017.

Belarussian authorities have banned US consular officials from visiting Ziankovich in prison.

Here's how continuous sleep loss can impact your mental and physical wellbeing

A new study looks at the consequences of sleeping fewer than six hours for eight consecutive nights - the minimum duration of sleep that experts say is necessary to support optimal health in average adults.

The findings of a new study suggest that all it takes is three consecutive nights of sleep loss to cause your mental and physical wellbeing to greatly deteriorate. A new study published in *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* looked at the consequences of sleeping fewer than six hours for eight consecutive nights - the minimum duration of sleep that experts say is necessary to support optimal health in average adults.

Lead author Soomi Lee, assistant professor in the School of Aging Studies at the University of South Florida, found the biggest jump in symptoms appeared after just one night of sleep loss. The number of mental and physical problems steadily got worse, peaking on day three.

At that point, research shows the human body got relatively used to repeated sleep loss. But that all changed on day six when participants reported that the severity of physical symptoms was at its worst.

"Many of us think that we can pay our sleep debt on weekends and be more productive on weekdays," Lee said. "However, results from this study show that having just one night of sleep loss can significantly impair your daily functioning."

Data provided by the Midlife in the United States study included nearly 2,000 middle-aged adults who were relatively healthy and well-educated. Among them, 42 per cent had at least one night of

sleep loss, sleeping 1 and a half fewer hours than their typical routines. They recorded their mental and physical behaviors in a diary for eight consecutive days, allowing researchers to review how sleep loss causes wear and tear on the body.

Participants reported a pile-up of angry, nervous, lonely, irritable and frustrated feelings as a result of sleep loss. They also experienced more physical symptoms, such as upper respiratory issues, aches, gastrointestinal problems and other health concerns.

These negative feelings and symptoms were continuously elevated throughout consecutive sleep loss days and didn't return to baseline levels unless they had a night



sleep of more than six hours. About one-third of US adults sleep less than six hours per night. Lee says once that becomes a habit, it's increasingly difficult for your body to fully recover from lack of sleep, continuing the vicious cycle of worsening daily wellbeing, which could impact one professionally.

A previous study led by Lee found losing just 16 minutes of sleep

could impact job performance. Her previous findings also show that minor sleep loss can decrease daily mindfulness, which is a critical resource for managing stress and maintaining healthy routines.

Lee says the best way to maintain a strong daily performance is to set aside more than six hours to sleep every night.

Researchers say eating milk chocolate at this time of day can help body burn fat



To find out about the effects of eating milk chocolate at different times of day, researchers conducted a trial of 19 postmenopausal women who consumed 100g of chocolate in the morning or at night.

Eating milk chocolate every day may sound like a recipe for weight gain, but a study of postmenopausal women has found that eating a concentrated amount of chocolate during a narrow window of time in the morning may help the body burn fat and decrease blood sugar

levels. The study was published in *The FASEB Journal*.

To find out about the effects of eating milk chocolate at different times of day, researchers from Brigham collaborated with investigators at the University of Murcia in Spain.

Together, they conducted a

randomized, controlled, cross-over trial of 19 postmenopausal women who consumed either 100g of chocolate in the morning (within one hour after waking time) or at night (within one hour before bedtime). They compared weight gain and many other measures to no chocolate

intake.

Researchers report that among the women studied:

1. Morning or night-time chocolate intake did not lead to weight gain;
2. Eating chocolate in the morning or in the evening can influence hunger and appetite, microbiota composition, sleep and more;
3. A high intake of chocolate during the morning hours could help to burn fat and reduce blood glucose levels.
4. Evening/night chocolate altered next-morning resting and exercise metabolism.

Frank AJL Scheer, PhD, MSc, Neuroscientist and Marta Garaulet, PhD, Visiting Scientist, both of the Division of Sleep and

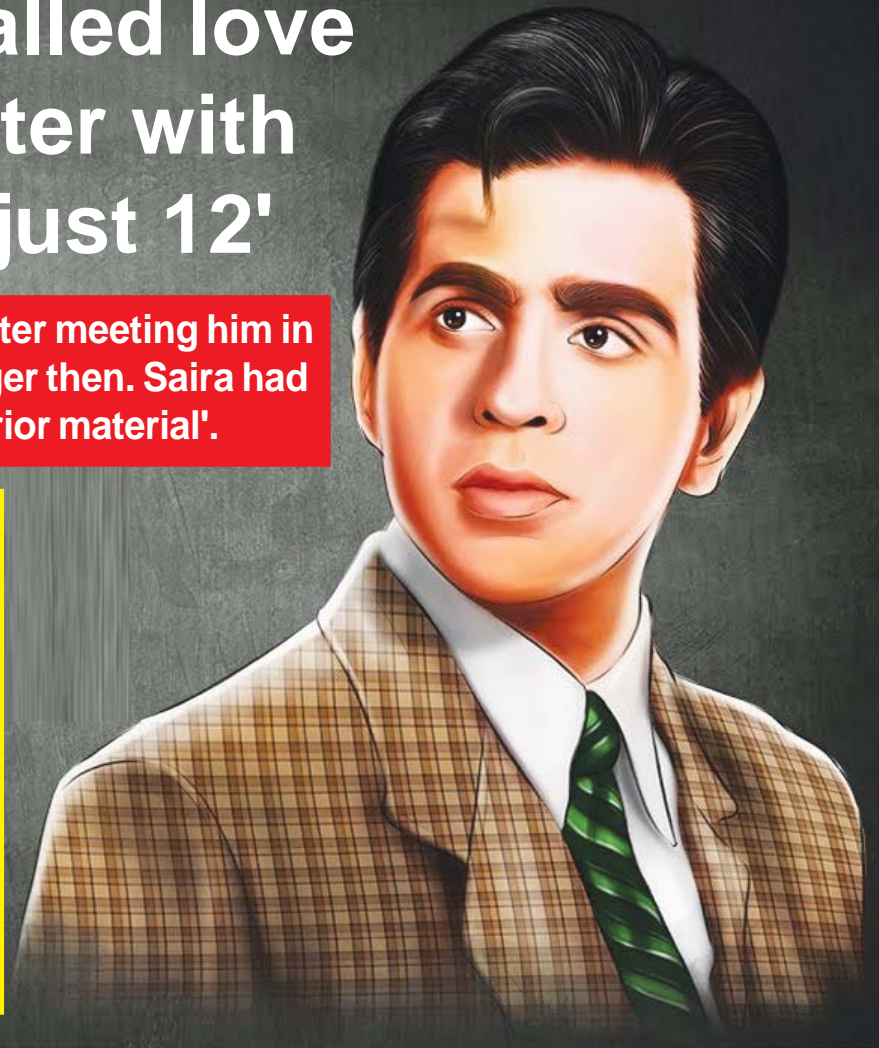
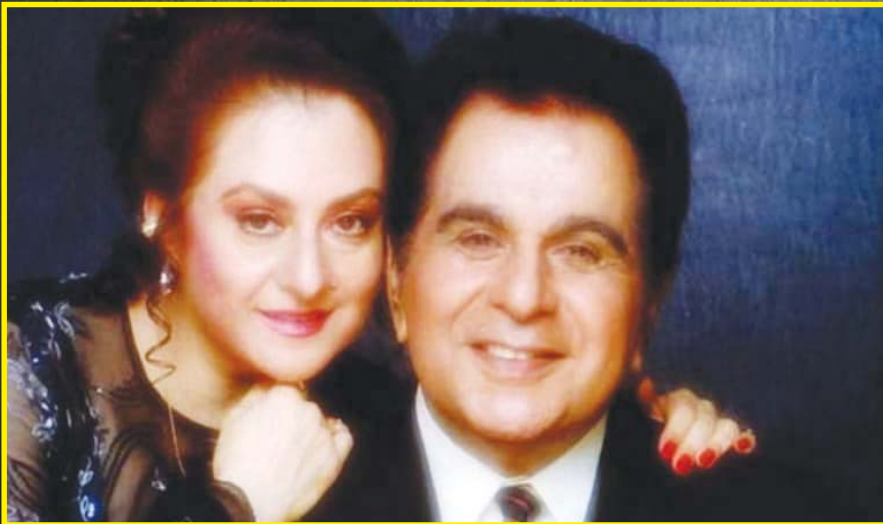
Circadian Disorders, Departments of Medicine and Neurology, Brigham and Women's Hospital. Drs Scheer and Garaulet are co-corresponding authors of the study.

"Our findings highlight that not only 'what' but also 'when' we eat can impact physiological mechanisms involved in the regulation of body weight," said Scheer.

"Our volunteers did not gain weight despite increasing caloric intake. Our results show that chocolate reduced ad libitum energy intake, consistent with the observed reduction in hunger, appetite and the desire for sweets shown in previous studies," said Garaulet.

When Saira Banu recalled love at first sight encounter with Dilip Kumar: 'I was just 12'

Saira Banu fell in love with late actor Dilip Kumar after meeting him in person for the first time. She was not even a teenager then. Saira had said that he was of 'different fibre and of superior material'.



Saira Banu had once spoken about her first meeting with late veteran actor Dilip Kumar, when she was 12 years old. She recalled falling 'in love with him almost instantly'. She had said that he was 'different from everyone around' and 'looked so polished and sophisticated'. Saira had also said that he was of 'different fibre and of superior material'. Speaking to a leading daily Saira Banu remembered meeting Dilip Kumar for the first time. "...I saw

him for the first time in person at Mumbai's Mehboob Studios- he was wearing a plain white shirt, white trousers and white chappals. And my God! He had such lovely free-flowing hair, just in sync with his song Ude Zulfen Jab Jab Teri from Naya Daur. He looked so polished and sophisticated and so different from everyone around. It was a party by Mehboob Khan (director of Mother India) and I met him. I fell in love with him almost instantly; I was just 12 then.

Even if he was leaning on a chair or standing against a wall, you could easily make out that this is a man of different fibre and of superior material," she said. She also said, "Well, Dilip saab was a family friend; he knew my parents. So we were always invited when there was a function at his place - and vice versa. Time rolled by. I did my first film Junglee and it became a hit. That film was the first one to bring the real colour on the big screen, which was Eastmancolor."

Earlier, speaking about their love story, Dilip Kumar had told Hindustan Times in a 2012 interview, "When I married Saira she was young, even younger than my sisters. I wondered how she would cope with establishing the right vibes with my brothers and sisters, especially since she belonged to a small family. We siblings were a dozen. But she not only respected and loved them as a devoted sister-in-law, but also keeps me close to all of them."

Dilip Kumar died on Wednesday morning at Mumbai's PD Hinduja hospital at the age of 98. He was admitted to the hospital after he complained of breathlessness. He will be buried at Mumbai's Juhu Kabristan at Santacruz.

Giving more details about the funeral ceremony, Dilip Kumar's family Faisal Farooqi took to the late actor's Twitter account and wrote, "Burial today at 5 p.m. Juhu Kabristan at Santacruz, Mumbai."

Ramesh Sippy on Dilip Kumar: 'He played the tragedy hero the best'

Filmmaker Ramesh Sippy spoke fondly of late Dilip Kumar, explaining how he aced the 'tragedy hero' roles but added that the veteran was versatile too.

Veteran actor Dilip Kumar died on Wednesday in Mumbai. For millions of his fans, over the years, no one did a tragic role as well as he did. Dilip has often been called an 'institution'. Eminent filmmaker Ramesh Sippy, in a chat with Hindustan Times, spoke of his admiration for Dilip Kumar as a 'tragedy hero' while reminding all that the actor was versatile too. Here's what he said: As far as I can look at it, I think it is about how the media and stars relationship is. It is built on that. Back then during Dilip Kumar's era there were these

three gentlemen who ruled the movies-- Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand and Dilip saab. They had different personas. All three has their own image. Of course, Raj Kapoor was known more for his common man image and portrayal in films, with a lot of music and dance. Dev Anand, on the other hand, was all style, charisma and glamour. And Dilip Kumar was the tragedy king back then because of his films like Andaz (1949), Deedar (1951), Mela (1948), Babul (1950) and so many others. Then, came Devdas (1955) and there was that image attached to him that 'oh

he is the tragedy king' in cinema. What kept on contributing more to that image was that fact that he was doing those films back-to-back. I also think that in that era, tragedy was the in thing; it was in vogue and he was just doing it. He was keeping up with the times. I don't think that it was about him doing it consciously or that no one else was doing it. But Dilip Kumar was doing it the best. He played the tragedy hero the best. Dilip Kumar did lighter roles as well, be it Ram Aur Shyam (1967) and others later in his career. In



Ganga-Jamuna (1961), he did action and, then, he did Mughal-e-Azam (1960). There is no end to the work he has done. So we must not remember him just by the tag of 'tragedy king' because he was a versatile actor and contributed to more than just

playing the tragic hero. It would be unfair to his acting talent to just think of him as the tragedy king. He played it across the genres and even though he did very few films, I only saw absolutely superb work from him.

When Kareena Kapoor spoke about home life with Saif Ali Khan: 'My husband isn't businessman who comes home at 6'

Kareena Kapoor Khan, who has been married to Saif Ali Khan for almost nine years, was once told that she wouldn't get films after she tied the knot. Kareena Kapoor has signed numerous projects since her wedding in 2012. That year, Kareena Kapoor starred in Agent Vinod, Heroine, and Talaash: The Answer Lies Within and appeared in Dabangg 2. She has starred in Singham Returns, Bajrangi Bhaijaan, Udta Punjab, and Good Newwz in the last nine years.

Speaking with Mid-Day in 2018, Kareena spoke about balancing work with her personal life and her son, Taimur Ali Khan, when she said, "My family, my son, my husband - they are the most important things for me. I love being a mother as much as I love my work. I want to ace that balancing act and be an example for others. I was told that I won't get films after marriage. I changed that. Even if this [doing fewer films] turns out to be a mistake, I'm okay with it. I have no regrets about the path I have chosen." "Movies will go on, but I will do one film at a time," she said before adding, "My husband isn't a businessman who comes home at 6 pm. He is an actor too, and between us, we must balance our time out for Taimur. We have decided we'll do one film each." Kareena and Saif had welcomed their second son earlier this year. Despite her pregnancy last year,

Kareena was out and about, completing her projects. She had completed her schedule on Laal Singh Chaddha, which stars Aamir Khan in the titular role, and was also recording for her radio show. Weeks after her delivery, Kareena resumed work, filming for an episode of the food show, Star vs Food. Speaking about working through her pregnancy, she told a leading daily, "There has never been any plan that I have to do this or that. It's just that I have never been that kind of a person who would sit at home and say, 'Now I want to put my feet up'. I am doing what I want to do. Working - whether it's during my pregnancy or post-delivery - has been a point to just say that when has anyone ever said that pregnant women can't work? In fact, the more active you are, the healthier the baby is and the happier the mother is.



**Kareena
Kapoor**

Ira Khan's first post since Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao divorce announcement



Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao announced their divorce in a joint statement on Saturday, July 3, after 15 years of marriage. Now, his daughter Ira Khan, from his first wife Reena Dutta, has shared her first Instagram post since the announcement. She shared a video reviewing a cheesecake on Instagram. IRA KHAN SHARES FIRST INSTAGRAM POST SINCE AAMIR AND KIRAN'S DIVORCE ANNOUNCEMENT

It was on Saturday, July 3, that

Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao jointly released a statement about their divorce. In a new video, the actor's daughter Ira Khan is seen sampling a cheesecake and giving it her review. She captioned the post, "Burnt Basque Cheesecake - Daniel Patissier The picture of Zomato is really pretty. And the centre fully fulfills the fantasies from seeing the picture. It melts in your mouth. Not too sweet. The outside though is egg-y. Very evidently egg-y. So I just eat the centre

#foodblogger #cheesecake #dessertblogger (sic)."
AAMIR KHAN AND KIRAN RAO'S DIVORCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao's divorce announcement read, "In these 15 beautiful years together we have shared a lifetime of experiences, joy and laughter, and our relationship has only grown in trust, respect and love. Now we would like to begin a new chapter in our lives - no longer as husband and wife, but as co-parents and family for each other (sic)." It further read, "We began a planned separation some time ago, and now feel comfortable to formalise this arrangement, of living separately yet sharing our lives the way an extended family does. We remain devoted parents to our son Azad, who we will nurture and raise together.

The 5 coolest gadgets for your entertainment



your room. Bang and Olufsen Beoplay A9 speaker We don't just love this speaker because of its subtle yet futuristic form, but also because of its great sound. The

Eat, play, love-it's all in one place now, your home. This is the year where a bottle that tracks your hydration and yoga pants that help you with your morning workout have been launched. So could your entertainment be far behind? Let's take a look at the big picture-whether it is watching your favourite shows on Netflix on a big screen or relaxing with a cuppa listening to smooth jazz, the right gadgetry can nudge the experience to a higher level. If you are an audio aficionado, a computer connoisseur or a gaming gearhead, here's our list of tech toys that will keep you entertained from the comfort of

satellite-shaped speaker looks like a piece of art sitting in the living room. But the Beoplay A9 speaker delivers great sound too. No matter what the occasion, a small gettogether with friends or a wild bachelorette party at home, Beoplay A9 is built to provide superior sound quality. Available in a variety of fabrics, you can choose one that complements the surrounding walls and furniture.

Price `2.50 lakh
Samsung Q800T 8K Smart QLED TV (75-inch)
Talk about a telly with a vision. This Samsung TV is an absolute delight when it comes to home entertainment.

Biden faces 'moment of reckoning' over sprawling Russian cyberassault

(SAI Bureau)-Russian cybercriminals' latest massive ransomware attack is placing new pressure on President Joe Biden to follow through on his promise to make Moscow pay for turning a blind eye to digital assaults emanating from within its borders. The cyberattack disclosed Friday on IT management software maker Kaseya, which may have affected as many as 1,500 companies whose vendors were using Kaseya's product, prompted emergency meetings over the weekend between the FBI, DHS' Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and other agencies, as officials scrambled to assess the scale of



the damage. Victims included a tech vendor that provides services to the Republican National Committee, although the RNC said Tuesday that none of its own data had been "accessed." But while the government's cyber defenders help affected companies recover their computer systems,

(Contd on page 26)

Adams waxes national in post-primary interviews as Garcia and Wiley concede



(SAI Bureau)-Eric Adams hit the airwaves Wednesday to discuss how his Democratic primary win, which is almost certain to propel him into Gracie Mansion, has larger implications for national politics around policing, violence prevention and public safety as his chief rivals in the race conceded. "We have demonized public protection in this city and this country because we have too many abusive officers who are allowed to stay in our agency," he said during an interview with CBS. "But at the same time, we have ignored

(Contd on page 26)

Global Covid deaths hit 4 million



(Contd on page 26)

Nintendo Switch OLED model with 7-inch display launched at \$350, to be available starting October 8



(SAI Bureau)- After months of speculations, Nintendo has finally announced a new Switch model today. In line with some of the earlier predictions, the latest Nintendo Switch will come with an OLED display that will be larger than the existing model. Called the Nintendo Switch (OLED model), the new Switch variant will come with a 7-inch OLED screen. It will add on to Nintendo's existing lineup

(Contd on page 26)

Pfizer, Moderna vaccines cut Covid-19 risk by 91 per cent: Study

People who receive Covid-19 vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna are up to 91 per cent less likely to develop the disease, according to a US study which also suggests that the preventives reduce the severity of symptoms and duration in those who still get an infection.

The research, published in the New England Journal of Medicine on June 30, is among the first to show the



benefits of mRNA vaccines even among those who experience breakthrough infections -- testing positive after immunisation. The mRNA vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna contain genetic instructions for our cells to make the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2, which the virus uses to infect and enter the human cells.

(Contd on page 25)

Political maths behind Modi Cabinet expansion

(SAI Bureau)- The reshuffle of the council of ministers by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday defied much of the speculation that was going around before the decision was announced. Some of the exits surprised political observers and all inductions sent a few strong political messages to both the BJP leaders and the allies in the NDA. Informed sources say the cabinet rejig has an imprint of the RSS, which provided definitive feedback on the

(Contd on page 25)