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2+2 Talks: India-US Ties Have Come A Long Way, Can Navigate Occasional Speed Bumps



**Full Story
on Page
29**

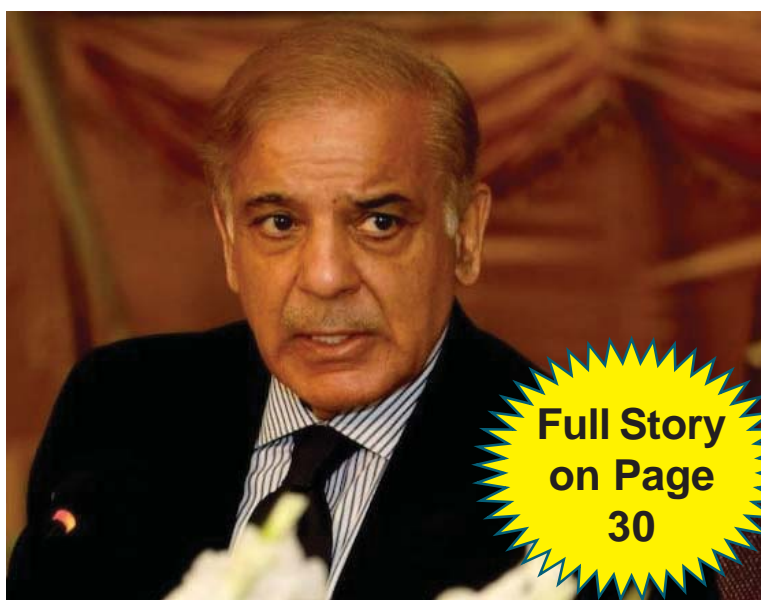
UK inflation rises at the fastest pace in 30 years



(SAI Bureau) Official data shows that the U.K. is facing what economists say will be the biggest drop in living standards since the mid-1950s British consumer prices rose at the fastest pace in 30 years last month, fueled by soaring costs for household energy and motor fuels — the latest grim figures as inflation surges around the world. Inflation in the United Kingdom accelerated to 7% in the 12 months through March, the highest annual rate since March 1992, the Office for

(Contd on page 29)

Pakistan desires peaceful ties with India: Shehbaz Sharif thanks PM Modi for wishes



**Full Story
on Page
30**

Super quake struck Earth 3,800 yrs ago, triggered 9,000km wide tsunami, say scientists

(SAI Bureau) An ancient super earthquake with a magnitude of 9.5 struck the Chilean coast around 3,800 years ago, triggering 9,000 kilometres wide tsunami that was felt all the way across New Zealand, a new study has discovered. The scientists said that the quake, believed to have taken place in northern Chile, was so powerful that it actually uplifted the land structures and sent humans into hiding for 1,000 years, according to Science Alert. Previously, it was believed that the 1960 earthquake in Southern Chile was the largest.

(Contd. on page 30)



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**Full page
Advt.**

on page 37

US Bill Seeks Automatic Work Rights For H-1B Visa Holders' Spouse, Children

US H-4 visas are issued to dependent spouses and children who accompany H-1B, H-2A, H-2B, and H-3 visa holders to the United States



skilled people in their own right and previously had careers of their own or worked to support their families. Introduced by Congresswomen Carolyn Bourdeaux and Maria Elvira Salazar, the H-4 Work Authorization Act seeks to change the current law and grant the spouses of H-1B visa holding immigrants an automatic right to work after receiving their H-4 visa. This would remove the requirement for visa holders to apply for a Form I-765, an Employment Authorisation Document (EAD), they said. "Right now, the spouses of highly-skilled immigrants have to fight through years of bureaucratic red tape before they are allowed to work in the United States," said Bourdeaux. "This bill removes

these needless barriers to ensure families can contribute and prosper together. If we are going to continue to be competitive and attract the greatest minds and talent around the world, we must ensure that the family members of high-value immigrants are able to build a life and career in the United States, just like everyone else," she said. Ms Salazar said this policy will help the United States maximise its entrepreneurial spirit and continue leading in job creation, innovation, research and development, and economic growth by meeting critical labour market needs. Currently, the H-4 visa holders must apply for work authorization and wait for it to be processed before they can work, even though they are already in

the United States and their spouse is working here. Due to backlogs at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), applications for work authorization can take anywhere from six to eight months, with some applications taking over one year to be approved. The bill, which has been endorsed by the National Immigration Forum and UnidosUs, hopes to fill America's labour gap and allow these visa holders to quickly work and provide for their families. It could also help to reduce the backlog of work authorisation applications at USCIS by providing immediate work authorization to H-4 visa holders and reducing the number of work authorizations USCIS must process, a media release said.

(SAI Bureau) Washington: Two American Congresswomen on Thursday introduced a bill in the House of Representatives aimed at granting an automatic right to H-4 visa holders to work in the US. The two lawmakers introduced the legislation saying it is aimed at addressing the labour shortage in the country affecting American businesses and helping immigrant families thrive together. H-4 visas are issued to dependent spouses and children who accompany H-1B, H-2A, H-2B, and H-3 visa holders to the United States. Many H-4 visa holders are highly

"Super-Talented" Vedant Patel "Helps President Every Day": White House

Assistant Press Secretary at the White House from day one of the Biden Administration, Vedant Patel is a graduate from the University of California, Riverside and has earned his MBA from the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business. Born in Gujarat, he was raised in California



(SAI Bureau) Washington: In a rare gesture, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki on Thursday praised her Indian American assistant Vedant Patel, describing him as "super-talented". "I often joke with him (Vedant Patel) that we give him easy assignments. We did not. It's just because he's super talented," Ms Psaki told reporters at her daily news conference in presence of Patel. "Vedant, I'll say about him, he's a beautiful writer. He's a fast writer. I don't know if that means he could be a wire reporter. I think he has a very

promising career in government ahead of him," she said in a rare gesture. She described his contributions as "amazing" for "everything he does to help me, help all of us, help the President every day". Assistant Press Secretary at the White House from day one of the Biden Administration, Vedant Patel is a graduate from the University of California, Riverside and has earned his MBA from the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business. Born in Gujarat, he was raised in California. At the White House, Vedant, 32, is popular among reporters. He

has a desk in the lower press office and handles all media queries related to immigration and climate change. Before joining the administration, he was a senior spokesperson at the Presidential Inauguration Committee and was a regional communications director in the Biden campaign. Vedant Patel started his career as deputy communications director to the former Congressman Mike Honda from December 2012 to November 2015. Thereafter he served as Communications Director for Mike Honda for

Congress from Nov 2015 to January 2017. After that, he served as regional press secretary and director of AAPI Media from April 2017 to November 2018 and was communications director to Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal from November 2018 to April 2019. In an earlier tweet, Vedant Patel had said that he and his family moved to the US in 1991. "We moved here in 1991 & it's because of their (parent's) sacrifices & hard work I'm able to sit here in the White

House working for" the President, he said. Priya Singh was the first Indian American White House Press Assistant from 2009 to 2010 during the Obama Administration. Raj Shah served as the White House Deputy Press Secretary from 2017 to 2019 under the Trump Administration. A few weeks ago, Megha Bhattacharya joined Vedant Patel in the White House press shop. Till recently Sabrina Singh, also from California, was the deputy press secretary to Vice President Kamala Harris.

CAPAC Chair Chu Statement on Confirmation of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court

(SAI Bureau) Washington, D.C. — Yesterday, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson was confirmed by the Senate to the United States Supreme Court by a vote of 53 to 47. CAPAC Chair Rep. Judy Chu (CA-27) issued the following statement: "Congratulations to Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson on her historic confirmation to the Supreme Court! As the first Black woman and first public defender to serve in this role, Justice Jackson embodies the

values of democracy and equality that we hold most dear in America. I have long believed that our country's judicial system should look like the people it serves. When Justice Jackson takes her seat, the Court will, for the very first time, have four women and three people of color serving on the bench. I commend the Biden Administration for this historic confirmation and look forward to seeing Justice Jackson establish her legacy on the bench."



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21-Year-Old Indian Student Shot Dead At Subway Station In Canada

According to reports, the man was killed following a shooting outside the Sherbourne subway station on Thursday evening



(SAI Bureau) New Delhi: A 21-year old Indian student was killed after sustaining multiple gunshot wounds following a shooting at the entrance of a subway station in Canada's Toronto city while he was on his way to work, according to police in Toronto. The victim, identified as Kartik Vasudev, was shot on Thursday evening at the Glen Road entrance to Sherbourne TTC

station in St James Town. Vasudev received medical attention from an off-duty paramedic and was taken to a hospital where he died during treatment, the Toronto Police Service said in a statement. The homicide squad of the Toronto Police Service has taken over the investigation.

Investigators would like to speak to any witnesses that were in the area at the time, as well as any drivers or businesses that have camera footage, the police said. We are shocked & distressed at the unfortunate killing of Indian student Kartik Vasudev in a shooting incident in Toronto

yesterday," the Consulate General of India wrote in a statement posted on Twitter on Friday. "We are in touch with the family and will provide all possible assistance in the early repatriation of mortal remains," it said. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar expressed grief at the killing. "Grieved by this tragic incident. Deepest condolences to the family," Jaishankar tweeted. Vasudev's brother told CP24 news channel he was a student at Seneca College and was taking the subway to his job when he was killed.

He arrived in Canada in January. Seneca College said Vasudev was enrolled in its

marketing management programme. "The Seneca community is saddened to hear of the tragic death of Kartik Vasudev, a first-semester Marketing Management student," a spokesperson said in a statement. Our thoughts are with Mr Vasudev's family, friends and classmates. Counselling support is being made available to students and employees." Police said the suspect in the shooting is a Black male standing five-foot-six to five-foot-seven inches tall with a medium build. He was last seen carrying a handgun walking south on Glen Road toward Howard Street, according to the news channel.

Indian-Origin Cult Leader Jailed For Rape Dies In UK Prison

Aravindan Balakrishnan, known to his followers as Comrade Bala, was sentenced for six counts of indecent assault, four counts of rape and two counts of actual bodily harm back in 2016



(SAI Bureau) London: An Indian-origin man who ran a secretive extremist Maoist cult in London and was sentenced to 23 years in jail by a UK court for a string of sexual assaults six years ago has died in jail. Aravindan Balakrishnan, known to his followers as Comrade Bala, was sentenced for six counts of indecent assault, four counts of rape and two counts of actual bodily harm back in 2016. The 81-year-old found guilty of "brutal" violence died in custody at HMP Dartmoor prison in south-west England on Friday, the UK Prison Service said. The cult leader had been convicted following a jury trial in December 2015, where it emerged that he had kept his daughter in captivity for over 30 years of her life. The daughter described her situation in court as "horrible, dehumanising and degrading". Sentencing Balakrishnan in January 2016, the judge said: "You decided to treat her as a project, not a person. You claimed to do it for her to protect her from the outside world, but you created a cruel environment." Balakrishnan, born in a village of Kerala, lived and grew up in Singapore and Malaysia before moving to the UK in 1963 to study at the London School of Economics. It is there that he met Chanda, whom he married in 1969 at about the time he began his collective. Scotland Yard raided the couple's flat in Brixton, south London, in November 2013 after two followers had called the Palm Cove Society charity seeking help.

Balakrishnan had denied charges of rape and told the jury that he was "the focus of competition" between "jealous" women who made sexual advances at him. The sentencing followed a lengthy investigation into a case which Scotland Yard detectives described as "completely unique". Detective chief superintendent Tom Manson,

from the Metropolitan Police's Organised Crime Command, said at the time: "It seems extraordinary that Balakrishnan could command such control over so many people, however all of the victims have told us in great detail that they very much believed his claims of power and greatness and the threats he made to them. They all described

feelings of fear and being totally controlled him." "All of the women have faced huge challenges in adapting to day-to-day life since they left Balakrishnan's control but with the support of a number of charities and professionals are making exceptional progress and their bravery deserves recognition and praise," he added.

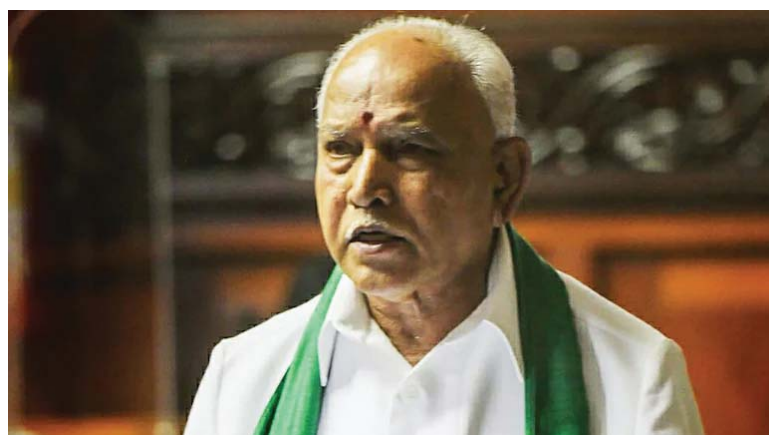
Xiaomi Global Vice President Manu Kumar Jain Summoned by ED in Probe on Firm's Business Practices

(SAI Bureau) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned the global vice president of Chinese mobile manufacturing company Xiaomi, Manu Kumar Jain, for questioning in a probe linked to alleged contravention of the foreign exchange law, officials said on Wednesday. The federal probe agency, according to sources, is investigating the company and its executives under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) linked to foreign remittances worth crores made over the last few years. Jain, the former India head of Xiaomi, has been asked to furnish a number of financial documents linked to the company by appearing in person on Wednesday or by sending it through an authorised representative. Documents related to Xiaomi's shareholding, source of funds, vendor contracts, and payments made to Indian management and sent abroad have been sought by the ED regional office located in Bengaluru from Jain, who supervised its operations in India till recently, they said. A Xiaomi spokesperson said

they were "a law abiding and responsible company", when asked about the ED notice to Jain. "We give paramount importance to the laws of the land. We are fully compliant with all the regulations and are confident of the same. We are cooperating with authorities with their ongoing investigation to ensure they have all the requisite information," the spokesperson said. Proceedings under the FEMA are civil in nature and the final penalty, post adjudication, can be at least three times the amount contravened under the law. Premises of Xiaomi and few other Chinese mobile manufacturing companies were raided across the country by the Income Tax Department in December last year on charges of tax evasion. The government has also banned some smartphone applications owned by Xiaomi on security grounds. Xiaomi has been leading since last several quarters the Indian smartphone market. Despite a dip in smartphone shipments in India, the company secured 22 per cent market share in the fourth quarter of 2021 and maintained its lead.

We have to live together, says former CM Yediyurappa as communal flare-ups rock Karnataka

Amid a series of communal issues that have rocked the state in the past few months, former Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa urged everyone to ensure that such incidents do not repeat as everyone has to live together



"Such tours will continue here...in the first phase we will be travelling in three teams," he added. BJP sources in Delhi said every team will have seven to eight members.

Besides Yediyurappa, national general secretary C T Ravi, former chief ministers Sadanand Gowda and Jagdish Shettar, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, and state ministers Eshwarappa and R Ashok, among others, will be part of the teams, they said. BJP president JP Nadda will also be spending a couple of days in the state. Each of the three teams, which will have ministers, MLAs and other leaders, will visit different regions of the state for the exercise. The team members will be spending at least two days in different areas so as to ensure that the feedback exercise is comprehensive, the sources said. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, during his

visit to the state earlier this month, had set a target of 150 seats (in the 225-member assembly) for Karnataka BJP leaders for the 2023 elections.

Amid the recent flare-up in communal issues in the state, the BJP central leadership has also asked leaders of its Karnataka unit and ministers to bring the developmental agenda to the fore and showcase the achievements of the government in view of the polls, sources said.

Stating that Hindus and Muslims should lead their lives as children of one mother, Yediyurappa, in response to a question, asserted that the chief minister has said the government will not tolerate such (flare-up in communal issues) things and has warned mischief-makers, who try to disturb peace, of stern action. "We have to live together and see to it that such incidents don't repeat here...let's stop all these and do our jobs. Muslims also

should lead a peaceful and respectful life," he added.

There have been a series of communal issues that have rocked the state in the past few months.

It started with the hijab row followed by calls to ban Muslim traders from Hindu religious fairs, and then a campaign to boycott halal meat and shutting down of loudspeakers at mosques.

Hitting out at Congress leaders for protesting against price rise, Yediyurappa said as the chief minister has also stated, the price rise is nothing compared to the surge that was during the Congress' tenure and the opposition party was indulging in such things, as they don't have any other issues. "...we all will have to work together for the development of the State. Siddaramaiah and D K Shivakumar (Congress leaders) should not cause confusion on such issues," he said.

(Staff Reporter) The BJP has formed three teams, led by senior leaders to travel across Karnataka from Tuesday, to prepare the ground for the state assembly elections next year, party strongman and former chief minister B S Yediyurappa said on Monday.

Making an appeal to end the flare-up of communal issues in the state, he said Hindus and Muslims should lead their lives as "children of one mother." "From April 12 to 24, in three

teams, we will be travelling across the state. BJP state president Nalin Kumar Kateel will be in the first team, our national general secretary (Arun Singh) and I will be together in the second team and Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai will be in the third team," Yediyurappa said. Talking to reporters here, he said this tour is aimed at strengthening the party, holding discussions with party workers for drawing up strategies and preparing for the polls.

Rajnath Singh, US counterpart Lloyd Austin review defence cooperation, regional security

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held bilateral talks with his US counterpart Lloyd Austin on Monday. They also discussed bilateral defence cooperation and the regional security situation

(Staff Reporter) Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, along with Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar and a high-level delegation, on Monday held a meeting with Secretary of Defence of the United States Lloyd Austin, accompanied by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other senior officials in Pentagon.

"Had a wonderful meeting with the US @SecDef, Mr Lloyd Austin at the Pentagon today. We reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral defence cooperation and the regional security situation," Rajnath Singh tweeted. The two defence ministers reviewed the entire

gamut of bilateral defence cooperation and the regional security situation, read a statement from the Ministry of Defence. Both ministers acknowledged the salience of India-US defence partnership for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and broader Indian Ocean Region. They discussed ways to deepen Major Defence Partnership (MDP) and to work together to advance quality and scope in bilateral defence cooperation, according to the statement.

They reviewed military-to-military engagements, information sharing, enhanced logistics cooperation, and ability of the Armed Forces to cooperate closely under compatible



communication arrangements. In this context, closer cooperation of Special Operation Forces came up prominently. The two ministers also discussed ways for closer collaboration between Defence Industries.

Rajnath Singh also underlined the need for co-development and co-production between India and US companies and invited US companies to India for manufacturing and maintenance of defence equipment.

Deoghar ropeway accident Man falls from IAF chopper during rescue operation, dies



(Staff Reporter) A video of the rescue operations from the Jharkhand's Deoghar ropeway accident has emerged, in which a man can be seen falling off an Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopter. Amid ongoing rescue operations in the Deoghar district of Jharkhand, where 15 people are still stuck after some cable cars in a ropeway collided with each other, a video has emerged in which a man can be seen falling off an Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopter. In the video, the man can be seen clutching the rope dangling from the chopper. However, just as he is about to

be pulled in, he slips and falls to his death. On Monday, three people were killed and several others were injured when two cable cars on a ropeway collided near the Baba Baidyanath Temple in Jharkhand's Deoghar district. Expressing sorrow over the incident, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren said rescue and relief operations are being conducted on war footing. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is closely monitoring the situation and has spoken with Home Minister Amit Shah about the rescue efforts.

India designates Pakistani national as terrorist for involvement in Pulwama attack

Mohiuddin Aurangzeb Alamgir, designated as a terrorist by the Indian government, had been involved in anti-India terror activities on behalf of JeM



The notification added, "He has been involved in anti-India terror activities on behalf of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and looks after the outfit's fund collection activities from Pakistani nationals and routing the fund to Kashmir." Alamgir, the 33rd person declared a terrorist by the Indian government, has been involved in facilitating infiltration of Afghan cadres and coordinating terror attacks on Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir. "Taking into account all his activities, Alamgir has been notified as a terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act," the ministry said. On Friday, the government had designated Hafiz Talha Saeed, a key leader of the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the son of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed, a terrorist.

(Staff Reporter) The government has designated Pakistani national Mohiuddin Aurangzeb Alamgir as a terrorist for his alleged involvement in the terror attack on a CRPF bus in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019. On February 14, 2019, 40 CRPF officers were killed in an attack. Almost 15

days later, India carried out an air strike on terrorist camps inside Pakistan as a response. The Union Home Ministry in a notification said, "Alamgir, 39, who used aliases Maktab Ameer, Mujahid Bhai and Muhammad Bhai, has been involved in the attack on the CRPF convoy in Pulwama," the notification read.

ED's adjudicating authority gives confirmation for attached properties of Anil Deshmukh

(Staff Reporter) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) recently received confirmation from the adjudicating authority on the attachment of properties made in the case against former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh. The confirmation order was regarding the attachment of assets made by the ED officials in the money laundering case against Deshmukh, which was filed by the agency in the month of July last year. After the confirmation, ED officials can now move court seeking evacuation of the said properties and take them under the agency's control.

ED officials had provisionally attached a flat located in Worli in the name of Aarti Deshmukh, the wife of Anil Deshmukh, and twenty five land parcels in Uran belonging to the company Premier Portlinks Pvt Ltd. The flat located in Worli valued at Rs 1.54 crores was purchased by the Deshmukh family by paying the entire

amount allegedly in cash in 2004. The registration of the flat allegedly only happened in the year 2020 after Deshmukh became the Home Minister. ED officials also alleged that the Deshmukh family had acquired 50 per cent ownership in the company Premier Port Links Pvt Ltd, acquiring its assets which included land parcels and shops, by allegedly paying Rs 17.95 lakh, a payment which reportedly was made after a long time. The book value of the assets was approximately Rs 5.34 crore. The former minister and NCP leader was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in November last year in connection with a money laundering case. Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh, in his letter written to CM Uddhav Thackeray, alleged that Deshmukh, then home minister, had given a target to police officers to collect Rs 100 crore per month from restaurants and bars in the city.



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Protest outside Sharad Pawar's residence: Police custody of arrested lawyer extended till April 13

Advocate Gunratna Sadavarte was arrested in connection with the MSRTC staffers' protest outside Sharad Pawar's residence on April 8. His police custody has been extended till April 13

(Staff Reporter) Girgaon court has extended the custody of advocate Gunratna Sadavarte till April 13 in connection with a protest by Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) employees outside the residence of NCP chief Sharad Pawar on April 8.

Gamdevi police asked for further custody of Sadavarte on the grounds that some incriminating evidence has been recovered, pointing towards conspiracy before the protest.

Police had asked for 11 days of custody for Sadavarte and four others who have been arrested in the case. Public Prosecutor Pradeep Gharat said, "Other than Sadavarte, 110 more people were arrested who are in judicial custody. Of these, custody of four accused, identified as Mohd Tajuddin Shaikh, Krushnath Kore, Savita Pawar and Abhishek Patil, has been sought.



Patil is the person who showed Pawar's residence to protestors. There is one wanted accused in the case, Chandrakant Suryavanshi of MJT Marathi YouTube channel. He was a part of the conspiracy." According to Gharat, Sadavarte had given

information to the media about the plan of protest. A text message was received by Sadavarte that read "patrakaar pathva". The police are looking for details of how the protest was funded. Sadavarte said that he did not take fees from MSRTC

workers. But Rs 550 was collected from each employee, amounting to Rs 1.80 crore. Gharat told the court that Sadavarte deleted data from his phone before March 31. "This shows a guilty mind. A WhatsApp message from

another accused, Mohd Tajuddin Shaikh, has been recovered, in which a banner was retrieved that said "Savdhaan Sharad Pawar". Defence lawyer Girish Kulkarni said, "They know I am a service provider. Where are we heading in this country? It's the prosecution's case that Rs 1.80 crore was collected from workers. Let's assume I took that money. But those who paid for advocates' fees, are they complaining? Let's show sympathy to the people who have suffered and died. Police are arresting them rather than finding a solution. No damage happened there, while the police called it a heinous offence. The investigation can still continue even if I am in or out." Satara city police have given a production warrant for Sadavarte in another case. It will be heard on April 13. The arguments of four other accused, who are in judicial custody, will be heard on Tuesday.

Ukraine situation worrying, we ensured steady supply of aid: PM Modi at virtual meet with Joe Biden

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there has been some disquiet in Washington over India's position on the Ukraine crisis as well as its decision to procure discounted Russian oil



(Staff Reporter) India placed importance on the safety of the civilian population in Ukraine and the uninterrupted supply of humanitarian aid to them, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said during his virtual meeting with US President Joe Biden. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there has been some disquiet in Washington over India's position on the Ukraine crisis as well as its decision to procure discounted Russian oil.

"Our talks today are taking place at a time when the situation in

Ukraine remains very worrying," PM Modi said.

"Till a few weeks ago, over 20,000 Indians were stranded in Ukraine. And most of these were young students."

"Recently the news of killings of innocent civilians in Bucha was very worrying. We immediately condemned it and demanded a fair investigation. We hope that the ongoing talks between Russia and Ukraine will pave the way for peace," the PM said. Horrifying visuals and images emerged from Ukraine's Bucha, which showed

hundreds of bodies strewn on the city streets. The reports prompted international condemnation of Russia's military action in the city that has been reduced to dust and debris.

Elaborating further on India's reaction to the war, PM Modi said, "I spoke on the phone several times with the Presidents of both Ukraine and Russia. Not only did I appeal for peace, but I also suggested President Putin hold direct talks with the President of Ukraine. The subject of Ukraine has also been discussed in great detail in our Parliament." "We have also placed importance on the safety of the civilian population in Ukraine and the uninterrupted supply of humanitarian aid to them. On our behalf, we have sent medicines and other relief materials to Ukraine and its neighboring countries. And on the demand of Ukraine, we are sending another consignment of medicines very soon." "When I came to Washington in

September last year, you said that India-US partnership can contribute to the solution to many global problems. I completely agree with you. As the world's two largest and oldest democracies, we are natural partners," the prime minister said, hinting at the growing roles of the two countries in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. "You gave a very important slogan at the very beginning of your tenure - 'Democracies can deliver'. The success of the India-US partnership is the best way to make this slogan meaningful," PM Modi stressed. The two leaders had last interacted in March when they were joined by other Quad leaders, Australia and Japan. On Sunday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), while announcing the meeting, said that it will "enable both sides to continue their regular and high-level engagement aimed at further strengthening the bilateral

comprehensive global strategic partnership". "The two leaders will review ongoing bilateral cooperation and exchange views on recent developments in South Asia and global issues of mutual interest," said MEA in a statement.

WHITE HOUSE ON BIDEN-MODI MEET The White House said that US President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed the "destabilising impacts" of Russia's war against Ukraine, with a particular focus on global food supply. In a readout of the virtual call between the two leaders, the White House said that the call lasted for about an hour. Biden and Modi spoke to inaugurate the fourth US-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, the readout said. "Together, they committed to strengthening the US-India relationship through cooperation on clean energy, technology and military cooperation, and expanded economic and people-to-people ties," the readout said.

PM Modi to receive inaugural Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award

The Mangeshkar family on Monday announced that PM Modi will be honoured with the inaugural Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award on April 24



(Staff Reporter) Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be honoured with the inaugural Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award, the Mangeshkar family announced on Monday. The prime minister will receive the award — Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Puraskar — on April 24 which marks the

80th death anniversary of Master Deenanath Mangeshkar, the singing legend's father. In a statement, the family and the Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Smruti Pratishthan charitable trust said they have decided to institute the award from this year in the honour and memory of Lata

Mangeshkar, who passed away in February following multiple organ failure. She was 92. PM Modi had attended her funeral in Mumbai to pay his last respects to the legendary singer, whom he regarded as his elder sister. The Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Puraskar will be given every year

to only one individual who has made path-breaking, spectacular and exemplary contributions to the nation, its people and society.

"We are pleased and honoured to announce that the first awardee is none other than the honourable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi," the statement read. Modi will be honoured with the award at the upcoming Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Awards ceremony. The Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Awards aim to honour legends from the field of music, drama, art, medical and social work. Veteran actors Asha Parekh and Jackie Shroff will receive the Master Deenanath Puraskar (special honour) for their "dedicated services in the field of cinema", the Mangeshkar family further said in the statement. Rahul Deshpande will receive the Master Deenanath Puraskar for Indian music, while the best drama award will go to the play, "Sanjay

Chaya". Master Deenanath Puraskar (Anandmayee Puraskar) will be given to Nutan Mumbai tiffin box suppliers charity trust for its "dedicated services in the field of social service". "In memory of Master Deenanathji, whose monumental contributions as singer, musician and stage artiste have been an inspiration to the people of Maharashtra and India, the Mangeshkar family organises the Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Smruti Pratishthan Awards to honour legends. We are glad that we have the love and support of the masses," veteran musicians Hridaynath Mangeshkar and Usha Mangeshkar said in a joint statement. The award ceremony will also host a music programme "Swarlatanajali", conducted by renowned singer Roopkumar Rathod, which will be a tribute to the "immortal melodies and memories of our beloved Lata didi", the statement further said.

Security tightened in 3 districts of Gujarat following communal clashes on Ram Navami



(Staff Reporter) Ram Navami celebrations in Gujarat took a violent turn on Sunday after communal clashes were reported in three districts, leaving one person dead and many injured. Security has been tightened in all three districts and situation remains under control. Several units of Gujarat Police, Special Reserve Police (SRP) and Rapid Action Force (RAF) have been deployed in three districts of Gujarat after communal clashes during Ram Navami celebrations.

We are holding meetings with religious heads from different communities, the police said, adding that CCTV footage was key to the case as most of the miscreants could

be identified and sequence of events could be established. On Sunday, Gujarat witnessed clashes between two communities in Himatnagar, Sabarkantha, Khambhat, Anand and Dwarka. According to IG Abhay Chudasama, the situation in Himatnagar in Sabarkantha district remains under control. A total of three FIRs have been registered in relation to clashes. He said, "The situation is under control now. Over 30 people have been detained till now. We have a lot of CCTV footage. Several teams of police are investigating the matter to nab the culprits. One FIR has been registered for attack on cops, the second FIR for attacking religious places and the third for arson. We are

having meetings with community leaders as well. We suspect that these were pre-planned riots but we are investigating from all angles but nothing has been found as of now. The organisers were given permission for Yatra but if they have not followed any rules and designated routes we will investigate the matter. In all the three FIRs, police is the complainant. Over 10 police officers were injured in the

clashes." In Anand district, Khambhat town, there was a procession organised on the occasion of Ram Navami. Again, there are allegations that stone pelting happened during the procession after which the riots started. In Khambhat, a person died in the incident. He was identified as Kanhaiyalal Rana, a construction worker.

On Monday, police imposed prohibitory orders after hundreds gathered during the procession of Rana's mortal

remains to cremation ground.

Meanwhile, in Dwarka, a video went viral on social media showing a saffron flag being burnt down by miscreants, which resulted in clashes between two communities. A high-level meeting was called by Home Minister Harsh Sanghavi with DGP and several SP level officers. The officials said that the situation is now under control and asked residents not to believe rumours.

3 LeT terrorists arrested in J&K's Sopore

The security forces arrested three terrorists, affiliated to the Lashkar-e-Taiba terror outfit, in Jammu and Kashmir's Sopore

(Staff Reporter) As many as three Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists were arrested in Sopore town of Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir. These terrorists were likely to carry out attack on security forces. Based on specific information regarding the movement of three suspected individuals from Wadoora Bala to Sonarwain Bridge, a joint naka was established by 22 RR, Sopore Police, and 179 Bn CRPF near the village of Wadoora Bala. While checking at the naka, it was observed that three persons were moving towards it in suspicious conditions. The naka party observed their suspicious body language and subsequently asked them to stop.

However, suspected individuals tried to flee from the spot, taking cover of darkness but were nabbed by alert and vigilant troops.

The troops assessed the situation and displayed extreme restraint and did not open fire, keeping in mind the darkness and to avoid any civilian casualties. The arrested terrorists are identified as Tufail Ahmad, Owais Ahmad and Shabir Ahmad. Around three pistols, three magazines, 22 rounds of pistols, one grenade and Rs 79,800 cash were recovered from their possession. A case has been registered at police station in Bomai under relevant sections and further investigation is underway.

JNU violence: AISA-affiliated students protest near PHQ, Tughlaq Road police stations; 70 detained

At least 70 protesters were detained and taken to Mandir Marg and Tughlaq Road police stations, a senior police officer said

(News Agency) Hundreds of JNU students affiliated to AISA staged protests at Delhi Police headquarters and Tughlaq Road police station on Monday, demanding the arrest of ABVP activists for their alleged role in the violence at the university which left several injured. A senior police officer said 70 protesters were detained and taken to Mandir Marg and Tughlaq Road police stations. They were released later. In the evening, students staged a dharna outside Tughlaq Road police station and called it off only after those detained were released.

"Among those detained, 48 were male and the remaining 22 were female protestors. All of them have been released. A case has been registered against them under appropriate sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)," a senior police officer said. Members of the Left-controlled All India Students' Association (AISA) said they will hold a protest again on Tuesday. However, they did not reveal the protest venue. Two groups had clashed at the Jawaharlal Nehru University's Kaveri Hostel here on Sunday allegedly over serving of non-vegetarian food in the mess on Ram Navami. Police said they have received 20 medicolegal cases of students who were injured in the incident.

AISA activist Neha alleged that women protesters were manhandled by security personnel during the protest. "Women protesters were manhandled and their clothes were pulled by male security personnel. Several protesters were injured. We have been detained inside the Tughlaq Road police station," she said. A senior police officer denied the allegations. "We have detained them because they were trying to protest near the police headquarters at Jai Singh Marg. They were detained before they could reach the spot and taken



to Tughlaq Road police station. "Another group of protesters, who came later, have also been detained and taken to Mandir Marg police station," the officer said. AISA president Sai Balaji said the protest will continue. "Our protest is going to continue. People who attacked the students are repeat offenders and so is the JNU administration."

"Protest at the PHQ (police headquarters) was to ensure accountability of the Delhi Police and ensure that justice happens." The Delhi Police on Monday registered an FIR

against unidentified members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) based on the complaint received from a group of students in connection with the clash in JNU. Anagha Pradeep, JNUSU councillor, said, "In this university, the ABVP and the RSS orchestrated a big incident again and unleashed violence in the name of food. All the 16 hostels in JNU serve both non-vegetarian and vegetarian food." Recalling the sequence of events on Sunday, she said when the

vendor came to supply meat to Kaveri Hostel, the ABVP activists tried to attack him and heckle him. "He was told that he won't be spared and was asked to leave the campus. They said non-vegetarian food will not be prepared here. The mess committee members, who were present there, were also attacked and heckled," she alleged. After that, students went to the warden to ask him to ensure that the Kaveri Hostel residents are provided food since an insufficient amount had been prepared owing to the diktat on

non-vegetarian food. "The vegetarian food was only sufficient for less than 100 people and there are about 400 students who stay in Kaveri Hostel. It was necessary to ensure that food was available for all the residents of Kaveri," Pradeep said. While students were talking to the warden, ABVP activists arrived there and attacked several students, she alleged. "Water coolers were thrown at students. Guards and the warden were not doing anything. The phones of some of the students, who were making videos, were snatched and broken by the ABVP members. "As soon as we stepped out of the mess, they started pelting stones. They used wipers, flower pots and whatever they could lay their hands on. Many students sustained injuries. They are spreading lies that we thrashed them. Nothing of that sort happened. We have evidence to prove their claims wrong," she said. Pradeep alleged that even in the presence of police, the ABVP tried to attack students. "All this happened in front of the Delhi Police and yet there have been no arrests in the matter," she said.

Delhi riots case: Court rejects bail plea of Sharjeel Imam

The Delhi court dismissed the bail petition filed by Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 North-east Delhi riots case on Monday

(News Agency) A Delhi court on Monday dismissed the bail plea filed by Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 North-east Delhi riots larger conspiracy case where he and several others have been accused under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The former JNU student has been accused of making inflammatory speeches against the government on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and National Register of Citizens (NRC), particularly at Jamia Millia

Islamia University in December 2019, which led to violence in the area outside the university. In April 2020,

Sharjeel Imam was charged with sedition, as Delhi Police alleged that



his speech promoted enmity between people that led to riots in the Jamia Millia Islamia University area. Imam's

Advocate, in the court, said that the accused has never advocated for any violence and that the allegations made against the accused are 'false and imaginary.' Meanwhile, the Delhi court had also rejected the bail plea filed by activist Khalid Saifi, one of the co-accused in the North-east Delhi riots larger conspiracy case, last week. Communal clashes had broken out in Northeast Delhi in February 2020 after violence between the Citizenship (Amendment) Act supporters and its protesters spiraled out of control.

Tourism in Kashmir breaks all records as 3,40,000 visitors throng valley in 3 months

(News Agency) Kashmir Valley has broken all the previous records of tourist arrivals in the last three months. The valley saw more than 3,40,000 tourist arrivals in the months of January, February and March. The March month saw the maximum tourist arrivals of 1,80,000 tourists. After years, such a huge number of tourist arrivals have been witnessed in the Kashmir Valley. The tourist rush pushed the government to increase the number of flights running at Srinagar Airport. Around 92 flights operate daily from Srinagar airport with the passengers numbering around 15,000.

In the last seven days of April, 58,000 tourists have come to the valley. The Tulip Garden was opened in the last week of March and on April 2, more than 50,000 people thronged the garden. "We had around 60,000 tourists coming in the month of January. In February, it went up to 1,00,000 and in March, we had a record-breaking number of 1,80,000 tourists coming to this place. In the last 7 days of April, we have already had 58,000 tourist arrivals. Around 8,000 arrivals are happening per day. So, in the last three months, it has crossed the 3,00,000 number. It's very encouraging to see our efforts yielding results. We expect more tourists to come in future," said Ahsan Ul Haq, Deputy Director, Tourism. Around 3,00,000 tourists have visited the Tulip Garden so far. The government says looking at the figures, it seems all the previous records of people thronging the garden will be broken. The travel agents in the valley say that all five- and four-star hotels and properties are fully booked for next two months. Even the mid-range hotels are booked till June.

"Tulip Garden was opened recently, and we have had a good season. It started from January and continued through February. All our hotels and houseboats are completely booked, and bookings have been made for the next two months. Kashmir is



completely sold out. We have a good flow of tourists now and till June, everything in the valley is booked and we are sure all previous records will be broken," said Waseem Gousani, travel agent. Spring is one of the most beautiful times to visit the valley. The Jammu and Kashmir tourism department organised many spring festivals to attract more and more tourists and prolong the spring season. This year, the department hasn't confined the spring season only for tulips but other gardens as well. The

tourists from across the country are enjoying these beautiful gardens and hill stations of the Kashmir Valley.

"It's very nice and different. People scare you a lot but it's very safe because of the Indian army. It's very secure, I can see a lot of tourists coming here. It's fun. I found a lot of people in Gulmarg. Post covid tourism has increased everywhere. I want to tell everyone to pack your bag and come," said Sheryl Louis, a tourist.

The tourists present in the valley said that they are happy to see

Kashmir tourism flourishing after so many years. "It's a beautiful place and I wish many people would come here. It's really a paradise and we only used to see this on TV and Bollywood films. It's worth visiting and experiencing it yourself. It will help local people and they will earn their livelihood. Locals will get a lot of business. Due to covid, they must have lost a lot of business and now, they are recovering. It's like nature is calling us. We have seen people from across India visiting here. We are happy

over here and it was fun," said Asumita Louis, another tourist. "It's a dream come true and it's very beautiful. There was no fear. Every place here is beautiful. There is so much tourist rush, we had to be in a queue at Gondola Gulmarg for more than one and a half hours. We went to Pahalgam and Gulmarg. Everyone needs to come here and experience this," said Jyoti Mehrotra, another tourist.

The tourist inflow has surprised all the officials, who work with the tourism department. Officials working at the gardens of Srinagar say that they have never seen such a rush.

"This year, all records have been broken. Last Saturday, we saw a huge number of tourists, around 10,000 people visited us that day. Due to Ramadan, we can see locals aren't coming in huge numbers but tourists in huge numbers are still coming. Everyday around 3,000 tourists come to this garden," said Khurshid Ahmad, official, Nishat Garden.

The government hopes, the numbers will increase more in the coming months.

AAP dissolves all units in Himachal Pradesh

(News Agency) The Aam Aadmi Party has dissolved all of its units in Himachal Pradesh after state Mahila Morcha chief and other office bearers resigned from the party on Monday. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday dissolved its all units in Himachal Pradesh after the state Mahila Morcha chief and other office bearers resigned from the party. AAP's state Mahila Morcha chief Mamta Thakur and other office-bearers joined the Bharatiya Janata Party in Delhi today.

Along with Mamta Thakur, state Mahila Morcha vice-president Sangeeta, vice-president of the social media wing Ashish Kumar and state president of the industry wing DK Tyagi also joined the BJP. Earlier on April 8, its state unit president Anup Kesari, organisational general



secretary Satish Thakur and Una district chief Iqbal Singh had joined the saffron party. Himachal Pradesh's state election in-charge and Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that the AAP state working committee had been dissolved. "Himachal

Pradesh's Aam Aadmi Party state working committee has been dissolved. The new state working committee will be reorganized soon," said Satyendar Jain in a tweet. The resignations came after AAP national convener and Delhi CM Arvind

Kejriwal and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann held a roadshow in the state last week. After winning Punjab, the AAP is now eyeing elections in Himachal Pradesh. Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh are scheduled to take place in December this year.

Jammu and Kashmir: Police to seize property of those harbouring terrorists

(News Agency) Jammu and Kashmir Police has decided to seize the properties of those people who are involved in providing shelter to the terrorists. The police will attach immovable properties used for terror activities under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

The attachments being done are for properties where it has been proved beyond doubt that the house owner or member had wilfully provided shelter/harboured terrorists, in most cases for days together and that it was not done under any duress whatsoever.

"We will seize all the properties of the people, wherever there is an encounter, or is being used as a hideout or are

harbouring the terrorists, their property will be seized,"

said Vijay Kumar,

IG Kashmir

Police. Legal

action will be

supplemented by

property

attachments as

per sections 2(g)

& 25 of the ULP

Act. The police

has said that

decision regarding enforcement of these

sections of law is due to the fact that

many supporters of terrorism are wilfully

providing safe havens to terrorists who

conduct attacks on civilians and



security forces in Srinagar City. In a

recent encounter

that took place in

Srinagar's

Bishamber Nagar,

JK Police said that

they will seize the

property of the

owner in whose

house the terrorists

were hiding. "Yes,

we will seize the

property in today's

encounter," said Vijay Kumar, IG

Kashmir Police. The Jammu and

Kashmir Police has also said that if

there is a 'forceful entry' of terrorists into

any house or other structure, the house

owner or any other member claiming

duress should timely inform the

authorities about the same, as many

provisions for hiding identity of such

informant are available under law.

However, the politicians in the valley

have criticised the step taken by the

JK Police. Former Chief Minister of

Jammu and Kashmir, Mehbooba Mufti

has called the step completely wrong.

"It's completely wrong. This is like

punishing the whole community. If you

have to fight the militants, fight them

but what's with punishing the locals for

it," said Mehbooba Mufti, Former Chief

Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. The

Jammu and Kashmir Police has said that

there will be zero tolerance towards terror.

'India desires peace and stability': PM Modi congratulates newly elected Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif

(News Agency) Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has congratulated Shehbaz Sharif, who has taken oath as the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Monday (April 11). Taking to his Twitter handle, PM Modi wrote, "Congratulations to H. E. Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan." "India desires peace and stability in a region free of terror, so that we can focus on our development challenges and ensure the well-being and prosperity of our people," PM Modi added. Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Shehbaz Sharif takes oath as the newly-elected Prime Minister of Pakistan. In his maiden address as

PM, Shehbaz Sharif talked about a range of issues, including Kashmir. He said that he wants good relations with India, but it can't be achieved without the resolution of the Kashmir issue. He raised the issue of abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir and claimed that people in Pakistan will provide them with "diplomatic and moral support" besides raising the matter at every international forum. Shehbaz also asked Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to come forward to address the Kashmir issue so that the two countries could concentrate on tackling poverty, unemployment, shortage of medicines and other issues on the two sides of the border.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurates Indo-Pak border viewing point in Gujarat

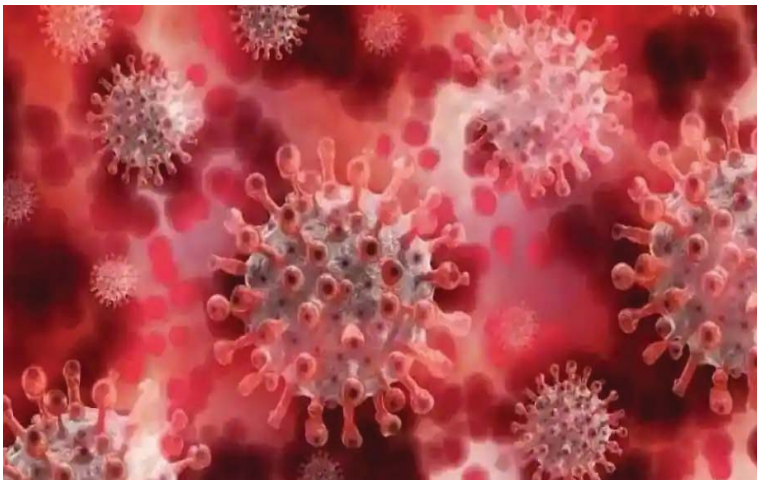


(News Agency) Union Home minister Amit Shah on Sunday inaugurated the Indo-Pak border viewing point in Nada Bet in Gujarat's Banaskantha district. The viewing point has been built on the lines of the Wagah-Atari border of Punjab. Nada Bet, as per the Gujarat Tourism website, is a small slice of land jutting into a sprawling lake, where the "Seema Darshan (border viewing) for tourists is organised." It offers an opportunity for travellers to see the workings of an army post on the border of India. Some of the activities and sights that will interest the traveller include the retreat ceremony against the backdrop of a glorious orange sunset where the Border Security Force (BSF) jawans put up a gallant show of marching with pride to end another day of guarding the borders," the website stated.

It further added that a

weapon display and photo gallery at Nada Bet includes guns, tanks and other sophisticated devices that help in keeping the border and inland places secure. As an ode to the camels and to showcase their expertise and discipline, a camel show is presented for the visitors. Before the inauguration, Shah, along with Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, offered prayer at the Nadeshwari Mata Temple in Banaskantha on Sunday. Later in the day, Shah will participate in the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India Limited in Gandhinagar. The Union Minister will also inaugurate Gujarat State Co-Operative Marketing Federation, GUJCOMASOL's office at Gandhinagar. In the evening today, he will launch Adarsh Sahakari Gram programme at Ahmedabad.

Omicron variant XE found in Gujarat, claims report



(News Agency) Reports claim the Omicron variant XE has been found in Gujarat, however, it hasn't been confirmed. Earlier, reports claimed the XE variant was found in Mumbai however the government denied the presence of Omicron's XE recombinant

variant. Mumbai's civic authorities had claimed earlier that they had found one case of Omicron's new sub-variant XE. A woman was reportedly detected with the new recombinant variant. However, the government said the "variant does not correlate with the genomic

picture of the XE variant". According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) the Covid hybrid Omicron XE is a recombinant strain. It is a mutant hybrid of Omicron variants - BA.1 and BA.2. The WHO had informed that it was first detected in UK with 600 sequences reportedly being detected. According to UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the most number of XE related cases were reported from east England including London. Reports say the XE and XF recombinant have been found in England and XD has been found in France. The UK agency said it was currently monitoring the three recombinant lineages namely: XD, XE and XF.

He will resign even if...: Karnataka minister on KS Eshwarappa

Karnataka Home Minister Araga Jnanendra said that minister KS Eshwarappa had agreed to resign. Minister Eshwarappa was charged with abetment of suicide after Udupi contractor Santosh Patil killed himself on Monday



abetment of suicide after Udupi contractor Santosh Patil killed himself on Monday. Santosh had recorded a WhatsApp message saying he was taking the extreme step and that minister Eshwarappa was responsible for it. Karnataka's home minister, in a statement, said, "I have asked him and he said that he will be resigning, even if he has not done anything wrong. Let the enquiry happen directly for the sake of the government, so he is tendering his resignation."

However, initially, Eshwarappa had maintained that he was being targeted and the allegations against him were false. He said, "I have not seen him or met him before." He had further said that he would not be tendering his resignation.

ESHWARAPPA DECIDES TO RESIGN

However, KS Eshwarappa decided to resign from the cabinet on Thursday evening. Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said that KS Eshwarappa had assured him of

having no role in civil contractor Santosh Patil's suicide. "He felt that the party could be uncomfortable and decided to quit on moral grounds. Let the investigation take its course. He said he would come out clean. There is no pressure from the party high command," Bommai said. Karnataka MLA and BJP leader BS Yediyurappa said that the case would be investigated in two or three months and that Eshwarappa would be included in the cabinet when he is found not guilty.

(News Agency) Karnataka's Home Minister Araga Jnanendra said that minister KS Eshwarappa was charged with

Eshwarappa will be issuing his resignation. Minister

Elgar Parishad case: Umar Khalid denies CPI(M) links, says not sure why his name appears in cadres' letters

National Investigation Agency officials have said that Umar Khalid, an accused in the Elgar Parishad case, has links with CPI(M), which the latter has denied. Umar Khalid also said he doesn't know why his name is present in letters exchanged between CPI(M) comrades

(News Agency) The National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is investigating the 2018 Elgar Parishad case in Pune, had recently submitted some additional documents in the case before the special court in Mumbai. These documents are some additional evidence in the form of statements mainly that have been recorded by the agency of witnesses.

One such witness whose statement was recorded by the agency on February 12, 2021, in Tihar Jail in Delhi was Umar Khalid. Khalid, in his statement,

has said that he knew Rona Willson, Arun Farerra, and had seen Hany Babu and Gautam Navlakha, all of whom were undertrials in the Elgar Parishad case. The NIA officials showed two letters to Khalid, which are part of the evidence against the accused in the Elgar Parishad case. One letter was written by a "Comrade M to Comrade Rona" on January 2, 2018. Khalid stated that he had already seen it in the media and that he didn't know anything regarding why his name is mentioned in this letter." The second letter which was shown

to him was written by an "R to Comrade Prakash" on December 23, 2017. About this letter, Khalid stated that he had seen it for the first time and he added, "I don't have any connection with the CPI (Maoist) party." Lastly, Khalid's statement said, "My above statement is recorded on an official laptop as per my saying, and after recording the statement, I read it and state that it has been taken as I said."

KHALID'S PREVIOUS STATEMENTS

Khalid said he was invited to the Elgar Parishad programme

organised on December 31, 2017, where he delivered his speech. He said, "I knew Rona Willson, as he came to deliver his speech in JNU in students' movements. As per my knowledge, Rona Willson passed

out from JNU. While delivering his speech in JNU among the students, he used to talk about the political prisoners. As per Rona Willson, GN Saibaba (alleged Naxal sympathiser) is a political prisoner.

Cops held captive by UP villagers after scuffle

Two policemen were held captive by residents of a village in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura after a scuffle. Three people have been arrested in connection to the case



(News Agency) The in-charge of a police outpost and a constable were allegedly held captive by the locals of Umarala village in UP's Mathura when they reached there following reports of a scuffle, officials said. The villagers also threw stones at a police vehicle, damaging it. The duo could be released after an additional police force reached the village, they said. Three people have been arrested in connection with the incident. According to the police, a scuffle occurred between two parties in the village on Wednesday night.

When Mohit Kumar, the in-charge of the police outpost reached the spot with some personnel of the force, a few women started abusing them.

When they objected, people attacked them and also threw stones at the police vehicle. Later, a case was registered following complaints made by the police outpost in charge and the police constable, SHO of Kosikalan Sanjay Tyagi said. Three people have been arrested and efforts were on to nab others, he added.

DMK, allies insulted poet Subramania Bharati by boycotting statue unveiling, says TN BJP chief Annamalai

Tamil Nadu BJP chief, K Annamalai, slammed DMK and its allies for boycotting the unveiling of poet Subramania Bharati's statue at the Raj Bhavan. The BJP leader called the move by the DMK and its allies 'an insult to the great poet'

(News Agency) Tamil Nadu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief, K Annamalai, who participated in the Governor's tea party and the inauguration of poet Subramania Bharati's statue, said that the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagan (DMK) and its allies not participating in the event can only be seen as an insult to the poet.

The BJP state president said that, "DMK and its allies had committed to the dates, but failing to attend the event can only be seen as a way of insulting the great poet."

The DMK and its allies had boycotted the tea party and the statue unveiling over the anti-NEET bill issue.

After meeting the Governor on Thursday, DMK ministers Thangam Thennarasu and Ma Subramanian said that the Governor had given no proper time frame with regard to the NEET issue.

"The Governor, by not giving his assent to the bill passed by the assembly, is acting against the elected representatives of the people and the interest of the general public," said the DMK ministers.

DMK's allies CPM, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) had also sent out statements stating that they would boycott the Governor's events

Neighborhood in crisis

How should India respond to the rising challenges?

By Susmita Ghosh

In 2022, India's neighborhood is caught up in a series of crisis. The countries sharing borders with India are on the verge of severe economic and political challenges. The rapid changes in these countries have a major impact on the country's own matters, hence worrisome for India overall. The internal economic and socio-political dynamic is affected by these external factors. Hence, proper planning is needed soon.

A country's strength is often contingent on its neighborhood. If it is a peaceful and calm neighborhood, the spending goes down on border security, providing a boost to the economy.

At the same time, import and export business goes up and more focus concentrated on the internal administration. Presently, it is not the case for India, hence there is enough cause to worry.

To the west, Pakistan has always been a constant cause of anxiety. In a stable or an unstable state, Pakistan's troubles have often crossed the border, be it the military action or the work of the militants. Recently, there has been massive chaos as regards to the position of the PM. Meanwhile, the advent of ISIS has created room for more terrorism and destruction. This might be harmful for India because many states share their borders with Pakistan. It has created an alert for national security and protection.

To India's north and east is China which is increasing its nuclear build-up. Especially after the Russia-Ukraine conflict, this progress is enough cause to worry. It can destabilize the security protocols in the south Asian countries including India as well. Besides, it can create hostile situations along the Indian Chinese border too.

In the Southern part of India, Sri Lanka is facing a huge crisis. There is an immense shortage of food and supply over the last few weeks. Many refugees from Sri Lanka are entering India to protect themselves from the economic crisis. Another northern

neighbour, Nepal is facing tremendous challenge in the tariffs. The country has banned the import of luxurious and highly-priced items, of which India was a major supplier. Nepal too might face a severe economic crisis like Sri Lanka.

In this situation, India has to take several measures to provide stability to itself, so that the external factors do not provide any major negative impact. The country should try to strengthen its security and armed

The countries sharing borders with India are on the verge of severe economic and political challenges. The rapid changes in these countries have a major impact on the country's own matters, hence worrisome for India overall. Hence proper planning is needed soon.

forces, especially near the border areas. Simultaneously, India should take all measures to prevent a war-like situation, in a diplomatic way.

When it comes to China, India should have a stable diplomatic relationship as India's imports and exports rely on China. A decline in might create a huge economic loss in India and finally recession. India must try to increase its marine power along the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, help keep a check on the waterways and increase its security.

India needs to be alert with the other south Asian countries, should have a peace treaty signed to prevent any fiery situations anytime. Sri Lanka's economic conditions are worsening gradually. Nepal's Foreign exchange results have fallen below 10 billion dollars which have created an economic loss in the country. India must keep a check on the import and export of goods from these countries. At one go, the Indian government should try to take all the measures to prevent an economic breakdown sooner or later. Due to the economic slowdown, India can rely on the other neighboring countries for its import and export for the time being. In all, India should learn and take all the measures to have adequate supply of food, fodder and other essentials during a national crisis like lockdowns, virus breakouts, economic recession and so on. This will help India to prevent any crisis in the future and ensure astounding security for the citizens.

Inflation marks a new pain point

Retail inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), grew at 6.95% in March. The latest inflation Bloomberg poll of economists — this number has surprised analysts. A will lead to some pain.

Bloomberg poll of economists put this number at 6.4%. March is the third consecutive month when CPI has

stayed above the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s tolerance band of 6%. Given the fact that the March numbers do not capture the full impact of fuel-price hikes, inflation is expected to gain momentum in April. To be sure, fuel is not the only factor driving inflation. Food inflation has breached the 7% mark and is expected to stay at elevated levels, given the global surge in food prices. Economists also expect core inflation to remain at high levels as businesses pass on the rise in input costs to consumers.

What does this mean for the Indian economy? The higher-than-expected inflation number will expedite the normalisation of monetary policy, not just on the liquidity front but also in terms of interest rate hikes. Given the fact that the inflationary surge is accompanied by a continuing slack in economic output — the Index of Industrial Production growth in

February was 1.7%, a percentage point lower than the forecast by the Bloomberg poll of economists — this number has surprised analysts. A will lead to some pain.

There is a class aspect to the inflationary pain in the economy. Because the poor spend a bigger share of their income on food, higher food inflation also means a greater squeeze on their purchasing power. When seen in this context, the government's decision to extend the free ration scheme by another six months is a welcome move. Last, but not least, is the question of inflationary noise in government finances. Both taxes and government spending are measured in nominal terms and rising inflation will give an artificial boost to both these numbers. It is important that policymakers do not get swayed by what might be an inflationary upward bias in spending and revenue collection numbers — because this is not a genuine pickup in economic activity or fiscal boost. If the price of crude oil stays around the \$100 per barrel level in 2022-23, which is what RBI now expects, inflation will continue to remain a pain point. The effects are bound to find resonance in politics as well.

What does this mean for the Indian economy? The higher-than-expected inflation number will expedite the normalisation of monetary policy, not just on the liquidity front but also in terms of interest rate hikes


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Who is Viktor Medvedchuk, Putin's close ally arrested by Ukraine?

Russia has reacted to Medvedchuk's arrest, asking Ukraine to 'watch out'. Why did Ukraine act against the businessman-politician?



launched constant attacks on the ruling Zelenskyy government through his television channels — highlighting its failures, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic.

Notably, Medvedchuk and his family were among the first to receive doses of the Russian Covid-19 vaccine in August 2020, Time reported. Putin and Medvedchuk even brokered a deal to deliver millions of doses of the vaccine to Ukraine, but it was later rejected by the Ukrainian government. Interestingly, with Zelenskyy's popularity taking quite a hit during the pandemic, some polls showed Medvedchuk's party in the lead that year.

In May 2021, he was charged with treason and placed under house arrest, which he escaped after the Russian invasion. He was accused of attempting to steal natural resources from Russia-annexed Crimea and leaking

military secrets to Russia. Several of his television channels were also controversially shut down last year for allegedly spreading Russian disinformation.

In March this year, Zelenskyy announced his government's decision to suspend 11 parties, including Medvedchuk's, that were linked to the Kremlin. The Zelenskyy government has been known to employ a strategy it calls "de-oligarchisation", where it targets some of the president's political adversaries through sanctions.

The US, too, does not look favourably at Medvedchuk's close relationship with Russia, imposing sanctions on the oligarch and three other Russia-backed politicians in March. The US believed that they were involved in a plot to set up a collaborated government with Russia around the time it was invading Ukraine.

What do we know about Medvedchuk and Putin's relationship?

The two of them seem to share a close relationship. Putin is the godfather of Medvedchuk's youngest daughter and is often sighted with the Ukrainian businessman at Formula 1 races and martial arts meetings, according to a BBC report. They are also known to holiday together on the Black Sea, a Time magazine report stated. In an interview with Time, Medvedchuk said, "I don't want to say I exploit that relationship, but you could say it has been part of my political arsenal."

However, in an interview with filmmaker Oliver Stone in 2019, the Russian President said they meet from time to time. "I would not say that we are very close but we know each other well," he said, according to the BBC.

Throughout Russian President Vladimir Putin's 21 years in power, Ukrainian oligarch and Opposition politician Viktor Medvedchuk has been his close ally and the biggest proponent of Moscow's interests in Ukraine. So on the 48th day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acted to hurt Putin — arresting his friend and ally in a "lightning-fast and dangerous" operation.

Ukraine's security service SBU on Tuesday shared a photograph of a dishevelled-looking Medvedchuk, in handcuffs and wearing military fatigues. In a late night address on Tuesday, Zelenskyy offered to exchange Medvedchuk for the Ukrainian prisoners of war in Russian captivity.

Before this, Medvedchuk had been in house arrest, which he escaped after Russia invaded Ukraine. On Wednesday, Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, responded to the attack. "Those freaks who call themselves the Ukrainian authorities say that they want to beat testimony out of Viktor Medvedchuk, 'quickly and fairly', convict him, and then exchange him for prisoners. These people should watch out and lock the doors well at night to make sure they do not become the people who are going to be exchanged themselves," he was quoted as saying by Reuters.

This is not the first time Medvedchuk has faced consequences for his pro-Kremlin leanings. Not only has he been put under house arrest on treason charges in the past, he has also been slapped with sanctions by the United States. On both occasions, Putin rushed to his defence — calling Ukraine's actions against the businessman "political persecution".

So, who is Viktor

Medvedchuk?

A rich businessman, Medvedchuk's wealth is said to come mainly from Russian oil interests and his close ties with the Kremlin. He is the leader of the pro-Russian Opposition platform For Life. Backed by a group of billionaires, who like Medvedchuk are sympathetic to the Kremlin, the platform is the biggest opposition force in the country. For a while, Medvedchuk

French elections: Le Pen says 'victory has never been so near', urges France to defeat the 'elitist bloc'

The election race in France is quickly gaining steam, with the top two contenders incumbent President Emmanuel Macron

and far-right leader Marine Le Pen giving each other tough competition. Le Pen on Thursday held a major rally in the southern city of Avignon, addressing around 4,000 supporters, she said that "victory has never been so near." Taking aim at her contender Macron, she said that he was "not

the man of a new era but the last avatar of a system that has run its course", adding that in her opinion, it is time to put an end to a system that "has run out of breath."

Centrist leader Macron and Le Pen finished first and second respectively in the first phase of elections on April 10th. Third in the race was hard-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon. They now face a run-off

vote on April 24th. Before that, on April 20, the two will meet for a live debate, which will be carried live on French television, a

people to back Macron in round two, alleging that Le Pen "was putting our principles into doubt".



critical event in the campaign's last phase. Seeking to reach out to the left-wing voters, Le Pen during her Thursday rally urged France to defeat elitism and oligarchy in the elections geared to take place this month. Her comments come after the incumbent President received public support for his predecessor Francois Hollande. A socialist, Hollande urged

bloc." As per the phase 1 results, Macron has a slight lead over Le Pen. However, as per an AFP report, an Opinonway poll released on Wednesday showed that Macron has 53 per cent support while Le Pen has 47 per cent. But even such a margin is too close for comfort for Macron supporters, who won nearly 66 per cent of the vote against Le Pen in the 2017 run-off election.

Speaking to TF1 Television, he explained that he wants the French to vote for the incumbent "for the sake of the cohesion of France" and its "European future". Calling the 24 April run-off a showdown between the people and oligarchy Le Pen added "the popular bloc will come face-to-face with the elitist

A greener, safer future for Indian cities

Master plans face prolonged delays in preparation, sanctioning and implementation. They lack the mandate for integration with other sectoral infrastructure plans which largely remain as wishlists

The IPCC's latest report shows how smart urban planning can mitigate the effects of climate change. The Union budget 2022 had announced the formation of a high-level committee of planners, economists and institutions to make recommendations on urban sector policies. The finance minister said that by the time India turns 100, nearly half the population will be living in urban areas, making it imperative to not only nurture India's mega cities but also facilitate tier-2 and tier-3 cities to gear up for the future. India is witnessing one of the largest urban growth spurts in history. However, three-quarters of the infrastructure that will exist in cities by 2050 is yet to be built. This presents Indian cities with an unprecedented opportunity to look at urban planning and development through a long-term strategic



lens to enable economic, environment and social impact. Urban infrastructure development results in high economic value-add but often

leads to unequal and inequitable growth. As a developing economy, negative externalities such as air and water pollution, climate change, flooding, and

extreme heat events also impinge on the economic value of urban infrastructure. Research has shown if cities are developed as compact and climate-resilient

centres, then infrastructure investments can produce more economic gain over time with minimal climate impact whilst ensuring equitable growth.

Town and country planning acts in India have largely remained unchanged over the past 50 years, relying on techniques set up by the British. Cities still create land use and regulatory control-based master plans which, on their own, are ineffective in planning and managing cities. Despite the many changes brought about by modernisation, the focus of planning continues to be the strict division of the city into various homogeneous zones such as residential, commercial and industrial. This is done to prevent mixing of incompatible uses and to avoid economic and social integration — a relic of the industrial

(Contd. on page 30)

'Possible origin from deep interior of planetary system': Meteor that hit Earth in 2014 was interstellar

A document released by the United States Space Command (USSC) states that researchers might have discovered the first known interstellar meteor to ever hit Earth, and it's not 'Oumuamua'.

'Oumuamua' has been famously known to be the first interstellar object passing through the Solar System, ever recorded. It was discovered in the Solar System by Panoramic Survey Telescope and Rapid Response System (Pan-STARRS) in 2017. However, researchers now claim that they have 'Oumuamua' possibly the second interstellar object known as the first one being a meteor that impacted Earth in 2014. In simple language, an interstellar object is an astronomical object in interstellar space that is not gravitationally bound to a



star.

The one that made an impact on Earth on January 8, 2014, is known as CNEOS 2014-01-08 and it crash-landed along the northeast coast of Papua New Guinea.

Last week on 6 April, the UCSS released a memo on its official Twitter handle, highlighting the crucial work of Harvard astronomers Amir

Siraj and Abraham Loeb, who drafted a paper on the findings. They studied the object in detail and the document noted that the velocity and trajectory of the meteor suggested the space rock was apparently from deep space, meaning the extrasolar in origin.

The summary of the paper from student Amir Siraj and veteran

astronomer Avi Loeb read: "Its high ... speed implies a possible origin from the deep interior of a planetary system or a star in the thick disk of the Milky Way galaxy."

In the paper, the researcher wrote: "Based on the CNEOS catalog of bolide events, we identify the 0.45m meteor detected at 2014-01-08 17:05:34 UTC as originating

from an unbound hyperbolic orbit with 99.999% confidence."

However, in a recent interaction with Vice, Siraj revealed that the margin of error was a reason why peer review and publication of the paper have been held up. He said that the US military had classified some of the data needed to confirm the scientists' calculations.

"Its high LSR speed implies a possible origin from the deep interior of a planetary system or a star in the thick disk of the Milky Way galaxy," a part of the paper read.

The paper also mentioned that this discovery will help enable a new method for studying the composition of interstellar objects.

The new method will be based on spectroscopy of their gaseous debris as they burn up in the Earth's atmosphere.

Not Just the Enemy's Enemy, India Must Befriend the Enemy's Friend Too



to surround India on both sides and straitjacketing it within the confines of South Asia.

To counteract this, India has developed friendly relations with multiple countries having adversarial relations with China such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Japan, Indonesia and Malaysia apart from South Korea, Australia and USA. These relationships, however, are not of the same intensity as China's due to two reasons: India, unlike China, is not the central actor in these relationships either financially or militarily; and India, unlike China, does not believe in inculcating parasitic relations. A focused approach towards issue-based plurilateralism has led to the operationalisation of The Quadrilateral Dialogue aka The Quad whose charter is overtly non-military, basing itself on vaccine diplomacy, resilient supply chains, climate change mitigation and a free and open

Indo-Pacific. In the modern era of political relationship, countries need not be either in conflict or in cooperation mode alone. Both sides of the relationship can co-exist and the same has been demonstrated in the case of multiple countries around the world. Sino-India relations are no exception. Even during heightened tensions on the LAC, our bilateral trade has broken all previous records despite a massive trade deficit for us. Both countries have also been together on issues such as farm subsidies by wealthy countries at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and a disproportionate burden of climate change mitigation on Third World countries. This amply demonstrates the fact that one need not always be opposed to a nation and look only at the enemy's enemy as a prospective and practical friend. China has attempted an

additional approach to checkmate us and enhance our adversities. When India had excellent relationships with its neighbours like Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and others barring a few downward moments, China adopted a different strategy. While on one hand, it continued investing in its relationship with Pakistan, it made deliberate plans to befriend all our neighbours. In the garb of financial assistance, loans, ease of trade and infrastructure development, China 'debt-trapped' a few of these countries due to which some of them started on their ruinous path. Current examples include Sri Lanka and Pakistan. In the process, China has not only served its strategic interests but also checkmated India, limiting its attempts to gain a rightful place in the community of nations.

(Contd. on page 30)

The enemy's enemy is a friend,' is an old adage that suggests that two parties or nations can work together in all domains against a common enemy/opponent. This argument is also found in statecraft related wisdom in Kautilya's Arthashastra dating back to the fourth century BC. This approach finds manifestations at the national level in almost all countries and is practised by us as well as our opponents. In the modern

context, Gabriel Manigault in his 1884 political creed highlighted this approach. In India's context, China has not only befriended Pakistan, our conventional adversary on the Western border but has also entrenched itself in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and Afghanistan, to say the least. Pakistan has adopted the same philosophy by maintaining enhanced and unparalleled relations with China, with a view

With No Means to Survive, Desperate Sri Lankans are Risking Their Lives to Enter India

Several Sri Lankans have escaped the crisis-hit country in the last few weeks and fled to Tamil Nadu, which has caused an uproar in the southern Indian state. Sri Lanka is witnessing an unprecedented economic crisis. A mounting international debt, a decline in tourism following the coronavirus outbreak, a decrease in the value of the Sri Lankan currency, an unfavorable decision to switch to organic farming, and a currency deficit that makes it difficult even to buy essentials—all these have contributed to the island country reaching this inflection point. Rice, for instance, is priced up to Rs (Sri Lankan) 500/kg, and a kilogram of sugar is selling at around Rs 290. The skyrocketing inflation has brought people out on the streets in despair. In one such incident last month, some Sri Lankans were trying to enter Tamil Nadu illegally and were stranded mid-sea. They were located by a hovercraft near



Rameswaram. After their interrogation, they were surrendered to the Coastal Security Group for further legal formalities. The Sri Lankans fleeing the country and desperately trying to migrate to India are bereft of resources

and hope. Some paid up to Rs 50,000 to the boatmen and travelled in a plastic boat, only to be dropped near Rameswaram.

During interrogation, one of the refugee families said people in their village could not afford

milk, which was selling at Rs (Sri Lankan) 1500 per tin. The prices of essentials and fuel have gone through the roof, forcing people to take drastic steps. Some of these refugees have been booked under relevant provisions of The

Foreigners Act and The Passports Act. Currently, in judicial custody, these refugees have no source of income back home due to the loss of jobs. Historically, such desperately needy migrants fall prey to extortion and manipulation by illegal immigration rackets and land in fatal or near-fatal situations. Most Sri Lankan refugees would have been stranded if not found by the coast guard and taken to the camps. The refugee camps in Tamil Nadu, especially those with Sri Lankan refugees, are now open prisons overcrowded with multiple families jostling for space.

And refugees who do manage to find a source of employment as daily wage labourers are under the constant watch of the state intelligence unit. In humanitarian terms, they are migrants searching for a means to survive. Unfortunately, they are often treated as terrorists or radical subjects who pose a threat to the country.

Who is Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, designated as a 'terrorist' under UAPA?

Born in Nowhatta area of Srinagar in the Kashmir Valley, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar was among the first batch of young Kashmiris who crossed over to Pakistan for terrorist training, and came back to wage war against the Indian state

After designating relatives of Lashkar-i-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar as terrorists under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), the Centre has now designated Kashmiri militant Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar as a terrorist under the Act.

Zargar (52), is originally from Srinagar. He was among the three terrorists released by India in exchange for the hostages in the hijacking of the Indian Airlines Flight IC 814 in 1999.

Who is Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar?

Born in Nowhatta area of Srinagar in the Kashmir Valley, Zargar was among the first batch of young Kashmiris who crossed over to Pakistan for terrorist training, and came back to wage war against the Indian state. In 1988, Zargar joined the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), and was considered to be close to its then chief Ashfaq Majeed Wani. In August that year, he crossed over to Pakistan through Trehgam with the help of Zahoor Sheikh, an Anantnag-based activist of the secessionist People's League, and received training at a camp organised by the JKLF.

He went back to Pakistan for a second round of training during May 1989, and returned through Uri. After Wani's death, Zargar fell out with JKLF's new chief Yasin Malik, and floated his own outfit, the Al Umar Mujahideen (AuM).

What kind of terrorist activities was he involved in?

Following his return, Zargar engaged in various terrorist activities in the Valley as part of the JKLF. The most high-profile of them was the December 1989 kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed, daughter of then Union Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. The Indian government was forced to release several jailed terrorists in exchange for Rubaiya's release at the time. According to South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), Zargar is reported to have executed several attacks on security forces personnel and high ranking Kashmir officials, and carried out a series of murders of Kashmiri Pandits.

Zargar is responsible for over 40 murders, and was a key figure in the terrorist ascendancy in downtown Srinagar. As security forces cracked down on his network, many of his associates were killed in the early 90s, and Zargar himself was arrested in 1992.

Apart from attacks on civilians and security forces, Zargar, according to SATP, also indulged in extortion and used his "influence" to intervene in local business and property disputes in Srinagar. At least seven abductions for ransom are attributed to him. In one instance, Zargar reportedly ordered a ban on the use of Maruti vehicles in Srinagar in order to help a Srinagar businessman who held the dealership for a rival motor company.

On the eve of Legislative Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir during September-October 2002, the ISI reportedly appointed Zargar as the 'chief coordinator' to carry out attacks on candidates and political

parties.

What happened after his release from jail?

Zargar was among the three terrorists released by the government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in December 1999 in exchange for the hostages on IC 814 that five Pakistan-based terrorists had hijacked.

The other two terrorists who were released were Masood Azhar, who went on to found the Jaish-e-Mohammed soon afterward, and Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, who was later convicted of the kidnapping and murder of The Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan.

After he was handed over to the Taliban on the tarmac in Kandahar, Zargar got back to Pakistan and is understood to have set up his base in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. He revived the AuM, drawing recruits from Kashmir, and also grew closer to Masood Azhar's JeM. AuM, however, remained largely

dormant for several years, and its activities have been noticed again only relatively recently.

What has Zargar been up to of late?

AuM began figuring on the radar of agencies prominently after the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani in 2016. Since then, the outfit has claimed responsibility of many terrorist attacks on security forces in the Valley.

In 2016, alleged AuM operatives attacked an Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) convoy in Srinagar, killing one jawan and injuring several others. Similar attacks followed in subsequent years. In 2019, two terrorists suspected to be from AuM attacked a Road Opening Party of the CRPF in south Kashmir's Anantnag, leading to the deaths of five personnel. According to security agencies, Zargar has been actively coordinating with JeM operatives to launch attacks in Jammu and Kashmir. The Ministry of Home Affairs

Notification designating him as a terrorist said, "Zargar has been running an incessant campaign from Pakistan to fuel terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir ... Zargar is a threat to peace, not only to India, but across the world, with his contacts and proximity to radical terrorist groups like the Al-Qaeda and Jaish-e-Mohammed."

What changes as a result of Zargar's designation as a terrorist under UAPA?

The designation of individuals as terrorists is in keeping with international norms and laws. The United Nations designates individuals as terrorists, and the United States Department of State has a list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations. The government has earlier said this would help clamp down on the financial resources and assets of terrorist individuals even if they are not associated with an organisation, or if they dissolve a banned organisation and float another with a different name and form.

Giving credit is a simple courtesy. Arooj Aftab must not grudge it

Mohabbat karne wale kam na honge, teri mehfil mein lekin hum na honge. (There won't be a dearth of those who will cherish you, but in that gathering of your admirers, I won't be there.)

For over half a century, this Hafeez Hoshiarpuri ghazal was brought to life by Pakistani ghazal maestro Mehdi Hassan. He presented it with such nuance and tenderness that for years, the pangs of separation in this piece have transcended even the geopolitics of the Subcontinent. The ghazal became so popular that it was sung by other greats such as Farida Khanum, Iqbal Bano and Jagjit Singh. But it was Hassan who etched this ghazal — along with "Ranjish hi sahi" — in our common consciousness. For "Mohabbat karne wale", he used Tilang, the raga that stems from the folk melodies of Rajasthan, where Hassan was born and learned music. So, when Brooklyn-based Pakistani musician Arooj Aftab walked away with a Grammy earlier this month — a first for any Pakistani woman — in the Best Global Music Performance category for the "neo-Sufi" version of this ghazal which she calls "Mohabbat" in her 2021 album Vulture Prince (New Amsterdam Records), it became a moment to cherish for the Subcontinent. But for "Mohabbat", which has musical influences from diverse worlds of jazz, Hindustani music, Sufi and folk music, Aftab does not

acknowledge — either in the album's digital versions or in her acceptance speech — the poet or the composer, even though the basic tune is used in its entirety. The only difference is pace, orchestration and of course, Aftab's voice and style. The Recording Academy's award is for her performance of the ghazal but the onus to acknowledge its origins is on Aftab.

Vulture Prince, Aftab's third album, came at the back of years of struggle in Pakistan amid a family that enjoyed musical baithaks at home but preferred their daughter to not make music. In it, she pairs the pain of famous ghazals with hushed orchestral arrangements created with the harp, flugelhorn, double bass, violins and synth. She sings Mirza Ghalib's "Diya hai" where the poignance of the poet's words finds release through her voice — the last song she and her brother shared before he passed away during the making of the album. The elegy and its pain aren't lost on the listener. There is also Sudarshan Fakir's "Kuch toh duniya ki inaayat", which found itself with Begum Akhtar back in the day. Ghalib, Fakir and Begum Akhtar aren't credited either. She gives a new tune to Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's famed "Surroor", but Anwar Farrukhabadi, the poet, does not find himself anywhere in the seven-track album. The album, however, does advertise a perfume oil created by Dana El

Masri, inspired by the music. As of now, the oil is sold out.

Barack Obama picked "Mohabbat" as one of his favourites for 2021 and the piece was called one of the best songs of 2021 by the New York Times. But I'd rather listen to Hassan's version. Mostly because of its quality but also because of its sincerity. He would almost always credit the poet. "Ye Hafiz Hoshiarpuri saab ki ghazal hai..." Aftab hasn't put out any statement or explanation. But she shared a post by a friend on her Facebook page that read: "For those who are asking Arooj Aftab to give credits... either they are jealous or they do not understand that you can pick up any old poetry and compose it yourself, then there is no cover left." This isn't a new composition. It's the same tune sung with different orchestration. Because she is trained in western forms of music, she's stripped the ghazal of classical ornamentations and created a new setting for it. Hoshiarpuri's words give context to her pain. This is why credit is necessary.

In 2018, at Lahore's Gurmani Centre for Languages and Literature, an 89-year-old Farida Khanum sat in a wheelchair and sang the same ghazal, diving into Hoshiarpuri's anguish and sarcasm. Musician and author Ali Sethi, who was in conversation with her, was visibly awed.

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What is the West Bengal School Service Commission recruitment scam

A Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday extended by four weeks its stay on a single-judge order directing West Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee to appear before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with its probe into an alleged recruitment scam. A Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday extended by four weeks its stay on a single-judge order directing West Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee to appear before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with its probe into an alleged recruitment scam.

While the case was being heard, a commotion occurred outside the courtroom of Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay who had told Chatterjee to appear before the central agency at 5:30 pm on Tuesday in connection with its investigation into alleged irregularities in recruitment by the School Service Commission (SSC). Pro-Trinamool Congress (TMC) lawyers tried to stop others from entering courtroom 17, including lawyers Bikash



Bhattacharya and Bilwadal Bhattacharya.

What is the SSC scam case?

In November last year, a single bench of Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay ordered a preliminary inquiry by the CBI into alleged irregularities in the appointment of Group D staff in state-run schools under West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE).

Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay passed the order while hearing a

petition by job aspirants who claimed appointments were made after the panel set up for recruitments in Group D staff in state-run schools had expired. The petitioners had initially produced before the court a list of 25 such appointees who were illegally recruited. Later they claimed that more than 500 additional such appointments were made.

The WBBSE, in an affidavit before the court, had claimed that all the

appointments were given on the basis of recommendations by the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC). But the commission submitted an affidavit before the court stating that after May 4, 2019, when the panel for the Group D staff requirement had expired, no recommendation letter was issued by it.

What did the court say?

In February, a single bench of Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay

passed an order asking the CBI to probe the alleged recruitment scam. However, on the same day the division bench comprising Justice Harish Tandon and Justice Rabindranath Samanta imposed a stay for two weeks on the single Bench's order.

On March 31, the single bench of Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay directed the CBI to start the probe by midnight.

Earlier, Justice Gangopadhyay wrote to the Chief Justice of India and the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court bringing to their notice that decisions by his court, where he has directed a CBI probe, have been stayed by a Division Bench of the High Court.

Justice Gangopadhyay had also directed the CBI to question WBSSC former adviser Shantiprasad Sinha and four other members over the irregularities in the appointments. While Sinha faced CBI questioning, the others moved the division bench challenging the order.

(Contd. on page 29)

Exploitation of Class and Public Money: JNU is Becoming a Failure of an Institution

The Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) is a public central university established in 1969 by an act of parliament and was named after Jawaharlal Nehru, the first PM of India. During the discussion for forming the JNU, Bhushan Gupta, the MP echoed in the parliament that JNU should inculcate 'scientific-socialism' and ensure noble ideas in mind and provide accessibility to students from weaker sections of society. This was a university that was meant to be the Harvard of the Third World and a model institution for social sciences and research.

As per the profile of the JNU, the aims of the university are the very Nehruvian objectives embedded in the founding of the University – national integration, social justice, secularism, a democratic way of life, international understanding and a scientific approach to the problems of society. These had built into



them constant and energetic endeavour to renew knowledge through self-questioning. JNU is meant as a premier institute of India where the Central Government has been doling out subsidies in the form of grants

lavishly since the inception of the university. Now, let's us have a cursory look at the stats with respect to facilities and financials in JNU. 52 long years have passed since the inception of JNU in 1969. It is the time to

audit for introspection. Now let's us look at how far this institution has lived up to the ideals for which it was established.

One of the ideals for starting JNU was that it should come up as a Harvard of the Third World.

Despite having the best facilities, infrastructure, faculties and teacher-student ratio, JNU as an institution is nowhere in the world to be reckoned with. Far from being an institution of acclaim, it has not come up even near to the ideals of the founders. As per the 2019-2020 Center for World University Rankings (CWUR), JNU has a world rank of 974 with a research performance rank of 1196. As per the QS World University Rankings 2021, JNU could not find a place in any of the top 1,000 spots of global rankings last year. Even the quality of research is far poorer in comparison to any global standards. So much so that it ranked below many universities in South East Asia in terms of research. Another goal of JNU was scientific socialism and social justice. Socialism aims at equitable distribution of resources.

(Contd on page 29)

Bangladesh celebrates Bengali New Year after two years

People celebrate Bengali New Year after two years of restrictions due to COVID-19

Bangladesh celebrated Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bengali New Year. For two years in a row, the Pahela Baishakh celebration remained muted across the country due to coronavirus lockdowns. This year, as the number of cases decline, the country launched full-scale celebrations to ring in the Bangla New Year 1429.

Considered the most important event in the country's cultural calendar, this Bengali New Year was welcomed with immense gusto and pomp, even though the transition from spring to summer in this part of the world is not very pleasant because of the scorching heat. The day started with Chhayanaut's flagship curtain-raising event at Ramna Batamul in Dhaka at dawn. "COVID-19 didn't allow us to

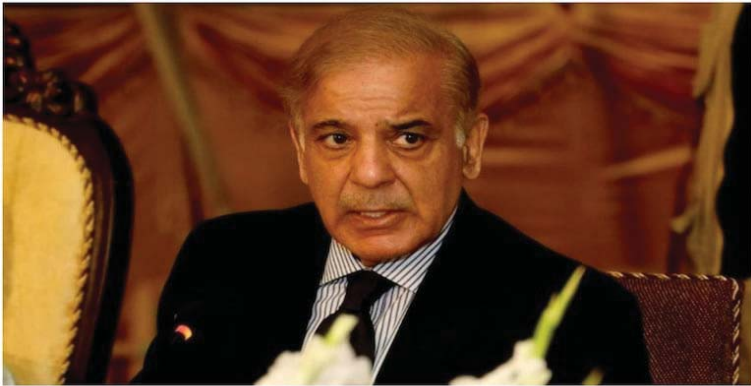
celebrate Pahela Baishakh for the past two years. The celebrations are incomplete if we don't perform to music at Ramna Batamul, a stage that resonates with non-communal sentiments," Laisa Ahmed Lisa, General Secretary of Chhayanaut, a premier cultural organisation, told Al Jazeera. "I am relieved that we have been able to come back and perform here this year." Mongol Shobhajatra, a thematic, colourful parade which has been declared a cultural heritage by UNESCO, also made a full-fledged return after a two-year lull. Trina Banik, a doctor who came to take part, said she was glad to be back. "Mongol Shobhajatra is not just a mere rally to me, this colourful procession is the perfect way to start a new year amidst festivities," she told Al Jazeera.

However, as Pahela Baishakh was being celebrated during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the festivities had been scaled down to some extent. As per the directives issued by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), all Pahela Baishakh celebrations in the capital ended by 2pm. DMP also had taken additional security measures for the event due to "tips on militant activity from foreign allies". Saleem Samad, a veteran journalist, said he witnessed only 10 percent of the crowd that is usually present during regular times. "This might be because of Ramadan. Excessive summer heat also plays its part. But I believe the strict police guideline discourages a lot of people to come here in numbers," he told Al Jazeera.



Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif orders issuance of diplomatic passport to Nawaz Sharif

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered the issuance of a diplomatic passport to his elder brother and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who will return to Pakistan after Eid



(News Agency) Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday ordered the issuance of diplomatic passport to his elder brother and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. According to Pakistan media reports, Nawaz Sharif will return to Pakistan after Eid on a diplomatic passport. Several corruption cases had been launched by the Imran Khan government against the 72-year-old supremo of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) since his ouster from office by the Supreme Court in July 2017 in the Panama Papers case. Nawaz Sharif left for London in 2019 after the Lahore High Court granted him four-week permission to go abroad for his treatment. He had given an undertaking to the Lahore High Court to return to Pakistan, citing his record to face the process of law and justice within four weeks or as soon as he is declared healthy and fit to travel by doctors.

Crisis-hit Sri Lanka defaults on external debt, hopes on IMF lifeline

Sri Lanka has defaulted on its multi-billion dollar external debt, and has termed the move a "last resort" while waiting on a bailout package from the International Monetary Fund

(News Agency) In the throes of an economic meltdown, Sri Lanka has defaulted on its multi-billion dollar external debt. The government termed the move a "last resort" after running out of foreign exchange to import desperately needed goods. The crisis-hit island nation's finance ministry, which is awaiting a bailout package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), announced that it would suspend normal debt servicing, and that "orderly and consensual restructuring will take place in a manner consistent with an economic adjustment program supported by the IMF." The policy would apply to international bonds, all bilateral loans excluding swaps between the Central Bank and a foreign central bank, all loans with commercial banks and institutional lenders, it said. According to media reports, Sri Lanka's external debt servicing obligations are

believed to be over \$6 billion. Sri Lanka is grappling with its worst economic downturn since independence. On top of low forex reserves and skyrocketing inflation, the country is



experiencing a crippling shortage of rations, fuel and several other essential items. People have been protesting for weeks over lengthy power cuts and shortage of goods. Blaming the government for poorly handling the economic crisis, they are demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

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China denies online 'rumours' blaming co-pilot for plane crash

Rumours have been doing rounds online that the co-pilot "might be responsible" for the crash, attributing it to the data from black boxes, with some believing that the CAAC will require flight crews to undergo mental health monitoring



China's civil aviation regulator, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), refuted such rumours over the co-pilot's involvement in the crash of China Eastern flight MU5375, saying the accident is still under investigation, and no conclusions have been drawn on the cause and nature of the accident yet. The "rumours", claimed to be sourced from some public security departments are misleading, would undermine public confidence in the ongoing investigation, and may represent a violation of the law, said Wu Shijie, a CAAC official told the official media on Monday. We will try our best to find out the cause of the accident as soon as possible and release the relevant information according to the law and procedures," he said. Wu said the crash has had an impact on the welfare of frontline civil aviation workers, and some

employees have suffered from emotional strain, particularly younger workers. The CAAC attaches great importance to the mental well-being of aviation workers and requested that airlines take measures to support pilots, flight attendants and safety officers in managing their psychological pressure. Early this month a working group sent by the US National Transportation Safety Board arrived in China to help investigate the crash of the China Eastern Airlines aircraft. The seven-member panel, consisting of authorised representatives and technical advisors, will participate in the investigation organised by the CAAC. Airline safety management is focused on the mental state and health of all aircrew, including pilots, and it is a key function of the regulation, CAAC said. The aviation industry recently held a

two-week-long safety review, stating that it had addressed a number of safety hazards, after the fatal crash of Flight MU5375, killing all 132 persons onboard, the Global Times reported. Concrete measures should be taken to strengthen the investigation of hidden dangers concerning aircraft maintenance, flight weather conditions, personnel qualifications and technical ability, China's civil aviation regulator said. China's aviation officials have said that there had not been any weather or other hazards endured by the flight on its route path. China Eastern said the plane, less than seven years old, had also passed all pre-flight checks.

There were three pilots, China Eastern officials said. The captain had 6,709 hours of flying experience, and the first and second officers had 31,769 hours and 556 hours respectively.

(News Agency) The cause of China's recent passenger plane crash which killed 132 people remains under investigation, a Chinese aviation official has said, rejecting online speculation that the co-pilot may be responsible for the tragic accident.

The Chinese passenger plane crashed in the southern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on March 21, killing all 132 people on board including the nine crew members. The Boeing 737-800

aircraft of China Eastern Airlines, which flew from Kunming to Guangzhou, plunged into the mountains in Tengxian County in the city of Wuzhou. Rumours have been doing rounds online that the co-pilot "might be responsible" for the crash, attributing it to the data from black boxes, with some believing that the CAAC will require flight crews to undergo mental health monitoring, the state-run Global Times reported.

Leaked documents reveal China had asked for heavily armed security team to be sent to Solomon islands

(News Agency) Leaked documents have revealed the Chinese embassy in the Solomon Islands has requested for a heavily armed security team to be sent to the islands after riots broke out in Honiara. The embassy said in a statement, "The government of the Peoples Republic of China has decided to send a plain-clothes security team, 10 personnel, with necessary light weapons and

equipment to the Chinese embassy in the Solomon Islands." The "official status" of the security team was "diplomatic attaches" that would "enhance the safety and security of the Chinese embassy," as per a leaked memo obtained by the Guardian.

Solomon Islands diplomat Colin Beck wrote a memo saying the request made by the Chinese embassy "stemmed from the

recent three days of November riots, of which the Solomon Islands Chinese community faced the brunt of the looting and violence amongst other business owners". "My ministry, during the period, could not guarantee the safety of the embassy and [its] staff. As host country, we had an obligation to protect all embassies including [the] Chinese embassy," the memo said. "In this regard, we have no



objection to the request."

Confirming the veracity of the documents, the Solomon Islands government said, "to be alert against fake news or misinterpreted commentaries on social media forums following leaked documents containing official correspondences between the Solomon Islands Government and the People's Republic of China (PRC) Embassy in Honiara." After a regional backlash, the Solomon Islands said it would not allow a Chinese military base in the Pacific islands nation despite its plans to sign a security pact with Beijing. Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare said,

"Government is conscious of the security ramification of hosting a military base, and it will not be careless to allow such initiative to take place under its watch." "The point of the security cooperation between China and the Solomon Islands is to maintain the safety of people's lives and property. It is without any military elements or overtones," said China's foreign ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian. Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific Zed Seselja said his country "stood strongly as a partner and a friend of Solomon Islands" and it believed "the Pacific family will continue to meet the security needs of our region."

Newly elected Pak PM Sharif to visit China, Saudi Arabia: Report

(News Agency) Newly elected Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will likely travel to China and Saudi Arabia as his first official visit, local media reported. The Express Tribune newspaper, quoting a Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader, said that Sharif will be first heading to Saudi and then Beijing. Earlier in the day, China congratulated Sharif for becoming the 23rd prime minister of Pakistan, saying that Beijing looks forward to building a "high quality" US \$60 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)".

As soon as it was made clear that Imran Khan would lose the no-confidence motion moved by the joint opposition led by Sharif on April 10, the Chinese state media projected that the all-

weather ties between the two countries would get better under him than during Khan's government. Sharif had spoken highly of China-Pakistan ties in his victory speech. He spoke about the special relations with China, calling the country "the most faithful friend and a partner through thick and thin".

"No matter what happens, no one can deprive the two countries of their friendship. This friendship will last till the day of judgment," he said and announced to speed up work on CPEC projects. Meanwhile, immediately after assuming the office, Sharif on Tuesday cancelled two weekly-off days in the government offices. He also announced changes in office timings.

187 to a US dollar: Political crisis in Pakistan led to the free fall of its currency

(Staff Reporter) The Pakistani rupee fell to a new low of 191 rupees to the dollar on Thursday, as the country's currency was shaken by a continuing political turmoil. The rupee has been falling for months, but it plummeted in March after opposition parties filed a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister Imran Khan, which resulted in the national assembly being dissolved last week. The Pakistani rupee has lost 18 percent of its value versus the US dollar since July 2021. Relationships with the US and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are also crucial. Pakistan has received a \$6 billion rescue package from the International Monetary

Fund (IMF) to help with its balance of payment problems in 2019. Traders' advice causes panic purchasing in the market during periods of currency devaluation. They persuade importers to buy more in a short period of time in order to meet their payment obligations, resulting in a dollar shortage in the market. At the same time, they encourage exporters not to sell dollars and instead stockpile them in anticipation of further depreciation, which will reduce greenback supply, according to Geo News. For the previous 11 months, the rupee has been on a downward trend. It has lost 23.58 percent (or Rs35.91) since its all-time high of Rs152.27 in May 2021.

Sri Lanka defaulting on all its external debt: Rajapaksa government



(Staff Reporter) The Sri Lankan government on Tuesday announced it is defaulting on all its external debt. The government had earlier announced it had appointed a panel on restructuring foreign debt amid the deepening economic crisis. The island nation has been hit by rising inflation and fuel crisis. Sri Lanka's economy was hit badly during the coronavirus pandemic as the tourism industry was hit amid the lockdown two years ago. "Sri Lanka has decided to suspend normal debt servicing of all affected debts for an interim period pending an orderly and consensual restructuring of those obligations in a manner consistent with an economic adjustment program supported by the IMF," the country's finance ministry said. Rating agencies had earlier warned of a potential default on its \$51 billion foreign debt. In a letter stating its interim policy on servicing external public debt, the

government said the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war had "eroded Sri Lanka's fiscal position" with its normal servicing of external public debt obligations becoming "impossible". "Although the government has taken extraordinary steps in an effort to remain current on all of its external indebtedness, it is now clear that this is no longer a tenable policy and that a comprehensive restructuring of these obligations will be required," it added. Amid the economic crisis, the Rajapaksa's cabinet had resigned en masse after people took to the streets to protest against rising prices. The Lankan president had imposed a state of emergency and requested members of political parties to join the cabinet, however, it was ruled out by the opposition members. The government said it is seeking financial help from other multilateral and bilateral partners including the IMF.

China-Pakistan ties could be better under Shehbaz Sharif than Imran Khan, says report

(Staff Reporter) The possibility of Shehbaz Sharif becoming next prime minister of Pakistan may be better for China-Pakistan ties, a 'Global Times' report said on Sunday. The change in guard seems to have been welcomed by the state-run daily. The all-weather ties between China and Pakistan "could be better than under Khan", it said, while saying about the scenario if Sharif becomes PM. The write-up in the daily, which is regarded as Chinese official media, said that a new Pakistan government may get formed under Shehbaz when Parliament reconvenes to vote for a new PM on Monday. "Chinese and Pakistani analysts consider that the solid China-Pakistan relations will not be affected by the internal political change in Pakistan because to safeguard and develop the bilateral ties is the joint consensus of all parties and all groups in

Pakistan," it said.

"The potential successor of Khan is from the Sharif family, which has been promoting China-Pakistan ties for a long time, and cooperation between the two countries could be even better than under Khan," it said. The close ties between the two nations were better under traditional political parties, it added.



"Khan is from a newly rising political party, and when traditional major political parties like the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) or the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) return to power, China-Pakistan cooperation could be even better because these traditional major parties have much closer and deeper ties with China," Qian Feng, director, research department, National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University told the daily.



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Sri Lankan protesters mark traditional new year outside President Rajapaksa's office as stir enters 6th day

Sri Lankan protesters occupying the entrance and surroundings of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office welcomed the traditional Sinhala and Tamil New Year outside the presidential secretariat

(Staff Reporter) Sri Lankan protesters, including some celebrities, welcomed the traditional Sinhala and Tamil New Year outside the presidential secretariat by boiling milk and distributing traditional sweets on Thursday, the sixth day of their anti-government stir demanding resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his powerful family for mishandling the country's worst economic crisis.

Protesters are occupying the entrance and surroundings of President Gotabaya's office, holding him responsible for the economic situation.

The protesters on Wednesday rejected Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's offer for talks and demanded the resignation of President Gotabaya and all members of his family from the government.

The protestors hailed the dawning of the new year at 8.41 am and then boiled milk at the auspicious time of 9.07 am. The spill of milk at the auspicious time is the indication of well being in the New Year. At 10.17 am, the time for the first meal in the new year, they distributed the



traditional sweets outside the president's office where they have been camping since Saturday.

Social media posts from the participants said they were unwilling to have any talks unless the Rajapaksas quit from all positions in the government. The protest is being carried out round-the-clock by youths demanding a total transformation of the "corrupt political culture", which they claim has been prevailing in the island nation since it gained

Independence from Britain in 1948. Several celebrities, musicians, artists and writers have joined the protests. On Thursday, veteran musician Victor Ratnayake joined the protesters at the site.

Roshan Mahanama, the celebrity cricketer who was a member of the 1996 World Cup winning team, also participated in the protest. Meanwhile, the President took to Twitter to wish the countrymen on the occasion of the

traditional Sinhala and Tamil New Year. "In the face of the current economic and global crises, we in Sri Lanka have to face the biggest challenge in history. We must overcome it with unity and understanding. I wish you all Happy Sinhala and Tamil New Year!" he said in a tweet in Sinhala.

The Prime Minister also congratulated the people and urged them to come together as one. "As the New Year dawns on our nation during one of the most challenging times for us as a people, let us come together as one, to work towards a better future for #SriLanka. I wish all Sri Lankans near and far celebrating, a very Happy New Year," he said on Twitter. Faced with critically low forex reserves, the government announced on April 12 that it is suspending repayments of foreign debt, including bonds and government-to-government borrowing, pending a bailout package from the International Monetary Fund. Sri Lanka had to meet USD 7 billion of debt payments this year.

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Russia war a genocide, Putin trying to wipe out Ukraine, says US President Biden

US President Joe Biden has said Russia's war against Ukraine amounts to genocide and accused Putin of trying to wipe out Ukraine

(Staff Reporter) US President Joe Biden has said Russia's war in Ukraine amounted to "genocide," accusing President Vladimir Putin of trying to "wipe out the idea of even being a Ukrainian." "Yes, I called it genocide," he told reporters in Iowa shortly before boarding Air Force One to return to Washington. "It's become clearer and clearer that Putin is just trying to wipe out the idea of even being a Ukrainian." At an earlier event in Menlo, Iowa, addressing spiking energy prices resulting from the war, Biden had implied that he thought Putin was carrying out genocide against Ukraine, but offered no details. Neither he nor his administration announced new consequences

for Russia or assistance to Ukraine following Biden's public assessment. Biden's comments drew praise from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who had encouraged Western leaders to use the term to describe Russia's invasion of his country. A United Nations treaty, to which the U.S. is a party, defines genocide as actions taken with the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

Past American leaders often have dodged formally declaring bloody campaigns such as Russia's in Ukraine as genocide, hesitating to trigger an obligation that under international convention requires signing

countries to intervene once genocide is formally identified. That obligation was seen as blocking President Bill Clinton from declaring Rwandan Hutus' killing of 800,000 ethnic Tutsis in 1994 as genocide, for example. Biden said it would be up to lawyers to decide if Russia's conduct met the international standard for genocide, as Ukrainian officials have claimed, but said "it sure seems that way to me." "More evidence is coming out literally of the horrible things that the Russians have done in Ukraine, and we're only going to learn more and more about the devastation and let the lawyers decide internationally whether or not it qualifies," he said. Just last



week Biden had he did not believe Russia's actions amounted to genocide, just that they constituted "war crimes." During a trip to Europe last month, Biden faced controversy for a nine-word statement seemingly supporting regime change in Moscow, which would have

represented a dramatic shift toward direct confrontation with another nuclear-armed country. "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power," Biden said. He clarified the comments days later, saying: "I was expressing the moral outrage that I felt toward this man. I wasn't articulating a policy change."

New York police rules out terror attack after lone gunman injures at least 17 in Brooklyn subway

Horrifying visuals from the scene show people tending to bloodied passengers lying on the floor of the station, where train services have been delayed during the morning rush hour

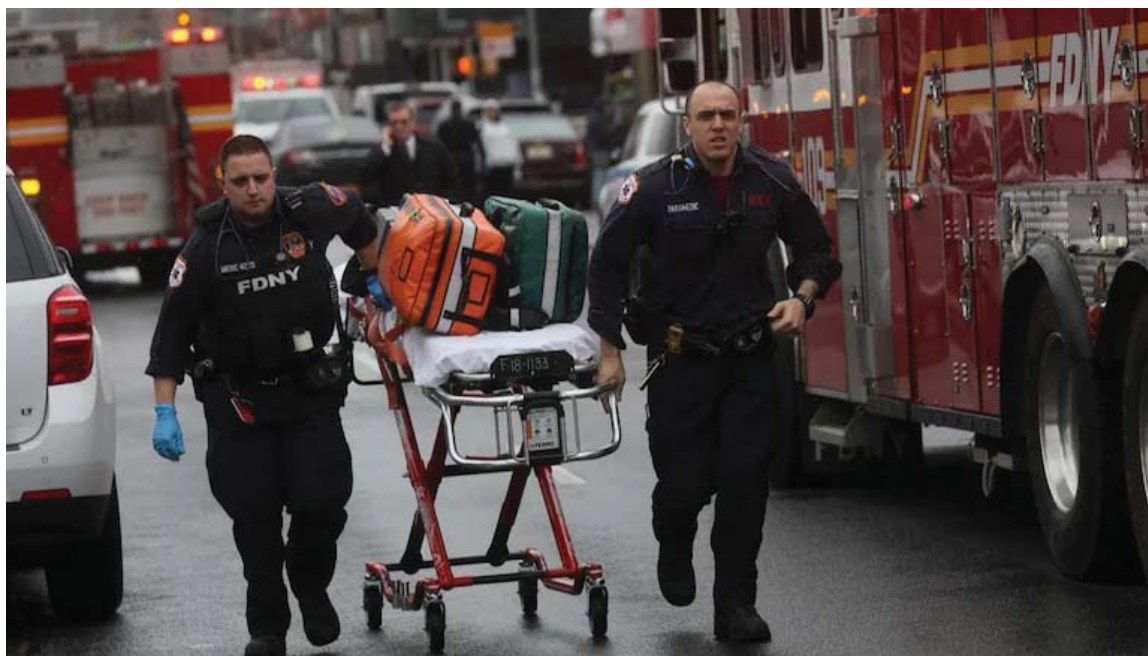
(Staff Reporter) At least 17 people have been injured in a shootout at a subway station in Brooklyn, New York, law enforcement said. The injured have been admitted to various hospitals in the area after what the police think was a lone wolf attack.

The police have described the suspected shooter as a man about 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighing around 180 pounds.

According to the police, the gunman acted alone and that investigation is on to find the motive of the suspect. However, the all-out manhunt for the gunman is the investigators' top priority, they said.

A suspect fled wearing an orange construction vest and a gas mask, according to the police, who are on the lookout for the gunman.

The New York Police Department, at a press conference, said that the Brooklyn shooting is being investigated as an "act of



terrorism" and that no "life-threatening injuries" have been reported. Horrifying visuals from the scene show people tending to bloodied passengers lying on the floor of the station, where train services have been delayed during the morning rush hour.

President Joe Biden has been briefed about the New York City subway shooting, the White House Press Secretary, Jen Psaki, said in a tweet. "White

House senior staff are in touch with Mayor Adams and Police Commissioner Sewell to offer any assistance as needed," she said.

New York's fire personnel responded to reports of smoke at the 36th Street station in the Sunset Park neighbourhood and found multiple people shot at and undetonated devices, a New York City Fire Department spokesperson said, reported

news agency Associated Press. There are "no active explosive devices at this time" at the subway station, the New York Police Department said.

The US Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg, tweeted that officials are closely monitoring the developments of the shooting. New York Governor Kathy Hochul said, "I have been briefed on this developing situation in Brooklyn. First responders are on the scene and we will work with MTA & NYPD to provide updates as the investigation continues."



US report warns about gerrymandering, voter suppression, misinformation and intimidation



(Staff Reporter) A report has raised an alarm over a "plot to destroy democracy" in the United States. The annual report titled "Under Siege: The Plot to Destroy Democracy" has been released by nonpartisan civil rights organisation National Urban League (NUL). It claims an "insidious and coordinated" effort between lawmakers and extremist groups is currently underway trying to threaten the American democracy, reports The Guardian. The study calls for "the urgent case for a national mobilisation to protect

and defend our most sacred constitutional right". NUL notes that four methods are being used to suppress the democratic rights of the people. They are: gerrymandering, voter suppression, misinformation and intimidation. The report pointed out that in 2021, 20 states sought to redraw the boundaries of constituencies for the Congressional elections by leveraging census data. It claimed that the new maps were proposed by Republican state lawmakers, adding that it amounted to "modern-day

gerrymandering that strips voting power away from communities with Black and brown voters". The NUL report further claimed that 34 laws were passed in 19 states between January 1 and December 7, 2021, that sought to dilute the voting powers of the people.

Among the restrictions used for this purpose includes, shortening the window to apply and deliver mail ballots, laws limiting absentee voting lists, restricting assistance in returning a voter's mail ballot, reducing the availability of mail ballot drop boxes, and increasing barriers for voters with disabilities, the research notes. "The burden of these laws – strict photo ID requirements, the elimination or restriction of Sunday voting, voting by mail and early voting, and the closing of polling locations – overwhelmingly falls on Black voters," Marc Morial, president and CEO of NUL, said in the report.

Cases of syphilis, other STDs rose in US during Covid pandemic: CDC report



(News Agency) According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) increased in the United States in 2020. The CDC said STD cases fell during the early months of the Covid pandemic in 2020 but rose again at the end of the year. Congenital syphilis, syphilis and gonorrhea cases rose as compared to 2019 levels, it added. CDC data showed gonorrhea-related cases rose by 10% overall in 2020, with syphilis rates increasing by 7%. The report said chlamydia

declined "likely due to decreased STD screening and under-diagnosis during the pandemic". The US health agency informed that syphilis rates in newborns soared 235 per cent in four years with cases among newborns rising 15 per cent in 2020 as compared to the previous year with early data indicating that "primary and secondary syphilis and congenital syphilis cases continued to increase in 2021 as well."

CDC stated that Chlamydia cases accounted for the largest proportion of STDs in the United States.

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

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Why did the United States resettle only 12 Ukrainian refugees in March ?

While several thousand Ukrainians have entered the United States via the border with Mexico and some on legal visas, only 12 Ukrainians came through the U.S. refugee program in March

(NewsAgency) U.S. President Joe Biden said last month that the United States would accept up to 100,000 Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion, but lawmakers and advocates have urged the Democratic president to speed up refugee and visa processing.

While several thousand Ukrainians have entered the United States via the border with Mexico and some on legal visas, only 12 Ukrainians came through the U.S. refugee program in March.

Why hasn't the US taken in more Ukrainian refugees?

More than 4 million people have fled Ukraine to neighboring countries since Russia invaded the country on Feb. 24, according to United Nations data, touching off Europe's fastest-moving refugee crisis since the end of World War Two. Top Biden officials said repeatedly last month that the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees would go to Europe during the conflict, which Russia calls a "special military operation." But facing pressure from U.S.

lawmakers and refugee advocates, the Biden administration said on March 24 that the United States would use "the full range of legal pathways" to accept up to 100,000 Ukrainians.

The pathways include the U.S. refugee resettlement program, which provides a road to citizenship, as well as existing visa avenues and a relief program known as "humanitarian parole," which allows people into the country on a temporary emergency basis.

The effort could stretch beyond the current fiscal year ending on Sept. 30, the official said, signaling that it may not move quickly. Refugee resettlement can take years and there is a long backlog for U.S. visa processing.

Could the US accept more Ukrainian refugees?

The United States admitted 514 Ukrainian refugees in January and February during Russia's build up to the war, according to State Department data, with only 12 resettled in March as the war intensified and the number of

Ukrainians fleeing skyrocketed. A State Department spokesperson said it had paused refugee operations in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv but continued to process cases through an office in Chisinau, Moldova.

Many Ukrainian refugee applicants cleared for travel to the United States in March were set to depart from inside Ukraine, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters last month. Those cases were stalled by flight cancellations related to the conflict, leading to the near-shutdown of admissions, the person said.

Lawmakers and advocates have urged the Biden administration to accelerate the processing of Ukrainian applications saying too little has been done so far.

Biden set the overall refugee ceiling for this year at 125,000 after his predecessor Donald Trump, a Republican, slashed admissions to a record-low 15,000, which gutted the program and led to processing delays already worsened by the COVID-19

What happens to Ukrainians who try to enter United States from Mexico?

Thousands of Ukrainians and Russians have been traveling to the U.S.-Mexico border to seek asylum, a trend that could accelerate as the humanitarian crisis worsens.

Last week, about 3,000 Ukrainians deemed by U.S. authorities to be particularly vulnerable were allowed to cross the border into the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The circuitous route may be the most accessible pathway into the United States for Ukrainians at the moment, even as it requires them to enter Mexico on tourist visas and approach the border without assurances they will be allowed to enter.

As of Thursday, about 2,400 Ukrainians were in Tijuana, Mexico, waiting to cross into the United States, according to Enrique Lucero, the city's migration affairs director.



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ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਅਤ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾਨ

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ

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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

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Insurance

Business, Liability, Disability, Workers Comp, E & O, Auto, Home, Property & Casualty

(See Full Page Advt. on Page 31)

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(See Full Page Advt. on Page 31)

2+2 Talks: India-US Ties Have Come A Long Way, Can Navigate Occasional Speed Bumps

What should two partners – one, a major power with a sense of entitlement, and the other, an emerging power with a sense of destiny and determination to safeguard its diplomatic elbow space – do, to smoothen things? Hold a 2+2 dialogue at the earliest! And that is precisely what India and the United States did. Their foreign and defence ministers met in Washington on April 11, 2022. The interaction was both timely and meaningful. It helped clear the air to an extent and enhance mutual understanding of each other's positions on a host of critical issues. The dialogue acquired greater salience when President Joe Biden invited the Indian prime minister for a virtual summit to kick off the ministerial confabulations. It enabled the two leaders to have an hour-long "direct, candid, open, warm and productive" exchange of views, according to an American "senior administration official".

The meeting was held in the backdrop of the Russian invasion of Ukraine which saw New Delhi and Washington stake out somewhat divergent positions. India is not a party to the conflict but, as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has been obliged to take a stand on unfolding developments. The US on the other hand has been the principal actor in fashioning a response to the Russian misadventure. Under Biden's lead, the West has made available unprecedented quantities of military assistance, including lethal and non-lethal weaponry, intelligence, and training, to the Ukrainian forces, which have not only put up a heroic resistance but also beaten back the Russian advance in some sectors.

The US is determined to make an example out of Russia and has pulled out all the stops in demonising and condemning it, including calling Mr Putin a "killer, butcher and war criminal". India on the other hand, having a 60-year-old relationship with Moscow and being highly dependent on its military hardware, has been critical but has refrained from name-calling or imposing sanctions. New Delhi by no means is condoning the invasion but that is seen as neutrality by the US. President Biden has characterised India's response as "shaky" while the spokesperson of the White House has urged India to be on the right side of history.

Prime Minister Modi, therefore, rightly decided to set the record straight, noting in his opening remarks at the summit that the "situation in Ukraine is very worrying... I spoke several times ... to the presidents of Ukraine and Russia. I not only appealed for peace but also suggested that there be direct talks between them." He pointed out that we have unequivocally

condemned the killings of innocent civilians in Bucha and have called for an independent inquiry. India has also been supplying medicines and other relief materials to Ukraine. The President welcomed "India's humanitarian support for the people of Ukraine". But the US is far from satisfied and sees it as an opportunity to drive a wedge between Russia and India. We are being called out for purchasing discounted Russian oil even though it comprises merely 1 to 2 per cent of our needs and does not violate any sanctions. New Delhi sources ten times that quantity from the US worth \$11 billion annually.

Unwarranted pressure is also being exerted on India to downsize its defence cooperation with Russia.

Defence Secretary Llyod Austin was at his condescending best while addressing a US Congressional Committee – "We continue to work with India to ensure that they understand that it's not in their best interest to continue to invest in Russian equipment... Our requirement going forward is that they downscale the types of equipment that they're investing in and look to invest more in the types of things that will make us continue to be compatible." Our "global and strategic partner" seems oblivious that such a hectoring tone could be counterproductive. There is no doubt that India attaches the highest importance to her relationship with the US and would like to see it flourish. Yet the growth has to be organic, propelled by mutual trust, not dictation. In any event, India will not give up her right of choice.

As such, there was a pressing need for a candid chat to flag India's right to make decisions in her national interest just like the US. It would appear that this message has been driven home.

The aforementioned "senior administration official" (SOA) responding to media questions in the background made two tell-tale observations. When asked about India's stand on Russia, he said "the President shared his views, and Prime Minister Modi shared his views (translation – We have different views and have agreed to disagree)." He added, "I think India will make its own decisions, but we're going to continue the discussions (translation – We note India's stand, are not very comfortable and will continue to press India to modify it)." Judging from the comments of American officials after the talks, some progress is discernible. On oil, the US has now reconciled to limited imports from Russia but as the SOA observed, "We don't think India should accelerate or increase imports of Russian energy. And the US is ready to support India, remain in a conversation with India

about its diversification of imports".

On defence purchases from Russia, the US has now trained its sights on preventing fresh acquisitions by India and could have hinted that a CAATSA waiver would be forthcoming for procuring S400 missiles. Washington must have figured that any sanctions at this stage would have a detrimental impact on the relationship with India. Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the joint press conference left little room for ambiguity – "... we continue to urge all countries to avoid major new transactions for Russian weapons systems..." Interestingly a similar line was taken by the spokesperson of the ministry of external affairs in his weekly briefing on April 8, albeit in the context of economic engagement with Russia – "Our focus is on stabilising this established economic relations in the current circumstances ... It's not talking about increasing, this was about stabilising it because this relationship exists and it's in our interest to make sure some of the economic activity continues."

In parallel, the Biden administration is trying to make defence deals more attractive for India. Secretary Austin noted that discussions will continue with India on "a range of options that would make our systems more affordable". Meanwhile, defence minister Rajnath Singh made a pitch for "Make in India" – underlining the need for co-development and co-production of defence

equipment. Secretary Austin expressed satisfaction at deepening defence cooperation including on the air-launched unmanned aerial vehicles and a new supply chain cooperation initiative to meet each other's priority defence requirements.

The sides held wide-ranging discussions on bilateral, regional and global issues, including energy, education, counterterrorism, science and technology partnership, space, cyber and emerging technologies, Afghanistan, Covid-19 pandemic, climate, global economy, and a free and open Indo-Pacific, yet the bulk of the discussions pertained to the Russian crisis. A working group on education and skill training has also been formed. Secretary Blinken made a jarring and gratuitous reference to "some recent concerning developments in India, including a rise in human rights abuses by some government, police, and prison officials", which did not go down well with the Indian side. Our American friends, especially the Democrats, cannot resist the temptation of being preachy while overlooking their domestic blemishes. This proclivity may boomerang if countries like India were to pay back in the same coin. However, no relationship is perfect. The strength of India-US ties is that the positives far outweigh the abbreviations. We have come a long way in the last two decades and are well-positioned to navigate occasional speed bumps.

UK inflation rises at the fastest pace in 30 years

National Statistics said Wednesday. The U.K. faces what economists say will be the biggest drop in living standards since the mid-1950s as rocketing energy costs, rising food prices and tax increases overshadow higher wages.

People around the world are feeling the squeeze of inflation as demand rapidly bounced back from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine further drove up energy costs and squeezed supply chains. In the United States, consumer prices last month jumped 8.5% from a year earlier, the fastest pace in more than 40 years, the Labor Department said Tuesday. In the 19 European countries using the euro, inflation surged to 7.5% last month, the fifth consecutive month that it has hit a record high. In the U.K., the toll of rising rising means disposable household incomes, adjusted for inflation, are expected to drop by 2.2% this year, according to the government's independent budget adviser. Household natural gas prices jumped 28.3% over the last year, and

electricity prices rose 19.2% as the global economy recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing worldwide demand for energy. Prices will continue to rise after Britain's energy regulator authorized a 54% increase in gas and electricity bills for millions of households that took effect in April. Transportation costs are also rising, with the cost of gasoline and diesel fuel rising by an average of 30.7% over the past year, the biggest increase since current records began in January 1989, the Office for National Statistics said. Countries are moving to ease the pain from rising food, fuel and other costs by raising interest rates. The Bank of England has raised its key interest rate three times since December, and the U.S. Federal Reserve hiked its benchmark short-term rate last month and is expected to keep raising it, possibly aggressively. The European Central Bank, meanwhile, has sped up its exit from economic stimulus efforts to combat inflation but has not taken more drastic steps. It meets again Thursday.

Exploitation of Class and Public Money: JNU is Becoming a Failure of an Institution

On an average per day expense out of the public money is Rs 1.1 crores. The unit cost of education is 7,15,716 rupees which is very high. In the fiscal year of 2019-20, JNU has received 411.49 crores as Grants in aid and subsidies against which it has received only 6.49 crores as academic receipts which is just 1.4% of the total grants. The ratio of academic receipts in comparison to grants is probably the lowest of any university by any standards. It is jokingly said that if you want to talk about class exploitation, you come to JNU, but if you want to see "exploitation of public money" you join as a student here. Another important ideal that the founders envisaged was imbibing the feeling of national integration, democracy and secularism as grooming ideas for the students. Far from being a seeding ground of democratic values and nationalism, the 'self-questioning' mind of the students started questioning anything which is Indian. The basic ethos brewed was to propose nothing, question and oppose everything. Even the communist ideas for which it is known for have been imported and borrowed from the western political thinkers like Marx, Gramsci, Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Mao, Lenin and so on. No idea of egalitarianism, democracy and socialism has been ever culled from Indian political

Pakistan desires peaceful ties with India: Shehbaz Sharif thanks PM Modi for wishes

Pakistan Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif thanked the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his wishes and expressed his desire for peaceful ties with India. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his congratulatory tweet and said, "Pakistan desires peaceful & cooperative ties with India." PM Modi had congratulated Sharif on his election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. "India desires peace and stability in a region free of terror, so that we can focus on our development challenges and ensure the well-being and prosperity of our people," said Modi in a tweet. Sharif replied to Modi's tweet saying, "Peaceful settlement of outstanding disputes including Jammu & Kashmir is indispensable." Both the prime ministers expressed their common goal to "ensure the well-being and prosperity of our people" and "focus on the socio-economic development of our people." Sharif had spoken of Kashmir during his inaugural speech and asked PM Modi to talk on the issue so that poverty on both sides can be tackled. Shehbaz Sharif, was sworn in as Pakistan's 23rd prime minister on April 11 by acting President Sadiq Sanjrani.

thought be it modern or ancient. Far from being secular, this institution has become the most politicised campus where everything is coloured in left and non-left ideologies. Students are free to flaunt the attendance criteria, hostel norms and administrative instructions since they are 'groomed' to disdain any 'authority' or rule of law. They can use any means be it violent or otherwise. They have an unbridled 'right to speech and expression' which they claim as sacrosanct. This right is used to question the very 'nation-state' in the garb of opposing the government. Though they claim to stand for questioning the powers that be, instead they question the very 'state' instead of the government.

Since its inception, far from being a Harvard, JNU remained an unchanged hotbed of academic intrigue, ideological warfare and continuing student unrest. The students, whose purpose of going to

the university is to get a critical and scientific understanding of things, are indoctrinated in ideologies and work more on political issues than on their studies. This culture of politics through student unions is so dominant in the cultural ethos of JNU that students are ready to use any means to get their way out. The net result is controversies that are not new to JNU. JNU was shut down for 46 days by the Indian government in 1981 after violence by student unions much before the present controversies. In the name of democracy and the rights of students, campus life is politicised by Student Unions. On 24 October 2008, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India stayed the JNU elections and banned the JNUSU for not complying with the recommendations of the Lyngdoh committee.

In 2010 a "JNU Forum Against War on People" was organised by the Democratic

Students' Union (DSU) and All India Students Association (AISA) to celebrate the killing of 76 CRPF personnel in Chhattisgarh. In April 2000, two army officers who disturbed an Indo-Pak Mushaira at the JNU campus were beaten up by agitated students. On 9 February 2016, a cultural evening was organised by 10 students of DSU at the Sabarmati Dhaba, against the execution of the 2001 Indian Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru and separatist leader Maqbool Bhat, and for Kashmir's right to self-determination. Anti-India slogans like "Pakistan Zindabad" ("Long live Pakistan"), "Kashmir ki azadi tak jung chalegi, Bharat ki barbadi tak jung chalegi," were reportedly raised at the protest meet. JNU administration ordered a "disciplinary" inquiry into the holding of the event despite the denial of permission, saying any talk about the country's disintegration cannot be "national".

What is the West Bengal School Service Commission recruitment scam

However, the division bench of Justices Harish Tandon and Rabinranath Samanta recused itself from further hearing the matter on "personal ground". Subsequently, a division bench of Justices T S Sivagnanam and Sabyasachi Bhattacharya too declined to hear the appeals. It was then assigned to a division bench of Justices Soumen Sen and A K Mukherjee, which too declined to hear the appeals.

Where does the case stand now?

The case was notified to be heard by yet another division bench comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Bivas Pattanayak on Tuesday. However, at the hearing, this bench too declined to hear the appeals, and placed the matters before the Chief Justice for reassignment. Finally, a fifth division bench of Justices Subrata Talukdar and Krishna Rao agreed to hear the matter. However, another order of Justice Gangopadhyay directing the West Bengal SSC former Advisor S P Sinha to be called for questioning by the Regional Head of the CBI was

stayed. However, a division bench of Justices Sen and Mukherjee stayed the order on the grounds that the matter could be heard by the regular Division Bench. Finally, the division bench of Justices Talukdar and Rao upheld Justice Gangopadhyay's orders on Sinha and former state education secretary A K Sarkar, but barred the CBI from taking them into custody. On Tuesday, the Division Bench of Justices Subrata Talukder and Ananda Kumar Mukherjee had stayed Justice Gangopadhyay's order, which had asked former state education minister Partha Chatterjee to appear before the CBI on the same evening. The court posted the matter for hearing for 10.30 am on Wednesday. Extending the stay for four weeks, the judges said on Wednesday that the CBI cannot investigate the case till the matter was disposed of. The court ordered the Justice Ranjit Bagh Committee to investigate the alleged Group C scam. The committee had earlier conducted an inquiry into alleged irregularities in "Group D" recruitment.

Super quake struck Earth 3,800 yrs ago, triggered 9,000km wide tsunami, say scientists

That earthquake, with a magnitude of 9.5, left two million people homeless, injured at least 3,000, and killed approximately 1,655.

The study was conducted by Professor Diego Salazar at the University of Chile and was published in Science Advances last week. "It had been thought that there could not be an event of that size in the north of the country simply because you could not get a long enough rupture," explained Professor James Goff, Visiting Professor at the University of Southampton who co-authored the study, according to ScienceAlert.

"But we have now found evidence of a rupture that's about one thousand kilometres long just off the Atacama Desert coast and that is massive," he continued. The scientists claimed that the enormous rupture of the plates due to the quake caused the coastline of northern Chile to lift up, generating a massive tsunami. They based their hypothesis after finding marine sediments and insects in the Atacama Desert, which are

usually discovered in the sea. "The Atacama Desert is one of the driest, most hostile environments in the world and finding evidence of tsunamis there has always been difficult," Goff was quoted as saying. "However, we found evidence of marine sediments and a lot of beasties that would have been living quietly in the sea before being thrown inland. And we found all these very high up and a long way inland so it could not have been a storm that put them there," he added.

The researchers believe that their findings will help in understanding the earthquake and tsunami hazards in the Pacific region, and how severe the effects will be next time such a super-earthquake happens. "While this had a major impact on people in Chile, the South Pacific islands were uninhabited when they took a pummeling from the tsunami 3800 years ago. But they are all well-populated now, and many are popular tourist destinations, so when such an event occurs next time the consequences could be catastrophic unless we learn from these findings," Goff concluded.

A greener, safer future for Indian cities

age when manufacturing and trade were the primary economic activities in cities. India's hierarchical system of cities — from mega cities which are the drivers of innovation and economic growth to smaller towns which support local and regional economies and ensure linkages to the rural hinterlands — requires targeted economic development planning and positive climate action.

Master plans face prolonged delays in preparation, sanctioning and implementation. They lack the mandate for integration with other sectoral infrastructure plans which largely remain

as wishlists. Inter-agency negotiations remain out of the scope of the master planning process. They tend to take a static, broad-brush approach to cities that have dynamic fine-grained structures and local specificities. In most cases, they end up having a low implementation rate. Globally, cities are moving to the practice of developing strategic plans and projects along with local area plans.

A set of strategic projects that have the potential to trigger growth in the region, to achieve the vision, are identified through a negotiated process. The projects are designed and developed in

the context of land that can be made available and capital resources that can be raised. Indian cities should transition to using master plans for developing a shared vision and stating desired long-term outcomes as a regulatory control tool. Strategic plans should be developed every five years to increase a city's competitiveness and help it achieve its strategic goals with respect to sustainability and economic development by identifying key projects to be implemented. Finally, local area plans should be developed to ensure the health, safety and welfare of citizens through

public participation, contextualising local challenges, needs and ambitions, while supporting the overall objectives of the master plan. Cities should also aim to mainstream the use of spatialised social, economic and environmental data to create robust links across the urban-rural continuum. Plans are about people and not just physical spaces. Building consensus around future growth and development, with a focus on climate action, economic and social integration, is crucial. Such a participatory process is what will help build a vibrant, inclusive and liveable urban India.

Not Just the Enemy's Enemy, India Must Befriend the Enemy's Friend Too

Given the current geopolitical and economic situation, India also needs to course-correct its strategy of statecraft. While efforts to maintain a healthy relationship with existing neighbours must continue vigorously besides the 'Act East Policy', there is a need to launch a new statecraft methodology to befriend the enemy's friends, that is, nations friendly to China have to be connected for the larger cause of India's national good. This is in sync with the saying that "there are no permanent friends or enemies in the

international system, only permanent enemies". Pakistan is currently crumbling economically, a colony but in name of China, with its deep state ie the military leadership signalling to India that they are ready for change. India should move that extra mile to improve its relationship with Pakistan with a 'people-focused' approach, despite the failed attempts earlier. Beginning with trade, once the miseries of people are addressed and employment generation picks up, it can not only facilitate mutual trade and cooperation but can

provide a gateway to India directly to Afghanistan as well as Central Asian Republics (CAR) and in the process, subvert a number of Chinese friends in a win-win matrix. Not only this, there is a need to start a relationship with North Korea as well, another friend of China. This relationship has probably also not been given due attention due to our friendly relations with Japan, South Korea and USA. As Indian diplomacy has efficiently handled the current challenge of maintaining the balance between the USA and Russia during the

Russia-Ukraine conflict, a similar approach is also needed to enhance our bilateral relationship with all friendly countries of China which can be deliberately identified and an action plan operationalised. While on one hand, this capacity creation will provide better leverages to the Government of India, in the long run, it may also act to stabilise our bilateral relations with China as well. The changed operationalisation of statecraft is sure to propel India to one of the lead pole positions in the world.

Who is Marine Le Pen, the far-right candidate up against Emmanuel Macron in France elections?

Le Pen's skirmishes with the European Union, a history of proximity with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and a recent call for rapprochement between NATO and Russia have turned several heads in the West. We take a look at Le Pen's anti-immigration policies and her chances of winning the French elections

Coming a close second in the first round of France's presidential election held on April 10, Marine Le Pen managed to bring her far-right National Rally party to the mainstream. A staunch nationalist, Le Pen this election has seemingly tempered her extremist views to appeal to a wider range of voters. With talks of unions and giving money back to the French poor, Le Pen looks to attract leftist voters. At the same time, she also carries the weight of the legacy left behind by her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the founder of the erstwhile National Front party.

Jean-Marie, known for his controversial, racist, and anti-Semitic remarks, was once dubbed 'le diable' (the devil). When Le Pen rose through the ranks, she was called 'la fille du diable' or 'the devil's daughter'. Since then, she has worked hard to tone down her perception as a hardliner. Yet, her anti-immigration and anti-Islamic stance remain in line with the far-right ideology.

Le Pen's skirmishes with the European Union, a history of proximity with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and a recent call for rapprochement between NATO and Russia have turned several heads in the West that now await the results of the elections. The 2022 Presidential elections will see Le Pen battle with Emmanuel Macron, the incumbent French President, for the second time. She has managed to secure 23.2 per cent of the votes in the first round,

just 4.6 percentage points behind Macron's 27.8.

The gap between the two candidates has widened from 2017 when Le Pen was just 2.71 percentage points behind Macron in the first round. Polls, however, show a neck-to-neck result in the second round. According to Ipsos, a Paris-based market research organization, the balance of power tips in Macron's favour with 54 per cent, and 46 per cent for Le Pen. During the last elections, Le Pen lost with a much larger margin securing 33.90 per cent against Macron's 66.10 per cent.

Le Pen and her rise in French politics

Born in August 1968, Le Pen recalls in a memoir that a bomb blast at their apartment when she was eight years old heralded a political awakening. With degrees in criminal law, Le Pen joined her father's National Front party in 1998.

She went on to hold positions of a regional councillor, a municipal councillor and a member of the European Parliament. She became the vice president of the party in 2003 and eight years later, she succeeded her father to become the chief of the National Front. In 2012, she competed in the Presidential elections, ending up third.

Le Pen has often distanced herself from the views of her father, who has had several convictions over hate speech. Le Pen expelled him from the party in 2015 after he defended his 1996 remarks calling the Nazi

gas chambers a mere "detail in the history of World War 2". Le Pen had publicly expressed her disagreement with Jean-Marie at the time. In 2018, she even rebranded the party as National Rally, in a further move to establish her own identity.

In the last five years, she has changed or somewhat softened her stance on immigration, gay marriage, and abortion. However, her views still remain fiercely nativist and conservative.

Le Pen on immigration and Islam

Le Pen's campaign has been boosted by the rise of far-right leader Eric Zemmour. Though he garnered just over 7 per cent of votes in the first round, his adherence to hardcore far-right ideology such as the 'great replacement theory' which suggests that "elites" are looking to replace the French population with non-Europeans, and his refusal to coexist with Islam, has made Le Pen seem a more palatable candidate. However, ending "uncontrolled immigration" through a referendum is also first on the list of agenda laid out by Le Pen. Though she no longer seeks an end to dual citizenship, she plans to make it harder for immigrants to take up residence or receive aid. She wants to end family reunification, through which immigrants can take up French residence if their relative is a resident; end residence permit of foreigners unemployed for over a year; and expel all foreign delinquents or criminals.

Elon Musk not sure if he could acquire Twitter, has a Plan B, calls SEC 'bastards'

Just hours after Elon Musk offered to buy tech giant Twitter for \$41.39 billion, the billionaire said he was not sure if he would 'be able to acquire it', but hinted at a plan B.

Asserting that his hostile bid was not aimed at making money but to create an inclusive arena for free speech, Musk said he has sufficient assets to carry out the deal. Musk's net worth is estimated to be around \$282 billion.

Speaking at TED2022 conference in Vancouver, Musk did not disclose what his plan B is but reports said he could dump the 9.2% stake in the company which had made him the largest shareholder in the social media giant.

"I am not sure that I will actually be able to acquire it," he told the conference. He called Securities and Exchange

Commission officials "bastards" for bringing fraud charges against him over his 2018 tweets regarding taking Tesla private.

"So I was forced to concede to the SEC unlawfully. Those bastards."

Musk offered to buy Twitter in a regulatory filing on Thursday. He is offering \$54.20 per share. He made an announcement about his offer in a short tweet on Thursday that said 'I made an offer'. Musk has looked to give 38 per cent premium over the closing price of the stock of Twitter on April 1.

The single tweet from the billionaire sent shockwaves through the business world. The offer elicited fears as well as cheers.

Tech watchers reacted to the Tesla chief's proposal for one of the world's

most influential information exchanges with immediate worries about accountability, public discourse and even how it could impact democracy.

"Twitter is too important to be owned and controlled by a single person," tweeted venture capitalist Fred Wilson. "The opposite should be happening. Twitter should be decentralized."

Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal has already come out against the proposal, saying it's too low, drawing a sharp reply from Musk questioning Saudi Arabia's "views on journalistic freedom of speech."

Still, Musk provided some detail Thursday on his vision, saying he'd like to lift the veil on the algorithm that runs on the platform, even allowing people to look through it and suggest changes. The mercurial billionaire is known to support free speech but is also opposed to curbs which experts believe are important to prevent negative real-world ramifications like violence.

"I do think that we want to be just very reluctant to delete things and just be very cautious with permanent bans. Timeouts, I think are better," Musk told the Ted conference on Thursday, without addressing Trump directly.

"I think we want to really have, like a sort of obsession and reality, that speech is as free as reasonably possible," he added.

Twitter not held hostage by Musk offer, says CEO

Meanwhile, speaking to employees, Twitter CEO Parag Agarwal said the company is not held hostage by Musk's offer.

"We as employees control what happens," he told staff, asking them to remain focused, according to news agency Reuters.

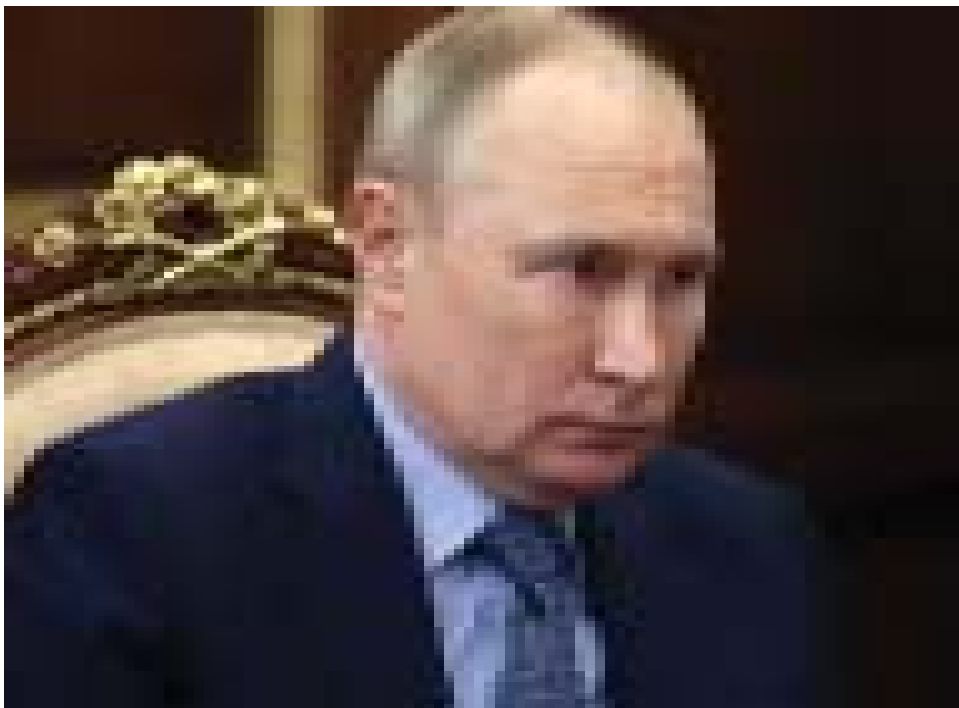
It said he was responding to staff queries posted on the Slack messaging service of Twitter.

Agarwal faced some tough questions in the interaction with staff.

One of them asked how Twitter decided to offer Musk a seat in the company's board. "Are we just going to start inviting any and all billionaires to the board?"

According to Reuters, Agrawal said the board was acting in the best interest of shareholders. "I have a strong point of view that people who are critical of our service, their voice is something that we must emphasise so that we can learn and get better."

Desperate Putin may use nuclear weapons, says CIA chief



CIA chief William Burns said on Thursday that Russian President Vladimir Putin may use a tactical or low-yield nuclear weapon especially since Russia has faced setbacks in its invasion of Ukraine. Burns was speaking in Atlanta in front of Georgia Tech University. "Given the potential desperation of President Putin and the Russian leadership, given the setbacks that they've faced so far, militarily, none of us can take lightly the threat posed by a potential resort to tactical nuclear weapons or low-yield nuclear weapons," said Burns. Burns added that the US has not seen "a lot of practical evidence" of actual deployment of nuclear weapons. "We're obviously very concerned. I know President Biden is deeply concerned about avoiding a third world war, about avoiding a threshold in which, you know, nuclear conflict becomes possible," said Burns. Russia possesses tactical nuclear

weapons. Such nuclear weapons are less powerful than the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima during Second World War. The escalate to de-escalate military doctrine of Russia would involve launching a first strike nuclear weapon of low yield to regain the initiative if things go badly in a conventional conflict with the West. But under this hypothesis, "NATO would intervene militarily on the ground in Ukraine in the course of this conflict, and that's not something, as President Biden has made very clear, that's in the cards." Burns has served as US ambassador to Russia. He had strong words for Vladimir Putin, calling him an "apostle of payback" who over the years "has stood in a combustible combination of grievance and ambition and insecurity." "Every day, Putin demonstrates that declining powers can be at least as disruptive as rising ones," Burns said.



BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution - First Degree Murder, Second Degree Murder, First Degree Assault, Second Degree Assault, Dangerous Weapon with Intent to Injure



Photograph taken April 2015

DESCRIPTION

| | |
|--|---|
| Alias: Bhadreshkumar C. Patel | Place of Birth: Kantrodi Ta Viramgam, Gujarat, India |
| Date(s) of Birth Used: May 15, 1990 | Eyes: Brown |
| Hair: Brown | Weight: 165 pounds |
| Height: 5'9" | Occupation: Employee of donut shop |
| Sex: Male | |
| Nationality: Indian | |

REWARD

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$100,000 for information leading to the arrest of Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel.

REMARKS

Patel was last known to be in the Newark, New Jersey, area.

CAUTION

Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel is wanted for allegedly killing his wife by striking her multiple times with an object while they were both working at a donut shop in Hanover, Maryland, on April 12, 2015. A local arrest warrant was issued in the District Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County on April 13, 2015, and Patel was charged with first degree murder, second degree murder, first degree assault, second degree assault, and dangerous weapon with intent to injure. A federal arrest warrant was issued in the United States District Court, District of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland, on April 20, 2015, after Patel was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

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Reports have claimed that Chinese companies are looking to buy up "strategic" pieces of land around the world close to US military installations including around key sea lanes and straits. A report in the Financial Times of London said that some of these companies may be linked to the Chinese government, while others appeared "genuine examples of private sector entrepreneurship". The report cited the case of Solomon Islands where Chinese companies had gained a foothold even before the country switched recognition from Taiwan to Beijing in 2019 with "similar patterns"

Chinese companies buying up 'strategic' pieces of land worldwide: Report

witnessed in Central America and the Caribbean. The report said Chinese investors in the Philippines in collaboration with a mainland real estate company sought to build a "smart city" in Fuga island along the strategically important Luzon Strait close to Taiwan. However,

the move prompted an investigation as the Philippines government made plans to build its own naval base in the island. The report claimed little known Chinese companies with small shareholders were being roped in for the initiative with some having close links to China's security forces and government agencies.

The Financial Times report claimed some ethnic Chinese living abroad were also being "pulled" into Beijing's plans. A report in Japanese media had claimed earlier that China may be eyeing food and natural resources in emerging and developing countries.

Methane concentration in Earth's atmosphere witnessed record rise in 2021

In 2021, methane concentration in Earth's air witnessed a record rise, as per US government data. The spike in greenhouse gas has been witnessed for the second year in a row, raising fears of more effects of it on climate change. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on Thursday found that the methane's presence has risen by 17 parts per billion (ppb) in the atmosphere in 2021. This seems to be the largest annual hike recorded since the exercise began in 1983. Earlier, the record rise was of 15.3 ppb in 2020.

Rick Spinrad, administrator, NOAA, said, "Our data show that global emissions continue to move in the wrong direction at a rapid pace. The evidence is consistent, alarming, and undeniable."

Lindsay Lan, atmospheric scientist, NOAA and University of Colorado, told AP that methane levels are now more than double the pre-industrial levels of 720 parts per billion. Methane is a potent heat-trapping greenhouse gas but its effect is short-lived too.

It is around 25 times more powerful than carbon dioxide at trapping heat but it only lasts nine years in the air and not thousands of years like carbon dioxide, Lan added.

Cornell University methane researcher Robert Howarth told AP, "This trend of accelerating increase in methane is extremely disturbing."

Crisis-hit Sri Lanka defaults on external debt, hopes on IMF lifeline

Sri Lanka has defaulted on its multi-billion dollar external debt, and has termed the move a "last resort" while waiting on a bailout package from the International Monetary Fund. In the throes of an economic meltdown, Sri Lanka has defaulted on its multi-billion dollar external debt. The government termed the move a "last resort" after running out of foreign exchange to import desperately needed goods.

The crisis-hit island nation's finance ministry, which is awaiting a bailout package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), announced that it would suspend normal debt servicing, and that "orderly and consensual restructuring will take place in a manner consistent with an economic adjustment program supported by the IMF." The policy would apply to international bonds, all bilateral loans excluding swaps between the Central Bank and a foreign central bank, all loans with commercial banks and institutional lenders, it said. According to



media reports, Sri Lanka's external debt servicing obligations are believed to be over \$6 billion. Sri Lanka is grappling with its worst economic downturn since independence. On top of low forex reserves and skyrocketing inflation, the country is experiencing a crippling shortage of rations,

fuel and several other essential items. People have been protesting for weeks over lengthy power cuts and shortage of goods. Blaming the government for poorly handling the economic crisis, they are demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

India invited by Germany for G7 summit in June

Germany has informally intimated New Delhi its intent to invite India for the G7 summit. A formal invite is expected soon from Berlin to India. The summit is due to take place from June 26-28 at Schloss Elmau in the Bavarian Alps. Germany is the chair of the grouping for this year and holds the meeting amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is the fourth time India has been consecutively invited to the G7 summit since 2019. France in 2019 had invited India for the G7 'Biarritz Summit' as "a goodwill partner". In 2020, President Donald Trump had invited PM Modi to the G7 outreach summit at Camp David. The summit was to take place in

June 2020 however due to the COVID-19 crisis it could not take place. Last year the UK had invited India for the G7 summit, but PM Modi could not travel due to the second COVID-19 wave in the country. PM Modi participated in the summit virtually. Meanwhile, the German government has dismissed reports of Berlin not keen to invite New Delhi for the summit due to its Russian policy amid the Ukraine war. It's believed that Germany is planning to not only invite India for the June summit but some other countries also. India was first invited to the G7 outreach summit in 2003 when the then Indian PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee was invited by France. From

2005 to 2009, India has been annually invited to the G7 outreach summit with PM Manmohan Singh representing India. Germany, this year's G7 host has had close ties with Delhi. EAM Jaishankar was in Munich in February this year for the security conference. During his visit, Jaishankar met his German counterpart. PM Modi is expected to travel to the country in early May for the 6th Inter-governmental Consultations (IGC). The then German Chancellor Angela Merkel had visited India from October 31 - November 1, 2019 for consultations which takes place every two years alternately between the two countries.

Lakhimpur case: SC to deliver verdict on plea seeking cancellation of Ashish Misra's bail on April 18

The Supreme Court will deliver its order on April 18 on the plea seeking cancellation of bail granted to Ashish Misra in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri

The Supreme Court will pronounce its verdict on April 18 on the plea seeking cancellation of bail granted to Union Minister Ajay Misra's son, Ashish Misra, in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case that claimed the lives of eight people, including four farmers. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court had reserved its order on a plea by some of the relatives of the victims of the Lakhimpur Kheri violence seeking cancellation of the bail granted to prime accused Ashish Misra.

Ashish Misra was arrested on October 9 last year in connection with the violence that erupted in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri on October 3. Eight people, including four farmers, were killed in Lakhimpur Kheri in clashes during a farmers' protest. In February this year, Ashish Misra was released from jail after he was granted bail by the Lucknow



bench of the Allahabad High Court. Ashish Misra's lawyers submitted two bail bonds of Rs 3 lakh each in regards to his bail orders on February 14.

Following this, some of the relatives of the victims of the Lakhimpur Kheri violence filed

a plea before the SC, seeking cancellation of Ashish Misra's bail. Advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for victims' families, read out the details of the FIR registered against the accused Ashish Misra. Dave claimed that the High Court did not take

into account many facts in granting bail, adding that this was a serious case of murder. Dushyant Dave argued, "In the FIR, it is clearly stated that people were crushed under the jeep. Ashish Misra was sitting in this vehicle. The High Court,

while granting bail (to Ashish Misra), had mentioned Bullet bike, while the car had crushed the victims. During this, bullets were also fired, but the High Court said there was no proof of bullets being fired." Dave said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) conducted a detailed investigation, adding that the bail of the accused should be cancelled. Meanwhile, Ashish Misra's lawyer Ranjit Kumar argued, "In the report given by the farmers to the police, it has been said that a farmer died due to bullet. The High Court also said that no bullet was fired. People also said that Ashish ran into the sugarcane field, but there was no sugarcane field at the spot, it was of paddy." After hearing both sides of the argument, the Supreme Court had reserved its verdict on April 4.

Heart inflammation risk after Covid-19 jabs is very low, finds study

The researchers found no statistically significant difference between the incidence of myopericarditis following Covid-19 vaccination and other vaccinations (56 per million)

The overall risk of heart inflammation (myopericarditis) following Covid-19 vaccination is very low, affecting 18 people per million vaccine doses, a study in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine has found. The researchers found no statistically significant difference between the incidence of myopericarditis following Covid-19 vaccination and other vaccinations (56 per million).

THE CONDITION: Myopericarditis is a condition that causes inflammation of the heart muscle and, in some cases, severe permanent heart damage. It is most often caused by viruses, but in rare instances can also occur after vaccination.

DATABASE: The researchers looked at more than 400 million doses from global databases, and analysed

more than 20 studies with reported incidences of myopericarditis following any type of vaccination between January 1947 and December 2021.

Of these, 11 studies looked specifically at Covid-19 vaccinations, covering over 395 million doses – nearly 300 million of which were mRNA vaccines. The rest of the studies covered other vaccinations such as smallpox (2.9 million doses), influenza (1.5 million doses), and others (5.5 million doses).

FINDINGS: Among COVID-19 vaccinations, the risk of myopericarditis (18 cases per million doses) was higher for those who received mRNA vaccines (22.6 per million) compared to non-mRNA vaccines (7.9 per million). Reported cases were also



higher in people below 30 (40.9 per million), males (23 per million), and following the second dose (31.1 per million). "The occurrence of myopericarditis following non-

Covid-19 vaccination could suggest that myopericarditis is a side effect of the inflammatory processes induced by any vaccination and is not unique to the SARS-

CoV-2 spike proteins in Covid-19 vaccines or infection," said co-author Dr Jyoti Somani, an infectious diseases specialist at National University Hospital, Singapore.

Why do humans have a longer life span than our furry companions? Scientists have the answer

Have you ever wondered why humans live a far longer life than the animals around us? Surely, you must've thought about it at one time or another. Why is it that for our animal companions, our dogs or cats, a 20-year lifespan is quite long, but for us, a 50-60 years life is at times considered short? Well, the simple reason behind that is that humans on average die at around 70-80 years of age. In 2017, the United Nations pegged the estimated global average life expectancy at 72.6 years. But why do we have a longer lifespan?

Earlier scientists thought that this had something to do with our body size. Experts suggested that a smaller body size burns up energy



quickly, which causes a speedier decline. For example, a mice has an average lifespan of 3.7 years while for a dog it can be anywhere from 10-13 years.

But then, how does a naked mole

rat that is only five inches big have pretty much the same lifespan as a giraffe? While a giraffe typically lives for 24 years, the naked mole-rat lives for 25 years.

A new study by the Wellcome Sanger Institute in Cambridge, which was published in the journal Nature suggests that the key to the logic behind the high or low lifespans might be in the rate of genetic decay and DNA mutations.

The study reports that animals with longer lives successfully slow down their DNA mutations, which contributes to their lengthy lifespans. Somatic mutations are genetic

alterations that occur in all cells and are mostly inconsequential, but some of them can set a cell on the route to cancer or affect normal function.

A report by the Telegraph quotes the study's lead author saying that: "To find a similar pattern of genetic changes in animals as different from one another as a mouse and a tiger was surprising.

"But the most exciting aspect of the study has to be finding that lifespan is inversely proportional to the somatic mutation rate. This suggests that somatic mutations may play a role in ageing." Going back to the giraffe and naked mole-rat example, the key to their almost similar lifespan lies in the number of genetic mutations; which is 99 for the former and 93 for the latter.

While we humans only face 47 mutations a year, mice which have a very short life span of 3.7 years experience suffer a massive number of 796 mutations every year. The finding, according to the researchers, opens the door to a better knowledge of the ageing process, as well as the inevitability and timing of death.

Invading forces in Ukraine deported 500,000 civilians to Russia, says report

Russian forces in Ukraine have been accused of committing several war crimes during the war. In a new report released by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the invading forces have been alleged to deport around 500,000 Ukrainians to Russia.

After the deportation, they were brought to the "filtration camps in Russia near the Ukrainian border," the report said, citing the Ukrainian Parliament's human rights ombudsperson. On Wednesday, the report, which detailed the alleged violations of humanitarian and human rights laws, was released. The organisation had begun its probe on March 14, while the report was finally submitted on April 5. Russia has been denying most of the allegations over

such deportations. The investigators noted that "if (some of) these deportations were forcible (including because Russia created a coercive environment in which those civilians had no other choice than to leave Russia) and as they necessarily concern civilians, who had fallen into the power of Russia as an occupying power, this violates in each case [international humanitarian law] and constitutes a war crime." Russian forces have also been alleged to rape and gang-rape civilian women, the OSCE said. The Red Cross emblem was also used by Russian forces as a disguise for "military non-medical vehicles," which is also a violation of international law. It seems to have also used Ukrainian flags, a white flag and other symbols and uniforms for the same.



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How to prove genocide, the most serious war crime

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and US President Joe Biden have accused Russian soldiers of genocide, focusing on evidence of rape, torture and killings in areas around Kyiv. What is genocide, and what must prosecutors do to prove it?

Washington and Kyiv are accusing Russia of genocide in Ukraine, but the ultimate war crime has a strict legal definition and has rarely been proven in court since it was cemented in humanitarian law after the Holocaust.

What is genocide?

The 1948 Genocide Convention defines genocide as crimes committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such."

Three cases so far have met international courts' threshold: the Cambodian Khmer Rouge's slaughter of minority Cham people and Vietnamese in the 1970s, who were among an estimated 1.7 million dead; the 1994 mass killing of Tutsis in Rwanda that left 800,000 dead; and the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of some 8,000 Muslim men and boys in Bosnia.

Criminal acts comprising genocide include killing members of the group, causing them serious bodily or mental harm, creating conditions calculated to destroy them, preventing births, or forcibly transferring children to other groups.

What must prosecutors do to prove genocide?

To establish genocide, prosecutors must first show that the victims were part of a distinct national, ethnic, racial or religious group. This excludes groups targeted for political beliefs.

Genocide is harder to show than other violations of international humanitarian law, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity, because



Who is accusing Russia?

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and US President Joe Biden have both accused Russian soldiers of genocide, focusing on evidence of rape, torture and killings in areas around Kyiv recaptured this month by Ukrainian troops. "Yes, I called it genocide because it has become clearer and clearer that (Russian President Vladimir) Putin is just

trying to wipe out the idea of being able to be Ukrainian and the evidence is mounting," Biden said. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said last week that the scale of atrocities "doesn't look far short of genocide." Moscow, which called the attack against its smaller neighbour "a special operation" to halt genocide against Russian speakers in

Ukraine, says the West has faked evidence to smear its army. The US administration has declared seven situations genocide since the 1990s: Bosnia, Rwanda, Iraq, Sudan's Darfur province, Islamic State's killings including against the Yezidi, the crackdown on Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in China.

it requires evidence of specific intent.

"Genocide is a difficult crime to prove. Parties have to bring a lot to the table," said Melanie O'Brien, president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars. She cited the combined requirement of showing intent, the targeting of a protected group, and crimes like killings or forcibly removing children. The International Criminal Court

opened an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine in February. It also has jurisdiction over genocide.

Ukrainian prosecutors, already investigating alleged Russian crimes since the 2014 annexation of Crimea, said they have identified thousands of potential war crimes by Russian forces since Feb. 24 and compiled a list of hundreds of suspects.

What cases are happening now?

The International Criminal Court previously issued an arrest warrant on charges of genocide against former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, but his trial cannot begin until he is in custody in The Hague.

The International Court of Justice also has jurisdiction over the Genocide Convention, the first human

rights treaty adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1948, stating the international community's commitment to prevent the atrocities of World War Two from ever happening again.

It is hearing two cases: one claiming Myanmar committed genocide against Rohingya Muslims, the other brought by Ukraine to argue that Russia is using accusations of genocide as a false pretext for invasion.

Such cases generally take years to reach a verdict.

Past cases

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda convicted dozens of senior officials, all of them Hutus, of genocide against Tutsis.

When former Rwandan Mayor Jean-Paul Akayesu was found guilty of the crime in 1998, the court became the first international tribunal to interpret the definition of

genocide set forth in the 1948 Genocide Convention. In 2018, a hybrid U.N.-Cambodian tribunal found two leaders of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge guilty of genocide following years of debate about whether the "Killing Fields" constituted genocide. The judges ruled that the Khmer Rouge had a policy to target Cham and Vietnamese people to create "an atheistic and homogenous society".

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia convicted several key figures of genocide for their roles in the Srebrenica killings during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. They include wartime Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic and Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic. Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic died in custody before his genocide trial concluded.



TCS results: Revenue crosses Rs 50,000 crore, net profit rises

TCS' Q4 results are out and the company's net profit and revenue grew during the Covid pandemic



(News Agency) Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Monday announced its fourth quarter results for the financial year 2021-22. The tech services giant's net profit rose and revenue grew amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The software giant reported a 7.4 per cent rise in March-quarter profit, as more businesses across the world leaned on technology and related services to drive their operations. TCS revenue crossed Rs 50,000 crore for the first time as it rose 15.8 per cent to Rs 50,591 crore in Q4.

Here is all you need to know about TCS Q4 results. TCS's net profit was up by 1.6 per cent at Rs 9,926 crore against Rs 9,769 in the third quarter. The revenue saw a spike of 3.5 per cent at Rs

50,591 crore against Rs 48,885 crore in the third quarter..

TCS' earnings mark the beginning of India's month-long corporate results season, with investors likely to focus on the impact of surging inflation on profit margins.

TCS share price on NSE closed at Rs 3,699, up by 0.36 per cent on Monday. On BSE, TCS share price was up by 0.26 per cent at Rs 3696.40.

"Increasing participation in our customers' growth and transformation journeys, and an all-time high order book provide a strong and sustainable foundation for continued growth ahead," TCS' Chief Executive Officer Rajesh Gopinathan said in a statement.

Lemon price rise: Don't blame petrol, diesel, CNG prices hikes alone

While high petrol, diesel, and CNG prices have increased the transportation cost, after-effects of the cyclone in Gujarat have disrupted lemon supply, pushing the rates up

(News Agency) Vegetable prices have gone up rapidly in Delhi and other parts of the country. Amidst all, it is the price of lemon that has grabbed eyeballs. Prices of lemons have gone up as high as Rs 350 per kilogram. Hikes in petrol, diesel and CNG prices have resulted in increased transportation costs, which has been one of the main factors why vegetable prices have gone up. However, in the case of lemon, traders have cited production issues behind the spike in rates. Several of them have said that prices of lemons have been

soaring due to the after-effects of a cyclone in Gujarat. During summer, lemon water is essential as it helps you to remain hydrated and fight the scorching heat. But lemon is available on the market for Rs 350 per kg, which means you would not even get one for Rs 10, according to a PTI report. The spike in lemon prices has been primarily due to the shortage in supply and high demand during the ongoing summer season. A vegetable seller in Noida, pointed out that the rates have gone up at the vegetable markets due to

the fuel price hike, coupled with damage of crops in Gujarat due to a cyclone. Due to the hike in the prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas, the transportation cost has increased, causing a ripple effect on vegetable prices. The rates of lemons are soaring because of a natural calamity in Gujarat, he told PTI.

OTHER VEGETABLES PRICES Another vegetable trader in east Delhi, said there has been a rise in the rates of lemon and capsicum, while the prices of staple vegetables like onion and tomato have also gone

up. "These days, lemon prices are ranging between Rs 300 and Rs 350 per kg, which is unprecedented. It is because of the crop loss due to a cyclone in Gujarat. Tomato prices are ranging between Rs 40 and Rs 45 per kg while earlier, it used to be sold for around Rs 30-35 per kg. Similarly, onion prices have also been hiked and now, it is around Rs 40 per kg. It used to be sold for around Rs 30-35 per kg earlier," he said. Similar thoughts were shared by a vegetable trader who said they have been buying vegetables at

higher rates in the wholesale markets and hence, the ripple effect is being felt in the retail markets as well. "Most of the staple vegetables such as onion and tomato come to Delhi from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. The rates of onion and tomato have increased by about Rs 10-15 per kg because of the high transportation cost. Similarly, lemon, capsicum and chilies are also being sold at high rates because of a cyclone in Gujarat, coupled with the high transportation cost," he said.

More hiring, better salary hikes: Here is what private sector employees can expect

Disruption in skill supply has driven salary rises in India far beyond those in other emerging economies, and businesses are offering greater flexibility in working circumstances - including hybrid or work from home - in an effort to retain employees

(News Agency) Covid pandemic hit all sectors and there were reports of job cuts and salary cuts as businesses across verticals have witnessed extensive disruptions. However, as the country's economy is on a path to recovery, hiring activity is likely to get a boost and employees in the private sector can expect better salary increases.

In an exclusive chat with IndiaToday, In, Yogita Tulsiani, MD CO-Founder at iXceed Solutions, lists out what private sector employees can expect this year.

In the past two years, almost every industry has been hit hard due to the ongoing pandemic. From an HR perspective, salary hikes have been limited. How would you react to this?

The harmful impacts of the Covid-19 epidemic on work and professions have been widely established, in my opinion. Not only that, but millions of professionals have had their incomes cut and many have lost their positions totally, with roughly 4 million jobs already gone for good in various areas of the world.

However, it would be incorrect to conclude that the worldwide response to the epidemic has been entirely negative for working professionals, according to me. The 'new normal,' in my opinion, has helped firms to identify development possibilities and accelerate digitalization. Not only that, but both Generation Z and millennials are

enthusiastic about how forward-thinking organisations are emphasising cutting-edge technologies and promoting digital cooperation. Companies are vying against one another to recruit and hire the greatest personnel, in my opinion, and the job market has experienced a remarkable resurgence. Not only that, but rising attrition, a severe talent shortage, and a scarcity of in-demand talents are all pushing pay up. But, in the case of high-performing individuals/employees with specific abilities, I believe that wage increases of up to 25 per cent are possible. In my opinion, India has already entered the new-age period of electric cars (EV). With new production centers and an increasing drive to improve charging infrastructure,

as well as the government's assistance through the PLI for building up local battery manufacturers, big investments are coming up. Apart from electric vehicles, I believe IT will do well because the need for digitalization from businesses that want to survive and grow will continue to rise. According to me, one out of every three companies is expecting a double-digit pay hike as the average rate converges to 9 per cent. In fact, the disruption in skill supply has driven salary rises in India far beyond those in other emerging economies, and businesses are offering greater flexibility in working circumstances - including hybrid or work from home - in an effort to retain employees.

Health insurance firm fined Rs 75,000 for rejecting claim



penalised a health insurance company for rejecting a cashless payment claim, citing non-disclosure of pre-existing disease.

Harjinder Singh Sohal, a resident of Phase 2, Mohali, had submitted in a complaint that he took an international medical health insurance policy from Religare Health Insurance Company Limited on payment of ₹17,864. The sum insured under the policy was USD\$50,000 and was valid for September 2018 to March 2019. However, when in November 2018, the complainant

submitted a claim for cashless benefit under the scheme for treatment in Australia, the firm rejected the cashless payment on the ground of non-disclosure of pre-existing disease, that is coronary artery disease (CAD) and dyslipidemia. Due to rejection of the claim, the complainant had to pay the hospital's bills worth AUD\$31,499. Allowing the complaint partly, the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission directed the firm to reimburse the entire claim amount along with

9% interest from the date of repudiation of the claim. "The firm will have to pay compensation of ₹50,000 to the complainant, for causing him mental agony, harassment and humiliation and also deficiency in providing service and adoption of unfair trade practice. The firm will also have to pay ₹25,000 to the complainant to pay the cost of litigation," the commission said. The commission further directed the firm to comply with the orders within 30 days, failing which the awarded amount shall be paid with 12% interest.

(News Agency) The Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission has penalised a health insurance company for rejecting a cashless payment claim, citing non-disclosure of pre-existing disease. The Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission has

Dengue: Know about the symptoms, causes, and prevention

According to Dr Col Vijay Dutta, senior consultant-internal medicine, children older than six years of age are most likely to be infected by this mosquito-borne pathogen

(News Agency) While summer brings with it the joy of the holiday season, seasonal illnesses, such as dengue, rapidly spread their wings too. A mosquito-borne viral disease, dengue infects people in the summer and the rainy season due to the increasing menace of mosquitoes in these months. According to the latest report by the Maharashtra health department, at least 348 cases of dengue have been reported in the state in the past three months. In Delhi, on the other hand, the yearly tally stands at 69 with eight fresh cases in the last week. "Dengue fever, also known as breakbone fever, is a severe flu-like illness that affects all age groups," Dr Col Vijay Dutta, senior consultant-internal medicine, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre said. While in most

people, the fever passes off at its own course, it can cause serious complications like hemorrhagic fever, bleeding from the nose and gums, liver enlargement and even circulatory system failure, Dr Dutta explained. The primary vectors that transmit the disease are *Aedes aegypti* and, to a lesser extent, *Ae. albopictus*. "With the absence of any credible vaccine against the disease yet, prevention from mosquitoes remains the most important course. Unlike other mosquitoes, the dengue virus carrier is mostly a day-biter and is believed to be most active during dawn and dusk time. The symptoms of the disease usually begin within seven days of the bite," the expert told indianexpress.com. He added that children older than six years of age are most likely to be



infected by this mosquito-borne pathogen. Timely medical attention and supervision are known to prevent the risk of complications arising from the disease. "For milder forms of dengue, basic care includes keeping fever under control and

consuming a lot of fluids to rehydrate the body's lost hydration. At the same time, keeping a check on the patient's platelet count keeps the doctors informed about any need for blood transmission." According to Dr Dutta, the only

way to control or prevent the transmission of dengue is to "stop the breeding of mosquitoes as much as possible through a series of measures". He suggested the following ways to keep mosquito breeding in check.

Global roll-out of WHO online training on rights-based mental health services begins

(News Agency) Today signaled the start of the global roll-out of WHO's online training course on understanding and promoting the human rights and recovery of people living with mental health conditions.

During the launch event, hundreds of participants from around the world heard WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Dr Michelle Bachelet, the Ministers of Health of France and Portugal, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Mental Health, Cynthia Germanotta and people with lived experience of mental health conditions

explain the significant benefits of the training. Widespread uptake will not only help address the stigma and discrimination experienced by people with mental health conditions but will also contribute to the improvement of mental health services such that they are respectful of human rights and focused on recovery.

Training already available in nearly a dozen languages

The interactive course, already available in 11 languages[1], has been developed for a wide variety of groups, including people involved in making decisions about mental health care provision, those who

provide mental health care and psychosocial support, and people who have received or are receiving support for their mental health. The modules can be followed at users' own pace, and generally take about 16 hours to complete in full.

At launch, nearly 30 000 people have already completed the training due to collaborative efforts between WHO and the Ministries of Health and Social Affairs in Czechia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Ghana, Kenya, Philippines, Turkey and Zimbabwe. Feedback from early adopter countries has been very positive, with evaluations

indicating significant shifts in mindsets on issues such as providing people with choice and information about treatment options; implementation of alternatives to seclusion and restraint; and promotion of recovery, hope and community inclusion. A number of other countries, including Armenia, Croatia, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Paraguay and Poland, are planning to introduce the training in the near future. In addition, some thirty organizations working in the area of mental health, including professional associations and academic institutions, have committed to support the global roll-out.

Isro looks to conduct demo, orbital flight of reusable launch vehicle

Isro has been developing Winged Reusable Launch Vehicle technology that will demonstrate hypersonic flight, autonomous landing, powered cruise flight and hypersonic flight



Geospatial World, the Isro chief said, "We will have a landing demonstration soon, followed by an orbital launching demonstration."

"We are also looking at how future launch vehicles can be built and how to bring down the cost of the launcher. Currently, the price per kg is typically \$20,000. We have to bring it down to \$5,000. This will be possible only by bringing reusability into the rocket," Somnath told Geospatial World.

Isro has been developing Winged Reusable Launch Vehicle technology that will demonstrate hypersonic flight, autonomous landing, powered cruise flight and hypersonic flight using air-breathing propulsion. According to Isro, under the technology

demonstration program, they will conduct a series of experimental flights that will focus on hypersonic flight experiment (HEX) followed by the landing experiment (LEX), return flight experiment (REX) and scramjet propulsion experiment (SPEX). "Suppose we were to build a reusable rocket and launch it only once or twice a year that would not be economical at all. In fact, it will be costlier than an expendable launcher. We need to first create the background on which the reusable rocket will be required, work out the business and launch opportunity, and only then will a reusable rocket become economically viable," Somnath told Geospatial World. India has been launching customer satellites on its Polar

Satellite Launch Vehicles and Geosynchronous Satellite Launch vehicle (GSLV), pushing its role in the Low Earth Orbit. The Department of Space earned over Rs 351 crores (\$35 million and 10 Million Euros) in foreign revenue in the last three years by conducting satellite launches of various private and international agencies.

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Minister for Science & Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh said, "NSIL has already launched 45 international customer satellites onboard Isro's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) during the last three years (2019-2021) and has secured four dedicated launch service contracts for foreign satellite customers."

(News Agency) The Indian Space & Research Organisation (Isro) is planning to conduct a demonstration flight and a orbital launching of a reusable launch vehicle in the coming months as it looks to target the commercial space sector. Isro has been working on a Reusable Launch Vehicle-Technology Demonstration

Program to develop a vehicle that can be used multiple times, unlike now when we use a new launch vehicle for every mission. Isro chief S Somnath has said that the reusable vehicle is critical for strategic users rather than commercial users, which will allow India to take a payload up into space and bring it back safely. Speaking to

Climate change: Indian researchers develop material that can absorb greenhouse gas, convert it to Hydrogen

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), Hyderabad have computationally designed a hybrid material that can capture methane and also act as a catalyst to convert it to high purity hydrogen



the modeling and preliminary experimental studies."It is unique and available for the first time in the country to test the performance of dual-functional materials for SESMR in the fluidized bed reactor system. SESMR offers specific advantages of in-situ CO₂ removal through sorbents and thereby overcomes the equilibrium limitations of steam reforming and leads to high purity H₂ production," the ministry added. The team is currently involved in synthesising the dual functional materials identified from theoretical predictions while also optimising existing sorbent/catalyst materials for meeting the increasing challenges of carbon capture and utilization and associated research. An estimated 640 million tons of methane were emitted into the atmosphere last year by human activity; roughly 36 billion tons of carbon dioxide were emitted during the same period. Preliminary analysis reveals that the annual increase in atmospheric methane during 2021 was 17 parts per billion (ppb), which was 15.3 ppb a year before. Scientists part of the IPCC has identified methane as the biggest contributor to climate

change after carbon dioxide, citing fossil fuel as the biggest source of these emissions. The panel has called for drastic cuts

in emissions by 2030 in order to achieve net zero by 2050 and gave the planet a fighting chance against climate change.

(News Agency) The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its latest report called for a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in a bid to achieve net-zero goals. To boost India's chances, a team of researchers from the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT) in Hyderabad has come up with a material that can absorb greenhouse gas methane, converting it to clean Hydrogen. The team has for now succeeded in computationally designing this hybrid material that can also simulate a process of capturing carbon dioxide in-situ and converting it to high purity hydrogen from non-fuel grade bioethanol. The team has developed a facility where they can test this material and push

for innovative technology in carbon capture. The IPCC report has focused on the immediate need to boost carbon-capturing technology across the world, especially in developing and underdeveloped countries that emit a big chunk of greenhouse gases. The Ministry of Science & Technology in a statement said that given the global warming potential of greenhouse gases, scientists are trying to explore innovative methods of absorbing these gases and converting them to useful substances. The new facility developed by the researchers is a dual operational fixed cum fluidized bed reactor system (FBR) that can carry out enhanced steam methane reforming (SESMR) for high purity H₂ production based on

New blood test can predict risk of stroke, heart failure four years before it happens

(News Agency) Researchers have developed a new blood test that can predict if someone is at high risk of a heart attack, stroke, or even dying from heart failure within the next four years. The test uses proteomics and machine learning to derive a 27-protein model that could predict the 4-year likelihood of cardiovascular disease. Developed by a team of researchers from SomaLogic, an American company based in Boulder, Colorado, it has been tested on 11,000 participants and was sensitive to both adverse and beneficial changes in outcome. The test relies on measuring proteins in the blood and has close to twice the accuracy compared to existing tests. The study published in the journal Science Translational Medicine states that the aims of this research program were therefore

to derive and validate a proteomic prognostic test that predicted all major cardiovascular outcomes and deaths on a time scale consistent with clinical outcome



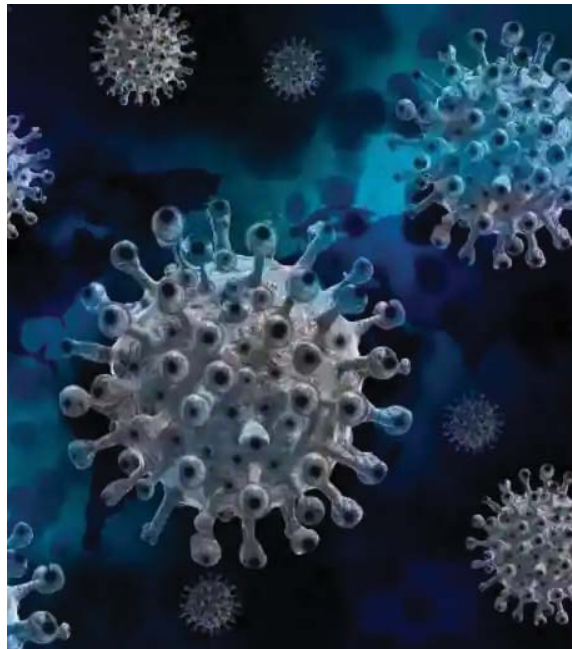
trials. The team used machine learning to analyse 5,000 proteins in blood plasma samples from 22,849 people and identify a signature of 27 proteins that could predict the four-year likelihood of heart attack, stroke, or even heart failure. The model was then validated in over 11,000 people and could also assess risk in people who have previously had a heart attack or stroke.

What is myocarditis? A rare complication of COVID-19 and non-Covid vaccinations

A large part of the world's population has received the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine, either one or two; some even have been inoculated with the booster shots. More than 10 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered globally as of March 2022.

(News Agency) Some people can reduce the heart's ability to have experienced the side pump and cause rapid or effects of the Covid vaccines, irregular heart rhythms usually mild and self-limiting. (arrhythmias). It has also been Fever, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, diarrhoea, understood that the term pericarditis refers to inflammation of the pericardium and myocarditis and both can experienced by most people. occur together in clinical practice. The study mentioned However, a recent report that the "overall risk of published in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine concluded that some people have COVID-19 vaccine is low". However, younger males have experienced severe heart inflammation. It has been described as a rare risk associated with COVID-19 vaccines. Researchers from National University Hospital, Singapore examined rare adverse events should be international databases to balanced against the risks of understand the incidence of COVID-19 infection (including myocarditis following COVID-19 myopericarditis)."

vaccination and compare this The study was based on a sample size of more than with non-COVID-19 vaccination as well. Experts have noted that 400M vaccine doses and the Myocarditis is an inflammation overall incidence of myocarditis of the heart muscle from 22 studies was 33.3 cases (myocardium). The inflammation per million vaccine doses. The



study noted that it did not differ significantly between people who received COVID-19 vaccines and those who received non-COVID-19 vaccines. As rates of myocarditis were higher in smallpox shots as compared to coronavirus jabs. Whereas it is about the same as in influenza, measles, mumps and rubella

and polio vaccines. "Our research suggests that the overall risk of myopericarditis appears to be no different for this newly approved group of vaccines against Covid-19, compared to vaccines against other diseases," said Dr. Kollengode Ramanathan, a cardiac intensivist at the

Hospital. "The risk of such rare events should be balanced against the risk of myopericarditis from infection and these findings should bolster public confidence in the safety of Covid-19 vaccinations," Ramanathan added. "The occurrence of myopericarditis following non-Covid-19 vaccination could suggest that myopericarditis is a side effect of the inflammatory processes induced by any vaccination and is not unique to the SARS-CoV-2 spike proteins in Covid-19 vaccines or infection," said Dr Jyoti Somani, an infectious diseases specialist at the Hospital. "This also highlights that the risks of such infrequent adverse events should be offset by the benefits of vaccination, which include a lower risk of infection, hospitalisation, severe disease, and death from Covid-19," she added. Another study published in the journal Circulation stated that found that 54 out of nearly 57,000 adults were hospitalised due to acute myocarditis after COVID-19.

The study, "SARS-CoV-2 Infection and Associated Cardiovascular Manifestations and Complications in Children and Young Adults: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association" focused on people in the US and Europe hospitalised with COVID-19 from February 2020 until April 2021.

First all-private astronaut team reaches International Space Station on SpaceX rocket

First all-private astronaut team reaches International Space Station on SpaceX rocket

(News Agency) The first all-private team of astronauts ever launched to the International Space Station were welcomed aboard the orbiting research platform on Saturday to begin a weeklong science mission. The first all-private team of astronauts ever launched to the International Space Station (ISS) were welcomed aboard the orbiting research platform on Saturday to begin a weeklong science mission hailed as a milestone in commercial spaceflight.

Their arrival came about 21 hours after the four-man team representing Houston-based startup company Axiom Space Inc lifted off on Friday from Nasa's Kennedy Space Center, riding atop a SpaceX-launched Falcon 9 rocket. The Crew Dragon capsule lofted into orbit by the rocket docked with the ISS at about 8:30 a.m. EDT (1230 GMT) on Saturday as the two space vehicles were flying roughly 250 miles (420 km) above the central Atlantic Ocean, a live webcast of the coupling from the National Aeronautics

and Space Administration showed. The final approach was delayed for about 45 minutes by a technical glitch with a video feed used to monitor the capsule's rendezvous with the ISS, but it otherwise proceeded smoothly.

The multinational Axiom team, planning to spend eight days in orbit, was led by retired Spanish-born NASA astronaut Michael Lopez-Alegria, 63, the company's vice president for business development. His second-in-command was Larry Connor, a real estate and technology entrepreneur and aerobatics aviator from Ohio designated as the mission pilot. Connor is in his 70s, but the company did not provide his precise age. Rounding out the Ax-1 crew were investor-philanthropist and former Israeli fighter pilot Eytan Stibbe, 64, and Canadian businessman and philanthropist Mark Pathy, 52, both serving as mission specialists.

With docking achieved, it took nearly two hours for the sealed passageway between the space station

and crew capsule to be pressurized and checked for leaks before hatches were opened to allow the newly arrived astronauts to come aboard the ISS. The Ax-1 team was welcomed by all seven of the regular, government-paid crew members already occupying the space station: three American astronauts, a German astronaut from the European Space Agency and three Russian cosmonauts. The Nasa webcast showed the four smiling Axiom astronauts, dressed in navy blue flight suits, floating headfirst, one by one, through the portal into the space station, warmly greeted with hugs and handshakes by the ISS crew. Lopez-Alegria later pinned astronaut wings onto the uniforms of the three spaceflight rookies of his Axiom team -- Connor, Stibbe and Pathy -- during a brief welcome ceremony. Stibbe is now the second Israeli to fly to space, after Ilan Ramon, who perished with six Nasa crewmates in the 2003 space shuttle Columbia disaster.

Reddit revisits the earliest Miss India winners

Juhi Chawla to Sangeeta Bijlani and Swaroop Sampat



Reddit has revisited the winners of the Miss India pageant from 1966 to 1984. The winners include, Juhi Chawla, Sangeeta Bijlani and Swaroop Sampat among others

(News Agency) The national beauty pageant of the country, Miss India, found its first winner in 1947. The crown was first won by Pramila (Esther Victoria Abraham), from Calcutta. A Reddit post recently revisited some of the earliest Miss India winners from 1965 to 1984. A few of the winners including Swaroop Sampat, Sangeeta Bijlani, Naina Balsavar, and Juhi Chawla went on to feature in movies. One of

the winners, Kavita Bhambhani was the sister-in-law of actor Anil Kapoor. Juhi was crowned Miss India by veteran actor Rekha. The post, shared in the subreddit BollyBlindsNGossip, featured the Miss India winners spread across nearly two decades. The caption read, "Femina Miss India winners (1965 to 1984). Of these 20 titleholders, 4 worked in Hindi cinema, with Juhi Chawla becoming one of the top

actors in the 1990s." All the winners were seen in ethnic wear and traditional jewellery. In 1965, Persis Khambatta won the crown. She went on to become a successful actor in the west with a memorable role in Star Trek: The Motion Picture. She was followed by doctor and model Yasmin Daji in 1966, Nayyara Mirza in 1967, Anjum Mumtaz Baig in 1968, interior designer, Anil Kapoor's sister-in-law Kavita Bhambhani in 1969, and model Veena Sajani in 1970. In 1971, Raj Gill won the title and she was followed by fashion designer Roopa Satyan in 1972, Farzana Habib in 1973, Shalini Dholakia in 1974,

Meenakshi Kurpad in 1975, actor and jewellery designer Naina Balsavar in 1976, Nalini Vishwanathan in 1977, and lawyer Alamjeet Kaur Chauhan in 1978. Swaroop Sampat, actor, teacher, author, and wife of actor Paresh Rawal, won the crown in 1979, followed by Sangeeta Bijlani in 1980, Rachita Kumar in 1981, photojournalist Pamela Singh in 1982, Rekha Hande in 1983, and Juhi Chawla in 1984. Juhi made her acting debut with a brief appearance in the film Sultanat (1986), and had her breakthrough role in Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak (1988). She has since featured in many films, including blockbusters like Darr (1993), Ishq (1997), and

Jhankaar Beats (2003). Juhi was last seen in the recent release Sharmaji Namkeen, late actor Rishi Kapoor's final project. The film released on Amazon Prime Video last month. Swaroop Sampat worked in hit films like Naram Garam and Himmatwala before embarking on a second innings on TV where she became successful with the popular TV comedy show Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi. On the show, she played the role of Shafi Inamdar's wife. After that, she starred in many serials and played supporting roles in films. Sangeeta made her Bollywood debut in 1987 with Qatil, opposite Aditya Pancholi, and went on to star in successful films like Tridev.

Dance Deewane Junior contestant introduces his 6-pack abs to Tiger Shroff, see his reaction

Tiger Shroff met a young fan on the sets of Dance Deewane Juniors where he was promoting his film, Heropanti 2. The fan showed him his abs which were named after his films

(News Agency) Tiger Shroff is currently promoting his upcoming film Heropanti 2. The actor, along with co-star Tara Sutaria, visited the sets of dance reality show Dance Deewane Juniors for the promotion of the film. During the appearance, Tiger came across a young boy who claimed to have six pack abs just like the actor and even removed his shirt to show his body. He also shared the names of each abs, named after Tiger's films.

Tiger shared the show promo on his Instagram page and put a heart emoticon in the caption. The video shows choreographer Marzi Pestonji, Nora Fatehi and Neetu Kapoor as the judges and Tiger and Tara as guests for the episode. It opens with Marzi asking a young contestant about his favourite actor. He names Tiger Shroff. His co-contestant tells Tiger that he even has six pack



abs just like the actor. As Tiger went on the stage and went down on a knee to talk to him, the boy went shirtless and

explained by introducing each of his abs in Hindi, "This is Heropanti, this is Baaghi, this is Baaghi 2 and this one is

Baaghi 3." Tiger's sister Krishna Shroff dropped an emotional face and face with three-hearts emoji in the comments section.

Shaira Khan, wife of Heropanti director Ahmed Khan, showered the video with several clapping hands emojis. A fan also commented, "Look at this cuteness." Tiger went on to ask him where will he find the place for Heropanti 2. The child confirmed that he will write the film's name on his ab upon the film's release. Amused by the child's antics, Nora called him a "Junior Tiger." Written by Rajat Arora and music by AR Rahman, Heropanti 2 is directed by Ahmed Khan, who also directed Tiger in Baaghi 3. The film is Tiger's first Eid release as it will hit theatres on April 29. Tiger channels his heroic skills as Babloo in Heropanti 2 with Tara playing the female protagonist Inaaya and Nawazuddin Siddiqui turning a mysterious antagonist named Laila. The film has been shot in international locations like Russia, China, Africa and Egypt.

Turning Red Debuts Digital Release on April 26 and on 4K Ultra HD, Blu-Ray and DVD on May 3

(News Agency) Disney and Pixar's *Turning Red* debuts on all major digital platforms April 26 and on 4K Ultra HD, Blu-ray and DVD on May 3, just in time for Mother's Day. Pixar fans can transport back to the early aughts and experience all the warm and fuzzy red panda Mei-hem with never-before-seen bonus material including seven deleted scenes, three featurettes and audio commentary with Director Domee Shi. *Turning Red* is also streaming on Disney+.

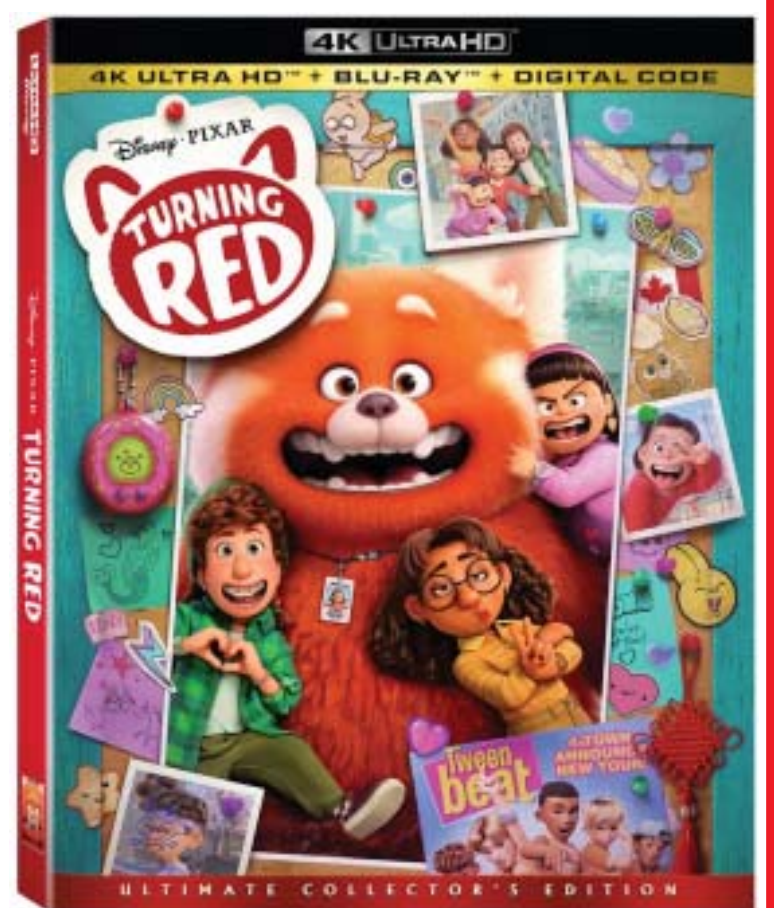
In Disney and Pixar's *Turning Red*, confident, dorky 13-year-old Mei must balance being a dutiful daughter with the chaos of adolescence. Her slightly overbearing mom is never far from her daughter. And, as if changes to Mei's interests, relationships and body aren't enough, whenever she gets too excited, she "poofs" into a giant red panda! "I really wanted to explore the conflicts of a young teen girl—how she's torn between being a good daughter and embracing her true messy self," said Academy Award® winner Shi (Pixar short "Bao").

"It's a coming-of-age story about change and those transitional moments," says producer Lindsey Collins. "It's about that time in our lives when we're trying to figure out who we are. We have a girl who is torn between her family and her friends, learning that she's not at all who she thought she was. And we have the mother whose daughter is suddenly interested in strange music and boys—a mother who struggles with letting go so her child can become who she needs to be. It's a universal theme that rings true whether you're the parent, the child, or maybe both."

Ming Lee is a proud wife, devoted mother and hardworking keeper of the Lee Family Temple in Toronto's Chinatown. Elegantly turned out and poised at all times, Ming takes her professional duties seriously—but she's even more dedicated to keeping an eye on her precious daughter, Meilin. There's no doubt, Ming is fierce, stubborn, funny, controlling, and—as Mei would put it—a lot, but the deep love she has for her

family is always apparent. "Ming is a compilation of all of the very strong and awesome Asian women in my life," says Shi. "Ming can be intense, but all of the crazy stuff she does is motivated by her love for her daughter."

Filmmakers called on newcomer Rosalie Chiang as the voice of Meilin; Sandra Oh ("The Chair," "Killing Eve") lends her voice to Mei's protective, if not slightly overbearing mother, Ming. Mei's tightknit group of friends are voiced by Ava Morse ("Ron's Gone Wrong") as Miriam, Maitreyi Ramakrishnan ("Never Have I Ever") as Priya, and Hyein Park as Abby. The voice cast also includes Orion Lee ("First Cow") as Mei's dad, Jin, Wai Ching Ho ("Daredevil," "Iron Fist") as Grandma, Tristan Allerick Chen ("The Barbarian and the Troll") as classmate Tyler, and Addison Chandler ("American Horror Story") as Mei's sudden secret crush Devon. Rounding out the voice cast are James Hong ("Big



Trouble in Little China," "Kung Fu Panda: The Paws of Destiny"), Lori Tan Chinn ("Awkwafina Is Nora from Queens"), Lillian Lim ("Motherland: Fort Salem," "Meditation Park"), Mia Tagano ("Tantalus: Behind the Mask," "Law & Order: Criminal Intent"), Sherry Cola ("Good Trouble"), Sasha Roiz ("Grimm") and Lily Sanfelippo ("Spidey and His Amazing Friends," "Firebuds").

Vivek Oberoi clocks 20 years in Bollywood: One producer told me I don't have the looks to be an actor



(News Agency) Actor Vivek Oberoi asserts that he will forever remain grateful to Ram Gopal Varma for giving him a chance. Vivek Oberoi's ride in Bollywood has been quite bumpy, from giving a hit one year to sitting at home jobless next year. As he completes two decades in the industry,

the actor is glad that he held onto his conviction, and belief in himself. "It has been a journey full of ups and downs. But I still feel like that same child who first stood on the stage at the age of five at a function in school, and just fell in love with that experience of a live performance," Oberoi

tells us. He entered the industry as a gangster in Ram Gopal Varma's *Company*, which released on April 12, 2002. The actor put down a chance to get launched by his father, Suresh Oberoi, in an Abbas-Mustan project, opting to struggle his way through the industry.

"My dad was putting all his life's earnings on my debut film, which was unacceptable to me. But I wanted a job on my own merit rather than my last name because my father also didn't find his way with sifarish and struggled for 18-29 months," says the 45-year-old. That was the time when he saw the "ugly dark side of Bollywood". The *Saathiya* (2002) actor elaborates, "The rejection here is so personal. When people think you are

struggler with no connection, they just tell you all kinds of stuff, which is very personal. They said I can't be an actor... but everything which broke me, made me stronger, which set the tone of my 20 years in the industry." Asked what did people tell him and he recounts, "I remember one particular producer made me sit outside his office for eight-nine hours. After three days, he called me to his office, looked at me, and without looking at my work or certificates, showed me a photo of somebody, and said 'Yeh hota hai hero, tum mein woh baat nahi hai. Tum kabhi nahi bann paoge. I was really hurt. The actor goes on to say that he celebrated his "personal victory" when the same producer came to his house and offered him a film. Vivek

reveals the producer didn't even recognise him, or anything about that incident. "That's maybe because he met so many people every day. But to me, that was a very big personal victory," says the actor. Today, he is credited for projects such as *Omkara* (2006), *Shootout at Lokhandwala* (2007), *Krrish 3* (2013) and web series *Inside Edge*. Looking back at his journey, he admits, "I have nothing but gratitude. There was a time when I gave hits, won awards and then sat at home for one and half years. Nobody wanted to work with me. I was told I will never get work in the industry again, no matter how you perform to be at the position where I am today. The journey is filled with gratitude... And I still have miles to go before I sleep."

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