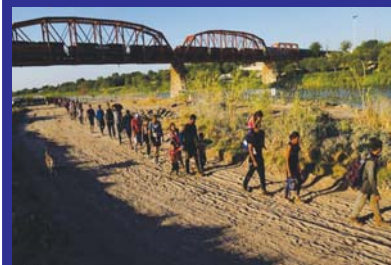


Beware the coming immigration crisis



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China wants to divide, rule, conquer Europe. *European Union is too confused to stop it*



Story on Page 18

The West is a Wounded Civilisation



(SAI Bureau)-The Israel-Hamas and Russia-Ukraine wars have inflicted a fatal wound on the new Western world order. At first glance, this seems improbable. The United States and its Western allies are dominant globally, both militarily and economically. Russia is being systematically weakened by Western sanctions and a deadlocked war in Ukraine.

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Political funding, not welfareism is the bigger problem in Indian election



Story on Page 19

"A Matter of Concern"



An Indian official plotted to assassinate a Sikh separatist leader in New York, US prosecutors say

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Jeyakumar Nadarajah, New York Banker & Trader Charged for US Treasuries Market Fraud Scheme



Story on Page 17

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23-year-old Indian student arrested for murdering grandparents, uncle in US

(Sai Bureau)- A 23-year-old Indian student has been arrested and charged for allegedly murdering his grandparents and uncle inside a New Jersey condominium, police and US media reports said.

Om Brahmhatt is accused of shooting Dilipkumar Brahmhatt, 72, Bindu Brahmhatt, 72, and Yashkumar Brahmhatt, 38, the South Plainfield Police Department and the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office said in a statement.

Officers responded to the home on Coppola Drive off New Durham Road in South Plainfield around 9 am on Monday after a neighbour reported hearing shots fired at the Traditions condo complex, the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office said in a press release. After arriving, officers found three people — two men and a woman — who had suffered gunshot wounds. Married couple Dilipkumar and Bindu Brahmhatt were found shot to death in the second-floor apartment, police said. Their son, Yashkumar Brahmhatt, was also found to have suffered multiple gunshot wounds. He was taken to the hospital, where he died.

A suspect was taken into custody for questioning at the scene and later charged. Om was charged with three counts of first-degree murder and second-degree weapon possession. Om, hailing from Gujarat, resided with the victims and was found at the residence when authorities arrived at the scene.

Om had just moved to New Jersey within



the past couple of months, sources said and had been living at the condo, NBC New York reported.

He was taken to the Middlesex County Adult Correctional Center pending a pre-trial detention hearing; it wasn't immediately clear whether he had an attorney and a listed number for him couldn't be found. According to the complaint, the crime was committed with

a handgun Om says he purchased online. Om had a seemingly calm demeanour during Tuesday's court appearance. Police say he was the one who called 911 that morning and when asked about who did it, officials say Om stated, "It might be me".

It was not clear what led up to the shooting. A neighbour told NBC New York that it wasn't the first time police had been called to the condo.

"I didn't really know them, I just know one time the police were there for a domestic violence call," said neighbour Jim Short, who lives upstairs from the unit where the three people were found dead. "Can happen anywhere but it is really creepy, it's right downstairs."

The Traditions apartment complex, home to many young families who emigrated from India, is equipped with dozens of security cameras that neighbours hoped could help police. "There's cameras all over and there are cameras coming in and out of the complex and every building has cameras outside and inside the breezeway. So hopefully that can help," said another neighbour, Victor Orozco.



Binaya Srikant Pradhan to succeed Consul General Jaiswal

(Sai Bureau)- Consul General of India at New York Randhir Kumar Jaiswal, on completion of his tenure extending over 3 years, is moving to Delhi early next month where he will take over as Spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry. He is succeeding Arindam Bagchi who has been appointed as India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations at Geneva. Ambassador Jaiswal is being succeeded by Binaya Srikant Pradhan who is currently India's High Commissioner to Tanzania.

Mr. Binaya Srikant Pradhan is a career diplomat and belongs to the 2002 batch of the Indian Foreign Service. As a diplomat, he served in senior positions in Indian Embassies in Moscow, Turkmenistan and Pakistan during 2004-12. During 2012-14, he looked after India's relationship with Afghanistan and Iran at the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi. During 2014-19, Mr. Pradhan worked as the Chief of Staff to the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India. He was appointed as India's High Commissioner to Tanzania in July 2021.

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India seeks evidence to help Canada conclude investigation: Indian envoy Sanjay Verma

(Sai Bureau)-Indian High Commissioner in Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma said that, and India is only asking for "specific and relevant" evidence in the killing of India-designated terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar so that it can help Canada in reaching the conclusion of the investigation. He further said that instead of the differences, the India-Canada relations should focus on convergence, as New Delhi is still open for business relations and urges Ottawa to send more business delegations here.

In an interview with Canadian journalist Tahir Gora at TAG TV Toronto, the Indian High Commissioner said, "We have always said that India

is ready to look into any specific and relevant shared by our Canadian friends and take it forward in a logical way that is legally defendable in both the countries."

On being asked if India is looking into the allegations and concerns made by Canadian PM Justin Trudeau, Mr. Verma said that India is only asking for relevant information so that New Delhi can help Ottawa reach the conclusion of the case.

"India is only asking for specific and relevant information so that we can help you. We can help the Canadian investigators to reach their conclusion, to the extent that it will be viable for them to go for the legal action...I will urge my Canadian friends and colleagues. I can assure them that we will certainly look into them," he added. The



Indian envoy further said that there is an understanding of New Delhi's concerns from the Canadian side but more action needs to be seen on the ground. "We have voiced our concerns on various occasions and not only today from through our historical relationship which we

have here. I believe that there is an understanding of our concern in the Canadian policy-making circles and decision-making circles. I have seen many statements coming from the Canadian leadership respecting Indian sovereignty and territorial integrity and I have no doubt about it," Mr. Verma said. He added, "We need to see more on the ground and through the dialogue.

Ajit Pai elected to America's Public Television Stations board

(Sai Bureau)-Former Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai has been elected to a three-year term as an at-large member of the America's Public Television Stations (APTS) board of trustees, effective Feb 26, 2024.

The first Indian American official to chair the FCC from 2017 to 2021, is now a partner at Searchlight Capital Partners, a global investment firm.

"America's Public Television Stations are honored and delighted to welcome Ajit Pai to the APTS board," said APTS president and CEO Patrick Butler announcing Pai's

election on Nov 14. "Over the course of his four years leading the FCC, Chairman Pai saw clearly the value of public television stations' public service missions of education, public safety and civic leadership, and his support on matters ranging from the spectrum auctions to the adoption of the NEXTGEN TV broadcast standard reflected that vision.

"As we plan to make the most of our spectrum assets in service to the

American people, Chairman Pai will bring an immensely useful perspective and extraordinary experience to our work," Butler said. "We're most grateful that he has agreed to contribute his formidable talents to help advance public television's service to the public."

"I am honored to join the distinguished board of America's Public Television Stations," said Pai. "For many years, I have appreciated the thoughtful approach APTS President and CEO Pat Butler and the entire APTS team have brought to challenging communications issues, and I'm delighted to have the opportunity to help

shape that vision going forward as a member of the board of trustees. And I have long recognized the value of public television, from my childhood affinity for Sesame Street through my tenure at the FCC." Pai is a graduate of Harvard University and the University of Chicago Law School. He has worked in all three branches of government, including as a lawyer in various offices of the US Department of Justice and the US Senate Judiciary Committee.



Indian PhD Student, 26, Shot Dead Inside Car In US

(Sai Bureau)-A 26-year-old Indian doctoral student died after being shot inside a car in the US state of Ohio, in an incident described by his medical university as "sudden, tragic and senseless".

Aaditya Adlakha was a fourth-year doctoral student in the molecular and developmental biology programme at the University of Cincinnati Medical School, according to a statement from the medical school, WXIX-TV reported. Aaditya Adlakha died earlier this month at the UC Medical Center, according to the Hamilton County

Coroner's Office. On November 9, Cincinnati Police Lt. Jonathan Cunningham said officers found a man shot inside a vehicle that crashed into a wall on the upper deck of the Western Hills Viaduct. ShotSpotter, a gunfire locator service, reported there was gunfire in the area around 6:20 am, police said. Drivers passing by called 911 to report a vehicle that had bullet holes in it with a person inside who had been shot, said Cunningham. Aaditya Adlakha was

transported to UC Medical Center where he was in critical condition and was pronounced dead two days later.

No arrests have been made since the shooting was reported, local media reports said.


"Today, you might have seen news reports of his sudden, tragic and senseless death. Those who knew him, along with fellow students and others who may not have had the fortune to have met Aaditya, may experience a wide variety of reactions, which are understandable and expected," Senior Vice

President of Health Affairs and Dean, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, Andrew Filak said.

"He was much-loved, exceedingly kind and humorous, intelligent and sharp, whose research was described as novel and transformative. The focus of his work was to better understand neuroimmune communication and how neuroimmune interactions might contribute to pain and the inflammatory landscape in ulcerative colitis."



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Indian-American community welcomes incoming Consul General Ramesh Babu with grand reception

(Sai Bureau)- In a spectacular gathering on November 19th, 2023, the Indian-American community in Georgia warmly welcomed the newly appointed Consul General of India in Atlanta, Hon. Ramesh Babu. The event, hosted by the Federation of Indian-American Associations of Georgia (FIA of Georgia), took place at the elegant Crowne Plaza in Norcross. The occasion marked the official transition from the esteemed service of Dr. Swati Kulkarni, who served as Consul General from 2018 to 2023.

The banquet hall was a lively scene, filled with distinguished dignitaries, prominent community figures, and representatives from various organizations. The evening commenced with a welcoming address by Dr. Vasudev Patel, President of FIA, who expressed gratitude for the community's continued support and highlighted the significance of the occasion. The ceremonial lighting of the lamp was conducted by the guest of honor, Hon.



Ramesh Babu, accompanied by vibrant dance performances by the students of Bharathakala Naatya Academy and Nataraja Natyanjali Kuchipudi Dance Academy, and vocal rendition in several Indian languages by Atlanta Indian Idol finalist Jyotsna Nanu, setting a joyous tone for the evening. Mayor of Norcross, Craig Newton, graced the occasion with his

presence, emphasizing the strong ties between the Indian-American community and the local government. Other notable speakers included Shiv Aggarwal, owner of Global Mail, Padma Bhushan Professor Jagdish Sheth, India America Cultural Association (IACA) chairman of the board, Ani Agnihotri, IACA president Kaushal Tripathi, FIA's Rajeev Menon, Indian Friends

of Atlanta (IFA) co-founder Sunil Savili, Dr. Sreeni Gangasani who represented GAPI and AAPI, Subhash Razdan, President of the Gandhi Foundation of USA & Raj Razdan, NFIA president and founder of Senior Citizens Program—each offering their perspectives on the importance of fostering cultural and diplomatic connections. In his address to the audience, Hon. Ramesh Babu expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and shared his vision for his tenure as Consul General. He highlighted the significance of community engagement, cultural exchange, and fostering stronger ties between India and the United States. The community responded with enthusiastic applause, expressing their optimism for a fruitful collaboration under his leadership. The event concluded with a sumptuous dinner, providing an opportunity for attendees to network, share ideas, and celebrate the rich cultural diversity within the Indian-American community.

Genpact Announces CEO Succession Plan

Genpact (NYSE: G), a global professional services firm focused on delivering outcomes that transform businesses, today announced a leadership succession plan. "Tiger" Tyagarajan, President and Chief Executive Officer, has informed the Board of Directors of his intention to retire from the company, effective February 9, 2024. The company's Board has appointed Balkrishnan "BK" Kalra, Genpact's Global Business Leader, Financial Services and Consumer & Healthcare, as Genpact's next CEO. Kalra will join the company's Board on February 9, 2024, and Tyagarajan will continue as a member of the Board of Directors.

Kalra is a transformative business leader, with more than 30 years of experience helping companies grow from early stage to large, globally competitive enterprises. He joined Genpact in 1999 and has served in a variety of increasing leadership roles across the company. He leads Genpact's global transformation efforts across the banking, capital markets, consumer goods, retail, life sciences and healthcare industries, helping companies better leverage technology and AI-enabled solutions.

"We are delighted to announce BK as Genpact's next CEO, a leader with a proven track record of delivering business results and fostering deep client relationships," said James Madden, Chairman of Genpact's Board of Directors. "In planning for Tiger's retirement, the Board undertook a robust process, assessing a number of internal and external candidates. In the end, BK stood out as the natural successor. He understands the importance

of investing in emerging trends and technologies with a particular focus on Genpact's efforts around advanced analytics and AI-enabled solutions. BK's strategic vision and deep understanding of our clients and business is exactly what Genpact needs as we enter this new chapter."

"I am honored to assume the CEO role and appreciate the confidence and trust that Tiger and the Board have placed in me," said Kalra. "With an immensely talented workforce and a deep history of developing innovative solutions for our clients, Genpact has a unique opportunity to lead our industry. I look forward to working closely with the Board and our leadership team to accelerate a new chapter of growth for Genpact, one with technology at the forefront of everything we do to unlock tremendous potential for our clients, employees, and shareholders alike."

Tyagarajan assumed the CEO role in 2011 and led Genpact through a period of tremendous growth. During that time, he helped transform the company into a recognized industry leader with more than \$4.3 billion in annual 2022 revenue, leveraging data and technology to better serve its clients.

"On behalf of the Board and the entire organization, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for Tiger's leadership of Genpact over the last 12 years," said Madden. "Tiger has built a strong, diverse, and global team, focused on a clear set of prioritized verticals, geographic markets, and services. We look forward to his continued contributions on the Board.

Troy businessman Vimal Patel running in Alabama's 2nd District: 'My job is to fix stuff'

(Sai Bureau)-Vimal Patel says the Great Recession of more than a decade ago taught him how to sustain his family businesses during lean times, skills that the 39-year-old Auburn University graduate believes would make him a problem-solver in Washington. Patel manages his family's hotels in Troy, Montgomery, and Dothan and a laundromat in Eufaula. He said the job requires many hours behind the wheel of his 2012 Chevrolet Tahoe and constant attention to the stream of messages on his phone. "The whole goal is communication," Patel said. "I have about 60 employees. I tell them I want to hear from them.



And if they have issues going on, I want to know what they are. I'm like a problem sponge, and you throw everything you've got at me. Because that's how I can make a difference.

"I prefer text messages. So, I get texts all the time about random things. And that's my job. My job is to fix stuff."

Patel is one of 13 candidates for the Democratic nomination in the 2nd District, which spans south Alabama and includes Montgomery County and a portion of Mobile County. There are eight Republicans running.

Candidates flocked to the race after a federal court approved a new map that changed the 2nd District from safely Republican to one where a Democrat can win. The primary is March 5. Patel lives

in apartment built into one of the family hotels in Troy. He is married and has an 11-year-old daughter. He shares his home and office with his father, Pravin Patel, who built three of the hotels. Patel's family immigrated from India in 1980. The first one in his family born in America, Vimal Patel graduated from Charles Henderson High School in Troy and earned a political science degree from Auburn in 2007.

He said he assumed management responsibilities for the family businesses around 2009 to 2010, a time when the recession and its aftermath was squeezing the economy in Alabama and across the nation. Patel said he does not want to brag but believes that made him able to handle most any circumstance when it comes to business. "The recession back then is still imprinted into my head," Patel said. "When we talk about how to manage a business, I still manage it in a way that worked through the recession.

"It makes you lean. It makes you smarter. It makes you know how to run things. So, I don't meet a lot of people that intimidate me when it comes to numbers and how to manage things."

Patel said he believes the business skills would make him effective in Congress and help tackle issues like the federal deficit and the long-range outlook for Social Security.



(By Our Staff Reporter) : Indian community bids farewell to Randhir Jaiswal is a career diplomat and India's Consul General in New York. Mr. Jaiswal will be joining the Ministry of External Affairs in India.



(By Our Staff Reporter) : The legacy and memory of celebrating Diwali, festival of lights, continued this year too. Noted community leader, Late Mrs. Uma SenGupta, the first South Asian American elected to office in New York State was remembered and honored at the annual Diwali event in Queens. An impressive gathering of officials, noted community leaders & activists gathered at Worlds Fair Marina to celebrate annual Diwali. Dr. Sumita SenGupta wonderfully led the event ceremony. South Asian Insider has exclusive pictures from the event.

Three Indian restaurants won the recent US Michelin awards. Meet the chefs



(By Our Staff Reporter) : Blessed is a word that Chef Vijay Kumar of Semma, a two-year-old South Indian restaurant in New York's West Village, uses a lot. He admits to being deeply thankful for his hardworking, dedicated team, the appreciation he receives from his patrons and now, most recently, a Michelin Star, which the restaurant has retained from last year. "We just wanted to cook our food, tell our stories through food — unapologetically," confesses the amiable Vijay, whose roots lie in the deep South, a small town called Natham in Tamil Nadu's Dindigul district. The dishes on Semma's menu are a nod to the food of this region; think kollu rasam, Kanyakumari nandu masala, paniyaram, gunpowder dosa and Dindigul biryani, made precisely the way it is made back home. "We assume that people in the West can't eat spicy food, that you have to debone the meat," he says, pointing out that this belief is



a fallacy. "They actually want original, authentic food. Why should we change our cuisine to accept what we do?" says Vijay, who counts his mother and grandmother as culinary inspirations. After studying Hotel Management in Tiruchirappalli, Vijay began his career at the Taj Connemara in Chennai, an experience he holds dear. He then worked on a cruise liner for three years before moving to the restaurants Dosa and later Rasa, both in California. "I got my first Michelin star at Rasa in 2016," he says, pride coloring his voice as he recounts how the contemporary Indian restaurant held on to the honour for five years before COVID upended the world. While he says he enjoyed cooking contemporary Indian food — elevated South Indian with California ingredients — he hankered to cook how they cooked back home. "I wasn't 100% satisfied...felt something was missing," says Vijay, who joined



Unapologetic Foods' Semmain 2021, a restaurant that "represents our cuisine, culture and country," he believes. "We have more responsibility to keep pushing what we are doing, more and more." What he cooks for himself Rice with dal or sambar Chef Chetan Shetty Rania, Washington DCTradition and authenticity of cuisine are not something Chef Chetan Shetty appears to be unduly worried about. Instead, he believes that food evolves. "From my point of view, everything starts changing with time." After all, many ingredients that are today considered central to Indian cuisine, including tomatoes, chillies and potatoes, did not originate from the subcontinent. "When people say that this is not authentic Indian food, I want to ask them what authentic Indian food is," says the executive chef of Rania, which won its first Michelin star

a year after it opened in mid-2022. While he was always interested in cooking — his father ran a kitchen in Pune, his hometown — he never imagined it would become his career, he says. "I was into motorcycles and wanted to pursue Automobile Engineering," he says. Maths, however, wasn't his strongest point, so he decided to try his hand at cooking, going on to graduate from IHM Gurdaspur in 2008. "It was a really good place. I got to know what cooking was about," says Chetan, who spent nearly a decade of his career with Chef Manish Mehrotra's Indian Accent, moving to New York in 2016, with the same restaurant. "Indian Accent was a place of high curiosity. We would serve blue cheese naan, and people would say that your naan had gone bad. We had to educate the clientele about what blue cheese is and the thought process behind it," he recalls with a laugh. "It was a different zone at that point and an evolution started out." The evolution continues going by Rania's latest menu, which throws up a range of dishes that continues to push the boundaries of imagination. A laccha aloo chaat, for instance, seems to be paired with a sorrel chutney, Amritsari hollandaise and moringa podi enhance the flavour of North Point oysters, while a mishti doi has traces of strawberry and rhubarb. "It is not that we dilute the food. For us, it is the integrity of flavour that matters," says chef Chetan, who firmly believes that food is always a personal interpretation of what you think it is. "The Michelin star is more about confidence that what you are doing is (heading) in the right direction," believes Chetan.

PM Modi arrives in Dubai for World Climate Action Summit, received by UAE leader

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Dubai for the World Climate Action Summit that will be held alongside the COP28 meet. He was received by UAE Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan at the airport.

(News Agency) - Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday landed in Dubai where he will attend the World Climate Action Summit that will be held alongside the United Nations 'Conference of the Parties' on climate, known as COP28.

He was received by UAE's Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan at the airport. "Landed in Dubai to take part in the COP28 Summit. Looking forward to the proceedings of the Summit, which are aimed at creating a better planet," PM Modi tweeted on X. The Prime Minister will hold meetings with global leaders and participate in special events aimed at furthering climate action, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi

said.

embers of the Indian community lined up to receive PM Modi at his hotel. Waving Indian flags, the community members sang 'Saare Jahan Se Achcha, Hindustan Hamara'. The World Climate Action Summit is the high-level segment of the COP28. Several world leaders are set to attend the meeting to discuss ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and effectively combat climate change. PM Modi is scheduled to participate in three other high-level side events as well. The COP28 is taking place from November 30 to December 12 under the presidency of the UAE.

Before his departure to Dubai, PM Modi said India had "walked the talk" on climate action and

asserted it was high on priority during New Delhi's G20 Presidency.

PM Modi said he was happy to see the COP28 Summit being under the presidency of the UAE, which has been an important partner for India in the field of climate action.

"In keeping with our civilisational ethos, India has always laid emphasis on climate action even as we pursue social and economic development," he said. The Prime Minister said COP28 will also provide an opportunity to review progress made under the Paris Agreement and chart a path for future course on climate action.

"The New Delhi Leaders' Declaration includes numerous concrete steps on climate action and sustainable development. I



look forward to the COP-28 taking forward the consensus on these issues," he said.

"At the Voice of Global South Summit convened by India, the Global South spoke for the need for climate action based on the principles of equity, climate justice, and common but differentiated responsibilities, as well as a greater focus on adaptation," he added. PM Modi stressed it was important that efforts of the developing world be supported with adequate climate financing and technology transfer.

"India has walked the talk when it comes to climate action. Our achievements in different sectors like renewable energy, energy efficiency, afforestation, energy conservation, Mission LiFE are testament to the commitment of our people towards earth," he said. "I look forward to joining special events including on climate finance, Green Credit initiative and LeadIT. I also look forward to the opportunity to meet some of the other leaders present at Dubai, and discuss ways to accelerate global climate action," he further said.

Nothing pending from our side: Sitharaman to Karnataka's 'delayed funds' charge

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah accused the Centre of delaying the release of crop loss compensation to drought-hit farmers and said his government would pay Rs 2,000 to them. Hitting back, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said there was "nothing pending from our side".

(News Agency) - The Karnataka government on Thursday announced that it would pay the first instalment of crop loss compensation, of up to Rs 2,000, for farmers affected by drought. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah accused the Centre of delaying the release of the funds even as Nirmala Sitharaman asserted there was "nothing pending" from the central government's side. Siddaramaiah said the crop relief amount would depend on the area of the land owned by the farmer. The minimum amount to be disbursed will be from Rs 1,000, he said. He said the crop losses in Karnataka stood at Rs 4,683.12 crore.

"The government has released Rs 450 crore for 6.5 lakh farmers. Apart from that, we have released Rs 328 crore for drinking and employment purposes. We have transferred Rs 780 crore to the district collector's account," Siddaramaiah said. Accusing the Centre of delaying drought relief



to farmers, the Chief Minister stated, "Crop losses stand at Rs 4,683.12 crore. We asked for that amount from the Centre. But, not a single meeting was held by the Centre on this issue."

"We sent a memorandum to the Centre on September 21. We met the Centre team who came to inspect the drought situation," he said.

Siddaramaiah added Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda spoke to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman about the

release of crop loss compensation, but alleged that nothing had happened.

Earlier, the Chief Minister wrote to Sitharaman and sought financial assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to tackle the severe drought in several parts of the state. Siddaramaiah said no amount had been given to Karnataka till now despite "mounting pressure". The Karnataka government has declared 223 out of the total 236 taluks in the state as drought-hit.

"From my experience, I have noticed that drought hits Karnataka once in four years. Why can't your 25 MPs speak to the Centre and grant us the funds?" Siddaramaiah said, attacking the Centre.

Pointing out that the state had witnessed a crop loss of an estimated 48.19 lakh hectares, the Chief Minister said, "Karnataka has sought financial relief of Rs 18,171.44 crore as per NDRF norms from the Centre. The crop loss compensation sought is to the tune of over Rs 4,663 crore."

SITHARAMAN HITS BACK
Hitting back at Siddaramaiah over his allegations of delay in releasing financial aid to drought-hit farmers, Sitharaman asserted there was nothing pending from the Centre to Karnataka.

"They have sent me the letter and much before the letter reaches me, they can put it on social media, the minister or the Chief Minister," she said.

The Finance Minister said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been the Chief Minister for more than 10 years and said he knew what that it is for the states to get their money on time. "I'm an MP from the state. I also have a responsibility. The state hasn't sent me the required papers. I keep waiting for the letter to be sent. I can't send the money without authorisation from the Accountant General. That's the truth. These are allegations without facts," she said.

"For NDRF funds, there's a committee that comes under the Home Minister. Karnataka Minister Krishna Byre Gowda met me. Even then, I had explained to him," she added.

Sitharaman asserted the money from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) was in the hands of the Karnataka government to spend. "It's not as if money will not come. The Centre team did an assessment and submitted it," she said.

A political stalemate led to the bloodshed in the Middle East. Only a political settlement can truly end it

Like many other people in Israel and across the world, my first reaction to the attack on 7 October was of shock and horror. But that initial reaction was accompanied by rage, not only at the appalling massacre perpetrated by Hamas on women and children, the elderly and the handicapped, even babies, but also at those who could have prevented this act of violence, many that preceded it and the brutal retaliation that would come in its wake.

Without clearly defined political goals, war tends to devolve into endless destruction and annihilation. The only way out of this conundrum is for Israel to declare that it seeks a peaceful resolution of the conflict with an appropriate and willing Palestinian leadership. Making such a statement would dramatically transform the situation and clear the way for intermediate steps to be taken on the ground, starting with a halt to the mutual killing and a return of all surviving hostages.

Any political path to resolving this crisis must include steps toward ending the occupation. Two months before the attack by Hamas, I helped craft a petition pointing out that the Israeli government's attempted legal "overhaul" was being pushed by an extreme rightwing settler faction whose goal was to annex the West Bank. Yet the impressive protest movement against the judicial coup had refused to confront this "elephant in the room", the occupation of millions of Palestinians.

On 7 October, this repressed reality literally exploded in the country's face. This was an event waiting to happen. If you keep over 2 million people under siege for 16 years, cramped in a narrow strip of land, without enough work, proper sanitation, food, water, energy and education, with no hope or future prospects, you cannot but expect outbreaks of ever more desperate and brutal violence, inexcusable as those atrocities were.

For a long time, Israeli politicians and generals had believed that they could "manage" the conflict with the Palestinians rather than resolve it. Indeed, Benjamin Netanyahu's many administrations chose to keep Hamas just strong enough, and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank weak and unpopular enough, that the Israeli prime minister and his allies could argue that no political pact with the Palestinians was possible. Meanwhile, settlements kept proliferating in the occupied territories, making any territorial compromise increasingly unfeasible.

That political stalemate, enforced by Israel, ultimately led to this violence. And while Hamas does not represent an existential threat to Israel, the current war in Gaza may bring about greater involvement by Hezbollah, Iranian militias and Shiite Houthis. Growing settler and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) violence in the

occupied West Bank may ignite another Intifada, followed by an attempt to ethnically cleanse that territory, triggering in turn communal violence in Israel's "mixed" Jewish and Palestinian cities. Israel may thus be unleashing a conflict on a scale not experienced since 1948, with unpredictable but surely profound regional and internal consequences.

Denying the deeper causes of the current crisis only makes things worse. Israel has presented itself as the only democracy in the Middle East, yet this applies only to its 7 million Jewish residents. Israel's 2 million internal Palestinian citizens have never enjoyed full democratic rights; the 3 million Palestinians living under a 56-year-long Israeli occupation in the West Bank have almost no rights at all, and almost half of Palestinians in Gaza have lived their entire lives under an Israeli siege. It is because of the denial of this reality that Israel is currently balanced over a precipice.

Since 7 October, the IDF has displaced 1.7 million civilians – the majority of whom are Palestinian refugees of the 1948 Nakba and their descendants – from the northern part of Gaza to the southern part, and reduced a vast number of their homes to rubble. By most accounts the Israeli military strikes on Gaza have killed well over 10 times as many Palestinians, including numerous children (who make up 50% of the overall population there), as the number of Israelis killed by Hamas. This policy is creating an untenable humanitarian crisis. The population of Gaza has nowhere to go, and its infrastructure is being demolished.

Meanwhile, Israeli political and military leaders have made deeply troubling pronouncements that appear to prepare the ground for what may result in ethnic cleansing. The potential outlines of this undertaking have been revealed by the arch-conservative Kohelet Policy Forum, previously engaged in the judicial overhaul plans, which advocates the "relocation" of refugees from Gaza to other countries, allowing Jewish settlers to take over.

Many other members of the Israeli government, parliament and military would like to see the Palestinian people, as such, disappear from the map and from consciousness. For that reason we must urgently warn against the potential for genocide before it happens, rather than belatedly condemning it after it has already taken place. Evidence suggests that the Israeli military is already in breach of the Geneva Conventions on the laws and customs of war, which has led to growing international censure and rapid loss of support in the US.

Why India's Reactions To Canada And US On Khalistan Row Are Different

The US Attorney for New York has charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta with murder-for-hire charges in the alleged foiled bid to kill Khalistani separatist Gurwatpan Pannun in the US. What is most significant is that the investigations by the US clearly state that Gupta was acting at the behest of an "Indian government employee", drawing a connection, much like the Canadian government did, with what PM Justin Trudeau called "agents of the Indian government".

The US press release is far more damaging than any accusation by Canada. First, it mentions the antecedents of Nikhil Gupta, who was allegedly working with the "Indian government employee", as being involved in serious crimes like "international narcotics and weapons trafficking". Secondly, it lays bare the entire process by which the bid to kill Pannun was thwarted, which included US undercover officers getting direct information from Gupta on the instructions he was getting from the "Indian government employee". For example, the official press release says, "On or about June 20, 2023, CC-1 sent GUPTA a news article about the Victim and messaged GUPTA, "[i]t's [a] priority now." Where CC - 1 refers to the "Indian government employee". The US undercover operation also points to the connection they made with Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing in Canada. The press statement mentions that just two days before the message that Gupta received from CC-1 to carry out the killing of Pannun on "priority", Nijjar was killed in British Columbia, on June 18. "On or about June 19, 2023, the day after the Nijjar murder, GUPTA told the UC that Nijjar 'was also the target' and 'we have so many targets'," according to the statement. As

opposed to this, so far, the Canadian government has not revealed any details of its investigation. On September 18 Justin Trudeau made a bombshell of an allegation against India in the Canadian parliament and then Foreign Minister Melanie Joly announced the expulsion of an Indian diplomat. The manner of the revelation was most probably the reason for India's sharp reaction. There were two issues here - one, that Justin Trudeau made the statement in parliament as investigations were underway and decided to move away from quiet diplomacy on the matter. Next, Melanie Joly's office identified the expelled Indian official to the Canadian media and added that he led the Canadian branch of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). This, while the officer was listed as a minister for economic, coordination, and community affairs on the Indian High Commission's website. The fact that India has, even in the past, expressed its concern to Canada over its approach of dealing with Khalistan separatists with kid gloves and allowing its territory to be used for a referendum over a secessionist call, had already created a backdrop for larger friction after Trudeau's statement. So, India reacted with visa restrictions and a threat to revoke the diplomatic immunity of diplomats, resulting in 41 of them returning to Canada last month. Why hasn't New Delhi used a similar forceful approach against the US? Many put it flippantly as, Canada is no US. The other, more plausible, reason seems to be that while the US has conducted an investigation and revealed details and charges, Trudeau seemed to have jumped the gun because of domestic political requirements.



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America once valued life more than guns. How did that change?

By Dominic Erdozain

Soon afterwards, we learned that Lane Murdock, the student who led the national school walkout after the Parkland mass shooting of 2018, has left the country. Burned out and disillusioned, Murdock now lives in Scotland, where freedom is a reality and nobody lives in fear of guns.

I appreciate the sentiment. But the picture looks different when you discover that almost everything we now live with, from assault rifles to stand-your-ground laws, is new. This crushing pattern of domestic armament is not the American heritage or the will of the people. It's a political experiment, conjured and contrived by a militant minority. To see this is to know that something can be done.

America has always had a gun problem, but never on this scale. Every day, 327 people are shot in the United States, more than a hundred of them fatally. And the numbers are rising. Mass killings, involving four or more victims, have nearly doubled in five years. Gun deaths among children, already at record highs, increased by 41.6% between 2018 and 2021.

School shootings, once rare and exceptional events, are on a similar spiral. In 2010 there were 13 such incidents nationwide. Last year, there were 79. This year, the number reached 77 by mid-November. Of the 36 deadliest shootings recorded since 1903, more than half occurred in the last decade.

No other generation has endured this. The death toll is growing because the weapons now available, and the right to carry them outside the home, are new. The norms of today would have been unthinkable to Americans of any other era.

Most Americans of the mid-20th century abhorred the concept of "preparatory armed carriage" and shuddered at the sight of a gun in public. Regulations against "going armed" were as old as the republic and staples of common law. Shotguns and hunting rifles were widely owned but handguns were feared and despised.



In 1959, nearly 6 out of 10 Americans favored a total ban on handguns, and only 16% of American households contained such a weapon, many of them in the South.

In 1969, the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence recommended drastic measures to reduce the number of handguns in circulation, then estimated at 24 million. "I am one of those persons who believe that violence and instruments of violence breed violence," said Marvin E. Wolfgang, a professor of criminology who co-directed the task force on firearms. "If pushed to the wall, I would probably support the Japanese ruling that no one except a police officer should be allowed to possess or carry a pistol."

The chairman of the commission, Milton S. Eisenhower, wanted to recommend a ban, settling instead on a policy of rigorous and selective licensing. Federal law, advised the commission, "should not consider normal household protection a sufficient showing of need to have a handgun."

The problem did not go away, and Republican President Richard Nixon was among those who favored a ban. "I don't know why any individual should have a right to have a revolver in his house," he growled to aides in 1972. Never mind licensing; why "can't we go after handguns, period?"

he wondered. The National Rifle Association would be against it. The gun makers would be against it. But "people should not have handguns," he insisted, with the usual stream of profanities. "Guns," he once said, "are an abomination."



Nixon was not alone. His attorney general, John N. Mitchell, declared on "The David Frost Show" that he was "diametrically opposed to anybody having a gun, except law enforcement officers." In 1973, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals called for the criminalization of privately owned handguns and their complete eradication as civilian weapons by 1983. The nation was bleeding. A total ban on these agents of misery, urged Russell Peterson, chairman of the commission and a former

Republican governor of Delaware, was long overdue.

Then came the storm. In June 1974, the City Council of Madison, Wisconsin, voted for a citywide ban on handguns in a mood of sonorous idealism. "Maybe one day when there are no guns in this community," declared the jubilant young mayor, Paul Soglin, "the cops won't have to carry them either." Forty years later, serving his third term as mayor, Soglin was fighting a different battle: to keep handguns — now legally carried across the state — off crowded buses. The dream was over. Republican lawmakers, not resting on their victory, were pressing to remove school zones from the last redoubts of gun-free spaces.

What changed? The short answer is President Ronald Reagan, whose crisp, Cold War thinking reduced domestic policy to a series of simple choices. Good and evil. Light and darkness. Arm the righteous, he promised, and crime will take care of itself. It was a "nasty truth," he said, but criminals were not fazed by gun laws. The answer was to make firepower accessible to the good people: the silent majority who sustain the nation. The good guys, who never miss. For the new conservative, guns were more than weapons: they were symbols of Americanism and vehicles of destiny. With Reagan's arrival in the White

House in 1981, the conversation shifted from controlling guns to "protecting" gun owners. Reagan embraced a militant NRA and pressed on with a "bill of rights for America's gun owners," against the recommendation of his own task force on violent crime.

"Only a madman could look at the problem we have in this country," wrote Michael Beard, head of the National Coalition to Ban Handguns, "and then say that what this country needs is to weaken our handgun control laws." But that was the agenda in 1984.

When Florida passed one of the nation's first concealed carry laws the following year, Gov. Bob Graham, a Democrat, vetoed it as a policy pregnant with danger. "People could have come armed into shopping centers, movies and school yards," a relieved and indignant senator said. Very soon they would.

When Texas passed a similar law in 1993, Democratic Gov. Ann Richards vetoed it with simmering rage. "On this day," she declared, "we say no to the amateur gunslingers who think they will be braver and smarter with gun in hand." The people of Texas, she had long argued, "do not need to be reminded that weapons of violence produce death to innocent children and adults." The only conceivable outcome of the bill would be that more people would be "killed by gunfire."

But this was no longer a debate. It was a culture war, in which facts were optional and reality negotiable. Opposition to the concealed weapons bill cost Richards the next election, and her successor, George W. Bush, duly signed it into law. "This is a bill to make Texas a safer place," he said, with uncertain gravity. A new era had begun.

In 1986, only one state (Vermont) allowed citizens to carry a gun without a permit. Twenty-five states restricted the privilege to those who could demonstrate "good cause." Sixteen states prohibited the carriage of firearms altogether.



Biden's 'as long as it takes' approach in Ukraine has failed: Here's why

By Rebekah Koffler

As the conflict in Ukraine is approaching its second anniversary, President Biden's "as long as it takes" approach to save the former Soviet nation clearly has failed. The commander in chief of Ukraine's armed forces, Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, recently admitted in an interview in *The Economist* that "there will most likely be no deep and beautiful breakthrough," speaking about the conflict's stalemate.

Indeed, despite a whopping \$113 billion appropriated by Congress for Ukraine in 2022 alone and 19 months of nonstop bloody fighting, Russia continues to control roughly 20% of Ukraine's territory. Less than 500 square miles of land have changed hands since the beginning of this year, according to analysis conducted by the distinctly pro-Ukraine *New York Times*, which relied on data from the Institute for the Study of War and the American Enterprise Institute.

It is not a coincidence that Washington's pouring billions of dollars in cash and weaponry into Kyiv has not translated into Ukraine's victory and Russia's defeat. Money and technology do not win wars. We learned it most recently in Afghanistan. Strategy does, and President Biden never devised one. That is, despite the fact that he almost certainly had the necessary intelligence to do it, at least seven years prior to Vladimir Putin's invasion. As a former senior official in the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency and one of the top three analysts on Russian doctrine and strategy in the intelligence community, I personally briefed President Obama's White House national security staff on Putin's plans and Russia's war-fighting strategy multiple times. I also briefed countless top U.S. military commanders and Pentagon officials, as well as NATO ministers and military leaders.

As vice president at the time, the go-to person on Ukraine policy, and the architect of the failed Russia "reset" strategy, Joe Biden had to be made aware of those briefings. President Biden and his team, many members of which, including his then-national security adviser and current Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, joined him in his administration, must have received similar briefings prior to and during his presidency, given Russia's ranking as a Tier 1 threat to U.S. security. The president had ample time to act to deter Putin, prevent the invasion of Ukraine, and avoid the exorbitant spending of U.S. taxpayers' earnings on what has become an unwinnable war.

To devise a viable plan to beat Putin, team Biden had to first understand the Kremlin's anti-U.S. strategy, or what I call Putin's Playbook. I described it, at the unclassified level, in my book, "Putin's Playbook: Russia's Secret Plan to Defeat America." The centerpiece of Russia's strategy in Ukraine – or in a conflict with any other post-Soviet state aspiring to join the West – has nothing to do with Ukraine. It has everything to do with the United States though. Putin's main goal has been to prevent Washington from entering a conflict by holding the U.S. homeland at risk. What Biden should have done was neutralize or at least minimize that risk.

Here are the top three areas that Biden's team failed to secure, thus provoking Putin's invasion. No former Soviet nation can possibly win a war with Russia, whose military, despite all the tactical mishaps in Ukraine, is designated by the Pentagon as a "near peer" competitor to the U.S. military, the world's best, albeit in terms of tactics only, and

not strategy.

The only possible way for these smaller countries to win against Russia would be for the U.S. armed forces to intervene on their behalf. To make sure it doesn't happen, Russian military strategists developed a top-secret war plan – "Plan for Strategic Containment and Conflict Prevention," which Putin approved on July 23, 2013. This plan seeks to deter Washington from entering conflicts in Russia's perceived sphere of influence in Eurasia by threatening to bring the war to the U.S. homeland. The plan envisions exploiting U.S. vulnerabilities in the key warfare domains – cyber, space and nuclear – and striking the U.S. homeland kinetically, if need be. It is for this reason that Biden has authorized just enough weapons to Ukraine to virtue signal that he is doing something even though it's insufficient to win. Biden understands that Ukraine's victory is unattainable without putting the U.S. homeland at risk.

First, cybersecurity should have been at the top of Biden's priorities as a counter-strategy to Russia's cyber warfare doctrine. Putin has at his disposal the most sophisticated and destructive arsenal of cyber weapons of any foreign nation. And he is not afraid to use it. Yet, our networks remain vulnerable.

The Russians have compromised the networks of many sectors of the economy, critical infrastructure, including nuclear facilities, and countless government agencies, including the White House, the State Department and the Pentagon.

Russia's ransomware attack on the Colonial Pipeline in May 2021, a critical part of U.S. petroleum infrastructure, supplying around half of the East Coast's fuel, demonstrated the kind of damage Russia could do. The six-day

shutdown of the pipeline, which transports 2.5 million barrels per day of gasoline, diesel fuel, heating oil and jet fuel, resulted in gas shortages, outages at gas stations, price hikes, long lines and panicked consumers.

Similarly, Russia's ransomware attack on JBS, which processes one-fifth of the nation's meat supply, raised the issue of food security and affordability. In wartime, Russia's cyberattacks would be much more crippling and could cause a catastrophic power outage.

Even our weapons arsenal, including the advanced Patriot missile system, the littoral combat ship, and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter – capabilities that the United States would be reliant on in the event of a kinetic war with Russia – are vulnerable to cyberattacks, according to a recent U.S. Government Accountability Office audit.

Second, securing U.S. satellites, on which U.S. forces depend for every aspect of war-fighting, would help mitigate our vulnerability to Russia's space warfare doctrine. Having found American space superiority is also our Achilles' heel, Russian strategists set out to deafen and blind U.S. forces in a conflict.

Moscow believes that in an all-out space war, America – whose entire society, from ATMs to gas pumps, is wired up through space – stands to lose more than Russia. And yet, our satellites remain attractive sitting ducks for Russia (and China), which have developed advanced space and counter-space capabilities.

Gen. John Hyten, then commander of the U.S. Strategic Command which is in charge of nuclear weapons, expressed his concern for the U.S. military's ability to protect these critical assets by describing them in 2017 as "big, fat, juicy targets." And third,

augmenting the U.S. nuclear arsenal with a low-yield nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile would have been a smart move if Washington were to take a direct aim at Putin's "escalate-to-de-escalate" post-Cold War nuclear strategy.

This weapon had been part of the U.S. arsenal until it was retired by the Obama administration. President Trump ordered to reinstate this capability as part of his modernization plan for U.S. nuclear weapons, but Biden canceled the program when he became president. While Congress seeks to fund the program, despite the Biden administration's efforts to end it, it's too little and too late to deter Putin. "A spoon is handy to have before lunch, not after," as a famous Russian saying goes. Putin has already invaded Ukraine, threatening periodically to launch a limited nuclear war in Europe to keep U.S. forces out of the battlefield.

Evidently, Biden is acutely aware of the danger of a nuclear Armageddon. "He [Putin] is not joking when he talks about the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons," Biden told his donors in October of last year.

None of these security measures are simple to implement. They are even harder to integrate into a coherent multipronged strategy. Closing, or at least significantly reducing, gaps in U.S. cyber, space and nuclear security requires years of work. The truth is that years are what Biden had at his disposal. And he failed to act. With the China threat looming, Washington must learn its lesson in Ukraine. The lesson is not to keep emptying the U.S. weapons stockpile and throwing good money after bad at Kyiv. It is to plan ahead and formulate a viable deterrence strategy, before, not after Xi Jinping invades Taiwan.

By: Maj Gen Ashok Kumar, VSM
(R)
GENESIS

There has been a paradigm shift in the definition of security for all the nations in the world. Initially conceived only as defence from military attacks, it moved to the protection of its citizenry as well, in multiple domains. At present, it encompasses the entire canvas of the national interests related to itself and its citizens, both in the present as well as future timeline. Due to such a wide canvas of emerging security concepts, it has become very important to address these challenges more meaningfully. These challenges emerge from friends as well as foes. While friends may be collecting certain data for their future utilisation, foes are working both in the present as well as the future, utilising covert and overt means. Coming closer home to the Indian context, the security challenges are galore but those emanating from its neighbourhood deserve special attention as they have a profound impact on national security. Since the expanse of national security is too wide, only some of the important aspects will be highlighted as they have direct as well as indirect impacts on the national contours of security.

CHINA

China poses the most potent security challenge for the country and that too in multiple domains. Some of the important aspects are as under: Territorial Challenges
There is an ongoing territorial dispute wherein large tracts of Indian territory of Aksai Chin are under adverse possession of China besides ongoing ingress in other areas as well extending from Ladakh to HP, UK, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.
Despite the 1962 war and skirmishes of 1967, 1987 and 2017, China continues to be aggressive on the border issue and on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) issue. Despite multiple agreements to maintain peace and tranquillity, it has disregarded all the bilateral agreements and international norms wherein it has made large-scale transgressions across multiple points on the LAC in Eastern Ladakh since April-May 2020, the transgressions continuing for more than three years.

It has adopted its Land Border Law with effect from January 1, 2022, which has transformed the issue of territorial dispute into a sovereignty dispute, restricting the scope of future negotiations.

It has established more than 600



Paradigm Shift in Security Challenges From India's Neighbourhood

Xiaokang villages close to the LAC to reassert its claim wherein it is trying to focus on the negotiation of LAC, keeping the border negotiation almost dead for times to come.

It is naming multiple places in Arunachal Pradesh to reassert its claims besides publishing incorrect maps.

It is giving stapled visas to residents of Arunachal Pradesh irrespective of the purpose of the visit to China and in the process, undermining Indian national authority.

It is raising objections to the visit of the President, PM and other senior dignitaries to the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

While China had initially focussed on strategic and operational aspects of warfighting, it is now focusing on the tactical aspects as well as readying itself for any future conflict whose timing it can decide as force capability is in its favour.

Having adopted 'No First Use' of nuclear weapons by both India and China, China has gained the edge wherein it can use the favourable conventional force asymmetry of the conventional forces currently in its favour.

China has been actively working with other neighbours of India to drift them away from India and has largely succeeded in this effort.

In addition to land threat, air & naval threat also looms large.

Economic Challenges

After the detente of post 1962 conflict between India and China, China used Indian markets to boost its trade which continues

heavily in its favour to date.

It made India so dependent on itself post-1990 that the Indian manufacturing sector suffered in a big way. Despite Covid-19 and its incursions on LAC, India's effort to reduce its economic dependence on China did not meet with much success. In fact, the trade values exceeded the previous levels and that too in favour of China. India needs to give additional impetus to domestic manufacturing combined with an alternate logistic supply chain. It's a time-consuming process but has to be done to address this economic challenge for its misadventures.

Water Challenges

Most of the Indian rivers emanate from Chinese-occupied Tibet/other parts of China.

China has been constructing dams to reduce the water flow which is critical to India being a low riparian state.

There are no formal agreements about sharing the river water coming from China unlike the Indus Water Treaty existing between India and Pakistan.

India needs to work towards a formal agreement with China for river water sharing lest it suffers due to Chinese adversarial actions.

In addition, India needs to resolve its water-related disputes with all other neighbours including Bangladesh.

The country has to work hard for the restoration of rivers and other natural water resources while linking all Indian rivers is a must. It continues to occupy close to 40 per cent territory of the Indian state of J&K to date.

Due to the CFL after the 1947-48 war and LOC after the 1971 war, it claims Siachen glacier illegally as demarcation was terminated at NJ 9842 at both stages of the demarcation. After India occupied the Siachen glacier in 1984, Pakistan has made numerous attempts to dislodge Indians though it has not met with success so far.

It handed over Shaksgam Valley to China illegally in 1963 to permit connectivity through the Karakoram pass.

It has now allowed the construction of CPEC through the occupied territory of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir thus bringing China into the India-Pakistan dispute.

It has been conducting proxy wars not only in J&K but attempting to cause disturbances in other states of India with a special focus on Punjab.

Pakistan has also been supplying drugs as well as fake currency including the use of drones for the purpose.

India has to call Pakistan's nuclear bluff for once. The current turmoil in Pakistan on multiple fronts, including the economic crisis, presents an excellent opportunity for India to handle the Pakistani challenges more effectively.

NEPAL

Nepal has been India's trusted friend for a long time. It is a country which allows borderless travel from both sides besides Nepalese youth being recruited in the Indian Army. Of late, there have been emerging challenges from Nepal as

well, some of which are as under: Chinese inroads in Nepal have increased substantially.

A bilateral border agreement has been made between Nepal and China to identify a separate Tri junction from the one recognised by India.

It has raised the Kala Pani territorial dispute claiming large Indian territories and has gone ahead even with the publication of maps probably at the behest of China.

Increased connectivity is being sought with China to reduce Indian dependence.

Agnipath, a revised recruitment scheme for the defence forces, which allows only 25 per cent of candidates to be retained after four years of service, has resulted in the Nepal government not allowing its youth to join the Indian Army, thus disrupting a very important chord in the bilateral relationship. Deliberate political and diplomatic handling is needed to arrest the Nepalese drift in the Chinese lap. A fresh friendship treaty could be the way out.

BHUTAN

This country has been a trusted friend whose security responsibility is with India. India stood its ground due to this in Doklam in 2017. There have been attitudinal changes in Bhutan after the democratic form of government came to power, some of the challenges are as under:

China is trying to establish diplomatic relations with Bhutan which will drift the nation away from India.

The ongoing border dispute settlement discussion, if it results in giving away the Western part of Bhutan in the Chumbi valley to China, will be detrimental to the security interest of India due to the increased threat to its Siliguri corridor.

Inroads into Bhutan by China will not only affect the Siliguri corridor but will also result in an enhanced threat to the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh.

India needs to handle Bhutan deftly to safeguard its national interests now as well as for times to come. A fresh treaty could be the way out.

SRI LANKA

Despite an all-time and all-out effort to support Sri Lanka, India is always seen as an untrusted friend. India even went out of its way to support this island nation in the current economic crisis when it was debt-trapped by China and had almost collapsed. The country has fallen into the Chinese hands in a big way.

Pharma Star: India Steering Global Supply Chain Away from China

India's pharmaceutical industry is at a pivotal juncture. With its well-established prowess in generic drug manufacturing, it has been called on by the world to build a reliable base for the manufacture of raw materials, which offers an opportunity for India to attract the bulk of the pharmaceutical supply chains away from China. India has answered this call and is well-poised to tap into its potential, gather its best in the mission and meet this geopolitical demand.

In recent years, India has been actively promoting the growth of domestic manufacturing in active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), and this policy is already yielding results. The world sees India as the greatest alternative to China in this aspect and India is determined to seize the opportunity.

In just the last two years, India has started producing 45 new APIs for which it was earlier dependent on imports from China. Big Pharma is also looking to increase orders with Indian contract manufacturers to steer supply chains away from China. "India has started producing 45 APIs



therapeutic effect in a drug. These are produced with KSMs and intermediates. KSMs or key starting materials are raw materials comprising basic chemicals needed in the manufacture of drugs. Intermediates are generally chemical

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

At the pinnacle of the global pharmaceutical landscape, India proudly bears the title of the 'Pharmacy of the World'. Most noteworthy is India's contribution to about 20% of global exports in generic drugs.

Over the past few decades, the Indian pharmaceutical industry has witnessed substantial growth, securing its position as the third largest producer by volume and the 14th largest by value globally. Contributing approximately 1.72% to the nation's GDP, the industry is projected to reach \$65 billion by 2024 and \$130 billion by 2030.

this remarkable growth is fuelled by an increasing demand for affordable and high-quality medicines, both domestically and internationally.

India has firmly established itself as a critical player in the global pharmaceutical market, with exports experiencing an impressive 103% growth since 2013-14, reaching Rs 1,83,422 crore in 2021-22.

The Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) segment is a pivotal component of the pharmaceutical industry, contributing approximately 35% to the market. India holds the position of the third-largest producer of APIs globally, commanding an 8% share in the industry. With the manufacturing of over 500 different APIs, India contributes 57% of APIs to the World Health Organization's prequalified list.

Forecasts indicate that the Indian API market is poised to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 13.7% in the initial four years, surpassing the generic API industry by about 8%.

The Indian API sector has garnered significant interest from investors and venture capitalists due to the country's robust domestic market, advanced chemical industry, skilled workforce, adherence to stringent quality and manufacturing standards, and cost advantages (approximately 40% lower than in the West) for establishing and operating modern plants, providing a distinct edge.

India produces more than 500 APIs and the number is growing fast to meet the country's ambition to manufacture raw materials locally. The PLI scheme launched by the Modi government has found a positive response from industry majors. Major pharma companies like Sun Pharmaceuticals, Cipla, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, Wockhardt, Biocon, Biological E, Panacea Biotec, Torrent Pharma, Aurobindo Pharma, Intas Pharma, Natco Pharma and Lupin.

Bulk manufacturing of raw materials needed for drugs is a critical challenge for India, which is tagged often as the 'Pharmacy of the World' with its dominance in generic drugs. China maintains its hegemony with highly competitive prices that are the result of cost-efficiency in production, high labour productivity, cheaper electricity, logistics costs and supportive government policies. India also needs to compete with China in the realm of ease of doing business to establish extensive manufacturing capacity for pharmaceutical raw materials.

THE INDIAN FIX

India is best placed to offer a fix to the world's heavy dependence on China for pharmaceutical raw materials. In a strategic move to harness its API potential, India is actively developing a comprehensive and supportive ecosystem. In 2020, the government granted approval for a PLI scheme, allocating Rs 6,940 crore to promote the domestic manufacturing of Key Starting Materials (KSMs)/Drug Intermediaries (DIs) and APIs. The manufacturing of 45 active pharmaceutical ingredients has commenced in India under the PLI scheme, representing about 70% of APIs for which the country has a 90% import dependence.

Simultaneously, the Department of Pharmaceuticals has granted "in-principle" approval to proposals from Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh under the Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks scheme. With a budget of Rs 3,000 crore, this initiative aims to provide financial assistance to these states for establishing bulk drug parks, thereby reducing manufacturing costs through the creation of world-class common infrastructure facilities. This strategic move is anticipated to enhance the competitiveness of the domestic bulk drug industry.

Additionally, the Government of Assam has proposed a pharmaceutical park in Chaygaon, Kamrup Rural, covering 100 acres with an estimated project cost of Rs 153.64 crore. In fostering innovation within the industry, various measures have been proposed, including raising the limit for foreign direct investment (allowing up to 100% through the automatic route for Greenfield pharmaceutical projects) and implementing a new strategy for safeguarding intellectual property rights.



after China stopped providing key ingredients during the Covid-19 pandemic," said Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya at the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER) in September.

The Narendra Modi government has nudged the Indian pharma industry to actively pursue API manufacturing and shed dependence on China. Its support has also come in the form of Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes. In 2021, the Union Health Ministry launched a PLI scheme with an outlay of Rs 15,000 crore over six years to promote domestic manufacturing of APIs, KSMs (key starting materials) and drug intermediaries.

THE CHINA PROBLEM

China is deeply entrenched in the pharmaceutical supply chains. It extensively produces APIs, KSMs, and drug intermediates, all of which are crucial for the world's pharma industry. APIs are the active ingredient that deliver the intended

compounds used in the process of making APIs. China is a global leader in the production and export of APIs with 40% share in global API exports. Over the past three decades, the proportion of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) imported into India from China has surged, rising from approximately 1% in 1991 to around 70% in 2019.

The world's pharma industry has learnt hard lessons from its sweeping dependence on China for APIs in past few years — first during the US-China trade war and then with Covid when supply chains met crippling snags owing to lockdowns in China. Tensions with India at the border have also contributed to the problem as Indian drug manufacturers heavily rely on raw material from China. It does not help that in the recent past, there has been a steep increase in the actual market price of some of the APIs imported from China contributing to market price volatility affecting Indian drug manufacturers.

How Silkyara Tunnel Rescue Brought Out A Bold, New Face In Rising India

By: Abhijit Majumder

Growing up in Dhanbad and Jharia in my earliest childhood years, I still recall the distant wails of families whose men were killed and trapped in the coal mines. It was almost an everyday affair. The cries would waft in with the night air across a few kilometres. But these wails did not travel beyond the coal mine region. Hardly any action was taken.

The Chasnala mining disaster of 1975, for instance, which happened near Dhanbad, killed 375 miners. An explosion was followed by flooding.

Bollywood took note. Kaala Patthar, starring Amitabh Bachchan, Shashi Kapoor, Shatrughan Sinha, Rakhi Gulzar and Parveen Babi was made. Utpal Dutt wrote his Bengali play, Kallol, on the mining tragedies. But data tabled in the Lok Sabha showed that 377 workers involved in the mining of coal, minerals and oil were killed in accidents between 2015 and 2017. Of these, 129 deaths happened in 2017, 145 in 2016,



and 103 in 2015. Landslides are another devastating expression of an angry earth. The Malpa landslide of 1998, for instance, wiped away the entire Malpa village in the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand in the Kali Valley of Higher Kumaon division. The initial rockfall killed three mules. By the time it ended, 221 people died buried under the earth, including 60 Hindu pilgrims travelling to Tibet as part of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra. Indian dancer Protima Bedi, mother of actor Pooja Bedi, was among

them.

There have been 3,782 major landslides in the seven years leading to 2022, revealed Ministry of Earth Sciences data. Whether it is mules or humans, even tragedies of such scale failed to shake the nation into collective anxiety and mourning, forget action.

That seems to have changed with the Uttarakhand tunnel collapse. For once, the entire nation was hooked on to the plight of 41 trapped workers from various

states inside the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarkashi. As the rescue team painstakingly made their way to the victims, television channels, websites, newspapers and the omnipresent social media started posting minute-by-minute accounts. It is media and technology, coupled with a growing bullishness about one's own nation that for the first time one saw Indians attaching so much value to other Indian lives, that too of poor workers. This one, looming tragedy and the gritty rescue brought with it an avalanche of actions, mostly positive. Bharat was hooked and praying, despite the cricket World Cup eating into its attention till a few days ago.

The Opposition by and large steered clear of politicising the accident, except for one tasteless poster by Congress mocking Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav even offered some tips on the rescue. Minister and former army chief General VK Singh and

principal secretary with the PM's office PK Mishra personally oversaw the rescue at the site. Rat-hole tunnel diggers — an activity now banned in India — made the last-mile rescue possible and gave the efforts a last, human touch. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami met and enquired about the health of rescued workers at the Chinyalisaur Community Health Centre on Wednesday. He handed over relief cheques of Rs 1 lakh each. He ensured that all workers undergo check-ups at AIIMS Rishikesh. Dhami said that the Baukhnag temple will be rebuilt and the tunnels under construction in the hill state will be reviewed.

PM Modi spoke to the rescued workers on the telephone.

The whole episode signalled a changing India where even workers' lives matter, where a nation prays and swings into action for the underdog as intensely as it lauds the success of its famous and powerful.

Uttarakhand tunnel rescue was India's First World moment.

The border is already a deadly serious situation. Biden's latest request would make it worse

By Sen. John Barrasso

President Biden has requested over \$100 billion in the name of national security. His request fails to address America's number one national security risk: a wide-open southern border.

Republicans and Democrats have opposing views of what is needed at the border. Republicans want to stop the flood of illegal immigrants. Democrats want to smooth the flow.

Democrats want taxpayer money for sanctuary cities and social services for illegal immigrants. Republicans want to finish the wall, increase funding for Border Patrol Agents, and make real policy changes.

ur line in the sand is the Rio Grande.

National security starts with border security. The president and Democrats in the Senate do not seem to believe this simple truth. While running for president, Biden promised that he would "surge to the border all those people who are seeking asylum." The surge of millions of illegal immigrants has not let up since he took office.

The U.S.-Mexico border is now the most dangerous border crossing in the world. The border is a magnet for criminals, smugglers, and terror suspects.

The number of people who die or disappear at the border is the equivalent of a mass shooting every week.



The number of people caught crossing illegally last month neared 241,000 in one month. It was the worst October for illegal border crossings on record.

In all, a staggering 8.4 million illegal aliens have crossed the border during the first three years of the Biden administration. That includes 279 on the FBI's terror watchlist.

This is a national security crisis. Yet America is only beginning to see how dire this border disaster is. By Election Day next year, a tidal wave of 10 million people will have come to our country from all over the world. How many are terrorists? How many are criminals? How many are bringing in the

fentanyl that is killing a record number of Americans? How many are children being trafficked? Democrats don't know and don't seem to care.

In fact, Senate Democrats have done nothing about this crisis.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has not put a single bill on the floor that would stop the flow of illegal immigrants and deadly drugs. When I visited the Southern Border last month, Border Patrol Agents told us that Democrats from the Senate haven't shown up. The few that have focus on immigrant comfort and quick release. Democrats have zero policies to secure the border and zero interest in stopping the flood of illegal immigrants. It is shameful.

You have to ask why Democrats are allowing this.

Senate Republicans want to strengthen our Southern Border. We have solutions to make our country safer. Earlier this month, we outlined effective policy solutions to stop the flood of illegal immigrants and deadly drugs into our country. These solutions include finishing the border wall, DNA testing to stop traffickers from exploiting children, and restoring the successful Remain in Mexico policy. The sooner these commonsense policies become law, the safer our country will be.

Afghan Refugees: A Humanitarian Crisis Unfolds in Pakistan as World Looks the Other Way



By: Arun Anand

While the global media is abuzz with the images of an unfolding humanitarian crisis in Gaza during the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, another such crisis of a much greater proportion is unfolding in Pakistan. But so far, the world hasn't taken notice the way it should have. Even the Islamic countries have decided to ignore the threat of survival faced by no less than 1.7 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. An Islamic state is now targeting millions of Afghan Muslims and there isn't much noise about it except from the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan. On October 3, 2023, Pakistan's interim Interior Minister, Sarfaraz Bugti, issued a stern warning to the 'illegal' residents while urging them to pack their stuff and leave Pakistan voluntarily by November 1, 2023. The military dictated that the interim administration directly asked the undocumented residents, particularly Afghans, "to willingly return to their" country, failing which they will be deported by the law enforcement agencies. Though Islamabad has asserted that its actions were not aimed at a particular community, however, it is a given that this is directed at Afghans only, who have been demonised by the state functionaries and political actors for all Pakistan ills. This was an unambiguous ultimatum to unleash a crackdown towards forcing mass return of Afghans from the country unlike the past when various governments would occasionally raise the issue. The immediate carte blanche offered by the Pakistani establishment to justify this horrendous threat is the security of the state, as it accused refugees of being involved "in funding, facilitating terrorists and other illegal activities" and thereby threatening the security and stability of the state. However, it is an open secret how the Pakistani military-controlled establishment as well as its Army controlled civilian governments has over the years made Afghan refugees scapegoats and used them as casus belli to Pakistan's deteriorating economic and security situation. The establishment has successfully exploited this deflection strategy to escape from accountability for its failures. The country is currently battling extreme economic conditions, a highly repressed political atmosphere and deteriorated security situation, a perfect mix

for creating the bogey of the external enemy for the Army establishment to deflect the attention from its failures. Further, these actions are portrayed as a mark of a strong establishment and are used to create optics that would hide the endless meddling of Pakistan military in its civilian affairs. Thus, the Pak military announced with much fanfare its intent to set up dozens of detention camps across provinces to hold Afghan refugees before deporting them. The interior ministry officials stated that "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will have two deportation centers; in Nowshera and Chamkani, while Balochistan will house three facilities in the provincial capital of Quetta, and in Pishin and Qilla Abdullah districts." Notably, this policy is justifiable as it would directly affect Afghan refugees who had fled their homeland due to the conflict which was created and escalated by Pakistan to a large extent. This ruthless decision has resulted in instability for over 1.7 million Afghans in Pakistan. A significant proportion of these Afghan refugees have been born in Pakistan and have established their lives for long in the country. What is noteworthy is that many of the 'undocumented' refugees being sent back had escaped Afghanistan because of the fear of prosecution by the Afghan Taliban, which overran the Republic in August 2021, through the active connivance of Pakistan and Pakistani Army. It is an open secret how Islamabad has been playing a double game in Afghanistan for decades. On one hand, it supported the American War on Terror which overthrew the Taliban in 2001, on the other hand it offered safe sanctuary to the very same group inside its territory. Islamabad had presumed that installing Taliban in Kabul in 2021 would provide it the crucial strategic depth in Afghanistan. These hopes have dissipated. There are frequent violent confrontations along the Durand Line—the border between the two countries. In fact, the legitimacy of this border itself has been contested by Afghans irrespective of political ideology, including Taliban. Afghanistan's Taliban government has vehemently condemned Pakistan's ultimatum to the Afghan refugees, calling Pakistan's behaviour utterly

"unacceptable". Zabiullah Mujahid, the Afghan Taliban government spokesperson, on October 4, 2023, contested the claims of Pakistani government and emphasised that Afghans were not "involved in Pakistan's security problems." However, since then, Afghan Taliban has amplified its efforts to receive Afghans inside the border despite the acute lack of resources. Taliban government's minister for refugees Khalil Haqqani warned the Pakistani establishment against giving "Afghans a hard time" lest they "make more enemies." As on date, nearly 2, 75,000 Afghan refugees have been literally pushed beyond Durand Line through multiple border crossings, including Torkham check post. This displacement has threatened tearing apart thousands of families who had found refuge in Pakistan for years. These Afghans have been displaced for years, as Pakistan collaborated with multiple partners to ensure the country remained bogged down in the conflict and at the very first instance helped undo two decades of progress in a democratic set up. The democratic set up in Afghanistan wasn't without some deep flaws but still it was a democracy and there was some semblance to rule of law and the religious bigotry was kept under check. But thanks to Pakistan, democracy is dead and Taliban's rule is based on religious bigotry. Given the manner Pakistani government machinery is administering this self-created crisis, it has turned into a humanitarian catastrophe. Multiple human rights organizations including the UN, have condemned Pakistan's actions, citing violations of international human rights laws and the potential for severe human rights abuses upon their return to Afghanistan. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) has accused the Pakistani government of "using threats, abuse, and detention to coerce Afghan asylum seekers without legal status to return to Afghanistan." The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated nearly 600,000 of those facing deportation escaped Afghanistan because of the Taliban takeover in 2021. Many of these were further planning to relocate to many western countries such as the US, UK and Germany through the asylum process. HRW has noted that since the visa documents of most of these asylum seekers had expired pending any decision by the western countries, they have been rendered in a limbo. What is more concerning in this deportation is how Pakistan is pushing the 2021 arrivals, including former functionaries of the Republican government and rights defenders, into the hands of the Afghan Taliban government thereby raising legitimate concerns about their safety and well-being. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights asserted, Pakistan's actions directly violate international human rights law. "We believe many of those facing deportation will be at grave risk of human rights violations if returned to Afghanistan, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, cruel and other inhuman treatment," it stated in a statement. Simultaneously, it is alarming to note that the Pakistani government has created an environment of fear and hence effectively suppressed any dissenting voices among its citizens regarding this harsh and ruthless policy resulting in a human tragedy of catastrophic proportions. This silence casts a dark shadow on Pakistan's collective moral conscience, tarnishing the goodwill it had earned over the years for providing sanctuary to Afghan refugees.

Exalted Legacy of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Champion of India's Civilisation Against Subjugation

Written By: Yuvraj Pokharna

This year, on the martyrdom day of Guru Tegh Bahadur, it is important to reflect on how a powerful clique in the current generation of Sikhs has distorted the teachings of Sikh gurus to misappropriate and transmogrify Sikhism into an Abrahamic cult religion. Guru Nanak Dev founded Sikhism as a spiritual warrior faith to protect the indigenous Bharatiya culture and diversity of the Indian subcontinent, tracing back to its origins. Given the resurgent clash between intolerant monotheism and pluralistic pagan universalism, it is crucial to remember why Guru Nanak conceptualised Sikhism.

Its raison d'être was to uphold the umbilically linked Indian value systems from the existential threats of Islamic conquest. By cloaking such inconvenient history with the fog of secular policies today, neo-Sikhs do grievous injustice to their identity's wellspring.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth guru of Sikhism, made the ultimate sacrifice to protect the religious freedom of Hindus facing violent oppression under the gory Mughal invader Aurangzeb. While earlier



Mughal despots had been relatively tolerant of non-Muslim faiths, Aurangzeb was a religious fanatic bigot who aimed to impose Sharia law and forcible conversions across his empire. After the Hindu leadership implored his intercession, Guru Tegh Bahadur raised his voice for their religious freedom, challenged Aurangzeb and moved to Delhi to dissuade him from forcing Islamic conversions under the pain of death. Guru Tegh Bahadur stood firmly by his convictions and refused to comply with Aurangzeb's orders to convert to Islam. As was imminent, Aurangzeb tortured and executed

his disciples in gruesome ways but failed to frighten the Guru, who upheld the right to freedom of religion. Ultimately, Aurangzeb beheaded Guru Tegh Bahadur publicly in Chandni Chowk on November 24, 1675, under a Banyan tree. By showcasing such singular valour bound to immutable principles, he ignited the subsequent rise of the valorous Khalsa as Hinduism's resurgent defenders.

By giving his life for Hindus to safely practice their faith, Guru Tegh demonstrated that the role of a true Sikh is to selflessly serve and protect humanity against all forms of oppression and injustice.

As a spiritual warrior and defender of religious tolerance, his martyrdom shone as a beacon of hope and resistance against bigotry, even under peril. This exemplary sacrifice by Guru Tegh Bahadur for upholding righteous values is the heritage that neo-Sikhs need to learn from to realign the community closer to its original vision. Some members of the Sikh community distorting core Sikh beliefs for their own vested interests should recognise that their gurus created the faith as a shield and voice for Indian cultures being subdued by invaders. The holy scripture of Sikhs, Guru Granth Sahib, uses the word "Ram" 2533 times. The most frequently used word is "Hari", which has been used a total of 8344 times. "Gobind" appears 475 times. There are 97 instances of the word "murari". Interestingly, the epithet "Waheguru" finds only 13 mentions! The understanding to reflect the universally appealing spiritual humanism, which is the very essence of Sanatana Dharma, is at the heart of Sikhism.

On his Shaheedi Diwas, all Indians ought to honour his memory as a saint-soldier who

martyred himself to protect and uphold dharma in the face of great injustice and religious persecution. His supreme sacrifice for the rights of the vulnerable and downtrodden is a shimmering demonstration of his unwavering courage and humaneness that inspires people today. SHALLOW DEPICTION OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S SACRIFICE

In despondent and dolorous attempts, the articles by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) on Guru Tegh Bahadur's life erase the core essence of why he sacrificed himself against Aurangzeb's atrocities on Kashmiri Pandits. They have sanitised how the ninth guru defiantly stood up as a bulwark to safeguard Hindu Dharma, facing an existential crisis under Islamic persecution. Terms like "oppression", "subjugation", "persecution", "genocide", or "unimaginable horrors" are missing when referring to Aurangzeb's state-sponsored campaign to ruthlessly convert or eliminate Kashmiri Hindus.

India knows Sheikh Hasina isn't a perfect PM. Here's why Delhi supports her while holding its nose

Bangladesh is in the middle of a political churn that hasn't been seen in recent years. The ruling Awami League is determined to win the general election to be held on 7 January 2024 and bring Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina back to power for an unprecedented fifth term. Meanwhile, its main opponent Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), having spent 17 long years in the political wilderness, is hoping that Hasina's sins of omission and commission will help it wrest power — even if the ruling party seeks to control several instruments of power like the Election Commission.

What is even more interesting this time is that outside powers have shown keen interest in the Bangladesh electoral outcome. The United States, which has spent the past several weeks sheltering Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, whose military has been relentlessly bombing Gaza, has been spinning democratic homilies to Hasina and urging her to dialogue with her political antagonists.

Significantly, India, which has gone out on a limb to befriend the Americans, seems determined to strike an independent note on Bangladesh. China, meanwhile, is waiting and watching to see the direction in which the wind blows.

Eyes on India-US positions

During the fifth India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue on 10 November, external affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi was asked a question about the recent Hasina-ordered crackdown in Bangladesh, in which about 10,000 opposition leaders and activists were reportedly arrested.



His reply was revealing: "Crackdown, jailed opposition leader, etc. are your interpretation. Please don't ascribe them to me. We do not want to comment on the policy of any third country. Elections in Bangladesh, as I have said, are a domestic matter for them. It is for the people of Bangladesh to decide their own future."

Only days before, a US State Department spokesperson had answered the same question in a totally different way, prioritising rights and their violations as a key part of the American position on the Bangladesh polls. "We continue to closely monitor the electoral environment in Bangladesh leading up to this January's election, and we take any incidents of violence incredibly seriously. We are engaging and will continue to engage with the government, opposition parties, civil society, and other stakeholders to encourage collaboration for the benefit of the Bangladeshi people," he had said.

So, why is there such daylight on the Indian and US positions on Bangladesh, considering all three nations

are democracies? Why is the US taking such a tough line, considering it has long shielded friendly regimes across the world even if they are led by despots, dictators, and demagogues?

The answer is a simple one. India understands the troubled neighbourhood in which it lives. It understands that Hasina is not a perfect prime minister — that she rules with a tough hand, often tougher than necessary. That she has cracked down on the free and independent media, that she has persuaded the Election Commission to take the ruling party's line, that she is trying to break the BNP into factions contesting with each other so as to make the election look like it's free and independent — and in case the BNP boycotts the poll like it did the last two times, it won't look so bad.

India also acknowledges that there is no alternative to Hasina. If she loses and the BNP comes to power, then the Islamic fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami follows close behind. And if the Jamaat is anywhere around the levers of power, then its backers, Pakistan's military establishment, will be in the driving seat.

This is essentially the reason why India will hold its nose even if Hasina commits or orders the committal of unparliamentary practices as she seeks to hold on to power. How the cookie crumbles

As it fights several assembly polls and goes into the Lok Sabha election in five months, the Modi government also understands that the exercise of power is not a kitty party. That eggs will have to be broken to make an omelette.

Fears of India's founders are coming true. Governors are acting like viceroys

In a Constituent Assembly debate, Rohini Kumar Chaudhary argued governor's powers could tarnish the Constitution 'just as a piece of cow dung may spoil the whole vessel of milk'

By VIBHAV MARIWALA

The frequent power tussles between the states and the Union, exemplified by the ongoing Supreme Court dispute between the governments of Tamil Nadu and Punjab, and their governors, raise some fundamental questions about India's federal set-up. They prompt us to ask if India's federal system can act as a bulwark on the Union's overreach.

If India's federal structure was conceived as a key tenet of Indian democracy, how can it survive when the Union can override states' rights so easily? When the Constituent Assembly debated India's future in 1947-50, the role and powers of the governor were discussed in great depth. At the time, India was broken and divided by Partition, insurgencies, communalism, and colonial rule, so a strong Union to hold the country together was deemed essential. Simultaneously, there was a desire to build a republic where the rights of its 400 million citizens were protected. Drawing from the experience of provincial governments during the British

Raj, the Constituent Assembly grappled with a key question—would governors wield powers akin to the colonial-era viceroys? Concerns arose that if governors were accorded a similar level of discretion under the Government of India Act 1935, this could well be the case. Under this Act, governors could appoint and dismiss governments at will and withhold assent to legislation. In essence, governors could bypass elected state governments. Fear of overreach

At the core of the Constituent Assembly's discussions on the governor's role was a fear of executive overreach.

For instance, in May 1949, Shibban Lal Saksena (UP) weighed in on the wide ambit of powers accorded to the Union government: "So the party in power at the Centre will nominate all the Governors in all the provinces. It will also nominate all the Judges of the Supreme Court and other big officials. That is not a good thing. I cannot subscribe to the view that a single person should have the power to nominate all these high officers. We should remember that

absolute power is not a good thing. It corrupts absolutely." Saksena's point must be viewed in the broader context of the Union's immense powers over the state, spanning the judiciary, diplomatic service, and other institutions—entities that are meant to act independently from the Union, if needed.

Rohini Kumar Chaudhary of Assam took a more explicit stance on how the governor's powers could threaten the Constitution itself.

"Sir, just as a piece of cow dung may spoil the whole vessel of milk, this particular provision will spoil this whole Constitution of ours," he said during a 2 June 1949 discussion on Article 147 (now 167), which defines the duties of the chief minister to the governor. A history of overreach. It is clear today that these apprehensions were not baseless. The executive's overreach has shaped the trajectory of the Union, especially in the first few decades of independence.

The impact of the ambiguity around the governor's powers is clear especially with the abuse



of Article 356 to impose a state emergency. This Article gives the President the authority to transfer a state's legislative and executive powers to the Union. Since 1947, President's Rule has been invoked more than 130 times. The greatest number of instances were reportedly when Indira Gandhi was in power (50 times between 1966-1977 and 1980-1984), followed by the Janata Party (20 times between 1977-1980).

More often than not, this intervention was more to suit a political agenda than to resolve a true breakdown in constitutional functioning.

The power of the Executive to declare a state emergency was significantly curtailed only after the 44th Amendment to the Constitution in 1978 and the Supreme Court's landmark 1994 S.R. Bommai judgment.

Since then, however, governors have found other ways to stifle elected assemblies by using their powers under Articles 163 and 200. Under Article 163, "the decision of the Governor in his discretion shall be final, and the validity of anything done by the Governor shall not be called in question on the ground that he ought or ought not to have acted in his discretion."

Under Article 200, Governors can withhold assent on bills, send them to the President for review, and then send them back to the Assembly for reconsideration. In times of a hung assembly, they can invite parties to form the government. Unlike the President of India, who is bound by the advice of the Union cabinet, theoretically, the governor can override the decision of a state Assembly.

Identity politics versus ideological politics

By Charanjit Ahuja

The caste survey released by Bihar on the Gandhi Jayanti has the potential to reshape the political narrative ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It seems a make-or-break gambit in the run-up to the 2024 General Election by the Opposition to play identity politics over the BJP's ideological politics.

The cover story in the current issue of Tehelka delves on the political googly that has led to a clamour seeking caste level census for revision of quotas for different castes in proportion to their respective population. Rajasthan has already announced to undertake a caste survey apparently to influence the political discourse in the state. Assembly elections are being held in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, besides Telangana and Mizoram. The issue of caste



census is set to influence the narrative in these states because it might affect the targeted delivery of government's welfare schemes and demand for a proportional share in reservations in education and employment on quota basis.

All this is likely come dangerously close to signalling the start of 'Mandal 2.0' politics after over

three decades when the then Prime Minister VP Singh announced the implementation of the 1980 Mandal Commission report. When in 2022, the Supreme Court upheld a 2019 constitutional amendment for a 10 per cent quota for economically weaker sections in the general category, the demand for raising the OBC quota limit

was rising. The implications of the move are enormous as the Bihar survey data has put the population of Backward Classes in the state at a whopping 63.13 per cent. Among the states going to polls, as per government surveys, OBCs constitute 42 per cent of the population in Rajasthan, 48 per cent in Madhya Pradesh and

43.5 per cent in Chhattisgarh. Little doubt all the political parties are raising their OBC pitch. Alarmed, the ruling dispensation plans to counter Opposition's OBC pitch by putting out data on backward class beneficiaries of government schemes and political space to OBCs in the saffron party pointing out that as far as BJP is concerned, 29 per cent of its MPs and close to 40 per cent of its MLAs and MLCs are OBCs. Similarly, out of 75 union council of ministers, 27 are OBCs. Till recently, welfarism had emerged as a common theme across parties and states but caste census might shift focus from parties guaranteeing freebies to people to further dividing them. As of now, the demand for caste survey appears akin to creating another rumbling in the politically and socially unstable populace.

Beware the coming immigration crisis

For all the chaos at the border, the one thing that President Biden has been credited for is his aggressive use of executive action to decrease the need for immigrants to enter at the border. Lacking any congressional action on immigration, Biden has paroled people in the United States so long as they apply from abroad and do not cross over the border illegally. This expansion initially resulted in a dramatic decrease of persons seeking entry at the border, with sources reporting as much as a 95 percent decrease in the first month of the program. This contributed to an overall decrease of persons at the border significant enough to bring border encounters to its lowest number in two years by the summer. Yet for all its success, this program is the foundation of a coming immigration crisis. The program, started in January 2023, is set to expire around the time that either Biden or former President Trump's second inauguration. That will render 2 million people who had been legally working and living in the United States illegal. Without congressional action, our crisis will not be just at the border but within it as well. Humanitarian parole is a discretionary grant of temporary permission to enter the United States for humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit. The parole is limited to two years, and during that period, parolees must either find another visa status, file for asylum or return to their home country.

For more than 70 years, the program has been used to admit individuals from countries such as Hungary, Cuba and

Vietnam. Initially, the Biden administration used it as a tool to admit individuals quickly from war-torn Ukraine and Afghanistan. As the number of migrants at the southern border increased, however, the administration turned to



humanitarian parole.

So long as applicants did not try to enter the U.S. at the border, citizens of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela (CHNV) were allowed to come into the U.S. to live and work. Up to 30,000 persons a month were allowed to take part in the program.

These migrants have been a godsend for many U.S. communities and businesses, with as many as 1 million American citizens personally sponsoring them. No less than Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has credited increasing migrant numbers with keeping the economy afloat. While the U.S. economy has added jobs thanks to these migrants, and

unemployment has decreased, millions of jobs remain available that no American is able or willing to fulfill.

The shortage is hamstringing key industries. North Dakota, which boasts a quickly rising oil industry, has only 30

employable people per 100 jobs available; and South Carolina, which plays host to major production centers for foreign car manufacturers such as BMW, as well as Boeing, has only 43 employable persons per 100 jobs available. Yet, Trump has threatened to undo the lives of these 2 million and wreck the U.S. economy in the process. On the campaign trail, Trump has not been shy about his intent to crack down on immigration if elected to a second term.

He has pledged to launch the largest deportation effort in U.S. history and cancel humanitarian parole for the millions who are already legally here. This plan includes establishing processing camps

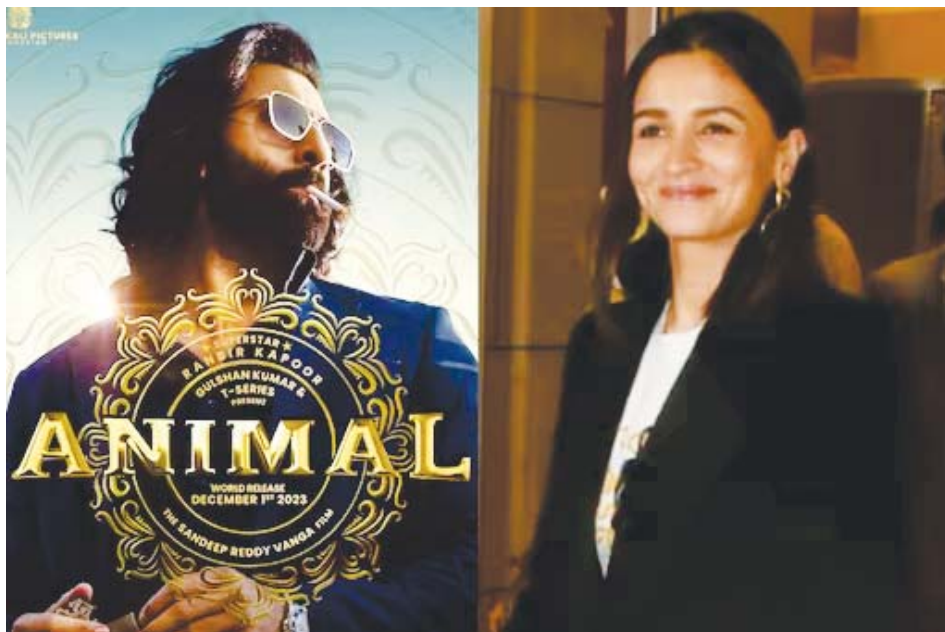
and using large-scale roundups to deport millions of people, going so far as to allocate military funding to the effort.

This means that under Trump, 2 million immigrant workers could lose their status, be rounded into camps and be deported en masse. Knowing this, the Biden administration and Congress owe it to these individuals, the businesses that employ them and the American public to find a solution. And workable solutions are available.

The simplest solution, and one under Biden's powers, would be to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) protections to all these humanitarian parolees. This would extend parolees' timelines and provide them an opportunity to apply for a green card while in the U.S. In conjunction with offering TPS, the Biden administration should immediately push for the passing of the Afghan Adjustment Act, which would offer protection for around 60,000 of these parolees.

In waiting to provide permanent pathways for these parolees to remain in the United States, the Biden administration may be causing a problem so big that it will be impossible to fix. The U.S. immigration system, mostly unchanged since the 1990s, desperately requires policy reform to meet the nation's needs. That should have happened decades ago. Now, as Congress declines to act on this issue, President Biden must utilize all available measures to safeguard the system's integrity, aligning it with the needs of hundreds of thousands of parole seekers and domestic economic interests.

Animal: Alia Bhatt Shares FIRST Review, Calls Ranbir Kapoor Film 'Khatarnaak'



Animal first review is out thanks to Alia Bhatt. On Thursday, Ranbir Kapoor and team of Animal hosted the premiere of the film and

Alia attended the special show with her family. The actress was seen with Neetu Kapoor, Mahesh Bhatt, Soni Razdan and Shaheen Bhatt at the

premiere. While Alia and the family were seen leaving the venue in a rush after the premiere, Alia gave a one-word review of Animal to the paparazzi before she left.

In a video shared by a paparazzo on Instagram, Alia was asked her review of Animal. The actress at first mouthed 'outstanding' before she said, "Khatarnaak." Watch the video below: Not only did Alia praise the film, she also gave a shoutout to Ranbir by sporting a customised tee dedicated to him and Animal. The T-shirt featured Ranbir's look from the film. The Gangubai Kathiawadi star had everyone's attention with the tee. She styled the T-shirt with a chic black blazer and a pair of black pants.

Animal is directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga and revolves around a father and son's toxic relationship. While Anil

plays the emotionally unavailable father, Ranbir plays the role of the traumatised, angry son. The trailer was released in Delhi with Bobby Deol and Rashmika Mandanna by his side. Speaking at the press conference, Ranbir compared Animal with Karan Johar's Khushi Kabhie Kabhi Gham. "This is an adult rated Khushi Kabhie Kabhi Gham," Ranbir said.

Animal marks Sandeep Reddy Vanga's second directorial venture in Bollywood, after Shahid Kapoor's Kabir Singh. Animal marks the first collaboration between Sandeep and Ranbir. The film is scheduled to be released in theatres on December 1. Besides Ranbir, the film also stars Rashmika Mandanna, Bobby Deol and Anil Kapoor. The film is clashing with Vicky Kaushal's Sam Bahadur. The film is directed by Meghna Gulzar.

The West is a Wounded Civilisation

Israel, the West's blood ally in the Middle East, is pounding Hamas out of existence. Washington's principal rival China, is in economic and demographic retreat.

The West's hegemony, established after the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate a hundred years ago, seems unstoppable.

A closer look reveals three cracks in the evolving world order.

First, a weakened Russia has fallen into China's geopolitical embrace. The Russia-China alliance has the military and economic heft to challenge a new US-led world order.

Second, the neutral Global South led by India and comprising nations across Asia, Africa and South America are wary of the US becoming a neo-colonial successor to the defunct British and French Empires.

Third, the Shia Muslim Gulf powers in the Middle East — Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon — remain unremittingly hostile to the West and will move closer to the China-Russia axis.

Russia already has a significant military presence in Syria. China was the first port of call for a delegation of Islamic leaders to the five permanent members of the UNSC: France, Britain, Russia, China and the US. The Western world order being crafted in Washington needs to bring the Global South on its side or risk being seen as a neo-colonial construct.

The London-based author Pankaj Mishra warned in an article in Bloomberg: "Only a few weeks ago, the Western press was full of speculation on whether India or China would lead the Global South. US President Joe Biden made his preference clear by wooing Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Biden administration drew up various schemes involving India in alliances with Israel and rich Arab countries, aimed in part at stemming Chinese influence."

"A European Council on Foreign Relations report echoed the new Western consensus: The West needed to woo friendly members of the Global South such as India and Turkey if it was to build a new world order. Now that the conflict in West Asia threatens to prematurely terminate this Western infatuation, it is worth asking what it was all about. Did the project of winning over emerging nations reflect wishful thinking and image-projection by Western elites? "The conflict in Gaza may now have mortally damaged Western power and credibility in the Global South. While Israel seems no closer to victory in its own counteroffensive against Hamas, it looks over-committed to a long war it cannot win, either on the battlefield or in the court of global public opinion. Indeed, Israel's failure to define a viable

future for itself and the Palestinians is now hitting its closest ally, inducing bitter division in the US State Department as well as on university campuses and endangering Biden's re-election in 2024." **BOMBING GAZA**

The four-day ceasefire and prison swap in Gaza ends on Monday, November 27, unless it is extended. Israel has vowed to resume bombing Gaza after the pause. Future ceasefires and prisoner swaps will depend on how successfully the first swap goes.

Hamas used the four-day pause to regroup, re-establish lost communications with divisional leaders across Gaza and strengthen its underground bunkers which the Israeli army, after nearly two months of fighting, has not yet been able to breach.

But bigger problems for the Washington-led world order lie closer at home. The US is ideologically fractured. President Joe Biden's Irish charm hides a cold warrior mind. He has encouraged Ukraine to fight Russia to the last Ukrainian. His son Hunter Biden's financial deals with Ukrainian company Burisma are publicly documented.

Biden has said if he was a Jew (he is Catholic) he would be a Zionist. Zionism

is what drove European Jews to persuade the complicit British Empire into giving white Jews a homeland in the middle of West Asia. **A TRANSACTIONAL ALLY**

The West has never been a true friend of India. It supported Pakistan from 1947 right through to the early 2000s when it realised belatedly the folly of backing a state sponsor of terrorism. Former President Richard Nixon in the 1970s did not try to hide his contempt for India and Indians. As late as 1998, former President Bill Clinton slapped harsh and sweeping sanctions on India following the Pokhran nuclear test.

The West is wary of a rising India and its sway over the Global South. Instead of prosecuting a terrorist like Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who openly incites violence against India, the Biden government protects him. It has used Canada and the FBI to make unverified allegations against India of plotting to kill Pannun and other terrorists.

HUBRIS AND HEGEMONY

The century of global hegemony that the West seized since the 1920s has given it a sense of hubris and infallibility. It bombs Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen

with impunity, killing thousands of civilians, including women and children. It assassinates terrorists on the soil of other sovereign nations. It forces regime change in the Middle East and South America. It engineered an eight-year war in 1980-88 between Shia neighbours Iraq and Iran.

For the West, a rising India is both welcome and worrisome.

Welcome because it adds to the West's anti-China alliance. Worrisome because the West does not like any country outside its civilisational ethos posing a future challenge to its global supremacy. When China did, America launched a trade and technology war on it. India, it believes, can be managed with periodic pinpricks from Five Eyes allies like Canada.

ENDGAME

The West was a supplicant to the East till 1700. British envoys like Sir Thomas Roe spent four years in India during the 1600s flattering Emperor Jehangir. They received withering contempt in return.

European traders and envoys to China were treated even more harshly. Colonial conquest and the transatlantic slave trade transformed Europe and America from supplicants to overlords.

Jeyakumar Nadarajah, a New York Banker & Trader Charged for U.S. Treasuries Market Fraud Scheme

A federal grand jury in Newark, New Jersey, returned an indictment that was unsealed today charging a Wall Street bond trader for a scheme to manipulate the U.S. Treasuries market. "Securities fraud and manipulation, as alleged here, victimize investors and degrade the integrity of our public securities markets," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri of the Justice Department's Criminal Division. "The department will continue to protect our financial systems and investors by holding accountable those who violate our securities laws."

According to court documents, between approximately April 2018 and May 2019, Jeyakumar Nadarajah, 39, who was employed as a director at a bank in New York and head of the desk that was responsible for trading U.S. Treasuries, allegedly engaged in a scheme to mislead market participants in the secondary (or cash) market for U.S. Treasuries. Nadarajah is alleged to have engaged in a spoofing and layering scheme that involved placing orders that he did not intend to execute in order to create the appearance of false supply and demand, and to fraudulently induce other market participants to trade at prices,



quantities, and times that they otherwise would not have traded.

"There's money to be made in the financial markets. And if there's money to be made, it means that fraudsters are right there looking to take advantage of other market participants," said Inspector in Charge Eric Shen of U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Criminal Investigations Group. "Whether it's a simple investment scam or a complex scheme like the one Mr. Nadarajah allegedly tried to pull off, Postal Inspectors are there to bring the scammers to justice."

Nadarajah is charged with two counts of

wire fraud, seven counts of securities fraud, and seven counts of securities manipulation. If convicted, he faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison for each count of wire fraud, securities fraud, and securities manipulation. USPIS is investigating the case.

Assistant Chief Scott Armstrong and Trial Attorney John J. Liolos of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section are prosecuting the case. An indictment is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

China wants to divide, rule, conquer Europe. European Union is too confused to stop it

The 24th EU-China summit, scheduled to be held in Beijing on 7-8 December, comes at a critical juncture. It will determine the trajectory of China's difficult relationship with the European Union, particularly with the Central and Eastern European countries within the reconfigured 14+1 – formerly 17+1 – format.

There is a significant divide among EU member states vis-à-vis China. For instance, the Czech Republic and Lithuania drifted away from China, while France, Germany, and Hungary are advocating for increased engagement with Beijing. At times, these nations even blur the lines between their individual China policies and the broader EU stance. After the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a surge in official visits from Europe to China, with French foreign minister Catherine Colonna being the latest to visit on 23-24 November. Earlier, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen visited China in April, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón in March, and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in November 2022.

These developments could be China's attempt to court its European counterparts. For instance, the country unilaterally announced a 15-day visa-free entry for citizens from France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands. While this move does not indicate a huge substantial shift, it does offer insights into China's Europe policy and its attempt to reconcile with those who hold favourable views toward Beijing.

Chinese media highlights Europe's 'hypocrisy'

China is evidently striving to stabilise its relations with Europe. The country's state-run media amplifies the perspectives of European Parliament members (MEPs) with remarkably positive sentiments toward the country. For instance, CGTN recently conducted an exclusive interview with Irish MEP Claire Daly, who remarked on the "historical arrogance" in the EU's stance toward China and how it stemmed from their "colonial mindsets". Global Times used similar language in an editorial, saying, "Many EU politicians maintain their assertive and arrogant stance, however, the foundations supporting their arrogance are gradually weakening."

Mike Wallace, a pro-China MEP, has frequently appeared in interviews with Chinese media outlets and expressed his views on the microblogging site Weibo. One of his prominent viewpoints — which drew the attention of Chinese social media users — compares EU's stance on human rights in Xinjiang to its position on the Israel-Hamas conflict. "The EU wants to talk about human

rights in Hong Kong. Chinese police did not kill a protester, while the same EU supported the genocide in Gaza. The far-right Israeli regime killed more than 13,000 civilians in 50 days. The EU is always on the evil side now," he said. However, in contrast to Daly and Wallace, several MEPs have emphasised the critical nature of the EU's strategy in handling relations with China. Reinhard Bütikofer, a German MEP, underscored his nation's China policy in an interview with the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS), a China-sanctioned German think tank. "As long as we have to worry that the Chancellery equates German and European interests with those of the overly China-dependent German car industry, European unity vis-à-vis China will always be fragile," he said.

Interestingly, von der Leyen is not the most liked figure on Weibo, largely due to her tougher stance on China. One user highlighted that, according to the EU constitution, von der Leyen does not have the authority to engage in foreign policy, yet she is attributing the escalation in Gaza to China". The already unfavourable views on the European Commission president were intensified when, in October, the EU initiated anti-subsidy investigations into its imports of battery electric vehicles from China. However, comments made by Macron

after his April visit to China, which emphasised that Europe should resist pressure to become "America's follower" on the Taiwan issue, were applauded by Chinese news outlets and social media. Where is EU headed with China? The EU has highlighted numerous critical issues in its engagements with China, notably focusing on substantial trade imbalance. In 2022-23, China's trade surplus with the EU soared to a historic high, amounting to \$434.96 billion, showcasing the magnitude of this economic disparity. Despite this, several European countries perceive engagement with China as vital for their economic interests, even viewing it as potentially beneficial in addressing the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

However, there are voices cautioning against a soft approach towards China and rushing into dealings with it. A prevailing viewpoint among European scholars is that "European leaders' visits to China this year have yielded little in terms of concessions that align with European interests—whether concerning Russia's aggression or economic ties. Instead, these visits were perceived as a showcase of European disunity, ultimately leaving Europe's China policy in a state of disarray."

However, the EU maintains a consistent and firm stance toward China. Von der

Leyen's statements have remained unwavering despite some individual nations expressing a desire for increased engagement with China. In 2019, the European Commission labelled the country as a systematic rival, a position consistently echoed in von der Leyen's statements throughout the year. "We must recognise that there is an explicit element of rivalry in our relationship. We must also recognise that China's views on the global security architecture are not by default aligned with ours," she reiterated at a MERICS event on 16 November.

However, member states like France and Germany continue to shape their own China policies, creating complexities in the path of a unified EU strategy. China's strategy for EU, on the other hand, is similar to its approach towards ASEAN – divide, rule, and conquer. There is consensus that the EU lacks a cohesive and nuanced China policy. It is crucial for both the EU and its member states to recognise that a fragmented Europe serves China's interests while undermining their own. Addressing issues with China requires sincere alignment among EU countries. The upcoming EU-China summit could serve as a platform for the EU to show a united front and secure its long-term interests. However, such cohesion seems unlikely at present.

"A Matter of Concern" An Indian official plotted to assassinate a Sikh separatist leader in New York, US prosecutors say

An Indian government official directed a plot to assassinate a prominent Sikh separatist leader living in New York City, U.S. prosecutors said Wednesday as they announced charges against a man they said was part of the thwarted murder conspiracy.

U.S. officials became aware last spring of the plot to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who advocated for the creation of a sovereign Sikh state and is considered a terrorist by the Indian government.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration interceded and set up a sting, with an undercover agent posing as a hitman, after the conspirators recruited an international narcotics trafficker in the plot to murder the activist for \$100,000.

The Indian government official was not charged or identified by name in an indictment unsealed Wednesday but was described as a "senior field officer" with responsibilities in "security management" and "intelligence" said to have previously served in India's Central Reserve Police Force.

The charges were aimed at a different person, Nikhil Gupta, 52, a citizen of India who was accused of murder-for-hire and conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire. The charges carry a potential penalty of up to 20 years in prison.

"The defendant conspired from India to assassinate, right here in New York City, a U.S. citizen of Indian origin who has publicly advocated for the establishment of a sovereign state for Sikhs, an ethnoreligious minority group in India," U.S. Attorney Damian Williams, the chief federal prosecutor in Manhattan, said in a news release.

"We will not tolerate efforts to assassinate U.S. citizens on U.S. soil, and stand ready to investigate, thwart, and prosecute anyone who seeks to harm and silence Americans here or abroad," he added.

The charges were the second major recent accusation of complicity of Indian government officials in attempts to kill Sikh separatist figures living in North America.

In September, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said there were credible allegations that the Indian government

had links to the assassination in that country of Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. India rejected the accusation as absurd, but Canada expelled a top Indian diplomat and India responded with the same measure.

Before the U.S. indictment was unsealed Wednesday, India announced it had set up a high-level inquiry after U.S. authorities raised concerns with New Delhi that its government may have had knowledge of the plot to kill Pannun.

The U.S. side shared some information and India "takes such inputs seriously since they impinge on our national security interests as well, and relevant departments were already examining the issue," a statement by External Affairs Ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said.

Gupta was arrested June 30 in the Czech Republic through a bilateral extradition treaty between the U.S. and the Czech Republic, prosecutors said. It was not immediately clear when he might be brought to the United States and whether he has secured legal representation in the United States.

Political funding, not welfareism is the bigger problem in Indian election

There is something grotesque about welfare schemes for the poor announced by leaders and politicians from glitzy ramparts and state-of-the-art vehicles and cavalcades. Yet, this is the only coherent script that has surfaced from an otherwise incoherent political landscape. 'Freebies' from choppers by well-heeled and even manicured politicians is the main image that has emerged from this all-important election season in Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Telangana. And we can only surmise the big spending on rallies, social media messages, bussing of voters to venues and parachuting of star campaigners. This expenditure would easily be in the hundreds, if not thousands, of crores. Political leaders across the spectrum are competing to declare the most cut price for an essential commodity or public good. This image nevertheless points to at least five, if not more, emerging patterns.

New political trends in an old guise
Political funding is robust, mobile, in big play and going for the big kill for starters —It would be myopic and downright foolish to simply focus on electoral bonds and their opacity as the key issue that is blighting Indian democracy. Whether it is a small party, the ruling behemoth or the contender to the provincial throne, the scale of election campaigning has been staggering in which money, it seems, has not been scarce. What this is doing to political work, leadership, and democracy deserves its own column. I will turn to it soon after this so-called semi-final of the 2024 Lok Sabha election is played out. Second, India's welfare system looks broken. If, in an important election season, politicians have been reduced to clamouring for the lowest price to be given on cooking gas cylinders, it points to both the presence of widespread economic distress and an absence of institutional mechanisms and policies to meet this all-important challenge of inequality. It will be cynical, if superficially accurate, to call it populism. It is indeed a populist plea to the voter to cast in a party's favour. This transactional plea will no doubt trouble technocrats and policy specialists whether or not they believe in welfare. For the economic reformers, giveaways, or 'freebies' as they would call them, are but a drain on the exchequer. For those persuaded by democracy's core relationship to public goods (as I am), this is bad because it lacks the institutional design and depth of real distributive mechanisms. These last-minute guarantees betray a total lack of vision for India's skewed political

economy.

There is much that can be done, but these slogans and declarations hinder that process and don't even begin to meet the challenge. For instance, is it too much to ask the fifth-largest economy in the world to have a national health service that is free on delivery? What would that take? However audacious an idea, there is no time and space to ask this when the political scene is captured in a breathless loop of rallies, studio fights and slugfests on social media. This takes up time, but above all, it takes a lot of money. There is clearly a lot of money about, but



it is being diverted and spent on transforming and influencing the relationship between the leader and the people, the ruler and the ruled.

Third, if — as it is increasingly becoming clear — expensive benevolence is going to be the hallmark of a political leader, then the power of personality is making politics feudal. I don't simply mean the flourishing of mini-rajahs and their prajahs (subjects) who are caught up in the ritual of cyclical popularity contests alone, but rather the coming of a new and deep division of political labour. For all the hyper-modern digital and sonic bombardment, memes and message forwards, the political leader is increasingly looking and behaving like the long-forgotten, rightly reviled and junked jajman (not a precise translation, but an overlord would fit).

Despite all the renewed talk on caste that is reanimating Indian politics, the leader is increasingly looking and behaving like a jajman. Surrounded by entourages, almost always in a cavalcade, standing atop or, better still, sitting in airspace, political leadership is displayed as distance with carefully choreographed moments of connection and proximity with the vast populace.

While it is only correct to debate a caste census, the graded entitlements or lack

thereof among sub-castes, and the inherent injustice of caste, the greatest gulf is increasingly between the leader and the people. Personalised pledges of showtime guarantees by top leadership are fast recasting the elected political representative as a hybrid between a celebrity and a feudal overlord. The only crucial difference is that the voter's loyalty is not necessarily a given, so the leaders must come out and sweat it out during campaign season. Gaming elections: welfare or campaigns?

In such a scenario, welfare schemes and guarantees convey and enforce a rhetoric

Such a scenario of spending big, only to shout and throw small sums at the poor, would be dismissed more robustly on the grounds of malevolent hypocrisy, if not myopic thinking, were the spectacle not so distracting.

Finally, this is not to say in the least that political change is not afoot. From gender and caste to minorities, Hindu-first agendas to the changing future of federalism and political parties are all in play. Precisely as these are in flux, this critical election season has been high on campaigning and low on new ideas. As adept gamers, politicians in this high-stake season have thus been risk-averse in laying out their political stalls overtly or clearly. Or maybe exhausted from all the bandobast [organising] and campaigning, they, and their back-room offices, have run out of ideas.

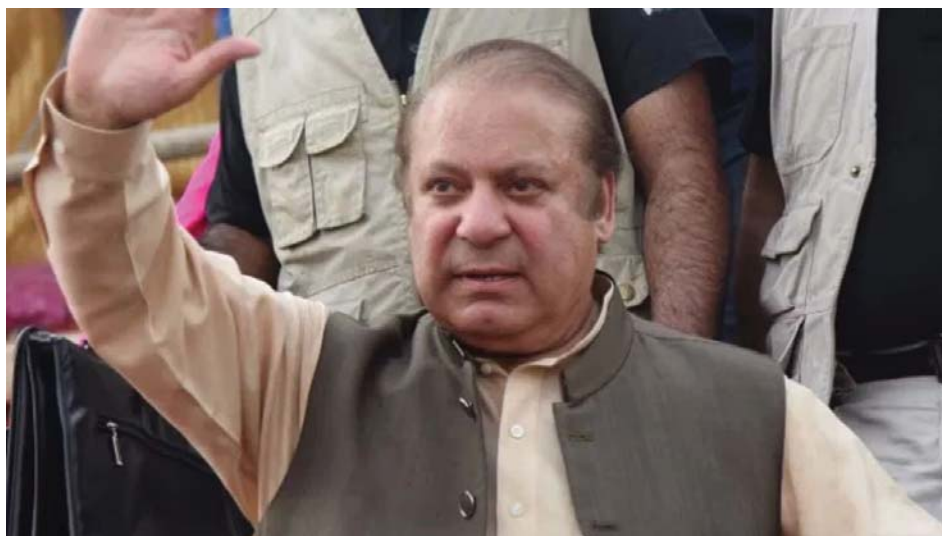
As neither a psephologist nor a gamer, I can only try, in a manner of speaking, to follow the money on the emerging big picture. But a little help is needed. In the absence of public data, I can only appeal to the adept number crunchers to

start speculating and creating data sets on how much a small rally costs, in comparison to a big one, state by state, district by district, and party by party, and add all approximations of digital and other advertising. What would be an approximate number? I can start with a wild guess of a very conservative number of Rs 1 crore per average-sized rally. And just that and the scale of spending that might have happened in this season alone indicates that more than any welfare system, it is our electoral system that is broken. It is lavish and profligate. For all the talk and criticism of expensive giveaways, the real object of spectacular spending is elections and campaigns. Unaccounted for, we only see the effects of that big money in mass spectacles with leaders vying for visibility. As political leaders get rich, the poor are becoming targets of guarantees and gratitude, with only a widening gulf between them. It is not guarantees for the poor, but protection from big money in politics that is needed. Hidden in plain sight, it is not competitive welfareism but the emerging shape and size of the political order that has been glimpsed before the 2024 elections. I am willing to bet that it will be the most expensive election yet.

To be sure, this is not to say gender and guarantees are not significant. Rather, their trivialisation and gamification are attested by the piecemeal and pathetic measures declared in lavish campaigns. Look no further than the thousand-odd rupees for women per month, as announced in one guarantee.

Pakistan HC acquits former PM Nawaz Sharif in two corruption cases

Sharif was convicted in July 2018 and handed 10 years in jail in Avenfield properties corruption case about assets beyond known income in London.



(News Agency)- The Islamabad High Court on Wednesday acquitted Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in two cases of corruption in which he was convicted in 2018. Sharif, 73, had challenged in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) his sentences in the Avenfield property and Al-Azizia cases. A two-member bench comprising Chief Justice Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb announced the verdict after hearing arguments from both sides. The former premier was convicted in July 2018 and handed 10 years in jail in the Avenfield properties

corruption case about assets beyond known income in London. He was sentenced in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills case to seven years in jail in December 2018. A two-member bench comprising Chief Justice Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb announced the verdict after hearing arguments from both sides. The former premier was convicted in July 2018 and handed 10 years in jail in the Avenfield properties corruption case about assets beyond known income in London. He was sentenced in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills case to seven years in jail in December 2018.

Pakistan's jailed Imran Khan names temporary successor for party election



(News Agency)- Jailed former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's party said on Wednesday that he had named one of his lawyers as his temporary stand-in to contest the position of party head. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party released a video showing barrister Gohar Khan announcing his nomination. "I will fill in for Imran Khan," the nominee said, adding that Khan was and will always remain party chief. The party needs a new chairman to hold elections scheduled for Saturday to elect a new party chairman and other office bearers as former national cricketing hero Khan,

being a convict, is barred from taking part.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) last week gave the party 20 days to hold the intra-party elections, which are needed for it to keep the cricket bat as its election symbol. Barrister Ali Zafar, another of Khan's lawyers, said that the replacement was just a babysitting arrangement. Khan was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison in August on corruption charges.

General elections are scheduled for Feb. 8, 2024, with Khan's party facing former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's party as its main opponent.

Bangladesh opposition vows to continue protests despite 'autocratic' crackdown

(News Agency)- Bangladesh's main opposition party said on Wednesday it would continue its anti-government protests despite what a rights group called an "autocratic crackdown" ahead of a general election in January.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), whose top leadership is either jailed or in exile, has already said it will boycott the election if Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina does not resign and allow a caretaker government to oversee the poll, to be held on Jan. 7. At least four people, including a policeman, have been killed and hundreds injured in violent protests across the country in the past few weeks, police said.

"Our peaceful and democratic protest programmes will continue in spite of the government crackdown on BNP, until the fundamental voting rights of the people of Bangladesh are restored," Abdul Moyeen Khan, a former minister and member of the BNP's highest policy-making body, told Reuters. Two people were injured in the capital, Dhaka, when a crude bomb exploded on Wednesday as a countrywide transport blockade

called by the BNP was underway, police said.

Dozens of buses and vehicles have been set on fire over the past one month,



authorities said. "People have no civil rights, no guarantee of living in safety. In order to end this misrule and lawlessness, the ongoing movement must be

accelerated and the victory of the people must be ensured," senior BNP official Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said. Hasina, seeking her fourth straight five-year term in office,

and more than 5,330 people arrested since the election was announced on Nov. 15.

Police say they have arrested only those responsible for violence. Human Rights Watch has accused the government of targeting opposition leaders and supporters. "The government is claiming to commit to free and fair elections with diplomatic partners while the state authorities are simultaneously filling prisons with the ruling Awami League's political opponents," said Julia Bleckner, senior Asia researcher at Human Rights Watch. "Diplomatic partners should make clear that the government's autocratic crackdown will jeopardise future economic cooperation," the rights group said in a statement quoting Bleckner.

It said it has found evidence that security forces are responsible for using excessive force, mass arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings in a recent spate of election-related violence, based on interviews with 13 witnesses and an analysis of videos and police reports. The government denies the accusations

has repeatedly ruled out handing power to a caretaker government and accused the BNP of "terrorism and hooliganism". BNP said four people have been killed

Henry Kissinger, US Diplomat Who Shaped Cold War Diplomacy, Dies At 100

(News Agency)-Henry Kissinger, a controversial Nobel Peace Prize winner and diplomatic powerhouse whose service under two presidents left an indelible mark on U.S. foreign policy, died on Wednesday, according to Kissinger Associates Inc. Kissinger died at his home in Connecticut, Kissinger Associates said.

Kissinger had been active past his centenary, attending meetings in the White House, publishing a book on leadership styles, and testifying before a Senate committee about the nuclear threat posed by North Korea. In July 2023 he made a surprise visit to Beijing to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping. In the 1970s, he had a hand in many of the epoch-changing global events of the decade while serving as secretary of state under Republican President Richard Nixon. The German-born Jewish refugee's efforts led to the diplomatic opening of China, landmark U.S.-Soviet arms control talks, expanded ties between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and the Paris Peace Accords with North Vietnam.

Kissinger's reign as the prime architect of U.S. foreign policy waned with Nixon's resignation in 1974. Still, he continued to be a diplomatic force under President Gerald Ford and to offer strong opinions throughout the



rest of his life.

While many hailed Kissinger for his brilliance and broad experience, others branded him a war criminal for his support for anti-communist dictatorships, especially in Latin America. In his latter years, his travels were circumscribed by efforts by other nations to arrest or question him about past U.S. foreign policy.

His 1973 Peace Prize - awarded jointly to North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho, who would decline it - was one of the most controversial ever. Two members of the Nobel committee resigned over the selection and questions arose about the U.S. secret bombing of Cambodia.

Ford called Kissinger a "super secretary of state" but also noted his prickliness and self assurance, which critics were more likely to call paranoia and egotism. Even Ford said, "Henry in his mind never

made a mistake."

"He had the thinnest skin of any public figure I ever knew," Ford said in an interview shortly before his death in 2006. With his dour expression and gravelly, German-accented voice, Kissinger was hardly a rock star but had an image as a ladies' man, squiring starlets around Washington and New York in his bachelor days. Power, he said, was the ultimate aphrodisiac.

Voluble on policy, Kissinger was reticent on personal matters, although he once told a journalist he saw himself as a cowboy hero, riding off alone.

HARVARD FACULTY

Heinz Alfred Kissinger was born in Furth, Germany, on May 27, 1923, and moved to the United States with his family in 1938 before the Nazi campaign to exterminate European Jews.

Anglicizing his name to Henry, Kissinger became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1943, served in the Army in Europe in World War Two, and went to Harvard University on scholarship, earning a master's degree in 1952 and a doctorate in 1954. He was on Harvard's faculty for the next 17 years. During much of that time, Kissinger served as a consultant to government agencies, including in 1967 when he acted as an intermediary for the State Department in Vietnam. He used his connections with President Lyndon Johnson's administration to pass

on information about peace negotiations to the Nixon camp.

When Nixon's pledge to end the Vietnam War won him the 1968 presidential election, he brought Kissinger to the White House as national security adviser.

But the process of "Vietnamization" - shifting the burden of the war from the half-million U.S. forces to the South Vietnamese - was long and bloody, punctuated by massive U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, the mining of the North's harbors, and the bombing of Cambodia.

Kissinger declared in 1972 that "peace is at hand" in Vietnam but the Paris Peace Accords reached in January 1973 were little more than a prelude to the final Communist takeover of the South two years later. In 1973, in addition to his role as national security adviser, Kissinger was named secretary of state - giving him unchallenged authority in foreign affairs. An intensifying Arab-Israeli conflict launched Kissinger on his first so-called "shuttle" mission, a brand of highly personal, high-pressure diplomacy for which he became famous. Thirty-two days spent shuttling between Jerusalem and Damascus helped Kissinger forge a long-lasting disengagement agreement between Israel and Syria in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Israel-Palestine war: Has David Cameron revived the Tory Arabist tradition?

The newly-appointed foreign secretary has - in the space of two short weeks - seized control of the Gaza file and renounced Sunak's policy of 'unequivocal' support for Netanyahu's Israel



(News Agency) On 6 November 1956, after Britain and France launched a military action in collusion with Israel to occupy the Suez Canal, the Spectator published an editorial denouncing it as an ill-considered "act of aggression". It was a bold move from Britain's iconic Tory magazine, one that would age well, on the part of then-editor and proprietor Lord Ian Gilmour.

Gilmour went on to serve briefly as defence secretary under Edward Heath's Conservative government, and then for two years as Margaret Thatcher's lord privy seal - until she sacked him in 1981. During that time, and throughout his life, Gilmour belonged to the almost extinct tradition of Tory Arabism and was a staunch and consistent supporter of the Palestinians. In

1961, the Spectator published Erskine Childers' article "The Other Exodus", which shattered the official Israeli narrative about the ethnic cleansing of 750,000 Palestinians in 1948. Childers challenged the (now thoroughly debunked) notion that the Palestinians were ordered to leave by Arab leaders. In 1982, Gilmour lamented Israel's "short-sighted preference for continued occupation and annexation of the disputed territories to withdrawal and peace". He condemned the American press's record of portraying Palestinians "as terrorists and primitives, always seeking to persecute the Israelis and unreasonably objecting to the Zionist takeover of their territory". Then, in 2001, having visited Gaza, he wrote in the Guardian that a "ruthless colonial war is being

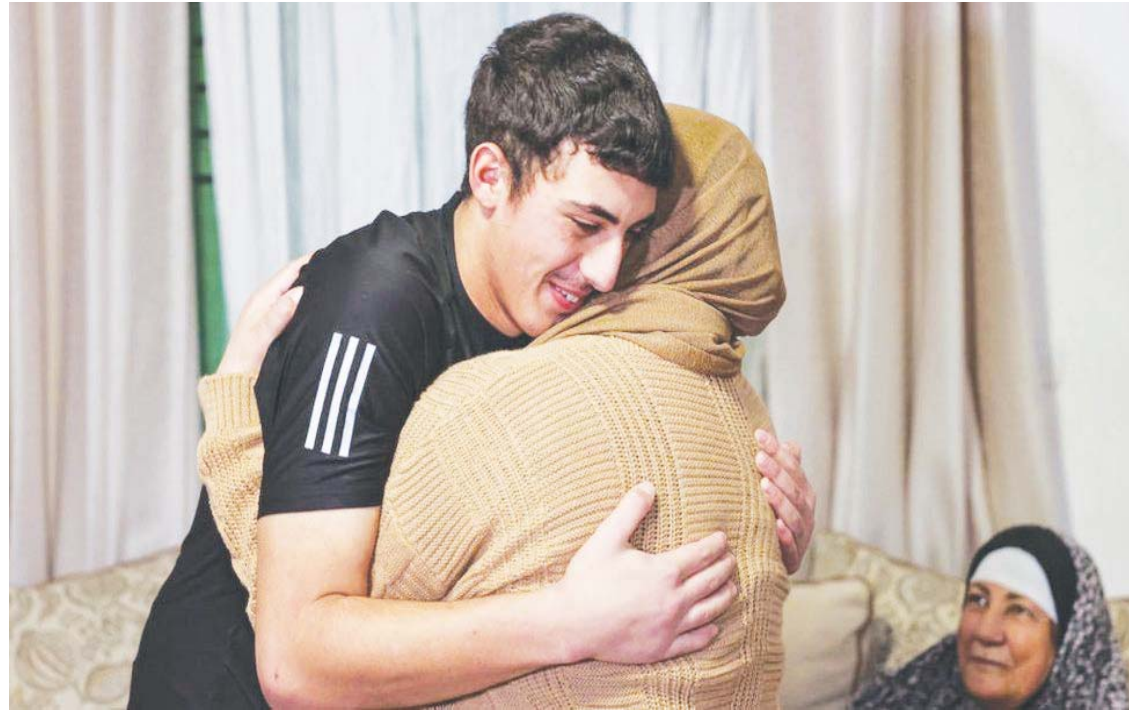
waged throughout the Gaza Strip and the West Bank", accusing Israel of imposing "collective punishments" on the Palestinians. He also disdained what he saw as Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's hypocrisy in denouncing Palestinian "terrorism" - "forgetting, no doubt, that his own record of terrorism and violence is, as the police used to say, as long as your arm". While Gilmour condemned Palestinian violence against civilians in Israel, he wrote that many Israelis "recognise that most (though not all) Palestinian violence in the [occupied] territories is not 'terrorism' but justified resistance to armed occupation". Gilmour warned that when, "as the Israelis have done, you make life not worth living for thousands of Palestinians, there will be no shortage of suicide bombers".

Inflammatory attacks Today it is inconceivable that any mainstream politician, let alone a Tory, could employ this kind of analysis. Support for the Palestinian cause is framed either as a purely left-wing anti-western obsession or - when it comes to British Muslims - as a failure of integration and multiculturalism. Tory Prime Minister Rishi Sunak allowed his home secretary, Suella Braverman, to make a series of inflammatory attacks on pro-Palestine protesters - before eventually sacking her over an article accusing the police of bias. With encouragement from Downing Street, Braverman suggested that displaying the Palestinian flag could in itself be an offence, and smeared hundreds of thousands of people protesting for Palestine as a "hate march".

Israel Gaza: 33 Palestinians released on fourth day of truce

(News Agency)-More Palestinians have been freed from Israeli prisons on the fourth day of a truce between Israel and Hamas. The release of 33 people means 150 Palestinians have been released since Friday - the day both sides began swapping hostages and prisoners. Fifty-one Israeli hostages, including three-year-old-twin sisters, have been freed by Hamas as part of the deal. Qatar has said the pause in fighting will be extended by two days, which Israel has not confirmed or denied. Little information has been released about the latest group of Palestinians to be freed. On Monday both Hamas and Qatar - which has played a major role in the talks between the warring sides - said 30 Palestinian children and three women were due to be freed.

The Israel Prison Service later said 33 people had been freed from Ofer prison in the West Bank, and a detention centre in Jerusalem, but did not specify their genders or ages. By



the evening, Reuters news agency reported that a bus carrying the newly released Palestinian prisoners had arrived in Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank. Images showed people in the Palestinian city, waiting to greet them - some carrying green flags of Hamas, their faces covered with

balacclavas. Separate images showed a Palestinian boy named Muhammad Abu Al-Humus reuniting with his mother, and other family members, at the family's home in East Jerusalem. Al-Humus called his release "an indescribable joy" and kissed his mother's hand, the AFP news agency reports.

freed and that our people are in a good situation. But this is our destiny that we were freed while they are on a sea of blood," she told Reuters. Ms Jaradat was arrested in 2021, accused of involvement in a shooting that caused the death of an Israeli settler, according to Reuters. While fighting between Hamas and Israel is temporarily suspended, aid organisations have taken the opportunity to send lorries into Gaza filled with essentials such as food, water, fuel and medicines. Hamas has committed to releasing another 20 women and children, should a two-day extension of the truce go ahead. Israel has not commented explicitly on the extension, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Monday evening that it had "approved the inclusion of 50 female prisoners in the list of prisoners eligible to be released, in the event that a release of additional Israeli hostages is carried out".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's Third Middle East Visit amid extension of truce for two days

With the truce initially set to expire, Qatar has announced a two-day extension, which both Israel and Hamas have agreed to.

(News Agency)- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is set to embark on his third visit to the Middle East this week, with a focus on addressing multiple issues in the region. Apart from the ongoing hostage release situation, Blinken will visit Israel and the West Bank to engage in discussions on ensuring continued aid for Gaza, securing the release of all hostages, and enhancing protections for civilians in Gaza. This is his third visit amidst the Israel-Hamas conflict.



Meanwhile, Hamas has freed another 11 Israeli hostages, including three-year-old twins, bringing the total number of released hostages to over 50. In exchange, Israel has released 33 Palestinians from

its prisons, including 30 children and three women bringing the total number to 150. This exchange has become a late nightly occurrence under the temporary truce between

additional 20 women and children, according to US national security spokesman John Kirby while Israel has issued a list of 50 Palestinian women prisoners that will be set free. Humanitarian efforts continue as more truckloads of supplies, including food, fuel, and medicines, enter the Gaza Strip. Aid organizations are distributing these essentials, but the United Nations emphasizes that these deliveries are insufficient to meet the urgent needs of the Gazans.

During this extension, Hamas commits to releasing an

Taking advantage of the lull in fighting, Gazans are utilizing the opportunity to gather supplies, return to their homes, assess the damage, and prepare for the upcoming winter weather, marked by rain and wind.

Su-35 Flankers: Iran Says 'Deal Done' To Acquire Russian Military Aircraft Inc Su-35 Fighters, Mi-28 Choppers

(News Agency)-Iran's Deputy Defense Minister, Brigadier General Mahdi Farahi, announced that the arrangements to acquire a range of advanced Russian military aircraft, including Sukhoi Su-35

not disclose the exact number of aircraft slated for delivery, reports had previously indicated Tehran's expectation of receiving 24 Su-35 Flanker-E fighter jets from Moscow.

Moreover, in September, Iran's Tasnim News Agency reported the arrival of subsonic Yak-130 trainer jets bearing IRIAF (Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force) markings.



fighter jets, Mil Mi-28 attack helicopters, and Yak-130 jet trainers, have been finalized, reported Tasnim News.

The report said Farahi provided reassurance that the procurement of the three advanced aircraft is advancing smoothly, underscoring their imminent integration into Iran's military arsenal.

He asserted that Iran is leading the region on the number of military helicopters and has notably strengthened its capabilities through several upgrade projects.

While the deputy minister did

At least two Yak-130s were observed in Iran's Isfahan province and are currently in service with the IRIAF. Despite their ability to serve as light combat aircraft, their capabilities are significantly less advanced than the Su-35.

The Iranian media emphasizes the main objective of these trainer aircraft is to train Iranian pilots in handling advanced fighter jets such as the Su-35 and Sukhoi Su-57. This effort is geared towards equipping Iranian pilots with the skills required to operate 4+ and fifth-generation aircraft effectively.

Like YouTube Videos To Earn Rs 5,000 Per Day: Check How This Dangerous 'Task Scam' Works

In 2023, the frequency of online scams has certainly increased. Not only are we witnessing scammers employ novel methods to deceive victims, but recently, they have been offering small sums of money to unsuspecting victims in a new type of scam dubbed the 'task scam.' This is similar to the job scams that mostly affect people on Telegram and WhatsApp.

The latest victims of this scam are two techies from Bengaluru, who reportedly lost almost 95 lakhs, according to a report by The Times of India. The report states that the duo were involved in online tasks that promised them an opportunity to earn extra side income.

Task Scam/Job Scam: How They Work

In this popular scam, fraudsters



posing as representatives of some of the top companies approach unsuspecting victims with offers that are usually too good to be true. This could involve offering unrealistic

returns on investments or asking them to complete simple tasks such as liking and watching YouTube videos, filling out forms, and sometimes writing reviews on Google and other platforms. They typically initiate contact with users

through WhatsApp or Telegram, attempting to persuade users to join their company by offering them work from home.

After completing a task or two, the scammers end up paying the "employee" but only to earn trust. Once the victims are invested and have done a substantial amount of work, they are told that they can increase their payouts if they invest more or make a deposit. Now, after investing a significant amount and requesting the promised "big" return on their investment or payout, victims are told they need to invest even more. This is how the loop continues. Victims often realize they have been duped too late, as the scammers usually disappear by that point.

How to Stay Safe

Firstly, always remember that no one in their right mind would pay you to like videos or do simple tasks for substantial money. It's not realistic. If something feels too good to be true, it usually is. Moreover, if these scammers approach you, regardless of the platform, always block them and report them to the authorities. Also, never share your personal identification, such as Aadhar numbers, with them, as they may use your ID for further scams. Additionally, refrain from clicking on links, downloading random apps, and always verify with the official company a person claims to represent if such a job role is available. And, of course, alert your friends and family about the scam whenever you get the chance to spread awareness.

Indian Gamers Are Starting To Earn 6-12 LPA, New Study Reveals; Parents Are



With gaming and esports starting to influence the creator economy more than ever before, a career in gaming is on track to become more mainstream, diverging from the niche it occupied just a few years ago.

Amidst this shift, a recent study by HP has revealed that almost half of Indian gamers are seriously considering gaming as a source of income. Based on the responses, they are earning anywhere from Rs 6 lakh to Rs 12 lakh. This study involved 3500 participants, including 500 parents from 15 tier 1 cities and 15 tier 2 cities across India. In

addition to these findings, gamers can also earn income through additional sources such as brand sponsorships, tournaments, and streaming, all of which contribute to their influence in the gaming community. There's been a positive shift in how parents respond to their kids' interest in gaming. According to the HP report, nearly 42% of respondents approved of gaming as a hobby, and 40% said their perspective had become more positive in recent years. However, some parents still have doubts about the field, with 49% relying on friends and family for information.

Gaming is not just popular in India's big cities; even smaller cities are getting in on the action. The study found that 75% of Gen Z and 67% of millennials in non-metro areas take gaming seriously, and 58% of female respondents expressed interest.

The study also looked at gaming hardware and found that 67% of gamers prefer to use a gaming PC over let's say a mobile phone. Additionally, it was revealed that most gamers are willing to spend more than Rs 1,00,000 on gaming hardware for better control, performance, and higher frames per second.

Apple Sending Experts To India For Threat Notification Probe: All Details



The US-based tech giant Apple is sending a team of technical and cybersecurity experts to investigate the recent issue involving Indian politicians receiving threat notifications from their devices. According to reports, the team will collaborate with the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) to further examine the matter.

In October, several opposition MPs, including Priyanka Chaturvedi, Mahua Moitra, Pawan Khera, Shashi Tharoor, Raghav Chadha, Sitaram Yechury, and Akhilesh Yadav,

reported receiving notifications from Apple indicating that their devices were targeted by state-sponsored hackers.

Expressing "concerns" over the snooping claims made by the opposition leaders, IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said an investigation has been ordered and asked tech giant Apple to join the investigation with real, accurate information on the "alleged state-sponsored attacks". Apple clarified that it does not attribute these notifications to any specific state-sponsored attacker and acknowledged the possibility of false alarms.

Sexy! Mouni Roy Turns Head In A Sexy, Plunging Neckline Corset Dress

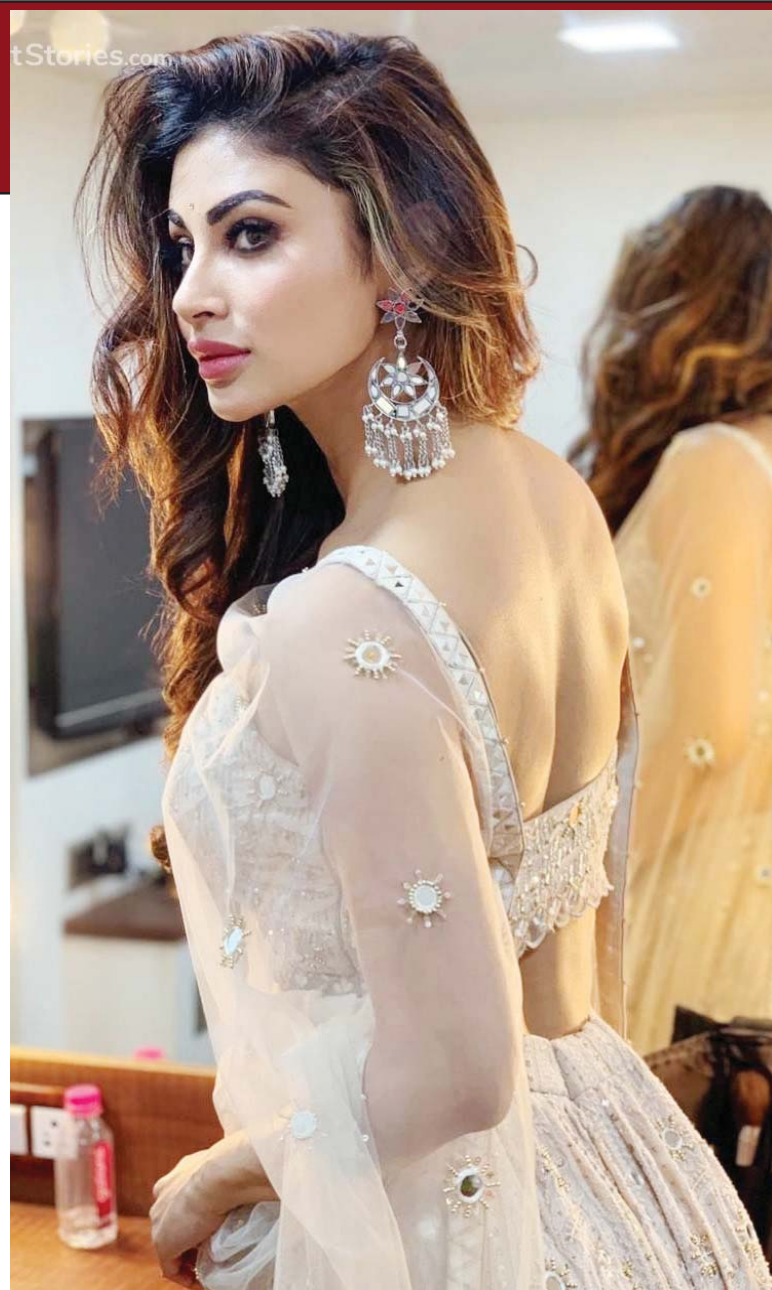
Mouni Roy is a fashion icon and there is no doubt about it. The actress has repeatedly proved that she can slay any outfit with her style. On Tuesday evening, Mouni was spotted at a fashion event in Mumbai, sporting a body-hugging outfit.



Mouni looked absolutely stunning in a blush pink dress featuring a corset-style top half paired with a charming short tulle-type skirt underneath. Her choice of leaving her hair down in tight waves and adorning a delightful pink makeup added a touch of elegance to her overall look. As she posed for the paparazzi, Mouni exuded confidence and radiance, flashing her gorgeous smile that captured everyone's attention. Fans were quick to express their love for the actress in the comments, with most agreeing that she looked

absolutely stunning. Mouni Roy has come a long way ever since she made her television debut with Ekta Kapoor's Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi. She became a popular name after she starred in Naagin. Mouni made her Bollywood debut with Akshay Kumar's Gold in 2018. Last year, Mouni was seen in Ayan Mukerji's magnum opus, Brahmastra. Recently, she was also seen in a music video titled 'Dotara' along with Jubin Nautiyal. Mouni is currently enjoying the success of her recently released series Sultan of Delhi.

In a recent interview, Mouni shared that it is projects like Sultan of Delhi and Brahmastra which changed people's perception of her as an actor. "Brahmastra was absolutely different. When you see Gold, RAW and Made In China, I had played very Indianised characters. Maybe after Naagin and Sati, people could only see me as a 'saree-clad Indian character'. So, for Milan sir to think of me as this cabaret dancer Nayantara, at a time when Brahmastra had not even released. I think it is an exciting time to be an actor where makers can visualise you in different roles. Such great parts are being written. I really feel fortunate to be offered these parts and be able to play them on screen," she told Indian Express.



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Katrina Kaif reveals why 'Ek Tha Tiger' will be her most special film

'Tiger 3', also starring Salman Khan in the lead, has already crossed the Rs 250-crore mark in India. Speaking to IndiaToday.in, Katrina talked about the film's success, her chemistry with Salman and the consistent love she's got over the years, among other things.



Katrina Kaif reprised her role as Zoya in 'Tiger 3'. In an exclusive chat with IndiaToday.in, the actress shared why the first film of the franchise, 'Ek Tha Tiger', holds the most special place in her heart, labeling it a 'beautiful love story'.

"EK THA TIGER" WILL ALWAYS BE MY MOST SPECIAL FILM'

Talking about 'Ek Tha Tiger', the 2012-film directed by Kabir Khan, Katrina Kaif told IndiaToday.in, "I remember when Kabir first told me the story of 'Ek Tha Tiger', we had just done a film together called 'New York'. I absolutely loved the story. I thought it was a beautiful love story about two fiercely independent people. They come together inspite of all the challenges and the obstacles. 'Ek Tha Tiger' will always

be my most special film. I am grateful for all the love the audience have given to the film and all the support as well. It's a special franchise."

ON HER CHEMISTRY WITH SALMAN KHAN Katrina Kaif talked about her on-screen crackling chemistry with Salman Khan and said, "It's all about the script. In 'Tiger 3' we had two such well-written characters. It was layered and had so many nuances. It connects beautifully. Zoya's character is written so well that it allows her to shine on-screen. We have also known each other for so many years now." 'Tiger 3', the third installment of the Tiger franchise, after 'Ek Tha Tiger' (2012) and 'Tiger Zinda Hai' (2017), hit theatres on November 12 on the occasion of Diwali.



Randeep Hooda reveals he wants lots of kids ahead of wedding with Lin Laishram

Randeep Hooda and Lin Laishram are all set to tie the knot in Imphal, Manipal today. The couple was spotted visiting the relief camp at Moirang Lamkhai and Sendra Tourist Resort while there, according to ANI. Speaking to the press ahead of their wedding, the couple opened up about how they met, their love story and more. (Also Read: Randeep Hooda reaches Imphal, Randeep has heard that grooms have to sit longer when getting married in Meitei traditions, but he believes that it's respectful to do so. "I felt that it's only respectful to come and marry in the bride's traditions. I look forward to the ceremony and experiencing my partner's culture. I just hope I don't make any mistakes," he said.

Randeep Hooda on his future

The actor added that he has only two wishes while embarking on a whole new phase of life - lots of kids and abundance. "We have been talking about Manipuri culture for a long time," he said, adding, "I am praying for a happy future filled with lots of kids and abundance."



I love that we're taking our friendship forward and becoming family." How Randeep Hooda and Lin Laishram met

Randeep revealed that he met Lin at a theatre group. "We have been friends for a very long time, we've had a great friendship since we met" he said, as Lin chipped in, "We met at Naseeruddin Shah's theatre group called Motley. He was my senior there." Randeep and Lin's wedding- Randeep took to social media a few days ago to confirm the news of his wedding. "Taking a leaf out of the Mahabharata where Arjuna married Manipuri Warrior Princess Chitrangada, We are getting married with the blessings of our families and friends," read the note. He also shared that a reception will take place at a later date in Mumbai. "As we embark on this journey, we seek your blessings and love for this union of cultures, for which we are forever indebted and grateful," he wrote in a joint post with Lin.

Jennifer Lawrence addresses getting plastic surgery rumours: It is incredible...

'The Hunger Games' star Jennifer Lawrence recently refuted allegations of undergoing plastic surgery, attributing her youthful looks to makeup and graceful aging. Kylie Jenner, during the same interview, supported Jennifer and shared her own experiences.

Jennifer Lawrence has recently refuted all rumours of plastic surgery. In a recent conversation with Kylie Jenner, she credited her youthful appearance to makeup skills and graceful aging. The rumours had started circulating after her appearance at the Dior Fashion Show. The actress refuted claims of having a nose job or lip fillers and stated that her changed appearance was due to aging and loss of baby weight. JENNIFER LAWRENCE ADDRESSES PLASTIC SURGERY RUMOURS

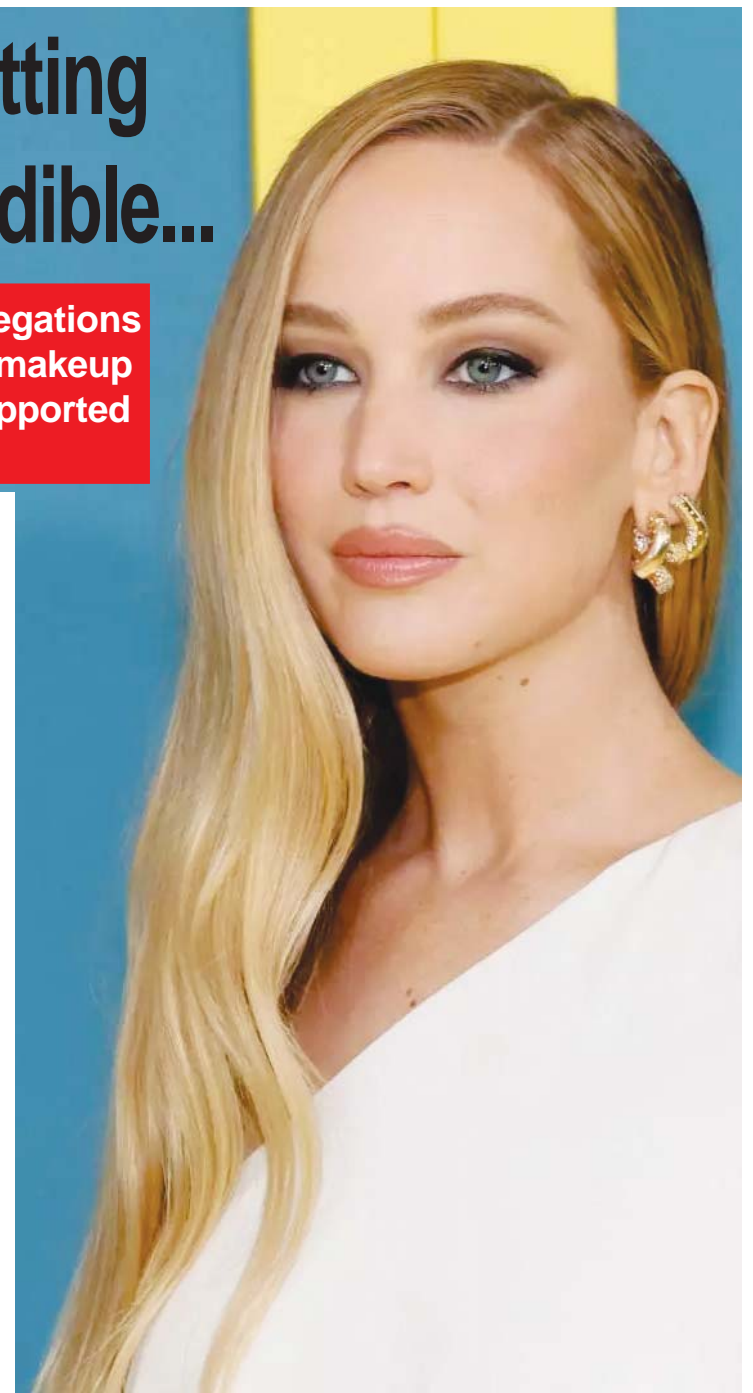
Jennifer Lawrence recently interviewed Kylie Jenner where she opened up about the rumours of her getting plastic surgery. 'The Hunger Games' star emphasised that she had not undergone any facial procedures and dismissed allegations of getting eye surgery. She acknowledged the transforming powers of makeup and attributed her changed look to her makeup artist, Hung Vanngo. "I also think it's incredible what makeup can do because I work with Hung [Vanngo], who overlines the lip, and I call him a plastic surgeon because everybody in the last few months since I've been working with him, is convinced that I had eye surgery," said the actor.

She then added, "I started at 19, so I get the before

and after pictures from when I'm 19 to 30 and I'm like, 'I grew up. I lost baby weight in my face, and my face changed because I'm aging'. "Everybody thought I had a nose job, and I'm like, 'I've had the exact same nose. My cheeks got smaller. Thank you for bringing it up.' Kylie Jenner, who herself has been subject to cosmetic surgery speculations, supported Lawrence and shared her own experiences of dealing with such rumours. The entrepreneur said, "I did end up getting lip fillers, but it's also the same with me" Kylie said next. She continued "I'll see before and after photos when I'm 12 years old versus 26 and my eyebrows are filled differently. I have contour on. I'm like, 'How can you compare my 12-year-old face and say I've gotten my jaw shaved and eyelids removed?'"

JENNIFER'S WORK FRONT

On the work front, Jennifer Lawrence was last seen in 'No Hard Feelings', co-starring Andrew Barth Feldman. It currently holds a 71 per cent rating on Rotten Tomatoes. The critical consensus reads, "This raunchy comedy often plays it disappointingly safe, but Jennifer Lawrence's comedic and dramatic chops ensure that the end result prompts 'No Hard Feelings'."



Prachi Desai On Dhootha: 'Couldn't Have Asked For A Better Series For My Telugu Debut'



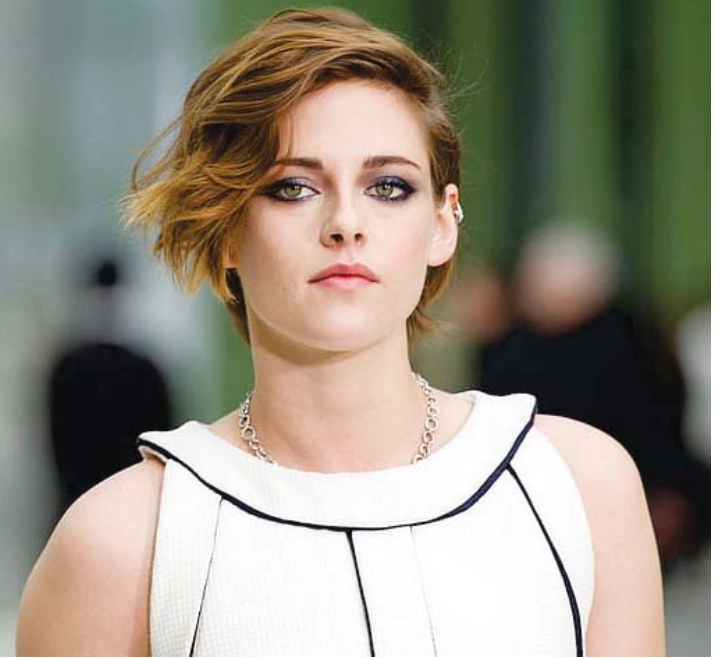
Prachi Desai, known for her impactful performances in the world of Bollywood, takes a bold step into the realm of OTT platforms with her unconventional debut in the Telugu language supernatural thriller, Dhootha. This marks a significant shift for the actress as she embraces the episodic format of storytelling, a departure from the traditional cinematic experience and also acts in a language that's unfamiliar. In her own words, Prachi describes her journey on 'Dhootha' as a truly unique experience. The extended storytelling format of the series allows for a more profound exploration of characters and plotlines.

She says, "Working on Dhootha was indeed a unique experience. The primary difference was the extended storytelling format, which allowed for more in-depth character development and plot exploration. The episodic nature of a series provides a different rhythm of

performance and character arc development. Couldn't have asked for a better series for my Telugu debut. Heartening to know that my work will reach audiences in 240 countries and territories. Stories from all over the country and different regions and languages are reaching a global audience, which is an excellent opportunity for any artist." She adds that the lure was the genre which she found enticing. "The supernatural genre has always intrigued me, and I was eager to experiment with it. When I was approached for Dhootha, I realised that it was an actual 'stepping out of the comfort zone' experience for me and venturing into a genre that I've always been curious to explore as an actor. While I can't reveal too much, I can say that my character experiences a fascinating arc throughout the series, and it was a challenging yet rewarding role to take on."

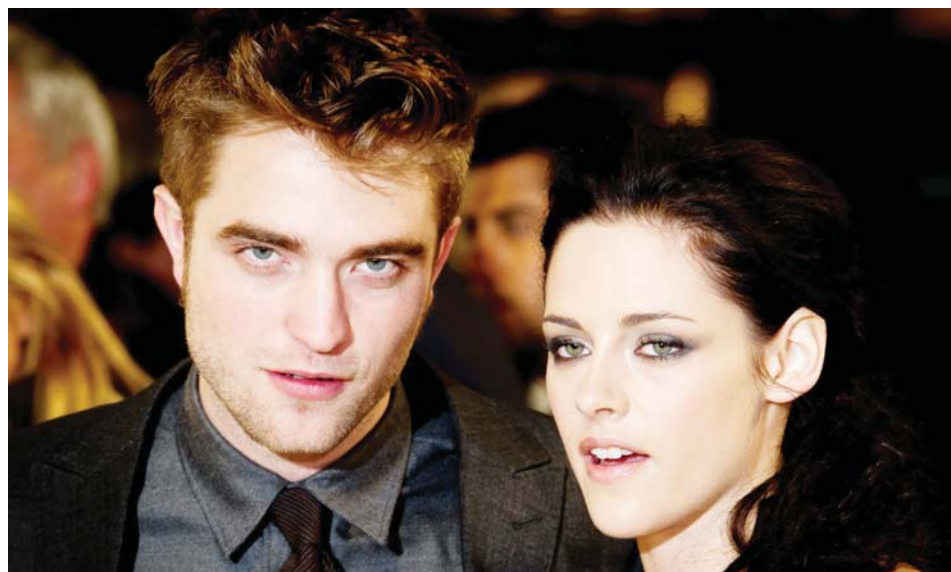
Kristen Stewart crashed Robert Pattinson's party, reveals Twilight director

Kristen Stewart had apparently gatecrashed Robert Pattinson's birthday party a few months ago, revealed 'Twilight' director Catherine Hardwicke. There is 'no bad blood' between them, as per the filmmaker.



Twilight director Catherine Hardwicke recently revealed that Hollywood star Kristen Stewart had gatecrashed Robert Pattinson's birthday party, which was held a few months ago. **KRISTEN STEWART GATECRASHES ROBERT PATTINSON'S PARTY**

She also went on to state that there is no 'bad blood' between the exes. Sharing the details, Catherine shared, "Strangely enough, I went to Rob's birthday party recently. I kinda crashed with my friend Toni Collette, who had just done a movie with him," Entertainment Weekly quoted the filmmaker as saying. "We had a fun thing,



and then Kristen crashed it too. That was just a few months ago, and it was just like, 'Oh my god!' We all hugged each other — like, this is so crazy and cool," she added.

ABOUT THE ACTORS

For the unversed, Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart were in a relationship for a long time before they decided to part ways after Stewart was clicked sharing an intimate moment with director Rupert Sanders.

Meanwhile, Robert Pattinson is expecting a baby with his partner Suki Waterhouse. The couple has been in a relationship since 2018.

Ranbir Kapoor recalls how Alia helped him during 'Animal' shoot: I was scared...

In a recent conversation, Ranbir Kapoor expressed his apprehensions about his intense character, Arjun Singh, in the upcoming movie 'Animal'. He also discussed how his wife, Alia Bhatt, helped him through the challenging scenes and was his biggest cheerleader.

Ranbir Kapoor has opened up about the support he received from his wife, Alia Bhatt, during the filming of his latest movie 'Animal'. He mentioned how Alia was the one who provided him the most support and encouragement. 'Animal' is set to hit theatres on December 1.

RANBIR KAPOOR REVEALS HE RECEIVED HELP FROM WIFE ALIA

In a recent interview, Ranbir Kapoor discussed the challenges he faced while portraying an exceptionally intense role in 'Animal'. He admitted to having moments of doubt as an actor, particularly when it came to pushing the envelope with his character's actions and dialogue. It was Alia who provided reassurance and guidance, acting as a sounding board for his concerns. He shared, "Alia and me speak so much about each other's work. I really respect her as an artiste and I really respect her mind and how she thinks. Every scene or everyday when I going to shoot the film, I would discuss it with her and she has helped me with so many scenes. She has helped me with scenes where I

was scared as an actor that 'Is it sounding too wrong?'"

Ranbir expressed his gratitude for Alia's role as a supportive partner, helping him navigate the complexities of his role in 'Animal'.

He added, "I have never pushed the boundaries so much as a character. I have always tried to portray goodness on the screen. She played that barometer, saying, 'Listen it is fine. It's a character and it is making sense. There is an idea and thought behind it.' She has been a strong support when this film is concerned."

ABOUT 'ANIMAL'
The film 'Animal' is set to hit theaters on December 1, and anticipation is high following the release of its trailer. The story delves into the tumultuous relationship between a father and son, with Kapoor's character embarking on a dark journey of vengeance. Directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, known for 'Kabir Singh', this marks his second Bollywood directorial venture and his first collaboration with Ranbir Kapoor. The film also features Anil Kapoor, Bobby Deol, and Rashmika Mandanna in significant roles.





Lawmakers will have to give up these fantasies if they want to get the House and Senate back on track.

The Painful, Depressing Reality of Why Congress Is So Dysfunctional

By STEVEN PEARLSTEIN

At the heart of today's dysfunction in Congress — the serial ousting of speakers, the perpetual threat of government shutdowns, the inability to address pressing issues like immigration, runaway deficits or climate change — lie three political fantasies. These illusions warp the perceptions, cloud the judgment and misdirect the energies of House and Senate members of both parties. Letting go of them will be the necessary first step to restoring a functioning legislature to a country that desperately needs one. The Right-Wing Fantasy

The most visible fantasy is the one that has been driving the populist wing of the Republican conference since Newt Gingrich took control of the House in 1994 and now makes its home in the Freedom Caucus. These partisan ideologues imagine that if they stick together and hang tough, if they remain willing to take the heat for disrupting government and trashing the norms of political behavior, they can bully their colleagues, wear down their opponents and grab the reins of power.

We've seen this fantasy play out repeatedly this year in the House, where a small band of right-wing zealots forced Republican leader Kevin McCarthy through 15 rounds of voting, to give them a virtual veto over legislation before they would give him the votes to become speaker. Nine months later he was out, ousted by the same crew for the unforgivable sin of striking a compromise with Democrats to avoid an economically disastrous debt default and a politically disastrous government shutdown. The melodrama that followed shut down the House for three weeks and led to the selection of one of their own, Mike Johnson, as speaker — a victory that, in their view, validates their strategy and is the next step in a divine plan to return Donald Trump to the White House and elect a MAGA-controlled Congress in 2024.

These zealots assume that the public has

been so brainwashed by the political, media and academic establishment that they've long since given up trying to convince colleagues or voters of the rightness of their cause. To them, it is self-evident that Obamacare should be repealed and spending for food stamps and education cut in half, that climate change is a hoax and billionaires are overtaxed, that no one should be able to get an abortion under any circumstances but anyone should be able to buy a bunch of AK-47s. Unwilling to engage in persuasion, they rely instead on coercion, seizing every opportunity to take their caucus, their leaders or the country hostage until they get their way. Recently I asked Rep. Chip Roy of Texas, one of the most determined of the right-wingers, what he imagined would happen once his crowd gained power and was able to impose their policies on that broad swath of the country that opposes them. He predicted that most voters would respond with a mixture of grudging respect and acquiescence — a most Trumpian view of leadership. And if governing required some compromise with opponents, Roy told me that would be okay because it would be done from a position of strength rather than weakness, much as a victor negotiates terms of the enemy's surrender. What Roy, Trump and their ilk cannot see is that conquering the Republican Party is not the same as conquering America. A meaningful majority of Americans find their policies to be extreme, their methods odious, their leaders foolish and their vision for America untethered to reality. Their bully-boy tactics are unlikely to succeed with an evenly divided Senate, a Democratic president or even a conservative Supreme Court struggling to maintain its own legitimacy. And were they to try to seize power (again) through nefarious means, the country's elite — judges, civil

servants, state officials, military and business leaders — would do whatever it takes to stop them, just as they did on Jan. 6.

The Progressive Fantasy

Political fantasy, however, is not limited to the Republican Party. The one thing that unites the Democratic cloakroom these days — aside from their righteous outrage at the behavior of Republicans — is the unshakeable conviction that Americans agree with them on just about everything. Democrats imagine that if they can just maintain party unity and stick to poll-tested talking points, they will run the table in the next election, win control of both the White House and Congress and finally enact the progressive agenda that Americans have wanted all along. In this new New Deal fantasy, the Trump wing of the Republican Party will finally be crushed and Democrats will become the dominant governing party for a generation.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, the Washington Democrat who heads the party's Progressive Caucus, calculates that two thirds of Americans agree with Democrats on everything from abortion, gay rights and immigration to health care, universal pre-K and paid parental leave. The only reason the Democratic agenda has not been enacted, she explained to me recently, is because of the anti-majoritarian structure of Congress, with a gerrymandered House and a filibuster-constrained Senate, where 40 members representing only 11 percent of the population can frustrate the popular will. "With even a slim majority in Congress," Jayapal told me confidently, "we could push through what a super-majority of Democrats want—and what a majority of the American public wants."

In reality, America is not the progressive paradise Democrats tell themselves — and us — that it is. While a majority of Americans favor modest increases in legal immigration and a pathway to legalization

for those here illegally, they don't favor a ban on deportations or providing food, shelter, medical care and public school education for those who cross illegally. Most Americans' response to the wave of carjackings, store lootings and drive-by shootings isn't to demand the end of cash bail and an all-out assault on "structural racism." While concerned about global warming, they're not on board with shutting down oil and gas production, paying higher prices for gas and electricity or giving up airplane travel. Even before the recent Supreme Court decision, a majority would have banned most abortions after the first trimester. And while most people have come to embrace gay rights and gay marriage, they are deeply offended at being labeled homophobic bigots because they don't think transgender females should compete on the girls' swim team or share locker rooms with their teenage daughters. What's particularly curious about the Democrats' "the-country-agrees-with-us" fantasy is that it gets stronger the farther they drift from the political center. Recently, Jayapal was heard to declare that "the American people are quite far away from where the president and even a majority of Congress are" in terms of support of Israel in the war in Gaza. In fact, depending on what poll you look at, Americans are more than twice as likely to sympathize with Israelis over Palestinians in the current conflict. When you live in a progressive bubble, however, the vox populi can appear to speak with amazing clarity.

With Republicans rushing headlong into their own La-la land of defunding the FBI and the IRS and drilling for oil in national parks, it's hardly surprising that Democrats have come to believe that the public is on their side. But as they should have learned in 1994, 2010 and again in 2022, this overconfidence invariably leads them to overplay their hand and try to push through an aggressively progressive agenda, costing them control of Congress. Two recent books — *Where Have All the Democrats Gone?* by Ruy Teixeira and John Judis and David Leonhardt's *Ours Was the Shining Future* — chronicle how the Democrats' progressive drift has alienated its working-class base.

The consequence of both of these partisan fantasies has been two decades of legislative gridlock and dysfunction. Democrats who fantasize that Americans are on their side are no more inclined to compromise with the right-wingers who now control the Republican caucus as those Republicans who fantasize that having God on their side will allow them to impose their radical policies on a country that doesn't want them.

The Cow Smuggling Files: Cross border smuggling continues

By Charanjit Ahuja

On May 4, the Enforcement Directorate filed a 204-page supplementary prosecution complaint before a court making startling revelation of the involvement of the Border Security Force and a syndicate that operated in smuggling of cows through a porous border to Bangladesh. The ED found that cow smuggling along the Bangladesh border mostly took place "between 11 PM and 3 A.M. in night after prior setting in connivance with the BSF officials" and a syndicate operated to launder money. The Central Bureau of Investigation too had arrested a BSF commandant and some traders for their alleged role in the smuggling of cattle to Bangladesh.

It was time for Tehelka to blow the lid off the scam and the result is our Cover Story "Cow Smuggling Files" that brings out the inside story of the thriving business of cattle smuggling along the Bangladesh border. Tehelka SIT report reveals the nuts and bolts of the thriving business of cattle smuggling along the Bangladesh border. This illegal



business is a cash cow which no one wants to take by its horns as it is an industry worth billions of dollars and involves the high and mighty.

It is not that BSF, hit by bribery allegations, did not make an effort to check the cross border smuggling that has been going on for years, but the scale is too large. In fact some BSF jawans have lost their lives while trying to stop trucks and pickup vans through which cows are

transported from various parts of the country including Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and other states.

India and Bangladesh share a 4095 km border that runs through rivers and ponds. Smugglers tie bundles of logs to animal's necks to keep them afloat. There have been instances when smugglers tie socket bombs to the neck of the cows so that an explosion can be triggered when their movement

is intercepted.

A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs report titled "Border Security: Capacity Building and Institutions" admitted that mass movement of cattle occurs from all the states and once it reaches the border areas, it becomes extremely difficult to stop their movement across the border. "It goes on to state, "The Committee feels that Police forces of various States have failed to stop this mass movement of cattle to border states". Cow vigilantism in such a scenario is no solution because cow vigilantes themselves have become a law unto themselves due to political patronage and police laxity to lynch even innocent members of a minority community. An affidavit submitted in the Punjab and Haryana High Court by Haryana Police claimed that experiment of social boycott of persons accused of cattle smuggling has proved to be pivotal in dealing with the menace. It is for other states to elicit community support to check the menace.

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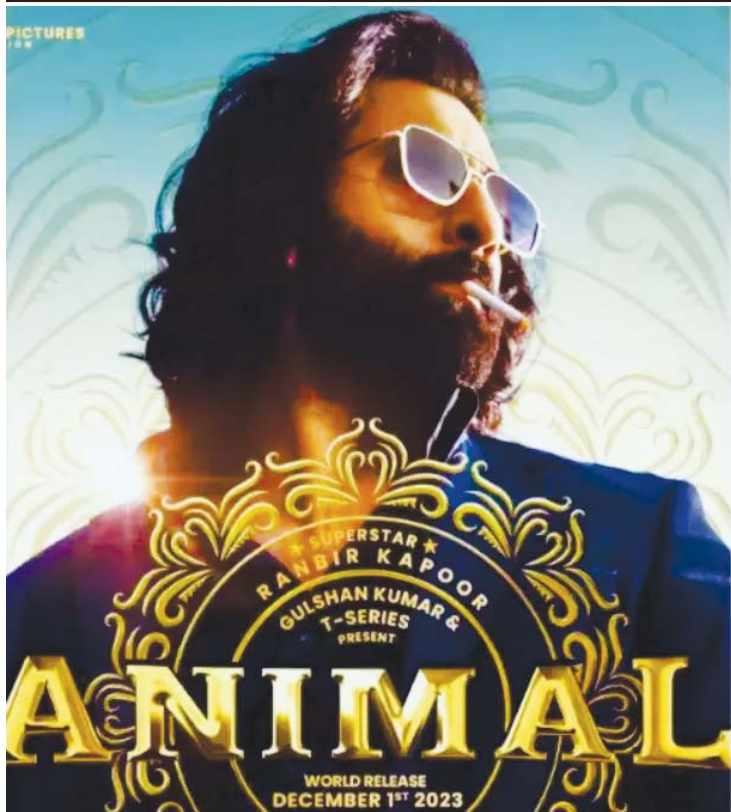
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From 'Animal' to 'Dunki': More Celebrations Round the Corner in Hindi Cinema

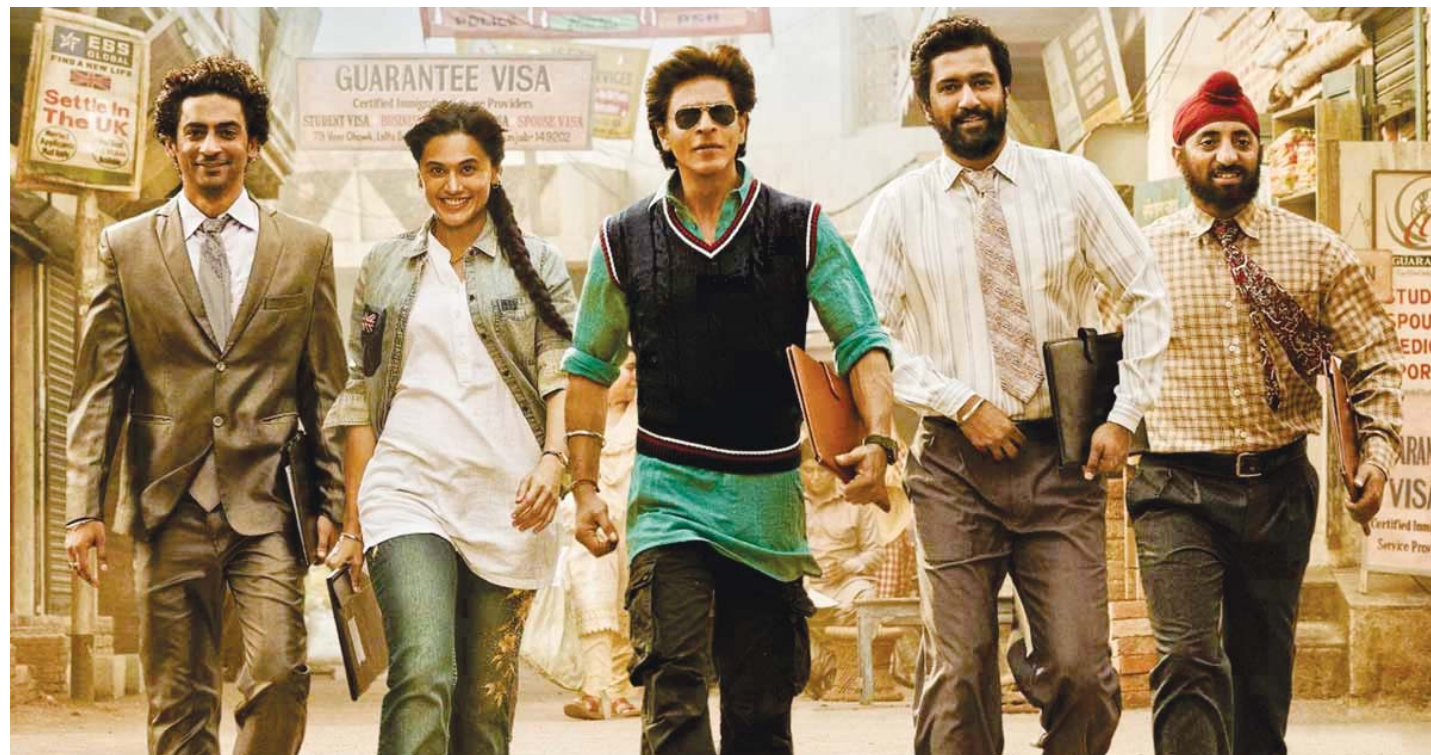


Written By: Biswadeep Ghosh

The Hindi film industry is looking forward to the month of December with understandable optimism. The coming days will witness the release of two potential blockbusters: Sandeep Reddy Vanga's action drama *Animal* (a December 1 release), followed by Rajkumar Hirani's comedy-drama *Dunki* (December 21). *Animal*'s trailer has been widely appreciated on social media, which is an indication of a great start for the Ranbir Kapoor film. *Dunki*, because of the Shah Rukh Khan and Hirani factors, will also have a fantastic first weekend. Another film, which is perfectly capable of becoming a major surprise story, is Meghna Gulzar's biographical drama *Sam Bahadur* (also, December 1) based on the life of India's first field marshal, Sam Manekshaw. Can December, then, generate the kind of excellent business the industry is hoping for? It certainly can.

The present year has proved that viewers in large numbers are ready to watch a film — if the initial feedback suggests a good theatrical experience. There have been as many as three all-time blockbusters this year: Siddharth Anand's action thriller *Pathaan*, Atlee's action thriller *Jawan* and Anil Sharma's period drama *Gadar 2*. Maneesh Sharma's action thriller *Tiger 3*, the third film of the Tiger series and the fifth installment of the YRF Spy Universe, has emerged as the fourth highest-grossing film of the year. The masala entertainer has already grossed more than Rs. 400 crore globally. *Tiger 3*'s business suffered because many cricket lovers chose to

watch their favourite Indian players in action in the ICC Cricket World Cup, largely because the Men in Blue seemed unbeatable before losing in the finals against Australia. Although the film has slowed down significantly, its box-office collections indicates that Salman Khan's star power remains more or less



intact. While 2023 has had several other successes, the recent commercial performance of Vidhu Vinod Chopra's biographical drama *12th Fail* starring Vikrant Massey as the protagonist shows how a well-directed mid-size film with a relatable subject can find a place under the sun. At the same time, several films released since the beginning of October have flopped, too.

Tiger Shroff's chiseled physique, enviable martial arts — and dancing skills have contributed to his popularity, especially among youngsters. After the failure of Ahmed Khan's action drama *Heropanti 2* (2022), Vikas Bahl's dystopian action film *Ganapath: A Hero is Born*, which hit the marquee on October 20, was seen

as Shroff's comeback vehicle of sorts. Produced with an estimated budget of Rs 200 crore, *Ganapath* made viewers expect an exciting theatrical experience. Yet, the film is not what it could have been. A mishmash set in a dystopian universe, it has been let down by weak direction, pathetic screenplay, uninspired performances and shoddy production values. The film has

collapsed at the box office, yet another setback for Shroff. Akshay Kumar had appeared in a special appearance in Amit Rai's comedy-drama *OMG 2*, a critically acclaimed commercial success. However, the fact is, the once-reliable Kumar needs solo hits to prove that has not lost his ability to attract audiences. Viewers are sufficiently familiar with the actor's liking for biographical dramas, and Tinu Suresh Desai's *Mission Raniganj: The Great Bharat Rescue* is one such film. The film is a tribute to Jaswant Singh Gill, a mining engineer and a real-life hero of our times, who had been instrumental in rescuing 65 miners trapped in a flooded coal mine during the Raniganj Coalfields collapse in 1989. *Mission Raniganj* wants to be a well-intentioned film, the choice of subject is brilliant, but the portrayal of Gill as a larger-than-life protagonist is an experiment gone wrong. Besides, the dramatized version of events sacrifices depth in an attempt to please the viewer. What happened after *Mission Raniganj*'s release was not a surprise. Most critics did not like the film. And, it was a commercial failure. A few other releases have also tanked since the start of October. Radhika Rao and Vinay Sapru's romantic drama *Yaariyan 2*, a standalone

sequel to Divya Khosla Kumar's *Yaariyan* (2014), failed to attract audiences. Sarvesh Mewara's action thriller *Tejas* sank, and Karan Boolani's sex comedy *Thank You for Coming* did not fare well either. Will December deliver on its promise to give 2023 that much-desired perfect ending? It should — if too much does not go wrong.

Big fat weddings are India's soft power abroad, just like Bollywood. Don't stop this export

Move over austere white church weddings, the ultimate Maharaja-style Indian wedding is the new goal of celebrities in the West.

In his latest Mann Ki Baat episode, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked Indians if it is "necessary" for families to go abroad for weddings. Keep the money in India, he instructs. But the big fat Indian wedding isn't just a cash cow; it's one of the country's biggest soft power exports.

Foreign destinations take weddings to a wider audience. Even Bollywood, India's other cultural phenomenon, is intrinsically tied to our loud, brash, colourful and unapologetic weddings. And the West is hooked—it can't get enough of the deep-red lehengas, the over-the-top jewellery and the excess of it all.

The last six posts on Vogue Weddings' Instagram page are of an Indian wedding that took place in Malibu. "Indian weddings are always glamorous," reads a comment. And this glamour is rebranding India's image. From a land of snake charmers and sages to one where the average family can spend big on Maharaja-sized weddings. Who cares if this isn't the reality, it's all about perception anyway. And a small percentage of big weddings happening outside India is a good price to pay for this makeover.

A cultural export

We might be taking weddings outside, but we're also taking along with us India's culture.

There are non-Indians who have been swept into the wedding industry. They have come to learn and appreciate India in a way they wouldn't have otherwise. One of the many such people is Armenian-Canadian makeup artist Anna Karapetyan. She almost exclusively works on Indian brides and is even an



expert saree draper.

The rise of Thailand as a popular destination is directly tied to the recent Indo-Thai film—Congrats, My Ex!—that follows a big fat Indian wedding. It was one of Thailand's top three searched movies in October. Even Nigeria's Nollywood has a hit Indian wedding movie, Namaste Wahala. An Indian wedding features in the Adam Sandler-Jennifer Aniston movie Murder Mystery 2. Aniston is even wearing a Tarun Tahiliani lehenga. Move over austere white church weddings, the ultimate Maharaja-style wedding is the new goal. And this is the kind of publicity that money just can't buy.

Easy-to-digest Hinduism

The stereotypical image of an Indian wedding is that of a Hindu wedding. The priest, the fire at the mandap, the saath pheras—all packaged in an aesthetic, easy-to-digest version of Hinduism through the lens of love for a global audience.

Global wedding planners even have pages dedicated to explaining a Hindu wedding, rituals and all.

"There are rarely small ceremonies or intimate Hindu weddings. It goes against a lot of the philosophies of the ceremony, so you can expect a big affair," reads one such website.

Another offers advice to guests on Indian

"According to the Confederation of All India Traders 3.5 million weddings will be solemnised between November 23 and December 15, bringing an estimated business of Rs 4.25 trillion this wedding season," the article published on 19 November reported.

By no means is the Indian wedding industry in need of any help. And vocal for local is great, but why not take local global?

Even when the ceremonies don't take place in the country, the couple spends lakhs of rupees in India before they step onto the plane.

From the Sabyasachis and Manish Malhotras to nameless brands in the lanes of Chandni Chowk and Lajpat Nagar—the lehengas and sarees worn in Lake Como, Dubai, Phuket and more are Indian.

And it's not just the clothes and jewellery.



wedding etiquette. It runs them through the significance of the Ganesh puja, the mehendi ceremony, and the saptapadi.

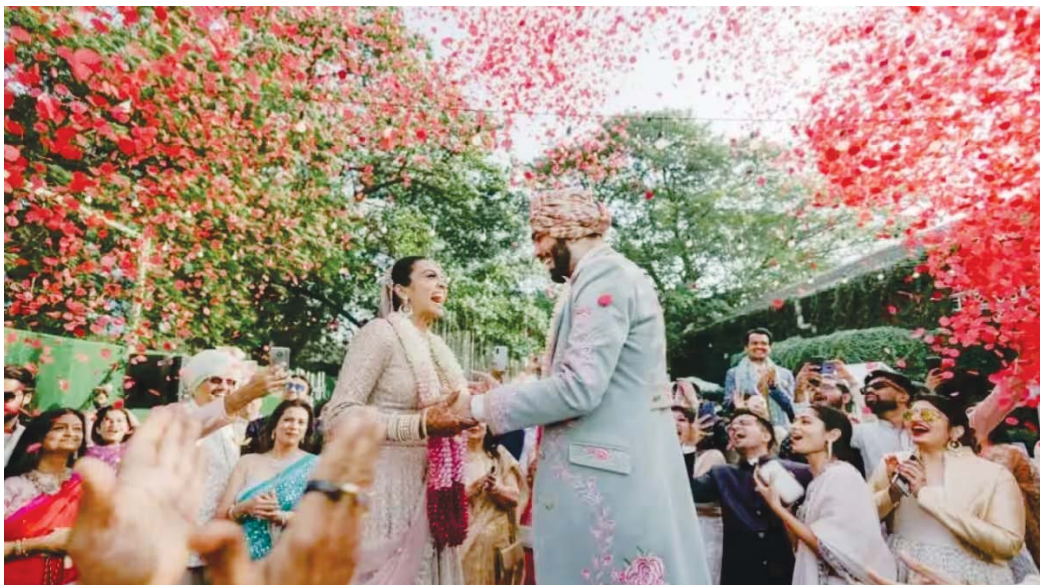
Going back to the Malibu wedding on Vogue, the article details the Sikh-Hindu couple's havan and jagrata, the five Hindu priests that conducted the ceremony, and the Anand Karaj (the Sikh marriage ceremony).

All this is exactly the kind of coverage of Hinduism that fits the BJP's religious push. So it's curious why Modi is still questioning whether it's necessary. Take local global. Forget soft power, let's get back to the economy. A recent article in The Financial Express called the upcoming wedding season "one of the most extravagant and glitzy".

Couples are hiring Indian wedding planning companies, who in turn give their business to local vendors. The photographers and the DJ/band are almost always flown in from India.

And Indians are notorious for craving Indian food wherever in the world they go, so why would a wedding be any different? Even Anushka Sharma-Virat Kohli had celebrity chef Ritu Dalmia whip up the feast in Tuscany while Deepika Padukone-Ranveer Singh took Bengaluru-based Sona Caterers to Lake Como.

And most often, it's Indian airlines transporting the guest list to these destinations. It's the venue, the hotel rooms and the decor that isn't Indian. And if 'vocal for local' is the Modi government's pitch, then even Indian weddings don't always happen at local hotel chains—it's the Marriotts and the Hiltons that rule the roost.



15 Years After 26/11, India is a Transformed Nation in Security Realm, But It Still Needs That X Factor

By: Sanbeer Singh Ranhotra

When Pakistani terrorists inflicted the dastardly 26/11 terror attacks on Mumbai in 2008, India was caught grossly unprepared. Its counterterrorism approach was found lacking, and various agencies, including Mumbai Police, were seen floundering while they desperately tried to rein in the terrorists. After losing 166 innocent lives and witnessing hundreds get injured, it was the National Security Guard (NSG) that got the situation under control after gunning down nine terrorists and capturing another, Ajmal Kasab alive. The 26/11 attacks became a watershed moment for India. The conscience of the nation was shaken, and the need of the hour was an overhaul of its security apparatus.

The then-UPA government took some measures to reform and strengthen India's approach to counterterrorism. These included the raising of Sagar Prahari Bal (SPB) and the induction of fast interceptor crafts (FIC) to prevent intrusions from sea. The NIA Act was also passed in 2008, paving the way for the creation of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to investigate and prosecute terrorism-related cases affecting the sovereignty, security and integrity of the country. Importantly, the Narendra Modi government has strengthened the NIA and made it a formidable agency crucial to India's anti-terrorism endeavour. After 26/11, the need for various wings of the Indian military and coastal security agencies to coordinate with each other became more pronounced. This led to the launch of 'Sagar Kavach' – a joint exercise between the Indian navy, coast guard and police forces in 2009.

The fact is that India has not witnessed a major terror attack against unarmed civilians since 26/11, and that is because the country has consciously worked to strengthen its counterterrorism apparatus since 2008. For starters, the National Security Guard (NSG) hubs have been set up in different states in order to ensure a rapid response to terror attacks. Today, India is much closer to the West, especially the US, sharing between Indian and Western agencies like the CIA and MI6. India can now get hold of crucial intelligence from its global partners well ahead of a terror

attack.

After the 26/11 attacks and until November 2021, more than 300 coastal security exercises were conducted with state authorities by the Indian Coast Guard to dominate the seas and eliminate any and all threats to India. An important exercise, Sea Vigil was



conceptualised in 2018 and is being carried out since 2019 by the Indian Navy in tandem with the coast guard and other agencies involved in maritime activities.

The idea to have a specialised agency, called the National Intelligence Grid or NATGRID, which was floated during the UPA tenure. However, it got lost in petty

108% to Rs 200.53 crore in the 2023-24 Union Budget compared to Rs 96.56 crore in the previous fiscal. Similarly, the Intelligence Bureau, among India's most important spy agencies, saw its budget being raised by 13% from Rs 3,022 crore in the previous fiscal to Rs 3,418 crore now. The budget

for the National Security Council Secretariat under NSA Ajit Doval was also increased from Rs 175 crore to Rs 185.70 crore this year. The home ministry's budget itself saw a near 6% rise this year as it was increased from Rs 3,022 crore to Rs 3,418 crore. Having said one cannot ignore the fact that these measures are aimed at

attacks perpetrated against India will invite no military response against it.

The lack of a concrete Indian response paved the way for a series of terror attacks after 26/11, albeit at smaller scales. Mumbai was targeted by multiple bomb blasts just three years later, on July 13, 2011, in which 26 people died and another 121 were injured. The lack of military deterrence continued until the Uri attack of September 2016. Then, with audacious surgical strikes inside Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, India changed the equation with its western neighbour for good. Unlike the Congress-led UPA government, the Narendra Modi-led NDA government is now much more likely to target Pakistan using the Indian military if Islamabad were to effectuate any provocation. This has no less been admitted to by the American intelligence. In its annual threat assessment report, USA's Office of the Director of National Intelligence earlier this year informed Congress that "under the leadership of PM Modi, India is more likely than in the past to respond with military force to Pakistani provocations." India took

the unwise decision of not returning Wing Commander Abhinandan or causing him harm. India is believed to have delivered direct warnings to Pakistan that failure on their part to return the wing commander would invite a larger escalation, and to back that warning, India deployed its Prithvi ballistic missile batteries in Rajasthan.

The Modi years can best be described as hellish for Pakistan. Today, Pakistan stands globally isolated. It's only good friend – China – is viewed as part of a global axis of evil. Islamabad's economy is in tatters, and the Islamic Republic, for all practical purposes, is surviving on borrowed time and money. A big factor that led to Pakistan's current state of affairs has been India's proactive global diplomacy since 2014 that exposed Islamabad as a patron of terror groups and a destabilising and rogue entity in the Indian subcontinent.

THE MAKING OF A MORE SECURE INDIA

Fifteen years after 26/11, Indians are living in a much more secure environment. Indians today step out of their houses not fearing the prospect of being victims of serial bomb blasts. Only a decade ago, that was not a luxury Indians enjoyed, since serial blasts across the country became normalised as a part and parcel of life. Security agencies are today more empowered to hunt down threats than they were 15 years ago. They are also armed with stringent laws like UAPA and NSA that help them deal with elements that wish to hurt India.

As a result of various measures taken to prevent terror attacks, terrorist-related violence has been on the decline since at least 2011. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2020, 8,749 people were killed in terror attacks in India since 2001. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of terrorist incidents, excluding Kashmir, declined by 70%. The Modi government, on its part, claims that the nation experienced a significant decline in terrorist incidents over the past nine years alone, with 2,350 occurrences resulting in the loss of 377 civilian lives, compared to the UPA era which witnessed 7,327 terrorist incidents and claimed the lives of 2,056 innocent civilians.



political battles and came into operational existence only under the Modi government in 2020. Today, NATGRID works as an integrated intelligence grid that connects databases of core security agencies of the government. It ensures the quick availability of intelligence to security agencies.

The budgetary allocation for NATGRID has been increased by

strengthening India internally. External deterrence against Pakistan was not established by the UPA while it was in power. The dastardly attack on Mumbai demanded that Pakistan be brought to task – using military force to neutralise its robust terror industry. Due to the lack of political will, however, that deterrence was not established. This ultimately led Pakistan into believing that terror

its campaign of establishing deterrence against Pakistan a step further in the aftermath of the February 2019 Pulwama attack. The IAF's precision air strikes against terror bases in Balakot, well within mainland Pakistan, showcased a doctrinal shift in how it responds to terror attacks. India then demonstrated its appetite of entering into a full-blown conflict with Pakistan in case Islamabad made