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Search Continues For 2 Indian-Origin Persons Missing After US Floods

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(Insider Bureau)-Authorities in New Jersey are searching with the help of drones and boats for two missing young Indian-origin persons in the massive floods caused by Hurricane Ida, which has killed over 40 people in the US, officials said.

Hurricane Ida, which made landfall on August 29 in Port Fourchon, Louisiana, is the second-most destructive hurricane to hit the southeastern state on record, only after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Nidhi Rana, 18, and Ayush Rana, 21, "were last seen Wednesday evening when Ayush's car was caught in the floodwaters", a report in northjersey.com said. Search for the pair continued Sunday as Passaic firefighters continued their search along the Passaic River for the two.

"We are currently operating with two boats on the water and three drones operating from state police," Passaic Fire Chief Pat Trentacost was quoted as saying in the report.

The report added that on Friday, "rescue workers searched the

culvert where McDonald's Brook leads toward the Passaic River and where witnesses said the pair were swept into the waterways under the city."

A total of five boats from the Sheriff's Department, Passaic, Clifton, Hawthorne and Ringwood departments are being used to scour the area and look for the youngsters.

Trentacost said, "rescue workers are also concentrating on the banks and the area where the culvert empties into the river."

Four persons of Indian origin had drowned as the massive flooding ravaged New York and New Jersey following Hurricane Ida.

A report in patch.com said that 31-year-old Dhanush Reddy from Edison died last week after being swept into a 36-inch storm sewer pipe in South Plainfield.

The report added that South Plainfield Police, Middlesex County Water Rescue Team and Piscataway Police arrived at the scene where police were assisting motorists in the area of Hadley and Stelton Road and heard cries for help. Authorities said two men

were swept into the pipe, which goes from South Plainfield to Piscataway. While one of the men was rescued, the other could not be located and authorities found Reddy's body in a wooded area a few miles away the day after he drowned. "Many of the flood's victims lived in basement apartments, some of which were subterranean dwellings carved out illegally from larger homes and may have lacked the emergency egress required of legitimate apartments. Comparatively low-cost living spaces, they are a refuge of thousands of the city's poor, even as they are known to be firetraps," a report in The New York Times said.

"Overnight, the basements became traps of water," it added. The NYT report added that the Ramskriets, a family of four, were in their Queens home when flood water reached their ankles. As they tried to get their things, "they heard a collapse and a gush of water shoved them through the pitch-black apartment as the walls caved in."

The flood swept the elderly



Dameshwar Ramskriets across the home as he clutched for the hand of his wife Tara. "I tried to hold on to my wife, and she was trying to hold on to me," he said on Thursday, the NYT said. "But the water pushed me away and I couldn't feel her hand anymore." Ramskriet and their 22-year-old son named Nick both drowned. At 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, Mingma Sherpa, who lived in a basement apartment in Queens with her husband and toddler son, frantically called her upstairs neighbour for help. Malathi Kanche, 46, a software designer who emigrated from India, was swept by the floodwaters in Bridgewater New Jersey as she and her 15-year old daughter clung to a tree after leaving their car that got stuck in the floodwaters. Then the tree gave

way, and "the water took her," a report in the NYT said, referring to Kanche. A Nepali family who lived in a basement apartment in Queens also died as the storm waters inundated their apartment, leaving them trapped inside. Mingma Sherpa had frantically called her neighbour Choi Sledge who lived upstairs for help, saying "The water is coming in right now." "Get out! Get to the third floor!" Sledge had told Sherpa. The NYT report said that the family did not come upstairs. Sledge called them again and in the brief call, Sherpa told her "The water coming in from the window." Sherpa, her husband, Lobsang Lama, and their little boy named Ang all drowned in the storm. The NYT said the storm killed at least 43 people in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

Indian Man Found Murdered In Canada, Friends Suspect Hate Crime: Report

Prabhjot Singh Katri's friends are worried that the attack was a racially motivated hate crime, the report said.



"We executed several search warrants on the weekend and we did have a person of interest that was arrested shortly after. However, they have since been released from our custody without charges related to this homicide at this time," MacNeil said.

"That man remains a person of interest," he said.

MacNeil said he met with the victim's family, friends, and members of the local Indian-Canadian community Sunday night to express his condolences. Singh came to Canada from India in 2017 to study.

"Singh was a hard-working young man with a bright future and this is an absolutely senseless loss of life," MacNeil said. "The community is outraged by this." A GoFundMe has been set up in

an effort to send Singh's body to India, CTV News reported.

Singh's friends are worried that the attack was a racially motivated hate crime, the report said.

Jatinder Kumardeep said Singh was "an innocent guy coming back from his job. He drives a taxi."

Kumardeep said he has not slept since his friend died. Kumardeep said there are few international students in Truro, so most get to know each other. They both come from Punjab, India, and so bonded in Nova Scotia.

We feel very unsafe," he said. "We are also people. Brown people also matter. We are giving our everything to this country," he said. "Why is this happening to us?"

Agampal Singh said his friend was a good person.

"Nothing was robbed. Even his phone was in his pocket," Singh said. "We don't have any idea why this happened."

His friend had no enemies, he said.

"He was a very innocent guy. Never had bad company, never smoked, never drank, he didn't touch drugs. He had only a few friends here," Agampal said.

"He didn't talk with people he didn't know. I think it might be a hate crime." "We are coming to this country for a good future," he said. "We are not safe. I can't even sleep." MacNeil, however, said, "Contrary to social media, we have no information on the motive that we're releasing at this point in time,"

(Insider Bureau)-A 23-year-old Indian was found murdered at an apartment in Truro town of Canada's Nova Scotia province, with community members suspecting it a racially-motivated hate crime, according to media reports.

David MacNeil of the Truro Police Service said a 911 call from 494 Robie St at 2 am on Sunday brought officers to the apartment building, where they found a man

with life-threatening injuries, CBC Canada reported.

MacNeil confirmed the victim was Prabhjot Singh Katri who later died of his injuries.

Singh worked for Layton's taxi as well as one or two restaurants in Truro.

Police are treating the death as a homicide, the report said.

A man was arrested in connection with the murder but was later released.

Search Continues For 2 Indian-Origin Persons Missing After US Floods

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4 Indian-Origin Persons Among Dead As Hurricane Ida Brings Flash Floods In US: Report

(Insider Bureau)-Four persons of Indian-origin have been killed in the US states of New Jersey and New York after they were swept away by flash floods caused by Hurricane Ida.

Hurricane Ida, which made landfall on August 29 in Port Fourchon, Louisiana, is the second-most destructive hurricane to hit the state on record, only after Hurricane Katrina (2005).

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swept into the pipe, which goes from South Plainfield to Piscataway.

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larger homes and may have lacked the emergency egress required of legitimate apartments. Comparatively low-cost living spaces, they are a refuge of thousands of the city's poor, even

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"Overnight, the basements became traps of water," it added. The NYT report added that the Ramskriets, a family of four, were in their Queens home when flood water reached their ankles. As they tried to get their things, "they heard a collapse and a gush of water shoved them through the pitch-black apartment as the walls caved in."

"Hero, Patriot": South African President On Killed Indian-Origin Graft Witness

(Insider Bureau)- South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has hailed an Indian-origin woman, who was killed allegedly for providing critical information about a multi-million-Dollar PPE fraud during COVID-19 lockdown in the country last year, as a "hero and patriot".

Babita Deokaran, 53, who was a senior official at the Gauteng provincial Department of Health, was shot multiple times through her car door when she returned home in a Johannesburg suburb after dropping her child at school on August 23. She was rushed to hospital where she died of her injuries.

She was a key witness in the investigations into a more than 330 million rand (over USD 20 million) fraud into the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) during the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa last year. The scam was unearthed at

the Department of Health in Gauteng province, where she had been appointed as acting chief financial director last year to assist in the investigation.

"Regardless of the circumstances behind this tragedy, Ms Deokaran was a hero and a patriot," Ramaphosa said.

"(Her murder) is a stark reminder of the high stakes involved in our collective quest to remove this cancer from our society.

"While we do not yet know the motive for her murder, she was a key witness in a SIU (Serious Crime Investigation Unit) investigation into the procurement of personal protective equipment in the department," Ramaphosa said.

He said that day by day, brave South Africans like Deokaran are standing firm that they will not be party to corruption and they are prepared to bear witness against it.

Prime Time

Daily Hindi News Bulletin

Geeta Saxena



ED summons deputy regional transport officer in Anil Deshmukh case

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned deputy regional transport officer Bajrang Kharmate in connection with the probe related to Anil Deshmukh case.

(News Agencies)-The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned deputy regional transport officer Bajrang Kharmate in connection with the probe in the money laundering case registered against former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh. Bajrang Kharmate has been asked to appear before the ED officials on Monday at the Mumbai office.

Last week, ED officials conducted searches at premises in Pune related to Bajrang Kharmate. Sources said ED officials were looking

into the transfer posting angle. Kharmate is said to be close to Maharashtra minister Anil Parab.

Last month, summons were also issued to Maharashtra minister Anil Parab by ED. Parab was asked to appear before the agency on August 31. However, Parab communicated to ED that he cannot appear citing some commitments regarding public meetings and functions. He had then sought 15 days time to appear before ED.

Earlier, dismissed Mumbai police officer Sachin Vaze,

arrested in the Antilia bomb scare and Mansukh Hiren murder case, had made allegations against Anil Parab in a letter he wanted to submit in the NIA court.

In the letter, written in April by Sachin Vaze, he had alleged that other than Anil Deshmukh, Parab had also asked him to extort crores of rupees on two different occasions.

Sachin Vaze had said in the letter that in July 2020, Anil Parab had asked him to contact SBUT (Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust) officials against whom an inquiry was

pending with Mumbai Police. Parab had allegedly asked Sachin Vaze to bring the SBUT officials to him and demand Rs 50 crore from them to settle the pending inquiry. In January 2021, Parab allegedly asked Vaze to extort Rs 2 crore each from fifty blacklisted contractors of BMC.

Earlier, suspended regional transport officer (RTO) inspector Gajendra Patil had also accused Parab and six other RTO officers of indulging in large scale corruption in the transfers and postings in the RTO department.

Delay in treatment take life of 11-year-old as heavy rain hits rural connectivity in Telangana



Incessant rainfall in Telangana has led to inundation in several districts, with connectivity to some villages and tribal habitations being completely cut off. The rural areas have been left with no access to medical treatment, which led to the death of an 11-year-old girl. The young girl in Telangana's Vikarabad died due to delay in getting medical treatment as roads leading to the village was cut off following heavy rain for the past 10 days. Harika, a Class 6 student, was suffering from fever for the past four days, but her family was unable to take her to a hospital. Even though the family tried to take another route to reach hospital, their tractor got stuck in slush midway to the hospital. The girl's father then carried his sick daughter to reach the road and took her to Niloufer Hospital in Hyderabad. Unfortunately, the doctors could not save her life. The grieving family blames lack of bridge on the river as cause of the young girl's death. In another incident, a pregnant woman had to be shifted to hospital by using railway inspection push car. The pregnant woman, a resident of Karankot village in Tandur, suffered labour pains and her family members tried hard to shift her to the hospital but failed as the roads connecting the village was inundated. The family called for an ambulance, but it was waiting on the other side of the insulated road patch. With no option left, the family took the woman to the nearby Cement Corporation of India unit and from there with the help of staff a rail track inspection car was used to cross the overflowing stream.

'International Book of Records' recognises Assam student for making 6-foot tall Durga idol using waste material

(News Agencies)-A college student in Assam's Karimganj district has been recognised by the 'International Book of Records' for making the largest idol of Goddess Durga by using waste materials.

Pallabi Deb Roy, a college student of Karimganj district had used recycling products to make a 6-foot tall idol of Goddess Durga in 2018. Pallabi used things like plastic packets, spoons, aluminum sheets, cardboard, clay model, etc to make the idol of Goddess Durga.

In 2018 just before Durga Puja, Pallabi's mother gave her an idea to make an idol by using recycled products, and she

took two months to complete it. In a bid to support environmental conservation, she has also used waste materials to make other

artistic products. "In 2018, I made the idol of Goddess Durga by using waste materials like spoons, plastic packets, and other aluminum sheets and got in touch with the International Book of Records and applied for recognition. But the process of verifying and claim is quite long. Finally, I have received recognition from the International Book of Records," Pallabi said. She also said that she is

very happy after getting the recognition. The deputy commissioner of Karimganj district congratulated her and handed over the certificate and medal.



TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee appears before ED for questioning in coal smuggling case



(News Agencies)-Abhishek Banerjee, Lok Sabha MP and national general secretary of the All India Trinamool Congress, appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday morning for questioning in a coal smuggling case.

The questioning of Abhishek Banerjee, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew, is taking place at the ED's Jamnagar House office in Delhi. India Today has learnt that officials of the headquarters investigation unit of the ED are questioning Abhishek Banerjee.

He is being questioned under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act in connection with an alleged coal smuggling case. The case, according to the ED, is connected to top politicians in West Bengal.

'READY TO FACE INVESTIGATION'

On reaching the ED office on Monday, Abhishek Banerjee was quoted by ANI as saying, "The investigating agency [ED] summoned me on September 6. I am ready to face any investigation. The investigation agency is doing its job. As citizens, we must cooperate with them." #WATCH | "Investigating agency (ED) had summoned me for 6th September. I am ready to face any investigation. Investigation agency is doing their job. As a citizen, we must cooperate with them," says TMC General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee in Delhi pic.twitter.com/KFzGkVvgKSO On Sunday, Abhishek Banerjee had told the media, "I am ready to face any enquiry. If they have evidence that I have taken even ten paise, then there is no need to use CBI or ED, I am ready to be hanged. Because they [BJP] lost the political battle, they are indulging in vendetta politics. That's why, even when the case pertains to Kolkata, they have called me to Delhi." Earlier, Abhishek Banerjee's wife Rujira, who was asked by the ED to appear on September 1, had skipped the summons and requested the investigative officer to question her in Kolkata.

WHAT IS THE CASE?

According to officials, the investigation by the Enforcement Directorate has revealed that two companies with political links - Leaps and Bound Pvt Ltd and Leaps and Bound Management Services LLP - received protection funds amounting to Rs 4.37 crore from a construction company via accused individuals who are being probed in a coal smuggling case.

Assam floods



24 animals die in Kaziranga National Park

Due to the current spate of floods in Assam and other reasons, a total of 24 wild animals have been reported dead in Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve. Officials said at least 30 per cent areas of the park are still underwater.

(News Agencies)- A total of 24 wild animals have been reported dead in Assam's Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve due to floods and other reasons.

The park authority said while the flood situation in the national park has gradually improved, at least 30 per cent of areas of the park are still underwater. 21 out of 223 anti-poaching camps in the park are currently submerged, the official said.

"Out of 24 animals, six animals including a rhino, three hog deer, one wild buffalo, one swamp deer drowned in flood waters in the park. Apart from it, 11 animals including nine hog deer, one python and one cap langur died

in a vehicle hit on National Highway 37 which is passing through the national park," an official of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve said.

The official further said that four animals, including a rhino and three hog deer, died due to natural causes.

"Three animals, including two hog deer and one swamp deer, died due to other reasons during the flood," the official said.

During the flood, the park authority and the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) at Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve have rescued four animals, including a rhino calf and three hog deer.

Assam flood situation improves marginally

On the other hand, the flood situation in Assam has improved marginally. However, 1.18 lakh people in 14 districts of the state are still affected, the government said.

According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), nearly 48,000 people in Golaghat district, 46,000 people in Darrang, 16,000 people in Morigaon, 3500 people in Nagaon, 2400 people in Barpeta district are still affected by the current spate of flood.

At least 646 villages under 35 revenue circles were reeling under water and seven people drowned in flood waters, ASDMA said.

The union ministry will inaugurate a new emergency airstrip on the national highway in Rajasthan's Barmer for landing and takeoff of military planes.

The Indian Air Force will get a new emergency airstrip developed on the national highway in Rajasthan's Barmer which will be activated on Wednesday with the landing of defence planes.

"Road and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari would be visiting Barmer along with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for the activation of the first airstrip to have been developed on a national highway," transport ministry officials said.



Govt to inaugurate emergency landing airstrip on national highway in Rajasthan's Barmer

The roadstrip prepared for the military aircraft is located in Barmer and the National Highways Authority of India officials have constructed each and every part of the facility in close coordination with Air

Force officials, they said.

The Agra-Lucknow expressway under the Uttar Pradesh government also has such an airstrip where fighter jets have already landed and taken off in military drills.

The air strip in Barmer district would be the first such facility on a national highway.

Twelve National Highways have been identified as emergency landing airstrips that will enable rescue operation teams

to reach affected areas easily. The 12 highways have been cleared are in different states of the country and would enable landing of military planes in emergency situations.



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BJP leaders

protest Andhra government's curbs on Ganesh Chaturthi festival, detained

BJP leaders in Andhra Pradesh were detained during a protest against the state government's decision to impose curbs on Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Andhra Pradesh BJP chief Somu Veeraju, and state general secretary Vishnu Vardhan Reddy Satya Kumar were detained by the police along with other party leaders while they were protesting the state government's curbs on public celebrations of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival. The BJP leaders staged a protest against the state government's decision at the Kurnool Collectorate and were detained by the police. The police blocked the movement of BJP demonstrators, resulting in a scuffle between them. Meanwhile, the ruling Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) said the restrictions were imposed according to the Centre's guidelines. Criticising the state BJP

leaders for politicising the government's decision, the state government clarified that the restrictions are only on the public celebrations in view of a possible third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, and said there was no need to politicise the issue.

To avoid mass gatherings, the state government had postponed the events like YSR Achievement awards, Teacher's Day celebrations, and even celebrated the 75th Independence Day without allowing public participation in the state function. The party clarified that the restrictions are part of the preventive measures for public safety. The Andhra Pradesh Government criticised the BJP leaders for not speaking up on vaccines, Covid testings and alleged that the saffron party intentionally politicised the

issue to mislead people. Strongly objecting to the BJP protests demanding permission for Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations at public places, Endowments Minister Vellampalli Srinivas alleged that the saffron party has been trying to instigate communal violence in the state for its vested interests.

"State government has restricted mass gatherings and celebrations in public places as part of the preventive measures given the pandemic," said Srinivas.

Speaking to media at the Chief Minister's camp office, the YSRCP minister said it was the central government that had released guidelines imposing restrictions on the celebration of festivals, so BJP leaders should protest against the Union Home Ministry and

urge it to revise the guidelines.

Srinivas pointed to the criticism received by the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre Central for permitting Kumbh Mela during the second Covid wave and said the state government doesn't want to repeat the same mistakes.

Apart from the BJP, the TDP too has criticised the YSRCP dispensation for putting restrictions on Chaturthi festivities. Former CM and TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu said, "While there were no restriction during YSR death anniversary which was celebrated across the state along with Idupulapaya where CM participated, Why was permission for Vinayaka Puja denied in Andhra Pradesh?"

Landslide at Jeori in Himachal blocks Shimla-Kinnaur highway



(News Agencies)-A landslide at Jeori in Himachal Pradesh's Shimla district blocked National Highway 5 (Shimla-Kinnaur) on Monday. Traffic came to a standstill even though no casualties have been reported so far.

The district administration has deployed SDM, Rampur, and a police team to assess the situation. Himachal Pradesh has seen several landslides in the monsoon season in the past few months.

Last week, landslides, triggered by heavy rainfall, damaged three vehicles in Shimla's Vikas Nagar area. On August 22, another landslide in Shimla led to the blockage of Khalini road.

A landslide occurred near Nalda village in Lahaul and Spiti district, blocking the flow of the Chenab river last month.

On August 11, a massive landslide near Nigulsari in Kinnaur district on Wednesday killed more than 25 people. Several vehicles, including a truck and a 42-seater Himachal Road Transport Corporation bus, were hit by the landslide. The bus was on its way from Reckong Peo in Kinnaur to Shimla.

Uttar Pradesh: Skeleton found in hospital's non-functional lift opened after 24 years

(News Agencies)-An out-of-order elevator at OPEC Hospital in Kailli of Basti district in Uttar Pradesh was opened after 24 years for repair work. Inside, a male skeleton was found on September 1, UP Tak reported. The police and its forensic department are now trying to solve the mystery of the skeleton. It has been sent for a DNA test.

A LITTLE HISTORY
The construction of the 500-bed OPEC Hospital began in 1991. The elevator concerned was running until 1997 when it became non-functional, according to the police.

The police are examining 'missing person' reports from 24 years ago in order to find leads



in the case. They are trying to establish the identity of the person whose skeleton was

found in the lift.

A BIG MYSTERY

For now, it is unknown who the person was, how he died and why the body has been in an elevator for so many years. Did the man die of suffocation on getting stuck in the lift or did someone kill him and hide the body there?

More information will only be

available once the DNA report is filed.

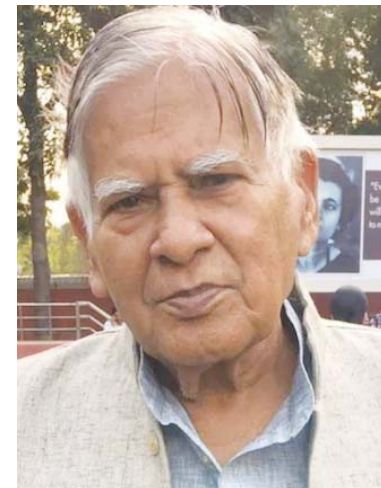
Additional Superintendent of Police in Basti, Deependra Nath Choudhary, said on the matter, "If any written complaint is given in the matter, we will register a case. At present, the police are investigating several angles. To solve the mystery of the male skeleton, 24 police stations in the district have been deployed."

Mehbooba Mufti criticises Centre for FIR over draping Syed Ali Shah Geelani's body in Pak flag

FIR against Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel's father for remark on Brahmins



PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Sunday criticised the Centre for the filing of an FIR over the draping of separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani's body in a Pakistani flag.



(News Agencies)-An FIR has been registered against Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel's father for allegedly making derogatory remarks against Brahmins.

The complaint was filed by the Brahmin community against 86-year-old Nand Kumar Baghel at DD Nagar Police Station in Raipur. In the complaint, the community has alleged that Nand Kumar Baghel described Brahmins as "outsiders (foreigners) who should either reform or get ready to go to Volga from Ganga".

The FIR has been registered under IPC sections 505 and 153. "The Brahmin community raised an objection to the statement made by Nand Kumar Baghel and complained to the police accusing him of creating tensions and spreading hatred in society," DD Nagar Police Station in-charge Yogita Khaparde said.

During a program organised a few days ago in Raipur, Nand Kumar Baghel had said, "Brahmin is a foreigner. Will send them from the Ganges to the Volga. The Brahmins should either reform or get ready to go to the Volga." Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said he respected his father but "no one is above the law in our government". "I respect my father as a son, but as a chief minister, none of his mistakes, which are going to disturb public order, can be ignored. No one is above the law in our government, even if he is the chief minister's father," Bhupesh Baghel said. "This comment has hurt the sentiments of the community. Our government respects and honours the feelings of all castes, religions and communities. Ideological differences with my father have been there from the beginning.

(News Agencies)-PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Sunday played the central government for the filing of an FIR over the draping of hardline separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani's body in a Pakistani flag and the alleged raising of "anti-national" slogans after his

death. The Budgam Police registered the FIR against unnamed people under various provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Indian Penal Code, taking cognisance of a video clip which showed Geelani's body draped in a Pakistani flag. However, as the

police moved in to take over the body, the late separatist leader's aides removed the flag. Geelani, 91, died Wednesday night at his residence here after a prolonged illness. The body was laid to rest at a graveyard in a nearby mosque. Criticising the filing of the FIR, Mehbooba tweeted,

"Having turned Kashmir into an open air prison, now even the dead aren't spared. A family isn't allowed to mourn & bid a final farewell as per their wishes. Booking Geelani sahab's family under UAPA shows GOI's deep rooted paranoia & ruthlessness. This is New India's Naya Kashmir."

Viral fever cases increase by 25% in 10 days in UP's Ballia



(News Agencies)-The cases of viral fever in the district hospital in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia have increased by 25 per cent over the past 10 days, a doctor at the facility said

Sunday, amid fears of the spread of dengue. Dr. VP Singh, the medical superintendent of the hospital, said the children's ward is fully occupied with patients. "This is the rainy season when

fever, weakness, body pain, and diarrhoea patients register a rise, and it is quite natural." Child specialist Dr. JS Kumar posted at the district hospital said, "In the past 10 days, there has been

an increase of 25 per cent in the number of patients of viral fever." District Magistrate Aditi Singh said all village panchayats and urban local bodies have been instructed to undertake anti-larval spray and keep a special focus on cleanliness. Chief Medical Officer of Ballia Dr. Tanmay Kakkar said all necessary precautions are being taken. "Every day, 140 patients are being tested in the district hospital. Most of these people are typhoid patients. No death has taken place due to dengue or viral fever, and at present, there are nine patients of dengue in the district," the CMO said. He added all possibilities of waterlogging in affected villages are being redressed, and anti-larval spraying is being done.



Rishikesh

Two officials of Noida-based firm drown in Ganga

(News Agencies)-Two officials of a Noida-based firm drowned in the Ganga in Uttarakhand's Rishikesh on Sunday.

Two officials of a Noida-based firm drowned in the Ganga in Uttarakhand's Rishikesh on Sunday.

The incident took place when a group of officials from a Noida-

based firm that makes Android applications visited the Darshan Mahavidyalaya ghat in the Ram Jhoola area, SDRF's deep diving team incharge Kavindra Sajwan said.

The company's centre chief, Rahul Singh (33), went to wash his hands in the river when the sand below his feet slid and he lost balance.

As he was swept away by strong currents of the Ganga, the manager of the firm, Bhanumurthy (33), jumped into the river to save him but he also drowned.

The team of officials had come to Rishikesh on Saturday.

Diving teams of the SDRF in rafts are still scouring the river in search of them, Sajwan said.

Former UP governor Aziz Qureshi booked for sedition over remark on Adityanath govt



(News Agencies)- Former Uttar Pradesh Governor Aziz Qureshi has been booked for sedition by Uttar Pradesh Police for his alleged derogatory remarks against the chief minister Yogi Adityanath-led government. The FIR was lodged on the complaint of BJP leader Akash Saxena at Civil Lines police station in Rampur district on Sunday night.

Police have slapped Sections 153A [promoting enmity between two groups on grounds of religion, race etc], 153B [imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration], 124A [sedition] and 505[1] [B]-[intent to cause fear or alarm to the public].

On Saturday, Aziz Qureshi had visited Samajwadi Party MP Azam Khan's wife at her residence in Rampur.

In his complaint, Akash Saxena alleged that Aziz Qureshi compared the UP government to a "demon" while addressing the media after the meeting.

Akash Saxena also claimed that the remarks made by Aziz Qureshi were to "create tension and spread hatred between two communities".

"His intentional statement is becoming increasingly viral on social media, due to which the atmosphere of UP, including Rampur, is also likely to deteriorate," the BJP leader said.

RSS remark row: Security stepped up outside Javed Akhtar's Mumbai residence; BJP demands apology

(News Agencies)-Security was beefed up outside the residence of writer-lyricist Javed Akhtar in Mumbai on Monday after a Maharashtra BJP MLA demand an apology from him over his remark where he allegedly compared the RSS with the Taliban, a police official said. Adequate police bandobast was placed outside Akhtar's residence near the ISKCON temple in Juhu area, the official said,

the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

BJP MLA and state party spokesperson Ram Kadam condemned Akhtar's remark.

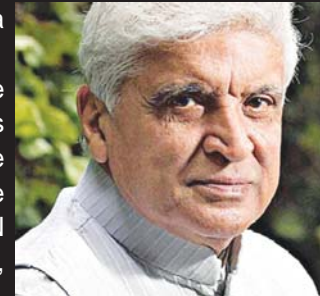
The legislator from Mumbai said no film involving Akhtar will be

allowed to be screened in the country until he apologises to Sangh functionaries over his comments.

The Shiv Sena, which shares

power with the NCP and Congress in Maharashtra, on Monday said Akhtar was "completely wrong" in comparing the RSS with the Taliban.

"How can you say those who favour the concept of a Hindu Rashtra are of Talibani mindset? We don't agree with this," an editorial in the Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' said.



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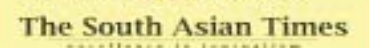
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Issuing a new order on Covid-19 guidelines on Sunday, the Haryana government extended the restriction on physical classes in the state's universities and colleges.

Issuing a new order on Covid-19 guidelines on Sunday, the Haryana government extended the Mahamari Alert Surakshit Haryana. The restriction on physical classes in colleges and universities has been continued under the new order which will be applicable in the state from September 6 (5 AM onwards) to September 20. The vice-chancellors of residential universities in Haryana have been directed to continue conducting classes online till October 15, 2021. The decision on whether to allow students to attend classes physically in residential institutions will be taken on that day after assessing the current Covid situation. The order said that the university administration must ensure full vaccination of all students and faculty members and share the progress with the department of higher education, technical education and medical education and research. The government, however, allowed the universities and colleges to open for students for doubt classes, practical classes

in laboratories, practical examinations and offline examinations with strict adherence to requisite Covid-appropriate behaviours. Besides the universities and colleges, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) have also been allowed to open for students to conduct doubt and practical classes. Hostels in universities and colleges will only be allowed to open for students who are appearing in examinations. Conducting entrance and recruitment examinations by different universities, institutes and government departments, besides recruitment agencies, were also given a go-ahead with strict implementation of revised SOPs issued by the ministry of health and family welfare. The restaurants and bars including, including hotels and malls, were already allowed to open with 50 per cent of the seating capacity by adopting the requisite social distancing norms besides regular sanitisation. Gyms and spas were also allowed to open with 50 per cent capacity in earlier orders.

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With Taliban, Pak Settles Old Scores Against US

As Washington ponders how the U.S. lost its longest war in Afghanistan, it's worth considering another question: Who won the war?

There is the Taliban, of course, the fanatics who have formed an interim government featuring several wanted terrorists. But an even bigger winner may be the Taliban's primary patron: Pakistan.

Most U.S. allies expressed shock, sadness and anger at the Taliban's victory last month in Kabul. But Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan celebrated the rout of Afghanistan's elected government, saying the Taliban had "broken the shackles of slavery."

For much of the war on terror that began after 9/11, Pakistan played a double game. It occasionally helped track and detain al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders. In 2010, Pakistani and U.S. special operations forces arrested Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Karachi. All the while, however, elements of the Pakistani military and intelligence services provided sanctuary, funding and training for the Taliban and its allies in the lethal terrorist group known as the Haqqani network.

For the first 10 years of the Afghanistan war, this was an issue that the U.S. and Pakistan preferred to debate in private. After the Haqqani network orchestrated a truck bombing at a NATO outpost near Kabul and an assault on the U.S. embassy there in September 2011, Admiral Mike Mullen, then the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, broke the silence. "The Haqqani network acts as a veritable arm of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency," he said.

Mullen's accusation should have surprised no one. A few months earlier, the U.S. had killed Osama bin Laden, who was then living comfortably in Abbottabad, home of the Pakistan's equivalent of

West Point. There is a reason Mullen didn't give his Pakistani counterparts advance notice of that raid.

Between 2001 and 2011, the U.S. provided Pakistan with more than \$20 billion in military assistance. That subsidy began to decrease after 2011. In 2018, with a few narrow national-security exceptions, the U.S. suspended security assistance.

The restrictions and eventual suspension of military aid were really the only ways the U.S. ever tried to punish its ostensible client. By his second term, President Barack Obama was looking for a way to get out of Afghanistan. And while there was a modest surge of forces in President Donald Trump's first year in office, his administration ended up negotiating the surrender that President Joe Biden just completed.

So it's no wonder that Pakistan is celebrating the Taliban's victory. A faction of its deep state had been working to return the Taliban to power since 2001. So far, the Biden administration has kept silent about Pakistan's betrayal. Remarkably, a remnant of Afghan patriots has not. On Tuesday, protesters in Kabul demanded that Pakistan not intervene in their sovereign affairs. It would be nice if there were some official show of U.S. support for these courageous protesters. But it's unlikely. As Biden has said many times in the last several months, the post-withdrawal plan is for the U.S. to retain an "over the horizon" capability to target terrorists in Afghanistan. That means the U.S. will need Pakistan's approval for flights over its airspace. America's "forever war" in Afghanistan may be over. But just across the border, in Pakistan, America's former client still holds leverage over the superpower it helped defeat.

Growing inflation affecting sustained price growth in the US

By Susmita Ghosh

Arguably, Inflation is one of the most common yet dreaded economic terms, in the discussion once again. According to Kristalina Georgieva, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, the United States is going to face the brunt of inflation sooner than expected, resulting in a sustained price hike.

In simple terms, inflation can be described as an increasing charge for goods and services, over a pre-set period of time. The basic reasons behind it may be an increasing demand for something or an upsurge in the production cost. It may lead to a rise in the price for basic needs, which results in a necessary price raise.

Generally, inflation is a needed mechanism that helps the economy to stabilize and heal. However, it all becomes a major problem when the former increases dramatically, compared to the wages and earnings. If unchecked, it can result in poor living conditions in shorter term and a major economic imbalance in the longer term. A long-standing economic growth, coupled with post-pandemic stability has resulted in a steady progression across the lifestyle and real estate sectors in the US. As a direct level of human resource utilization, consumer spending is increasing, with a predictable double-digit growth. While this optimistic level is good for the market, it also indicates a higher opportunity for a steady inflation rate in the sectors. The Federal Reserve foresees a higher rate of inflation as the

country is firmly getting back on its feet.

The inflation changes, affect both the smaller and larger aspects of the national and international economic system. While an inflation rate of around two percent is normal, the realized inflation rate in the USA is around five percent now. Even some economists predicted it might happen with the global lockdown amidst the pandemic though, the pay checks will be lesser to the common people.

From the Equity market to the entertainment sector, an unchecked inflation rate can have a highly adverse effect. The savings account interest rate will gravitate towards zero, or the money in the bank may lose some percentage of the value too. The long-term bonds and stocks will be devalued to some extent as well, which will only get better while normalcy returns. There is already an evident inflation rate in the housing sector. The only hope is that it is triggered by lesser supply than demand, unlike the 2008 housing financial crisis with poor lending practices.

Inflation is the necessary evil of economic changes, as per the pundits. It is inevitable in the cycle of changes in the general price and production cycle. A country cannot, or should not try and stop inflation from happening. Instead, it should be managed in such a way that inflation may have a minimal adverse effect on the livelihood of the citizens and their economic affairs.

An efficient government can curb the negative effects on the common people through proper planning. A prior

(Contd on page 35)



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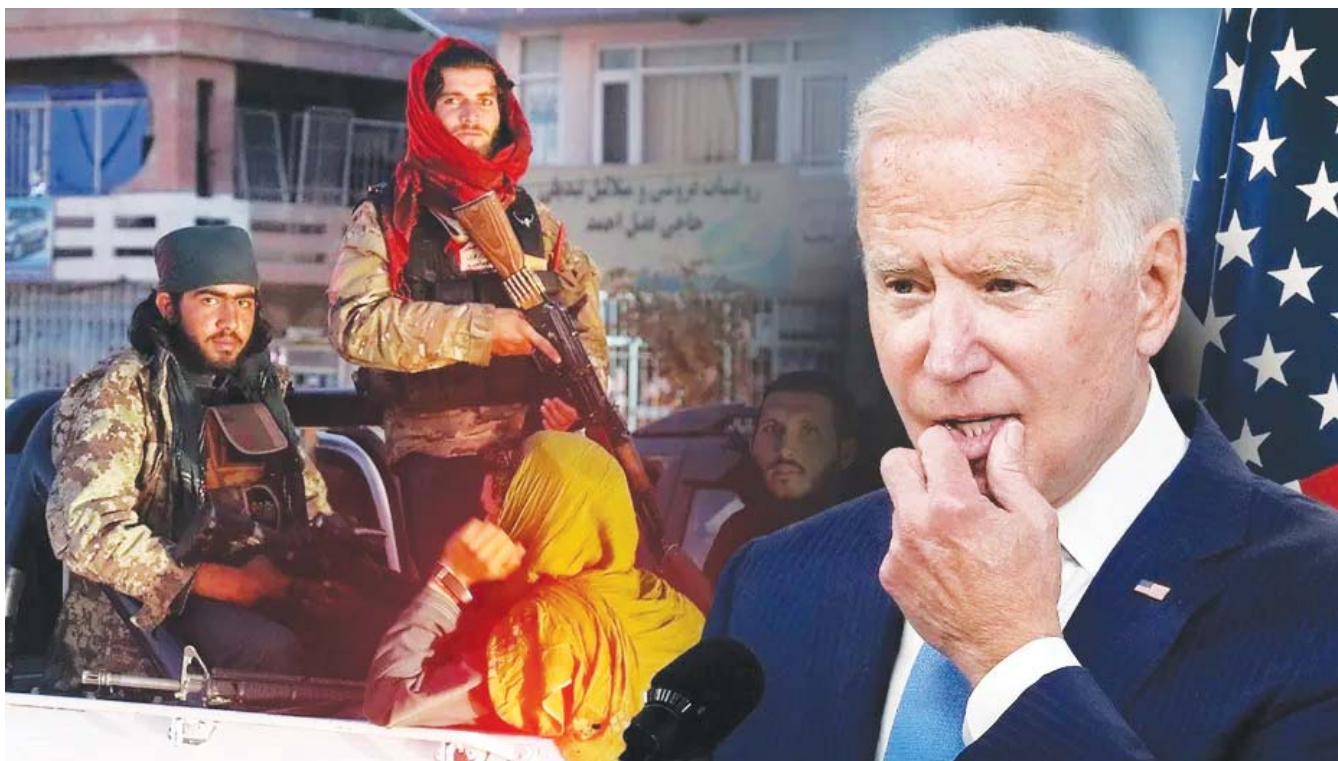
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Biden will be competing with the Taliban as 9/11 approaches

How anyone could ever think it was a good idea is mind-boggling, but Americans should never forget that President Joe Biden wanted to celebrate the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan on September 11th. Whether he's addled or just arrogant, Biden believed the 20th anniversary of a day of infamy could be turned into a feel-good event - and no doubt give him a political booster shot.

Wiser heads prevailed, but only up to a point. The withdrawal date was moved up to Aug. 31, but Biden remained fixated on getting all the troops out before 9/11, damn the consequences. Now the consequences are damning the president, the latest evidence being the six charter jets stuck for days on the ground in Afghanistan, their passengers, reportedly including American citizens, not sure if they will be allowed to fly to safety or be executed by the Taliban.

Whatever the outcome, the key point has already been made. The Taliban hold the power and America is reduced to supplicant. Yet it is a measure of the Biden administration's duplicity that Secretary of State Antony Blinken denied that the trapped passengers were hostages - even as he admitted the US was looking at this and other departure restraints to decide whether to lift sanctions on Taliban officials, restart financial aid and normalize relations. Promising benefits, including cash, in exchange for those who want to leave certainly sounds like a hostage negotiation. But apparently hostages are not hostages unless the government says so.

Indeed, Blinken sounded like a shill for

Biden appears to have believed that the 20th anniversary of a day of infamy could be turned into a feel-good event

the terrorist group by describing the plane delay as a matter of routine paperwork. He said the Taliban promised to allow American citizens or others to leave on charter flights if they have proper documents, but claimed the delay was because some passengers don't have the documents.

"Because all of these people are grouped together, that's meant that flights have not been allowed to go," Blinken said.

His doubletalk is proof there is no limit to how low the White House will sink to portray the chaotic, bloody withdrawal as a great success. Its defense of the Taliban's misconduct is a defense of its own misconduct. The boneheaded evacuation plan cost the lives of 13 brave servicemen and - women and left behind hundreds of our citizens and thousands of Afghan allies we repeatedly promised to get out. The broken promises amount to a death sentence for some.

The disastrous events guarantee that this anniversary of 9/11 will be unlike any other. The heroism of that awful day and the ultimate sacrifices of almost 2,500 troops in Afghanistan are stained by the shameful actions

of Biden, Blinken and the military leaders who told the president they could successfully carry out his foolish withdrawal orders.

Biden is planning to visit all three 9/11 sites - the Pentagon, New York and the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, Pa. The ceremonies are always somber remembrances, and it would be way off key in any year to turn the day into a political victory party and especially inappropriate this year. Then, too, the president will have to compete with the Taliban for attention. The terrorists are certain to mark the day now that they have driven out the world's mightiest military. Flush with American uniforms and equipment, they've already mocked the famous flag-raising on Iwo Jima.

And as former Ambassador Ryan Crocker wrote, their victory "has given a huge boost to militant Islam everywhere." Crocker also said the outcome allows the Taliban to portray themselves as the faithful believers who, "clad in the armor of the one true faith, have vanquished the infidels." With his public approval falling rapidly, Biden just wants to get past Afghanistan, and his media Praetorian Guards are ready to help him change the subject. The Boston Globe did its duty with a Tuesday story that began this way: "The collapse of the Afghan government, a surge of COVID-19 cases caused by the Delta variant, devastating weather events, a disappointing jobs report. After a torrent of crises, President Biden is hoping to turn the page on an unrelenting summer and refocus his presidency this fall around his core economic agenda."

Why this is the last chance for the Taliban



The Taliban finally announced an all-male interim government in Afghanistan, 23 days after the fall of Kabul. Many people predicted that the Taliban would announce a new set-up on the 20th anniversary of 9/11 but these predictions proved wrong. The Taliban avoided further humiliation of the superpower and announced their government four days before the 9/11 anniversary. They were only waiting for the fall of Panjshir.

The US administration is not looking happy with the new Afghan interim government because there is no representation of other political groups. It is a 100 percent Taliban government, including some ministers wanted by the FBI and some who spent many years in US prisons. Most of the faces, including the new head of the cabinet, Mullah Muhammad Hassan, are old colleagues of Taliban founder Mullah Muhammad Omar.

This new Taliban government is looking like a legacy of Mullah Muhammad Omar but with some new tactics and new allies on the international scene. There are 22 ministers, including two Deputy Prime Ministers and five Deputy Ministers in the new Taliban cabinet. Some more ministers will be appointed in the coming days.

Afghan women protest against Pakistan for meddling, helping Taliban | In Pics

Taliban head Mullah Haibatullah Akhonzada formed this new government after long consultations with Rehbari Shooraa of the militant outfit. Akhonzada was very close with Mullah Muhammad Omar and his son Abdul Rehman was killed in a suicide attack in Helmand in 2017. He will supervise the government as Mullah Muhammad Omar did. His status in the new government is not different from a President. He is a religious figure who included many Shia fighters in Taliban ranks and that's why he is being considered as a reformer and he may appear in front of the cameras but not very often.

The new head of the interim cabinet, Mullah Muhammad Hassan, is included on the UN sanctions list. He served as Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime minister of the Taliban government between 1996 and 2001. Mullah Muhammad Hassan was part of the small group that founded the Taliban under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Omar. He was the first Governor of Kandahar in 1994 who later became a deputy of Prime Minister Mullah Rabbani. Mullah Hassan Akhund met former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif many times between 1997 and 1999. Nawaz Sharif tried

Chinese Whispers



Are Banned China Companies Making A Quiet Comeback In India?

Almost fifteen years ago, done under the provisions of when I and others with Not only did it send a message exposure to the great Chinese digital game used to go around writing and presenting about the threat of the Chinese digital companies, we were told that we are crying wolf. That there is no threat from "benign" Chinese companies who are providing cheap telecom equipment. The apps had still not started rolling in. That there is no such thing as digital companies weakening the security envelope of the country. We are collectively sad to say that we were proven right, as this has been at the cost of the nation's security. However, post the unprovoked Galwan valley military attack on India by China, the Indian government took swift steps to weed out the Chinese digital companies from the Indian

digital ecosystem. This was section 69A of the Indian IT Act. to China, but it also secured the digital ecosystem from predatory players. The apps were banned at three different times in 2020, the last one being in December 2020. Unfortunately, these apps are now rearing their heads back in the Indian digital ecosystem, under various corporate structures with layered ownership. The Ultimate Beneficial Owner or UBO for all these entities seem to be essentially the Chinese companies that were banned in 2020. Most of them have very thinly veiled differentiation of their digital offerings and branding compared to what they were offering in 2020. In fact, most of them seem to have the same set of employees also. So, we now see the Chinese apps coming back in "new

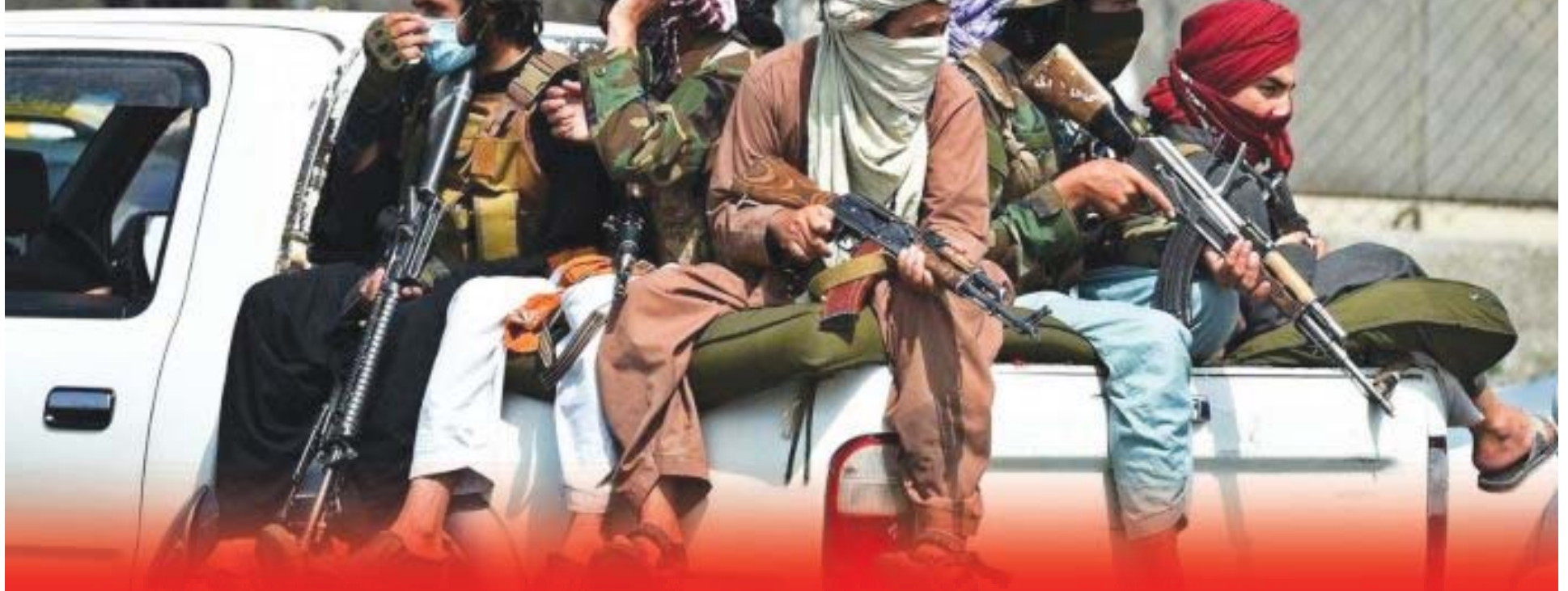
bottles". The short video apps and gaming apps that have reappeared, are now gaining millions of users. Tiktok, which had a massive following in India, seems to be making a comeback in India, while in China, the Chinese government has taken a minority stake and a board seat in its parent company, Bytedance. PUBG, which had one of the largest user bases in India before the 2020 ban, seems to have reappeared in a thinly veiled disguise as Battlegrounds India. These companies are coming back in the form of PLAYit, Noizz, Mast, Resso, Zili, Tiki etc., and are zooming to the top of the charts. Besides the usual entertainment driven apps, the Chinese are also targeting the more vital sectors such as logistics. Lalamove, a Chinese app in the logistics sector, that was banned in December 2020, seems to have reappeared as

Delivery Uncle. Even the employees of Delivery Uncle are the same as those of erstwhile Lalamove and many of them even slip up and refer to Delivery Uncle as Lalamove. Even the LinkedIn profile of the so-called Indian "founders" of Delivery Uncle claim that they are employees of Lalamove. This structure hints at benami ownership, and also movement of capital into India against the law of the land as the UBO (Ultimate Beneficial Owners) appear to be Chinese. Interestingly, both Lalamove and Delivery Uncle even have the same app version of 105.1.0. These developments are especially worrisome as the Chinese government is now openly taking over Chinese tech companies. There is news pouring in of the Chinese government getting control over Didi, an app-based cab hailing service. Similarly, there is news

Chinese companies banned under Sec 69A of the IT Act of India, are quietly making a backdoor comeback through what could be largely termed as a "Benami" route. The menace needs to be aggressively tracked and stopped

of ARM, the erstwhile British company whose semiconductor IPR drives phones, cars, microcontrollers, Amazon's servers and even finds its way into Intel processors, having its entire Chinese operation being snatched by a rogue former CEO, backed by the Chinese government, whose security personnel does not even let the ARM executives to enter their own premises. This has been billed as the semiconductor heist of the century, where an entire plant and its IPR has been simply snatched away. Perhaps this is a literal version of ARM-twisting. Keeping the puns aside, it shows the single-minded pursuit of the Chinese government to acquire technology at any cost and to also weaponize technology. India needs to continue its policy of defending its digital ecosystem from the assaults by the Chinese digital forays. It would not be an easy task for government bodies to identify and unravel the web of ownerships of the benami Chinese companies that pose a threat to India's security and economy and would require support of the Indian digital players and startups for providing the necessary inputs.

Taliban will face same economic challenges as previous regime but under sanctions



Few countries will invest in Afghanistan because of fear of sanctions. The new govt must face this reality & adhere to global standards, writes Ajmal Ahmady, former central bank governor.

There are optimistic suggestions that the hard-won integration of Afghanistan into the global economy will remain despite the ascendancy of the Taliban and the withdrawal of the U.S. A number of commentators have suggested that China - which the Taliban have declared their strongest ally - could become Afghanistan's primary economic supporter and help the country stay part of the global system. That analysis is unrealistic. For one, it ignores the sanctions regime imposed by the international community on the Taliban. Those restrictions apply not only to financial transactions but to business ones as well. All companies - not only banks - must comply with the framework against financing terrorism and money laundering. The central bank of Afghanistan (DAB) - which I presided over until the fall of Kabul in August - worked with its international partners to prohibit such transactions. Now, Afghanistan and DAB under the Taliban are likely to be treated as sanctioned entities by the rest of the world. In addition to the financial

implications, there will be three additional consequences to this situation. First, Afghanistan's physical money supply will be impaired. This is because the central bank does not print its own currency: DAB typically receives afghanis produced by specialist firms overseas. The bank expected 2 billion afghanis in small-denominated notes from a Polish currency company in August. It had also signed a contract with a French firm for the supply of another 100 billion afghanis for the following year. I am relatively certain that these deliveries cannot be made. Second, the \$7 billion Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India natural gas pipeline project (TAPI) will likely not proceed. This pipeline would have brought 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from the Turkmen Galkynysh field - the world's second-largest - to Pakistan and India. It would have generated a few hundred million dollars in transit revenues for the Government of Afghanistan. I know this issue well because for five years I was

Afghanistan's representative on the project's board. I helped move the pipeline from just a vague goal conceived during the previous Taliban regime to a realistic project. Engineering work had been completed, bilateral agreements signed and the land acquisition process begun. The project company had short-listed a number of European firms to supply the steel piping, valves, and construction work. We had even identified financing from various export credit agencies and insurance companies. A Taliban delegation visited Turkmenistan earlier this year to assure the government there that a Taliban regime would provide security for the pipeline. I remember the visit because a car bomb exploded under the TAPI project manager in Kabul that same day. (Fortunately, he survived.) In any case, whatever assurances the delegation provided to Turkmenistan, the Taliban do not fully understand the complexities of the project. As a result of the sanctions regime and security concerns, European companies will not be able to provide equipment or financing. They will certainly

not be able to obtain insurance for the project. For now, the project has to be assumed to be dead. Third, hopes to profit from the country's mineral resources have to be scaled back - or abandoned. This includes the Aynak copper mine, one of the largest untapped sources in the world, which the Metallurgical Corporation of China acquired rights to in 2008. Or the Hajigak iron ore mine, a mine with world-class iron ore content, for which an Indian firm signed a contract. There's also the Amu-Darya oil basin, where the China National Petroleum Corporation has the right to drill. Each of these projects requires international financing and more. It is unlikely that any reputable company would involve itself in such projects now. The risks are simply too high. Impact of reduced fiscal space In addition, economic programs to support trade are likely to be curtailed. As an economic adviser to the president of Afghanistan, I developed an air cargo support program that helped increase exports by more than \$100 million per year. We exported pine nuts to

China, fresh fruit to India, rugs to Turkey, and handicrafts to Europe. However, with reduced fiscal space, it is likely that government support for these air corridors will become unsustainable. There are analysts who suggest that the Taliban may turn to Islamabad for help. But Pakistan's economy is hardly up to the challenge. Pakistan has only \$20 billion in international reserves. Though this is double what Afghanistan has, Pakistan has to deal with a gross domestic product 14 times as large. What's more, the country has a 90% debt-to-GDP ratio, high for a developing market. China has recently stepped back from investments in Pakistan due to security concerns. The Taliban will face the same economic challenges as the previous regime - but under sanctions and with much less international financial support. Afghanistan's new rulers must face this reality, form an inclusive government and adhere to international standards. Otherwise, they will further impoverish themselves and the Afghan people.- Bloomberg

Pakistan and China are preparing for a Taliban govt they don't trust.



So should India

Pakistan's interest in an influential role for the Haqqani group in a Taliban government is on account of its anti-Indian agenda. We must be prepared.

It has been three weeks since the Taliban swept across Afghanistan and brought the entire country under their control, except for the remote valley of Panjshir. The latest reports indicate that the resistance in the valley may also have crumbled. While the country is under the control of well-armed Taliban fighters, there is still no government in place in Kabul. Such administration as exists is ad hoc in nature under interim Taliban leaders. This suggests that there are internal tensions among the various factions of the Taliban that have not been resolved. The visit of the Pakistan ISI chief to Kabul points to a Pakistani role in promoting a compromise among the factions and ensuring that groups most closely associated with Pakistan, such as the Haqqani group, obtain the lion share of the political spoils. Pakistan is keen that the Haqqani group gets the governorships of the key Afghan provinces adjacent to Pakistan. This may be critical to preventing

the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from continuing to launch cross-border attacks against targets in Pakistan. The recent suicide bombing by a TTP fighter in Balochistan points to the continuing threat from this quarter. The other reason for Pakistan's interest in an influential role for the Haqqani group in a Taliban government is on account of its anti-Indian agenda. Pakistan does not want any Indian presence in Afghanistan, including the continuance of its substantial aid programme in the country. It would prefer that Afghan trade with India is not resumed. This may not be in accord with some factions of Taliban, in particular, the Doha faction led by Mullah Baradar. But the Haqqani group may be counted upon to support the Pakistan agenda. In case Indian presence in Kabul is restored, a serious terrorist attack against the embassy or on its personnel will compel India to undertake a hasty withdrawal. Given the history of the Haqqani group's attacks on Indian diplomatic missions in the past, at the behest of Pakistani ISI, the

distribution of political power and posts in a Taliban government is of special interest to India. In case of an oversize role for the Haqqani group, India's interests would be better served by not rushing to restore its diplomatic presence in Kabul, despite assurances from the Taliban government. There may be merit in remaining engaged and even in extending humanitarian assistance to the people of the country but not going beyond that for the time being. India is in a different situation. India's situation is different from countries of Europe and the United States. While concerns are being voiced about violation of human rights and attacks against women under the Taliban rule, the main concern is preventing the flow of Afghan refugees to their countries. This is why leaders like Germany's Angela Merkel keep repeating that the West must engage with the Taliban. A few cosmetic gestures from the Taliban will be enough to fully legitimise their rule over Afghanistan so that there is

justification for not opening the doors to the hapless Afghans, who are left to the mercy of the new rulers. The western commentary these days is about accepting ground reality, of "holding your nose" and talking to a ruthless and obscurantist group, of seeking their help in keeping jihadi terrorists at bay. The irony is that the Taliban itself is one of the most successful jihadi groups and sees its success as a vindication of jihad everywhere. They are being presented as a "nationalist" entity interested only in ruling Afghanistan. It is not nationalism that drives the Taliban. Its Islamic brand is an instrument to subsume nationalist and tribal identities within the larger rubric of Islam. This is particularly important to Pakistan as its great apprehension is over Pushtun irredentism spanning the Durand Line. This is also why China and Russia continue to be concerned.

Bitcoin Will Soon Be Legal Tender In El Salvador - Here's What That Means



On Sept. 7, 2021, El Salvador will become the first country to make bitcoin legal tender.

The government even went a step further in promoting the cryptocurrency's use by giving US\$30 in free bitcoins to citizens who sign up for its national digital wallet, known as "Chivo," or "cool" in English. Foreigners who invest three bitcoins in the country - currently about \$140,000 - will be granted residency.

Panama is considering following El Salvador's lead.

Does making bitcoin legal tender mean every store and merchant in El Salvador will now have to accept digital payments? If more countries do the same thing, what will this mean for consumers and businesses around the world?

As an economist who studies wealth and money, I believe that briefly explaining what legal tender is will help answer these questions.

What is legal tender?

Legal tender refers to money - typically coins and banknotes - that must be accepted if offered in payment of a debt.

The front of every U.S. banknote states "This note is legal tender for all debts public and private." This statement has been enshrined in federal law in various forms since the late 1800s.

The greenback is not legal tender in just the U.S. El Salvador, for example, switched from the colon, its previous currency, to the U.S. dollar in 2001. Ecuador, Panama, East Timor and the Federated States of Micronesia also all use the dollar as legal tender.

Hinduphobia is a reality.

Scholars at 'Dismantling Global Hindutva' conference must know

Scholars from Western universities-from Columbia to Rochester-write and oppose what they understand are disturbing assertions on Hinduphobia.

In certain academic circles, nuance, rigor, and reasonable disagreement in scholarly discourse surrounding India and Hinduism is supplanted with polemics, tendentiousness, and bad faith. We, as a group of academics, write with specific concern about the exacerbation of this trend through the upcoming Dismantling Global Hindutva (DGH) conference, which has claimed the apparent sponsorship of over forty academic institutions.

The conference, to be held virtually between 10-12 September, aims to "address the threat and power of Hindutva" by relying on perspectives from scholars, journalists, and activists. However, these perspectives - as expressed through the conference's promotional materials - pose an inherent threat to the well-being of the Hindu community, and to academic freedom itself. As scholars, we embrace academic freedom - the right of scholars to conduct inquiry and

engage in constructive debate and disagreement without threat or intimidation; yet, this upcoming conference imperils our ability to freely do so in good faith and thus constitutes the very antithesis of this ideal.

DGH has promulgated the "Hindutva Harassment Field Manual" (HHFM) as an official resource for the conference. Three basic claims made by this document therefore underline the foundational premise of DGH and its participants.

1. Hinduphobia does not exist

The document claims that Hinduphobia was coined recently by the Hindu Right and that it "relies on flawed analogies with anti-Semitism and Islamophobia." It continues, "individual cases of discrimination, no matter how painful, do not amount to Hinduphobia since Hinduphobia rests on the false notion that Hindus have faced systematic oppression throughout history and in present times." The note concludes, "Scholars of South Asia overall consider the term 'Hinduphobia' problematic."

Many of us, as scholars of or belonging to South Asia, refuse to be spoken for.

Earlier this year, academics - including signatories to this letter - created a working definition of Hinduphobia, which has also been recognised by the Student Assembly of at least one DGH-sponsoring institution. This definition is specific to Hindu experiences across time and geography.

As defined, the word 'Hinduphobia' has been used in media and politics since the nineteenth century. To claim it was coined by "the Hindu Right" is an easily disproved, prejudicial falsity. Many DGH scholars are aware and have even publicly acknowledged that a free, public conference at Rutgers University was held to examine Hinduphobia earlier this year. Yet, they refuse to engage with the definition, even as an intellectual exercise, perfunctorily dismissing the possibility that Hinduphobia exists.

A nascent literature that examines Hinduphobia within

the United States and United Kingdom already exists, including within religious studies. A survey of British Indians conducted by The 1928 Institute in collaboration with Oxford University found that "80% of respondents experienced prejudice as a result of their Indian identity," with "Hinduphobia... the predominant type of prejudice reported." Altman's *Heathens, Hindus, Hindu: American Representations of India, 1721-1893* (Oxford University Press, 2017) incisively demonstrates the way in which representations of "Hindoo heathenism" were used as a foil to the "supremacy of white Protestant American identity." Reflecting on this and other scholarship, to suggest offhand, as DGH does, that anti-Hindu bias is not engrained systemically into the consciousness of the Anglosphere is fundamentally anti-intellectual and ahistorical.

2. There is no historical linkage between anti-Hindu bias and large-scale anti-Hindu violence. The conclusion that Hinduphobia

does not exist rests on a pernicious and violent assertion - that there is no evidence that "Hindus have faced systematic oppression throughout history and in present times... The anti-Semitic ideology of Nazism led to the Holocaust. Islamophobic foreign policies over time resulted in the killing of civilians in the Middle East as well as the recent anti-Muslim ban of the Trump administration. Anti-Hindu bias, on the other hand, cannot be easily linked to casualties on such horrific scales."

Such an assertion is disturbing, and dangerous when put forth by those with academic credentials. As this scholarly definition notes, "outright denying or accusing Hindus or any people of inventing or exaggerating the persecution of Hindus, including genocide," constitutes Hinduphobia. It is not difficult to connect anti-Hindu bias with anti-Hindu violence on a mass scale; such incidents include:



Twenty years later, a fractured world

Reports that representatives of six countries - Pakistan, China, Russia, Qatar, Turkey, and Iran - were invited to the formation of the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan perhaps best capture the long-term geopolitical repercussions of the post-9/11 era. The complex global landscape that marked much of the past two decades has started to assume greater clarity. Of particular importance is the concatenation of four regional geopolitical contests across the Eurasian landmass. Recent developments in Afghanistan have affected them all. The first, in the Western Pacific, has long featured a rising China on the one hand and the United States (US) and its Asian allies on the other. Flashpoints have included the Korean Peninsula, East China Sea, Taiwan Strait, and South China Sea. This dynamic has shaped negotiations between the two Koreas, the strength of the US-Japan alliance, scenario-planning around a potential Taiwan Strait crisis, and China's building and militarisation of artificial islands. But while tensions continue along what is commonly referred to as the first island chain, US-China competition is now playing out on a global scale.

The second dynamic has witnessed India's attempts at addressing an intensifying China-Pakistan axis since the 1960s. But as the balance of power has shifted, both between China and India, and between India and Pakistan, this competition has moved beyond just contested borders, and has begun to alter regional institutional cooperation and economic connectivity. It has also influenced developments in

In a post-9/11 world, four geopolitical contests are playing out. In Afghanistan, all strands intersect

Afghanistan, Myanmar, the rest of South Asia, and the Indian Ocean. The third theatre, in West Asia, has featured a more complex landscape, involving Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, and Qatar. The Gulf Cooperation Council's 2017 ostracism of Qatar coupled with the Abraham Accords - through which the UAE and Bahrain normalised diplomatic relations with Israel - are but the most significant reflections of the changes afoot. They relate in large part to the role of political Islam (and often specifically the Muslim Brotherhood) in regional politics, which being contested in different forms in Egypt, Libya, Syria, and the Palestinian territories. These divisions have also been transposed upon sectarian divides, often featuring Iran, that have erupted in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen.

The fourth regional contest has been in Europe, a legacy of the post-Cold War expansion of the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) into areas traditionally seen by Russia as within its realm of influence. This has resulted in so-called "frozen conflicts" in Moldova and Georgia, the annexation of Crimea, and continuing conflict in eastern Ukraine. A further dynamic affecting Europe has involved fraying relations with Turkey, whether over regional security concerns,

migration, or energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The boundaries between these various regional rivalries had already started to blur. China's more active presence in the Indian Ocean after 2008 merged the Pacific and Indian Oceans into a single strategic continuum - the Indo-Pacific. The India-Pakistan rivalry was beginning to influence - and be influenced by - developments in the Gulf. And Turkey's activism has started to shape outcomes to its east, west, and south, whether in the Caucasus, Eastern Mediterranean, or Levant. Developments in Afghanistan, however, affect all four dynamics at once. Of particular significance is the open alignment on the Taliban between Pakistan, China, and Russia, as part of a process facilitated by Qatar.

However, Taliban rule in Afghanistan raises the prospects of further terrorism directed against India, a refugee outflow to Europe, the spectre of populist Islamist governance in West Asia, and intensifying competition between China and the US for global influence.

Yet, despite the growing crystallisation of geopolitical competition between the states of the Eurasian heartland, and those of the periphery, a number of factors will continue to complicate matters. For example, some states in Europe (Greece, Hungary, even Germany) may still advocate for greater engagement with Russia, even as others (France, Poland, and the Baltic States) grow even more concerned about Moscow's intentions.

For Delhi, the India-US partnership remains the best bet



The last American troops in Afghanistan have flown out, ending the longest war the United States (US) has ever engaged in. There was agreement in the international community that the withdrawal was incompetent, at best, and a disaster, at worst. The withdrawal also generated many claims that it heralded the unravelling of American empire. Given that any sentence containing the words "American" and "empire" is contested not just in the US's policy community but also among historians, it would be more useful to ask if the end of America's 20-year war is also the end of American leadership and dominance. There, the jury is still out. And it is far from clear that India must, as some have argued, rethink the India-US partnership. How great powers decline is a question that many historians and political scientists have asked. One of the most famous exponents of the answer is Yale University historian Paul Kennedy. Kennedy's book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, argued that attaining great power is a matter of balancing economic wealth and military power, and great powers inevitably decline because the military overreach necessary to sustain their power also requires the draining of economic resources to support it. Knowingly or not, Kennedy's thesis is often the foundation for quick predictions of great power decline among policy pundits.

However, despite important insights, Kennedy's argument also had problems. Military overreach is difficult to pinpoint. How many such instances of the overreach of power need to occur, how deep and prolonged do they need to be, and how devastating a loss great powers need to incur, in order to decline is hard to say. Kennedy also did not account for domestic politics, alliances, technologies or ideologies in sustaining or eroding great power. For example, the erstwhile Soviet Union did not lose the Cold War because it lost the war in Afghanistan, but because it could not contain the processes of democratisation and nationalism within its borders, and that led to its disintegration. Using, various yardsticks of the decline of great powers including those outlined by Kennedy and others, can help us understand the case of the US.

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There's good and bad news about Covid-19



Many of us started the summer fully vaccinated and ready to celebrate. I booked tickets for work and family trips, left my mask at home when seeing friends, and took a deep sigh of relief that the worst seemed to be behind us. But now Covid-19 cases are rising at my hospital. My colleagues and I are worried about kids going back to school while so many are ineligible for vaccination. Many businesses are telling their workers to stay home a bit longer. Daily infection rates are more than three times higher than they were last Labor Day in the US -- and in the coming days and weeks, we could be met with still higher infection rates as Covid cases that were picked up on Labor Day travels are detected.

It's hard not to feel tricked. Is it 2020 all over again? Worse yet, is this what our future looks like?

From a medical perspective, the answers are both yes and no. Here's why.

The bad news is that some things haven't changed. The good news is that despite the sense of déjà vu, this moment is profoundly different from last summer.

The world still suffers from an inexplicable deficit of basic knowledge about this virus and its variants. The Delta variant is clearly more transmissible, but somehow, six months after its identification, we still don't know whether it's inherently more dangerous, particularly for children. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is not consistently tracking the many so-called "breakthrough" infections that don't require hospitalization, so we are left guessing how well the vaccines protect from mild and asymptomatic infection. And we have no reliable dataset on school transmission. This lack of data makes it difficult to provide airtight recommendations to the public as we embark on a new school year.

This moment also feels like last year because of the sense of overwhelm and exhaustion in our hospitals and schools. My health care colleagues in southern states are in a particularly bad spot; some of them are facing hospitalization numbers that dwarf the first three waves of this disease. We barely had a chance to catch our breath before another wave hit this summer. We are making crisis care decisions, just as we did last winter. Parents and school staff are also back in a world of revolving quarantines and fear.

What the Texas Law Really Means for Abortion in America



This week, five justices of the Supreme Court allowed a Texas law to go into effect that says private citizens can sue for \$10,000 anyone who performs, aids or abets an abortion on a fetus that has a detectable heartbeat. Their decision didn't overturn Roe - in fact, the legal question at stake wasn't about the fundamental right to an abortion at all. Still, abortion rights advocates are up in arms for a reason - mostly because how the court acted today could be a signal as to how it will act in November, when the real challenge to federal abortion rights will come before the Supreme Court.

This week's Supreme Court case was all about whether or not a federal court had the ability to "enjoin," or block, the Texas law from going into effect until the merits of the law could be settled in court. The broad use of injunctions is a relatively recent but increasingly common legal practice, so we are accustomed to seeing courts block even potentially unconstitutional laws during the period after the law is passed and before it goes into effect. For example, in 2015, a federal judge enjoined President Barack Obama's secretary of Homeland Security from implementing its Deferred Action for Parents of Americans program. In 2018, a different federal judge enjoined Trump's secretary of Homeland Security from terminating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Let's consider this in the context of the Texas law. The Texas law does not criminalize abortion. It allows a private person to sue an abortion provider and recover civil damages. So when abortion providers sued to stop the law from going into effect, the question was always whom they were going to bring

The Supreme Court case this week wasn't about Roe or Casey. But that doesn't mean we can't learn from it.

the lawsuit against. The Texas attorney general and governor - the people who normally get sued in state abortion restriction cases - weren't parties to any of these future lawsuits, so they couldn't be sued in this case. In the end, the abortion providers decided to sue a state judge, arguing that he was a state actor that could be enjoined from presiding over the civil cases and using the power of the state to enforce the \$10,000 award.

Whether a federal court can enjoin a state judge from overseeing a state civil trial based on state law is a complicated legal question. States themselves are immune from suit under the 11th Amendment, but in 1908 the Supreme Court held that a plaintiff could get an injunction against an enforcing state officer when that person was violating the U.S. Constitution. The question for the Supreme Court was: Are state judges the enforcers of the Texas law?

This legal ambiguity was precisely the point, by the way. After decades of passing myriad state abortion restrictions only to have them enjoined by federal courts and never go into effect, the anti-abortion movement's legal wing came up with this idea as a way to get around the problem. By their way of thinking, if there were no one to enjoin, then they could get past that first hurdle - further than

any so-called heartbeat bill had ever made it. It was a hypothetical a law student might expect on their constitutional law final exam - and the Texas legislature was happy to go along because for years Republican politicians have been able to signal their anti-abortion bona fides by signing onto these types of bills without any real concern that the law would actually go into effect. They are now the dogs that caught the car, which I think explains why so few Republicans have been out in the media cheering on the result.

In the end, in an unsigned opinion, a majority of justices held that "federal courts enjoy the power to enjoin individuals tasked with enforcing laws, not the laws themselves" and did not enjoin the state judge. But they also said that the decision was emphatically "not based on any conclusion about the constitutionality of Texas's law, and in no way limits other procedurally proper challenges to the Texas law, including in Texas state courts."

The dissenters - John Roberts, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan - all wrote their own opinions. Roberts wanted to prevent the law from going into effect until SCOTUS could have more time to decide "whether a state can avoid responsibility for its laws in such a manner." Breyer would have been satisfied with enjoining the state judge because such a procedural bottle held "what is, in essence, very old and very important legal wine: The ability to ask the Judiciary to protect an individual from the invasion of a constitutional right - an invasion that threatens immediate and serious injury."



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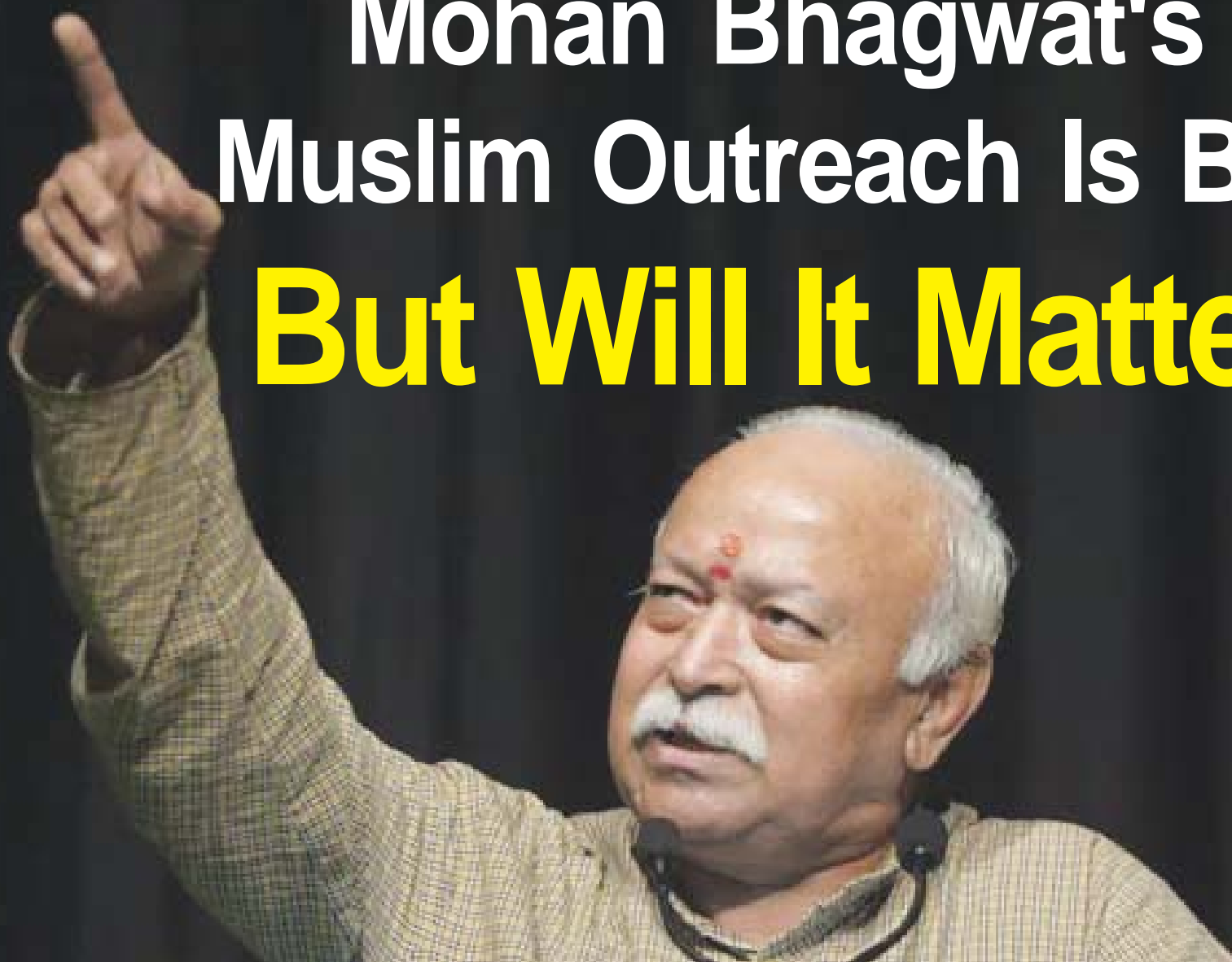
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Mohan Bhagwat's Muslim Outreach Is Big But Will It Matter?



Mohan Bhagwat is the most 'political' RSS chief after Balasaheb Deoras. If Keshav Baliram Hedgewar was quintessentially an organisation man, M S Golwalkar was more of a missionary; Balasaheb Deoras was a rebel within the Hindutva fold: a non-practicing Swayam Sewak who left the RSS for eight years due to differences with Golwalkar, and a hard-core political individual. It was Deoras who saw potential in the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement, aggressively pursued with the full might of the RSS, at a time when BJP was oscillating between the Gandhian Socialism of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Integral Humanism of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. Without the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, the BJP would not have accomplished what it has.

Not many people outside the RSS know that Deoras, after becoming chief of the organisation, advocated that the RSS should open its doors to the followers of the other religions like Islam and Christianity. He was told by the top leadership of the RSS "This is not what Hedgewar envisioned when he founded the RSS; if he feels so strongly about that, he should start his own RSS". Many years later, the RSS did open its membership for Muslims and others; much later, it also sponsored the Rashtriya Muslim Manch to reach out to Muslims and neutralise their apprehensions that the RSS is anti-

Islam. Therefore, in that context, what Bhagwat is preaching today is not new, it is in continuation with the Deoras line of thinking.

But Bhagwat has walked a few steps further than Deoras. At an event in Mumbai yesterday, attended by Muslim intellectuals, he said, "Hindus and Muslims in India share the same ancestry. In our view, the word Hindu means motherland, and the culture that we have inherited from ancient times. The term Hindu... denotes every person irrespective of their language, community or religion. Everyone is a Hindu, and it is in this context that we see every Indian citizen as a Hindu. The faith of another will not be disrespected here, but for that we should be thinking not of Muslim dominance but of India's dominance. For the country to progress, all have to work together." On the surface, it appears that Bhagwat, in a way, is trying to redefine Hindutva; theoretically, he is challenging Golwalkar's basic premise and pushing Hindutva away from Savarkar's interpretation of history. His definition of Hindutva is much closer to Swami Vivekanand's who talked about a cohesive, strong and organised Hindu society but one that should live in complete harmony with Muslims in India. Bhagwat, in 2018, had said, "Hindu Rashtra does not mean there is no place for Muslims. The day it becomes so, it won't be Hindutva. Hindutva talks about one world family."

Bhagwat's insistence that there is place for Muslims in the Hindu Rashtra is antagonistic to the Hindu Rashtra as envisaged by Savarkar, Golwalkar and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, the three sources of RSS ideology. Savarkar, like Jinnah, advocated the two-nation theory. In 1937, Savarkar declared, "India can't be assumed to be a unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary, there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Muslims, in India." On this issue, Babasaheb Ambedkar found no difference between him and Jinnah. He said, "Strange as it may appear, Mr. Savarkar and Mr. Jinnah instead of being opposed to each other on the one nation versus two nations issue are in complete agreement about it. Both agree and not only agree but insist that there are two nations in India - one the Muslim nation and the other Hindu nation."

Golwalkar, like Savarkar, was not an original thinker, he was inspired by the Hitler's ideology of fascism. In 1939, he wrote in his book, *We, or Our Nationhood Defined*, (this book was later disowned by the RSS) "...there are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only sound view on the minority problem." This statement very clearly underlines

the fact that Golwalkar was contemplating throwing Muslims out of the country.

Deen Dayal Upadhyay did not disagree much with his ideological mentor except on one point and that is that seven crore Muslims (that was the population of Muslims then) living in India is a reality and they can't be removed. So, a formula for the co-existence must be evolved.

Bhagwat goes much further to say that without Muslims, Hindutva can't be imagined. By this logic, he negates the basic premise of the "Two-Nation Theory". In his opinion, Hindus and Muslims are not the foundation of two distinct nations but one. They have the 'same ancestry'. Unlike him, Savarkar had declared Islam and Christianity foreign religions, whose holy lands existed outside India, and so their loyalty to the nation was suspect. He acknowledged that most of the Muslims and Christians were at one time Hindus, but..."since their adoption of the new cult they had ceased to own Hindu sanskriti as a whole...their heroes and their hero worship, their fairs and their festivals, their ideals and their outlook on life, have ceased to be common with others." One can argue and object that Bhagwat's is a much-nuanced position as he says that everyone living in India is 'Hindu' irrespective of religion.

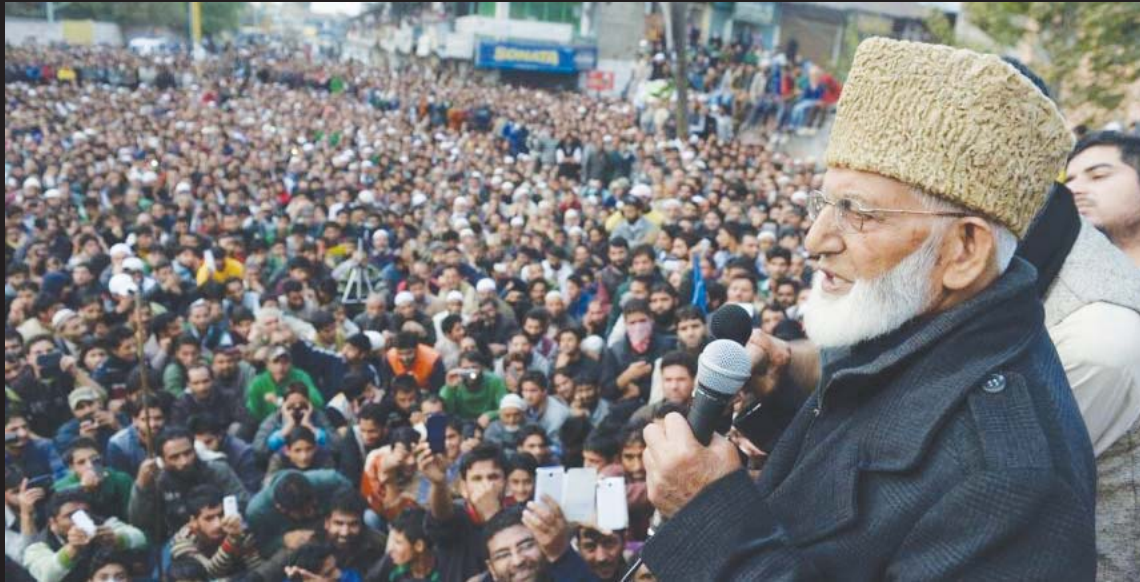
India to investigate late Kashmir leader's family under anti-terror law

(News Agencies)-The family of a separatist icon from Indian-administered Kashmir have been booked for police investigation under a sweeping anti-terrorism law for chanting anti-New Delhi slogans and wrapping his body with Pakistan's flag after he died, officials said.

The family of a separatist icon from Indian-administered Kashmir have been charged under a sweeping anti-terrorism law for allegedly chanting anti-New Delhi slogans and wrapping his body with Pakistan's flag after he died, officials said.

Tensions in the Himalayan territory, which is disputed between India and Pakistan, have been heightened since Mr Syed Ali Geelani died last Wednesday (Sept 1) at the age of 92 in the main city of Srinagar.

Police in Kashmir said a case under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) - which effectively allows people to be held without trial indefinitely -



was registered on Saturday against Mr Geelani's family.

The family were accused of "raising anti-national slogans and resorting to other anti-national activities" at the influential resistance leader's home soon after his death.

They have not yet been detained by police.

His son Naseem Geelani did not deny the allegations but repeated earlier claims that police took his father's body away to be buried in the middle of the night just

hours after his death, and did not allow the family to perform last rites.

Police have refuted those allegations.

"We told the visiting police officers that they had taken control of everything after my father's death and that we were mourning. We had no way of knowing who was doing what," the son told Agence France-Presse on Sunday.

A video widely shared on social media showed the leader's body

wrapped in a Pakistani flag before police officers took it away amid a scuffle with his family members.

Chants of "we want freedom" were heard in the background during the mayhem.

The authorities on Sunday eased a lockdown imposed to maintain calm after his death across Kashmir, allowing for limited movement. An Internet and mobile phone shutdown was partially eased on Saturday.

Mr Geelani, a popular figure in

the region, spent over five decades fighting for self-determination for people in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Islamabad observed a day of national mourning after Mr Geelani's death and funeral prayers for the leader were held across Pakistan and in Turkey. In Srinagar, Indian troops are guarding Mr Geelani's grave and no one is allowed to approach it. Anger has simmered in the territory since 2019 when New Delhi controversially revoked the region's semi-autonomy and brought it under direct rule.

Residents in the Muslim-majority region say repression has intensified in the two years since the changes.

India has used the vaguely-worded UAPA legislation against thousands of Kashmiri residents, journalists and dissidents, according to activists. Rebel groups have been fighting Indian forces for decades, demanding independence for the territory or its merger with Pakistan that controls a part of it.

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Sri Lankan Navy seize 336 kg heroin, apprehend 7 Pakistanis



(News Agencies)-The Sri Lankan Navy has apprehended a trawler, allegedly involved in drug trafficking, in the high seas off Male, and brought it back to Colombo.

Seven persons, all Pakistan nationals, were taken in custody, and 336 kg heroin was seized in the operation earlier this week. The trawler, reportedly acting as a multi-day fishing trawler, was transporting drug consignments to other boats, and investigations are still in progress.

No weapons were recovered so

far.

The stock of heroin weighing 336 kg with a street value of around Rs 3.1 billion was detected by the Sri Lanka Navy was found in this operation.

A seven-member crew were found to be Pakistan nationals with a multi-day fishing vessel used to transport the heroin from a foreign port.

The operation was the culmination of a stringent three weeks of surveillance and information sharing between the Navy and intelligence agencies.

China should cooperate with us, many projects awaited, says Taliban's Zabihullah Mujahid

As the Taliban claimed it had captured Panjshir Valley, the militant group's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said there were no civilian casualties while "taking over Panjshir".

"There was a shortage of food during the fighting," the Taliban spokesman said, adding, "but we will fix that now." The Taliban spokesman asserted that, "China should cooperate with us, there are so many projects awaited due to security concerns like roads and other infrastructure, they all will be implemented soon." "The Taliban wants to negotiate this matter (Panjshir), the jihadi commanders were used in this to resolve the matters for negotiation and dialogue. When our delegation went there they did not get positive answers, so the Islamic Emirate sent their military," he added. The National Resistance Front (NRF) said it will continue its struggle in Panjshir even as the Taliban claimed it had complete control over the area although the Taliban spokesman claimed the "nest of terrorism in Panjshir is under complete Taliban control". "If anyone causes problem or trouble in Afghanistan, Islamic Emirate will categorically deal against such forces," the Taliban spokesman warned. "We will not allow anyone to congregate or get together and act against us," he said.

Zabihullah said the country should be a place of "reconstruction" and "rebuilding".

"We want to repeat that people of Panjshir are just like any other place from Afghanistan and we will not discriminate against them," Zabihullah reiterated.

On restarting operation at Kabul airport, the



Taliban spokesman said: "Domestic flights have already started and we are looking into when can we start international flights."

The spokesman added that the "reconstruction" of Kabul airport is ongoing while adding: "business and trade will start and be back to normal slowly." The spokesman also claimed that the currency rate of the Afghani is stable even as it had taken a major hit in the past month as the Taliban took control of Kabul.

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No new camps for Afghan refugees at border, says Pakistan minister



Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad said that there are no Afghan refugees at the border and the government is not setting up any new camps in the area.

(News Agencies)-Pakistan is not setting up any new camp to accommodate Afghan refugees trying to flee the war-ravaged neighbouring country after the Taliban seized power in Kabul, Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad has said.

Rashid said that there are no Afghan refugees at the border and the government has not established any camp in the area, the Business Recorder newspaper reported.

Rashid's statement came on Sunday during his visit to the

Torkham border after reports that people were massing at the border and trying to enter Pakistan which already has been hosting about 3 million Afghan refugees.

According to officials, about half of the refugees staying in Pakistan are illegal as they have not been registered in the country. Officially about 1.5 million are registered and have documents to stay, carry out businesses and move across the border.

Pakistan has been saying since the unfolding of the current Afghan

crisis that it will not accept any more refugees. But its ministers have been issuing contradictory statements about allowing Afghans to come.

While the interior minister has taken a tough line on the issue, Minister for Information Fawad Chaudhary, said last week that the policy about women and children might be different. However, so far no clarification has been issued. Officially it has also been stated that Pakistan has issued visas and travel documents to about 4,000 people in Afghanistan to enter

Pakistan at the height of the evacuation crisis. It is said that most of them were given three-week transit visas to fly to various destinations in the West.

On August 15, the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, two weeks before the US was set to complete its troop withdrawal after a two-decade war. The insurgents stormed across the country, capturing all major cities in a matter of days, as Afghan security forces trained and equipped by the US and its allies melted away.

Taliban arrest journalists, cameramen covering anti-Pakistan protest in Kabul



(News Agencies)-The Taliban have reportedly arrested journalists and cameramen who were covering anti-Pakistan protests in Afghanistan's capital city, Kabul. Afghanistan's TOLO News reported that the Taliban had stopped journalists from covering the protest and took away their cameras. The news agency alleged that the Taliban captured one of its photographer, Waheed Ahmadi, during the protest rally. On Tuesday, hundreds of Afghans, mostly women, took to the streets of Kabul as they protested against Pakistan and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Videos of the protest shows demonstrators marching towards the Kabul Serena Hotel where the Pakistan ISI director has been staying since last week. As the protests intensified, the Taliban opened fire on the rally to disperse the crowd, according to several media reports. An Afghan journalist tweeted, "For several kilometres well-disciplined Taliban members allowed a protest of approx 300-500 to continue through the streets of Kabul. Talibs guarding Zambak Square, however, fired in the air, beat protesters, vandalised a vehicle leading them and tore cameras from journalists." Videos of the incident shows protestors walking on the Kabul street with placards and shouting slogans against Pakistan. Afghan men and women could be heard chanting "freedom" and "death to Pakistan". Meanwhile, Afghans in Balkh province have also reportedly come out to the streets to protest against Pakistan and Taliban. The arrest of journalists and cameramen comes even as Afghan media face an uncertain future under the Taliban rule.

Pakistan police release 155 men arrested over sexual assault of YouTuber woman

(News Agencies)-Police have released 155 suspects, arrested for their alleged involvement in the sexual assault of a YouTuber girl on Independence Day at the historic Minar-i-Pakistan, after the victim and her team members could not recognise them during an identification parade, a Punjab government official said on Tuesday. The incident, which sparked nationwide outrage and drew international condemnation, took place on August 14 when hundreds of youngsters were celebrating Pakistan's Independence Day at Azadi Chowk near Minar-i-Pakistan in Lahore. In viral videos circulated on social media, hundreds of young men can be seen throwing the girl



in the air for fun, dragging her, tearing her clothes and molesting her. Politicians from all parties and members of civil society have strongly condemned what many of them called "sexual terrorism". Lahore Police had registered a case against 400 unidentified men for assaulting the girl and her companions, and later arrested 161 people in the case. "The

identification parade of 161 arrested suspects was conducted at the Camp Jail Lahore during the last few days under the supervision of a judicial magistrate. The girl and her team members (could) identify only six suspects after which the police told the magistrate that 155 suspects were no more required in this case and subsequently

they were released from jail," a Punjab government official told PTI on Tuesday. The six suspects identified by the girl have been sent to judicial custody till September 9, he said. Some of the suspects alleged before the court that the girl herself invited them to the Minar-i-Pakistan to make videos and that she was responsible for what had happened to her. Police had geo-fenced 28,000 people and shortlisted 350 suspects in the case. Geo-fence is a virtual geographic boundary, defined by GPS (Global Positioning System) or RFID (radio frequency identification) technology, that enables software to trigger a response when a mobile device enters or leaves a particular area.

Plans for \$400-billion new city in the American desert unveiled



(News Agencies)-The cleanliness of Tokyo, the diversity of New York and the social services of Stockholm: Billionaire Marc Lore has outlined his vision for a 5-million-person "new city in America" and appointed a world-famous architect to design it.

Now, he just needs somewhere to build it -- and \$400 billion in funding.

The former Walmart executive last week unveiled plans for Telosa, a sustainable metropolis that he hopes to create, from scratch, in the American desert.

The ambitious 150,000-acre proposal promises eco-friendly architecture, sustainable energy production and a purportedly drought-resistant water system. A so-called "15-minute city design" will allow residents to access their workplaces, schools and amenities within a quarter-hour commute of their homes.

Although planners are still scouting for locations, possible targets include Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Texas and the Appalachian region, according to the project's official website.

The announcement was accompanied by a series of digital renderings by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), the architecture firm hired to bring Lore's utopian dream to life. The images show residential buildings covered with greenery and imagined residents enjoying abundant open space. With fossil-fuel-powered vehicles banned in the city, autonomous vehicles are pictured traveling down sun-lit streets alongside scooters and pedestrians.

Another image depicts a proposed skyscraper, dubbed

Equitism Tower, which is described as "a beacon for the city." The building features elevated water storage, aeroponic farms and an energy-producing photovoltaic roof that allow it to "share and distribute all it produces."

The first phase of construction, which would accommodate 50,000 residents across 1,500 acres, comes with an estimated cost of \$25 billion. The whole project would be expected to exceed \$400 billion, with the city reaching its target population of 5 million within 40 years.

Funding will come from "various sources," project organizers said, including private investors, philanthropists, federal and state grants, and economic development subsidies. Planners hope to approach state officials "very soon," with a view to welcoming the first residents by 2030.

A new urban model In addition to innovative urban design, the project also promises transparent governance and what it calls a "new model for society." Taking its name from the ancient Greek

The building features elevated water storage, aeroponic farms and an energy-producing photovoltaic roof that allow it to "share and distribute all it produces."



word "telos" (a term used by the philosopher Aristotle to describe an inherent or higher purpose), the city would allow residents to "participate in the decision-making and budgeting process." A community endowment will meanwhile offer residents shared ownership of the land. In a promotional video, Lore described his proposal as the "most open, most fair and most inclusive city in the world."

Lore founded jet.com before selling it to Walmart and joining the retail giant as head of US e-commerce in 2016. He left the

company earlier this year, saying that his retirement plans included working on a reality TV show, advising startups and building a "city of the future." On Telosa's official website, Lore explains that he was inspired by American economist and social theorist Henry George. The investor cites capitalism's "significant flaws," attributing many of them to "the land ownership model that America was built on." "Cities that have been built to date from scratch are more like real estate projects," Lore said in a

promotional video for the project. "They don't start with people at the center. Because if you started with people at the center, you would immediately think, 'OK, what's the mission and what are the values?'" The mission of Telosa is to create a more equitable and sustainable future. That's our North Star. "BIG's founder, Danish architect Bjarke Ingels, is meanwhile quoted as saying that Telosa "embodies the social and environmental care of Scandinavian culture, and the freedom and opportunity of a more American culture."

Afghans who worked with Americans worried as US database could expose them to Taliban



(News Agencies)-Over two decades, the United States and its allies spent hundreds of millions of dollars building databases for the Afghan people. The nobly stated goal: Promote law and order and government accountability and modernise a war-ravaged land. But in the Taliban's lightning seizure of power, most of that digital apparatus - including biometrics for verifying identities - apparently fell into Taliban hands. Built with few data-protection safeguards, it risks becoming the high-tech jackboots of a surveillance state. As the Taliban get their governing feet, there are worries it will be used for social control and to punish perceived foes. Putting such data to work constructively - boosting education, empowering women, battling corruption - requires democratic stability, and these systems were not architected for the prospect of defeat.

"It is a terrible irony," said Frank Pasquale, Brooklyn Law School scholar of surveillance technologies. "It's a real object lesson in 'The road to hell is paved with good intentions.'" **TALIBAN MAY HAVE USED DATA**

Since Kabul fell Aug. 15, indications have emerged that government data may have been used in Taliban efforts to identify and intimidate Afghans who worked with the US forces. People are getting ominous and threatening phone calls, texts and WhatsApp messages, said Neesha Suarez, constituent services director for Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, an Iraq War veteran whose office is trying to help stranded Afghans who worked with the US find a way

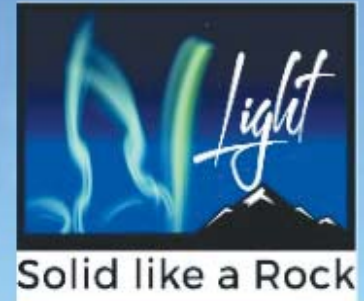
out. A 27-year-old US contractor in Kabul told The Associated Press he and co-workers who developed a US-funded database used to manage army and police payrolls got phone calls summoning them to the Defense Ministry. He is in hiding, changing his location daily, he said, asking not to be identified for his safety.

In victory, the Taliban's leaders say they are not interested in retribution. Restoring international aid and getting foreign-held assets unfrozen are a priority. There are few signs of the draconian restrictions especially on women they imposed when they ruled from 1996 to 2001. There are also no indications that Afghans who worked with Americans have been systematically persecuted.

Ali Karimi, a University of Pennsylvania scholar, is among Afghans unready to trust the Taliban. He worries the databases will give rigid fundamentalist theocrats, known during their insurgency for ruthlessly killing enemy collaborators, "the same capability as an average U.S. government agency when it comes to surveillance and interception."

The Taliban are on notice that the world will be watching how they wield the data. All Afghans - and their international partners - have an obligation together to ensure sensitive government data only be used for "development purposes" and not for policing or social control by the Taliban or to serve other governments in the region, said Nader Nadery, a peace negotiator and head of the civil service commission in the former government.

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Who is Jared Isaacman, the billionaire pilot funding first all-civilian mission to space?



(News Agencies)-When SpaceX's Inspiration-4 mission lifts off from the launch pad that once saw Neil Armstrong soar to the heavens on Apollo-11, the crew onboard will go down in the history books as the first all-civilian crew to leap into low Earth orbit. The September 15 launch will seal SpaceX as a leader in not just successfully launching and returning trained astronauts and cargo from space but also an amateur crew that has no experience in space travel and astrophysics. While the trip will bring brownie points for Elon Musk amid his brawl with Jeff Bezos, the mission will lock Jared Isaacman into glory not just for commanding the all-civilian crew but also for philanthropy. Why? Because the billionaire is financing the four seats on the mission to raise awareness for a children's hospital. The four-member crew strapped into SpaceX's Dragon capsule will orbit the Earth for three days before returning.

Who is Jared Isaacman?

Jared Issacman is the founder and chief executive officer of Shift4 Payments, which provides integrated payment processing and technology solutions "powering over 350 software providers across industries." However, Issacman is more than a corporate guy in a suit. At 38 years, the billionaire is an accomplished jet pilot, who is rated to fly commercial and military aircraft and holds several world records including two Speed-Around-The-World flights in 2008 and 2009 that raised money and awareness for the Make-a-Wish Foundation.

9/11

As the decades pass, the act of remembering evolves

Remembering is not merely a state of mind. As those who beseech us to never forget the Holocaust have long insisted, it is an act. And when loss and trauma are visited upon human beings, the act of remembering takes many forms.

(News Agencies)-Across the vast field where the plane fell out of the sky so many years ago, all is quiet.

The hills around Shanksville seem to swallow sound. The plateau that Americans by the millions ascend to visit the Flight 93 National Memorial, to think of those who died in this southwestern Pennsylvania expanse, sits just above much of the landscape, creating a pocket of quiet precisely where quiet needs to be.

It is a place that encourages the act of remembering.

Twenty years have passed since United Flight 93 made its final descent, chaos unfolding aboard as buildings burned 300 miles to the east. Nearly one-fifth of the country is too young to remember firsthand the day that changed everything.

At the edge of the memorial's overlook, a burly man in a leather Harley Davidson vest

talks to two companions. He points toward the patch where the plane hit. It is an intimate conversation, and it is hard to hear what he's saying.

But his first two words are clear:

"I remember"

Remembering is not merely a state of mind. As those who beseech us to never forget the Holocaust have long insisted, it is an act. And when loss and trauma are visited upon human beings, the act of remembering takes many forms.

Remembering is political. Those who

disagree about the fate of Confederate statues across the American South demonstrate that, as do those who dispute how much the war on terror and its toll should be part of discussions about 9/11 memories.

Remembering wears many coats. It arrives in ground zero ceremonies and moments of silence and prayers upon prayers, both public and private. It shows itself in folk

been presented to us in monuments and memorials like Shanksville's, negotiated and constructed and fine-tuned to evoke and provoke the memories and emotions of people and moments in certain ways.

"Monuments are history made visible. They are shrines that celebrate the ideals, achievements and heroes that existed in one moment in time," architectural historian Judith Dupre writes in her 2007 book about

them - a book she first pitched to her publisher on, of all dates, Sept. 10, 2001.

Yet while monuments stand, remembering itself evolves. How 9/11 is remembered depends on when 9/11 is remembered. Remembering it on Sept. 15, 2001, or on September 11, 2004 is different from remembering it on Sept 11, 2011 - or, for that matter, different from what it will be next weekend.



memorials like those erected at the sides of lonely roads to mark the sites of traffic deaths. It is embedded in the names of places, like the road that leads to the Flight 93 memorial - the Lincoln Highway. It surfaces in the retrieval of "flashbulb memories" - those where-were-you-when-this-happened moments that stick with us, sometimes accurately, sometimes not.

There are personal memories and cultural memories and political memories, and the line between them often blurs.

And for generations, remembering has

What, then, does remembering come to mean on a 20th anniversary, or at any juncture when an event like 9/11 starts to recede into the past - starts to become history - even as its echoes are still shaking the foundations of everything?

"Our present influences how we remember the past - sometimes in ways that are known and sometimes in ways that we don't realize," says Jennifer Talarico, a psychology professor at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania who studies how people form personal memories of public events.



US probing nearly 350 reports of oil spills in wake of Hurricane Ida

Flights on Sunday found evidence of a new leak from an offshore well and reported another leak responsible for a miles-long streak of oil was no longer active.

(News Agencies)-Flights on Sunday found evidence of a new leak from an offshore well and reported another leak responsible for a miles-long streak of oil was no longer active.

The US Coast Guard said on Monday it was investigating nearly 350 reports of oil spills in and along the US Gulf of Mexico in the wake of Hurricane Ida.

Ida's 150 mile-per-hour (240 kph) winds wreaked havoc on offshore oil production platforms and onshore oil and gas processing plants. About 88% of the region's offshore oil production remains

shut and more than 100 platforms unoccupied after the storm made landfall on Aug. 29.

The Coast Guard has been conducting flyovers off the coast of Louisiana looking for spills. It is providing information to federal, state and local authorities responsible for cleaning the sites. Flights on Sunday found evidence of a new leak from an offshore well and reported another leak responsible for a miles-long streak of oil was no longer active. A third report of oil near a drilling platform could not be confirmed, it said.

Offshore oil producer Talos Energy Inc (TALO.N), which hired divers and a cleanup crew to respond to an oil spill in Bay Marchand, said old pipelines damaged during the storm were apparently responsible.

The source of the Bay Marchand leak remains unknown, said Coast Guard spokesman Lieutenant John Edwards. A Coast Guard-led team "will be looking at all potential sources in order to ensure any future risk is mitigated," he said.

State and federal regulators responded to the spill site and

the company acknowledged a "sheen of unknown origin" at its flooded refinery. (Photo: AP)

The spill off the coast of Port Fourchon, Louisiana, had decreased substantially since it was first discovered last week, Talos said. The company is not the owner of the pipelines and had ceased production operations in the area four years ago, said spokesman Brian Grove.

An offshore well belonging to S2 Energy was discharging oil about five miles (8 km) away from the Bay Marchand site, the Coast

Guard said. The company told the Coast Guard it has secured the wellhead and it was no longer discharging oil.

S2 did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) said it is working with the Coast Guard and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to require companies responsible for any spills to halt and clean up the discharges. "If necessary USCG and/or the EPA can open federal funding streams to cover mitigation costs," LDEQ said.

Qatar's Emir discusses developments in Afghanistan with US secretaries of state and defence

(News Agencies)-Qatar's ruling emir and the visiting US secretaries of state and defence discussed developments in Afghanistan and efforts to enhance security in the war-torn country, the emir's court said on Monday.

The emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, received US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of



Defence Lloyd Austin after their arrival in Doha earlier in the day. The visit came as Washington sought support for the evacuation of Americans and at-risk Afghans left behind in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover and for building a consensus among allies on how to respond to the new Islamist rulers. State Department spokesman

Ned Price said in a statement Blinken and Austin thanked al-Thani "for Qatar's extraordinary support in facilitating the safe transit of US citizens, our partners, and other Afghans at-risk."

Price added they discussed other "bilateral issues and initiatives to promote regional security and prosperity."

Ashraf Ghani said he would 'fight to death' the night before he fled Afghanistan: US State Secy Blinken



(News Agencies)-US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said the trajectory of the country's relationship with the Taliban would depend entirely on what it does and not just on what it says.

In an interview with TOLO news, Antony Blinken said, "The Taliban says it seeks international legitimacy and international support and that will depend entirely on what it does, not just on what it says. And the trajectory of its relationship with us and with the rest of the world will depend on its actions."

Antony Blinken further said that the US would work with the Taliban government if it upheld its commitments, especially on "combating terrorism" and honouring human rights and the rights of minorities.

"If the Taliban are able to uphold its commitments, including with regards to freedom of travel, combatting terrorism, and also upholding the basic rights of Afghan people, including women and girls and minorities, then that's a government that we can work with. If it doesn't, we won't," Blinken said.

'DIDN'T FACILITATE ASHRAF GHANI'S ESCAPE FROM KABUL'

When asked if he helped Ashraf Ghani flee Afghanistan, Blinken said he spoke to the ousted Afghan President the night before he left Kabul but "did nothing to facilitate it".

"We were talking about work that was being done in Doha, on the transfer of power, and in the absence of that succeeding, what he told me in the conversation the night before he fled is that he was prepared to fight to the death and in less than 24 hours he left Afghanistan. So, no, I certainly didn't know about it. And we certainly did nothing to facilitate it," Blinken told TOLO news. Blinken also said he was not aware of Ashraf Ghani fleeing Kabul with tonnes of cash. "What I do know,

is that he left the country and again, in a very short period of time, the security forces and its institutions collapsed and so did

the government," Blinken said.

On Wednesday, Ghani, in a statement from the UAE, said that he left Afghanistan to "keep the

guns silent and save six million people in Kabul". "Leaving Kabul was the most difficult decision of my life, but believed it was the only

way to keep the guns silent and save Kabul and her 6 million citizens," the 72-year-old former president said.

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Why We Can't Turn the Corner on Covid

calendar indicating that the worst is past and we can be confident that going forward there will be fewer cases, fewer deaths, fewer hospitals stuffed to their dangerous limits.

The deadly surge currently raging in the Southern states may level off, but as the virus recedes in one part of the country, it may explode in another. Public health officials are already warily watching an uptick in the Dakotas, possibly linked to last month's Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. The governor of Idaho is summoning the National Guard to assist in rapidly filling hospitals.

It seems the narrow window to wipe the coronavirus completely off the face of the globe has slipped through our unvaccinated fingers.

But just because we aren't looking at the best-case scenario, doesn't mean that we're now in a worst-case scenario. Instead, according to U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, we're looking at something in the manageable middle.

"It is really important that we convey that success does not equal no cases," Murthy told POLITICO in an interview. "Success looks like very few people in the hospital and very few dying."

With all the worry about Delta, he noted, the gains we've made are sometimes forgotten or diminished. The vaccines do work, he stressed. Breakthrough

cases remain infrequent; few are life threatening.

"This is obviously a very difficult part of the pandemic," Murthy added. Delta is a genuine danger, but vaccinated people may overestimate their peril, just as unvaccinated people may underestimate it.



"This is the dichotomy developing," he said. "It's almost like living in two different Americas."

This uneven picture will pose political challenges. Joe Biden has staked much of his presidency on getting the virus under control. He's missed a few self-imposed deadlines but his administration has gotten tens of millions of Americans vaccinated, reopened schools and presided over a recovering economy. He's generally had a more consistent, science-based response than former President Donald Trump did - although lately he's angered some FDA officials by getting

ahead of them over decisions about booster shots. In his July 4 celebration of Covid Independence, Biden did warn of the risks ahead, even name-checking the Delta variant. But overall, his tone was exultant.

"This year, the Fourth of July is a day of special celebration, for we

are emerging from the darkness of years; a year of pandemic and isolation; a year of pain, fear and heartbreaking loss," he said in a speech on the White House's South Lawn.

Now, frustration with the disease's resurgence - coming at the same time as the messy withdrawal from Afghanistan - appears to be a factor softening Biden's previously stable approval ratings and adding to Democrats' worries about retaining their slim majority in the House and Senate after the 2022 congressional elections.

The months ahead will undoubtedly be a mix of advances

and setbacks. The political challenge for Biden and the public health system will be to communicate a sense of progress and momentum even without the benefit of a clear "turning point."

The halcyon days of late spring and early summer weren't a mirage. It really was better. Cases were down, deaths were down, hospitals were more or less back to normal. Even in communities with low vaccination rates, the virus was in retreat. As former White House coronavirus adviser Andy Slavitt put it, you could walk around anyplace in the country and just not be all that likely to encounter someone who could infect you.

Centers for Disease Control Director Rochelle Walensky was second guessed in some quarters for going too far, too fast when she told vaccinated people in May that they didn't have to wear masks. (Many of the unvaccinated had already scrapped them, if they had even worn them in the first place). Critics said she confused the public, and that she should have linked mask guidance more closely to local vaccination rates. But Walensky wanted to encourage vaccination - and going mask-free was seen as a lure for the hesitant.

Yet that moment in time, that glimpse of normality, was a tentative "so far, so good" truce with a mutating virus. Even as

things got better in the U.S., the variant now known as Delta was tearing through India, sending thick plumes of smoke from the funeral pyres. Soon it was here, and "so far, so good" wasn't so good anymore.

Epidemiologists now expect the coronavirus to be endemic, meaning it's here to stay. But even if the virus persists, it doesn't mean a perpetual pandemic. Over time, human immunity will keep growing through vaccination and natural infection; that's already started. Scientists will develop new treatments. Eventually, Covid can become one of many diseases that circulate, that sometimes even kill, without bringing the world to a deadly standstill.

Until then, the challenge is to find out how to co-exist with it, tenuously, as safely as we can. For the indefinite future, fighting the pandemic is more like a tug of war than an epidemiological ground war. We just have to keep tugging harder than the coronavirus does. Sometimes we'll tug our way into periods of relative normalcy, like last June and July. Sometimes it will tug us back into moments like right now - not hunkered down the way we were before vaccines but still making a constant, exhausting chain of risk assessments and adjustments as we try to reclaim as much of our lives, economic and emotional, as we can.

Let's be clear on why the US economy is weakening

The people who are refusing the vaccine and refusing to mask up aren't just killing themselves and infecting their neighbors. They're destroying the American economy.

Life in the United States had been looking up. Cases had plummeted in the summer as mass vaccinations began to take hold. President Joe Biden was being pressured to ship extra vaccine doses overseas so developing countries could keep their populations safe, too.

In the big cities hit hardest by Covid in 2020, people poured into the streets for a Hot Vax Summer. Restaurants and bars were packed. Unemployment

payments meant a lot of people had a little more cash in their pockets and weren't having to choose between their lives and their jobs. Many businesses were booming.

But now, summer is coming to an end -- and so is the hot economy. Republican governors, spurred on by business owners who say they can't find low-wage workers, slashed unemployment benefits. And even though this doesn't seem to be pushing more potential low-wage workers into the labor force, some Democrats seem poised to do the same.

The stubborn refusal of so many Americans to get vaccinated and wear masks is likely to continue doing damage in the weeks and months ahead, as kids go back

to school, the weather cools and more activities move inside. Cue still more economic devastation. Take schooling. There is little more fundamentally human than wanting to protect your child, but right-wing propaganda and conservative polarization seems to have undermined even that very basic impulse. Several Republican-run states have gone as far as to ban mask mandates in schools, even as the Delta variant rages. Meanwhile, hospitalizations -- of children in America are soaring. Between August 20 and 26, an average of 330 children were admitted to hospitals every day with Covid-19, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and



Prevention. Children now represent more than a quarter -- or 26.8% -- of weekly Covid-19 cases nationwide, according to data released Tuesday from the American Academy of Pediatrics. "Keep your kids from getting a new and potentially deadly disease" should be argument enough for masking in

schools -- or at the very least, not preventing schools from requiring masking in areas with high Covid rates. But it's been clear throughout this pandemic that far too many Americans don't buy the argument that you have an obligation not to infect and potentially kill your family members and neighbors.

San Francisco is even worse than we knew and Newsom needs to answer for it



spots and an abundance of marijuana shops. But it's perfectly obvious, between shouted offers and glancing quick exchanges that illicit deals are everywhere. Even along the soul-crushing lines of tents on what should be nice sidewalks, and among the long lost folk beneath their tarps. All of the street moves slow like it has no place to be. What was not plentiful on the corners of the Tenderloin were police. In my afternoon wander I saw exactly one squad car that seemed on its way somewhere else, and no cops on foot. In fact, beyond a lone man in a bright shirt picking up trash there seemed to be no semblance of city governance in this place at all. It felt left alone, to its own devices and its devices are pretty awful. Images are like these are part of the reason why the recall election to remove Gov. Gavin Newsom has become a

nationally important race. In cities across America, like Chicago, Philadelphia, and even New York the San Francisco scene right now feels like foreshadowing. What is happening in the Tenderloin is a far worse, more dramatic example, but urban dwellers in America feel the decline happening. If one is to be honest, the idea that a person who was recently mayor in this place, which Newsom was, should be in charge of even a carnival ride is absolutely amazing. But in progressive politics it makes perfect sense. Newsom, like de Blasio and so many other Democrats have an answer. They will find the evil Republican leprechaun hiding all the gold and start cutting checks. But that is obviously not going to work here, it's like running a line of credit to your buddy with a bad coke habit. There is no doubt that the

pandemic lockdowns played a role in the current state of affairs here, another thing attributable to Newsom, but this runs much deeper. This is an utter loss of control. It is a kind of anarchy that should disqualify any leader who lets it fester. On one corner I stood alone smoking a cigarette. A young woman in filthy sweat pants and shirt walked up to me, glanced around as if at several people, but not me, and said, "Does anybody have a cigarette?" I said, "Sure" and handed one to her as she made brief eye contact to say thank you and scurry away. It didn't feel generous. I felt guilty. These are the wages of the war on police, of refusing to maintain order. This is what comes from that permissiveness. And it is something that Gavin Newsom, both as former mayor and current governor should answer for.

Pak signature on Taliban appointments: IC-814 hijack plotter's son is defence minister of Afghanistan



off from Kathmandu and was headed to Delhi but was hijacked and taken to Kandahar in Afghanistan.

The hijacking operation was said to have been backed by Pakistan's military intelligence, ISI.

The appointment of Yaqoob and some others like Sirajuddin Haqqani, the interior minister, and Mullah Hassan Akhund, who are listed as terrorists by the US and United Nations respectively, shows the influence and stamp of the Haqqani network active in Afghanistan that is backed by Pakistan. Mullah Mohammad Yaqub, now the defence minister, was appointed to lead the Taliban Military Commission in May 2021. This was also one of the reasons for recent differences in the nature of the Taliban leadership when it comes to power. Both Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mullah Yaqoob wanted a government that has a military outlook where the leadership remains

with the military and not political elements supported by Baradar, who were part of the Doha group.

According to a UN report, Yaqoob harbours ambitions to become the group's leader.

While the Haqqani network has shared close ties with the Taliban, the group remains independent. According to the UN, within the Taliban structure, the Haqqani Network remains the Taliban's most combat-ready force under the leadership of Sirajuddin Haqqani. The Haqqani network has specialised in brutal attacks and also provided technical skills like putting together improvised explosive devices and rocket construction. If the Haqqani network enjoys power in the Taliban regime, Pakistan may use it to its advantage and also neutralise India's influence in the country. The Haqqani network has targeted the Indian embassy in Kabul earlier.

Growing inflation affecting sustained price growth in the US

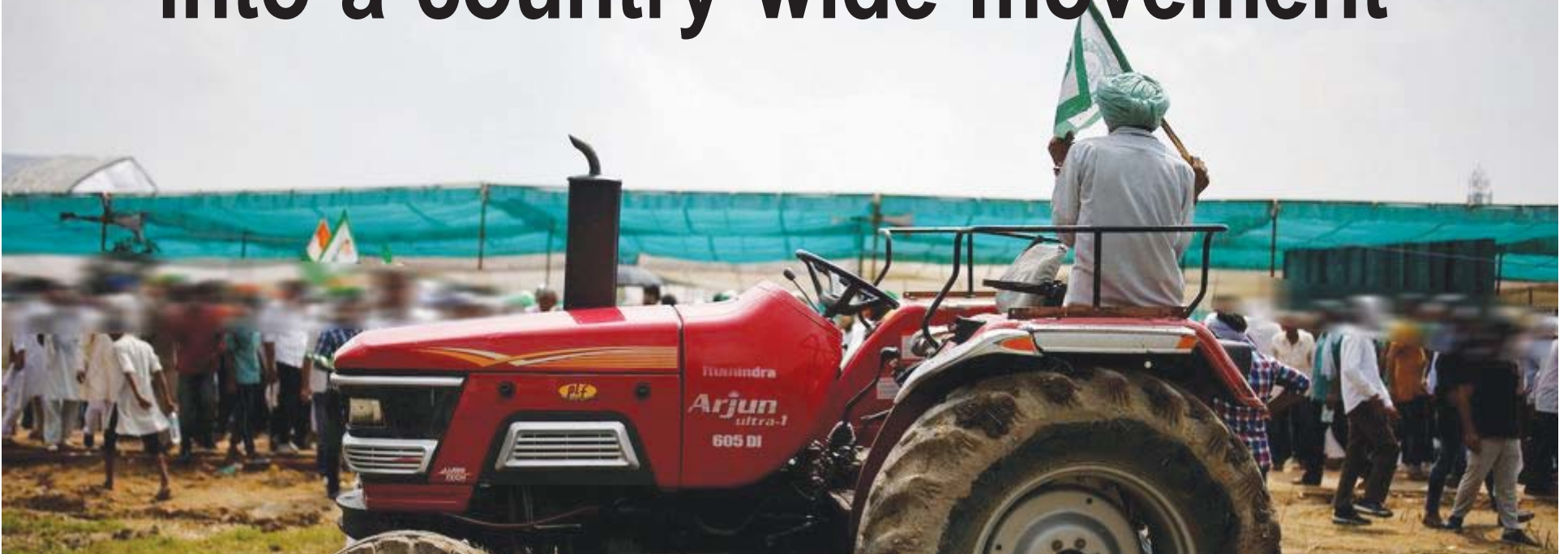
intimation of the predicted inflation, constant monitoring of daily-needed items along with aids when needed - these steps can be quite useful in battling inflation.

In a generic condition, those who have a pre-fixed earning cap can face troubles, while it is

somewhat better for the borrowers. Still, a mismanaged inflation can turn to hyperinflation, which can bring economic growth, stagnant. A carefully designed monetary policy with proper planning can efficiently tackle the inflation challenge.

By Susmita Ghosh

How Indian farmers' protest turned into a country-wide movement



A group of influential farmer leaders ratcheted up pressure on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to roll back three new farm laws by organising a mammoth rally in India's most populous state Uttar Pradesh last week.

After the successful mass meeting - the biggest rally yet in a months-long series of demonstrations to press for repeal of the laws - farm union leaders now plan to step up protests in Uttar Pradesh ahead of the state assembly election next year.

Protesting farmers say the laws, introduced in September last year, would erode a longstanding mechanism that ensures farmers a minimum guaranteed price for their rice and wheat, but the government says this will help growers get better prices.

Almost immediately after

parliament cleared the farm laws late last year, tens of thousands of farmers from grain-growing Punjab and Haryana states trudged towards the capital New Delhi. Stopped by authorities from entering India's capital, growers have camped on highways to New Delhi, in India's longest-running farmers' protest against the government.

Several rounds of talks between the government and farm union leaders failed to break the deadlock. Some government ministers and leaders from Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) initially dismissed farmers' protests as demonstrations by a handful of rice and wheat growers only from Punjab and Haryana.

As the days went on, farmers from other parts of the country galvanized into action by either joining the protest near New

Delhi or organising a series of demonstrations in different states.

Other than calling for the withdrawal of the laws, farm union leaders put forth another demand - a law that would force the government to buy every farm produce at a state-set guaranteed price. The new demand gained traction among farmers from across the country, beyond Punjab and Haryana - known as India's grain belt.

WHY DO FARMERS WANT TO INTENSIFY THEIR MOVEMENT IN UTTAR PRADESH?

After farmers' protests became more broad-based, union leaders turned their gaze to Uttar Pradesh, home to 240 million people.

Modi's BJP came to power in Uttar Pradesh in 2017, and the state assembly election is due by early next year.

Farm union leaders plan to paint

the BJP as an anti-farmer party ahead of the state assembly election, especially in western Uttar Pradesh, where agriculture is a mainstay.

According to protesters, farmer leaders will go to every city and town in Uttar Pradesh to convey that Modi's government has overlooked growers' interests. The election in Uttar Pradesh, which sends 80 lawmakers, or more than any other state, to parliament in New Delhi, is seen as a barometer of the popularity of the federal government.

While the BJP is expected to pull out all the stops to hold on to the state, farmer groups will try to hit the ruling party where it hurts most.

HAVE HINDU AND MUSLIM FARMERS OF UTTAR PRADESH COME TOGETHER TO OPPOSE FARM LAWS?

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait, a former Modi ally from Uttar

Pradesh, has turned the protest from Punjab and Haryana into a broader movement across the politically critical heartland.

In western Uttar Pradesh, which sends 130 lawmakers to the state assembly, the upper caste landlords from the Jat community and the farmhands who typically come from the lower strands of the rigid Hindu social hierarchy have joined hands to oppose the farm laws. Even more remarkable, Hindu and Muslim farmers have come together to fight the agricultural laws in western Uttar Pradesh - pockmarked by communal clashes in late 2013, just ahead of the 2014 general election swept by the BJP.

Tikait, 51, and his followers say the communal divide helped the BJP, and farmers' unity will hurt the ruling party.

The BJP had denied fanning communal tension.





Despite pandemic, Modi's farmer problem hasn't gone away

Marking the return of a months-long movement that has posed a unique challenge to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, farmers gathered in the predominantly agricultural state of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday to protest controversial agricultural laws they say could ruin their livelihood.

District official Amit Singh told CNN about 150,000 people attended the rally, in the city of Muzaffarnagar. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) farmers' group said about 1 million protesters were present.

Rakesh Tikait, a prominent farmer's leader, told protesters that Sunday's demonstration will reignite the movement, which through December saw tens of thousands of people camp around the outskirts of India's capital New Delhi, blocking major roads and paralyzing traffic. The protests had quietened down in April, when India was devastated by a second wave of coronavirus infections.

"When this protest succeeds, when the farmers and the youth of India win, then only will we leave," Tikait said.

Farmer leaders are now calling for a nationwide strike on September 27, although pleas for similar strikes in the past

have met with limited success. Challenges to Modi's government

In India, farming is a central political issue, and the protests pose a rare threat to Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Farmers are the biggest voting bloc in the country, and the agricultural sector sustains about 58% of India's 1.3 billion citizens. Angering farmers could see Modi lose a significant chunk of votes at the next general election in 2024.

For almost nine months, Indian farmers have been fighting three new laws, which they say will leave them open to exploitation by large corporations and destroy their livelihoods. The laws, which were passed last September, loosened rules around the sale and pricing of produce that have protected farmers from an unregulated free market for decades.

Under the previous laws, farmers had to sell their goods at auction at their state's Agricultural Produce Market Committee, where they were guaranteed to receive at least the government-agreed minimum price. There were restrictions on who could buy, and prices were capped for essential commodities.

The new laws dismantled this structure, instead allowing

farmers to sell their goods to anyone for any price. The government says the reforms are needed to modernize the country's agricultural industry, but many farmers argue it will allow large corporations to drive prices down.

Modi has failed to quell the demonstrations, and negotiations between his government and the farmer's unions have been unsuccessful.

In mid-January, India's Supreme Court temporarily suspended the laws, in the hopes the farmers might "come to the negotiating table with

confidence and good faith."

But the protests continued, with some farmers vowing not to leave until the laws are fully repealed.

Government criticism

Sunday's rally in Muzaffarnagar is of particular importance, as the state of Uttar Pradesh -- India's most populous -- will hold a state assembly election early next year.

SKM said the rally was a "warning" to the state government. "If the government does not repeal all three agricultural laws and does not give legal guarantee for the purchase of agricultural

products, then the movement will be intensified," the group said in a statement.

In February, authorities blocked internet access in several districts bordering New Delhi after violent skirmishes erupted between police and farmers at a protest site.

India's Ministry of Home Affairs said the move was "in the interest of maintaining public safety and averting a public emergency." However, protesters condemned the shutdown, with one farmer's union leader, Darshan Pal, calling the move "undemocratic."



Farmer Protest In UP, Punjab, Not Haryana Since No Polls There: Minister

Farmers Protest: The farmers should make sure that opposition parties do not use them for their own political agenda, said Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan.

Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan on Tuesday said that the farmers' protests against central agriculture were turning political.

"The entire issue is turning political. Farmers will protest against BJP in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. But they will not protest in Haryana since there are no elections set to take place there. Be it for the rally that happened yesterday or other ones in future, parties like Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) are providing resources for it," he said.

Farmers should make sure that opposition parties do not use them for their own political

agenda, Mr Balyan added.

On talks between farmers and government, Mr Balyan said, "We want the talks between farmers and government to happen and the real issues of farmers to be discussed. Farmers should not return home empty-handed. Instead of being adamant about repealing of the laws, they should try getting the laws amended in the ways they desire."

Mr Balyan said that the fate of the BJP was in hands of the public.

"Our fate is in the hands of the public. People will eventually understand what is going on when they will see the flags of

other parties at protests," he said.

Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls are scheduled to take place early next year.

A 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' was held in Muzzafarnagar on Sunday against the three farm laws by the Centre. It declared that they will campaign against the BJP in the upcoming assembly elections. The Mahapanchayat witnessed participation from various political parties.

Farmers have been protesting on the different borders of the national capital since November 26 last year against the three newly enacted farm



laws: Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services

Act 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Farmer leaders and the Centre have held several rounds of talks but the impasse remains.

Farmer protests enter 3rd day in India's Haryana state



The ongoing farmers' protests outside the main government office in the northern Indian state of Haryana entered the third day on Thursday, officials said.

The protesting farmers are on a sit-in protest outside the mini-secretariat (government building housing major offices) in Haryana's Karnal district, demanding action against a government official who ordered the baton charging against farmers on Aug. 28 in Haryana. The video of the official ordering police officers to "smash heads

of farmers" went viral on the social media.

The official has been removed from the post as part of a reshuffle but farmers are demanding that a murder case be filed against him.

The farmers have pitched tents and laid out mats indicating they are going to stay.

"We are going to stay here until our demands are met," said a protester. "It is up to the government to decide whether they want another front to be opened up against them here in Haryana."

Hundreds of policemen and paramilitary forces are stationed in Karnal.

Several meetings between local government officials and farmer leaders have not yielded any results.

Meanwhile, as the standoff intensified, Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij said Thursday that the government will investigate "the entire Karnal episode."

"We can't hang anyone based on someone's allegations. There aren't separate penal codes for nation and farmers,"

Vij told the media.

"Punishments are handed over after fully establishing one's guilt and for finding one's guilt, it is necessary to initiate a probe. We are ready to order a neutral investigation but we will not only investigate the sub-divisional magistrate, instead whole Karnal episode will be probed. If farmers or their leaders are found guilty, we will also take against them."

The sit-in at Karnal came on Tuesday after farmers had gathered for a mahapanchayat (congregation of major village

councils) in the district.

On Tuesday evening the farmers defied restrictions and climbed barricades to reach the mini-secretariat after talks with local government officials failed.

The gathering in Karnal came days after a massive rally was staged in adjacent Uttar Pradesh which witnessed a huge attendance of farmers.

Thousands of farmers have been on strike since Nov. 26 last year, demanding the repeal of three controversial farm laws that they said will badly affect farmers. Though the federal government has been strongly defending the laws, farmers fear the new laws will weaken their position and make them dependent on corporates.

The protesting farmers are camping on the borders of the national capital New Delhi demanding revocation of the three laws.

The farmers have held 11 rounds of talks with the federal government. However, the negotiations remained inconclusive and no breakthrough was achieved. Both the federal government and the protesting farmers are adamant on their respective positions.



Hundreds of thousands of Indian farmers protest Modi agricultural laws

Hundreds of thousands of farmers gathered in India's most populous state Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, the biggest rally yet in a months-long series of demonstrations to press Narendra Modi's government to repeal three new agricultural laws. More than 500,000 farmers attended the rally in the city of Muzaffarnagar, according to local police.

The demonstration in Uttar

Pradesh, a predominantly agricultural state that's home to 240 million people, will breathe fresh life into the protest movement, said Rakesh Tikait, a prominent farmers' leader.

"We'll intensify our protest by going to every single city and town of Uttar Pradesh to convey the message that Modi's government is anti-farmer," he added.

Over the past eight months, tens

of thousands of farmers have camped on major highways to the capital, New Delhi to oppose the laws, in India's longest-running farmers' protest against the government.

The measures, introduced last September, allow farmers to directly sell their produce, outside government-regulated wholesale markets, to big buyers. The government says this will unshackle farmers and

help them get better prices.

Farmers, however, say the legislation will hurt their livelihood and leave them with scant bargaining power against big private retailers and food processors.

Farming is a vast sector that sustains almost half of India's more than 1.3 billion people, and accounts for about 15% of the country's \$2.7 trillion economy. Balbir Singh Rajewal, another

farmers' leader, said Sunday's rally was a warning for Prime Minister Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party, which next year will contest a state assembly election in Uttar Pradesh, often seen as a barometer of the popularity of the federal government.

"Our message is very clear - either repeal the laws or face defeat in the state election," he added.

Farmers' protest: BJP MP says government will not repeal farm laws

Amid the ongoing protests by farmers against the Centre's farm laws, BJP MP Virendra Singh Mast said the government will not withdraw the three legislations.

Amid the ongoing protests by farmers against the Centre's farm laws, BJP MP Virendra Singh Mast said the government will not withdraw the three legislations.

The laws were not made to be withdrawn later, the MP from Uttar Pradesh's Ballia said on Tuesday.

Thousands of farmers from across the country, particularly Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at Delhi borders, including Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur, since

November last year to demand the repeal of the three farm laws and a new law to guarantee minimum support price (MSP) for their crops.

"The government will not withdraw the new farm laws. They were not made to be withdrawn later," Mast said.

"If a law passed in Parliament is withdrawn due to protests on roads, what will be its (Parliament's) standing?" he asked.

Mast, however, said he will welcome suggestions in the

interest of farmers and agriculture.

Farmers claim that the farm laws -- the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 -- will do away with the MSP, leaving them at the mercy of big corporations.

The government maintains that

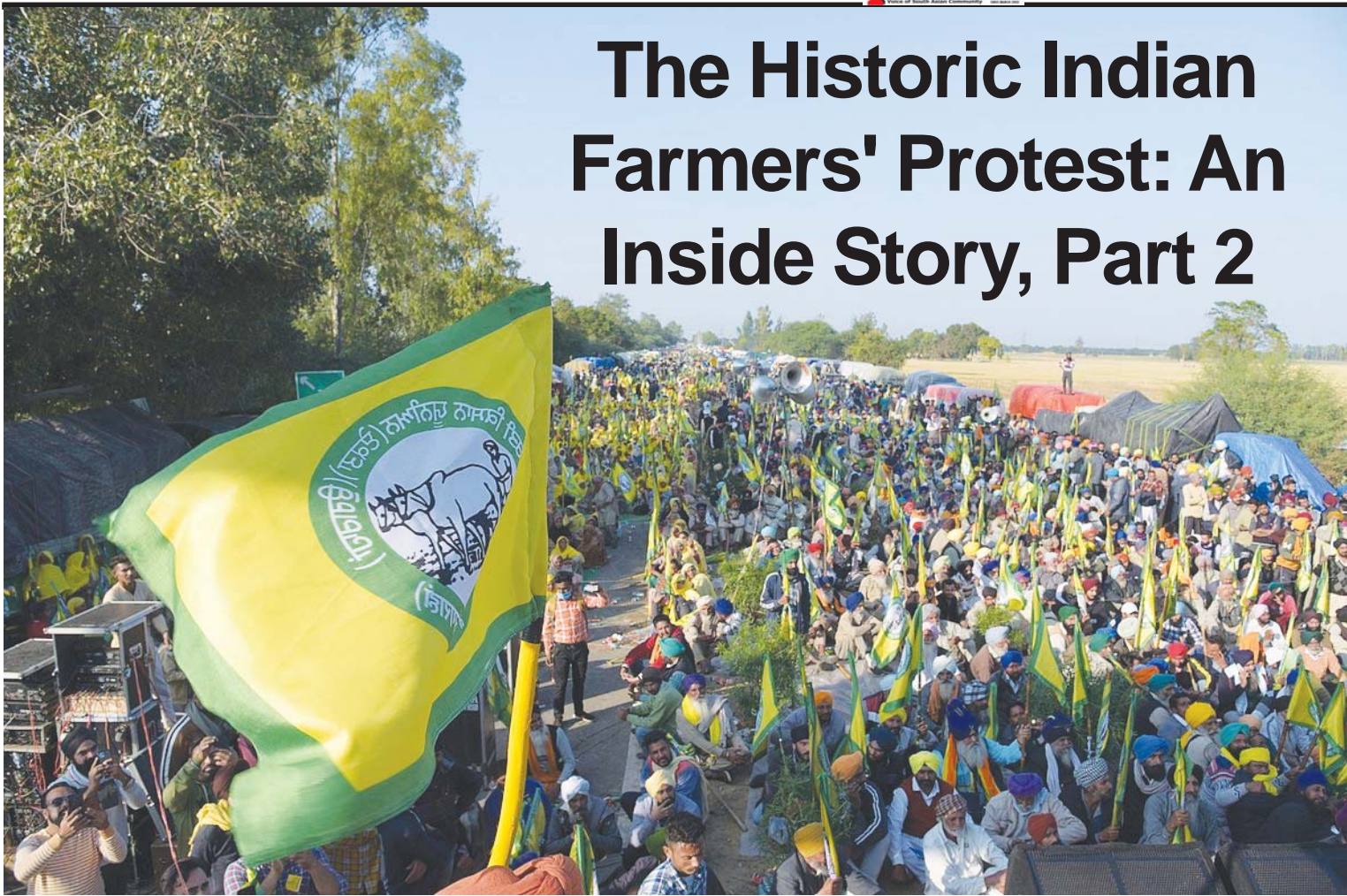
these laws are pro-farmer.

Over 10 rounds of talks between the government and farmer

leaders have failed to break the deadlock between the two sides.



The Historic Indian Farmers' Protest: An Inside Story, Part 2



With the massive numbers of people engaged in a non-violent protest against the Three Farm Laws by the Modi Government, Dr. Ashish Mittal, a key prime mover in the Kisan Movement explains further. He touched on the unions involved, the demands as well as the proposals, on the government's counter response and propaganda, if the farmers could have a role in the legislature to protect their needs, and the kind of support they have been getting.

The Farmers' Protest Movement It is made up of 33 unions in Punjab, about 49 in Haryana, and several in the other states. It is difficult to count because between being small and big, having an expanse of work from a few districts, to those having volunteer setups, it is huge. India is a huge country, multilingual, multicultural. Very difficult to tell figures but I can tell you that we are sitting at the Tikri border, with trolleys and tents spread over 22 square kilometers. At the Singhu border, we are spread over about two kilometers wide to about nine kilometers. So that is also about 18 square kilometers. In Gazipur, we are in huge numbers now, though not as many, stretched around a highway of about two kilometers.

On the 26th of January, 400,000 tractors and 1.5 million new people came specially to Delhi borders for the Republic day parade from areas within 300 kilometers of Delhi, but 80% of

that massive number could not enter. It was a phenomenal gathering in any case. We were on all the borders, but we could not see for how long the tractors and people coming for that program were lined-up. Huge power. Very big.

Demands and Proposals of the Farmers' Protest Movement

Obviously, there is a big difference between the government's claims and the real thing that is happening. Huge difference. These farm bills are not useful for to the farmers at all. Indian agriculture has been in severe crisis, and these laws are going to enhance the farmers' crisis. These laws have to be repealed and the issues re-addressed through collective participation. That is our proposal.

Repeal these farm laws and then form a committee to identify the issues facing Indian agriculture, and have a collective manner of finding solutions to. A collective meeting of minds. Yes.

One key issue is input prices. In India, input prices are very high and are also heavily taxed. Diesel is a very important resource and two-thirds of the price is government tax. It is not a subsidy but a negative subsidy, similar for all other inputs. Input prices have to be reduced, which will make agriculture viable and creative. Creative because of the creative skills of Indian people. It is like the kind of varieties of mangoes that we grow; it is mind blowing. Have you tasted or seen

the vast variety of mangoes, the kinds of hybrids our farmers create? It is absolutely mind blowing and has such delicious flavors! So it is for this reason that these companies are coming here. If you reduce the input prices, you will get so many agricultural products. You need to ensure that the farmers earn out of the commercial sale of these products. That has to be a real issue. If that happens, I think India will become one of the richest countries. All our population problems, all our poverty problems, our nutritional problems will have been solved. Lower the input prices so that farmers can be more creative in their output.

Aside from inputs, place the marketing and processing structures of the crops needs to be under the control of farmers so that they earn from it. Not the agro processed products being sold by the companies who are earning huge profits from them. This has to be addressed. There are several other issues: education that the society needs to have, farm education, healthcare, healthcare infrastructure, civic infrastructure that is vastly lacking. The terrain has to be settled which needs a lot of engineering skills.

I have not studied many other countries, but India is a country which has a lot of rain-fed agriculture that can serve the requirements for the entire year. But the terrain needs local storage tanks. This is a full

engineering task to actually implement it and solve irrigation problems. You don't need big dams. Big dams are a disaster. In the long run, the agro economy, the environment, ecology, biodiversity, all get destroyed. There are a lot of questions to answer in order to creatively use the Indian terrain for the development of agriculture and of its people. A huge task. It needs the meeting of minds and some gray matter exercises, collectively.

Government's Counter Propaganda

The short appeal

Well, these three laws are going to change the agricultural pattern in the country to the detriment of Indian farmers and will completely erode village life. And they are going to establish control of the corporate world and the multinational corporations, on all agricultural processes, they are going to determine and dictate what crops need to be grown, they are going to be controlling the inputs supplies, diesel, petrol, electricity, seeds, fertilizers, machinery, they are going to be selling all agricultural services in terms of spraying, in terms of irrigation, in terms of harvesting, and the farmer is going to be forced to buy them and ultimately they are going to be purchasing the crop grown as per their requirement. By bringing down the actual price paid to the farmer, because they are going to assay it before they purchase, the quality of the crop and they will

determine the ultimate price paid as per the results of their assay. They are going to be controlling the agricultural markets. In Indian agricultural markets, big traders have so far been banned, because big traders tend to lower the price by exercising market monopoly and they lower the price by involving the farmers in debts and as per the debt they squeeze down the price. But now this whole business of purchase of crops is going to be opened up through these private mandis (markets), which are going to determine the price of all the crops all over the country through the internet, through the e-trading platforms.

And the country is going to suffer from what is now going to be redefined as essential commodities. India had an act called the Essential Commodities Act, which said that all essential commodities for life, which included food, water, electricity, medicines, petrol, diesel, and all these things which would have been notified by the government, they cannot be stocked beyond notified limits, they cannot be stored and black marketed. The government has passed an amendment to this act and it says that food will no longer be considered as an essential commodity! And they have said that the Act will not come into play unless the prices of the food items, like the dry foods - cereals, pulses and oilseeds, do not rise 50% over their prices in the previous year. That means, every year the price can be more than 1.5 times; if you are selling wheat at 20 rupees a kilo, the next year it can be 30 rupees a kilo, and the year after that 45 rupees a kilo and year after that 67 rupees a kilo and year after that 100 rupees a kilo. So, this is the kind of price escalation that this law is now going to allow. And for vegetables and fruits, it is going to be two times the price prevailing in the previous year. So, essentially, this whole food market is being opened up for the multinational corporations and the figures, as I have, say that India's processed food market is 300,000 million rupees, and they expect it to grow within a year or two to 2,100,000 million rupees. This is the kind of magnitude of growth which the corporate are expecting from these laws. So, this is the essential reason why the farmers are up in protest against these laws, because they feel that they will lose their land.



Petrol, Diesel prices

Petrol rates cut by 15 paise; diesel becomes cheaper

The prices of petrol and diesel have been lowered by 15 paise per litre by the state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) across the country on Sunday. Check the latest city-wise rates here.

The prices of petrol and diesel have changed marginally on September 5, 2021, after remaining unaltered yesterday. The state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) have kept fuel rates steady in the past few days even after international crude oil prices remain weak.

Today, petrol prices have been slashed by 13 to 15 paise per litre and diesel rates have also decreased by almost 15 paise. However, even after a slight cut in prices, petrol and diesel are still retailing at high levels across India. In New Delhi, petrol has already crossed the three-figure mark and is retailing at Rs 101.19 per litre. Diesel prices stood at Rs. 88.62 per litre in the national capital. Similarly, petrol costs Rs. 107.26 per litre in Mumbai and over 101 in Kolkata. Notably, there are several Indian cities where the price of petrol still remains above Rs 100 per litre.

Meanwhile, diesel costs Rs 91.71 per litre in Kolkata and over Rs 93 per litre in Chennai.

Fuel rates were static on September 4

The fuel rates remained steady for the third consecutive day

across the country on September 4, 2021. The petrol prices remained constant at Rs.101.34 in the national capital yesterday. Similarly, diesel was sold at a steady price of Rs. 96.33 per litre in Mumbai.

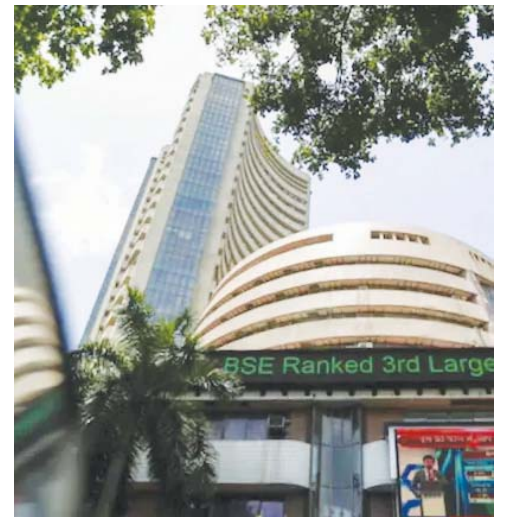
However, the fuel rates fluctuated a lot between May 4 and July 17 and the price of petrol even went up by Rs 11.52 per litre during that time period. Since July 18, the prices of petrol and diesel have remained constant and witnessed a slight decline thereafter.

Petrol and diesel prices in major Indian cities:

CITY	PETROL (PER LITRE)	DIESEL (PER LITRE)
NEW DELHI	Rs.101.19	Rs. 88.62
MUMBAI	Rs.107.26	Rs. 96.19
CHENNAI	Rs.99.12	Rs. 93.40
KOLKATA	Rs.101.62	Rs. 91.71
BENGALURU	Rs.104.70	Rs.94.04
PATNA	Rs.104.12	Rs. 94.86
BHOPAL	Rs.109.91	Rs. 97.68

In India, petrol and diesel prices depend on various factors like demand for fuel, valuation of INR against USD, consumption ratio of refineries and more. The fuel prices are revised by oil marketing companies such as Bharat Petroleum, Indian Oil, and Hindustan Petroleum based on international prices as well.

Sensex hits all-time highs on Reliance, Asian markets boost



Boosted by heavyweight Reliance Industries and firmer Asian markets, BSE Sensex recorded a lifetime high on Monday while NSE Nifty also registered a record high.

Indian shares hit record highs on Monday, boosted by heavyweight Reliance Industries and firmer Asian markets after a weak US jobs report raised hopes that the Federal Reserve could continue its massive economic support for a longer period.

The blue-chip NSE Nifty 50 index was up 0.44 per cent at 17,399.75 by 0346 GMT and the benchmark S&P BSE Sensex climbed 0.46 per cent to 58,394.95. Both the indexes rose more than 3.50 per cent in their second straight week of gains last week.

Oil-to-telecoms conglomerate Reliance Industries Ltd and Hindalco Industries Ltd were among the top performers on the Nifty 50, gaining 2.4 per cent and 1.8 per cent, respectively.

In the broader Asian market, shares edged higher as a disappointing U.S. payrolls report promised to keep policy there loose for longer, but also clouded the outlook for global growth and inflation.

Gold and Silver prices: Yellow metal records marginal dip; silver trades higher on MCX



The rates for gold and silver have changed on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). Witnessing the downfall of Rs 75 or 0.16 per cent, gold futures, maturing on October 5, 2021, are trading at Rs 47,433 per 10 grams on September 6, 2021.

Meanwhile, silver futures, maturing on December 3, 2021, stand at Rs 65,377 per kg on the MCX. Silver has

recorded a marginal hike of Rs 66 or 0.10 per cent. Last Friday, both metals were trading on the higher side. While gold stood at Rs 47,095 per 10 grams on the MCX on September 3, 2021, silver was at Rs 63,389 per kg, recording a jump of Rs 79 or 0.12 per cent.

Gold and Silver prices on international market:

As per Reuters, gold prices held steady near a 2-1/2-month peak on Monday after disappointing U.S. jobs data raised hopes the Federal Reserve could wait a bit longer to pare stimulus measures, bolstering bullion's appeal as an inflation hedge.

Meanwhile, spot gold was steady at \$1,826.82 per ounce as of 0333 GMT. In the last session, prices hit their highest since June 16 at \$1,833.80.

According to the report, U.S. gold futures eased 0.2 per cent to \$1,829.50.

Gold is being supported by the notion that the Fed will

be slower to taper than previously thought, and a weak U.S. dollar, said IG Market analyst Kyle Rodda. Some investors view gold as a hedge against inflation that may follow stimulus measures, while lower interest rates reduce the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding bullion.

The metal report revealed that silver had risen 0.1 per cent to \$24.72 per ounce. Prices rose 3.4 per cent in the previous session, its biggest one-day percentage gain since early May.

Gold and Silver prices in India:

CITY	GOLD (per 10 grams, 22 carats)	SILVER (per kg)
New Delhi	Rs 46,670	Rs 65,300
Kolkata	Rs 47,020	Rs 65,300
Chennai	Rs 44,980	Rs 69,600
Mumbai	Rs 46,420	Rs 65,300



Taliban special forces bring abrupt end to women's protest in Kabul

Taliban special forces in camouflage fired their weapons into the air on Saturday, bringing an abrupt and frightening end to the latest protest march in Kabul by women demanding equal rights from the new rulers of Afghanistan.

Taliban special forces in camouflage fired their weapons into the air on Saturday, bringing an abrupt and frightening end to the latest protest march in the capital by Afghan women demanding equal rights from the new rulers.

Also on Saturday, the chief of Pakistan's powerful intelligence agency, which has an outsized influence on the Taliban, made a surprise visit to Kabul.

Taliban fighters quickly captured most of Afghanistan last month and celebrated the departure of the last US forces after 20 years of war. The insurgent group must now govern a war-ravaged country that is heavily reliant on international aid.

'HERE TO GAIN HUMAN RIGHTS'

The women's march - the second in as many days in Kabul - began peacefully. Demonstrators laid a wreath outside Afghanistan's Defense Ministry to honor Afghan soldiers who died fighting the Taliban before marching on to the presidential palace.

"We are here to gain human rights in Afghanistan," said 20-year-old protester Maryam Naiby. "I love my country. I will always be here." As the protesters' shouts grew louder, several Taliban officials waded into the crowd to ask what they wanted to say.

Flanked by fellow demonstrators, Sudaba Kabiri, a 24-year-old university student, told her Taliban

interlocutor that Islam's Prophet gave women rights and they wanted theirs. The Taliban official promised women would be given their rights but the women, all in their early 20s, were skeptical. AERIAL GUNFIRE, TEAR GAS As the demonstrators reached the presidential palace, a dozen Taliban special forces ran into the crowd, firing in the air and sending demonstrators fleeing. Kabiri, who spoke to The Associated Press, said they also fired tear gas.

The Taliban have promised an inclusive government and a more moderate form of Islamic rule than when they last ruled the country from 1996 to 2001. But many Afghans, especially women, are deeply skeptical and fear a roll back of rights gained over the last two decades.

PAKISTAN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF MAKES A VISIT

For much of the past two weeks, Taliban officials have been holding meetings among themselves, amid reports of differences among them emerging. Early on Saturday, neighboring Pakistan's powerful intelligence chief Gen. Faiez Hameed made a surprise visit to Kabul. It wasn't immediately clear what he had to say to the Taliban leadership but the Pakistani intelligence service has a strong influence on the Taliban.

The Taliban leadership had its headquarters in Pakistan and

were often said to be in direct contact with the powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency. Although Pakistan routinely denied providing the Taliban military aid, the accusation was often made by the Afghan government and Washington.

Faiez' visit comes as the world waits to see what kind of government the Taliban will eventually announce, seeking one that is inclusive and ensures protection of women's rights and the country's minorities.

FORMATION OF NEW GOVT

The Taliban have promised a broad-based government and have held talks with former president Hamid Karzai and the former government's negotiation chief Abdullah Abdullah. But the makeup of the new government is uncertain and it was unclear whether hard-line ideologues among the Taliban will win the day - and whether the rollbacks feared by the demonstrating women will occur.

TALIBAN WHITEWASH MURALS

Taliban members whitewashed murals Saturday that promoted health care, warned of the dangers of HIV and even paid homage to some of Afghanistan's iconic foreign contributors, like anthropologist Nancy Dupree, who single-handedly chronicled Afghanistan's rich cultural legacy. It was a worrying sign of attempts

to erase reminders of the past 20 years.

The murals were replaced with slogans congratulating Afghans on their victory.

A Taliban cultural commission spokesman, Ahmadullah Muttaqi, tweeted that the murals were painted over "because they are against our values. They were spoiling the minds of the mujahedeen and instead we wrote slogans that will be useful to everyone."

'IT IS A WOMAN'S COUNTRY TOO'

Meanwhile, the young women demonstrators said they have had to defy worried families to press ahead with their protests, even sneaking out of their homes to take their demands for equal rights to the new rulers.

Farhat Popalzai, another 24-year-old university student, said she wanted to be the voice of Afghanistan's voiceless women, those too afraid to come out on the street.

"I am the voice of the women who are unable to speak," she said. "They think this is a man's country but it is not, it is a woman's country too."

Popalzai and her fellow demonstrators are too young to remember the Taliban rule that ended in 2001 with the US-led invasion. The say their fear is based on the stories they have heard of women not being allowed to go to school and work.

I Know Firsthand How Ugly a Wartime Evacuation Really Is



Desperate crowds scrambling after planes on the verge of liftoff; sobbing mothers handing their babies over fences to soldiers; and finally, a gruesome terrorist attack that killed nearly 200 people, including 13 U.S. service members. It's no surprise that the public thinks President Joe Biden botched the U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan, even as polling shows Americans still largely approve of the decision to withdraw.

But from my own personal experience running an evacuation in a war zone, I can attest that it was never going to look good. Ultimately, there was little the U.S. government or military could have done in recent weeks to significantly change the outcome on the ground. These evacuations are always ugly. There is no graceful way to flee a country at war. I saw this firsthand in December 2013 in Juba, South Sudan. As the U.S. Embassy's sole consular officer, I led a small interagency team to run evacuation operations at the airport after civil war erupted and violence consumed the capital city and much of the countryside.

The scale was far smaller than what our government just undertook in Kabul. Take the numbers from Afghanistan and knock off two zeroes, and you can approximate the scale in South Sudan. While the U.S. government evacuated about 120,000 people from Kabul, we evacuated around 1,200 from Juba. Even at this smaller scale though, it was an urgent operation, and about a half dozen of us ran 19 evacuation flights in 19 days during South Sudan's civil war.

The risk profile in Juba differed significantly from Kabul too, but many realities on the ground were similar, and the U.S. government could do little in either case to change them much.

Beware Of Lies

Exclusion of the 1921 rebellion from our freedom struggle's official history is a grave injustice to history and in line with the British view

Variamkunnath Haji, the most popular leader of the rebellion, was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Shaukat Ali. He attended the meeting organised in connection with Gandhi's first visit to Kerala in 1920. Moidu Maulavi, a Gandhian and another stalwart of the national movement in Malabar, recalls his first meeting with the khadi-clad Haji in his memoirs. Ahead of the Congress-Khilafat meetings, in February 1921, the district magistrate issued an order prohibiting certain leaders from addressing the public in Eranadu taluk. Haji's name was first on the list. These accounts testify that the rebellion was motivated by strong anti-British sentiments. This is amply supported by British documents of the time. The rebellion was as much against landlords as it was against the colonial power. Malabar, unlike Cochin and Travancore, was directly under British rule.

Give Credit To 1921 Malabar Revolt Against British

As the maxim goes, "history is written by the victors". The British won the battle of Malabar, crushing the rebellion of 1921. They were the victors. They wrote away the history of that rebellion as a mere Mappila (Muslim) mutiny. They had similarly played down the people's struggle of 1857 as a mere sepoy mutiny. A century later, the new victors have officially endorsed the British version of the 1921 Malabar rebellion. The ICHR's proposal to remove the names of the 1921 martyrs from the official list of freedom fighters is in line with the British interpretation of the

rebellion. The ICHR too has defined it as a mutiny of Muslims alone and not connected to the freedom struggle. This move amounts to distortion of the history of our freedom movement. This was a rebellion that struck against the colonial power and its loyal feudal allies. Though colonial historians later cleverly fabricated the theory of Mappila revolt in consonance with their divide-and-rule policy, their own reports and historical documents point to the contrary. The rebels were booked for waging war against the British government and their monarch. Hundreds were massacred, thousands were

mercilessly tortured, deported to the Andamans and imprisoned for life. This ruthless suppression was unleashed as the authorities apprehended a grave challenge to their colonial power, which could replicate the 1857 mutiny. Many prominent leaders of the national movement in Kerala saw the rebellion as an armed conflict with the British. K. Madhavan Nair, a leader of the freedom struggle in Malabar and eyewitness to the rebellion, assessed it as "a great conflict between the British government and the Indians since the 1857 mutiny". Another leader who was subjected to torture and life

imprisonment for involvement in the rebellion, M.B. Namboothiripad, an upper-caste Hindu, also rated the 1921 revolt as next only to the 1857 mutiny in our freedom struggle's history. He categorically rubbished the theory of communal hatred as the primary cause of the rebellion, asserting that "the original cause of the mutiny is political oppression and police atrocity". The fact that many other Hindu leaders were also arrested, framed and convicted contradicts the narrative of Muslim outrage against Hindus. It is worth noting that many Muslims had no role in it.

Unidentified military planes target Taliban positions in Panjshir valley: Reports

A day after the Taliban claimed complete victory over Panjshir province in Afghanistan, unidentified military planes targeted the positions of the militant group in the valley, according to local news reports. A day after the Taliban claimed victory over the rebel Panjshir province in Afghanistan, unidentified military planes targeted the positions of the militant group in the valley, according to local news reports. On Monday, the Taliban claimed that Panjshir province, the last



stronghold of anti-Taliban resistance forces in Afghanistan, was "completely conquered". Videos of gun-wielding Taliban fighters hoisting flag at the Panjshir Governor's office went viral on Twitter. However, Ahmad Massoud, the leader of the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF), dismissed the Taliban's claim of having conquered Panjshir. He claimed that the resistance forces fighting the Taliban were "invincible" and he would fight till his "last drop of blood".



What I Wish the U.S. Had Done About Putin Years Ago - And What Biden Should Do Now



Fifteen years ago, I was working in the State Department when a prominent Russian journalist and a high-profile critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin were brutally murdered within a few weeks of each other, almost certainly by elements of the Russian security services. Our failure (my own included) to respond meaningfully to those murders is one of my biggest regrets.

Few realized in 2006 that the deaths of Anna Politkovskaya and Alexander Litvinenko were a canary in the coalmine for how Putin would deal with critics and perceived enemies. Of course, the former KGB officer had overseen a brutal invasion of Chechnya that claimed thousands of lives. But the murder of Litvinenko in particular, which took place in the U.K., showed Putin's readiness to

wipe out perceived threats even if located in other countries.

The situation has deteriorated since, with Putin overseeing the worst crackdown on Russia's opposition, media and civil society since the Soviet era, including the assassination of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov in 2015 and the poisoning of Alexei Navalny in 2020. Despite a stagnant economy and the coronavirus pandemic, Putin maintains a firm grip on power, at least for now, by eliminating domestic opposition, removing term limits through rigged constitutional changes and propping up like-minded leaders in the region (Belarus' dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, for example) and beyond (Syria, Cuba, Venezuela).

The United States, with rare exceptions, has done little about this, giving Putin the impression

that he can get away with hunting down enemies inside Russia and overseas while seemingly turning a blind eye to cyberattacks conducted by Russian-based hackers. In June and again in July, President Joe Biden warned Putin of consequences for ransomware attacks emanating from Russia. "We expect him to act," Biden told reporters. Asked directly whether Russia would face consequences, Biden answered "yes."

It is possible the administration has retaliated covertly. But the lack of public response - which seems to encourage Putin to do nothing to stop the attacks - continues the unfortunate mistakes of the past three administrations.

Indeed, the U.S.-Russian relationship over the past 15 years is littered with examples of American failure to hold Putin accountable and impose penalties that would induce him to alter his behavior. This is in part because U.S. policymakers have consistently failed to see Putin as a true threat who will only stop when faced with serious pushback. It also reflects a desire across administrations to minimize the risk of escalation with Russia. Finally, America's cautious posture is rooted in concern about jeopardizing prospects for cooperation in other areas, like arms control,

Afghanistan, Iran and climate change.

But the reality is that we are likely to get very little cooperation from the Putin regime. Instead, "playing nice" with Putin plays right into his playbook. While Biden may seek "predictability and stability" in the U.S.-Russia relationship, Putin's end goal is precisely to stir up as much instability as possible. He has used hybrid warfare and outright invasion to destabilize neighbors like Ukraine and Georgia to try to make them unattractive candidates for membership in NATO and/or the European Union. He does not want to see thriving democracies along Russia's borders that could pose threatening alternatives to the authoritarian model he has constructed. Every time the West responds weakly or not at all, he pushes even further with his destabilization efforts. On Afghanistan - the Biden administration's most urgent foreign policy crisis at the moment and an area where the U.S. might be tempted to seek Russian cooperation - Putin reportedly brushed off a request from Biden during the leaders' June summit to allow U.S. bases in Central Asia.

Today, I'd advise Biden to avoid the mistakes of his predecessors and to instead take the tougher approach that

The U.S. has long avoided punishing the Russian leader in the misplaced hopes of cooperating with a regime that only seeks instability.

seemed to be his instinct early in his presidency. Hoping Putin will just go away so the administration can focus on China or, worse, that he can be channeled in a more positive direction ignores the lessons of the past 15 years. This will only lead to more regrets down the road. In the fall of 2006, I was the deputy assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia with responsibility for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Putin was halfway through his second term. Initially, relations with the United States got off to a decent start - Putin was the first foreign leader to contact President George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks - and the two men developed a rapport. But with Russia rebounding from the chaos of the 1990s, thanks to the spike in oil prices, Putin accelerated his campaign of marginalizing or even eliminating perceived threats, such as former oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, arrested in 2003. On Oct. 7, 2006 (which happens to be Putin's birthday), journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who exposed corruption and wrongdoing by the Putin regime, was gunned down in her Moscow apartment building. While several men were arrested and tried for her murder, nobody has been arrested for having ordered it. Since then, more than 20 Russian journalists have been killed. Less than a month later, Russian agents traveled to London and poisoned the tea of Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian spy who had turned against Putin. He died an excruciatingly painful death three weeks later.

New Zealand records warmest winter as climate change drives temperatures

For the three months through August, the average temperature was 9.8 Celsius, according to New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research.

The southern winter that just ended in New Zealand was the warmest ever recorded, and scientists say that climate change is driving temperatures ever higher. For the three months through August, the average temperature was 9.8 Celsius (50 Fahrenheit), according to New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research. That's 1.3C above the long-term average and 0.2C higher than the previous record posted last year. Scientists have been keeping records since 1909, but most of the warmest winters have been recent. Nava Fedaeff, a meteorologist at the institute, said that on top of a background of global warming, this year there were more warm winds than usual from the north and warmer sea temperatures. She said the underlying warming trend can be tracked through carbon

dioxide concentration, which has increased in New Zealand from 320 parts per million 50 years ago to about 412 parts per million today. Fedaeff said snowfall at lower elevations was well below average this winter as it was often replaced with rain, which could make for lower river levels later in the year because there will be less snowmelt. That could impact irrigation for farms, she said. There were also more extreme weather events, Fedaeff said, including severe flooding in some places and dry spells in others. Professor James Renwick, a climate scientist at the Victoria University of Wellington, said that in the short term at least, some New Zealand farmers with cow or sheep herds might benefit from a longer grass-growing season. But he said the changes were also putting pressure

on natural ecosystems and over time, more species would face extinction. He said it was imperative for humans to slow the rate of greenhouse gas emissions. "If we don't get on top of warming soon, there is going to be grief for large sections of the world," Renwick said. Renwick said that New Zealand had talked a lot about climate change but had so far done little to curb its emissions. But he said there were now good government policies in place, including a pledge to become carbon-neutral by 2050. He said there were plenty of natural resources like wind, sun and water that could provide renewable power for the nation's energy needs. "New Zealand could become world-leading in green energy and a green economy," he said.

China, Rwanda, North Korea - How authoritarian rulers manage their international image



Earlier this year, the staff of Rwanda's minister of justice accidentally sent Al Jazeera journalists a video recording that included the minister's preparation sessions with a public relations firm for an upcoming interview. The interview was about the Rwandan government's involvement in a scheme to lure exile Paul Rusesabagina to Rwanda so that he could be arrested and tried.

Rusesabagina helped save hundreds of Rwandans during the genocide by sheltering them in a hotel, a story that was made into the movie Hotel Rwanda. He later became a vocal and sometimes controversial critic from abroad of Paul Kagame's government. He now faces trial on terrorism charges.

The video shows consultants from Chelgate, a UK "reputation and relationship management" firm, prepping the minister to evade questions about Rwanda's involvement in Rusesabagina's capture.

This episode nicely illustrates the multiple ways that authoritarian states - countries where the leadership maintains power by non-democratic means - manage their image abroad. There's plenty of scholarly debate about what "counts" as authoritarianism and about different subtypes of authoritarian states. But controlling domestic institutions to preclude genuine political competition and pluralism is a hallmark of the modern authoritarian strategy.

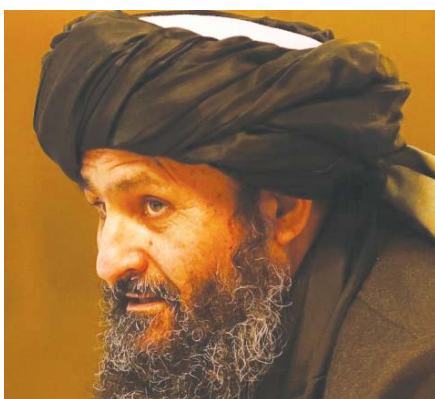
As I argue in my new book Making the World Safe for Dictatorship, a good image abroad affords many advantages to authoritarian leaders. It makes achieving foreign policy goals easier and helps marginalise foreign critics. It also makes it tougher for exiles and domestic activists to work together and solidifies the government's legitimacy domestically. The book draws on a range of data. I examined filings by public relations firms, gathered data on cases of transnational repression, did fieldwork and interviews, watched authoritarian propaganda, and more. Although the book is global in scope, I also take a closer look at China, Rwanda and North Korea in case study chapters. These cases were chosen to illustrate how things play out given different regime types, capabilities, regional contexts and ambitions. Understanding authoritarian image management is important. It helps explain our global information environment and the behaviour of authoritarian states in it.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the quiet Taliban deal maker who holds key role for Afghan future

He co-founded the Taliban, helped it rebuild during two decades of war with the U.S. and then brokered a deal to get American troops out. Now, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar's job is about to get even harder.

Baradar, named as deputy prime minister in a Taliban government unveiled on Tuesday, is still the most well-known figure to the outside world in the new administration. Taliban supreme commander Haibatullah Akhundzada hasn't been seen in public since becoming the group's leader in 2016, and little is known about new Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan.

To get access to international aid and billions in central bank assets,



Baradar will have to convince world leaders that this is a different Taliban, a more moderate version of a group infamous for banning girls from school and stoning women to death during its rule in the 1990s. U.S. President Joe

Biden on Tuesday said major countries around the world were "all trying to figure out what do they do now."

All the while, Baradar will "be in the crosshairs of Taliban hard-liners who do not see any reason to change their movement's core beliefs to please the unbelievers," said Husain Haqqani, Pakistan's former ambassador in Washington.

A soft-spoken figure in his 50s with a gray beard, Baradar has proven to be an adept diplomat, helping lead negotiations with the U.S. during the Trump administration that culminated in him meeting Secretary of State Michael Pompeo to formalize the American withdrawal.

Climate change

**Why is Asia,
America witnessing
longer winter?
Answer is hidden in
the Arctic**

While the ongoing spells of heatwaves and deadly wildfires have been linked to climate change, a new study hints that the recent spells of unusual winters in the northern hemisphere could be the result of Arctic warming. However, it does not indicate if similar trends will continue as the planet heats up further.

Researchers trying to understand a climate dichotomy in the view of global warming found that despite the rapid warming, which is a cardinal signature of global climate change especially in the Arctic, the United States and other regions of the northern hemisphere have experienced an increasingly frequent number of extremely cold winter weather over the past four decades. This is also the period when global warming became most marked.

The study published in journal Science, combines observations from models and satellites to demonstrate that "Arctic change is likely an important cause of a chain of processes dubbed as stratospheric polar vortex disruption, which ultimately results in periods of extreme cold".

A CONTRASTING EVENT

Climate scientist and the lead author of the study Judah Cohen told Nature that conventional wisdom was that while global warming meant more heatwaves, it would definitely lead to fewer cold spells and snowfall. However, that might not be quite true.

Cohen said, "There are mechanisms by which climate change can contribute to more severe winter weather too."

The most recent example of extreme winter weather was seen in January and February 2021 in Asia, Europe, and especially the United States.

The most recent example of extreme winter weather was seen in January and February 2021 in Asia, Europe, and especially the United States.

Researchers maintained that the cold wave witnessed in the US's Southern Plains in February 2021 might be exceptional in the observational record for the region based on the aggregate severity of the cold intensity, cold duration, and widespread disruptive snowfall. It fuelled the debate of whether climate change contributes to more severe winter weather.

Researchers believe that the loss of ice and snow cover in the Arctic Sea could be affecting the airstreams in the region with increasing episodes of the polar vortex. The polar vortex is a large area of low pressure and cold air surrounding both of the Earth's poles.

According to the National Weather Service, "It always exists near the poles, but weakens in summer and strengthens in winter. The term 'vortex' refers to the counter-

clockwise flow of air that helps keep the colder air near the Poles. Many times during winter in the northern hemisphere, the polar vortex will expand, sending cold air southward with the jet stream." The identification of the pattern can extend the warning time of cold extremes in Asia, Canada and the United States. "Preparing for only a decrease in severe winter weather can compound the human and economic cost when severe winter weather does occur," the researchers said in the paper.

WHAT IS ARCTIC WARMING?

Over the last decade, researchers have observed changing trends across the Arctic with the temperature rising in the region faster than anywhere else on the globe. The rising temperature has led to a decline in summer sea ice in the region and the melting of ice in the Barents and Kara seas leading to increased snowfall over Siberia.

Meanwhile, one of the more robust signatures of global warming is accelerated Arctic warming, known as Arctic amplification. "It is both a response to, and accelerator of Arctic sea ice decline, with the greatest losses observed in the BarentsKara and ChukchiBering Seas," the paper said.

This amplification leads to increasing snowfall and snow cover at high latitudes, including across Eurasia during October through January. However, whether Arctic amplification could result in more severe winter weather, and how, is a matter of active debate, the researchers said.

IUCN updates Red List: Sharks headed towards extinction as pressure on marine life spikes; Tuna recovers



As the world grapples with the dangerous consequences of climate change, marine life is threatened as well. A new report by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reveals that while tuna is recovering, sharks are headed towards extinction.

The new report shows that four commercially-fished tuna species are on the path to recovery due to the enforcement of regional fishing quotas over the last decade.

The latest development has been released by the IUCN, which compiles the global list identifying species that are threatened, endangered or extinct.

"Despite increasing pressures on our oceans, species can recover if states truly commit to sustainable practices," Dr Bruno Oberle, IUCN Director General said.

The revised list was released during the world's leading conservation congress underway in the French city of Marseille.

Sharks heading towards extinction

The updated Red List shows the growing threat being faced by shark species across the global oceans. 37 per cent of shark species are now threatened with extinction, demonstrating that "effective management measures are lacking throughout much of the world's oceans."

The IUCN in a statement said that all of the threatened shark and ray species are overfished, with 31 per cent further affected by loss and degradation of habitat and 10 per cent affected by climate change. Tuna on recovery path

The organisation has assessed seven most commercially fished tuna species, and found that four of them showed signs of recovery as countries enforced "sustainable fishing quotas and successfully combating illegal fishing."

The recovered species include the Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*), which has been moved from endangered to least concern while the Southern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus maccoyii*) is moved from critically endangered to the endangered list. The albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) and yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) both moved from near threatened to least concern.

However, the organisation maintained that despite global improvement at the species level, many regional tuna stocks remain severely depleted.

Meanwhile, the world's largest living lizard, the Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*), has moved from Vulnerable to Endangered on the IUCN Red List. The species is largely threatened by climate change which has led to rising sea levels. The spike in sea levels is expected to reduce the Komodo dragon's suitable habitat by at least 30 per cent in the next 45 years.



SpaceX's first all civilian mission to launch on Sept 15 led by billionaire Isaacman

Months after Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin launched tourists into space under Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos respectively, Elon Musk is trying to catch up. The billionaire owner of SpaceX is set to blast off on the first fully private mission to space on September 15.

Named Inspiration-4, the first all-civilian mission has received the green light for launch on September 15 onboard Falcon 9. "Inspiration4 and @SpaceX have completed our flight readiness review and remain on track for launch!" the Inspiration4 mission team tweeted.

The mission will lift off from Nasa's Pad 39A at Kennedy

Space Center in Florida and head on a three-day journey around Earth. The mission will have four civilians on board the Crew Dragon capsule led by Billionaire Jared Isaacman, the founder of Shift4 Payments.

What is the Inspiration-4 mission? The Inspiration 4 mission is an all-civilian mission to Earth's orbit being undertaken by SpaceX. The mission will be commanded by Jared Isaacman, the 38-year-old founder and chief executive officer of Shift4 Payments.

"The Inspiration-4 crew will travel across a low earth orbit on a multi-day journey that will continually eclipse more than 90 per cent of the earth's population," the company said in a statement.

During the mission, the crew will raise awareness and funds for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Purpose of the mission During the three-day period, the crew will perform experiments looking at how space affects the human body. Flying at 17000 kilometres per hour, the crew will collaborate with SpaceX, the Translational Research Institute for Space Health (TRISH) at Baylor College of Medicine and investigators at Weill Cornell Medicine. Jared Isaacman, the billionaire tech entrepreneur who will command the mission said, "The crew of Inspiration4 is eager to use our mission to help make a better future for those who will launch in the years and decades

to come."

"We are proud that our flight will help influence all those who will travel after us and look forward to seeing how this mission will help shape the beginning of a new era for space exploration," he added. SpaceX will also collect environmental and biomedical data as well as biological samples like blood from the crew before, during and after the mission, which will be studied for future crew missions that SpaceX has in the pipeline. The company is already in plans to launch to Mars in the future which requires a great deal of human research.

A billionaire led crew

The four-member crew is being

commanded by Isaacman, an accomplished jet pilot, who is rated to fly commercial and military aircraft and holds several world records including two Speed-Around-The-World flights in 2008 and 2009 that raised money and awareness for the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Along with Isaacman, the crew includes St. Jude physician's assistant Hayley Arceneaux, data engineer Chris Sembroski and geoscientist, science communicator and space artist Sian Proctor. Arceneaux, a childhood bone cancer survivor, represents the charity, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, where she was treated and is now a physician assistant.

Nasa detects 1000th asteroid to come close to Earth

Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) has tracked the 1000th Near-Earth Asteroid (NEA) after its radars picked up 2021 PJ1 as it passed at a distance of just 1.7 million kilometers from Earth.

While the asteroid did not pose any danger to the planet, its remote size made it difficult to be tracked. Initial radar observations showed it to be between 65 and 100 feet wide. Despite its small size, the asteroid managed to get its name recorded in history books as the 1000th near-earth object to cross the planet.

Seven days later, JPL picked up the 1001st object as it came close to Earth. This time it was larger than before. Dubbed

2016 AJ193, it passed our planet at a distance of about 3.4 million kilometers. A global radar system tracks NEOs

"2021 PJ1 is a small asteroid, so when it passed us at a distance of over a million miles, we couldn't obtain detailed radar imagery. Yet even at that distance, planetary radar is powerful enough to detect it and measure its velocity to a very high precision, which improved our knowledge of its future motion substantially," Lance Benner, who leads Nasa's asteroid radar research program, said in a statement. The radar detection of these fast-moving objects, which began in 1968, helps astronomers understand the NEO orbits, providing data that can extend

calculations of future motion by decades to centuries and help definitively predict if an asteroid is going to hit Earth, or if it's just going to pass close by.

The radars also provide critical information about size, shape, spin rate, and whether or not it is accompanied by one or more small moons. Over half of these asteroids have been detected using the telescope at Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico before it was damaged and decommissioned in 2020. Fourteen NEAs have been observed using antennas at the Deep Space Network's Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex to transmit radio waves to the asteroids and the CSIRO's Australian Telescope Compact



Array and Parkes Observatory in New South Wales to receive the radar reflections.

Why is tracking Near Earth Objects critical? Nearly three-quarters of all NEA radar observations have been made since Nasa's NEO Observations Program, now a part of its

Planetary Defense Program, saw an increased funding a decade ago. The agency monitors the vast reaches of the cosmos using satellites, ground-based telescopes, observing if any object threatens the planet or its assets hovering above it.



Though it spreads far more slowly than the virus of widest concern-SARS CoV 2-the high fatality rate is cause for worry

Why the Nipah virus is worrisome

The sudden death of Muhammad Hashim, a 12-year-old schoolboy who was the only child of a coconut tree climber in Pazhoor in the Kozhikode district on September 5, has heightened fears of yet another outbreak of the zoonotic Nipah virus in north Kerala. A contact list of 188 persons, a majority of whom are health workers, has been prepared. Two of them have been found symptomatic, and another 20, who are believed to

be high-risk contacts, have been kept in isolation at the Government Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode. Samples of eight of these people, as well as of the Rambutan fruit grown near Hashim's home that the family says he ate, have been sent to the National Institute of Virology, Pune, for screening. The sample could help identify the source of the infection and confirm whether it originated from a bat.

A team from the National Centre for Disease Control, Delhi, that visited the area has advised extra vigil for symptoms. Hashim developed encephalitis or inflammation of the brain, and myocarditis, which affects the heart muscles. Other symptoms include respiratory illnesses, myalgia or muscular pain, fever, headache, nausea, stomach pain, blurred vision and seizures. Encephalitis and seizures occur in severe cases and can send

the person into a coma within 24-48 hours.

Detecting the infection is a daunting exercise. The incubation period, or the interval between infection and onset of symptoms, can range from four to 14 days. A longer period of 45 days has also been reported. Hashim was first admitted to a private clinic on August 29. He moved three hospitals, including the government hospital in

Kozhikode, before the fourth facility, a private hospital, on September 1, suspecting the Nipah virus had infected him. NIV Pune confirmed the diagnosis on September 4.

An alert has now been declared in Kozhikode and the contiguous Mallapuram and Kannur districts. Kozhikode is reporting the deadly infection for the second time in three years. In May-June 2018, laboratory tests confirmed 18 cases of people infected with the Nipah virus. Of these, 16 people died. Seven other people were suspected of having died because of the infection.

Though the Nipah infection is known to spread far more slowly than the virus of widest concern-SARS CoV2--it is worrisome because of its high fatality rate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US, says the Nipah infection has a fatality rate between 40 and 75 per cent. In comparison, COVID-19 has a death rate of around one per cent in India.

Fruit bats are considered the natural hosts of the virus, which gets its name from the village in Malaysia where the person in whom the virus was first isolated died in 1999. They transmit this virus to other animals like pigs, dogs, cats, goats, horses and sheep. Humans get infected mainly through direct contact with these animals or consuming food contaminated by the saliva or urine of infected animals. Human-to-human transmission is not fully established, but it is not as easy or fast as in SARSCoV2.

Chandigarh gets its pollen calendar that will help identify allergy triggers

Chandigarh now has its first pollen calendar which can identify potential allergy triggers and provide a clear understanding for clinicians as well as allergy sufferers about their causes to help limit their exposure during high pollen loads, the Department of Science and Technology said on Monday.

About 20-30 per cent of India's population suffer from allergic rhinitis/hay fever and approximately 15 per cent develop asthma. Pollens are considered major outdoor airborne allergens responsible for allergic rhinitis, asthma and atopic dermatitis in humans. Pollen calendars represent the time dynamics of airborne pollen taxa in graphical form in a particular geographical area.

They yield readily accessible visual details about various airborne pollen taxa present throughout the year, with their seasonality in a single picture. Pollen calendars are location-specific with concentrations closely related to locally distributed flora.

The Department of Community Medicine and School



of Public Health, PGIMER, Chandigarh, examined the seasonal periodicities of airborne pollen spectrum and developed the first pollen calendar for Chandigarh city.

"This will help prepare early advisories and disseminate them through media channels to the citizens so that they can use protective gear during the period when the concentration of allergic pollens will be high. It is also a preventive tool for sensitive people to diminish exposure when the levels of aero-pollen are high during specific periods," the DST

said. The calendar was made possible by a team led by Ravindra Khaiwal of the Department of Community Medicine and School of Public Health, PGIMER, Chandigarh. It included Ashutosh Aggarwal, Head of Department of Pulmonary Medicine at PGIMER, Associate Professor Suman Mor, and Akshi Goyal and Sahil Kumar, research scholars from Department of Environment Studies, Panjab University. The group explored the main pollen seasons, their intensities, variations and aerobiologically significant pollen types in Chandigarh. The study brought out the first pollen calendar for Chandigarh, provided up-to-date information, and highlighted the variability of crucial pollen types in different seasons. The prominent airborne pollen dominating seasons were spring and autumn, with maximum species surfacing when the phenological and meteorological parameters are considered favourable for pollen grains' growth, dispersion and transmission. The study supported by the DST was recently published in the Atmospheric Environment journal.

To Stop HIV

Researchers Are Investigating an mRNA Vaccine

An early stage clinical trial of an mRNA-based HIV vaccine could begin this month, according to the U.S. National Library of Medicine clinical trial registry. This vaccine candidate uses technology developed by biotech company Moderna - the same technology used for its highly effective COVID-19 vaccine. The trial, which builds on earlier research by the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative and Scripps Research, would test the first stage of a multistep vaccine regimen. The eventual goal is to stimulate the immune system to produce broadly neutralizing antibodies that target multiple HIV strains. Additional clinical trials will be needed before a vaccine capable of preventing HIV infection is available. Targeting multiple strains of HIV Many people are familiar with the coronavirus spike protein: mRNA vaccines train the immune system to produce antibodies that target the spike protein and prevent the virus from infecting cells. HIV also has a spike-shaped virus protein known as Env, or the envelope protein. The shape of this protein varies among

different strains of the virus, making it harder to target with antibodies. "Antibodies against one virus - against one HIV spike - will not block another HIV spike," William Schief, PhD, a professor and immunologist at Scripps Research, said in a YouTube video released by Scripps. "We have to elicit antibodies that bind to specific patches on the spike that don't change very much," he said. In the early 1990s, scientists first isolated a broadly neutralizing antibody that targets these non-changing, or conserved, areas of the HIV envelope protein. Additional antibodies have been identified since then. However, going from vaccine to broadly neutralizing antibodies requires multiple steps. Schief and his colleagues at Scripps and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative developed a candidate vaccine that stimulates the immune system to produce precursor cells needed to start this process. Results released earlier this year from a phase 1 clinical trial showed that 97 percent of

participants who received the vaccine showed the desired immune response. This "priming step" is the first of several that researchers hope will lead to broadly neutralizing antibodies against HIV. The immune cells generated during this initial trial in response to the candidate vaccine "don't know how to neutralize HIV yet," Schief said in the YouTube video, "and we didn't expect that they would." "But we have studied them, and now we have a good idea for what our second shot should look like." Applying mRNA vaccine approach to HIV The International AIDS Vaccine Initiative and Scripps have partnered with Moderna to test an mRNA-based vaccine version of this approach. Messenger RNA, or mRNA, contains a blueprint for making a specific protein. mRNA vaccines deliver these instructions to the cells, which then produce the protein. In the phase 1 trial using Moderna's technology, the mRNA vaccine will carry the instructions for a protein that stimulates the immune system in the same way

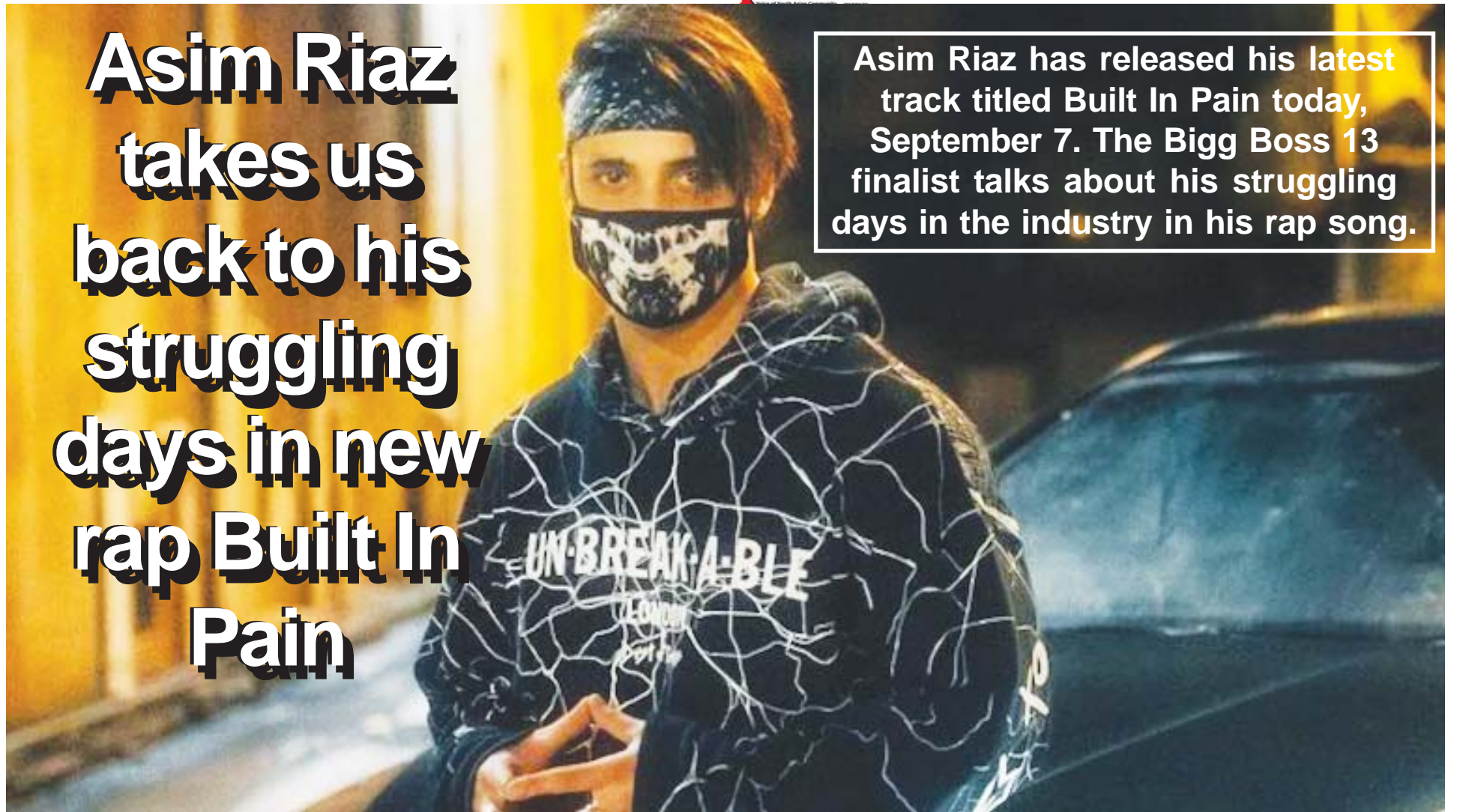


as the earlier Scripps and International AIDS Vaccine Initiative trial. This trial will enroll 56 healthy people without HIV, and will test two versions of the vaccine candidate. Two groups of people will receive a mix of the two vaccine candidates, and the other two groups will receive one or the other. Researchers will look to see whether the vaccine generates the desired immune response - the immune precursor cells - and whether there are any safety concerns. This is only the first of several clinical trials, so it will take some time before scientists know whether this approach can prevent HIV infection. However, many people will be

watching closely to see whether the mRNA technology does for HIV what it did for COVID-19. "If nothing else, I hope that we're able to leverage the lessons learned from the COVID-19 trials for developing a safe and effective HIV vaccine," said Anthony J. Santella, DrPH, a public health researcher at the University of New Haven. HIV testing and treatment still important tools Although the mRNA technology looks promising, over the past few decades, finding a safe and effective vaccine to prevent HIV infection has proven to be very challenging. The latest blow comes from a clinical trial of an HIV vaccine that uses the same technology as Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 adenovirus (Ad26) vaccine.

Asim Riaz takes us back to his struggling days in new rap Built In Pain

Asim Riaz has released his latest track titled Built In Pain today, September 7. The Bigg Boss 13 finalist talks about his struggling days in the industry in his rap song.



Asim Riaz is on a roll. The Bigg Boss 13 runner-up is releasing back-to-back rap songs which are being loved by the audience. Today, September 7, he released his latest track titled Built In Pain. The song highlights Asim's struggles and the challenges he had to go through in the

entertainment industry. Earlier, the actor released songs such as Back To Start and Sky High, which were focused on similar subjects. While the lyrics and vocals of Built In Pain are by Asim himself, the music is given by Charan. The video is directed by Jay Singal.

ASIM RIAZ'S BUILT IN PAIN SONG OUT NOW

Asim Riaz was last seen in his rap song Sky High, which also featured his girlfriend Himanshi Khurana. In the new song Built In Pain, he can be seen in a fiery avatar looking dapper in an all-black outfit. The rap talks about

his hardships that he faced to attain success in life.

ABOUT ASIM RIAZ

Asim Riaz earlier featured in Back To Start and Sky High. This is his third rap song. In Back To Start, he documented his struggle in the entertainment industry and how he made a

name for himself. He is currently in a relationship with Himanshi Khurana whom he met on Bigg Boss 13. They often share lovely posts for each other on social media and go out on dates. Asim Riaz rose to fame with his stint on Bigg Boss 13. Post that, he has been seen in many music videos.



Sidharth Shukla and Shehnaaz Gill's photos from unreleased music video out, emotional fans say 'Sidnaaz forever'

Pictures of Sidharth Shukla and Shehnaaz Gill from their yet-to-be-released music video, Habit, have surfaced online. Emotional fans were excited to see them together, one last time. Sidharth, who died last week, was rumoured to be in a relationship with Shehnaaz. Sidharth and Shehnaaz shot for

the Habit music video in Goa a few months ago. In the behind-the-scenes photos, Sidharth wore a blue floral half-sleeved shirt with shorts. Shehnaaz was twinning with him; she wore a blue swimsuit with a sarong tied around her waist and a large hat. The images were shared on Instagram by photographer

Ovez Sayed.

Fans were happy to see the pictures of Sidharth and Shehnaaz. "Thank you for the memories," one wrote, while another said, "#Sidnaaz forever." Many also dropped heart emojis on the post and wished for the video to release soon. +

Sidharth died on September 2 of

a suspected heart attack. He is survived by his mother and two sisters. He was cremated at the Oshiwara crematorium in Mumbai a day later. Former Bigg Boss contestant Jasleen Matharu, in an interview, recalled meeting Shehnaaz at Sidharth's house on the day of his death. "I spoke to Shehnaaz but she is not in a good state. She was just sitting at a place, blank, nothing

to say, lost in her world. I went up to her, tried talking but all she asked me to do was to sit next to her. I saw how disturbed she was and asked her to sleep. Exhausted, she fell off to sleep. I met her brother, Shehbaz who is thankfully there for and with her in this grim hour. He will take good care of Shehnaaz, I am sure," she told Pinkvilla.



Anushka Sharma gorges on dosas near Buckingham Palace

Actor Anushka Sharma has posted another update from London. On Tuesday, she took to Instagram to share a picture from Taj 51 Buckingham Gate, where she is currently staying. She posted a photo from her hotel room which showed two plates of dosas in front of her. The room also included a work desk and an arm chair. "Home away from home," Anushka wrote with the photo. She also thanked the hotel for its hospitality. Taj 51 Buckingham Gate is located near the Buckingham Palace, where the British royal family resides. Anushka has been in

up to the love with which you look at us, little one. Happy 6 months to us three."



England since June, accompanying her husband, cricketer Virat Kohli on India's tour of England. Their daughter Vamika has also joined them for the trip. The couple also celebrated Vamika turning six-months old with a picnic. Sharing pictures from their day out, Anushka wrote in an Instagram post, "Her one smile can change our whole world around! I hope we can both live

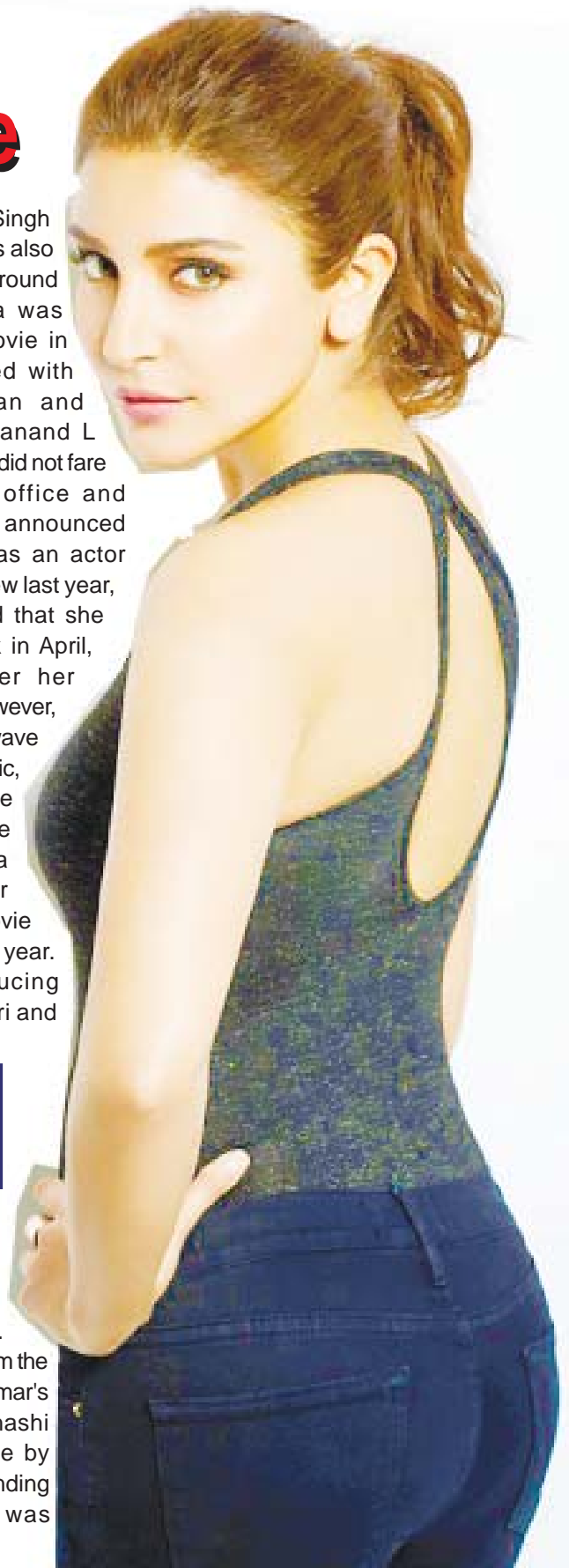
Anushka has also been stepping out with Virat to try out different restaurants in the area. When in Leeds, she visited an Indian restaurant and later, a street food joint.

Anushka and Virat also spend his days off with his cricket buddies and their partners and families. Recently, Anushka shared photos from their day out with KL Rahul, Athiya Shetty,

Ishant Sharma, Pratima Singh and others. Their kids has also joined them for the walk around

Durham. Anushka was last seen in a movie in 2018. She starred with Shah Rukh Khan and Katrina Kaif in Aanand L Rai's Zero. The film did not fare well at the box office and Anushka has not announced her next project as an actor since. In an interview last year, Anushka had said that she will return to work in April, four months after her daughter's birth. However, due to the second wave

of the coronavirus pandemic, Anushka decided to take some more time off. The actor has been active as a producer though. Her series Paatal Lok and movie Bulbbul had released last year. She is currently producing Qala, starring Tripti Dimri and Babil Khan.



Javed Akhtar says we have similar song in Hindi as Shashi Tharoor sings Ek Ajnabee Haseena Se

Shashi Tharoor recently attended an event in Srinagar where he was asked to sing a song at the end of the meet. The writer and Member of Parliament took to social media to share a video from the event where he is seen



singing Kishore Kumar's Ek Ajnabee Haseena Se. Javed Akhtar found it quite amusing and took a dig at the politician for his Hindi pronunciation. SHASHI THAROOR SINGS EK AJNABEE HASEENA SE - Shashi Tharoor keeps entertaining his fans with his proficiency in the English language. The Congress leader time and again comes up

with almost unpronounceable long words. However, deep down he loves Hindi and often croons old Hindi film songs. Recently, at an event in Srinagar, he gave proof of his love for Hindi songs.

The parliamentarian shared a video from the event where he can be seen singing Kishore Kumar's Ek Ajnabee Haseena Se. Sharing the video, Shashi Tharoor wrote, "After the cultural programme by Doordarshan Srinagar for the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology, I was persuaded to sing for the Members.

Game of Thrones Fan Convention announced; will launch in Las Vegas next year

Warner Bros Themed Entertainment has announced that the Game of Thrones Official Fan Convention will be held in Las Vegas next year. The event, which is being organised to celebrate the upcoming House of the Dragon, a prequel series to the Emmy-winning epic series, will run from February 18-20. According to Collider, the fan convention will be an "action-packed experience" for the franchise fans and will take place at the Rio Hotel & Suites Convention Center.

Peter van Roden, Senior Vice President of Warner Bros



Themed Entertainment said the team is "thrilled" to be celebrating Game of Thrones with its first official fan convention.

"This is an exciting initiative, growing one of our beloved global

franchises and allowing fans to become even more immersed in the world of Westeros and beyond. This will be a truly unforgettable experience that loyal and new fans alike will love and enjoy," Van Roden said.

The event will feature all of the standard convention fare that veteran attendees of conventions have come to expect, including special guests, cosplay and trivia competitions, plenty of panels, and autograph signings and photo opportunities, as well as the sale of exclusive Game of Thrones merchandise.

No schedule or guest line-up has been announced as of yet, but the full schedule, as well as ticket prices and on-sale dates, will be released in the coming months. Based on George RR Martin's fantasy book series A Song of Fire And Ice, Game of Thrones

had a glorious eight-season run on HBO from April 17, 2011, to May 19, 2019. It was created by David Benioff and D B Weiss. The TV show went on to become a cultural phenomenon with an incredible fanbase across the world, with its popularity raising many actors like Peter Dinklage, Emilia Clarke, Jason Momoa, Sophie Turner, Kit Harington, Maisie Williams, Lena Headey, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Richard Madden, among others in its large ensemble cast to prominence.

Why We Can't Turn the Corner on Covid

(SAI Bureau)- After a hot vax summer that wasn't, it's clearer than ever that there will be no easy end to the pandemic.

The summer of 2021 began with such promise. On Memorial Day, the traditional start of summer, many Americans thought that the worst of Covid might be over, that masks were out and hugs (or more) might be in. But that optimism has yielded to a more somber and uncertain Labor Day as hot vax summer turned into hot spot autumn.

In the three months in between, the vaccination drive hit a wall of resistance, and the more infectious Delta variant arrived. All that talk about "emerging" from the pandemic morphed into nervous questions: When will we reach a turning point in combating Covid 19? When



and how will we finally get back to something close to "normal" for more than a season?

Unfortunately, public health officials say that's the wrong question. There will be no quick and clear turning point ahead in the Covid-19 pandemic, no "X" to mark on the

(Contd on page 34)

Let's be clear on why the US economy is weakening



(SAI Bureau)- The American economy is weakening. And we know who is responsible. On Monday, Goldman Sachs economists downgraded their projections for economic growth in 2021. ("The Delta variant is already weighing on Q3 growth," wrote Goldman economist Ronnie Walker.)

August's job growth was sluggish. The Delta variant continues to ravage the unvaccinated and sicken so many, with the country hitting the dark milestone of 40 million Covid cases. And about 1,500 Americans are dying every day -- almost all of them not fully vaccinated.

(Contd on page 34)

Pak signature on Taliban appointments: IC-814 hijack plotter's son is defence minister of Afghanistan



(SAI Bureau)- Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, son of Taliban's first emir or leader and founder Mullah Omar, who was the mastermind of the IC-814 hijacking, is the defence minister of Afghanistan under the Taliban regime.

The hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight in 1999 was plotted to get terrorists -- Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Maulana Masood Azhar, leader of defunct terror group Al Umar Mujahideen, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, and British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh -- released from Indian prisons. The hijackers kept the 176 passengers of the IC-814 aircraft hostage for seven days. The flight took

(Contd on page 35)

San Francisco is even worse than we knew and Newsom needs to answer for it



(SAI Bureau)-It's worse than you thought in San Francisco. It was 2:30 in the afternoon and there was no legitimate business going on in the streets, even the wide thoroughfares. Not a guy delivering a pizza,

not a few friends at a lingering lunch, no shopping bags, not any new ones anyway.

The Tenderloin district of San Francisco was just entirely overrun by the homeless, more accurately by people who appeared to be addicts or mentally ill.

There was no thronging mass to cover them, they were not straggling exceptions to well-run city blocks, they were the city blocks. Even the blocks, and there were many, that boasted the kind of new high end apartment buildings that are swanky back East. This is a place of total surrender, you can smell it, as well as other things, in the atmosphere. I was prepared for a rough scene, but holy hell, this beat the band.

What little legal commerce there is here is mainly confined to fast food, liquor stores, little convenience

(Contd on page 35)