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Vol. 20

Issue 34

Friday 15 October to 22 October 2021

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India-China trade deficit soars to \$47 billion

Business ignores Ladakh crisis, 'Atmanirbhar' push

Trade deficit between India and China ballooned to almost \$47 billion in just the first nine months of 2021. It stood at \$44.02 billion in 2020-21.



(SAI Bureau)-The Modi government's attempts to reduce India's dependence on goods manufactured in China and push self-reliance alongside since the military confrontation in Ladakh last year does not seem to be making much headway if India-China trade figures are any indication. While

bilateral trade is on track to hit a record-high of \$100 billion, New Delhi's trade deficit with Beijing ballooned to \$46.55 billion in the first nine months of this calendar year - higher than the full-year figure in the last fiscal - and is expected to rise further by the end of 2021, according to latest data from China's General Administration of Customs (GACC). The trade deficit between the two countries stood at \$44.02 billion in 2020-21, according to (Contd on page 34)

Will Priyanka Gandhi's aggressive stance in UP benefit Congress or BJP?



(SAI Bureau)- During her 60-hour detention, Priyanka Gandhi made sure to be in the spotlight with social media posts, including one that showed her sweeping the floor of the police guest house. She was reportedly released following a telephonic conversation between Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. (Contd on page 34)

Aryan Khan is qaidi no. 956 at Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail



(SAI Bureau)- Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan completes one week at Mumbai Central Prison, also known as Arthur Road Jail, on Thursday. (Contd on page 37)

Border battle: New Jersey readies for war over Manhattan toll plan



(SAI Bureau)- New York officials are on the precipice of imposing massive new tolls to cut congestion in Manhattan following decades of explosive growth. There's just one problem: New Jersey. Gov. Phil Murphy says he's ready to use the "nuclear option" to battle New York's plan. Murphy, (Contd on page 35)

It's Congress vs Congress in Punjab
This time Sidhu has nothing to do with it



(SAI Bureau)- On a day when state Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu is slated to meet the high command after a long hiatus that began with his resignation, the party is on the boil again in Punjab, this time

over the Modi government's move to increase the Border Security Force's (BSF's) jurisdiction. The union home ministry had Monday announced that the operational

(Contd on page 36)



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Indian-Origin Singaporean Sikh Couple To Release Docuseries On Guru Nanak

However, in January 2019, the Amardeep Singh and Vininder Kaur led team embarked on a journey to retrace Guru Nanak's footsteps.

(News Agencies)- Saudi Arabia, Tibet, the places he travelled to fall An Indian-origin Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka for over two decades will be releasing online a 24-episode docuseries that chronicles the vast expanse of sites that were visited by Guru Nanak during his lifetime.

Amardeep Singh and his wife Vininder Kaur will release the weekly episodes of the docuseries at no cost on the website TheGuruNanak.com, Mr Singh said on Friday. It will also be available for download.

In the next phase, the docuseries, produced by 'Lost Heritage Productions' and 'SikhLens Productions', will be translated into Punjabi and Hindi.

Over 550 years ago, Guru Nanak travelled across the distant lands of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq,

Saudi Arabia, Tibet, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka for over two decades on an altruistic pursuit to spread the message of the oneness of creation.

To relate with people of diverse cultures and belief systems, Guru Nanak engaged in philosophical and social dialogue, and through the medium of words and music, he gracefully imparted experiential and spiritual insights, fearlessly challenged the binary constructs of society, and relentlessly opposed gender, religious, racial and class inequalities.

In the 21st century, geopolitical restrictions and cultural mandates impose immense challenges to trace Guru Nanak's extensive travels as approximately 70 per cent of

the places he travelled to fall in geographies where filming is difficult.

However, in January 2019, the Mr Singh and Ms Kaur led team embarked on a journey to retrace Guru Nanak's footsteps.

"This herculean task, extending far beyond personal ambition, is aimed with a passion to preserve Guru Nanak's teachings that perceives no borders or human divisions," said Mr Singh in a press release.

Aided with the analytical study of the oldest 'Janamsakhis' (biographies of Guru Nanak) and supported by the allegorical messages in Guru Nanak's verses, the team spent over three years filming all the geographies and multi-faith sites visited by Guru Nanak to present his life events in the form of a 24-episode

docuseries.

Undeterred by adversities, they travelled from the deserts of Mecca in Saudi Arabia to Mount Kailash in Tibet, explored remote regions of perilous Afghanistan, experienced

the scorching heat in Iraq, scaled the arid Baluchi mountains in Pakistan, sailed across the waters of the Indian Ocean to disembark in Sri Lanka, blended with the Persian culture in Iran, crossed the delta region in Bangladesh and mapped all four directions in India.

Commenting on the docuseries, Dr. Mohammad H. Qayoumi, President Emeritus, San Jose State University, said, "As a practising Muslim, I have found this docuseries filled with symbolic spiritual messages of Guru Nanak which will be



enjoyable for everyone who has a curious mind. I highly recommend them to all viewers."

For Amardeep and Vininder, every moment in Guru Nanak's footsteps was philosophically liberating. It encouraged them to challenge their own conditioning, unlearn, relearn and assimilate the beauty of unity in diversity. "In a world that is so fragile and volatile, there has never been a better time to understand why Guru Nanak travelled for 22 years to share his experiential wisdom and propagate the oneness of humankind," said Ms Singh.

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UNEDITED: A Kathak Dance Solo Featuring Rachna Nivas

When : Thursday, October 21, 7pm and Saturday, October 23, 7pm

Where: Dixon Place, 161A Chrystie St, New York, NY 10002 (Tribeca)

For more information about Leela visit: <http://www.leela.dance/>

(By our staff reporter) NEW YORK - UNEDITED is just the kind of show to add the necessary spice and magic to New York City's re-opening of the performing arts this fall. Bringing world art at its pinnacle, Unedited will immerse audiences into India's captivating kathak dance and rich, soulful classical music. Renowned kathak artist, Rachna Nivas, will hit

the stage in her powerful tour-de-force solo performance that is simultaneously dance, music, poetry, and storytelling. Joined by live musical artists in a dynamic exchange between dancer and musicians, Nivas will showcase the most riveting facet of kathak dance in this highly interactive experience that is in large part improvised.





From bullet trains to helitaxis

NCR board approves Draft Regional Plan-2041 to improve connectivity

The NCR Planning Board on Tuesday approved the Draft Regional Plan-2041 paving the way for a future-ready, slum-free National Capital Region

with air ambulance facility and high-speed connectivity through helitaxis, road, rail and inland waterways.

The draft plan puts special impetus on 30-minute connectivity through super-fast trains within major cities of NCR and also proposes to explore feasibility of 30-minute Mass Transit Rail System (MTRS) from nearest NCR boundaries to Delhi.

According to an official statement, the plan was approved in a meeting of the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) on Tuesday which was chaired by Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs (MHOUA) Hardeep Singh Puri.

The approved draft plan will be made public soon for comments.

"Board has approved Draft Regional Plan-2041 with some modifications to be shared for public comments. It was desired that after carrying out necessary changes as per procedure to consider comments or feedbacks, efforts should be made to notify the final version of Regional Plan-2041 by the end of March 2022 with the approval of the board," a NCRPB statement said.

The meeting was attended by Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Delhi Urban Development Minister Satyendar Jain and Rajasthan Urban Development Minister Shanti Kumar Dhariwal and Uttar Pradesh Khadi Gram Udyog, MSME Minister Sidharth Nath Singh

along with senior officials. The Regional Plan-2041 envisages to make NCR a smart connected region by improving connectivity among towns with help of bullet trains, helitaxi services, smart roads and evolve the region into a economically prosperous region with citizen centric harmonious infrastructure.

It lays key focus on multi modal connectivity across NCR through air, road, rail and inland waterway connectivity.

"The draft plan also proposes promoting electric mobility infrastructure. The plan laid emphasis on circular economy of water and air quality improvements to help environment conservation. Urban regeneration, ease of living, slum-free NCR, 24 hours air ambulance, Swachh and Smart NCR are major initiatives of this Regional Plan," the statement said.

The draft plan states it is necessary to minimise journey times across NCR and limit travel times across NCR under 30-minutes by superfast trains and helitaxi services, within 60 minutes by other trains and two to three hours by car.

"Delhi should have 30-minute connectivity through superfast trains with major cities of NCR. Efforts should be directed towards easing out traffic congestions and create a more integrated, user-centric, accessible, and affordable transportation system," the Draft Regional Plan-2041 said.

The NCRPB covers entire Delhi, eight districts of Uttar Pradesh, 14 districts of Haryana and two districts of Rajasthan. Collectively it covers an area of about 55,083 square kilometres.

The draft plan puts impetus on connecting cities in NCR with helitaxi

services to promote tourism and quick connectivity.

"Helitaxi service be provided at each district headquarters and tourist destinations to promote tourism," the Draft Regional Plan-2041 said.

The draft plan recommends creation of world class aviation hubs and facilities by developing a network of air transport across NCR with heliports and operational airports at every NCR district headquarter to promote "fly from Delhi NCR".

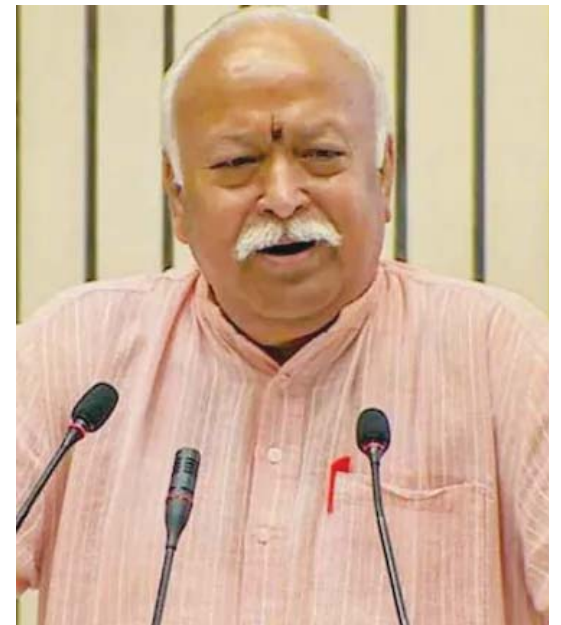
In addition to Eastern and Western Peripheral expressways, the Draft Regional Plan-2041 also recommends construction of two more regional expressways.

It said circular regional expressway connecting Panipat-Shamli-Meerut-Jewar-Nuh-Bhiwadi-Reqari-Jhajjar-Rohtak-Panipat and another such regional expressway connecting Karnal-Muzaffarnagar-Garhmukteshwar-Naraula-Aligarh-Mathura-Deeg-Alwar-Mahendragarh-Charkhi Dadri-Bhiwani-Jind-Kaithal-Karnal should be developed for balanced development of NCR-based facilities.

"The NCRPB chairman expressed his views that the Draft RP is an evolving document and views of the states on the draft provisions may be reviewed till it gets finalised and approved by the board for publication and implementation," the NCRPB statement said.

The draft plan also puts impetus on development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities across the NCR. The regional plan says that population in the NCR is expected to grow to around 7 crore by 2031 and to about 11 crore by 2041 so there is a need to make the region "future-ready" for sustainable development.

Savarkar was not enemy of Muslims, he wrote ghazals in Urdu: Mohan Bhagwat



(News Agencies)-Veer Savarkar was not an enemy of Muslims, and he had written ghazals in Urdu, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarasanghachalak Mohan Bhagwat said on Tuesday.

Mohan Bhagwat said there was a campaign after Independence to defame Veer Savarkar and that others, including Swami Vivekananda, might be targeted the same way.

Speaking at the launch of 'Veer Savarkar: The man who could have prevented Partition', a book by Information Commissioner and former journalist Uday Mahurkar, Bhagwat said, "There was a campaign to defame Savarkar. After Independence, the campaign went on very fast. Right now, Sangh and Savarkar are being targeted. The likes of (Swami) Vivekananda, (Swami) Dayanand and Swami Arvind are next in line."

Mohan Bhagwat said those who are against the unity in India do not like them.

The RSS chief said Savarkar believed nationality does not discriminate against people based on how they worship, and this is Hindu nationality. "Everyone is equal here, so don't talk of isolation or privilege," he said.

Giving Parliament's example, the RSS chief said, "Except physical fighting, what doesn't happen in Parliament? But outside, everyone drinks tea together and goes to each other's wedding."

Mohan Bhagwat said several people talked about Hindutva and unity in Indian society, but Savarkar spoke about it loudly. "If everyone had spoken loudly, no division (of the country) would have happened," he said.

"It's a fashion now to describe Hindutva as Savarkar's Hindutva, Vivekananda's Hindutva. Hindutva was one, is one and will remain one till the end," he added.

The RSS chief also recounted names of influential Muslim leaders, saying they should be celebrated. "Ashfaqulla Khan had said that after death, I will take the next birth in India. The names of such people should be echoed." Mohan Bhagwat said Savarkar was not an enemy of Muslims, and he had written ghazals in Urdu.

ABVP activists, police clash during Garba event at university in Surat



(News Agencies)-Several students including members of RSS-backed Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) were injured in a clash with police during a Garba event held at a university campus in Gujarat's Surat.

A video of the incident, that has gone viral, shows cops allegedly beating students, including ABVP workers, on the university campus in Surat.

Surat police said the students had violated Covid protocols and many were not wearing masks during the Garba event. Many students were detained and taken to Umra police station, where a group of ABVP members allegedly clashed with the security personnel. A group of students, including ABVP workers, followed them and gathered outside the police station where they shouted slogans against the police.

Many students were injured in the clash and later taken to Surat civil hospital on Monday night.

Students said they had organised the Garba event and many took part after the university granted permission. ABVP activists said a limited number of students took part in the garba event when "police personnel suddenly appeared and thrashed them".

Police, however, said the students flouted Covid guidelines and during

the event and they were trying to control the crowd.

The Gujarat government on September 24 allowed the organisation of sheri garba (traditional garba) in housing societies and on streets with a limit of 400 participants and strict adherence to the standard operating procedures (SOPs), including the condition that every participant should be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

However, commercial organisation of garba events has not been allowed this year.

Surat Police Commissioner Ajay Tomar said he has asked the DCP to conduct an inquiry and submit a report within three days. "From what I have learnt, the university's vice chancellor permitted garba event on the campus even as the government had decided not to permit any form of garba, other than the 'sheri garba'.



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Centre holds tripartite talks with Gorkha delegation, Bengal govt

The Centre on Tuesday held tripartite talks with the Gorkha representatives from the Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars regions and the West Bengal government. The second round of talks will be held in November.

The Union Home Ministry on Tuesday began tripartite talks with the Gorkha representatives from the Darjeeling Hills, Terai and Dooars regions and the West Bengal government. The talks are aimed at resolving the issues related to the Gorkhas. The tripartite talks were chaired by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The Gorkha delegation was led by Darjeeling MP Raju Bisht and highlighted

various issues concerning the Gorkhas and the region. The Centre is constantly making efforts to resolve issues related to the Gorkhas.

The Home Minister listened to all the parties concerned and has decided to call for the second round of talks in the presence of the senior officials of the West Bengal government in November. The West Bengal government has been specifically asked to send their senior officials for the next round of talks. The all-round

development and prosperity of the Darjeeling hills, Terai and Dooars regions is a top priority of the central government. The meeting was also attended by Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, Minister of State for Minority Affairs and Member of Parliament from Alipurduar John Barla, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, Secretary Ministry of Tribal Affairs Anil Kumar Jha, Registrar General of India Dr. Vivek Joshi, Principal Resident

Commissioner of West Bengal Krishna Gupta and other senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs. On behalf of the Gurkhas, the delegation comprised of the Darjeeling MLA Neeraj Zimba, Kurseong MLA BP Bajgain, Kalchini MLA Bishal Lama, GNLf chief Mann Ghising, CPRM chief RB Rai, GoRaNiMo chief Dawa Pakhrin, ABGL Chief Pratap Khati and SuMuMo chief Bikash Rai.

NIA searches 20 locations in 3 states over 2016 Maoist training camps in Kerala's Nilambur forest



(News Agencies)-The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday carried out searches at 20 locations spread across Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka in connection with alleged Maoist training camps organised in Nilambur forest area in 2016, officials said.

According to an official statement, the searches have been carried out at twelve locations at Tamil Nadu in districts of Chennai, Coimbatore, Theni, Ramanathapuram, Salem, Kanyakumari, and Krishnagiri, three locations at Kerala in districts of Wayanad, Thrissur, and Kannur, and five locations at Karnataka in districts of Chikmagalur, Udipi, Shimoga, Karnataka.

The case was originally registered by Kerala Police in 2017. The investigation was then taken over by the central agency on August 20, 2021.

"The case pertains to an alleged conspiracy by members of the banned terrorist group CPI (Maoist), a proscribed terrorist Organisation for conducting training camp, arms training, flag hoisting and celebrations for formation day of CPI (Maoist) during the last week of September 2016 in the Nilambur forest area and also for engaging in anti-national activities, threatening the unity, integrity and security of India," the statement added.

On May 18, 2021, the Kerala Police filed a charge-sheet against five persons--Kalidas, Danish alias Krishna, Rajan Chittilapilly, Dinesh DH and TK Rajeevan in connection with the case. "Investigation by NIA is continuing against the involvement of the remaining 20 members of CPI (Maoist)," the statement added. The NIA recovered a number of digital storage devices besides mobile phones, SIM cards, documents including books, manifesto, pamphlets. Further investigation in the case is underway.

Suspected of killing 4, man-eater tiger spotted in Tamil Nadu's Mudumalai Tiger Reserve

(News Agencies)-After an eight day gap, a tiger, which has so far killed four people and 20 heads of cattle, was spotted at Ombetta area in Tamil Nadu's Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, following which Forest department personnel and a medical team rushed to the area, officials said.

Camera footage showed the feline, coded T-23, moving towards the area, covering Mayar, Theppakkadu and Mudumalai late last night, forest department sources said.

They said efforts were on to trap it live by tranquilising for the



last 15 days, but the tiger had been evading capture.

The officials suspect that the tiger may move to its old habitats in Devan Estate and Mayfield, and said a special team has already reached the

area. The Madras High Court, while passing interim orders on a PIL petition last week, praying for a direction to the Forest Department to ensure that the tiger is captured alive and no steps were taken to put

it to sleep, or otherwise kill it, had asked the officials to ensure that the least number of persons entered the forest for its capture, while stressing the need to respect its right to roam free in the wild.

Will for progress is new India's motto: PM Modi at GatiShakti launch

He said earlier, special zones would be announced for industries but there was no seriousness in the efforts to make available connectivity, electricity or telecom.

(News Agencies)-Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that how government systems have worked for decades create a perception of delay, insult to taxpayers' money and poor quality of work. He was speaking at the launch of the PM GatiShakti - National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity. "People were disappointed after witnessing developments in other countries. Will for progress and preference for progress is the new mantra for today," he said. "The

nation had become accustomed to the chalta hai culture in which nothing can change. We have changed the 'work in progress' concept. This term has now become a symbol of non-performance," he added. He said earlier, special zones would be announced for industries but there was no seriousness in the efforts to make available connectivity, electricity or telecom. "PM GatiShakti will ensure that there will be no loss of time and money due to lack of infrastructure. It will connect all departments to facilitate the exchange of information on

time," he said. PM Modi said GatiShakti will help in the creation of quality infrastructure for sustainable development and give rise to many economic activities, creating employment on a large scale. "The people of India, the industries, the business community, the manufacturers, and the farmers of the nation are at the centre of this great GatiShakti campaign." PM Modi added. He said that it will give new energy to the present and future generations to build the India of 21st century.

New Pragati Maidan to host G-20 summit in 2023: Piyush Goyal

(News Agencies)-New Pragati Maidan will host the G-20 summit in 2023, Union minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday.

"PM GatiShakti-National Master Plan will give a push and direction to various development plans. It will also encourage investments. Under the leadership of PM Modi, the G-20 summit will be held at Pragati Maidan in 2023 for the first time," Union Minister Piyush Goyal was quoted as saying by ANI. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched PM GatiShakti-National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity on Wednesday at Pragati



Maidan. During the event, he also inaugurated the new exhibition complex (Exhibition Halls 2 to 5) at Pragati Maidan. The India International Trade Fair (IITF), the flagship event of the India Trade Promotion Organisation, will be held in these new exhibition halls from November 14 to 27.

"Spread over 72,000 sq km, eight exhibition halls will be constructed. The new ICC Centre is currently under construction. Underground parking has a capacity of more than 8,000 vehicles," Union minister Piyush Goyal said.



Aryan Khan involved in conspiracy, amount of drugs recovered immaterial: NCB

The NCB has said that Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan was involved in a conspiracy and therefore should not be granted bail in the Mumbai cruise drugs bust case.

(News Agencies)-The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) said on Wednesday that Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan was involved in a conspiracy and therefore should not be granted bail in the Mumbai cruise drugs bust case.

In the remand reply to Aryan Khan's bail plea, the NCB said the role of one accused cannot be dissected from another and

even if there is no recovery of a small substance, the accused are involved in conspiracy.

"Khan was accused of being used to procure contraband, and the contraband was found in the custody of [Arbaaz] Merchant. The investigations pertaining to transactions abroad need to be investigated and are being investigated," the NCB said.

A special NDPS court in Mumbai

had directed the NCB to file its reply on Aryan Khan's bail plea by Wednesday. The anti-drugs agency is opposing the star kid's bail application.

Aryan Khan and others were charged with offences under Section 8(c), 20(b), 27, 28, 29 and 35 of the NDPS Act. On October 7, he was remanded to judicial custody for 14 days after which he immediately moved

court seeking bail.

Aryan Khan's bail plea was rejected by the magistrate court on October 8. The court said the application was not maintainable as only a special court of sessions is entitled to hear the bail plea.

Aryan's legal team filed a fresh plea on Friday under the NDPS Act seeking bail in the Mumbai cruise drugs case.

NCB FILES REPLY TO MUNMUM DHAMECHA'S PLEA

The NCB also filed its reply to accused Munmun Dhamecha's bail plea. Senior advocates

Amit Deasi and Satish Maneshide, representing Aryan Khan, apologised to the court for interrupting but said that they have the reply of NCB but since no one from the agency is in court, so hearing will happen only in the afternoon. Advocate Ashwin Thool and others pointed out that the replies are copy pasted but still NCB has not filed a reply. "They (NCB team) are filing reply only in case of three accused," they stated. The NCB reply was handed over to the lawyers for the accused but it was not filed before the court as it does not carry signatures yet.

Union Minister Ajay Misra should resign: Rahul Gandhi on Lakhimpur Kheri violence case



The Congress delegation presented a "memorandum of facts" about the Lakhimpur Kheri incident to the President and demanded immediate dismissal of Minister of State for Home Ajay Kumar Misra.

punished and also that the communicated the farmers' for justice should never stop we prime accused's father is demand to the President," Rahul have raised the demand on MoS Home...till he is [a] Gandhi said. Priyanka Gandhi behalf of the victims. President minister, fair justice is not said, "We want justice for Kovind has assured he will possible..we have farmers and the journalist. Hope take up this matter today."

Congress leader Ashish Misra was arrested on Saturday by the Uttar Pradesh Police in connection with the violence. In a statement following the meeting with President Kovind, Rahul Gandhi said, "We went to Lakhimpur Kheri and visited the families which lost their members. We were told that they want two things. They want justice. The one who is behind the murder should be punished." "They also want the murderer's father, the Home Minister, to be removed from the post. Till he is on the post there cannot be justice. MoS Home [Ajay Misra] should resign," Rahul Gandhi said. Rahul Gandhi also alleged that before the Lakhimpur Kheri incident, Ajay Misra had "threatened" the farmers. "Before the incident, MoS Home had threatened farmer[s] and then there was action on his warning. We have demanded that MoS be removed and [we have asked for] an inquiry by two sitting judges of the Supreme Court." "They [farmers] want justice the person who has murdered should be killed of farmers." The delegation also demanded strict action against the accused in the killing of farmers.



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Mahatma Gandhi asked Savarkar to file mercy petitions: Rajnath Singh

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said, "Lies were spread about Savarkar" and that it was on Mahatma Gandhi's advice that he wrote mercy petitions to the British.

(News Agencies)-Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Tuesday Hindu Mahasabha leader Vinayak Damodar Savarkar wrote mercy petitions to the British government during India's freedom struggle on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi. Rajnath Singh targeted the critics of Savarkar saying the freedom fighter was being defamed over the mercy petitions. He said, "Lies were spread about Savarkar." "Time and again, it was said that he filed mercy petitions before the British government seeking his release from jail...The truth is, he didn't file mercy petitions

to get himself released. It is a regular practice for a [jailed] person to file mercy petitions. It was Mahatma Gandhi who asked him to file mercy petitions," said Rajnath Singh. Union Minister Rajnath Singh said, "Lies were spread about Savarkar" and that it was on Mahatma Gandhi's request that he wrote mercy petitions to the British. #ITVideopic.twitter.com/ayd6W8AC22 - IndiaToday (@IndiaToday) October 13, 2021 He was speaking at the launch of a book on Savarkar - Veer Savarkar: The Man Who Could Have Prevented Partition,

authored by Uday Mahurkar and Chirayu Pandit. Rajnath Singh said, "Mahatma Gandhi had back then said that Savarkar should be released. The way we are carrying out a peaceful movement to gain freedom, Savarkarji should also be allowed to do the same." Critics are trying to "defame" Savarkar, said Rajnath Singh. He also called the allegations levelled against him "baseless". - pic.twitter.com/aEkCE0XeCE - Rajnath Singh (@rajnathsingh) October 12, 2021 Rajnath Singh described

Savarkar as a "national icon" saying he gave the country a "robust defence and diplomatic doctrine". "He was an icon of the Indian history and will remain so. There can be a difference of opinion about him, but to look down on him as inferior is not appropriate and justifiable," Rajnath Singh said. Hailing Veer Savarkar as a staunch nationalist and India's first military strategist in the 20th century, Rajnath Singh said those believing in the ideologies of Karl Marx and Lenin wrongly accused him as a fascist.

Rajnath Singh said, "He [Savarkar] was a freedom fighter and a staunch nationalist, but people who follow the Marxist and Leninist ideology are the ones who accuse Savarkar of being a fascist."

He said hatred towards Savarkar was illogical and misplaced.

Rajnath Singh's remarks on Savarkar drew sharp criticism from All India Majli-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief and Lok Sabha MP Asaduddin Owaisi.

Owaisi said, "They [the Bharatiya Janata Party] are presenting a distorted history. If this continues, they will remove Mahatma Gandhi and make Savarkar the father of the nation, who was accused of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and was pronounced complicit in the inquiry of Justice Jeevan Lal Kapur."

They are presenting distorted history. If this continues, they'll remove Mahatma Gandhi & make Savarkar the father of the nation, who was accused of the murder of Mahatma Gandhi & was pronounced complicit in the inquiry of Justice Jeevan Lal Kapur: AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi

<https://t.co/1aEsVMgZLC> pic.twitter.com/ue2Q8Oxy3Z

- ANI (@ANI) October 13, 2021 Savarkar had written mercy petitions to the British government while he was lodged at the Andaman jail. He had been sentenced to 50-year-imprisonment for his role in the murder of a British government official and conspiracy against the British Empire.

Accepts bribes, gets drunk: Karnataka Congress leaders on DK Shivakumar in leaked video

(News Agencies)-The Karnataka Congress has found itself in an embarrassing position after a video emerged of a former member of Parliament and a media coordinator badmouthing state unit president DK Shivakumar. In the video, former Lok Sabha MP VS Ugrappa and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee media coordinator MA Salim can be heard talking about a "scandal" involving DK Shivakumar, that allegedly has to do with him and his aides

accepting bribes."It was six to eight per cent before then it became 10 to 12 per cent. It is all DK adjustment. Mulgund (aide of DK) has made Rs 50-100 crore. Imagine if Mulgund has this, then how much DK has," says Salim in the clip. VS Ugrappa and Salim also discuss how the Karnataka Congress president is of no use to the party. "We all fought hard to make DK the president. But he hurt us and the party," says Ugrappa. They wonder if Shivakumar gets drunk

because of his so-called stutter and compare him to senior leader and former chief minister Siddaramaiah. "He stutters while talking. I don't know if it's low BP or if he's a drunkard. That's what we discussed, media also asked if he was drinking then but he wasn't. Siddaramaiah's body language is kadak (smart)," says Salim. "We all fought hard to make DK the president. But he hurt us and the party," says Ugrappa. This isn't the first time that DK Shivakumar has found



himself embroiled in controversy because of the actions of a party functionary. In July this year, the Karnataka Congress chief was caught on camera slapping a party worker who tried to put his hand on his shoulder. The video of the incident went viral on social media.



Money laundering case:

Anil Deshmukh says not running away from ED, need protection from coercive action

During a hearing in the Bombay High Court, Anil Deshmukh said he wants to "dispel the impression that he was running away" from the summons issued to him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case. According to the probe agency, Anil Deshmukh has not complied with any of the five summons issued to him earlier.

(News Agencies)- Former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh told the Bombay High Court that he wanted to "dispel the impression that he was running away from the proceedings initiated against him" by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case. Anil Deshmukh said he is willing to cooperate with the probe, provided it is undertaken with "objectivity."

Arguing before the bench of Justices Nitin M Jamdar and Sarang V Kotwal, Anil Deshmukh's lawyer Vikram Chaudhri said, "My client wants to dispel the impression that I am running away, provided I am investigated by persons having no personal agenda. The action of the respondent agency fails to comply with fundamentals parameters of objectivity. Therefore, the court's interference is needed and Deshmukh must be protected from coercive action."

Anil Deshmukh's lawyer further alleged that the ED probe is being conducted by certain officials with "arbitrariness" and "vendetta". He added that the central agency was making

"selective disclosures" to media to portray Anil Vidya, Mumbai

Former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh told the Bombay High Court that he wants to "dispel the impression that he was running away from the proceedings initiated against him" by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in an alleged money laundering case. Anil Deshmukh said he is willing to cooperate with the probe, provided it is undertaken with "objectivity." Arguing before the bench of Justices Nitin M Jamdar and Sarang V Kotwal, Anil Deshmukh's lawyer Vikram Chaudhri said, "My client wants to dispel the impression that I am running away, provided I am investigated by persons having no personal agenda. The action of the respondent agency fails to comply with fundamentals parameters of objectivity. Therefore, the court's interference is needed and Deshmukh must be protected from coercive action." Anil Deshmukh's lawyer further alleged that the ED probe is being conducted

by certain officials with "arbitrariness" and "vendetta". He added that the central agency was making "selective disclosures" to media to portray Anil Deshmukh as a "bad person" before every court hearing, so as to create a wrong public perception about him. With this, Vikram Chaudhri sought interim protection from coercive action against Anil Deshmukh as he apprehended arrest under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Anil Deshmukh is seeking quashing of summons issued by the ED. The probe agency had earlier asking him to appear before it in connection with a money laundering and corruption case.

The ED has so far issued at least five summons to Anil Deshmukh. However, Deshmukh has not complied with any of them. Anil Deshmukh had earlier requested the ED that he be questioned through video conferencing in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. Anil Deshmukh's plea in the high court, filed through Advocate Aniket Nikam, seeks

permission to submit documents or statements to the agency through electronic mode and be represented through an "authorised agent". Anil Deshmukh also wanted a special investigation team comprising ED officers from outside the Mumbai zonal office to investigate his case. The ED is investigating the money laundering case after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) initiated a probe against him based on allegations levelled by former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh. Param Bir Singh had alleged that Deshmukh asked policemen to extort protection money from businessmen. Anil Deshmukh's lawyer Vikram Chaudhri argued on behalf of his client for the last two hearings, while Additional Solicitor General Aman Lekhi, representing the agency, was waiting for his turn. Vikram Chaudhri said that he needed one more hour to argue. However, the bench asked Chaudhri to wrap up his submissions within 45 minutes on Wednesday. The agency would then argue and after that, the bench would reserve its order.

National Capital Region likely to shrink as Draft Regional Plan 2041 gets greenlit



The National Capital Region is likely to shrink to 100-km radius from Rajghat with the NCR Planning Board approving the 'Draft Regional Plan 2041' which is aimed at focused development of NCR's urban areas, official sources said.

They said NCR currently spreads to around 150-175 kilometres, covering entire districts and their rural areas. But with the approval of Regional Plan 2041, areas beyond 100 km are not likely to be the main part of the NCR. A detailed draft plan will soon be made public for suggestions and objections and thereafter, it will be notified by the NCR Planning Board.

"Linear corridors will be developed beyond 100 km radius and up to the existing NCR boundary, paving the way for development in areas falling within one kilometre from expressways, national highways and regional rapid transit system," a source told PTI.

Also, the decision to include or omit tehsils lying partly within this 100 km delineation will be left to the respective state governments.

The Regional Plan 2021, which is available on NCRPB's website, had identified seven metro centres --- Faridabad-Ballabgarh, Gurgaon-Manesar, Ghaziabad-Loni, Noida, Sonapat-Kundli, Greater Noida and Meerut.

Besides, it had also identified 11 regional centres --- Bahadurgah, Panipat, Rohtak, Palwal, Rewari-Dharuhera-Bawal, Hapur-Pilkhua, Bulandshahr-Khurja, Baghpat-Baraut, Alwar, Greater Bhiwadi, Shahjahanpur-Neemrana-Behror.

My Request To Hindu Platforms Of All Sorts

By Rajmohan Gandhi

In this festival season from Dussehra to Diwali, an Indian watcher of life in America notices a minor yet interesting trend: an apparently widening acceptance of Hindu (and other eastern) prescriptions for calming the mind during an emotional storm.

It is no longer a surprise when a TV commercial on a mainline U.S. channel features a white American, male or female, sitting in the padma or lotus posture with eyes closed and the face serene. Nor is it a shock when a non-Indian is seen extending the wonderful, no-contact, namaste greeting. Our Covid times have caused this gesture to spread far beyond India's shores to other races on the planet.

In this favourable global climate, India's Hindu world tragically offers some sickening images. Like that of the yati who is based near Delhi in western U.P., is associated with a historic temple, evidently commands a large following on social media, and who apparently asks for nothing less than "the removal of Muslims from the face of the world". Hindu India has also lately offered the video of one of its priests in Ayodhya, evidently enjoying fervent local support, who threatens to immolate himself if by a certain date (about which he fortunately displays flexibility) if India is not declared a Hindu rashtra and Muslims and Christians are not stripped of their citizenship. Then there are the images of actual and brutal extinction, like that of 24-year-old Arbaz Mulla of Karnataka, whose mutilated body was recently found on a railway track between two small stations (Desur and Khanapur) that lie about 30 km from the city of Belagavi. Arbaz paid the ultimate price for that primeval human folly: falling in love. The message was that "Hindu India" will not only not allow a young Muslim man and a young Hindu woman to fall in love. It will discourage that impudence in an unforgettable manner. Murderous prevention of human love is poor advertisement for any religion or nation. It becomes the essence of immortal tragedy and is the source of poetry, music and social change in age after age. Down the ages it has also been the hallmark of tyranny. Stung by it, will we use it as a fuel for reform?

I will say more on this last point, but first let me point out that police in Karnataka seem to have arrested several people in connection with Arbaz's murder, and that FIRs have evidently been filed against the yati in question, even if not necessarily for his wild statements about Muslims.

Let us recognize, moreover, that Hindu extremists like the ones I have

mentioned are not on the same page with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who probably faces more hostility from fierce champions of a Hindu rashtra than he does from political parties opposed to the BJP. Politics linked to religion, whether it is Hinduism in India, Islam in Pakistan, Buddhism in Myanmar, or anything else, seems to invite sharper enmities from "within" than from secular antagonists.

India's government and security forces can doubtless recall Pakistan's bloody July 2007 confrontation between the army under Musharraf and the extremists who had occupied Islamabad's Lal Masjid as also the adjacent residential madarsa for Muslim girls. That operation resulted in hundreds of deaths and an attempt to assassinate Musharraf. The Modi Government will not want to allow any possible build-up towards that sort of situation.

Disappointment that our constantly communicating and famously fluent Prime Minister is silent when innocent lives of farmers, Dalits, adivasis and Muslims are snuffed out has been expressed by some and felt by a great many more. However, my purpose in this column is to point to another conspicuous silence: the silence of Hinduism's gurus and swamis. In an earlier era, India mercifully found some Hindu thinkers who denounced untouchability and insisted that the shameful practice violated Hinduism's central injunction about the sameness of all human beings. In 1916, Gandhi told a Chennai audience: "Every affliction that we labour under in this sacred land is a fit and proper punishment for this great and indelible crime [of untouchability] that we are committing." Two years later, he said, "If slaveowners can be said to be fit for swaraj, then perhaps we are."

Candid acknowledgments of this kind led, among other things, to the outlawing of untouchability in free India's Constitution, even if the practice continues in subtler forms. In an earlier age, thank God, brave Hindu intellectuals like Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar had attacked the heinous sati custom. Before and during this Diwali, there will be innumerable celebrations, sermons, songs, and open-air displays featuring the victory of good over evil. Children will play with excitement. Gifts will be exchanged, and new clothes will be put on with delight. Learned discourses will be offered from neighbourhood platforms and on TV. Amidst all that, will some Hindu voices from some Hindu platforms - from religious, spiritual, non-political platforms - denounce atrocities against helpless and cornered humans? In plain, unmistakable language? Calm, serene, silent faces that avoid looking at cruelty, or wink at it, can only disgrace Hinduism at a time when the global climate seems to be friendly to it.

Lakhimpur Kheri violence - Prime suspect in custody for lethal political aggravation

By Susmita Ghosh

The volatile political scenario in Uttar Pradesh took a violent turn in Lakhimpur Kheri recently. A group of protesting farmers along with onlookers and journalists were trimmed down by a group of vehicles to disperse the mob. The witnesses have pointed at Ashish Mishra as the mastermind for this mayhem, who is also the son of Union minister Ajay Mishra.

Uttar Pradesh, in recent times, has seen several farmers' agitation and movement on a large scale. In Lakhimpur Kheri, it was an anti-farm law and the farmers were campaigning against the visit of Keshav Prasad Maurya, the Deputy Chief Minister, UP. At this rally, all broke loose when three cars mowed down the protester followed by assassinating.

The witnesses and the present farmer leaders have claimed that the person driving the SUV was none other than Ashish Mishra. Besides, the four farmers, two BJP party members and a local journalist died at the spot. The Union Minister has outright denied his son's involvement in this, even in the face of witness accounts. The police are yet to find any solid evidences against Ashish Mishra to produce on the court.

The opposition party leaders from across the nation tried to reach Lakhimpur to talk to the farmers, but the administration denied any access. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi stated over Twitter that the ongoing

investigation is bound to face obstruction, as Ajay Mishra is still the union minister in office. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, his sister and the Congress General Secretary was also detained as she was on her way to meet the family of the deceased farmers.

The court initially sent Ashish Mishra to fourteen-day judicial custody. Later, the police on Monday got him on a three-day remand, against their initial claim of two weeks, scheduled to end on October 15. Chief Judicial Magistrate Chintaram has granted the remand on the condition that Ashish Mishra will have his lawyer present during the interrogation.

The national political scenario remains abuzz on the Lakhimpur Kheri case. A seven-member delegation team from Indian National Congress, led by Rahul Gandhi, is going to meet Indian President Ram Nath Kovind to present a memorandum on the Lakhimpur incident and developments.

Priyanka Gandhi has attended the final rites of the farmers. The senior Congress leader was joined by Rakesh Tikait, the leader of the Bharatiya Kisan Union. As the UP election is on the horizon, a potential alliance between the two can be a major cause of worry for the ruling party.

Undoubtedly, the Lakhimpur Kheri incident is a massive administrative failure. In the light of the approaching election in UP, it can prove costly to the ruling party in the state too. The

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ISSN No. 1554 06X

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A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

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Hathras to Lakhimpur Kheri opposition is only relying on BJP missteps, not setting agenda

Ahead of the assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, the opposition has found a rallying point and an agenda to further its politics, with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence and Bharatiya Janata Party's brazenness giving a much-needed fillip to the parties sitting out of power.

Much like Hathras and Sonbhadra, Lakhimpur has given them the boost they needed. But unfortunately for BJP's rivals, they seem to have no agenda, vision or cohesive plan to offer voters. Criticising and protesting against the ruling dispensation is the right and duty of any opposition, but to only rely on that, use that as a crutch and not have any unique selling point is neither smart politics nor a clever electoral approach.

From Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Rahul Gandhi to Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav, Bahujan Samaj Party's Mayawati and Rashtriya Lok Dal's Jayant Chaudhary, opposition leaders in the poll-bound state seem dependent on the Narendra Modi and Yogi Adityanath governments for their next 'treat'. It's almost as if the opposition is simply sitting around with no active thinking of its own and waiting for the next gift from the BJP that will prompt it into action. The Lakhimpur 'breather'

The killing of four farmers in Lakhimpur Kheri after being

The opposition in UP has found its voice, but it needs to dig its own agenda, not merely beat the anti-Modi tin drum.

mowed down by a convoy allegedly belonging to Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister of State Ajay Mishra, has kept the situation in the state on the boil and the opposition on its toes. There have been some defining and fierce images in this crisis: Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's spiritedly confronting the police and sweeping the floor of the guest house where she was detained, Deepender Hooda jostling with the cops, Jayant Chaudhary reaching the spot and Akhilesh Yadav roaring that BJP was presenting a "bouquet" to the culprits instead of arresting them.

All of these have had powerful political influence, with timely and pertinent interventions by the opposition, more defined thanks to the obstinate silence from the prime minister. The opposition latching on to this incident brings back memories of Sonbhadra and Hathras, where the Yogi government slipped and its rivals found an issue to pivot around. The Gandhis fought their way through to reach Hathras to meet the family of a 19-year-old

Dalit woman who died a fortnight after she was allegedly raped by four men outside her village. Mayawati and Akhilesh too, left no stone unturned to be heard and ensured that they put the Yogi government on the backfoot. They were equally vocal and fiesty when 10 people were killed and several others injured in clashes over land ownership in the Sonbhadra district, besides being active during the CAA controversy as well as on the Yogi government's questionable law and order record.

The episodic approach Every opposition waits for the government to make a mistake and use it as a tool against it. But that has become the only strategy in the case of UP, and perhaps nation-wide at large. It is as if the opposition is in a lazy trance, and wakes up strictly when the BJP messes up, only to go back to sleep. Anti-BJP-ism or anti-Modi-ism has become the sole weapon of some opposition parties, especially the Congress, and that is unlikely to be a potent one. Voters want to see political

parties offer a clear vision, a clean line of thinking and a coherent promise. The vote in 2014 was more in favour of Modi and his vision than against the 10 years of UPA rule.

The strategy of relying purely on the ruling party's failures and whipping up sentiments against it works only when the incumbent has become extremely unpopular and the voter is longing to get rid of it, perhaps how it was in states like Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh in 2018.

Unfortunately for BJP's rivals, that stage is yet to arrive for the party or the prime minister, or even Yogi Adityanath for that matter. Jumping from one episode to another to mark your politics merely tells the voter that you are bereft of ideas and are relying solely on Modi's BJP to give you opportunities to score a political point.

What happens with this approach is that the BJP becomes the sole agent in driving the agenda, even with its mistakes and missteps. The minute it decides to fix things, the Congress and others are left with nothing to fall back on, only to lie in wait for the next mistake.

The opposition in Uttar Pradesh has already found its voice, but with elections due in just a few months, it also needs to dig its own language and agenda.

China believes its time has come. But here's what it hasn't come to terms with yet



India and China have agreed to disagree on how to disengage from their faceoff in the Hot Springs area, namely Patrolling Point 15 on the Line of Actual Control, with the 13th round of talks between the corps commanders of the two sides ending in a stalemate Sunday. On the face of it, this is not a deeply disturbing event. The Indian side, led by Lt Gen PGK Menon "stuck to its stand", pointing out that it was the Chinese who had disturbed the status quo last year and violated several border agreements and understandings with India.

Moreover, India maintained that an improvement in the overall bilateral relationship depends on China going back to its side of the LAC and restoring the status quo. Surprisingly, China has upped the ante by speaking of its resolve to "safeguard national sovereignty".

Certainly, the Chinese are signalling they are here to stay in Ladakh. Only a fortnight ago, intrusions took place in Barahoti in the Middle Sector in Uttarakhand, even as Indian and Chinese troops faced-off in Tawang area in Arunachal Pradesh.

So, across the entire 3,488 km length of the LAC, the Chinese are sending the message that, as the stronger military power, they won't be checkmated by a country that isn't just one-fifth its economic size, but is allying with other powers such as the US, Australia and Japan - the Quad - to back its game.

Perhaps the Chinese believe their time has come. President Xi Jinping has virtually coerced US President Joe Biden to agree to a summit meeting before the end of the year - albeit a virtual one, unlike the physical meeting between Biden and Vladimir Putin last year - and Biden realises he has no option. For the time being,



Where is the outrage for Ethiopia?

The sudden fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban has rightly drawn much of the world's ire and attention. Fears of women's rights and civil liberties being swept aside by Islamic extremism, along with trepidation about the country's threat to regional stability, have all justly triggered global concern. The sudden fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban has rightly drawn much of the world's ire and attention. Fears of women's rights and civil liberties being swept aside by Islamic extremism, along with trepidation about the country's threat to regional stability, have all justly triggered global concern. The fighting, which first erupted in November 2020, is the result of a dispute between the government of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and fighters in the country's mountainous northern region of Tigray. Thousands of Ethiopians have been killed in the conflict, and there is evidence of massacres of the innocent.

Two million people have been displaced, more than 350,000 are facing famine, and millions more are in need of emergency food aid. Yet continued fighting, bureaucratic hurdles imposed by the federal government and the blocking of key humanitarian aid routes has engendered a growing desperation that's gone largely unnoticed by the global community.

We have watched in horror as humanitarian groups have sounded the alarm about multiplying accounts of Ethiopian military members, along with allied troops from neighboring Eritrea and various supporting militia, claiming the bodies of Tigrayan women and girls as an extension of the battlefield. The Ethiopian government has pledged investigations into any wrongdoing.

Stories of rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, torture and humiliation have emerged as a grotesque feature of this crisis. Pramila Patten, the UN's top official on sexual violence in conflict, said in April that Tigrayan women and girls are being subjected to sexual abuse with "a level of cruelty beyond comprehension." In media reports, local medics have described removing nails and rocks from the bodies of victims.

Again, we ask: Where is the outrage?

According to Amnesty International, more than 1,000 cases of sexual violence were registered by local health facilities within just three months, and

yet these estimates are likely just the tip of the iceberg. All too often, fear and stigma prevent many survivors from ever coming forward to report their ordeal.

Though Tigray has been largely cut off from the world, at times deprived of electricity and telecommunications, we know enough from the global media and aid workers who have struggled to gain access that something heinous is happening there.

Yet you wouldn't know that from the world's response.

Day after day, as conditions worsened on the ground, we have hoped that the suffering of millions of Africans would trigger a public outcry. We waited for the details of this humanitarian crisis to galvanize mass protests, dominate our social feeds and create a united stand from our global leaders.

But we have yet to see an international joint communique that could bring this devastating violence to an end. Where there should have been bold action, there has been largely silence and half measures -- President Joe Biden's timid authorization of broad sanctions among them. We had hoped that long before now, the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front would have engaged in urgent talks to end this and allow critically needed aid to pass safely into the region. Instead, this conflict has entered a new and potentially more deadly phase. The war is expanding, with the violence that started in Tigray spreading into the neighboring regions. Dangerous alliances are being formed and the battle lines redrawn. Prime Minister Abiy has called for all able-bodied citizens to root out the TPLF. In recent weeks, Tigrayan rebels have joined with anti-government forces from the Oromo region.

Ethiopia now stands on the brink of a full-blown civil war. This would not only be a tremendous tragedy for the people of Africa's second-most populous nation -- it could also spark significant trouble for neighboring Eritrea, Sudan, Egypt and Somalia. In truth, a fractious, convulsive Ethiopia would have a massive impact on the entire continent, and the accompanying reverberations have the potential to set off a chain reaction that could impact us all.

Climate: Reduction With Growth?

How can we reduce our collective/individual carbon footprint while also enjoying our normal way of life? That's a very tough question to answer. It's easy to say things like "Don't use A/C", "Recycle more", "Don't fly". But when push comes to a very violent shove & we're told to conserve & reduce our total usage, what in the polluted world are we going to do?

There are answers to it we may not like & realizations that we must accept. There are nations with teams



working around-the-clock on formulating plans to combat the increasingly hostile environment we are currently producing. Individuals growing their own produce, eating less meat & taking a conscious effort to reduce their lifestyle's footprint in a multitude of other ways should be commended. We won't commend them for it, because it's expected of you if you truly care. When others do not care about these global issues, the larger effort may just get drowned out by the millions of others that do not adhere to the same standards of reduction.

So if we took a step back from the individual efforts, which other groups are truly at fault for this? The easiest answer would be companies, enterprises, conglomerates (Big Business). But it's completely reasonable for them to decide to withhold climate-saving practices. After all, if it isn't incentivized, why should they do it at all? Corporations have for a long time only considered their bottom-line gains & telling them to introduce expensive practices in their businesses for the sake of saving the future environment with no added benefit for the corporations themselves just won't work. There's a lot of reasons to appeal to the senses of these large organizations, the primary one being the simple fact that a large number of these companies hold practices that may be efficient & effective, but whenever we hear of new efficiencies, what we're really hearing is a more streamlined way to pollute. For examples of this, consider industries like meat & gas, advanced fracking & mass culling. These practices may save costs & resources but the underlying fact that we are

still fracking earth & mass-culling animals denotes from any efforts of change. What can we do? If we force companies to stop fracking, they'll be forced to close their doors. But the question we never ask is that with the vast amount of wealth

& resources held by these companies, would it not be safe to assume that they do in-fact have the ability to invest in new technologies, systems & products, but they simply choose not to? That is completely safe to

assume, why would they do this? Why in the world would they not invest in the very products that will put them out of business? Because it's very risky for them to completely bet their existence on unproven alternative markets that may or may not flourish.

If the world truly cared about its own destruction, the car industry would already be full of EV fleets, the meat industry would invest in lab-grown meat products & infrastructure to mass produce it. The oil & gas industry would have large swaths of renewable energy resources. But that's not the case, so we're left scratching our heads thinking what we can do. For starters we could try to avoid plastics as much as we can, or at the very least the abuse of plastic receptacles. LIKE WATER BOTTLES! We can bring reusable bags with us to the store, lobby for corporations to introduce more eco-friendly packaging in all packaged goods. More importantly, we should start buying products only when we need to. We all know I'm not speaking to the 3rd world family that is going hungry every night. I'm speaking to you, to myself, to everyone in the 1st world that is contributing the most to the devastating effects of overconsumption. We simply have to choose whether we need certain products or not & shun the rest. Stop consuming so much, for perspective, a pound of burger meat requires nearly 1,800 gallons of water to produce it. We give the corporations power with our mass-purchasing of their products, it's time to use that leveraged power to boycott the brands & organizations behind the most atrocious climate corrections.

(By Max Thind)



What's at risk in the murky Capitol attack investigation

There are two principles that form the bedrock of America's legal system: The beliefs that "justice is blind" and that "the wheels of justice move slowly." These two ideals -- that you are innocent until proven guilty, and that you have adequate time to prove that innocence -- are the best way we know to ensure that justice is served.

But when these ideals are applied in the extreme, it can result not only in the denial of justice but in a significant loss of confidence that the American legal system delivers justice at all. In January, the US Capitol was overrun by what I believe were domestic terrorists hellbent on overturning a free and fair election. Worse yet, they tried to strike a dagger in the heart of American democracy.

Nine months have passed since these crimes were perpetrated, and yet the country is still waiting for the leaders of this attack to be charged with the crime that was committed -- sedition. The Department of Justice and the FBI have done heroic work identifying many of those in the mob, arresting and bringing obstruction,



conspiracy and weapons charges against hundreds. I have no doubt those charged will face trial, and that many will do time in prison. I do believe there is ample reason for the DOJ to take its time, and that it shouldn't be judged on day-to-day progress.

But just as justice is blind, the American people cannot be blind to how the system is working. The FBI and the Justice Department couldn't be more opaque concerning the progress of the investigation, and that lack of information has many concluding that nothing will happen.

Last week, Attorney General Merrick Garland had to defend the DOJ against claims that they aren't prosecuting aggressively enough, during which he reiterated that prosecutors have a policy of divulging as few details as possible. The information made available to our citizens has been next to nothing, and what has been made available has been so dense the public largely hasn't paid attention. The Senate released a comprehensive, nearly 400-page report earlier this month that laid out in detail what happened that day. But it was

such a long and impenetrable review that it's already getting lost in public discourse -- not to mention that the report, which detailed extensive criminal behavior, didn't generate a single criminal referral.

On the House side, the bipartisan select committee on January 6 has issued a series of subpoenas to the highest-ranking people in the Trump orbit, minus the former president himself. Those subpoenas, at the direction of Trump, are being resisted by at least one Trump loyalist, Steve Bannon, on the dubious claim of executive privilege. As the deadline passed, the House committee could only issue strongly worded condemnation and said they are exploring ways to enforce the subpoenas. Despite knowing the date of the deadline and the likely outcome, the select committee had no apparent strategy ready for dealing with this resistance, and certainly no strategy for letting the public know what was happening. They should have been ready with an aggressive media push explaining exactly

how they would compel people to comply with a subpoena. The reality is that these subpoenas will likely end up in court and could languish for years just like the congressional subpoenas in the Trump impeachment trial.

Many Americans -- including former federal prosecutors -- are demanding to know who did what, and who is going to be held responsible for this crime against the state. They want to know how far up the chain this went, including what the former president's role was in the attack.

As another legal maxim states, justice delayed is no justice at all. And many Americans who are tired of waiting to see visible progress are already losing confidence in their nation's legal system, assuming no one will be held accountable. My Twitter feed is littered every day with Americans criticizing Attorney General Garland, with some calling for his removal. At a minimum, they no longer believe the courts can secure appropriate justice from those with money and influence.



JREINH/BOOTS/POOL/GETTY IMAGES

I've spent my life fighting for human rights -- and the job is not done



Time is a funny thing. Not so long ago, it seems, I was an Indian girl, coming of age under the South African apartheid regime. Now I am 80 and apartheid is history, but challenges remain. The country is not yet an equal society -- economically or politically.

To see how far we have still left to go to achieve true equality -- not only in South Africa but anywhere in the world where people are denied human rights and justice -- can feel daunting, but we must remember that if we do not remain vigilant, demand accountability and continue to work toward ending human rights violations everywhere, they are likely to be repeated anywhere.

The key to fighting against atrocities fueled by hate lies in the lessons of the Nuremberg trials from 75 years ago. As a law student in 1963, I was intrigued by the Nuremberg cases I pored over in the library; they gave me a framework for understanding apartheid-era crimes, and how the law could tackle state-sponsored violence and inequality.

I became a lawyer in 1967 when no law firm would employ me as a "colored person." I defended anti-apartheid activists, exposed the torture of political detainees, and successfully sued to prevent the torture of my own detained husband. I won access to lawyers for political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela. The first judge's chambers I entered was my own, in 1995, as the first non-White woman to serve on the High Court. I am proud of my accomplishments, but the struggle to truly end the legacy of apartheid truly is not over; it has deep roots. Thirty years after the signing of the National Peace Accord ushered in the November 1993 ratification of the Interim South African Constitution and the April 1994 election that made Mandela South Africa's first post-apartheid president, the non-

Facebook isn't the only problem

Frances Haugen's spellbinding testimony before Congress last week riveted the attention of lawmakers and the country. She claimed that Facebook's own research found that the platform is harmful to teenage girls and amplifies dangerous speech that has led to violence and death, but those findings were ignored or buried. The testimony - which CEO Mark Zuckerberg has said created a "false picture of the company" - followed her explosive whistleblowing of how Facebook prioritizes engagement over safety and profits over people. Haugen's revelations brought comparisons to the tobacco company insiders who testified about the addictive qualities of cigarettes and that Big Tobacco knew.

It's hard not to see parallels between Haugen's declaration of Facebook's "moral bankruptcy" and the branding of tobacco companies as irredeemable organizations that could not be trusted. But is Facebook really no different than a tobacco company - peddling a fundamentally toxic product that is addictive, unhealthy, has powerful second-hand negative effects on others, and that no amount of tweaking

and tuning could possibly reform? We don't think so. Facebook itself is not the problem. Neither is Mark Zuckerberg. The problems of algorithmic amplification and prioritizing engagement over safety are ubiquitous on social media. We see the same fundamental dynamic in other platforms built around user-generated content such as YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat and TikTok. What's more, we see a similar dynamic in end-to-end encrypted messaging services like WhatsApp (owned by Facebook), Signal and iMessage, which optimize for user privacy, but leave those services open to potential abuse by child pornographers, human traffickers and terrorist organizations, despite the companies saying they try to remove such content and to encourage their users to report it. The problems in Big Tech are systemic, not just the fault of a single company. New technologies continue to transform how we live, work and engage one another, yielding enormous benefits. But the push to scale new technologies quickly and achieve market dominance makes it even more likely that societal harms aren't fully considered until the negative consequences become evident and inescapable. Examples

abound. There are facial recognition tools that offer the hope of greater safety at a significant risk of misuse by law enforcement agencies, and ride-sharing apps that deliver seamless transportation options while leaving gig workers vulnerable without the wage and benefit protections given to regular employees. The companies have said that they're committed to providing minimum earnings and health care benefits, but drivers claim they haven't kept those promises. So what's to be done? It appears from Zuckerberg's note to Facebook staff that he appreciates that more than just apologies are needed. And that he recognizes companies have lost the public trust and legitimacy to manage the negative consequences of the technologies they produce. The prospects of self-regulation as a pathway out of this mess are a dead end.

But while Republicans and Democrats demonstrated unusual unity on their dislike of Facebook, the big question is whether they can agree on what government should do next. There are a lot of places to start. Part of the reason we find

ourselves loving to hate Facebook is that it doesn't seem like there are many other options available. After all, we've spent so much time building our friend network and posting on the platform that it doesn't seem like it's reasonable to try to do that all again on some other social network. If we want meaningful alternatives, we need to have mandated standards for interoperability between social networking platforms to allow new competitors to be able to provide useful alternatives to the entrenched players. That means that new social networking apps would be able to access your friend networks on Facebook, Twitter or anywhere else if you (and your friends) give permission. This would make it easier for you to switch to a new platform that, say, offered better privacy guarantees or promoted less toxic content to you, while being able to leverage all the friendships or followers you had already built on Facebook or Twitter. That not only means more platform options that might better match your preferences, but it also creates competitive pressure for Facebook and other social media companies to improve their own policies.



How we can close the vaccine gap much faster next time

By Bill Gates

Today, 46% of the world's population has received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine. It's hard to overstate what a remarkable achievement this is. Humanity has never made and distributed a vaccine for a disease faster than it did for Covid-19. It accomplished in 18 months something that used to take a decade or more. But within this amazing success, there is a startling disparity: Just over 2% of people in low-income countries have received any Covid-19 vaccines. And the gap will be harder to close as the world's richer governments buy up extra doses to serve as booster shots.

People are right to be upset about the inequity here. Vaccines make Covid-19 a largely preventable disease -- and a survivable one in all but the rarest cases -- and it is heartbreaking to know that people are dying of a disease not because it can't be stopped but because they live in a low-income country. Sadly, this inequity is not new. It is not even the worst gap in global health. There were shocking disparities in health long before any of us had heard of Covid-19.

Every year, more than 5 million children die before their fifth birthday, mostly from infectious diseases, and almost entirely in low- and middle-income countries. A child in northern Nigeria is more than 20 times more likely to die before the age of 5 than a child in a rich country. That is simply unjust and reducing this inequity has been the Gates Foundation's top priority for more than 20 years. If you step back and look at the trends, though, there is good news. Since 1960 the childhood death rate has been cut by more than 80%, thanks in large part to the invention and distribution of vaccines for children around the world. The fact that routine childhood vaccines are reaching so many people is reason to believe Covid-19 vaccines can too.

Providing them to everyone who needs them is one of three crucial steps in controlling this

pandemic, along with containing the virus so it doesn't come roaring back and coordinating the global response. At the same time, we can learn from the inequities that were so clear during this pandemic so we can do a better job of closing the gap during the next one. (Assuming there is a next pandemic. I think it is possible to prevent them altogether. But that's a subject for another time.)

How could we achieve vaccine equity in a future pandemic? I see two ways:

Change how the world allocates doses

What would the optimal allocation look like? It's not simply a matter of proportional representation, where if your country has X percent of the world's population, you get X percent of the vaccines. There are two different benefits to consider, and both are important.

One benefit is to the individual who's immunized; they get protection from the virus. The more likely you are to get infected -- and the more likely you are to become seriously ill or die if you do get infected -- the more benefit you get from a vaccine. A 70-year-old Covid-19 patient is 90 times more likely to die than an otherwise healthy Covid patient in their 20s. From a global perspective, it is neither fair nor wise to protect that young person before the old one.

Second, when an individual is vaccinated, society gets the benefit of lowering the risk that the person will spread the disease to others. This is the core of the argument in favor of vaccinating health workers and people who work in elderly care facilities, since even when a lockdown is in place, they can transmit the virus to people at high risk. When a virus is spreading, we should maximize both benefits -- saving lives and stopping transmission. This means that, when supplies are short, we should prioritize vaccinating people who both have a high risk of death and live in the places where the virus is spreading fastest.

Those will not necessarily be low-income countries. When Covid-19 vaccines first became available, many of the most severe epidemics were in rich- and middle-income countries.

The gravest inequity, even more than vaccinating rich people before poor ones, is vaccinating young people in

rich countries before older people in middle-income countries with bad epidemics, such as South Africa and most of South America.

To their credit, rich countries have pledged to share more than a billion doses with poorer countries during Covid-19. But they haven't yet delivered fully on those pledges, and even if they had, the gap would still be enormous.

Although sharing doses needs to be part of the solution, it will never be sufficient to solve the problem. For one thing, the number of doses won't be high enough. And will future politicians always be willing to tell young voters they can't be vaccinated because the doses are going to another country, at a time when schools are still closed and people -- including a few young people -- are still dying? That's why it's so important to find ways to produce more doses in less time. The world should have the goal of being able to make and deliver enough vaccines for everyone on the planet within six months of detecting a potential pandemic. If we could do that, then the supply of doses would not be a limiting factor, and the way they were allocated would no longer be a matter of life and death.

Make more doses

As limited as the supply of Covid-19 vaccines has been, the situation could have been even worse.

We are fortunate that mRNA vaccines work so well, since this is the first disease for which the mRNA technology has been used. If they hadn't, we would have been far worse off. It is also great that some vaccine companies entered into second-source deals, which allowed huge volumes of their vaccines to be manufactured by other firms. This was a crucial and remarkable step. (It's as if Ford let Honda use its factories to build Accords.) Just one example: In less than two years, a single manufacturer, AstraZeneca, signed second source deals involving 25 factories in 15 countries. You may have heard the argument that waiving intellectual property (or IP) restrictions would have made a difference. Unfortunately, that's not true in this case.



The coal crisis is reminiscent of the shortage in 2014, which was managed through a meticulous plan and execution. There is a roadmap to deal with it.

Coal India has become the whipping boy in coal crisis but Modi govt can't escape blame

The coal crisis, reminiscent of 2014, is back. Amid dangerously low levels of domestic coal availability threatening to hit power supplies, it is the Coal India Limited, or CIL, that has, unfortunately, become the whipping boy. However, the real problem with the devastated power sector, with the failure of the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana, is the Rs 20,000 crore that the power generation companies owe the CIL and the fact that they did not maintain a 20-day stock. In 2014, it was on account of a rampaging Comptroller and Auditor General who made his calculations just like an accountant and played to the gallery. The consequences were devastating and coal production suffered. However, the crisis was managed through a meticulous plan and immaculate execution. There was a record additional production of coal of 34 MT during 2014-15. This was more than the cumulative increase during the previous four years. This production increased further by 44 MT during 2015-16, so much so that not a single power plant in the country was short of coal and there was an attempt to explore the possibility of exporting coal to Bangladesh. The present-day crisis is on account of both demand and supply-side management issues. There has been a spurt in demand as the economy is

recovering after the pandemic. The international prices of coal have shot through the roof and there have been unseasonal rains in mining areas of the country. However, what is baffling is the stagnation of coal production levels by the CIL, which was 606 MT in 2018-2019, 602 MT in 2019-2020 and 596 MT in 2020-2021.

Probable causes of the coal crisis

After record production during 2015-16, why did the production stagnate? Let us look at some of the probable causes.

First, the increase in production during 2014-15 and 2015-16 was on account of an extremely competent team led by the then chairman and managing director Sutirtha Bhattacharya. His tenure should have been extended but for some inexplicable reason, it wasn't. What was worse was that after he completed his tenure in 2017, a regular CMD was not appointed by the Narendra Modi government for more than a year. A few directors were also not appointed. The momentum built was lost.

Second, the Incremental growth in Coal India production is dependent on new mines that are taken up regularly. This expansion plan was put on the back-burner once Bhattacharya left. Ironically, the CIL was asked to invest in three fertilizer plants. Third, the Swachh Bharat Mission was a good initiative by

the Modi government, but to ask mine managers to scout and focus on monitoring the setting up of toilets in schools was too far-fetched. The additional tagline for CIL was: "We set up toilets. We also produce coal". I have made detailed observations about this in my book *Ethical Dilemmas of a Civil Servant*.

Four, most of the private entities plough back their profits to invest and increase their capital base. In the case of CIL (and many other Central Public Sector Undertakings), it was used as a milch cow by the government to seek dividends to balance its own budget. The CIL was obviously strapped for funds for its expansion plans. It had accumulated reserves and a surplus of around Rs 35,000 crore in 2015. This should have been used for expansion plans. However, as the Modi government sucked out most of these funds through forced dividends and buybacks, CIL was left with only around Rs 8,000 crore as reserves in 2019.

Lastly, most of the coal belts exist in states that are not ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party. There are a number of issues relating to land acquisition and environment and forest clearances that have to be sorted out with the states. Between 2014 and 2016, not a single meeting was held in New Delhi. All the meetings (there were many of them) were held at the

state level, where a larger number of regional officers participated. This approach enabled the resolution of a number of issues. As I have written before in my book, *Not Just a Civil Servant*, states were conveyed a definite value proposition in these meetings. The problem during the past few years has been the ongoing "war" between the centre and the states. Without the cooperation of the states, coal mining can't happen smoothly.

What about the private entities? CIL is the primary producer of coal in the country and still contributes around 80 per cent of the production. But why hasn't the non-CIL coal production picked up?

An attempt was made to auction coal mines after the devastation caused by the CAG. Around 34 mines were indeed auctioned to the private sector. However, because of the irrational bidding by some companies, many others backed out. At the time of CAGs 'imaginary revelations', the private sector was contributing around 90 MTs for captive mining. This collapsed. It was only on account of increased production by CIL that the situation was salvaged. Mining is a complex operation that requires a variety of clearances. An inter-ministerial Coal Project Monitoring Group (CPMG) was set up in the ministry in 2015 that helped a

number of clearances for both CIL mines as well as some private mines. However, this group became dysfunctional after 2016. It may also be noted that all the mines mentioned above for the private sector were for captive consumption and they were not allowed the commercial sale of mined coal. The fact of the matter is that such mines still do not contribute substantially to coal production.

In 2015, PM Modi was very keen on going ahead with commercial mining and had even given a verbal go-ahead. However, for some reason (perhaps apprehending a unions' backlash), the file was never put up for a formal decision of the Cabinet. Precious time was lost as the final decision on commercial mining was taken only after five years. Had the nod of PM Modi been taken seriously and followed up, some mines could have been producing now. The way forward

Now, what is the possible way forward? There are both short term and long-term measures that can and should be taken. First, the CIL is fortunately blessed with an excellent team. They need to be supported. The Modi government should play the role of a facilitator and not a monitor. "Bossing" by the government was resisted stoutly between 2014 and 2016. CIL will have to be given the requisite freedom.

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The Hunter Biden saga remains an outrageous scandal on its first anniversary

Where's The New York Post's Pulitzer Prize for its Hunter Biden exposé?



Years ago, journalists unhappy that their ideas drew no interest from their bosses were known to complain that "news is what happens to an editor's wife." The view is outdated, but the fundamental point remains intact. News gathering is not science, and judgments about which stories get covered are driven by the interests, experiences and prejudices of the people in charge of media organizations.

Americans intuitively understand this as technology creates more options for them. The fact that, on any given day, competing outlets highlight different stories and even draw different conclusions from the same facts reflect the personal element involved.

In many cases, those differences are admirable, but not always, and certainly were not admirable when The Post stood virtually alone a year ago. On this, its first anniversary, the Hunter Biden saga remains an outrageous scandal for two reasons. One for what it revealed about how Joe Biden's brothers and surviving son got big payments domestically and from foreign governments and nationals for years while he held public office. The laptop that Hunter abandoned at a Delaware repair shop was bursting with emails and messages revealing a sordid pattern of deals with oligarchs, Chinese Communists and thugs that brought the family tens of millions of dollars.

Moreover, the laptop contained compelling evidence that contradicted Joe's risible claim he never discussed his son's businesses with him. In fact, there was correspondence showing Joe aided Hunter by

meeting with his foreign associates.

The second scandal is that many Americans are still unaware of the Biden deals and Joe's involvement because of the embargo by major outlets. That embargo, which largely continues today, revealed the coordinated corruption of Big Media and Big Tech.

Rather than do their own work on The Post reports, the New York Times, Washington Post, CNN and others tried either to ignore the stories or knock them down. Without a shred of evidence, they



swallowed whole the Biden campaign claim of "Russian disinformation" and were aided and abetted when Twitter, Facebook and YouTube blacked out The Post's reports.

This was not an honest case of differing judgments about the laptop's contents. This was a shared decision to protect Joe Biden during the 2020 presidential campaign.

It was not journalism. It was propaganda.

And it was no coincidence that the same outlets and tech giants that breathlessly promoted the Russia, Russia, Russia fiction about Donald Trump ignored the Biden scandal. Just as they pushed the Russia collusion story long past any credibility because they hated Trump, their devotion to a Biden

victory overwhelmed their stated obligations to follow the news, regardless of party or prejudice.

The Times, for example, won a Pulitzer for its reporting on the Russia story, which turned out to be a dirty trick concocted by Hillary Clinton and weaponized by the Obama-Biden administration. As such, it was a "Scoop" worthy of the Evelyn Waugh novel of the same name. Yet the Times has never admitted its Russia error or turned its reporters loose to

reveal the truth of the Clinton role and that of the Obama-Biden White House.

Nor has it exhibited much curiosity about the full extent of the Biden family's foreign entanglements and whether the president of the United States has been compromised by secret deals. This lack of curiosity comes despite the fact that Tony Bobulinski, the former naval officer who was the CEO of the Bidens' joint venture with a Chinese conglomerate, has said publicly that Joe was the "big guy" set to receive a secret 10 percent stake in the venture.

He told the same thing and more to the FBI, which has had Hunter Biden's laptop for two years. Where are the leaks

about the investigation? Where are the investigative reporters uncovering hidden details?

The possible implications of the Biden family connection are astounding - and dangerous. With China emerging as America's most potent and determined adversary, the mere possibility that our president is not free to protect America's interests because Chinese Communists know all the details of his entanglements and might release them if provoked is unprecedented.

Indeed, we have far more evidence that Biden is compromised by China than we ever had that Trump was compromised by Russia. Yet the Clinton claims of collusion dominated the media for nearly three years and led to a special counsel probe before coming up empty.

In that case, one might reasonably ask, where is The Post's Pulitzer Prize for its Hunter Biden coverage? The stories were exclusive and documented, and included the key context of how the paper got possession of the laptop's contents.

Most important, the reports were true and the Bidens no longer bother to say otherwise. Yet not a single large organization, outside of Fox News, is pursuing the story. One result is that Hunter -continues his brazen scams. His "art" sales for astronomical sums would have led to impeachment if a Trump child did that.

The question about a Post Pulitzer is partly in jest because the paper never submitted its stories for consideration. And there is something in The Post's renegade spirit that recalls a

Groucho Marx line that "I wouldn't want to belong to a club that would have me as a member."

Make no mistake, the Pulitzer is a club, with membership controlled by - you guessed it - the Times and other big organizations on the left.

The Times and Washington Post often take home a disproportionate share of the 14 journalism awards, and their executives usually play an outsize role in distributing the others as final -deciders.

That's not to deny the large media groups do some excellent work that would be deserving of recognition under any system, and the Pulitzers are no more or less political than the Oscars or Nobel Prizes.

Still, having been both a Pulitzer recipient and a juror, I saw that a conformity of style, structure and topics were rewarded. After reading the projects submitted to the investigative category one year, I remarked to a fellow juror that they all read as if they were written by the Times.

In effect, they were. Since the Times wins so many Pulitzers, other applicants seem to have decided that imitating the Gray Lady would increase their chances. It's also a fact that many reporters toiling elsewhere hope to work for the Times, and writing the way the Times does might help them land a job.

The fatal flaw in this thinking is that journalism is not supposed to be about conformity. The best reporters, columnists and editors I have known are nonconformists who follow the story wherever it leads. They are fair yet relentless about giving the customer the facts.



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Parental control is a smoke screen for right-wing activists

School drop-off used to be a happy occasion, a time for children to reunite with their friends and parents and caregivers to socialize. For a growing number of Americans, that's no longer the case. The scenes of harassment and vitriol in front of schools and in school board meetings in all parts of the country are the latest indicator of the deepening fractures in American society. While talk of a possible "civil war" may seem hyperbolic, four years of Donald Trump's divisive and polarizing presidency, and the post-Trump extension of the GOP's retreat from bipartisan governance, have eroded support for the democratic ideals of consensus, compromise and mutual tolerance.

The internal politics of the Republican Party's leadership model this new climate. The authoritarian-style party discipline Trump imposed during his time in office remains in place. Lawmakers who criticize Trump, like Liz Cheney, are viewed as disloyal and ostracized by the GOP establishment. And questioning the leader cult can be downright dangerous. "Our expectation is that somebody may try to kill us," said Rep. Peter Meijer, R-Mich., who voted to impeach Trump, explaining in January why he was buying body armor.

Now this authoritarian culture, which sees those who hold different views as enemies, has reached the personal and local levels. Schools, and school boards, are the latest front of a Republican crusade to "take back America" through violent verbiage. For instance, Steve Lynch, the Republican nominee for Northampton County executive in Pennsylvania, advocates

the use of intimidation at school board meetings to deal with parents who support mask mandates. "I'm going in with 20 strong men....I'm going to give [the school board] an option: They can leave or they can be removed," he declared. While Lynch later claimed that his "strong men" were simply people in the community who want to be more involved in school politics, the "agree with us or else" message he sent was clear.

Centering the anti-mask and anti-vaccine fight on schools may seem an illogical move by Republicans: What parent wouldn't want to keep their children safe by complying with best public health practices? Yet right-wing propaganda has effectively convinced many parents that masks are "muzzles" of freedom and vaccine mandates tyrannical, spawning new waves of activists imbued with an intolerant "us vs. them" mentality little in keeping with democratic models of civic life.

This translates into public bullying of parents who want to protect their children from Covid-19. In Los Angeles, anti-vaccine mandate protesters harassed parents at school drop-off. They claimed that masking is child abuse and subjecting children to vaccines a form of "rape." In Grand Rapids, Michigan, "Moms for America" activists pressured parents to pull their children out of schools that mandate face coverings. "We have had enough of the forced mandates, knee-jerk reactions, and government overreach," said the group's founder, Kimberly Fletcher. "We will not co-parent with the government."

Here the supposed advocates of education "freedom" show their hand.

Arguments like those repeated by Fletcher have little to do with child welfare. But they have everything to do with right-wing efforts to discredit the Biden administration by depicting it as bringing socialist tyranny to America, and by labeling Democrats as degenerates who exploit children (the latter belief is also a central tenet of QAnon conspiracy theories).

Concern for children in this context is just a smoke screen for right-wing activists with far greater ambitions. Calls by Fletcher and many others for a mass exodus from public schools, with the excuse of opposing vaccine and mask mandates, align with the ideal of divesting from the civic space of democracy altogether. They also further the cause of privatizing American education -- a pet project of Trump's Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. Moreover, the idea of "parental rights" in schools, advocated by anti-vaccine militants and their White Christian Evangelical allies, also becomes another way to justify censorship of ideas you don't like, such as the centrality of slavery in America's development and the costs of institutionalized racism.

It's not surprising that former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wants the private realm to take control of public school curricula. "I think parents should decide what their children are taught in schools," he tweeted, his stance also reinforcing the right's disdain for expertise. Nor is it unexpected that Glenn Youngkin, who is running for Virginia governor against Democrat Terry McAuliffe, cites parental rights, along with opposition to critical race theory and "transgender ideology," as part of his ideals for school reform.

Parents as terrorists, cancel culture mobs - we must fight the age of conformity



It is the age of conformity. We see it in the cancel culture around us, the vaccine mandates pushed by the president, the move to turn parents at school board meetings into domestic terrorists. Speaking out, speaking up, gets scarier all the time.

For a long time, the cultural enforcement was happening by the left for the left. They impose speech codes on each other and change language on a whim. "Latinx," 76 gender names, were how you knew you belonged with the in-group of the left.

Most canceling was left-on-left, too. The person being canceled would often try to defend themselves with their leftist credentials. I'm one of you, they would plead, as the axe came down.

It was much harder to cancel public conservatives. Prominent conservatives can rile up the left weekly, have their names trend on Twitter, but ultimately would only grow in prominence from being the left's targets.

The pandemic emboldened the survivors of the circular firing squad to turn their attention to the rest of us. It was a particularly difficult time for free thinking and speech. Last year, when schools were closed in so many "blue" areas like New York City, but open in places with Republican leadership, I had many a Democrat tell me they knew this was crazy.

They knew it made no sense. They hated that their kids were losing a year of education while Randi Weingarten and her union actually had the CDC alter their guidance on school reopening.

They were aware of all of it but they were terrified to speak up. One parent told me "I don't want my boss to get a call saying I want teachers to die." So they said nothing.

Any questioning of conventional wisdom on COVID was immediately shut down. Discussion of a possible lab leak in Wuhan, China was considered so racist and unacceptable that Twitter, YouTube and Facebook would censor discussions about it. In April, Governor DeSantis of Florida was having a roundtable discussion with doctors about the efficacy of masks and YouTube removed the video. The groupthink was most frightening because it was so often simply wrong. It's not just COVID and it's not just on social media, either.

I was in the great state of Texas last weekend. My family went to the Texas State Fair in Dallas. We took in a wide selection of deep fried food and listened to the rodeo announcer lead the crowd in prayer to his savior Jesus Christ before watching men try to hang off bulls.

32 killed, several injured in bus accident in Nepal's Mugu district



(News Agencies)-A passenger bus enroute to Gamgadhi in Nepal's Mugu district skidded off the road and fell 300 metres down into a river, killing at least 32 people and injuring many others, a media report has said. The bus

heading towards Gamgadhi from Nepalgunj fell into the Pina Jhyari river in the Chhayanath Rara Municipality, My Republica website reported.

"The latest death toll from the accident stands at 32. The picture

on the number of injured is also getting clear as it is increasing," the report said.

Many passengers on the bus were returning home from various parts of the country to celebrate the Vijayadashami festival.

A Nepal Army chopper was dispatched from Surkhet for carrying out rescue work at the accident site. Santosh Shah, the In-Charge of Nepalgunj Airport Security Guard, said 10 persons who received deep injuries on

their head were taken to Kohalpur Medical College and five others were sent to a Nursing Home in Nepalgunj for treatment. Mugu is famous for the beautiful Rara lake, which lies 650 km North-West of Kathmandu.

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 Since April 2005 Editor : Sharnjit Singh Thind
 PUNJABI DUNIYA Weekly
 Vol. 14 Issue 15 Wednesday 02 Jan to 08 Jan, 2019 www.PUNJABIDUNIYA.com Published Weekly from New York
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37-year-old Danish man suspected to be behind bow and arrow attack in Norway



(News Agencies)-A 37-year-old Danish citizen is suspected of killing five people in a bow-and-arrow attack in the Norwegian town of Kongsberg in a rare incident of mass killing in Norway, police said on Thursday. Two people, including an off-duty police officer, were wounded in the Wednesday evening attacks, which took place in different locations in the town, 68 km (42 miles) southwest of the capital, Oslo.

"This very serious situation is of course making a deep impression on Kongsberg and those who live here," district police chief Oeyvind Aas said in a statement. The suspect, who was apprehended, was believed to have been acting alone, police said. They said nothing about a possible motive. Several of the attacks were committed with a bow and arrow, Aas said late on Wednesday, though police were also investigating whether other weapons were used. The death toll was the worst of any attack in Norway since 2011 when far-right extremist Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people, most of them teenagers at a youth camp. The police said they were giving information on the man's nationality after rumours swirled on social media about people not linked to the attacks.

As Japan battles Covid-19, child suicide rate highest in over 40 years: Report



(News Agencies)-Child suicides in Japan are the highest they have been in more than four decades, local media have reported, citing the country's education ministry. As the Covid-19 pandemic prompted school closings and disrupted classrooms last year, 415 children from elementary to high school age were recorded as having taken their own lives, according to the education ministry's survey. The number is up by nearly 100 from last year, the highest since record-keeping began in 1974, the Asahi newspaper reported on Thursday.

Suicide has a long history in Japan as a way of avoiding perceived shame or dishonour, and its suicide rate has long topped the Group of Seven nations, but a national effort brought numbers down

by roughly 40 percent over 15 years, including 10 straight years of decline from 2009.

Amid the pandemic, suicides increased in 2020 after a decade of declines, with the number of women committing suicide surging amid the emotional and financial stress caused by the coronavirus pandemic, although fewer men took their own lives.

The education ministry said a record high of more than 196,127 school children were absent for 30 days or more, media reported.

The results showed that changes in school and household environments due to the pandemic have had a huge impact on children's behaviour, NHK quoted an education ministry official as saying.

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Nepal-India sign MoU for Kathmandu-Raxaul railway link

Nepal has signed an MoU with India to prepare a detailed project report for the proposed \$3.15 billion railway line linking Kathmandu with the Indian border town of Raxaul, a statement said on Friday.

This proposed rail line is seen as counter to China's bid to expand the railway upto Kathmandu.

The broad-gauge line will give the Nepali capital a direct connection with the Indian railway network, enabling non-stop train travel to all Indian cities.

Both sides signed the SOPs for start of passenger train services on the Jaynagar-Kurtha section and the MoU for final location survey of the proposed broad gauge railway line between Raxaul and Kathmandu, according to the statement issued by the Indian Embassy here.

The agreements were signed on Thursday during the Fifth Joint Working Group and the 7th Project Steering Committee meetings in New Delhi on October 6-7, to review implementation of ongoing cross-border railway links and overall bilateral cooperation in the railway sector.

On the Indian side, the JWG was led by the Railways

Ministry's executive director, Traffic Transportation-Freight, Dr Manoj Singh, and the PSC by the External Affairs Ministry's joint secretary, DPA-III, Anurag Bhushan, and the Nepali side was led by joint secretary in the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Keshab Kumar Sharma, in both meetings.

On March 9, the Nepali Cabinet had given an in-principle approval to the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport to sign an MoU with India to create a plan.

The Konkan Railways Corporation has already prepared a pre-feasibility study of the proposed broad-gauge railway project.

The train link to Raxaul, which will be 136 to 198 km long, is seen as New Delhi's attempt to counter Chinese influence in Nepal. According to the understanding, India will finish the detailed project report within 18 months of the commencement of the agreement, and Nepal will facilitate the process. The Indian government will bear the cost of preparing it.

Once this railway is constructed, goods can be transported directly to Kathmandu from India and third countries. Currently, shipments originating overseas

are brought to the inland container depot in Birgunj by rail and transferred to Kathmandu and other locations by road.

The SOPs of Jaynagar-Kurtha railway provide the technical aspects of running passenger trains on the new section and will serve as a guiding document for early start of rail services in the upcoming cross-border railway links with Nepal. This construction of the Jaynagar-Kurtha railway line was funded by India.

Besides reaching out to these two understandings and agreements, both sides discussed the ongoing works of Jaynagar-Bijalpura-Bardibas, and Jogbani-Biratnagar broad gauge railway lines between India and Nepal, being developed with grant assistance from the Indian government.

Nepal and India are mulling at least five different cross-border railway lines between the two countries. "The technical preparedness of the completed 34-km-long section of the railway line, from Jaynagar (India) to Kurtha (Nepal) for operationalisation of passenger train services was also reviewed. Nepali side also informed that necessary regulatory framework will be put in place to facilitate early operationalisation. For

Kurtha to Bilajpura (17.25 km) section of the railway line, Nepal assured to provide necessary facilitation for completion of the work at the earliest," the statement added.

Both sides also agreed to expedite the work on completion of the 18.6-km-long Jogbani-Biratnagar rail link, and its early operationalisation.

During then-Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's state visit to India in April 2018, the two neighbours had agreed to construct a new electrified rail line with Indian financial support connecting Raxaul and Kathmandu. As per the joint statement issued at that time, the objective of constructing the railway is to expand connectivity to enhance people-to-people linkages and promote economic growth and development. In August 2018, the two sides exchanged an MoU to carry out a preliminary engineering-cum-traffic survey of the broad-gauge line. India had designated Konkan Railway Corporation to undertake the study. As per the survey report, construction of the proposed railway will need an investment of \$2.66 to \$3.15 billion, in addition to land acquisition, taxes on imports of various technical and other materials.

Malaysia committed to reforming healthcare system post-pandemic



Malaysia will undertake a medium to long-term reform of its healthcare sector while gradually aiming to increase healthcare spending every year, Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul Aziz said on Wednesday (Oct 13).

Speaking during a virtual briefing on the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s latest Asean Youth Survey - organised in collaboration with The Straits Times - Datuk Seri Zafrul admitted that Malaysia's public healthcare spending needs a review after the country reeled from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We have a blueprint, we are looking at a new way forward, and a study will be undertaken to reform the healthcare system," Mr Zafrul said.

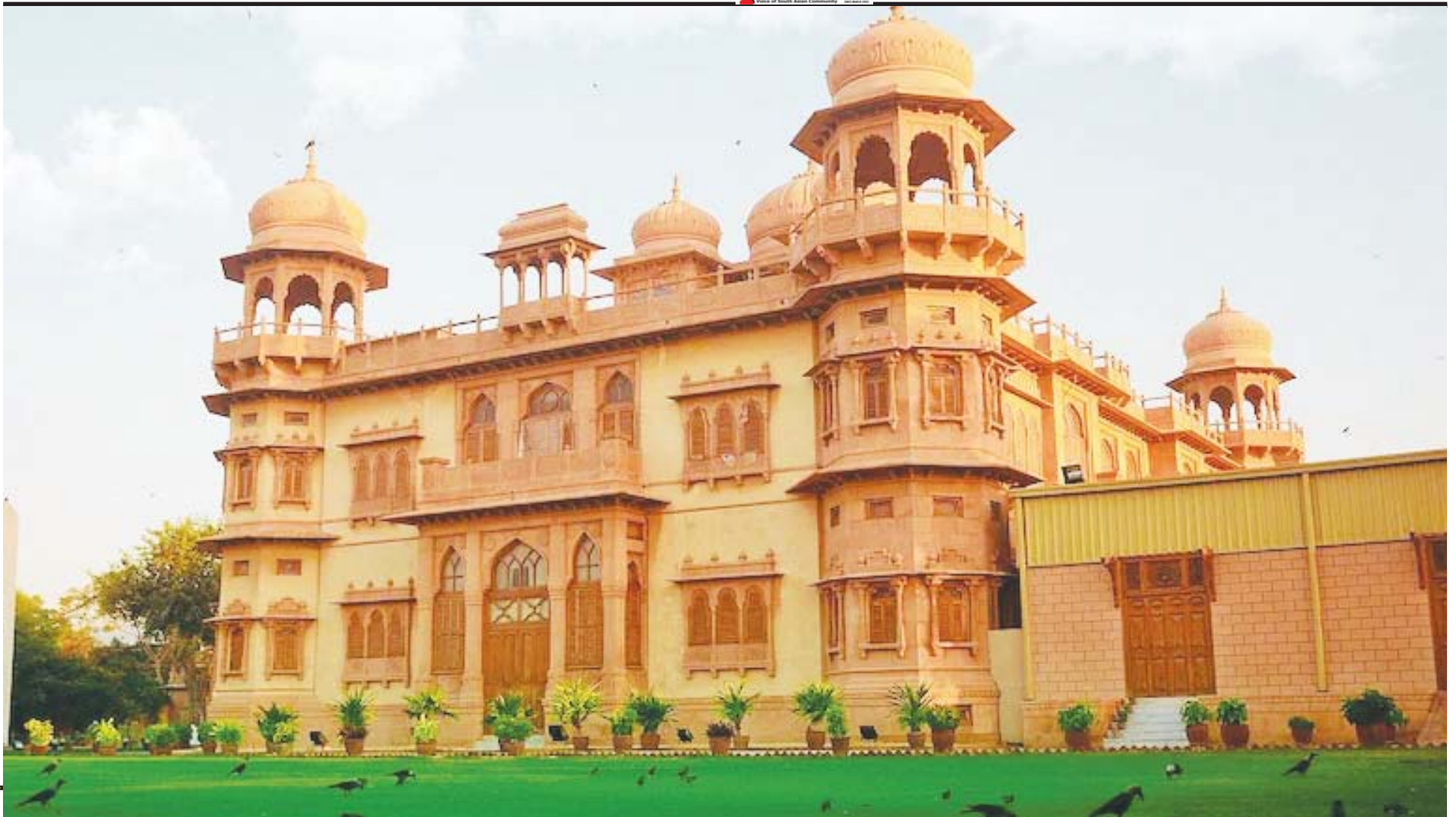
"We are committed to reforming the healthcare system in the medium to long term," he said during the briefing on the survey titled Asean Digital Generation: Pathway to Asean's Inclusive Digital Transformation and Recovery.

Malaysia's overall healthcare spending is still below 5 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP), way below the projected average of close to 10 per cent of GDP for Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

It is projected to hit 5 per cent of GDP in 2021 ahead of Malaysia's next federal budget to be tabled on Oct 29, Mr Zafrul had previously said.

Among the policy directions being considered is increasing public healthcare charges for higher-income earners, and incentivising people to buy health insurance. Social protection schemes should also provide health benefits for informal workers, Mr Zafrul said.

Malaysia's public healthcare system is almost free for all citizens. Mr Zafrul said about 70 per cent of the 32 million population rely on the public healthcare sector.



Sindh High Court's verdict on Karachi's Mohatta Palace's name earns netizens' ire

The Sindh High Court in Pakistan recently asked for the Mohatta Palace in Karachi to be called Qasr-e-Fatima

Hearing a 50-year-old petition, the Sindh High Court in Pakistan recently asked for the Mohatta Palace in Karachi to be called Qasr-e-Fatima. This has angered netizens who are demanding to revoke the order. According to The Express Tribune, the order was based on a petition filed by Hussain G Walji, a cousin of Fatima Jinnah, in 1971. The younger sister of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the first Governor-General of Pakistan, Fatima Jinnah, had planned to build Qasr-e-Naz, a modern medical college for free education of girls. According to the report, Walji's descendants are claiming the division of the property and the main case related to the inheritance of Mohatta Palace is still pending. The high court has now sought recommendations to turn the premises into a medical college. Built in 1927, the 18,500 sq ft Mohatta Palace is currently a museum in Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan. The palace was designed by Agha Ahmed Hussain for Shivratan Chandraratan Mohatta, a Hindu Marwari businessman from modern-day Rajasthan. The palace was taken over by the Government of Pakistan after Partition and in 1995, it was bought by the Government of Sindh to be turned into a museum. Soon after the Sindh High Court's decision, netizens vented their anger at the attempt to 'distort history' and said the building was being targeted as it was built by a Hindu.

Military exercises near Taiwan 'just move', claims China



The Chinese Taiwan Affairs Office justified Beijing's military drills near Taiwan, stating they are a "just" measure to safeguard peace and stability, and accusing Taipei of "collusion" with foreign troops. On Wednesday, Ma Xiaoguang, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, blamed Taipei for escalating tensions,

accusing it of fabricating "bogus charges" against Beijing and colluding with foreign countries. "The [Democratic Progressive Party] DPP authorities' hyping of the so-called 'military threat' to the mainland is a total inversion of right and wrong, as well as a false charge," Ma told a media gathering. Ma Xiaoguang, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said the present tensions are the result of Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) "collusion" with foreign forces and "provocations" over Taiwan's independence.

Chinese drills are directed against this collaboration - a veiled allusion to US backing for Taiwan - and separatist actions, as well as safeguarding the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, he said. Taiwan asserts that it is an independent country known as the Republic of China, and that it will preserve its independence and democracy. Despite Ma's remarks, both Chinese President Xi Jinping and Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen delivered comparatively

conciliatory addresses over the weekend, even as Xi promised to annex Taiwan and Tsai stated that they would not be compelled to submit to China. Chinese soldiers conducted beach landings and assault manoeuvres in the southern portion of Fujian province, across the sea from Taiwan, on Monday. According to the official People's Liberation Army Daily newspaper, the attack included "shock" troops, sappers, and watercraft specialists.



Post PM Modi-Biden meet,

focus now on moving ahead on range of issues: White House

(News Agencies)-Following PM Modi and US President Joe Biden's first in-person meeting, the White House said that the focus of the Indo-US bilateral relations is now on continuing to move forward on a range of issues.

A fortnight after the first in-person meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden here, the White House has said that the focus of the Indo-US bilateral relations is now on continuing to move forward on a range of issues, including economy, national security and getting the pandemic under control.

Since the September 24 meeting between PM Modi and Biden at the White House, there has been a flurry of high-level visits between the two countries and several Cabinet-level visits are in the pipeline in the next few weeks. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, addressing reporters at her daily news conference on Friday, said that the Quad and bilateral meetings here in September were an opportunity "to discuss the importance of the relationship and the partnership, the work that can be done moving forward

Following PM Modi and US President Joe Biden's first in-person meeting, the White House said that the focus of the Indo-US bilateral relations is now on continuing to move forward on a range of issues.

as well as of course the bilateral meeting".

"At this point, the focus is going to be on continuing to work through high-level interlocutors, whether it's the Secretary of State and the leaders at the State Department, or leaders from our national security team about how we can continue to move forward on a range of issues, whether it's economic security, physical national security, addressing Covid, and getting the pandemic under control.

"So, that work will continue at lower than the leader level, but still high levels in the weeks and months ahead," Psaki

said on India-US relationship.

At President Biden's invitation, Modi and his counterparts Scott Morrison from Australia and Yoshihide Suga from Japan also attended the first in-person Quad summit during which they announced a slew of new initiatives to take on common challenges, amidst muscle flexing by an assertive China in the strategic region.

Meanwhile, some important bilateral visits have taken place and some are going to happen in the coming weeks, including on some key areas like climate change, defence, Indo-Pacific and Afghanistan.

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat was in Washington last week and the Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman has just concluded a visit to India. On Friday, the two countries held their 16th Defence Policy Group meeting and the Pentagon announced the visit of the US Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Mike Gilday to India next week.

A senior-level Biden Administration official from the US Trade Representative's office visited India this week for trade talks.

As US-China relations thaw under Biden, Beijing warns, 'don't play Taiwan card'



Amid a surge in Chinese military exercises and warplane missions near Taiwan, Beijing has warned that it will not look favourably upon any country that seeks to play the "Taiwan card" to undermine China's sovereignty.

"Some people in the United States breach the one-China commitment and keep stepping on the red line, playing the 'Taiwan card'. The one-China principle is the cornerstone of the establishment and development of our diplomatic ties. Any attempt to contain China by using the Taiwan question will end up in failure," Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng said in an interview with state broadcaster CGTN.

Even as China called out the United States on the issue of Taiwan, relations between the two countries are beginning to thaw under the Biden administration, which is making overtures to rebuild channels of communications as opposed to the Trump regime's bellicose stance.

For instance, Le Yucheng said a group has been set up to discuss disputes with Washington ahead of a video summit between President Xi Jinping and his American counterpart Joe Biden.

"Dialogue and cooperation are indispensable and confrontation and conflict will lead us nowhere," he said, adding that the group has already "made some progress".

ON US-CHINA TRADE

Le Yucheng said economic cooperation and trade are vital to the mutual interests of China and the United States, and any setback would be fundamentally harmful. He cited the trade war between the two countries which broke out under the Trump administration, saying it had hit the US economy hard.

"We hope the US government will truly change its course and work with the business community to turn economic cooperation and trade into an 'ice-breaker' in China-US relations," he said.

ON AUKUS

China's Vice Foreign Minister noted that the newfound three-way security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States poses grave risks to regional peace and may cause a nuclear disaster.

US, Taliban had 'productive' talks on humanitarian aid, says State Department

(News Agencies)-The United States and the Taliban had "productive discussions" on the issue of humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan during meetings in Qatar over the weekend, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday, describing the talks as "largely positive."

Officials discussed humanitarian access during the two days of meetings between Taliban representatives and US officials including some from the intelligence community and the US

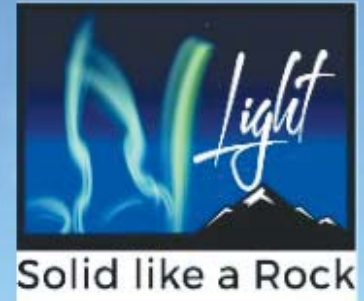
Agency for International Development. Price said the talks focused on security and terrorism concerns, safe passage for foreign nationals and Afghan allies of the United States to leave the country, as well as human rights.

Washington has repeatedly called for Afghanistan's new rulers to demonstrate a respect for human rights, including the rights of women and girls, in order to win international legitimacy.

"The delegation made clear, as we consistently have, that the Taliban will ultimately be judged not only on its

words but solely on its actions," Price said. A separate meeting with Taliban representatives involving officials from the European Union as well as US officials took place on Tuesday, Price added. Since the Taliban took power in August, Washington has frozen bilateral assistance to Afghanistan but says it is still providing aid through non-governmental groups. There are calls for government reserves held in the United States to be made available to the new Taliban-led government to ease a growing humanitarian crisis.

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Taliban warns US not to 'destabilise' regime in face-to-face talks

A Taliban delegation told US officials in Doha that any weakening of their government could cause "problems for the people".

(News Agencies)-The Taliban warned the United States not to "destabilise" the regime on Saturday during their first face-to-face talks since the US withdrawal, as a deadly sectarian bombing raised further questions about their grip on power.

As mourners in northern Afghanistan buried their dead from an attack on a Shiite mosque that killed 62, a Taliban delegation told US officials in Doha that any weakening of their government could cause "problems for the people".

Scores more worshippers were wounded in Friday's blast in Kunduz, which was claimed by the Islamic State group -- who appear to be attempting to further

shake Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover.

"We clearly told them that trying to destabilise the government in Afghanistan is good for no one," the Taliban's foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi told the Afghan state news agency Bakhtar after the talks in the Qatari capital.

"Good relations with Afghanistan are good for everyone. Nothing should be done to weaken the existing government in Afghanistan which can lead to problems for the people," he said, in a recorded statement translated by AFP.

The Taliban are seeking international recognition, as well as assistance to avoid a humanitarian disaster and ease

Afghanistan's economic crisis.

It would also pressure Afghanistan's new rulers to form an inclusive government and to respect the rights of women and girls, the official said, stressing the meeting did not indicate Washington recognised Taliban rule.

"We remain clear that any legitimacy must be earned through the Taliban's own actions," the official said.

Taliban's bitter rivals

As the two-day talks began, Kunduz counted the cost of the bloodiest assault since US forces left the country in August. A gravedigger in the Shiite cemetery overlooking the city told AFP they had handled 62 bodies,

and local reports suggested the final toll could be up to 100.

The regional branch of IS, known as Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), has repeatedly targeted Shiites in Afghanistan. It is a Sunni Islamist group like the Taliban, but the two are bitter rivals.

IS-K said the attack was carried out by a Uyghur suicide bomber who had "detonated an explosive vest amid a crowd" of Shiite worshippers. The attack happened during Friday prayers -- the most important of the week for Muslims -- and residents of the city told AFP that hundreds of worshippers were inside.

In a heart-wrenching scene, relatives gathered around the newly-dug graves in Kunduz wailed inconsolably over their loved ones.

"We are really hurt by what happened," Zemarai Mubarak Zada, 42, told AFP as he mourned his 17-year-old nephew, who he said had wanted to follow in his footsteps and become a doctor. "He wanted to get married. He wanted to go to university," he said.

'Terrifying'

The Taliban's efforts to consolidate power have been undermined by a series of deadly IS-K attacks.

The Taliban security chief in Kunduz accused the mosque attackers of trying to foment trouble between Shiites and Sunnis. "We assure our Shiite brothers that in the future, we will provide security for them and that such problems will not happen to them," Mulawi Dost Muhammad said.

US says talks with Taliban in Doha were 'candid and professional' talks

(News Agencies)-The United States said on Sunday the first face-to-face meeting between senior US and Taliban officials since the hardline group retaken power in Afghanistan was "candid and professional" and that the US side reiterated that the Taliban would be judged on their actions, not just their words.

A State Department statement said the US delegation in the weekend talks in Doha, Qatar, focused on security and terrorism

concerns and safe passage for US citizens, other foreign nationals and Afghans, as well as on human rights, including the meaningful participation of women and girls in all aspects of Afghan society.

It said the two sides also discussed US humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

"The discussions were candid and professional with the US delegation reiterating that the Taliban will be judged on its

actions, not only its words," the statement said.

On Saturday, Afghanistan's acting foreign minister told Al Jazeera that Taliban representatives asked the United States in the talks to lift a ban on Afghan central bank reserves. Biden administration officials told Reuters on Friday the US delegation would press the Taliban to release kidnapped US citizen Mark Frerichs. Another top priority would be to hold the

Taliban to their commitment not to allow Afghanistan to again become a hotbed for al Qaeda or other extremists. The Taliban took back power in Afghanistan 20 years after they were ousted in a US-led invasion for refusing to hand over al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

The officials said the meeting was a continuation of "pragmatic

engagement" with the Taliban and "not about granting recognition or conferring legitimacy" to the group, which took control of Afghanistan in August.

US officials say they are in contact with dozens of Americans and legal permanent residents who wish to leave Afghanistan and there are thousands of US-allied Afghans at risk of Taliban persecution still in the country.



US to reopen land borders in November for fully vaccinated

Ending a 19-month freeze due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the US has decided to reopen its land borders to nonessential travel next month.

The U.S. will reopen its land borders to nonessential travel next month, ending a 19-month freeze due to the COVID-19 pandemic as the country moves to require all international visitors to be vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Vehicle, rail and ferry travel between the U.S. and Canada and Mexico has been largely restricted to essential travel, such as trade, since the earliest days of the pandemic. The new rules, to be announced Wednesday, will allow fully vaccinated foreign nationals to enter the U.S. regardless of the reason for travel starting in early November, when a similar easing of restrictions is set to kick in for air travel into the country. By mid-January, even essential travelers seeking to enter the U.S., like truck drivers, will need to be fully vaccinated. Senior administration officials previewed the new policy late Tuesday on the condition of anonymity to speak ahead of the formal announcement.

Both Mexico and Canada have pressed the U.S. for months to ease restrictions on travel that have separated families and curtailed leisure trips since the onset of the pandemic. The latest move follows last month's

announcement that the U.S. will end country-based travel bans for air travel, and instead require vaccination for foreign nationals seeking to enter by plane.

Both policies will take effect in

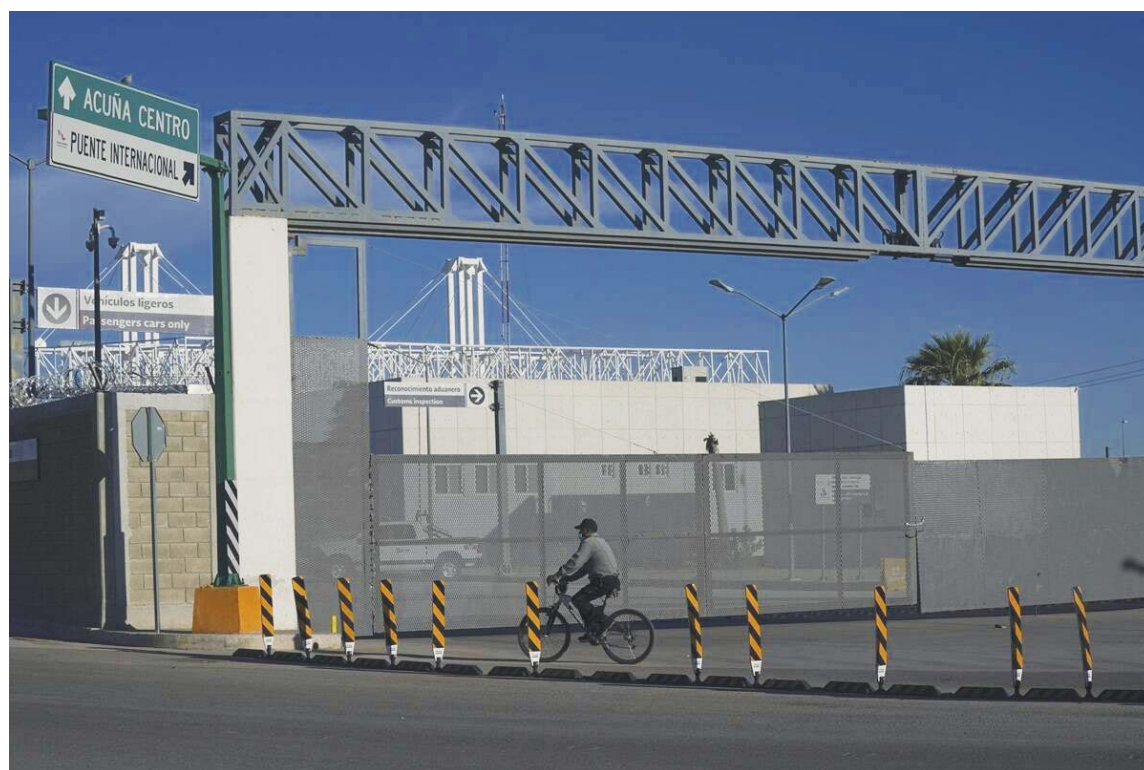
42 authority, first invoked by former President Donald Trump, that has drawn criticism from immigration advocates for swiftly removing migrants before they can seek asylum. One of the

asked about their vaccination status as part of the standard U.S. Customs and Border Protection admissions process. At officers' discretion, travelers will have their proof of vaccination

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. will accept travellers who have been fully vaccinated with any of the vaccines approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization, not just those in use in the U.S. That means that the AstraZeneca vaccine, widely used in Canada, will be accepted.

Officials said the CDC was still working to formalize procedures for admitting those who received doses of two different vaccines, as was fairly common in Canada. The delay in the vaccination requirement for essential cross-border travel is meant to provide truck drivers and others with additional time to get a shot and minimize potential economic disruption from the vaccination mandate, officials said.

All told, the new procedures move toward a policy based on the risk profiles of individuals, rather than less targeted country-based bans. The vaccination requirement for foreign nationals comes as the White House has moved to impose sweeping vaccination-or-testing requirements affecting as many as 100 million people in the U.S. in an effort to encourage holdouts to get shots.



early November, the officials said. They did not specify a particular date.

The new rules only apply to legal entry to the U.S. Officials cautioned that those seeking to enter illegally will still be subject to expulsion under so-called Title

officials said the U.S. was continuing the policy because cramped conditions in border patrol facilities pose a COVID-19 threat.

According to the officials, travelers entering the U.S. by vehicle, rail and ferry will be

verified in a secondary screening process. Unlike air travel, for which proof of a negative COVID-19 test is required before boarding a flight to enter the U.S., no testing will be required to enter the U.S. by land or sea, provided the travelers meet the vaccination requirement.

Japan PM dissolves parliament, paves way for election



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is seeking a mandate for his policies in the October 31 parliamentary election. Meanwhile, the opposition has vowed to close Japan's income gap. Japan's new prime minister Fumio Kishida dissolved the lower house of parliament on Thursday, setting the stage for national elections later this month.

Kishida, who formally took over the reins from Yoshihide Suga 11 days ago, will be seeking to maintain a lower house majority for his conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The prime minister also enjoys reasonable public support, according to opinion polls. Voters in Japan will head to the polls on October 31 to choose a new parliament, and indirectly elect the country's next government.

Kishida to lead LDP into polls
The last lower house election was held in 2017 under Shinzo Abe, who pulled the long-ruling LDP further to the right while serving as Japan's longest-serving prime minister.

This time, Kishida will lead the party, along with its coalition partner the Komeito party, into the election.

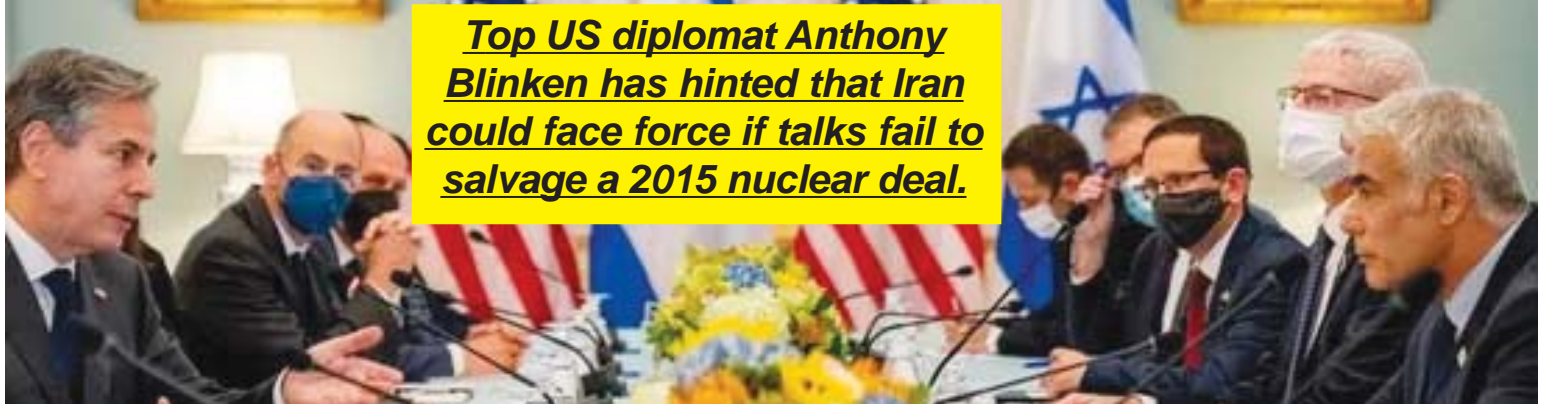
"I want to use the election to tell the people what we're trying to do and what we're aiming for," he told reporters at his office.

Talking about his time in office so far, Kishida said: "I've had a very busy schedule but strangely, I'm not feeling tired - I'm feeling fulfilled."

Opposition calls for 'wealth distribution first'

The country's largest opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ), announced its plan to focus on closing Japan's income gap with wealth redistribution if it were to win the election.

US warns of 'other options' on Iran's nuclear program if diplomacy fails



Top US diplomat Anthony Blinken has hinted that Iran could face force if talks fail to salvage a 2015 nuclear deal.

(News Agencies)-Top US diplomat Anthony Blinken has hinted that force could be used if Iran does not return to the negotiating table to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal. Iran is accused of violating the deal by enriching uranium.

The United States and Israel said Wednesday they were looking at further possible ways of dealing with Iran if Tehran does not come back in good faith to negotiations to rescue a landmark nuclear deal.

Speaking after three-way talks with the foreign ministers of Israel and the United Arab Emirates, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "other options" were on the table if Iran were to reject an offer to comply again with the agreement in the event that the US rejoins it.

"We will look at every option to deal with the challenge posed by Iran," he said. "And we continue to believe that diplomacy is the most effective way to do that. But it takes two to engage in diplomacy, and we have not seen from Iran a willingness to do that at this point."

Israel threatens action
Possible non-diplomatic options could include military force, but also a further tightening of sanctions or covert actions against Iran.

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid was more forthright in his warnings to Tehran.

"There are moments when nations must use force to protect the world from evil," he said. "If a terror regime is going to acquire a nuclear weapon we must act," he said.

"Israel reserves the right to act at any given moment in any way. That is not only our right, it is also our responsibility," he added.

What is the nuclear deal?

Under the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and several world powers, including the US and Germany, Iran agreed to discontinue certain elements of its nuclear program that the West fears could lead to the

development of nuclear weapons. In return for that and for allowing comprehensive international inspections of its nuclear facilities, the country was to receive billions of dollars' worth of sanctions relief.

The deal has been in jeopardy

since former US President Donald Trump withdrew from it in 2018, with Iran violating a number of the agreements it had made. Israel was not a party to the deal, which was negotiated by the administration of former US President Barack Obama.

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India-China trade deficit soars to \$47 bn as business ignores Ladakh crisis, 'Atmanirbhar' push

data shared by the Indian commerce ministry in August. Last fiscal's trade deficit had actually dipped from \$53.57 billion in 2018-19.

The deficit comes as India and

China seem set to hit a record-high trade of \$100 billion, having already touched \$90.37 billion in the first nine months of 2021 - a 49.3 per cent year-on-year

rise, according to the Chinese

customs data.

These figures come even after a chill in bilateral ties in the aftermath of the Galwan Valley clash in June 2020 and the continuing stand-off on the

Line of Actual Control over the last year-and-a-half. The push by the Modi government for an 'Atmanirbhar' economy also couldn't put a pin in the ballooning trade.

The latest figures from China's GACC also revealed that exports to the US, Beijing's biggest strategic and economic competitor, jumped 30 per cent to \$57.4 billion while imports from the US rose nearly 17 per cent to \$15.4 billion.

Steady monthly rise in India-China trade

India-China total trade volume has already touched \$90 billion by end September - following a steady trend of trade flow month by month.

According to GACC data, the countries registered a trade flow of \$9.9 billion in January, \$8.1 billion in February, \$9.5 billion in March, \$10.5 billion in April, \$9.4 billion in May, \$9.3 billion in June, \$10.02 in July and \$11.02 in August.

China was India's top trading partner in the April-July period, followed by the US, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Singapore, according to data from India's commerce ministry.

Based on trade data sourced from official agencies in both countries, exports and imports between the countries grew at over 65 per cent in the January-June period this year.

Will Priyanka Gandhi's aggressive stance in UP benefit Congress or BJP?

The viral video also saw the rivals dub it a 'stunt' and 'drama', to which she responded later by picking up the broom again. This time, she swept a tiled floor bare footed at a temple in Lucknow's Balmiki Basti. Holding a broom in a Dalit basti, Priyanka Gandhi appeared to take a leaf out of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's gesture of wielding a broom in October 2014 when he launched the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. She returned the taunt by BJP leaders, calling the ruling party anti-Dalit. Earlier, responding to Priyanka Gandhi's viral video from Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had said, "Janata unko isi layak banana chahti hai [the public wants to render her to this capability only]." In Lakhimpur Kheri, Priyanka Gandhi met families of the farmers who died in the violence. She also met the family members of the journalist killed in the incident. Priyanka Gandhi told mediapersons that she wanted to meet the families of the BJP workers who died in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence. Having struck all favourable chords, Priyanka Gandhi visited Varanasi to perform



a puja at the Kashi Vishwanath temple before appearing as 'priestess warrior' to address a crowd of thousands in PM Modi's constituency.

BENEFIT TO CONGRESS

Organisationally, the Congress is described in Uttar Pradesh as a moribund political outfit that springs to life only when a Gandhi visits the state from Delhi. Priyanka Gandhi has drawn crowds during her visit and looked successful in mobilising the party cadre. Even the top state leaders have hit the ground like grassroots party workers. The biggest benefit that the Congress seems to get from Priyanka Gandhi's campaign in Uttar Pradesh is that the party is

being talked about in the press and public. However, it remains to be seen how much of it the Congress can sustain over the next five months and what benefit it may derive in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls.

ALLIANCE?

In 2017, the Congress had tied up with the Samajwadi Party (SP) for the UP polls, but the alliance failed to stop the BJP's sweep. The Samajwadi Party returned from the election with an impression that its partnership with the Congress worked against it. In 2019, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party joined hands for the Lok Sabha polls. The BJP emerged stronger

in the elections. The two parties parted ways, taking a sort of a vow not to ally with another 'big' party. This leaves the Congress with a bleak chance of forming a forceful coalition in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls. The Congress, now led by Priyanka Gandhi in Uttar Pradesh, is practically on its own. **PRIYANKA CAMPAIGN SUITS BJP?**

With no politically attractive alliance in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress depends heavily on Priyanka Gandhi's abilities and perseverance going into the assembly polls. If Priyanka Gandhi's aggressive campaign works for the Congress, it may lead to a division of votes in the Opposition camp. SP president Akhilesh Yadav has been drawing crowds in his rallies, but over the past 20 years, his party's vote share has remained somewhat 'limited' to 20+ per cent range. BSP chief Mayawati, too, depends on a solid but limited support base. The BJP, on the other hand, has seen the sharpest jump in

recent election cycles - over 25 percentage points in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and the 2017 UP Assembly election over the previous set of elections. It has maintained its vote share since 2014. In this situation, a Priyanka Gandhi impact on the UP polls may end up helping the BJP. This also explains why the BJP's central leadership had a word with Yogi Adityanath to release Priyanka Gandhi and allow her to take the centre stage in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence incident. **WHY BJP MAY PREFER PRIYANKA FACTOR**

In 2014, the BJP got about 43 per cent of all polled votes. In 2017, it had about 40 per cent vote share. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the BJP got about 50 per cent of polled votes in Uttar Pradesh, where the SP and the BSP contested the polls in alliance, polling 18.1 per cent and 19.42 per cent votes, respectively.

The Samajwadi Party's highest vote share in the past 20 years was recorded in 2012 (of all Lok Sabha and assembly polls) when it formed the government with over 29 per cent votes.

Border battle: New Jersey readies for war over Manhattan toll plan

usually a political ally of fellow Democratic leaders in New York, is insisting on toll discounts for New Jersey commuters who drive into New York City. And he is threatening to use his powers to halt business at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey - one of the few ways a New Jersey governor can get the attention of a New York governor - if he doesn't get his way.

The dispute is over the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority's "congestion pricing" plan, which would charge drivers between \$9 and \$23 to enter Manhattan's central business district, south of 60th Street. The tolls are meant to discourage driving, reduce traffic and improve air quality. The revenue from people who keep driving, about \$1 billion a year, would help fund public transit upgrades.

Some people see Murphy's comments as ephemeral bluster tied to his upcoming reelection bid. Others see New Jersey mustering a sustained attack on congestion pricing as a 16-month environmental review of the tolling project begins.

Other New Jersey officials also oppose New York's plans, but any specific retaliation from the governor was previously unspoken. At one point in 2019, Murphy said he would not summon a full "Jersey attitude" to fight the new tolls. Around the same time, former Republican Gov. Chris Christie said New York was "walking all over" New Jersey on the issue.

That just changed. Asked about the issue last week, Murphy told members of a local chamber of commerce, "We're not going to relent if New Jersey commuters are discriminated against, period." Then he made the threat about holding up business at the Port Authority, which oversees the region's shipping terminals, major airports, the World Trade Center, an interstate subway system and most of the vehicular bridges and tunnels that link New York and New Jersey.

The Port Authority, which is jointly controlled by appointees

of the two states, has long been a battleground where governors clashed over their priorities - even before the infamous "Bridgegate" scandal. Still, Murphy's threat was a surprise from a governor who one of his allies in the fight - Ron Simoncini of the Fair Congestion Pricing Alliance - described as "one of the most sedate people on the planet."

A senior Murphy administration official said the governor's request has been consistent and simple: take care of George

commerce it is not an island unto itself," Pascrell said in a statement aimed at the MTA. The fight over congestion pricing isn't the only dispute between the states. In mid-September MTA officials called New Jersey "illogical" in a fight over how to split billions in pandemic relief dollars meant for regional transit. The Murphy official said the administration isn't playing 3D chess by tying that dispute with the congestion pricing concerns.

One congressional aide also



Washington Bridge drivers by offering them the same credits New York plans to give drivers entering Manhattan via the Holland and Lincoln tunnels. That means if a New Jersey commuter is paying \$12.50 to cross a bridge or tunnel, Murphy argues all crossing tolls should be deducted from the new MTA toll. So, if the new congestion toll were \$15 a day, a New Jersey commuter who crossed a bridge or tunnel would pay perhaps \$2.50 more each day, rather than \$15 more.

Members of New Jersey's congressional delegation have gone further in their demands. Democratic Reps. Bill Pascrell and Josh Gottheimer argue New York is fleecing New Jersey commuters by earmarking all the revenue from the tolls for its own subways and buses.

They argue the tolls would be fairer if some money went to fund the public transit systems that get New Jerseyans to New York in the first place, like NJ Transit's buses and trains and the Port Authority's PATH trains. "Manhattan may be an island, but on affairs of interstate

said the gubernatorial election and other disputes aren't the issue. Rather, the issue for New Jersey is that New York likes to forget that it relies on New Jersey commuters.

"This isn't about the election and it isn't about the Covid formula," the aide said. "New York's greed there isn't coloring our opinion of New York's greed here."

New Jersey's chances of getting a piece of the New York pie seem slim, though. While the MTA has pretty broad authority in setting the tolls - as long as they raise \$1 billion or so a year - New York law says where the toll money will go: 80 percent to city mass transit, 10 percent to Long Island Rail Road and 10 percent to Metro North, the train system that serves part of the Hudson Valley and Connecticut. New Jersey politicians often portray their state's commuters as uniquely captive to the whims of New York. But New Yorkers trying to leave their state are often captive to some unilateral tolls themselves - on the New Jersey Turnpike and Garden State Parkway.

"There is a whole interstate

running down the center of New Jersey that if we have to drive south, that's the only way to go," said Danny Pearlstein, policy and communications director at the Riders Alliance, a group that advocates on behalf of New York subway and bus riders.

Some of the turnpike toll money goes to help fund public transit - in New Jersey. This spring, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority signed a deal that sends several billion dollars to NJ Transit in coming years. Likewise, the tolls to cross bridges and tunnels are set by the bi-state Port Authority.

"If there is a need for greater transit in New Jersey, then the New Jersey governor and legislature have all sorts of ways of raising that money," Pearlstein said.

Indeed, Jeff Tittel, the retired director of the New Jersey Sierra Club and a Murphy critic, said the governor and other New Jersey politicians are making congestion pricing an issue to distract from already rising tolls and gas taxes in New Jersey. (This year, the gas tax dropped.) "That's what it really comes down to, that they are playing to the drivers who tend to be wealthy and suburban at the expense of mass transit," Tittel said.

It remains unclear how many New Jersey drivers would be affected by the new tolls. MTA officials said an ongoing environment review is aimed at figuring that out.

Existing estimates vary a bit in what they say: An analysis by the pro-toll Tri-State Transportation Campaign found that "an average of 1.6% of workers will be subject to a congestion charge." In one 2019

report, New York City's planning department estimated 44,000 workers came to Manhattan by car from New Jersey. In another 2019 report, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council estimated 111,000 people entered the central business district in cars, taxis, vans or trucks through New Jersey. All those numbers have likely been upended by the pandemic.

Whatever the number, congestion pricing supporters argue the new tolls are actually making things fair for New Jersey drivers. The new MTA tolls would hit far more Long Island drivers who can currently cross four different bridges over the East River into Manhattan for free.

New Jersey drivers, by contrast, now pay \$12.50 to cross the Hudson River's tunnels and bridge.

"While New Jersey drivers have always paid tolls to cross the Hudson River, many drivers from Westchester, Long Island and Connecticut have avoided paying tolls by crossing at free, city-owned crossings such as the Brooklyn Bridge," Zoe Baldwin, the New Jersey director for the Regional Plan Association, told the MTA during a recent public hearing. "With appropriate toll credits in place at the three Hudson River crossings, this new policy will level the playing field."

There seems to be agreement that it's fair to deduct the cost of crossing through the Hudson tunnels, since the tunnels dump cars straight into the central business district already. But the toll commuters pay to cross the George Washington Bridge has been a lingering issue Murphy and others flagged back in 2019.

Lakhimpur Kheri violence - Prime suspect in custody for lethal political aggravation

opposition is trying to make the most out of the situation. The constant prohibition of the national-level opposition leaders adds fuel to the fire only.

Even though the image of the central government was stained in this incident, the prompt

action that they took is surely creditable. At their request, the Yogi government at Uttar Pradesh changed its stance. There were prompt judiciary and administrative actions, which lead to Ashish Mishra's arrest.

By Susmita Ghosh



It's Congress vs Congress in Punjab, and this time Sidhu has nothing to do with it

jurisdiction of the BSF, which falls under it, will increase from the current 15 km to 50 km in the border areas of Punjab, Assam and West Bengal.

I strongly condemn the Gol's unilateral decision to give additional powers to BSF within 50 KM belt running along the international borders, which is a direct attack on the federalism. I urge the Union Home Minister @AmitShah to immediately rollback this irrational decision.

- Charanjit S Channi (@CHARANJITCHANNI) October 13, 2021

The decision was categorically condemned by Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi who termed it as a direct attack on the federal structure of the country and demanded that it be immediately revoked. His predecessor Captain Amarinder Singh, however, responded by hailing the decision, saying that the enhanced presence of the BSF will make Punjab stronger. He added that the central armed forces should not be dragged into politics.

'Our soldiers are being killed in Kashmir. We're seeing more & more weapons & drugs being pushed by Pak-backed terrorists into Punjab. BSF's enhanced presence & powers

will only make us stronger. Let's not drag central armed forces into politics':
capt_amarinder 1/2 (File pic) pic.twitter.com/nu4DhAQnAz

- Raveen Thukral (@RT_Media_Capt) October 13, 2021

Amarinder, who was removed as chief minister of Punjab last month, has already made it clear that he will be leaving the Congress and is believed to be hobnobbing with the BJP before finalising his next course of action, which includes the possibility of him forming his own political outfit.

The home ministry declaration, meanwhile, has exposed more faultlines within the Punjab Congress.

Former state unit chief Sunil Jakhar slammed Channi for the move, tweeting that the chief minister may have "unwittingly managed to hand over half of Punjab to the central government.

"Be careful what you ask for ! Has @CHARANJITCHANNI unwittingly managed to hand over half of Punjab to the Central govt. 25000sq km (out of total 50,000sq km) has now been placed under BSF jurisdiction. Punjab Police stands castigated. Do we still want more autonomy to

states?" he tweeted Wednesday.

Be careful what you ask for ! Has @CHARANJITCHANNI unwittingly managed to handover half of Punjab to Central govt. 25000sq km (out of total 50,000sq km) has now been placed under BSF jurisdiction. Punjab Police stands castigated. Do we still want more autonomy to States ? <https://t.co/JIGB7G0Pnj>

- Sunil Jakhar (@sunilkjakhar) October 13, 2021

He raised more eyebrows Thursday, when he tweeted in praise of the BSF and that he backed Amarinder's observation that central forces should be used as political tools.

We are proud of our security forces which are meant to secure our borders and protect India from foreign aggressors. Using them to cover up the failures & to clean up the mess created by leaders & govts is very alarming. It not only denigrates our brave forces but also 1/2

- Sunil Jakhar (@sunilkjakhar) October 14, 2021

Jakhar, who was tipped to be the chief minister of Punjab following Amarinder's removal, was let down by the party high command at the last minute. He is believed to be upset with both Navjot Sidhu and the

Congress brass.

Of the others, Amritsar MP Gurjeet Singh Aujla welcomed the move, though he said the 50 km mark was "too much". "I think it would help in curbing drug menace. But the area is more than required. BSF jurisdiction should be limited to around 10 km. I am making this comment only from the perspective of drug smuggling," Aujla reportedly said.

Sidhu's close aide and cabinet minister Pargat Singh held a press conference Thursday and blamed Amarinder for the Modi government's decision.

"Amarinder is doing BJP's bidding and trying to polarize Punjab by generating fear and insecurity among the population," he said. "With this move, the Government of India has taken over half of Punjab." The opposition Shiromani Akali Dal has also strongly objected to the move, calling it as the virtual declaration of emergency in the state. Party chief Sukhbir Singh Badal Thursday staged a protest in Chandigarh against the decision.

The new notifications by the Union Home Ministry is an indication of internal emergency in Punjab - @drcheemasad pic.twitter.com/1PvjAR5kbW

- Shiromani Akali Dal

(@Akali_Dal_) October 13, 2021

Sidhu mum on issue, to meet high command today Congress' state party chief Navjot Sidhu, however, is yet to speak on the issue. He had put out an "interview" with his advisors on his social media platforms Wednesday but steered clear of the topic.

Much of what he said was a repetition of his earlier statements barring a carefully camouflaged attack on the chief minister regarding his plans to end illegal mining in the state. The chief minister had recently deliberated allowing landowners free access to sand, which Sidhu objected to in the Facebook interview.

Sidhu had been sulking ever since his resignation over the appointment of the Punjab DGP and the advocate general but seemed to have come around last week in the wake of the Lakhimpur Kheri incident. The Punjab Congress had put up a united front in showing solidarity with the farmers.

Sidhu is expected to meet Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal and Punjab in-charge Harish Rawat Thursday to discuss changes in the party's organisation structure, ahead of assembly elections next year.



Aryan Khan is qaidi no. 956 at Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail, sources reveal inside details

With the judge having reserved his order on Aryan's bail plea in the Mumbai cruise drugs case, the 23-year-old star kid will stay in jail at least till October 20. According to jail sources, Aryan Khan seems disturbed, tense and uncomfortable in jail. All the accused in the Mumbai drugs case have been kept in a barrack separate from the other inmates for security reasons. As per Covid protocol, the accused had been kept in the jail's 'quarantine cell' until Wednesday. But now that their quarantine period is over and they have all tested negative for Covid-19, they have been shifted to the normal barracks. Allotted on Thursday, Aryan Khan's 'qaidi (prisoner) number' is N956.

FOOD AND CLOTHES

Aryan Khan is eating regular jail food but not liking it, sources from within the jail said. No food from outside is allowed.

A money order amounting to Rs 4,500 dated October 11 was

received by Arthur Road jail authorities from Aryan Khan's family. This money is for his canteen expenses. As per jail rules, a prisoner is allowed only one money order of Rs 4,500 per month. Aryan Khan is, so far, wearing clothes sent to him from home.

JAIL ROUTINE

At Arthur Road Jail, Aryan Khan has to wake up not later than 6 am every morning. Breakfast is provided at 7 am and lunch at 11 am. The inmates are given dinner at 6 pm, after which the barracks are closed.

In the afternoon, the inmates are allowed to roam around in the open area located in the middle of the jail. Jail officials are keeping a watch on Aryan Khan round the clock, as per sources.

The court may pronounce its order on Aryan Khan's bail plea on October 20. At least until then, Shah Rukh Khan's son will remain in jail under 24/7 surveillance.

WHY WAS ARYAN ARRESTED?

Aryan Khan was arrested after the NCB conducted a raid on the Cordelia Cruises' Empress ship off the coast of Mumbai on October 2. A rave party was allegedly taking place on the ship and Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's son was on board. No drugs were found on him, as per an NCB official.

NCB sleuths said they seized 13 grams of cocaine, 5 grams of MD, 21 grams of charas, 22 pills of MDMA (ecstasy) and Rs 1.33 lakh in cash during the raid.

Seven others were arrested with Aryan Khan, namely Munmun Dhamecha, Arbaaz Merchant, Ismeet Singh, Mohak Jaswal, Gomit Chopra, Nupur Satija, and Vikrant Chhokar. A total of twenty people have been arrested in the case so far, including foreign nationals and alleged drug peddlers.

Aryan Khan was sent to 14-day judicial custody on October 7.

What happens if a galaxy flies past our Milky Way? Indian astronomers reveal cosmic changes



Galaxies in the universe are clustered together and over time they tend to move closer and closer. While in some instances they merge together, at other times they fly past each other. Now, research shows what happens when two galaxies conduct flyby in the vastness of the cosmos.

A study by Indian astronomers has found that when a smaller galaxy passes by a much larger galaxy, it leads to a major disruption in the structure of the latter. They found that if a smaller galaxy flies past a galaxy like our Milky Way, it can trigger the formation of spiral arms in Akashganga (Hindi name for Milky Way).

In the study published in the journal Monthly Notices of Royal Astronomical Society, astronomers investigated the effect of minor flybys on the bulges, discs, and spiral arms of Milky Way mass galaxies for two types of bulges. They found the main effect on the discs is its thickening, which is seen as the increase in the ratio of disc scale height to scale radius.

Astronomers say that galaxy flybys are as common as mergers in the low-redshift universe and are important for galaxy evolution as they involve the exchange of significant amounts of mass and energy. Stressing the need for their study, the astronomers said that the structures fade away in time.

WHAT IS A GALACTIC FLYBY?

Flyby generally refers to a close approach between two spacecraft, fighter jets, or between two objects, a galactic flyby, however, is on a massive scale. As opposed to galaxy mergers, when a galaxy can fall into another to become a larger one, in a flyby galaxies come close, exert a tremendous gravitational pull on each other, and then go away on their own paths.

Go for launch: Blue Origin to launch William Shatner and three others into space today

Blue Origin is set to launch four passengers in its second crewed mission to space. The New Shepard spacecraft is go for launch to carry William Shatner and three others into microgravity on Wednesday.

The liftoff is scheduled for 7.00 pm IST from launch site one after it was postponed from Tuesday due to heavy winds forecast in the region. The 60-foot-tall New Shepard rocket will blast off from outside the rural west Texas town of Van Horn

on a journey to the edge of space.

"New Shepard is go for launch! The mission team has completed the Flight Readiness Evaluation prior to #NS18. This is our final meeting with the engineers and Mission Control team to ensure all systems are go for launch," Blue Origin said.

WEATHER CONDITIONS NOMINAL

Blue Origin said that forecasted winds at launch have subsided and the weather currently looks good for Wednesday. However,

engineers will keep a lookout for changing conditions.

The four astronauts on Tuesday got familiar with the function of the autonomous spacecraft, which will be controlled by engineers on the ground as it flies into space. Astronauts got "familiar with the launch tower, redundant safety features of the New Shepard crew capsule, as well as, ingress and egress procedures," Blue Origin tweeted.



The training was completed by the end of the day. WHEN AND WHERE TO WATCH LAUNCH The launch can be seen live via a webcast hosted by Blue Origin on its YouTube channel. Meanwhile, you can follow the developments at indiatoday.in.



Taiwan tensions raise fears of U.S.-China conflict in Asia

China seeks to bring the strategically and symbolically important island back under its control, and the U.S. sees Taiwan in the context of broader challenges from China.

After sending a record number of military aircraft to harass Taiwan over China's National Day holiday, Beijing has toned down the saber rattling but tensions remain high, with the rhetoric and reasoning behind the exercises unchanged. Experts agree a direct conflict is unlikely at the moment, but as the future of self-ruled Taiwan increasingly becomes a powder keg, a mishap or miscalculation could lead to confrontation while Chinese and American ambitions are at odds. China seeks to bring the strategically important island back under its control, and the U.S. sees Taiwan in the context of broader challenges from China.

From the U.S. perspective, the concept of a great power rivalry with China has driven this back up the agenda," said Henry Boyd, a Britain-based defense analyst with the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "The need to stand up to China is a strong enough motivating factor that not taking this fight would also be seen as a betrayal of American national interests."

China claims Taiwan as its own, and controlling the island is a key component of Beijing's political and military thinking. Leader Xi Jinping on the weekend again emphasized "reunification of the nation must be realized, and will definitely be realized" - a goal made more realistic with massive improvements to China's armed forces over the last two decades. In response, the U.S. has been increasing support for Taiwan and more broadly turning its focus to the Indo-Pacific region. U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price on Tuesday emphasized that American support for Taiwan is "rock solid," saying "we have also been very clear that we are committed to deepening our ties with Taiwan."

Washington's longstanding policy has been to provide political and military support for Taiwan, while not explicitly promising to defend it from a Chinese attack. The two sides came perhaps the closest to blows in 1996, when China, irked by what it saw as increasing American support for Taiwan, decided to flex its muscle with exercises that included firing missiles into the waters some 30 kilometers (20 miles) from Taiwan's coast ahead of Taiwan's first presidential election.

The U.S. responded with its own show of force, sending two aircraft carrier groups to the region. At the time, China had no aircraft carriers and little means to threaten the American ships, and it backed down. Stung by the episode, China embarked upon a massive overhaul of its military, and 25 years later, it has significantly improved missile defenses that could easily strike back, and equipped or built its own aircraft carriers. The U.S. Defense Department's recent report to Congress noted that in

2000, it assessed China's armed forces to be "a sizable but mostly archaic military" but that today it is a rival, having already surpassed the American military in some areas including shipbuilding to the point where it now has the world's largest navy.

Counting ships isn't the best way to compare capabilities - the U.S. Navy has 11 aircraft carriers to China's two, for example - but in the event of a conflict over Taiwan, China would be able to deploy almost the entirety of its naval forces, and also has land-based anti-ship missiles to add to the fight, said Boyd, a co-author of IISS's annual Military Balance assessment of global armed forces.

"China's concept of operations regarding Taiwan is that if they can delay the U.S. presence in the fight, or restrict the numbers that they're able to put into the fight because we're able to hold their forward assets at some level of risk, they can beat the Taiwanese before the Americans show up in enough force to do something about it," he said. Taiwan's own strategy is the mirror image - delaying China long enough for the U.S. and its allies to show up in force. It has significant military forces itself, and the advantage of fighting on its home turf. A recent policy paper also notes the need for asymmetric measures, which could include things like missile attacks on mainland China ammunition or fuel dumps.

Taiwan's defense department's assessment of China's capabilities,



presented to parliament in August and obtained by The Associated Press, says China already has the ability to seal Taiwan's ports and airports, but currently lacks the transport and logistical support for large-scale joint landing operations - though is improving by the day.

In a new strategic guidance policy last week, U.S. Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro, identified China as the "most significant" long-term challenge.

"For the first time in at least a generation, we have a strategic competitor who possesses naval capabilities that rival our own, and who seeks to aggressively employ its forces to challenge U.S. principles, partnerships and prosperity," the paper said. China, over its National Day weekend at the beginning of the month, sent a record 149 military aircraft southwest of Taiwan in strike group formations - in international airspace but into the island's buffer zone, prompting Taiwan to scramble its defenses.

On Monday, China announced it had carried out beach landing and assault drills in the mainland province directly opposite Taiwan.

Ma Xiaoguang, spokesperson of the mainland government's Taiwan Affairs Office, justified the actions as necessary, saying Wednesday they were provoked by "Taiwan independence forces" colluding with "external forces."

"With every step the Chinese are trying to change the status quo and normalize the situation through this salami slicing," said Hoo Tiang Boon, coordinator of the China program at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. "They know Taiwan cannot do anything about it, and the danger is that possibility of miscalculations or mishaps do exist."

Taiwan and China split in 1949 amid a civil war, with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists fleeing to the

island as Mao Zedong's Communists swept to power.

In a 2019 defense white paper, Beijing said it advocates "peaceful reunification of the country" - a phrase repeated by Xi over the weekend - but is also unequivocal in its goals.

"China must and will be reunited," the paper reads. "We make no promise to renounce the use of force, and reserve the option of taking all necessary measures."

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, meantime, has been making the case for more global support, writing in the most recent edition of Foreign Affairs magazine that "if Taiwan were to fall, the consequences would be catastrophic for regional peace and the democratic alliance system."

"A failure to defend Taiwan would not only be catastrophic for the Taiwanese," she wrote. "It would overturn a security architecture that has allowed for peace and

extraordinary economic development in the region for seven decades."

U.S. law requires it to assist Taiwan in maintaining a defensive capability and to treat threats to the island as a matter of "grave concern." Washington has recently acknowledged that U.S. special forces are on the island in a training capacity, and it has been stepping up multinational maneuvers in the region as part of a stated commitment to a "free and open Indo-Pacific." They included an exercise involving 17 ships from six navies - the U.S., Britain, Japan, Netherlands, Canada and New Zealand off the Japanese island of Okinawa earlier this month.

The so-called Quad group of nations - the U.S., Australia, India and Japan - on Thursday were concluding joint exercises in the Bay of Bengal, which Japan's Defense Ministry said showed their resolve to uphold "fundamental values such as democracy and the rule of law."

Washington also signed a deal last month in concert with Britain to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines, which China said would "seriously damage regional peace and stability."

"The Americans are trying to bring in the allies on a united front," said Hoo. "There's a growing internationalization of the Taiwan issue."

Right now, neither side's armed forces feels fully prepared for a conflict over Taiwan, but in the end it may not be their decision, Boyd said.

"It's not going to be up to the military," he said. "It's going to be up to the politicians."





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NY's new governor has given me a glimmer of hope related to COVID nursing home deaths



"Apologies aren't meant to change the past, they are meant to change the future."

I remembered that quote on Tuesday on my way home with my husband Sean after meeting New York Gov. Kathy Hochul. We were invited to the meeting after the governor saw us at a rally outside her Manhattan office a few weeks ago when we were advocating on behalf of the loved ones we lost to COVID last spring in separate long term care facilities.

It was a small, closed door meeting. There were no pictures taken inside the office. It was simply a moment to finally speak and be heard.

This was the first time our family has ever been acknowledged by the governor's office. As she walked in and shook our hands, she offered her condolences.

"I'm sorry for your loss." I thanked her for taking the time to sit with us, and find out what we've been fighting for all these months.

Without any of us knowing on March 25th of 2020 former Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order to admit over 9,000 COVID positive patients into New York nursing homes for 46 days. Even Cuomo knew this would endanger our seniors when he pre-emptively warned the virus would "spread like fire through dry grass." It's still a mystery to us as to why he and his health office decided to light the match.

Instead of being honest, and admitting this was a terrible

decision, Cuomo lied, denied, blamed others while covering up the death toll. While he could've

met with families or expressed his condolences, the governor decided it was more important to celebrate himself by writing a book and winning an Emmy.

As grieving family members, many of us wanted some kind of acknowledgement for our pain and grief. Instead, we were accused of playing politics for wanting to know why our loved ones were put in grave danger.

My good friend and fellow advocate New York State Assemblyman Ron Kim, who lost his uncle to COVID in a nursing home help arrange the sit down.

I am so grateful for his kindness and leadership through all of this. Tuesday's meeting would never have happened without him.

Gov. Hochul was empathetic and generous with her time. She wanted to hear from all of us, and listened to our thoughts and concerns about how we can finally start the healing process and the way forward to help make sure it doesn't happen again.

My husband Sean, who is a very private person, finds it very difficult to talk about his loss. He

time without being able to see or comfort them. He told her how he brought his mom flowers a few

showed Gov. Hochul pictures of their moms Elba and Ana while sharing their tragic stories.

days after his father Gov. Hochul says that going died, but couldn't hug forward, her administration is her. He stood six feet going to transparent. She gave away in the lobby of her us her word that her assisted living residence administration would work with telling her to hang on. us. She looked us in the eye We'd get through this. and thanked us for being That was the last time strong, relentless advocates. he saw her before she Cuomo wanted everyone to got sick and died. believe this was about Seeing my husband politics. It never was. There sharing this with the were no Democrats or governor brought me Republicans in that room right back to what it was pouring their hearts out. like a year and a half It was about human beings ago. The shock, wanting to help and listening to confusion, and grief those that were hurting. crashed over me so hard I left the meeting with a glimmer I could barely catch my of hope. That's something I breath. I cried listening haven't had in a long time.

to my friends Peter and But, Gov. Hochul's actions in the Daniel Arbeeney talk days ahead will speak louder about their father than words.

Norman, asking if his An apology won't bring back our death counted in Gov. loved ones, but it might just change the way things are done going forward to protect other

families in the future.



was able explain to her how painful it was losing both his parents in such a short period of

Cuomo's whitewash of the numbers.

Haydee Pabey and Alexa Rivera



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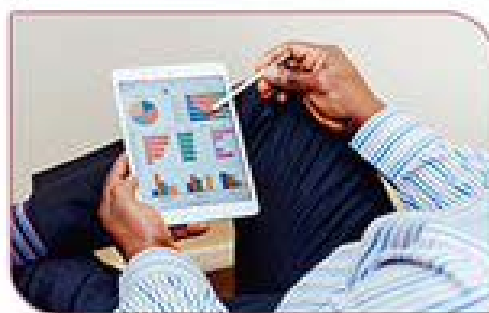
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Increasing spread of terrorism in Africa is matter of serious concern: India at UN



Addressing a UN Security Council High Level Open Debate, MoS External Affairs V Muraleedharan said that the increasing spread of terrorism in Africa is a matter of serious concern.

India on Tuesday voiced serious concern over the increasing spread of terrorism in Africa, saying these terrorist forces and groups are receiving encouragement from member-states which seek to divide communities by legitimising terrorist activities.

"Terrorism is a clear manifestation of how forces inimical to unity and diversity can seek to destroy the social cohesion and democratic fabric of countries by, inter alia, fomenting disaffection, hatred and violence," Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said.

Addressing the UN Security Council High Level Open Debate on 'Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: Diversity, state building and the search for peace', Muraleedharan said the

increasing spread of terrorism in Africa is a matter of serious concern.

"What is even more unfortunate is that these terrorist forces and groups are receiving encouragement from member states which seek to divide communities by legitimising terrorist activities," he said at the open debate organised under Kenya's Presidency.

He said that the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) has clearly reinforced yet again that terrorism cannot be justified on any ground and that no country should provide an excuse for such activities.

"It is equally important that UN organisations take GCTS as a template and not give any encouragement or excuse, even indirectly, to efforts of member states to justify terrorism in any

way." Muraleedharan told the open debate that "when we deal with countries coming out of conflict and going into peace building, putting in place a strong legal framework as well as building credible institutions based on solid principles is critical.

"This will also ensure that diversity is protected, and inclusivity is fostered. We need to encourage donor countries which are contributing generously to peace building in Africa and other regions to ensure that those countries coming out of conflict are able to put in place an enduring framework that withstands the test of time," he said.

Noting that the challenge will always be to make tradeoffs between the immediate and long-term, Muraleedharan said that

"we believe the UN system as a whole should work closely with member states and regional organisations in line with their national requirements and needs and not advocate the imposition of ideas of solutions from outside."

He emphasised that it is now the time to look at peacebuilding in the broader context and in a more focused manner, especially in the context of Covid pandemic, which is threatening to erode the gains we have made over the years.

He told the debate that India has always played a constructive and significant role in the context of peacebuilding through its extensive development partnership with developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia

and with LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. India has and continues to assist countries bilaterally in post-conflict situations by providing substantial grants and soft loans, he said.

Apart from focusing on infrastructure, especially housing, education and health, on connectivity, on providing livelihood to those impacted by conflict, especially in agriculture, and on projects at the grassroots level, which directly impact the lives of people, India also provides extensive education training and capacity building, including vocational training and in IT focusing particularly on the youth, he said.

"We will continue to be a pillar of strength for all developing countries in their transition to development, progress and prosperity," Muraleedharan said.

Havana Syndrome: Colombia to leave investigation to US

Colombia said on Tuesday that it was aware of so-called 'Havana Syndrome' cases at US Embassy in country's capital Bogota but was leaving the investigation to Washington.

"Of course we have knowledge of this situation but I want to leave it to the US authorities, who are doing their own investigation, because it is about their own personnel," said Colombian President Ivan Duque to reporters in New York.

At least five US families associated with the embassy in Colombia have come down with symptoms associated with the mysterious affliction, which include headaches, nausea and possible brain damage, the Wall Street Journal reported. The cases in Colombia are latest in the series of instances of 'Havana syndrome' experienced by US diplomats in many countries of the world. The cases were seen first in Cuba then in China,



Germany, Australia, Taiwan and the US capital. US President Joe Biden on Friday signed a law providing financial support for

victims of the mysterious illness.

The Havana Act provides financial compensation for members of the State Department and CIA who suffer brain injury from what officials suspect may be directed microwave attacks.

The cause of the illnesses has not been fully diagnosed and the identity of the attacker, if there is one, has not been revealed. The Cuban government

investigated the matter and has repeatedly rejected US statements on the matter as disinformation.

The US Embassy in Bogota, one of the largest in the world, includes a strong contingent of agents working in both intelligence and counter-narcotics operations, in addition to career diplomats and personnel. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is scheduled to visit the country on October 20.



Report says UK's slow coronavirus lockdown cost thousands of lives

The UK's first comprehensive report on the Covid-19 pandemic was released on Tuesday. Citing the report, lawmakers said Britain's failure to impose a lockdown in the early days of the pandemic cost thousands of unnecessary deaths.

Britain's failure to impose a lockdown in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic cost thousands of unnecessary deaths and ranks among the country's worst public health blunders, lawmakers concluded Tuesday in the nation's first comprehensive report on the pandemic.

The deadly delay derived from the failure of British government ministers to question the recommendations of scientific advisers, resulting in a dangerous level of "groupthink" that caused them to dismiss the more aggressive strategies adopted in East and Southeast Asia to limit infections, the report said.

It was only when Britain's National Health Service risked being overwhelmed by rapidly rising infections that Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government finally ordered a lockdown. in late March 2020.

"Decisions on lockdowns and social distancing during the early weeks of the pandemic - and the advice that led to them - rank as one of the most important public health failures the United Kingdom has ever experienced,"

states the joint report from the House of Commons' science and health committees. "Painful though it is, the U.K. must learn what lessons it can of why this happened if we are to ensure it is not repeated." Lawmakers said their inquiry was designed to uncover why the U.K. performed "significantly worse" than many other countries during the initial period of the pandemic. The U.K. has recorded more than 137,000 coronavirus deaths, the highest toll in Europe after Russia. But government officials said they did what they could with the information they had in a time of crisis. "It was an unprecedented pandemic," Cabinet minister Stephen Barclay told Sky News. "We were learning about it as we went through, and of course with hindsight, there's things we know about it now that we didn't know at the time." Bereaved families reacted to the parliamentary report with outrage, furious that the people who died of Covid-19 received scant mention in the 150-page document. They said the joint committee only was interested in "speaking to their colleagues and friends." "The report it's produced is laughable and more interested in political

arguments about whether you can bring laptops to...meetings than it is in the experiences of those who tragically lost parents, partners or children to Covid-19," said Hannah Brady, spokesperson for Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice. "This is an attempt to ignore and gaslight bereaved families, who will see it as a slap in the face." Lawmakers released their findings amid frustration with the timetable for a formal public inquiry into the government's response to Covid-19. Johnson says the inquiry will start next spring. The report was based on testimony from 50 witnesses, including former Health Secretary Matt Hancock and former government insider Dominic Cummings. It was unanimously approved by 22 lawmakers from the three largest parties in Parliament: the governing Conservatives and the opposition Labour Party and the Scottish National Party. The committees praised the government's early focus on vaccines as the ultimate way out of the pandemic and its decision to invest in vaccine development. These decisions led to Britain's successful inoculation program, which has

seen almost 80 per cent of people 12 and over now fully vaccinated.

"Millions of lives will ultimately be saved as a result of the global vaccine effort in which the UK has played a leading part," the committees said.

But they also criticized the government's test-and-trace program, saying its slow, uncertain and often chaotic performance hampered Britain's response to the pandemic.

The government's strategy during the first three months of the crisis reflected official scientific advice that widespread infection was inevitable given that testing capacity was limited; that there was no immediate prospect for a vaccine; and the belief that the public wouldn't accept a lengthy lockdown, the report said. As a result, the government sought merely to manage the spread of the virus, instead of trying to stop it altogether. The report described this as a "serious early error" that the UK shared with many countries in Europe and North America. "There was a groupthink that the way you tackle a pandemic should be similar to a flu pandemic,"

Jeremy Hunt, a former British health minister who now heads Parliament's health committee, said. "I was part of that groupthink, too, when I was health secretary."

Hunt said that before the coronavirus hit, "an American university said we were the second-best prepared country in the world" for a pandemic.

"We know that clearly wasn't the case," he said.

Trish Greenhalgh, a professor of primary care health services at the University of Oxford, said the report "hints at a less-than-healthy" relationship between government and scientific bodies. With Covid-19 still killing hundreds of people every week in Britain, advisory committees continue to debate exactly what evidence is "sufficiently definitive" to be considered certain, she said. "Uncertainty is a defining feature of crises," Greenhalgh said. "Dare we replace 'following the science' with 'deliberating on what best to do when the problem is urgent but certainty eludes us'? This report suggests that unless we wish to continue to repeat the mistakes of the recent past, we must."

What the Supply Chain Crisis Reveals About American Infrastructure



Politicians like to argue in favor of more infrastructure — and more spending on it. But we can use the capacity we already have in much smarter ways.

If there is one universally recognized principle in American political life, it's that the president of the United States should want Christmas to come off without a hitch.

Surely, this is one of the reasons Anthony Fauci so rapidly backed off his comment in an interview the other day that it's too early to say whether people should gather for the holiday. No sooner had Fauci relented than the national focus shifted to an ongoing crisis of the global supply chain that is clearly going to crimp the holiday shopping season, forcing the Biden administration to scurry to try to alleviate a long-running, highly complex mess.

We've gone from fruitless "infrastructure weeks" in the Trump administration to fruitless "trying to pass infrastructure and reconciliation" weeks in the Biden administration to, now, "an attempting to make our infrastructure work" week that might have to be repeated until the end of the year and beyond. As part of a push to get our logistics unstuck, the president is prodding the Port of Los Angeles, one of the most important in the country, to operate on a 24/7 basis. This is welcome news, although it might cause most people to stop and think, "Wait a minute - our ports don't already operate 24 hours a day?"

No, which speaks to the thick layer of irrationality that encrusts our supply chain. It's beyond the

power of any one person to change this anytime soon, but trying to scrape off as many of these encumbrances as possible should be a national priority.

We are experiencing the worst disruption of the supply chain since the advent of the shipping-container era in the late 1950s, driven, at bottom, by the pandemic. A surge in e-commerce, coupled with a labor

challenge here. Everyone along every part of the U.S. logistics chain is pointing fingers at each other, and everyone deserves some blame, whether it's the ports, the truckers, the warehouses, the railroads or other players.

Yet the situation also highlights how, as Scott Lincicome of the Cato Institute persuasively

instance, twice as long on average to move a container from a large ship at the Port of Los Angeles than it does at top ports in China. Ports in Asia operate 24 hours a day, matching the 24-hour-a-day pace of factories, whereas, until now, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach were operating only 16 hours a day.

The White House made a pointed, if understated, reference to this in its recent fact sheet on its new logistics push, "Unlike leading ports around the world, U.S. ports have failed to realize the full possibility offered by operation on nights and weekends."

Uh, yeah.

The main culprit for this massive inefficiency is the incredibly powerful International Longshore and Warehouse Union, which has a lock on the ports up and down the West Coast. It hates automation, and has won extraordinary pay for its workers (dockworkers make an average of \$171,000 per year, with foremen making nearly \$300,000) and strict work rules. When it negotiates contract renewals, the union can effortlessly snarl freight everywhere in the West - work slowdowns are its specialty.

As Peter Tirschwell writes in the Journal of Commerce, "Huge cost increases, limited ability to automate terminals, chronic avoidable disruption during contract negotiations, and far lower productivity and working hours compared with ports in Asia and elsewhere around the world

are at the core of the issue."

Notably, the highly automated Port of Virginia has been weathering the current crisis better than its counterparts.

Nothing comes easy in our current regime. The truckers have complained that various restrictions have made it difficult for them to make use of the additional nighttime hours that have already been available at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. In its fact sheet, the White House said 3,500 more containers will be moving at night, an incremental change in the right direction, but a drop in the bucket in the scheme of things. Tirschwell points out that's about 3 percent of what goes through U.S. ports weekly. Long-haul truckers around the country need about 20,000 more drivers, and have also been hit by a shortage of chassis. In the midst of a major logistical nightmare, the U.S. International Trade Commission imposed roughly 200 percent duties (on top of Trump-era duties of 25 percent) on the world's biggest manufacturers of chassis, China Intermodal Marine Containers. The company does indeed benefit from unfair subsidies, but the timing of the trade commission's action was hardly propitious. The head of the Harbor Trucking Association, representing port truckers on the West Coast, complained, "Now we've created scarcity and increased the cost." U.S. trade policy shouldn't proceed heedless of the real-world consequences to the U.S. economy. Then, as Lincicome points out, there are longstanding rules like the Jones Act, which makes it much more expensive to ship goods from port to port within the U.S., putting a premium on the over-taxed ground systems. Eventually, U.S. logistics will get out of the current fix and reach a new equilibrium. Still, this crisis should prompt a rethinking of the needless inefficiencies we foist on ourselves.



shortage, helped to create the conditions for a spiraling series of bottlenecks.

Ships are idling waiting to unload their cargo at ports, while containers are waiting at the ports to be shipped further inland, while cargo is waiting outside full warehouses on chassis that aren't available to use to pick up other containers, and so on. In theory, there are plenty of ships, trucks and other capacity to handle the volume, but not if so much of that capacity is tied up and frozen in place.

argues, our logistics system is beset by idiotic policies and practices that make it hugely inefficient. There is a tendency in the political debate over infrastructure to assume that more - and more spending, in particular - is better, but it matters how you are making use of what you already have. Consider our ports. U.S. facilities are nowhere near the top-performing facilities around the world. They are generally less automated and less efficient than those in other advanced economies. It takes, for



At 4.35%, retail inflation falls to five-month low in September; IIP grows by 11.9% in August

Retail inflation based on CPI fell to 4.35 per cent in September, the lowest since April 2021. As opposed to this, retail inflation had jumped to an eight-month high of 7.34 per cent in September 2020.

Retail inflation across the country based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell to 4.35 per cent in September from 5.30 per cent in August, according to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO). It is the lowest retail inflation recorded since April 2021.

Comparatively, retail inflation had jumped to an eight-month high of 7.34 per cent in September 2020, primarily being driven by higher food inflation.

The Consumer Food Price

Inflation (CFPI) for September stood at 0.68 per cent in September, as compared with 3.11 per cent in August.

Apart from this, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) also witnessed a growth of 11.9 per cent in August.

Last August, the IIP had contracted 7.1 per cent. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, industrial production had contracted to 18.7 per cent in March 2020.

Meanwhile, petrol and diesel prices have been at a record high

across the country, but despite that headline retail inflation has not crossed the proverbial danger mark because almost 50 per cent of CPI inflation is food inflation, which has been under control.

Though retail inflation has been tamed, edible oil inflation rose 34.19 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in September, as compared with 33 per cent in August.

Similarly, fuel and light inflation rose to 13.63 percent year-on-year in September,

compared with 12.95 percent in August.

Meanwhile, year-on-year inflation for fruits fell sharply to 3.70 per cent, compared with 6.69 per cent in August.

During its last meeting, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept the key lending rate unchanged at 4 per cent and retained the monetary stance as accommodative. This is the eighth consecutive time the MPC maintained a status quo in rates.

Tata Motors lifts shares to record highs on EV investment pledge



Indian shares hit record highs on Wednesday, as Tata Motors surged after pledging to boost investments in its electric vehicle business, while an emergency use nod for Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine in kids also supported sentiment. The NSE Nifty 50 index was up 0.56 per cent at 18,080.31, while the S&P BSE Sensex rose 0.38 per cent to 60,501.22 by 0345 GMT.

Tata Motors jumped 10 per cent and was the top boost to the Nifty 50 index. The Jaguar Land Rover parent said on Tuesday it would invest over \$2 billion in its EV business over the next five years, after the automaker announced it had raised funds from private equity firm TPG.

Airline stocks also surged, as Interglobe Aviation rose nearly 3% and SpiceJet jumped over 4 per cent after India's civil aviation ministry said domestic flights would fly at full capacity from next week.

India's drug regulator on Tuesday recommended emergency use of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin for the two to 18 age group, expanding the country's vaccination drive to include children.

Cryptocurrency prices today, October 13: Bitcoin below \$55,000, Ether, Dogecoin also weaken



Bitcoin was trading over 4 per cent lower on Wednesday while some major cryptocurrencies, including Polkadot and Stellar, were back on the green side. However, Ether, the coin linked to the Ethereum blockchain, was also trading marginally lower at \$3,432, dropping more than 1 per cent in the last 24 hours.

Cardano slipped to \$2.11 whereas Dogecoin dropped to \$0.221952.

Other digital tokens like Polkadot, Uniswap and Stellar have been trading with gains over the last 24 hours.

The global crypto market cap increased as much as a per cent to \$2.31 trillion compared to last day.

The total crypto market volume, however,

declined marginally to \$105.18 billion.

Here are the latest prices and trends of popular cryptocurrencies:

Cryptocurrency	Price (US Dollar)	24-hour change	Market cap	Volume (24 Hours)
Bitcoin	54,596.50	-4.68%	\$1.03 trillion	
Ether	3,432.32	-1.11%	\$403.66 billion	
Dogecoin	0.221952	-1.57%	\$1.71 billion	
Litecoin	168.91	-2.76%	\$11.61 billion	
XRP	1.09	-1.17%	\$108.71 billion	\$4.85 billion
Cardano	2.11	-0.36%	\$68.31 billion	\$210.28 million

We have liftoff...



Two big missions to launch this week, one to return, other to move towards Jupiter

The scientific community is up for two major launches before the week ends as Blue Origin and Nasa attempt missions beyond Earth. While one will return within minutes, the other will commence a billion-kilometre-long journey towards Jupiter. Both the missions are being held as major events owing to their scientific and engineering prowess.

While Blue Origin will launch four passengers into space in its second crewed mission on the New Shepard spacecraft, Nasa will launch the ambitious

Lucy mission to the Trojan asteroid swarms close to Jupiter. The launch of Lucy will be followed by the much-awaited James Webb Telescope, slated in December this year.

BLUE ORIGIN LAUNCH ON WEDNESDAY

Blue Origin will launch four passengers, including famed actor William Shatner, to space on its New Shepard spacecraft on Wednesday. The launch was initially scheduled for Tuesday, however strong winds in the region led to the postponement of the liftoff for October 13.

The liftoff is targeted at 7.00 pm IST from launch site one. The mission comes months after the company flew its boss Jeff Bezos on the debut crewed flight with three others proofing its system's capabilities of launching and landing humans to and from space. The company has been working with Nasa on perfecting the reusable system, as it gives competition to Elon Musk's SpaceX. Led by Bezos, Blue Origin aims to get a chunk of business in the emerging space tourism sector ferrying millionaires and

billionaires (for now) to and from space. The Wednesday launch will see 90-year-old William Shatner, known for his portrayal of Captain Kirk, strapped to the New Shepard spacecraft, along with Glen de Vries co-founder of Medidata Solutions, Dr Chris Boshuizen founder of PlanetLabs and Audrey Powers. The autonomous spacecraft will take the four crewmembers beyond the Karaman Line (100 kilometres above Earth) for a few minutes before they return to Earth. The astronauts will experience weightlessness before they return.

LUCY TO LAUNCH ON SATURDAY- Nasa will launch Lucy, a spacecraft designed to probe the Trojan asteroid swarms around Jupiter, on October 16 from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida. The Lucy mission has been designed to find answers to some of the biggest questions in astronomy like where did we come from? and how did our universe begin?

The spacecraft will look for answers in a debris field near Jupiter, that consists of some of the biggest objects that are

remnants of the primordial material that formed the outer planets. Dubbed trojan asteroids, scientists believe the remnants of the early solar system are trapped by the gravitational field of Jupiter and the Sun in a pitch-perfect balancing act. During its 12-year operational phase following launch, the spacecraft will study several asteroids in the debris field flying by one main-belt asteroid and seven Trojan asteroids. Lucy will incorporate three Earth-gravity assists (using Earth's gravity to slingshot) to reach the Trojan swarms and accomplish these targeted encounters.

Nasa said, "No other space mission in history has been launched to as many different destinations in independent orbits around our sun. Lucy will show us, for the first time, the diversity of the primordial bodies that built the planets." The mission takes its name from the fossilized human ancestor (called "Lucy" by her discoverers) whose skeleton provided unique insight into humanity's evolution





Europe to launch two Galileo satellites next month, strengthen navigation capabilities

Galileo is Europe's civil global satellite navigation constellation, claimed to be the world's most precise satnav system.

As Nasa gears up to launch the James Webb Telescope in December, Europe is not behind. The European Space Agency (ESA) is gearing up to launch the latest pair of Galileo satellites in November. The pair of spacecraft arrived at the Spaceport in French Guiana from where they will be launched.

The satellites left ESA's ESTEC Test Centre in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, travelling over the Atlantic as it flew to Cayenne in French Guiana. After landing, the satellites were then driven through the tropical dusk to the cleanroom surroundings of the spaceport nearby Kourou, where they could be safely unpacked to begin the satellite launch campaign.

Before being cleared for launch, the satellites have gone through rigorous testing at ESA's ESTEC Test Centre, the largest satellite test facility in Europe their last stop before flying to

South America.

WHAT IS GALILEO SATELLITE?

Galileo is Europe's civil global satellite navigation constellation, currently the world's most precise satnav system with a fleet of 26 satellites in orbit.

The two satellites are the first of the last batch of Galileo First Generation satellites, known as 'Batch 3', made up of 12 satellites in all. The two satellites will be launched together aboard a Soyuz launcher from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana. The satellites will be placed at an altitude of 23,222 km in the medium-Earth orbit. These satellites will add to the 26-satellite Galileo constellation already in orbit and delivering Initial Services around the globe. Europe says that Galileo is currently the world's most precise satellite navigation system, serving more than two billion users around the globe. The new generation of Galileo satellites has been equipped

with enhanced navigation signals and capabilities. Meanwhile, the next batch of satellites is expected to be deployed in 2024.

STRENGTHENING NAVIGATIONAL CAPABILITIES

"Next month's liftoff will be the 11th Galileo launch in ten years. Two further launches are planned for next year, to allow Galileo to reach Full Operational Capability in its delivery of services, to be followed by the launches of the rest of the Batch 3 satellites which are currently all undergoing pre-flight testing," ESA said in a statement.

Europe plans to ready the new G2 satellites in a short time scale allowing them to commence operations in space as soon as possible. The satellites feature a more powerful navigation antenna and advanced jamming and spoofing protection mechanisms to safeguard Galileo signals.

Scientists catch unexpected radio signals from distant stars



Searching for extra-terrestrial life has been preoccupation of scientists and creative folks. The idea of us not being alone in this universe on this rock we call Earth is somewhat assuring. Maybe it gives a purpose to our search in the vast expanse of space that so far not yielded any definitive clue of intelligent alien life.

Scientists have now found stars that are unexpectedly blasting out radio signals. This has indicated presence of hidden planets.

University of Queensland's Dr Benjamin Pope and colleagues at the Dutch national observatory ASTRON have been searching for planets using Low-Frequency Array (LOFAR), world's most powerful radio telescope located in the Netherlands.

Dr Pope has been quoted as saying that the team of researchers has discovered radio signals from 19 red dwarf stars. It is suspected that four of these stars have planets orbiting them.

Planets in our solar system also emit radio waves but such radio waves from planets outside the solar system had yet to be found. Red dwarf stars are much smaller than the Sun. They have intense magnetic activity and radio emissions.

More research is needed to determine to the most accurate degree what is the cause of these radio emissions. What if aliens are sending us messages? That would be interesting indeed.

China's Xi launches \$232 mn biodiversity protection fund for developing countries

Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the launch of a 1.5 billion yuan (\$232.47 million) fund on Tuesday to support biodiversity protection in developing countries, as talks continue on a new post-2020 global pact to tackle species loss. Xi was virtually addressing the COP15 biodiversity summit in Kunming, China, where diplomats, scientists, and conservationists are meeting to lay the groundwork for a global agreement to halt and reverse the destruction of nature, set to be



finalised in May next year.

"Developing countries need help and support and solidarity must be strengthened to allow

developing countries to benefit in a fairer way," Xi said. Li Shuo, senior climate adviser at Greenpeace China, said the new

fund "should jump-start an urgently needed conversation on biodiversity finance". "COP15 needs to see donor countries from the developed world contributing in this regard," he said. Experts have said it will take an estimated \$1 trillion a year to build sustainable supply chains and help countries protect nature in other ways far more than the \$150 billion spent on such action in 2019. President Xi said China's contribution to the Kunming Biodiversity Fund would start at 1.5 billion yuan and that it would

also welcome contributions from other parties. He also announced a new national park scheme that would bring a land area of 230,000 square km (88,800 square miles) under stronger state protection. The parks - which cover China's panda, tiger and leopard habitats as well as key nature reserves near the headwaters of the Yangtze, Yellow and Mekong rivers in the northwest - are home to nearly 30 percent of the key terrestrial wildlife species found in the country, Xi said.



Biological E seeks DCGI's nod for phase-3 trial of Corbevax as booster dose for Covishield, Covaxin

Hyderabad-based pharmaceutical company Biological E has sought permission from India's drug regulator to conduct the phase-3 clinical trial for its Covid-19 vaccine Corbevax as a single booster dose for those who have been fully vaccinated with Covishield or Covaxin.

Currently, phase 2/3 clinical trials of the second indigenously developed Corbevax, an RBD protein sub-unit vaccine to be administered in adults aged 18 years to 80 years, is underway and the results are likely to be declared this month.

The company, meanwhile, has put in an application seeking the nod of the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to conduct the phase-3 clinical study of Corbevax as a single booster dose in those fully inoculated with either Covishield or Covaxin.

"Currently there are several literatures indicating the decline in antibodies in the vaccinated individuals, and that several countries have begun or are in the process of administering booster dose to the people who have completed the primary vaccination," it said. "In view of this, we are herewith

Biological E has sought permission from DCGI to conduct the phase-3 clinical trial for its Covid-19 vaccine Corbevax as a single booster dose for those who have been fully vaccinated with Covishield or Covaxin.

submitting the application for grant of NOC to conduct a phase-3 clinical study to evaluate the immunogenicity and safety of Corbevax when administered to COVID-19-negative adult volunteers primed with either Covishield or Covaxin," stated the application submitted to DCGI last week.

The Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on Covid-19 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) is likely to take up the matter in its next meeting. The DCGI in September also granted permission to the Biological E to conduct phase 2/3 clinical trials of the vaccine in children aged between 5 and 18 years with certain conditions. The government last week said that the science relating to

the use of booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines is still evolving and the developments are being closely watched. At a press conference, NITI Aayog Member (Health) Dr V K Paul had said there are several studies that are looking into the subject of booster doses. "This is an evolving science and a paradigm of information...that data is still emerging. We are watching this science very very carefully through our NTAGI system. "We know that Covaxin has done a study on booster doses and those results can be available anytime...We also know that WHO has not given a clear-cut recommendation on the matter...we are watching science as it emanates and in India also, there are studies which are looking at this aspect," he had said. Biological E will supply 30 crore doses of Corbevax to the central government by December, as announced by the Union Health Ministry in June. The Union Health Ministry finalised arrangements with Hyderabad-based vaccine manufacturer to reserve 30 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses, an official statement had said.

Merck's Molnupiravir could be world's first pill against Covid-19: All you need to know



As the World Health Organisation (WHO) urges countries to ensure vaccine equality in poor and low-income nations, a new drug could help ease the fight against Covid-19. Pharmaceutical giant Merck has applied for an emergency use authorisation for its oral medication, a pill that cuts down on hospitalisation and death by about 50 per cent. Dubbed Molnupiravir, the clinical trial for the pill showed that it reduced the risk of hospitalisation or death when given to high-risk people early in their infections. If approved by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) in the US, Merck will be the first pill to get approval amid the vast number of vaccines against the deadly coronavirus.

The pharma giant in a release said that it expects to produce 10 million courses of treatment by the end of 2021, with more doses expected to be produced in 2022. Merck entered into a procurement agreement with the US government earlier this year, under which it will supply approximately 1.7 million courses of molnupiravir following approval.

"Merck has entered into supply and purchase agreements for molnupiravir with other governments worldwide, pending regulatory authorization, and is currently in discussions with other governments," the company said in a statement.

WHAT IS THE MOLNUPIRAVIR PILL?

Molnupiravir is an investigative orally administered form of ribonucleoside that prevents the replication of SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19. Invented at a not for profit biotechnology company, Drug Innovations at Emory (DRIVE), which is part of Emory University in Atlanta, it is being developed by Merck in collaboration with Ridgeback Biotherapeutics. Molnupiravir forces SARS-CoV-2 to try to replicate its genetic material. However, as the process begins, the pill inserts errors into the genetic code. Molnupiravir is also being evaluated for "a global, multicenter, randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled Phase 3 study, which is evaluating its efficacy and safety of molnupiravir in preventing the spread of Covid-19 within households." "With the virus continuing to circulate widely, and because therapeutic options currently available are infused and/or require access to a healthcare facility, antiviral treatments that can be taken at home to keep people with Covid-19 out of the hospital are critically needed," Wendy Holman, chief executive officer of Ridgeback Biotherapeutics said.

HOW LONG IS THE TREATMENT?

People who will take the pill will have to go through a course that includes taking four capsules twice a day for five days. Overall, the course has 40 pills.

Do you listen to your heart when it needs help?

Note: This article was created with valuable inputs from Dr. T. S. Kler, Chairman, Fortis Heart and Vascular Institute, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram

A healthy heart is essential for holistic health because this is the essence of one's spiritual and emotional well-being. However, we often ignore our heart when it needs care and treatment. If reports are to be believed about the burden of heart diseases in India, Cardio Vascular Diseases (CVDs) account for 17.7 million deaths and are the leading cause. The results of the Global Burden of Disease study

state an age-standardized CVD death rate of 272 per 100000 populations in India, which is much higher than that of the global average of 235. 1

What is valvular heart disease?

Commonly called Heart disease, but when any heart valve gets damaged or diseased this is called valvular heart disease. A normal heart has four chambers and four valves. During the heartbeat, a healthy heart valve leaflets fully open and close, but with a diseased valve, it doesn't happen. Any valve can become defective however, it is often seen that the aortic valve gets affected. Most of the deaths occurring

due to valvular heart diseases are caused by aortic valve disease. 2

When does your heart need help?

When you feel fluttering in your chest, irregular heartbeat, rapid weight gain, chest pain, fatigue, shortness of breath, fever, dizziness, and fainting, or near fainting situations all these conditions indicate that your heart needs help. However, when the blood vessels that provide blood and oxygen to the heart muscle become narrow and hard, the condition turns severe and surgery is required. Generally, open-heart surgery is performed to fix such a condition.

Parineeti Chopra to star in Sooraj Barjatya's Uunchai, New film announced on Big B's 79th birthday

Parineeti Chopra took to social media to share her excitement about working with Amitabh Bachchan in her next project, Uunchai, on the veteran actor's 79th birthday (October 11). Directed by Sooraj Barjatya, the film's cast also includes Anupam Kher, Neena Gupta and Boman Irani, among others.



PARINEETI CHOPRA AND BIG B TO STAR IN SOORAJ BARJATYA'S UUNCHAI

Ajay Devgn to Rakul Preet Singh, celebrities wished Amitabh Bachchan on his birthday on Monday, October 11. Parineeti Chopra also wished the megastar with a new film announcement. Titled Uunchai, the film will be directed by Sooraj Barjatya, who is known for family entertainers such as Maine Pyar Kiya and Hum Saath-Saath Hain. Taking to Instagram, Parineeti shared pictures with director Sooraj Barjatya and announced Uunchai. She wrote, "Thrilled and honoured to be a part of the iconic cinematic universe of Sooraj Barjatya sir. Sooraj sir has defined,

and is the torchbearer of India's family entertainers and I can't wait to work under his tutelage; alongside this stellar and incredible cast (sic)."

Parineeti further wished Amitabh Bachchan a happy birthday and introduced the rest of the cast of Uunchai. "Mr. Bachchan,

happy birthday sir!

This is a special day, and a special moment.

@amitabhbachchan .

Especially excited to be working once again with Anupam sir

@anupampkher ,

Boman sir

@boman_irani , and

Neena mam

@neena_gupta . And

for the first time with

Sarika ma'am and

Danny sir. Let this

magical journey begin. #Uunchai

#SoorajBarjatya (sic)," the actress

wrote. AMITABH BACHCHAN'S UP-

COMING FILMS Amitabh

Bachchan has many films lined

up. He was last seen in Chehre

with Emraan Hashmi. Big B's

upcoming films include Ajay

Devgn-starrer MayDay,

Rashmika Mandanna's Goodbye

and Brahmastra with Ranbir

Kapoor and Alia Bhatt. Apart from

these, Amitabh also has The

Great Man, The Intern and

Jhund in the pipeline.



Pooja Hegde on theatres opening up: Some films need you to have an immersive experience



Pooja Hegde, who is currently shooting for her upcoming Tamil film Beast In Chennai, has six other projects in the pipeline. She might have had her last release one-and-a-half years ago, but she has no qualms about it. Currently, she is looking forward to her films that are slated for a big-screen release, and is glad that multiplexes are finally opening up in Maharashtra "with all Covid-19 protocols in place". She believes that the experience of watching a film on the big screen is "magical" and elaborates, "The energy changes when there are so many people watching a film together, laughing at the same joke or crying to the same scene. There are some films that are made for a theatrical experience and need you to have an immersive ex-

The actor, who turns 31 today, says that her birthday is going to be 'a mix of spirituality and fun'; she also lets us in on her recent family trip to Varanasi

perience."

Hegde adds, "In the past one-and-a-half years, people have suffered due to the pandemic and have gone through a lot. I believe cinema has the power to make them forget their stress even if it means for two hours."

Recently, the Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo (2020) actor took time out of her busy schedule and joined her family for a trip to Varanasi where she prayed for the success of her upcoming projects. "As a family, we haven't been able to take a

family trip for a long time. Praying and getting to be a part of the culture of the people in Varanasi was beautiful. The maha aarti was beautiful," she shares. Hegde, who turns 31 today, says that her birthday is going to be a week-long celebration. "A couple of days back, a few of my fans came to meet me with a cake. I also celebrated my birthday with the team of Beast. Dussehra is really big in my house. We'll have a havan to mark the occasion of Ashtami. My birthday is going to be a mix of spirituality and fun," she ends.



Aa raha hoon main, NFTs leke:

Salman Khan announces his crypto plans

After Amitabh Bachchan, the latest Bollywood celebrity to join the bandwagon of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFT) is Salman Khan, who has announced that he will launch a collection for his fans soon. The actor in a tweet said "Aa raha hoon main, NFTs leke. Salman Khan Static NFTs coming on bollycoin.com."

Salman has joined hands with BollyCoin for his NFT collections.

NFTs are unique crypto assets, a digital certificate of authenticity and credibility that you own something collectively known as the blockchain. Non-fungible

tokens (NFTs) can be used for digital assets or goods that are different from each other to prove their worth and rarity. They can represent and provide digital acceptance to everything from virtual games to artworks etc.

According to a whitepaper released by BollyCoin, the digital collectables from the Bollywood industry will be auctioned on the Ethereum blockchain, for Bollywood enthusiasts from around the world to own NFTs of their favourite Bollywood films and celebrities.

"Towards the end of 2020, the crypto market began a new era with the explosion of the

NFT market. Movie stars, famous artists, musicians, businessmen and investment funds have built a large portfolio of NFT tokens," the company said. BollyCoin aims to act as the bridge between the Bollywood industry and this new emerging marketplace. BollyCoin comprises of Atul Agnihotri, Armand Poonawala, Kyle Lopez among others.

The goal of introducing BollyCoin is to provide a convenient and secure mode for Bollywood and Crypto enthusiasts to become a part of our ecosystem. The platform is offering 20 million tokens following a private round at \$0.1 a coin.

With Aisa Waisa Pyaar, experience Quirks of Love in a like-never-before avatar!

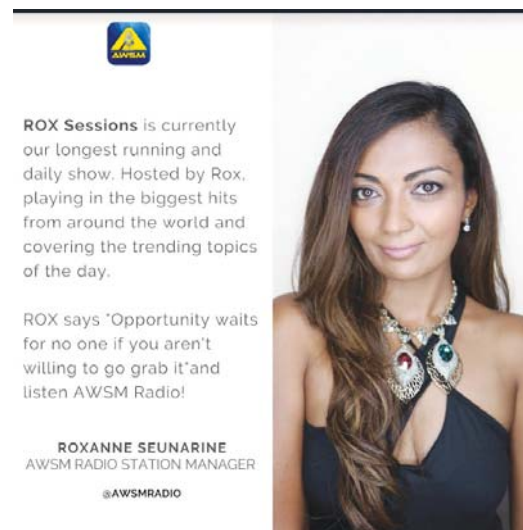


around the theme of romance and dramedy, which will bring a pocketful of joy to everyone. In creative collaboration with the Culture Machine and directed by Ashish Patil, every story in Aisa Waisa Pyaar showcases unique and endearing characters from diverse age groups. Through these sweet little tales, these charming characters,

Eros Now, South Asia's leading streaming entertainment service owned by the Eros STX Global Corporation (NYSE: EROS), a Global Entertainment company, today released the trailer of the most awaited anthology digital series of the year, Aisa Waisa Pyaar starring Saqib Saleem, Nidhi Singh, Prit Kamani, Ahsaas Channa, Adah Sharma, Taaha Shah, Rajit Kapur and Sheeba Chaddha. The anthology explores different shades of love through 4 separate relationship stories crisscrossing each other. All four stories revolve

young and old, portray the quirky yet heart-warming side of relationships and copious idiosyncrasies of love. Commenting on this newest addition to Eros Now, Ridhima Lulla, Chief Content Officer Eros Group, mentioned, "We were searching for a light-hearted love story when we came across Aisa Waisa Pyaar. It is an endearing anthology that explores various aspects of love and what it means to different people. We are sure it will resonate with our viewers and bring a smile to everyone's face."

AWSM Radio Announces Exciting New Look



(By our staff reporter) New York: Tune into America's #1 Digital South Asian Radio Station. AWSM Radio is a digital-only radio station that plays all of today's best music. AWSM Radio not only focuses on mainstream artists, but also gives a platform to various independent artists and a variety of interesting talk shows that entertains, informs and inspires our listeners.

The AWSM Radio website & apps are power-packed with a brand-new design for easier access and a much simpler user interface. One of the awesome features of AWSM radio is that you can play music in the background while you work on our desktop, mobile, or apps. It's your go-to Radio.

As Roxanne Seunarine, AWSM Radio station manager says, 'Opportunity waits for no one if you aren't willing to go grab it' AWSM Radio now features tiles

and an easier menu to browse the site. The 'Listen Now' links are embedded at the top of each page, which means you can listen to our radio while you read the news and other info whilst browsing the site. The website will be updated regularly, and there will be something for everyone on our new and improved site. We welcome everyone to join us and tune in to some kickin' beats.

It is available on any device - including mobile phones, laptops and smart speakers - promises "a brighter mix of great music" along with local information, interviews and a friendly voice. It is available 24/7 as an online stream at awsmradio.com or via the FREE app for both Android and iOS. AWSM Radio is all set to conquer the globe, one ear bud at a time. We always deliver nothing short of the best in music from all over the world, including: pop, urban, bollywood, bhangra

and more from our headquarters in New York City.

The new look represents change. AWSM Radio is changing because the world around is changing - the company has a determination to never stop leading the way in innovation, personality and thought. AWSM Radio is an digital-only radio station that plays today's best music. AWSM Radio focuses on main stream artist, and giving a voice to independent artists along with variety of interesting talk shows that entertain, inspire and inform our audiences.

Listen to AWSM Radio and see why we are the #1 and hottest mainstream South Asian Digital Radio Station from New York. All we do is entertain, inform and inspire our listeners. Simply Awesome! Creator and Founder, Ritesh Parikh

If you would like to learn more, you may email hello@awsmradio.com



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Vol. 20

Issue 34

Friday 15 October to 22 October 2021

\$1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Taiwan tensions raise fears of U.S.-China conflict in Asia

China seeks to bring the strategically and symbolically important island back under its control, and the U.S. sees Taiwan in the context of broader challenges from China.



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See full page advt. on page 24

