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'Live in the future'

Mark Zuckerberg revamps company values as Meta faces investment concerns



(News Agencies) Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg has revamped Meta's company values as it faces investment concerns. Touting pivot and an all-hands approach, he has unveiled a company overhaul after its shares had the biggest single-day slide in market value. The huge drop, erasing over \$200 billion from Meta's market capitalisation and around \$29 billion from Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg's net worth, spilled over to the broader technology sector and dragged the Nasdaq Composite Index lower.

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Dangerous climate change scenario emerges as US West faces worst megadrought in 1200 years



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Top European Court rules EU can freeze aid to Poland and Hungary



has been increasingly at odds with, and opens a new chapter in the dispute that could see the countries losing out on tens of billions of euros in aid. The European Court of Justice ruling, which is final, provides ample legal and political cover to the European Commission, the bloc's executive, to flex its muscle and withhold vital aid to the two countries over what it has long seen as a pernicious and deliberate illiberal drift away from EU standards. The timing of the ruling makes the court's decision politically explosive.

(Contd on page 29)

(News Agencies) Europe's top court ruled Wednesday that the European Union can withhold funding from member countries failing to uphold the rule of law, immediately affecting, whose governments the European Union efforts to defend its core values. The ruling shoots down a lawsuit by Hungary and Poland, the two countries most directly and immediately affected, whose governments the European Union

ED set to question Iqbal Kaskar and aides in case against Dawood Ibrahim

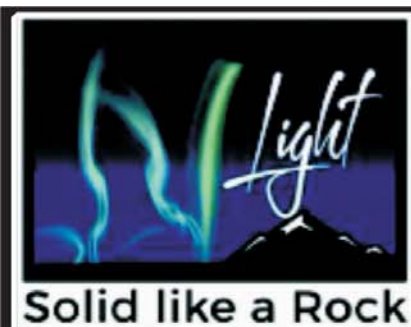


**Full Story
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Tracing DNA of related elephants reveals illegal ivory trafficking networks

(News Agencies) African elephants have drastically dwindled as targets of the illegal ivory trade, but the DNA contained within their tusks is pointing to the very criminal networks that poached them.

(Contd on page 32)



Insurance

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Indian-American Ex-Amazon Employee Gets 10 Months In Jail For Fraud

Rohit Kadimisetty of California's Northridge, pleaded guilty to conspiracy in September 2021, the Department of Justice (DoJ) said in a statement.

(News Agencies) Washington: A 28-year-old Indian-origin former employee of Amazon has been sentenced to 10 months' imprisonment for his involvement in an international bribery scheme to steal confidential information and manipulate the Marketplace platform of the e-commerce giant. Rohit Kadimisetty of California's Northridge, pleaded guilty to conspiracy in September 2021, the Department of Justice (DoJ) said in a statement. He is one of the six consultants indicted in September 2020 for a fraud and bribery scheme targeting the Seattle-headquartered e-commerce giant and its online Marketplace. Amazon Marketplace is an e-commerce platform owned and operated by Amazon that enables third-party sellers to sell new or used

products on a fixed-price online marketplace alongside Amazon's regular offerings. US Attorney Nick Brown on Friday announced that Kadimisetty was sentenced to 10 months in prison. He was also fined USD 50,000, the DoJ said. He used his prior status as an Amazon employee and underhanded tactics, including commercial bribes, to steal confidential information and manipulate the Amazon Marketplace, it said. At the sentencing hearing US District Judge Richard A Jones said, "You do not have a license to steal from Amazon... you were involved in illegal conduct... This could be called modern day organised crime." Kadimisetty used his knowledge and contacts from prior employment at Amazon to enrich himself by manipulating listings on Amazon Marketplace, Attorney Brown

said. "He was a critical cog in the bribery wheel: paying contacts in India to reinstate suspended accounts, steal confidential information and attack competitors who got in the way of those funding the bribery scheme," Brown said. According to records in the case, since at least 2017, the defendants used bribery and fraud to elevate and benefit certain merchants on the Amazon Marketplace. Kadimisetty and the other defendants served as so-called consultants to third-party ("3P") sellers on the Amazon Marketplace.

Those 3P sellers sold a wide range of goods, including household goods, consumer electronics, and dietary supplements on Amazon's multi-billion-dollar electronic commerce platform. Following his employment at Amazon, and



after relocating to the US, used deceptive email accounts, encrypted messaging services, and bribes through third parties, the DoJ said. The illicit services provided by Kadimisetty and the other defendants included: stealing confidential business information about Amazon algorithms; reinstating accounts and products that had been suspended; circumventing inventory fees for Amazon warehouses; falsifying claims for lost inventory; and facilitating attacks on competing sellers and product listings, it said.

Indian-Origin Manager Jailed In Singapore For Bribing Engineer \$33,500

The project manager in Singapore pleaded guilty to one charge of corruptly giving gratification to an assistant engineer and a second of abetting the engineer in making a false invoice.

(News Agencies) Singapore: An Indian-origin project manager in Singapore was on Monday sentenced to over seven months' imprisonment for giving \$33,513 in bribes to an assistant engineer of a government agency for carrying out his work smoothly. Ganisan Suppiah, 52, pleaded guilty to one charge of corruptly giving gratification to Public Utilities Board (PUB) assistant engineer Jamaludin Mohamed and a second of abetting Mr Mohamed in making a false invoice, Channel News Asia reported. The court heard that Mr Suppiah was a project manager of both Pipe Works and Krishco Singapore Construction at the time of the offences. He oversaw projects, including the purchase of materials and management of manpower and equipment for projects.

Mr Mohamed, 58, was an assistant engineer at PUB's network renewal division of its water supply (network) department. He supervised water diversion works performed by PUB

term contractors and subcontractors at third-party sites. Around November 2017, Mr Mohamed supervised the works performed by Pipe Works at PUB work sites, after main contractors



subcontracted the work out to the company.

Mr Mohamed approached Mr Suppiah and asked for what he called "supervision fees", in exchange for Mr Mohamed's help in facilitating and expediting Pipe Works' matters. Mr Suppiah agreed that Mr Mohamed would be paid based on the duration and complexity of the works, with amounts ranging from 2 per cent to 5 per cent of

the amounts on the invoices Pipe Works billed to the main contractors. Mr Mohamed told Mr Suppiah that he would set up a company to receive the money from Ganisan through false invoices, and Mr Suppiah agreed. Between November 2017 and August 2018, Mr Suppiah gave Mr Mohamed 45,169 Singapore dollars (USD 33,513) over multiple occasions. Mr Suppiah's superior was unaware of the fake invoices used in the crime, according to the Channel report.

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) said in a statement after the hearing that Mr Mohamed had also attempted in July 2019 to obtain a 5,00,000 dollars (3,71,085) bribe from a company that submitted a bid for a PUB tender in 2019. The company rejected Mr Mohamed's request. In exchange, Mr Mohamed helped Pipe Works by asking the main contractor to submit documentation quickly so that Mr Suppiah's workers could start work early, or by giving Mr Suppiah's workers priority to lay the pipes at the sites.

SpaceX Engineer Anna Menon To Be Among Crew Of New Space Mission

(News Agencies) New York: SpaceX engineer Anna Menon will be among the crew of a unique space mission announced by US billionaire Jared Isaacman, who last year led the world's first all-private space crew into orbit. Anna Menon, the wife of Indian-origin physician Anil Menon, is a Lead Space Operations Engineer at SpaceX, where she manages the development of crew operations and serves in mission control as both a Mission Director and crew communicator, SpaceX release said on Monday.

Isaacman, the founder and CEO of American payment processing company Shift4, who had commanded the Inspiration4 mission, announced the Polaris Programme, "a first-of-its-kind effort to rapidly advance human spaceflight capabilities while continuing to raise funds and awareness for important causes here on Earth." The programme will consist of up to three human spaceflight missions that will demonstrate new technologies, conduct extensive research, and ultimately culminate in the first flight of SpaceX's Starship with humans on board. The first mission is named Polaris Dawn, which is targeted to launch no earlier than the fourth quarter of 2022 from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

AIA in America celebrates Inauguration ceremony of its newly elected National Executive Committee

(By Susmita Ghosh) Gobind Munjal, the newly elected National President of The Association of Indians in America (AIA) was sworn-in along with his National Executive Committee in an inauguration ceremony arranged virtually on February 6, 2022. Founded on August 20, 1967, the Association of Indians in America (AIA) is the oldest not-for-profit organization of Asian Indians in America. It is the grassroots national organization of Asian immigrants in United States. With chapters and membership spread across the USA, AIA represents the aspirations of the immigrants, united by their common bond of

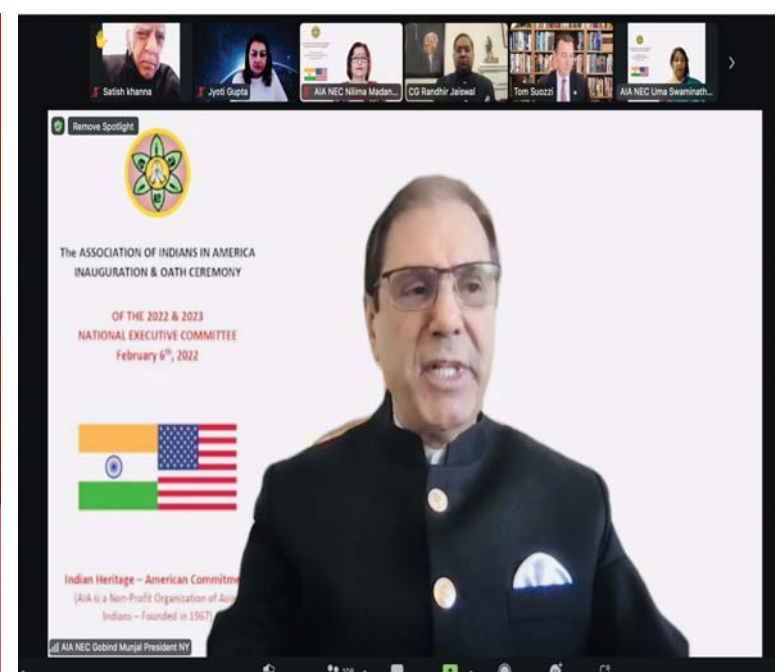
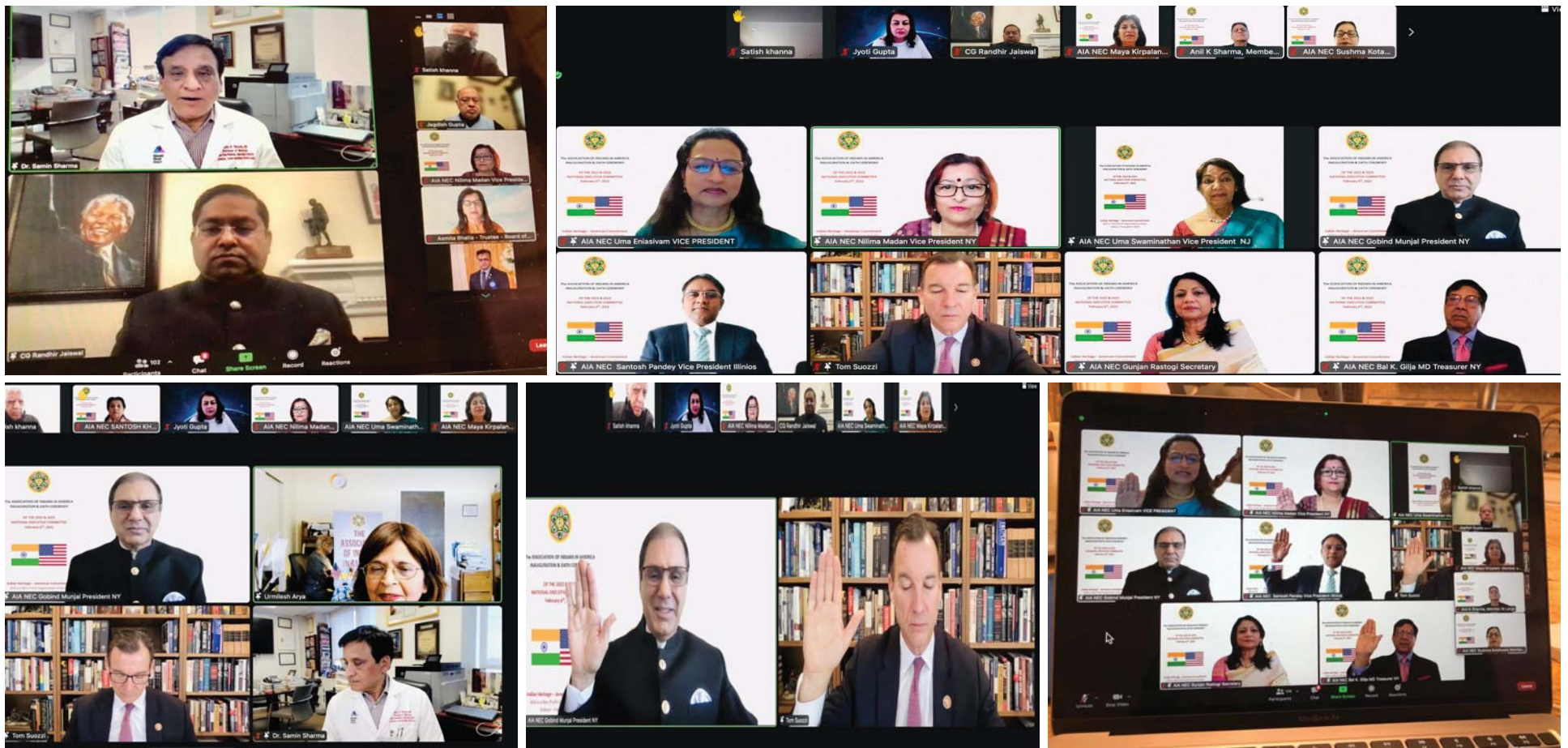
Indian heritage and American commitment. The occasion was graced by the chief guest Hon. Consul General Randhir Jaiswal, Hon. Congressman Tom Suozzi and Hon. New York Senator Kevin Thomas. The Inauguration and Oath ceremony was attended by over 100 attendees. This included AIA founding members, board of Trustees, AIA National Past Presidents, AIA current and past chapter Presidents, community leaders, AIA members, friends along with the media partners.

Bharat Ratna legendary singer, Lata Mangeshkar was given homage by observing a moment of silence. It was

followed by melodious singing of American and Indian National Anthem by Gita Setia. The Chairman Board of Trustees, Dr. Samin Sharma initiated the program conveying brief about AIA. The Chief Guest Hon. Consul General of India in New York, Randhir Jaiswal praised AIA for all his best deeds for the community during its 55 years of history and commended the organization for sending oxygen concentrators to India in 2021. National President Gobind Munjal was sworn-in by Honorable Congressman Tom Suozzi, who also administered the oath to Vice Presidents Uma Swaminathan (NJ), Nilima

Madan (NY), Santosh Pandey (IL), Uma Eniasivam (FL), Secretary Gunjan Rastogi (NY) and Treasurer Dr. Bal Gilja (NY). Honorable NYS Senator Kevin Thomas had the honors for swearing-in the members at large from all the states. In pursuing the AIA's motto of "Indian Heritage and American Commitment," National President Munjal emphasized, "We are here to serve the community needs. As we continue to direct our help to the people in India, our homeland, we should equally remain committed to the community in the United States, our adopted homeland. We hope to work towards increasing that

commitment. "We remain committed to understanding the changing requirements of the community, and then will develop Programs to help both, the youth and the senior citizens. NEC pledges support to all the Chapter Presidents and its members, help build and expand these programs across the nation." A plaque was presented to the outgoing National President Dr. Urmilsh Arya. The program concluded with a traditional Vote of Thanks by the secretary. The program on Zoom was very well planned and appreciated by all. An in-person event will be planned and executed post Covid.



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FROM WORLD'S BIGGEST IGLOO CAFE TO TAJ MAHAL

Gulmarg offering new 'icy' surprises to tourists

(News Agencies) Gulmarg, the world-famous ski resort is coming up with new surprises every week for the tourists visiting. An Igloo Cafe and Taj Mahal made of snow have become the most visited sites in the last few days. People are mesmerised to have a cup of coffee inside a cafe made completely of snow. The table, chairs, and everything in this Igloo Cafe is made of snow. The makers of the Igloo Cafe claim it to be the biggest Igloo in the world. They have contacted the Guinness book of world records to get this listed as the biggest Igloo made. The makers took 64 days to build this cafe while 1700-man days of work were used in two shifts. The height of the Igloo is 37.5 feet while the diameter of the Igloo is 44.5 feet. Long ice bricks were used to build the structure with a cost of 1.2 million rupees. "I have a passion for creativity and that's why I thought I should create something unique. Something which would



get famous and that's how I got inspired and built the world's biggest igloo. The height of the igloo is 37.5 feet, and it has a diameter of 44.5 feet. We have already applied to the Guinness World Record, and their team will visit and they will certify it. We started the construction with the first snowfall in Gulmarg. We built this igloo in 64 days and 1700 man-day workers worked in two shifts. 7000 ice blocks were used to construct the structure. It would last till March 15." Waseem Shah, Owner

of Igloo Cafe. Gulmarg has had more tourist inflow after these structures were made. The Igloo Cafe has become an instant hit with the tourists and it's all over the social network. The Igloo has two parts, one has especially been kept for people to take pictures and the other side has 10 tables which can seat up to 40 people at a time. Tourists say that they have always seen Igloo's in foreign countries but it's for the first time they are seeing an igloo cafe in India. 'Absolutely it's a different experience, India coming up with new ideas and restaurants like these is a new era because it attracts a lot of tourists and we come from Karnataka are enjoying it to the fullest. We don't get to experience all of this and coming here is amazing. The coffee here is great. It's like a thrilling experience and now people have more reasons to come to Gulmarg. said Spurti, a

Indian government to ban more Chinese apps

(News Agencies) The Indian government has reportedly issued orders to ban 54 Chinese apps citing privacy and national security concerns. Reports claim India's IT department has said the apps were transferring data to foreign countries including China and has reportedly directed Google Playstore to block it. The apps include Alibaba Workbench, AliSuppliers, CamCard, WeDate and TrulyChinese. India had banned hundreds of Chinese apps two years ago including Snack Video, Ali Express, ByteDance-owned TikTok, UC Browser and Tencent's WeChat. Officials say several apps are available through APK files with the government monitoring them. The other apps include Beauty Camera, Sweet Selfie HD, Music Player, Volume Booster, Music Plus, Volume Booster, Video Players Media. Other Chinese apps Viva Video Editor, Nice Video Baidu, AppLock and Astracraft have also been banned.

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Doctors save life of boy who ingested AA battery without surgery



(News Agencies) Having informed his parents of having ingested a 5-cm-long battery and the parents' decision of seeking immediate medical help has saved the life of a 4-year-old. By accident, the child had swallowed the battery that was being used in the remote control, while playing with it at his residence. An X-ray revealed that the battery was lodged in the child's stomach. However, doctors managed to remove the battery via an endoscopy, thus avoiding further delay and the complications associated with going in for a surgical procedure. WION Media spoke to Dr R. Ravi who performed the procedure in a considerable amount of time and saved the boy, nearly fourteen hours after he ingested the battery. According to the doctor, senior gastroenterologist, Rela Hospital, children unknowingly swallow small objects such as buttons, coins, small batteries. However, in this case, the swallowed object measured 5cms in length and 1.5cms in width, which was as large as the child's food pipe. This also made the removal via endoscopy complicated. There was a risk of damaging the internal organs while performing the procedure, neither would the battery exit the system via excretion. "There is also the risk of the battery corroding in the acid that the stomach produces and thereby releasing the chemicals that it holds within. Such heavy metals could lead to toxicity in the patient's system," Dr Ravi said. Based on their examination of the boy, the doctors decided to go ahead with an endoscopy procedure, while using a Roth net, a device that helps capture, scoop out the foreign object. According to the doctor, even certain types of tumours can be removed using this net.

Syndicate Bank fraud case: ED attaches properties worth Rs 56.81 crore

During the investigation, it was revealed that from 2011 to 2016, the main accused, in collusion with the bank officials, defrauded Syndicate Bank to the tune of Rs 1267.79 crore.

(SAI Bureau) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached immovable and movable properties worth Rs 56.81 crore in form of agricultural land, plots, shops, offices, flats, FDs and bank accounts belonging to alleged fraudsters Bharat Bomb, Shankar Lal Khandelwal and their other associates under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, in the Syndicate Bank fraud case. The ED had initiated the money-laundering investigation based on FIRs registered and charge sheets filed by the CBI, BS and FC, New Delhi, against the officials of erstwhile Syndicate Bank (now Canara Bank) and others. During the investigation, it was revealed that from 2011 to 2016, the alleged main fraudster and Udaipur (Rajasthan)-based Chartered Accountant Bharat Bomb, in collusion with the bank officials defrauded the then Syndicate Bank to the tune of Rs 1267.79 crore. The modus operandi of the fraudsters included getting loans sanctioned in their name or in the name of family members and fake cheque



discounts purported to be issued by the shell companies controlled by Bharat Bomb. The loans were never repaid by the alleged fraudsters. The investigation by the ED revealed that proceeds of crime generated out of the fraud were transferred by Bharat Bomb to various bank accounts operated/controlled by him, through a complex maze of transactions for placement, layering and integration of the tainted funds. He invested these tainted funds in immovable properties in the name of

himself, his family members, associates, employees, tribal persons, fictitious firms, companies, etc. Earlier during the investigation, the ED had so far issued four Provisional Attachment Orders towards cumulative attachment of assets worth Rs 478.66 crore. Additionally, a seizure of Rs 2.25 crore in the form of a demand draft was also carried out. With the present attachment, the worth of total attachments in the case stands at Rs 537.72 crore approximately.

Kerala man builds garden to prevent accumulation of garbage under a bridge in Kozhikode

(SAI Bureau) Shamseer, a resident of Kerala's Kozhikode, is slowly and steadily making his village waste-free by turning an area under a bridge into a garden. It was during one of his early morning walks that he found waste dumped under the Panniyankar bridge with stray dogs feeding on the trash. This often led to accidents near the bridge as dogs chased and collided with vehicles moving along the bridge. Shamseer set out to educate

people who threw waste under the bridge. Many others tried to dissuade Shamseer, saying he lived a little away from the bridge. As a last resort, Shamseer even knocked on the doors of city corporation, who also refused to move the garbage from under the bridge. He then decided to move the waste himself into an open land. However, Shamseer soon found out that as more land became available to dump trash,

more waste accumulated over time. In the end, Shamseer decided to make a garden under the bridge to make sure that no waste is dumped there. He watered the plants, maintained it for several months and it worked wonders. Although the new initiative has stopped people from dumping waste, Shamseer is developing plans to chase away people sneaking in to steal flower pots from the garden.

Didn't intend to hurt anyone: Karnataka Congress MLA apologises for comparing rape cases with 'purdah'

Karnataka Congress MLA Zameer Ahmed Khan apologised over his remark where he compared rape cases in India with women not veiling their face.

(SAI Bureau) Karnataka Congress MLA Zameer Ahmed Khan on Monday apologised over his remark where he compared rape cases in India with women not doing "purdah" or veiling their face. In a series of tweets, Zameer Ahmed Khan said, "I get anxious & scared to see increasing atrocities & rape on women in our country. Because of this state of our society, I said that at least with burqa-hijab, we may be able to prevent rapes. It was not intended to hurt or

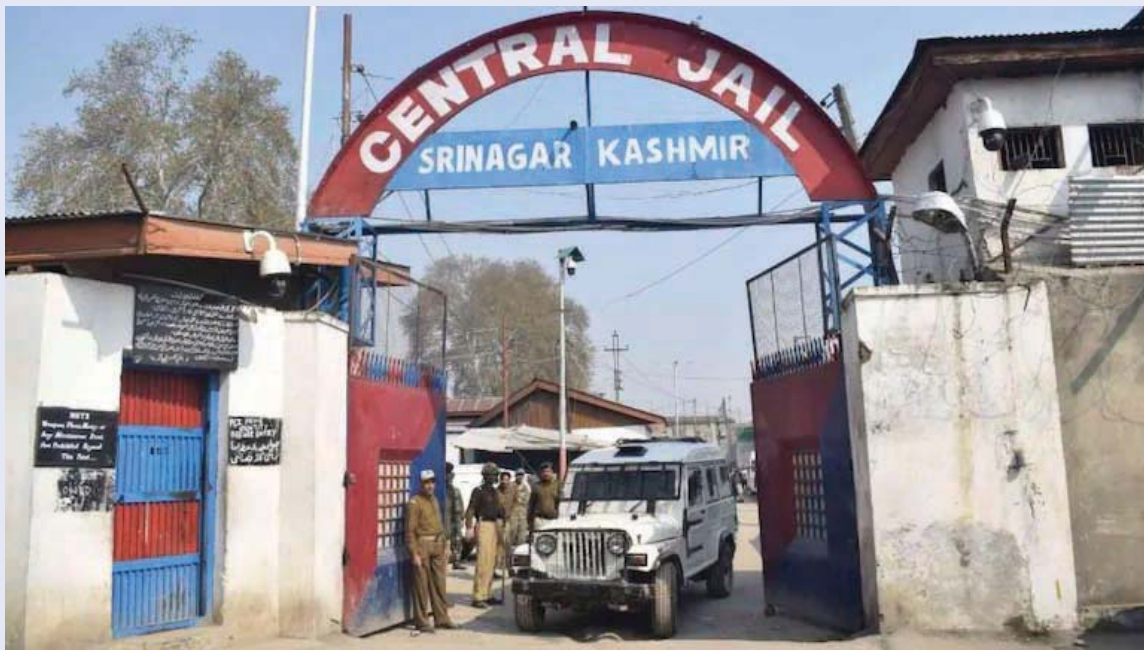
disrespect anyone. I regret it if it has hurt anyone." "I believe our ancestors had mandated wearing burqa-hijab as religious practice in order to protect women. My statement was based on this belief & there was no other reason," he added. Reacting to the ongoing row over hijab in Karnataka, Zameer Ahmed Khan had on Sunday said, "The concept of hijab is to keep girls, when they grow up, behind a 'purdah' [veil] to hide their beauty.



Cop suspended for smuggling mobile phone into high-security prison in J&K

The suspended policeman, Constable Mutazir Abbass of the J&K Armed Police (JKAP), was caught in the act during in-house surveillance initiated by the Prisons' Department

(SAI Bureau) A policeman was suspended on Monday following a complaint by the Jammu and Kashmir Prisons' Department that claimed he was smuggling a phone inside the high-security Srinagar Central Jail, officials said. The suspended policeman, selection grade Constable Mutazir Abbass of 6th battalion of the J&K Armed Police (JKAP), was caught in the act during in-house surveillance initiated by the Prisons' Department last month, they said. The officials said Director General of Prisons B Srinivas reported the matter to the Home Department, which repatriated him to his battalion before placing him under suspension and ordering a time-bound departmental inquiry against him.



him.

In an order issued by the Home Department on Monday, Principal Secretary Shaleen Kabra said Abbass had been placed under suspension and an inquiry

was ordered in reference to the January 25 communication of the director general of police and prisons. "...the government, in exercise of the powers conferred by Rule 31 of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil

Services [Classification, Control and Appeal] Rules, 1956 read with Rule 353 of the Jammu and Kashmir Police Rules, 1960 hereby places Abbass under suspension with immediate effect," the order

read. However, the order did not provide any specific reason for his suspension. "The director general of police shall, in terms of the extant rules, initiate a departmental inquiry against Abbass and submit the report of inquiry along with the findings on each charge, with supporting documents to the administrative department within two months," the order read. Kabra said till the suspension order remains in force, the headquarters of the suspended policeman would be the Jammu armed police headquarters and he will not leave the premises without obtaining the permission of the additional director general of police, armed police. The order said Abbass shall be entitled to subsistence allowance, as admissible under rules.

Union Minister Kishan Reddy slams KCR's comments on surgical strikes

G Kishan Reddy asks if the neighbouring country's action of declaring a no-fly zone in its own air space for more than six months after the Balakot strike was not proof enough

(SAI Bureau) The BJP on Monday hit back at Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for seeking to know about the truth about India's 2019 surgical strikes in Pakistani territory, with Union Minister G Kishan Reddy asking if the neighbouring country's action of declaring a no-fly zone in its own air space for more than six months after the Balakot strike was not proof enough. By asking proof of the surgical strikes, KCR, as Rao is also known, has now joined the bandwagon of the "Tukde Tukde gang and urban naxals" to cast aspersions on the armed forces, the Union Tourism Minister said.

Retaliating to a terror attack on February 14, 2019 by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror group at Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir that left 40 CRPF personnel dead, Indian warplanes struck the biggest terrorist training camp of JeM deep inside Pakistan's Balakot days later. "I strongly condemn the irresponsible statement of Telangana CM KCR against the Indian armed forces. The fact that this came on the eve of the anniversary of the Pulwama attack shows the insensitivity, irresponsibility, ignorance and that is unbecoming of a Chief Minister," Reddy tweeted. He was responding to Rao on

Sunday questioning the surgical strike by the Indian Air Force. Lending support to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who demanded proof, of the surgical strike, Rao said half of the country, including himself, wants to know the truth behind the targeted strike. "Isn't the valour of Abhinandan Varthaman [IAF pilot] proof enough? Isn't Pakistan's own actions of declaring a no-fly zone in their own air space for more than 6 months after Balakot proof enough," Reddy asked. If these are not enough, then KCR can seek proof from Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, he said. Questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi or the government is a democratic



right, but insulting the nation's patriotic armed forces is not, Reddy said. Observing that the Indian armed forces are fighting valiantly against enemies across the border on multiple fronts, he said Colonel B Santosh Babu, a Telugu "bidda" (son of Telugu soil), gave up his life last year to protect the country's citizens. Babu was among the 20 Indian soldiers killed in the Galwan Valley clash with the Chinese Army in 2020. "I request CM KCR to not insult those who

attained sadgati in protecting our great country," he said. Meanwhile, state BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar screened a video at a press conference here, in which Rao purportedly said while the saffron party claimed that about 300 persons were eliminated in the surgical strike, it was dismissed by noted terrorist Masood Azhar. Kumar also screened the news video of a Pakistani official admitting to the surgical strikes.

Gujarat: Chargesheet filed against 3 in 24 hours of arrest in gang rape case

A 15-year-old Bhavnagar girl was allegedly gang raped by three people in a car on the Bhavnagar-Alang highway

(News Agencies) A 15-year-old Bhavnagar girl was allegedly gang-raped by three people in a car on the Bhavnagar-Alang highway, and all three accused have been arrested. The police filed the chargesheet against the three in 'record' 24 hours after they were handed over to court custody. The incident occurred late on

Friday night, around 10 pm, when one of the accused, Mansukh Solanki (35), the victim's neighbour and acquaintance, noticed her standing alone outside her house. Solanki, who was accompanied by his friend Sanjay Makwana (25), enticed her to join him for a short drive in the former's car, to which she

agreed. Meanwhile, the duo also called their friend Mustafa Sheikh (35). The trio then drove the car beneath an under-construction bridge near Trapaj village and took the girl onto the highway near Alang, where the three of them took turns raping the girl. Sheikh fled the scene after



committing the crime, while Solanki and Makwana took the girl into the car and drove to Bhavnagar. The accused also stopped for snacks at a hotel on the highway around 1:30 am on

Saturday. When the hotel owner noticed the girl in the car sobbing uncontrollably, he immediately contacted the Alang police. Following that, the police arrested both of the accused.

Goa records 79% voting in Assembly polls; Sawant says BJP to win over 22 seats

Chief Electoral Officer Kunal said the highest voting was registered in the Sankhalim constituency in North Goa at 89.61 per cent, while the lowest voter turnout was 70.20 per cent at Benaulim in South Goa.

(News Agencies) Goa on Monday registered a very high voter turnout of 78.94 per cent in polling for the 40 Assembly seats which passed off peacefully with no untoward incident reported from any part of the state which witnessed a multi-cornered contest, officials said.

They said this was preliminary voter turnout and the final figure may cross 80 per cent as electoral fate of 301 candidates were locked in EVMs which will be opened on March 10 for counting. To check the spread of Covid-19, voters were provided hand gloves at polling stations. Addressing a press conference here, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Kunal said the highest voting was registered in the Sankhalim constituency in North Goa at 89.61 per cent, while the lowest voter turnout was 70.20 per cent at Benaulim in South Goa.

The poll officer said the overall voter turnout stood at 78.94 per cent. This is a tentative percentage of voting, while the exact data would be available later. The voting percentage may cross 80 per cent after adding votes polled through ballot papers," CEO Kunal said. Over 11 lakh people were eligible to cast their votes. They include 9,590 persons with disabilities, 2,997 aged over



80 years, 41 sex workers and nine transgenders. The Vasco constituency had the highest number of 35,139 voters, while the Mormugao seat had the lowest number of voters at 19,958, he said. Kunal said "13,150 postal ballots were issued and a total of 12,546 people voted through postal ballots." He said polling was held at 1,722 booths, of which 105 were manned by only women personnel (also called 'pink booths') and eight by differently abled persons. The CEO said 80 candidates had criminal antecedents, which were published in the media before the voting as per a Supreme Court mandate.

A senior police official said the election was conducted in a peaceful manner and no serious complaint of any malpractice

was received. He said three FIRs related to different incidents were registered

during the day. In one of the incidents, the car of a person, who is related to a political

leader, was set on fire at Bicholim, while at Sanvordem a person was found with cash, the police official said. He said the total cash seizure was Rs 6.06 crore during the period of code of conduct which came into force in early January. Besides, liquor worth Rs 3.57 crore was also seized during the period, the official added. Earlier in the day, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, the BJP candidate from Sankhalim, claimed the BJP will win more than 22 seats in the 40-member Assembly and said he will continue to hold the top post if his party forms the next government in the coastal state.

Andhra Pradesh CM Jagan Mohan Reddy's key aide shifted to New Delhi

(News Agencies) Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's Principal Secretary Praveen Prakash was transferred and moved to New Delhi as Principal Resident Commissioner of AP Bhavan. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's Principal Secretary Praveen Prakash was transferred on Monday and moved to New Delhi as Principal Resident Commissioner of AP Bhavan. Prakash's wife Bhavna Saxena, a 1996-batch IPS officer who is currently holding charge as the Principal Resident Commissioner of AP Bhavan, has



been relieved from the AP cadre subsequent to her posting as the Joint Secretary in the G-20 Secretariat in the Ministry of External Affairs. Chief Secretary

Sameer Sharma issued two separate orders to this effect on Monday. Prakash, a 1994-batch IAS officer, joined as the CM's Principal Secretary in September 2019.

Allow us to wear hijab matching colour of school uniform, say students to Karnataka HC

The girls who petitioned in favour of hijab requested the Karnataka High Court on Monday to allow them to wear Islamic headscarves of the colour of the school uniform.

(News Agencies) Challenging the government order restricting the use of any cloth that can disturb peace, harmony and, law and order, the girls who petitioned in favour of hijab requested the Karnataka High Court on Monday to allow them to wear Islamic headscarves of the colour of the school uniform. The girls made the plea to the full bench of the High Court comprising Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, Justice J M Khazi and Justice Krishna M Dixit. "I am not only challenging the GO but also asking for a positive mandate for allowing me to wear a headscarf of the same colour of the uniform," advocate Devadatt Kamat, appearing on behalf of the girls of the government pre-university college in Udupi, told the bench. Kamat also claimed that the central schools permit Muslim girls to wear headscarves of the school uniform colour and the same could be done here. According to him, headscarves are an essential religious practice, and restricting its use was violating Article 25 of the Indian Constitution. Article 25 reads: "Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this part, all persons are equally



entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion." The article also says that nothing in it should affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the state from making any law regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice and regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice. Kamat argued where was the law as mandated under Article 25 regulating or restricting any

economic, financial, political or other secular activity.

The advocate for the Muslim girls also said the College Development Committee (CDC) comprising an MLA has been authorised by the government to decide the uniform. "A CDC comprising an MLA is an extra constitutional authority and a third party to decide what to wear. The government has assigned its responsibility to this third party," Kamat argued. He also informed the bench that the girls studying in the second pre-university class have been wearing hijab for the past two years ever since they took

admission. Due to the other students who suddenly sported a cloth displaying their religious identity, the fundamental rights of his clients were curtailed, the lawyer argued. "State says that wearing of head scarf can be a problem as other students want to display their religious identity," Kamat pointed out. The court adjourned further hearing of the case to Tuesday. On January 1, six girl students of a college in Udupi attended a press conference held by Campus Front of India (CFI) in the coastal town protesting against the college authorities denying them entry into the classroom by wearing hijab. This was four days after they requested the principal permission to wear hijabs in classes which was not allowed. Till then, students used to wear hijab to the campus and entered the classroom after removing the scarves, the college principal Rudre Gowda had said. "The institution did not have any rule on hijab-wearing as such and since no one used to wear it to the classroom in the last 35 years. The students who came with the demand had the backing of outside forces," Gowda had said.

CBI books eight Central Railway officers on charges of tendering fraud

The accused had allegedly entered into a conspiracy with private suppliers to purchase non-store items at higher costs, in exchange for illegal monetary benefit from private firms/companies.

(News Agencies) The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case against eight Central Railway officials for the purchase of non-store items at higher costs for monetary benefits. The accused include the then senior divisional electrical engineer, then assistant divisional electrical Engineer, then senior material manager, two former senior section engineers, two former chief office superintendents, then divisional electrical engineer, all employees of Central Railways, besides many unknown people. It was alleged that the accused had entered into a conspiracy with the private suppliers to purchase non-store items at higher costs, in exchange for illegal monetary benefit from private firms/



companies. It was further be understood by other the tenders were allotted to the conducted at 12 locations on alleged that ambiguous suppliers, except some set of favoured set of suppliers and the premises of the accused, descriptions of items were suppliers who were involved in allegedly procured at exorbitant which led to the recovery of mentioned in such a manner the conspiracy. It was also rates. The purchases allegedly incriminating documents related that they could not be procured alleged that this resulted in amounted to approximately Rs to the case. The investigation from GeM Portal and may not limited tendering and, as such, 22.60 crore. Searches were is on, an official said.

Kerala court stays order against former CM Achuthanandan in defamation case



(News Agencies) A district court stayed a lower court order directing former Kerala chief minister VS Achuthanandan to pay damages of Rs 10.10 lakh to Congress leader Oommen Chandy for loss of reputation. The district court in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday issued a stay to the lower court order asking former Kerala Chief Minister VS Achuthanandan to pay Rs 10.10 lakh to Congress leader Oommen Chandy in a defamation case. The court said that it will grant a stay if the petitioner deposits Rs 14,89,750 as security for considering the appeal filed by Achuthanandan. An equivalent bail condition would also be sufficient to grant the stay. Chandy had filed a case alleging defamatory comments by Achuthanandan in an interview to a Malayalam news channel in 2013 in connection with the solar scam.

It was the Principal Sub Court that asked Achuthanandan to pay the sum to Chandy last month for making allegations against the latter for links to solar scam while being the Opposition leader. Achuthanandan was also asked to pay six per cent interest of the fine amount, with retrospective effect from 2014. The former chief minister had alleged that Chandy had a role in the solar scam. He had alleged that Chandy had formed a company with an intention to swindle money.

PM Modi, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince to hold virtual summit today, discuss bilateral cooperation, intl issues

PM Modi and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan will hold a virtual summit on Friday to discuss bilateral cooperation and exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.



India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will hold a virtual summit on Friday evening to forge better and look for another new chapter in their 'comprehensive strategic partnership'. The two leaders - Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan - will also "discuss bilateral cooperation and exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest," said a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs. Both leaders have spoken to each other regularly all through the Covid-19 outbreak and helped each other. The UAE took great

care of the 3.5 million Indian community. The Air Bubble agreed in August 2020 has helped most people to return to employment and business. "UAE hosts a large Indian community which numbers close to 3.5 million. The prime minister has expressed India's appreciation to the leadership of the UAE for supporting the Indian community during the pandemic. The UAE leadership has also been appreciative of the contribution of the Indian community to its development. Both sides had agreed on an Air Bubble Arrangement in 2020 during the pandemic which has enabled the movement of people

between two countries despite the challenges posed by Covid-19," said the MEA statement. The meeting coincides with the visit of UAE's Minister of Economy, Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, to New Delhi. The two sides have been fiercely negotiating for an early conclusion of the free trade pact. "A major initiative in bilateral relations is the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Negotiations for CEPA were launched in September 2021 and have been completed. The Agreement will take India-UAE economic and commercial engagement to the next level. The UAE is India's third largest trade partner, and bilateral trade and investment ties are expected to see significant enhancements," the MEA announced.

Both sides endeavour to bring back India-UAE trade to a pre-pandemic level of USD 60 billion this Financial Year. With CEPA it is expected to grow even more substantially. UAE investments are in the range of almost USD 17 billion today as compared to USD 3 billion in 2014. UAE business groups have also shown great interest in investing in J&K.

4 killed, 9 critically injured as pickup van falls into gorge in Arunachal

At least four people were killed and nine others injured when a pickup van fell into a gorge in Arunachal Pradesh on Monday.

(Staff Reporter) Four women were killed and 15 others injured, nine of them critically, after a pickup van ferrying them skidded off the road and fell into a gorge in Arunachal Pradesh's Kra Daadi district, police said on Monday. The accident took place on Sunday evening when the passengers were going towards Palin from Tali after attending a fellowship programme, Superintendent of Police Dusu Kaling said. The vehicle skidded off the road near Kumey bridge point at Kuwa and fell into a 20-metre-deep gorge above Kumey River, he said. Four women passengers died on the spot, while nine others received grievous injuries and six sustained minor injuries, Kaling said. The critically injured have been sent to Itanagar, while the rest are being treated at Palin, the officer said. Only four



occupants, including the driver, were men while the rest were women, he said. The deceased have been identified as Bohu Poyum, Nich Nenia, Toku Yachi and Goda Yayak, the SP said. Tali Circle Officer (CO) Jina Bagang said that the accident took place when the driver lost control over the vehicle

while ascending a hill and the pickup van came downhill in reverse before falling into the gorge. Chief Minister Pema Khandu expressed shock and sadness over the loss of lives in the accident. "Deeply saddened to learn about the unfortunate tragic vehicle accident near Kuwa bridge point between Tali and Palin in Kra-Daadi district. My deepest condolences. I pray for early recovery of those injured. Ex-gratia under Chief Minister Relief Fund (CMRF) sanctioned," Khandu tweeted.

Thirty-three injured as bus rolls down into gorge in Himachal Pradesh

Thirty-three people were injured when a Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) bus met with an accident in Shimla district.



(Staff Reporter) Thirty-three people were injured when a Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) bus met with an accident in Shimla district on Monday, a state disaster management official said. The Reckong Peo-bound bus rolled down into a 150-foot gorge near

Ratanapur in Rampur Sub Division, he said. Thirty-three people, including 31 passengers, the driver and the conductor of bus, sustained injuries, the official said. They were taken to Civil Hospital Khaneri for first aid, he said, adding four of the injured suffered major injuries.

Feasible Ukraine crisis de-escalation begins with Russian troop retreat

By Susmita Ghosh

In a surprising stance, Russia has begun troop pullback from the Ukraine border, which is a clear sign of de-escalation in an unstable matter. After a period of rising tension over the potential war, it is a very welcoming move. It may also indicate that Russia is ready to return to the tables instead of all-around warfare with devastating consequences.

A continuous volatile situation in the Ukraine Russia border was simmering up for the past few months. More than 100,000

Russian troops were stationed across the border and the stance of

they do not plan a Ukraine invasion. Russian President Putin accused Washington for ignoring Russia's valid security demands. He also had participated directly or indirectly with the top brass of France and UK. However, all the talks were fruitless and the threat of war was looming near the horizon.

Besides taking a wrecking ball to the Ukrainian and the global economy, another negative parallel effect like the refugee problem may arise if there is a war. Poland, which shares the

largest European border with Ukraine prepares to accept Ukrainian refugees.

The controversy and military movement started on the behalf of Russia in November 2021 when the amassing troops and arsenal in the Ukraine border region was on the go

the Russian diplomats also indicated a potential and imminent invasion by the super-power country in the territory. The controversy and military movement started on the behalf of Russia in November 2021 when the amassing troops and arsenal in the Ukraine border region was on the go. Their primary demand in December was that NATO ceases all the military activities in the Eastern Europe and stopped accepting Ukraine or any former Soviet countries as members. Several countries started pulling back their non-essential employees and students from Ukraine in fear of rising conflict. At the same time, the NATO forces were kept on alert and reinforced the military presence with the air force and navy. China took a pro-Russia stance where they asked the western world to consider "Moscow's legitimate security concerns."

US President Joe Biden took a prominent step in the right direction when he spoke to the Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin. In the conversation, he warned that any attack on Ukraine would have resulted in 'widespread human suffering.' Moreover he stated that the US and its allies are ready to 'impose swift and severe costs' in case of an attack on Ukraine. This firm statement may have worked as a nudge to Russia in the proper direction, which resulted in the force calling back.

The official stance of Russia was that

Even though it will affect the country, Poland is ready to extend a helping hand on humanitarian grounds.

At this moment, the NATO Chief Jens Stoltenberg expresses a 'cautious optimism' though he stated that the NATO monitoring of the situation will continue. He remains hopeful for an amicable solution as both the Russian defence ministry and Kremlin confirmed the force pullback from the Ukraine border.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, under any condition, will have a devastating effect, not only locally, but also on a global scale. Evidently the stock markets across the world began to tumble on downward spiral. Even with NATO warning and probable violation of western economic sanctions, this crisis, if not averted, can lead to global military and political pandemonium.

Presently, there is a probability on the rise that Russia is ready to return to diplomatic talks. They have achieved their goal of showing the world their military might, their attempts were kept in check though by the US and its allies. The all-around warfare is bad for the NATO countries and Russia. Even China will feel the impact as the consumer market globally will be affected to a large extent. Now, it remains to comprehend if the countries will remain in the path of diplomacy long enough to find a solution that will satisfy all the parties involved or not.

Gaming and banning: On ban on online games

Online gaming might be addictive, but a ban will militate against individual freedom. Yet another legislative attempt to prohibit online gaming has failed under judicial scrutiny. The amendments brought to existing regulations on betting and gambling in Karnataka have been struck down by the State's High Court. Last year, the Madras High Court invalidated similar amendments that targeted online rummy and poker. What is common to both cases is that the legislature assumed a paternalistic role, arguably with the laudable aim of protecting the people, especially the youth, from the temptations of online gambling. However, the resulting provisions failed to make a distinction between games of skill and games of chance, and sought to bring under the proscription all games played online, regardless of the extent to which skill was required. Further, the Karnataka High Court has rejected a key submission that it could be upheld as a 'public order' law. It referred to "the menace of cyber games" of epic proportions, and the registration of about 28,000 cases by the police in the State in the last three years. The government did have a point when it said many have taken their own lives and families ruined as a result of gaming addiction and indebtedness. However, as the court has pointed out, if the objective was to curb the menace of gambling, the government should prohibit activities that amount to gambling as such, and not the games of skill. While enacting

the extreme measure, it did not consider the feasibility of regulating wagering on games of skill.

While the idea of betting and gambling conjures up the image of a 'bucket shop' associated with dingy gaming-houses frequented by hustlers, there is an element of 'information, expression and entertainment' that has constitutional protection. And gaming platforms are also a legitimate business that enjoy the freedom of trade when used for online versions of games of skill. The court has drawn attention to the fact that what such bans do is to create "a wholly new category of medium-based regulation, when chance of medium per se does not alter the true nature and content of the games". In other words, what is targeted is not the gambling part but the 'online' part. Also, the amendments contradicted a general exemption in the original law to 'games of skill' by making all online gaming punishable even if they involved skill. It is clear that an absolute embargo on games of skill involving money or stakes could not have been upheld by the court, as the line between individual freedom, both to carry on the business and to participate in it as a consumer, and state action could not have been obliterated. All legislation that assumes that sections of society require the hand of the state to guide and support them have some populist appeal. And there is an addictive element to online gaming, but that does not mean there is no individual freedom and choice at all.



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Rise and fall of Gujarat's ABG Shipyard, now under probe for fraud

How did Gujarat's ABG Shipyard, once thriving with a net profit of Rs 107 crore, slide in growth? Why has it been booked for fraud now?

Once considered a powerhouse in shipbuilding with an order book of Rs 16,600 crore, Gujarat's ABG Shipyard is now under probe for fraud. On a complaint by State Bank of India, the CBI recently booked ABG Shipyard, its directors, and ABG International Pvt Limited for allegedly causing losses of Rs 22,842 crore to a consortium of 28 banks.

A decade of losses

Until the end of 2012-13, ABG Shipyard was thriving, with a net profit of Rs 107 crore. The slide started the following year, with a loss of Rs 199 crore. By March 2016, its net loss had mounted to Rs 3,704 crore, up from Rs 897 crore in 2014-15. Revenues had fallen to Rs 37 crore, from Rs 401 crore a year earlier.

The company undertook a debt restructuring exercise in 2013-14. In its annual report that year, it cited cancellation of new ship/vessel orders, reduced lending from banks, high borrowing cost,



low capacity utilisation of the Dahej shipyard in Surat, and the expiry of the Centre's shipbuilding subsidy scheme in 2007.

An independent auditor's report, annexed with ABG Shipyard's annual report for 2015-16, mentions legal proceedings by some creditors, and a showcause notice from the Directorate of Revenue

Intelligence, Mumbai that alleged fraud by ABG employees. The report said the auditor and the management had not noticed or reported any fraud.

Growth

Registered with the Registrar of Companies in Ahmedabad, ABG Shipyard Ltd was incorporated as Magdalla Shipyard Pvt Ltd in March 1985. It became ABG Shipyard Pvt Ltd in May 1995 and

ABG Shipyard Ltd in June 1995. Between 1990, when it delivered its first ship, and 2013, it built over 165 ships, 80% of them for international customers. In 2000, it got its first government order to build two inceptor boats for the Coast Guard; in 2011, the Centre gave it a licence to build defence ships including submarines. By February 2012, ABG Shipyard had an order book of

Rs 16,600 crore. Its main shipyard was spread over 35 acres on the banks of the Tapi in Magdalla, Surat. It later set up a second shipyard in Dahej, Bharuch, 150 km from Magdalla, following an MoU with Gujarat Maritime Board for long-term lease of land and waterfront usage.

The company signed MoUs for large projects at Vibrant Gujarat summits, including one of Rs 2500 crore for a third shipyard. Acquisitions & subsidiaries ABG Shipyard acquired UAE-based Crossocean Ship Repair Limited, FZE, Fujairah on January 22, 2006, but sold it off in March 2008. In 2007-08, ABG acquired Vipul Shipyard adjacent to its Magdalla shipyard.

A key acquisition was of Western India Shipyard Limited (WISL), Goa, through a deal with ICICI bank and other lenders. ABG held a 60.15% controlling stake in WISL,

(Contd on page 34)

Assembly elections 2022: In a first, women party workers from other states campaign for BJP in Uttar Pradesh

Women party workers have been given the responsibility to campaign in different districts across UP. At least one worker has been deployed in every assembly.

For the first time during elections, women party workers from other states have reached Uttar Pradesh to campaign for the BJP.

This time, all the parties have claimed to get the votes of women. Meanwhile, the BJP has also roped in women workers from other states to campaign in UP to reach out to the women voters by organising events like 'Lotus Kitty Club'.

The BJP has intensified

its campaign after the second phase of voting. According to reports, women have shown enthusiasm for the party. Based on this, the party decided to share the responsibility of campaigning with women workers in the next five phases

as well. Women party workers have been given the responsibility to campaign in different districts across the state. At

as many migrated families are settled there.

Former minister of Gujarat Dr Nirmala Wadhvani said, 'I am Sindhi. I am meeting and campaigning among Sindhi colonies in Lucknow.' These migrant women workers have done complete research into the situation and politics in Uttar Pradesh. This becomes clear from their speeches and their conversations with local women. The party's

committee member Dr Deepika Reddy addressed women voters in UP. She told them in the Yogi government, all women are getting the respect and security they deserve. "This was not the case when the previous government was in power.

That's why women should support the BJP," she said. Another party worker, Naina Ben, who came from Ahmedabad in Gujarat, does not forget to mention Ram Mandir and Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in meetings with women. Local women workers also feel comfortable campaigning with others. Godavari Mishra, president of Awadh region of BJP Mahila Morcha, said, "Our enthusiasm has increased further by the arrival of these sisters from other states to support us. It is a big deal that they have come here for our elections." To connect with the population, the BJP organises 'Kamal Shakti Samvad' in Kamal Club. In this meeting, 20-25 women from the locality are called, just like in a kitty party. The workers offer them food, henna tattoos, music and ask for their support through speeches. Women in small groups also do door-to-door campaigning.



How Indian economy's key wheel is facing funding crisis

What is needed is a resolve to solve the malaise and adopt the digital supply chain finance system which has been thriving since the Covid disruption. Late payment and even non-payment of dues to the MSME sector are rampant. This increased manifold when the Covid pandemic hit the country's economy. To address the issue, the government enacted several laws and started 'Samadhan' portal to monitor delayed payments to MSMEs. What the Samadhan portal has revealed is the huge sum that remains unpaid to MSMEs that approached the portal for redressal. There are 98,666 applications filed by MSMEs to the portal. Out of these, a mere 11,057 cases have been disposed of and 30,074 applications have yet to be viewed. Evidently, Samadhan is not much help to the cash-strapped MSMEs which suffer from cash flow worries even under normal



circumstances.

DELAYED PAYMENTS

The Samadhan portal shows that the central and state government departments and owned units are no less responsible for the cash flow plight of MSMEs than others. On the latest count, there are 18203 applications filed against government units and departments. Out of these, the

government bodies have not responded to 14,739 applications. As much as Rs 8949.68 crore worth of potential cash flow of MSMEs are locked with the government-owned enterprises only. Curiously, the Union Government is helpless in ensuring timely payment of dues to MSMEs.

In response to a question in the

Lok Sabha in February 2021 the government said, "While the government can urge buyers to pay MSMEs on time, it cannot force them to do so. The Ministry has taken up the subject vigorously with the Central Ministries, Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and State Governments and the corporate entities. But, it is to be noted that

the Central Government cannot issue any directions to, or force, State Governments or State PSEs to pay the dues."

OVER RS 25,550 CRORE OF MSME CASH FLOW IS STUCK

Economists, while analysing the macroeconomic variables impacting growth, usually leave out a critical microeconomic factor, cash flow, which is the lifeline of the productive sector. This is most critical in the case of MSMEs sector since these units operate on a limited cash liquidity. For small business owners, cash flow problems are a common and dangerous threat, as seen that even in the USA, small businesses and start-ups fail 82 per cent of the time due to a low cash flow. In India the problem is even more acute. As per the Samadhan portal more than Rs 25,550 crore of MSME cash flow is stuck in non-payment or delayed payment of dues.

(Contd on page 33)

What is Lassa fever and what are its symptoms?

The death rate associated with this disease is low, at around one per cent. But the death rate is higher for certain individuals, such as pregnant women in their third trimester.



One of the three persons diagnosed with Lassa fever in the UK has died on February 11. The cases have been linked to travel to west African countries. The Lassa virus is named after a town in Nigeria where the first cases were discovered.

The death rate associated with this disease is low, at around one per cent. But the death rate is higher for certain individuals,

such as pregnant women in their third trimester. According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, about 80 per cent of the cases are asymptomatic and therefore remain undiagnosed. Some patients may need to be hospitalised and develop severe multi-system disease. Fifteen per cent of the hospitalised patients may die.

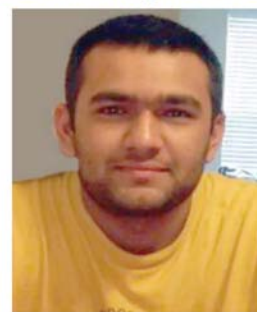
(Contd on page 32)



FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

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

Date(s) of Birth Used: May 15, 1990

Hair: Brown

Height: 5'9"

Sex: Male

Nationality: Indian

Place of Birth: Kantrodi Ta Viramgam, Gujarat, India

Eyes: Brown

Weight: 165 pounds

Occupation: Employee of donut shop

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.

SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Baltimore

The myth of the trickle-down

Evidence from around the world is that the economic policy paradigm of first increasing the overall size of the pie by reducing taxes at the top and then ‘redistributing’ the wealth has not delivered benefits to people

Comments by economists about the budget explain the condition of the Indian economy. They also reveal ideological divisions about how the health of an economy should be measured and the prescriptions to improve it. The finance minister's rectitude has been commended: There are no “populist hand-outs” nor have taxes on incomes and wealth increased. There is agreement that investments in physical infrastructure will benefit the economy in the long run, and in the short run too, by creating more employment. However, there is fear that the way the money will be used by the Centre will disempower the states further, just when they must do most of the heavy lifting on public welfare. And, there is



disappointment that allocations for health and social security remain grossly inadequate.

Former Finance Minister P Chidambaram summarised the budget as, “No work, no welfare, only wealth”. Large “wealth creators” are made free to create

wealth for themselves — wealth which, supposedly, will trickle down to the masses. Evidence from around the world is that the economic policy paradigm, of first increasing the overall size of the pie by reducing taxes at the top and then “redistributing”

the wealth, has not delivered benefits to people. Trickle-down has dried up while gushing up has increased, with policies to make it easy for investors to do their business of making more profits for themselves. Gandhiji had declared that he was not against

wealth creators. He lauded wealth creation. However, it must not be at the cost of workers and welfare. Wealth creators must be trustees of the wealth they create, not its exclusive owners.

(Contd on page 34)

India must prioritise stability in Myanmar

The military cannot ensure stable political environment. Delhi must look beyond the junta and forge new friendships

One year ago, the military in Myanmar attempted to grab power from the elected civilian government in a dramatic coup. Subsequently, it installed a “caretaker government”, while the commander-in-chief, Min Aung Hlaing, declared himself “Prime Minister”. Meanwhile, the deposed civilian lawmakers who were elected in free-and-fair elections in November 2020 put together their own government known as the National Unity Government (NUG), which commands the support of the majority.

The coup faced popular resistance from the first day, with mass protests bringing the country to a halt. Thousands, including government officials, refused to go to work, spawning a civil disobedience movement. The junta swiftly responded with disproportionate force —



opening fire at unarmed protestors, conducting violent nighttime raids in residential areas, and blocking social media sites. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, as of January 28, 1,499 civilians have been killed in Myanmar since the coup. Within about three months after the coup,

a full-fledged armed rebellion erupted across Myanmar. Dozens of civilian militias, called People's Defence Forces (PDF), now armed with more sophisticated weapons, mushroomed in nearly every region and state. From the remote hills of Chin state to major urban centres like Yangon and Mandalay, the

armed resistance gripped the whole country by midsummer. Today, the military is having to fight on multiple fronts, as even powerful ethnic armed groups in the north, northwest and east have joined forces with the PDFs. This is unlike anything that the military has seen before. According to the ACLED (Armed Conflict

Location and Event Data Project) database, there were more than 6,675 clashes and attacks in Myanmar from February-December 2021 — more than Afghanistan and Yemen. The last three months alone saw 2,388 clashes — highest in the world, higher than even Syria.

(Contd on page 33)

What the Taliban is doing to survive in power

Faced with violent protests and resistance, it is weaponising ideology and firming up like-minded alliances across the globe

Since the fall of Kabul, the Taliban has been finding it difficult to rule Afghanistan the way it had bragged about for decades. Pakistan's proxy, the Islamic State Khurasan Province (ISKP)'s violent campaign against the Taliban is continuing, mostly in Kabul and eastern Afghanistan. Pakistani forces are mounting cross-border attacks on TTP hideouts and leaders inside Afghanistan. Over the last few weeks, underground armed resistance movements have become stronger, frequently freeing "pockets" in at least 10-12 provinces of northern Afghanistan, which are also witnessing frequent public protests.

Taliban forces have also experienced border skirmishes with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Iran and have amassed military equipment along the borders. The Defence Minister has even threatened Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to return Afghan fighter planes that had landed in their territory when the Taliban seized power. The Taliban leadership is re-emphasising Sharia-based governance, backing TTP strongly and appears to be inching towards naming a new Amir-ul-Momineen (AuM) to stitch a powerful narrative and plan for survival. The emergence of a Kabul-based AuM would adversely impact the stability of Afghanistan, the region and far beyond.

In recent weeks, a significant section of the Taliban's top leadership is building the image of Defence Minister Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, son of Taliban's founding AuM, Mullah Omar, as a young, charismatic, incorruptible and strong leader, who is also the heir to Mullah Omar's legacy. Referring to his role as of a "blue-blooded Pashtun", deputy Amir and military chief of the Taliban since 2016, Taliban propaganda is showcasing him as "the warrior" who defeated the US and NATO, quietly moving the spotlight away from the invisible AuM, Haibatullah Akhundzada. This appears to be preparation for scaling up Yaqoob's "divine religious warrior" image and possibly



anointing him as the next AuM. The new AuM would be seen in control of the Afghan army and would work as a "unifier".

The friction of the Taliban with its "prime backer" Pakistan is becoming more vicious and visible. There is no let-up in Taliban support for TTP, or on frontal attacks on Pakistani forces in the tribal belt and in big cities, including Islamabad. The propaganda by the two groups is now enmeshed in terms of projecting a common ideology and slamming Pakistan's deep state as an "enemy" of Islam.

Non-Pashtun Taliban are being arrested by Taliban or are switching sides. The reports about killings of scores of former Afghan forces by the Taliban may soon augment ranks of the resistance movements. The tensions between Taliban and Central Asian countries would only strengthen the movements that are now calling on Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras to unite against a Pashtun Taliban.

Furthermore, the new movements are projecting the legacy of Ahmad Shah Masood as a historical "hero"

of the Afghan nation and his son, Ahmad Masood, as a capable, young, charismatic "new hero" for a "modern" Afghan nation, as against "primitive" Taliban rule. At the same time, the propaganda is questioning the US "model" of backing a Pashtun presidency for 20 years since 2001.

Violent public protests in Kazakhstan in January have demonstrated the "fragility" of Taliban's rule, which cannot count on military support from any nation-state or block of nations to overcome similar crises. In case of a "hypothetical rapprochement" with Pakistan, even Pakistan would not have the bandwidth or courage to play such a role for the Taliban.

Lacking financial or diplomatic support of any big nation or block, the Taliban's quest for funding and recognition has, till now, largely failed. The formal structure of governance in Afghanistan has crumbled in no time and the Taliban's inability to even pay basic salaries to local functionaries is leading to exodus and the emaciation of whatever was left of this machinery.

The Taliban has not lived up

to assurances given to the international community through the Doha process — of a broad-based, all-inclusive government, willing to engage and accommodate progressive forces within and beyond. As a result, apart from "regulated" humanitarian assistance, it has failed to acquire funds or legitimacy, even from Pakistan and China.

The Taliban knew that it lacked tools, finances and expertise to create a "modern state", so it is not even pretending to do so. Rather, it has chosen a primitive model — showcasing Afghanistan as a Sharia-based system, even justifying deployment of suicide bombers against enemies. This approach aims to keep its flock together, weaponise the ideology to instil fear in the regional and global community and firm up like-minded alliances across the globe.

Its backing of TTP is being projected as support for the Pashtun cause across the Af-Pak border. It is clear that the Taliban has cultivated a bond with TTP as an "ideal buffer" against Pakistani forces, which could create deep

trouble for Taliban. Both groups believe that survival can be ensured if they stick together and may claim "Pashtunistan" along the Af-Pak border — in case Taliban loses its grip over northern Afghanistan to underground movements. Taliban is aware that, if presented with a choice, Russia, Iran and Central Asian nations would prefer the movements as a practical buffer against the Taliban.

The presence of a Kabul-based AuM would, however, have implications beyond Afghan borders. The Islamic Emirate could soon start behaving like an ISIS-style Caliphate, emulating Syria- and Africa-based terrorist groups. Terror groups of the region and beyond could begin pledging allegiance to the AuM. Once such a move is made, the natural progression would be for the Taliban to start exporting and receiving foreign fighters to and from other regions. Taliban propaganda to this effect is already making mentions of Syria, Palestine, Xinjiang and Central Asia, which could eventually expand to include other areas.

Six months of Taliban: Afghans safer, poorer, less hopeful

The country feels safer, less violent than it has in decades, but the once aid-fuelled economy is barreling toward collapse. Tens of thousands of Afghans have fled or have been evacuated, including large numbers of the educated elites.

Afghanistan has undergone a dramatic transformation in half a year of Taliban rule. The country feels safer, less violent than it has in decades, but the once aid-fuelled economy is barreling toward collapse. Tens of thousands of Afghans have fled or have been evacuated, including large numbers of the educated elites. They either fear for their economic future or lack of freedom under a group that ascribes to a strict interpretation of Islam and during its previous rule in the late 1990s barred girls from school and women from work. Tuesday marks six months since the Afghan capital of Kabul was ceded to the Taliban with the sudden and secret departure of the country's US-backed president. The takeover of Kabul had been preceded by a months-long Taliban military campaign to take control of provincial areas, many of which fell with hardly a fight. Today, the sight of armed Taliban



fighters roaming the street still jars and frightens residents.

But women have returned to the streets, and many young men have put on Western clothes again after initially shedding them for the traditional shalwar kameez, the long shirt and baggy pants favoured by the Taliban. Unlike in the 1990s, the Taliban are allowing some

women to work. Women are back in their jobs in the health and education ministries, as well as at Kabul International airport, often next to men. But women are still waiting to return to work in other ministries. Thousands of jobs have been lost in the economic downward spiral, and women have been hit hardest. The Taliban have cracked down

on women's protests and harassed journalists, including briefly detaining two foreign journalists working with the UN refugee agency last week. On Monday, the detention of some young men selling heart-shaped flowers in recognition of Valentine's Day was a stark reminder that the new all-male religion-driven administration has

no tolerance for Western ideas of romance. Girls in grades 1-6 have been going to school, but those in the higher grades are still locked out in most parts of the country. The Taliban promised all girls will be in school after the Afghan new year at the end of March. Universities are gradually reopening and private universities and schools never closed. Poverty is deepening. Even those who have money have a hard time accessing it. At banks, lines are long as residents wait for hours, sometimes even days, to withdraw a limit of \$200 a week. More than USD 9 billion in Afghanistan's foreign assets were frozen after the Taliban takeover. Last week, President Joe Biden signed an executive order that promised USD 3.5 billion – out of USD 7 billion of Afghanistan's assets frozen in the United States – would be given to families of America's 9/11 victims.

(Contd. on Page 35)

Everyday Economics: What are repo & reverse-repo rates?

Every day, people go to commercial banks either to deposit their savings or to get a loan

On their savings/deposits, the bank pays them interest at a certain rate. On loans, the bank charges them interest at a certain rate. Typically, the interest rate banks charge on loans is higher than the interest they pay on deposits.

How does a bank decide what repo rate should be?

A key deciding factor — although not the only one — is the interest rates that commercial banks themselves pay (or get) when they borrow (or deposit) money from (or in) the Reserve Bank of India. The interest rate that the RBI charges when commercial banks borrow money from it is called the repo rate. The interest rate that the RBI pays commercial banks when they park their excess cash with the central bank is called the reverse repo rate. Since RBI is also a bank and has to earn



more than it pays, the repo rate is higher than the reverse repo rate. At present, the repo rate is 4%, and the reverse repo rate is 3.35%.

How does repo rate affect the economy?

Using these two rates, the RBI

sets the tone for all other interest rates in the banking system, and through that route, in the broader economy. For instance, when the RBI wants to encourage economic activity in the economy, it reduces the repo rates. Doing this enables commercial banks such as the

SBI to bring down the interest rates they charge (on their loans) as well as the interest rate they pay on deposits. This, in turn, incentivises people to spend money, because keeping their savings in the bank now pays back a little less, and businesses are

incentivised to take new loans for new investments because new loans now cost a little less as well. It is for this reason that the repo and reverse repo rates are often referred to as the "benchmark" interest rates in the economy.

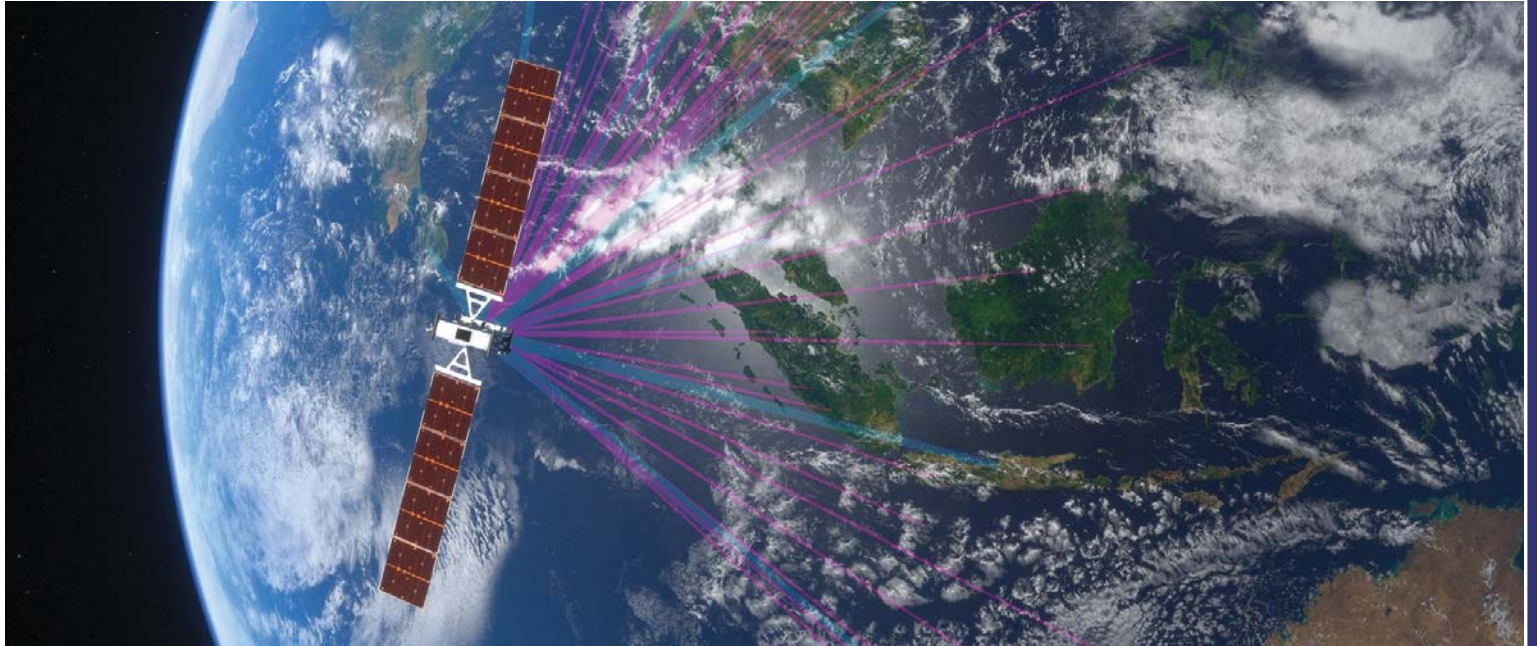
Jio Platforms' joint-venture with SES to provide satellite broadband services

Jio has formed a joint-venture with Luxembourg-based SES to deliver satellite broadband services across India. What does the deal entail?

Digital services company Jio Platforms has formed a joint-venture with Luxembourg-based satellite-linked content connectivity solutions provider SES to deliver satellite broadband services across India.

What does the deal entail?

In a press statement, the companies said that the joint venture will use multi-orbit space networks that is a combination of GEO (geostationary equatorial orbit) and MEO (medium earth orbit) satellite constellations capable of delivering multi-gigabit links and capacity to enterprises, mobile backhaul and retail customers across the length and breadth of India and neighbouring regions. The joint venture will be the vehicle for providing SES's satellite data and connectivity services in India, except for certain international aeronautical and maritime customers who may be served by SES. It will have availability of up to 100 Gbps capacity from SES and will leverage Jio's sales reach in



India to unlock this market opportunity. As part of the investment plan, the joint venture will develop extensive gateway infrastructure in India to provide services within the country, the companies said.

Is Jio's proposed satellite broadband service any different from what Starlink or OneWeb offer?

Yes, SES primarily has satellites in the GEO and the MEO, while those of Elon Musk-led Starlink

and Bharti Group's OneWeb are in low earth orbit (LEO). While GEO satellites are positioned at an altitude of 36,000 km, MEO and LEO are lower at altitudes of 5,000-20,000km and 500-1,200 km, respectively. The altitude of the satellite is directly proportional to the area of earth that it covers. Therefore, the higher a satellite is positioned, the larger an area it covers.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of GEO,

MEO and LEO?

GEO and LEO satellites are considered to be the two extremes in satellite communications. While GEO satellites provide a larger coverage and therefore only three satellites can cover the whole earth, hundreds of LEO satellites are needed to provide coverage to a larger area. LEO satellites are smaller and are cheaper to launch than GEOs or MEOs. But the recent incident of SpaceX's

satellites falling out of orbit as a result of the solar flare has put the spotlight on the riskiness of the technology and the threat from the space debris it creates. For MEO satellites, on the other hand, while a simple equatorial orbit covers 96 per cent of the global population, it shares some disadvantages of GEO satellites such as the need for a high inclined antenna for locations away from the equator.

Who is Ilker Ayci, the new Air India CEO?

The Tata Group, which had set its mind on hiring an expatriate to helm Air India, has appointed Ilker Ayci as the Managing Director and CEO of the airline

The Tata Group Monday announced the appointment of former Turkish Airlines Chairman Ilker Ayci as the Managing Director and CEO of Air India, which it took over from the government last month.

Who is Ilker Ayci?

Ilker Ayci was chairman of Turkish Airlines since 2015, and his resignation from the post was announced by the airline on January 27 this year — the same day the Centre handed over Air India to the Tatas.

Ayci was born in Istanbul in 1971. He is a 1994 alumni of Bilkent University's Department of Political Science and Public Administration, according to the Tata Group statement. After a research stay in political science at the Leeds

University in the UK in 1995, he completed an International Relations Master's programme at the Marmara University in Istanbul in 1997. In 2011, he was made the Chairman of the Republic of Turkey Investment Support and Promotion

Agency. During his professional career, Ayci has been an advisor to the then Mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul, where he took part in a number of development projects in Turkey's largest city. Erdoğan is currently the President of Turkey.

Why has Ayci been appointed Air

India MD & CEO?



American carriers, before naming Ayci for the role. This is in line with the group's ambition to turn the airline's global brand around.

In a statement, Tata Group Chairman N Chandrasekaran said: "Ilker is an aviation industry leader who led Turkish Airlines to its current success during his tenure there. We are delighted to welcome Ilker

to the Tata Group where he would lead Air India into the new era".

Do other airlines in India have foreigners as CEOs?

Yes, promoters of Indian airlines have been looking at those with global experience to pilot their airlines for a long time now. Tata Group-Singapore Airlines joint-venture airline Vistara had Singapore citizens Phee Teik Yeoh and Leslie Thng as their CEOs. GoAir has had several expatriates, including Cornelis Vrieswijk and Wolfgang Prock-Schauer, in the corner office. IndiGo has had several expatriates in its top management. Its CEO Ronojoy Dutta is a US citizen. Currently, Prock-Schauer is President and Chief Operating Officer, while Willy Boulter is its Chief Commercial Officer.

Brother acquitted for honour killing of Pakistani social media star Qandeel Baloch

After serving less than six years in prison, Muhammad Waseem was sentenced to life in prison for strangling his sister, Qandeel Baloch. She was a social media star known for her suggestive and defiant posts



(News Agencies) The brother of a Pakistani social media star who was murdered in one of the country's most notorious "honour killings" was acquitted on Monday after serving less than six years in prison, lawyers said. Qandeel Baloch, 26, became famous for her suggestive and defiant posts which flew in the face of the nation's deeply patriarchal mores before her death in 2016.

Her brother Muhammad Waseem was arrested and later sentenced to life in prison for strangling her, brazenly telling the press he had no remorse for the slaying because her behaviour was "intolerable". "He has been fully acquitted" by a court in the eastern city of Multan, his lawyer Sardar Mehboob told AFP, without giving further details. The court order has yet to be made public. The case became the most high profile "honour killing" of recent years -- where women are dealt lethal punishment by male relatives for purportedly bringing "shame" to the reputation

of a family. Under a recent Pakistani law change, perpetrators are no longer able to seek forgiveness from the victim's family -- sometimes their own family -- and to have their sentences commuted. In Baloch's case, her parents initially insisted their son would be given no absolution. But they later changed their minds and said they wanted him to be forgiven. A lawyer for the siblings' mother said she had given "her consent" to pardon him, according to her lawyer, Safdar Shah. He is expected to be released later this week. "Waseem may now walk free while Qandeel was condemned for stepping outside the bounds of what is deemed 'acceptable' behaviour for women in Pakistan," biographer Sanam Maher told AFP. "After today's verdict, we may ask, who killed her?" she added. Three months after Baloch's murder Pakistan's parliament passed new legislation mandating life imprisonment for honour killings.

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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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Man accused of blasphemy stoned to death by mob in Pakistan, 62 held

A man was stoned to death in a remote village in Pakistan's Punjab province for allegedly desecrating a religious book

(Staff Reporter) A middle-aged man was stoned to death and his body was hung from a tree by a mob for allegedly desecrating a religious book in a remote village in Pakistan's Punjab province, police said on Sunday, a gruesome incident that has sparked nationwide outrage.

The incident took place in Jungle Derawala village, in Khanewal district, situated 275-km from Lahore on Saturday evening, where locals had gathered after their Maghrib (evening) prayers, following announcements that a man had torn pages of the Holy Quran and had set them on fire.

The police had arrived in the village before the incident, but the mob had outnumbered them.

They seized the victim from the SHO's custody and tied him to a tree, after which he was lynched to death, eyewitnesses said.

"Over 300 men had gathered at Masjid

Shahmuqeen Muaza in Jungle Derawala village, where they tied a middle-aged man with a rope before stoning him to death. Later, they hung his body on a tree," police officer Muhammad Amin told PTI.

He said two policemen, who tried to bring the body down from the tree, were injured when mob began throwing stones at them. "Police tried to take the injured man into custody, but we were outnumbered by the mob, and they killed him. They chanted religious slogans and attacked the two policemen who tried to bring the victim's body down from the tree. Once fresh reinforcements arrived in the village, they shifted the body to a mortuary," Amin said. According to BBC Urdu service, the victim was identified as Mushtaq Ahmed (son of Bashir Ahmed), who was a resident of Bara Chak village. The villagers said that the victim was mentally unstable and stayed out of the house for several days. A number of videos have surfaced on social media in which the enraged mob

can be seen torturing the man and hanging his body on the tree. Some had even tried to burn his body, according to the videos that are circulating online.

Punjab Inspector General of Police Rao Sardar Ali Khan submitted a preliminary report of the incident to Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar. According to the report, a case was registered against 33 suspects and 300 unknown persons while sections related to heinous crimes and terrorism were also added.

Chief Minister Buzdar has issued directives that all requirements of justice must be met and said no one would be allowed to take the law into their own hands. "Police have registered an FIR against 300 people. Of them, 62 have been arrested so far and raids are being conducted to nab the remaining culprits," Amin said. The detained accused also included the prime suspects. The police will conduct forensic analysis of available footage to identify more suspects. Prime

Minister Imran Khan on Sunday expressed anguish over the incident and said the culprits involved in the lynching will be "dealt with (the) full severity of the law" along with police officials who "failed in their duty". "We have zero tolerance for anyone taking the law into their own hands and mob lynching will be dealt with the full severity of the law," he tweeted a day after the incident. Khan said he has sought a report from the Punjab police chief on the actions taken against perpetrators of the lynching. Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said he had "repeatedly pointed out" the destructive extremist elements present in the education system. "This problem is one of rule of law and one of social decline as well. Be prepared for great destruction if the school, police station and pulpit are not reformed," he warned. Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari condemned the incident and said it "should not go unpunished".

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Will weed out extremist elements: Pakistan Army chief Bajwa tells President Alvi

Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa met President Dr Arif Alvi and reiterated the armed forces' resolve to weed out extremist elements from the country



(Staff Reporter) Pakistan Arif Alvi and has reiterated the Army chief General Qamar armed forces' resolve to weed out Javed Bajwa met President Dr extremist elements from the

country, according to a statement released by the President's House on Tuesday. Bajwa met President Alvi at the Aiwan-e-Sadr on Monday, where he briefed the head of state on the operation against terrorists and the security forces' professional readiness.

The Army chief also reiterated his forces' resolve "to eliminate militants and miscreants from the country," the release said. Two weeks ago, the security

forces flushed out 20 militants from Naushki and Panjgur areas in the restive Balochistan province. "The nation is proud of the armed forces' sacrifices, despite all the troubles, the security forces have defended the country's borders," President Alvi said after the meeting.

Bajwa also met Prime Minister Khan on Monday, a rare engagement that took place on the sidelines of the apex committee on Afghanistan's session. This high-profile meeting

has elicited considerable interest, especially after Khan and Bajwa were at odds over the appointment of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Lt. Gen Nadeem Anjum. Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa called on Prime Minister Imran Khan today. Professional matters pertaining to the Pakistan Army were discussed during the meeting," Pakistan's PMO said in a tweet.

Myanmar Junta holds military parade, commits to release 814 prisoners

Myanmar's military government announced an amnesty for 814 prisoners on Union Day, as it held a parade in the capital as a show of force



(Staff Reporter) Myanmar's junta spokesperson Zaw Min Tun told on Saturday announced an amnesty for more than 800

prisoners, as it held a parade and show of force in the capital to mark the country's Union Day. The country has been in turmoil since last year's coup, with mass protests and a subsequent military crackdown that has killed more than 1,500 civilians, according to the UN's human rights office. Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing issued the "pardon order" -- a regular feature of major holidays in the country -- for 814 prisoners, state media said, marking the 75th Union Day. The annual holiday commemorates an agreement between independence hero Aung San and several ethnic groups to form a Union of Burma independent of British rule. Those given amnesty will be mostly from prisons in commercial hub Yangon, junta

spokesperson Zaw Min Tun told AFP.

He did not say whether Australian academic Sean Turnell - who has been detained for more than a year - would be among those released. The economics professor was working as an adviser to civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi when he was arrested last February, days after she was ousted by the military. He has been charged with violating Myanmar's official secrets law and faces a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison if found guilty. About 100 people gathered outside Yangon's Insein prison on Saturday morning hoping to be reunited with loved ones, AFP correspondents said. Four minibuses left the prison around noon local time (0530 GMT) and drove away, with those inside waving as people in the crowd

shouted the names of relatives. Thin Thin Aye, 46, waited in the hope her son - jailed last year for incitement against the military - would be among those freed. She kept waiting even after the last bus pulled away and prison staff said no other prisoners would be released. "I hope my son will be released as soon as possible and I want him to stay with our family," she told AFP through tears.

'Where was the union?'

The junta marked Union Day with a show of force in the military-built capital Naypyidaw. Hundreds of troops paraded

alongside civil servants waving national flags in unison, and there were choreographed dances. Helicopters carrying the country's yellow, green and red flag flew overhead, followed by jets trailing the same colours in smoke. In a speech to troops, Min Aung Hlaing repeated the military's claim of massive fraud in 2020 elections won by Suu Kyi's party.

He also invited the myriad ethnic armed organisations that have been fighting Myanmar's military -- and each other -- for decades to sit for peace talks. The Karen National Union, whose fighters have clashed repeatedly

with junta troops in the east, said it would not attend talks. "They say it was union day, but where was the union?" spokesman Padoh Saw Taw Nee told AFP. "They stole power from the civilian government. They are not the official government." "The message for Union Day is at complete odds with the reality that is Myanmar," said independent analyst David Mathieson, adding the junta was not sincere about peace. "It's pretty absurd that on the 75th anniversary of Union Day the country is more divided than at any point in its history."

Alert gateman's timely intervention averts major train mishap in Bangladesh

A major portion of the Boral Railway Bridge had caved in on Saturday, moments after a cargo train had crossed the structure

(Staff Reporter) About 300 passengers on board the Uttara Chilhati Express narrowly escaped a major accident on Saturday, thanks to the timely intervention by an alert gateman in Rajshahi district in northwest Bangladesh, railway officials said. A major portion of the Boral Railway Bridge had caved in on Saturday, moments after a cargo train had crossed the structure. However, the passenger train was steaming in on the same track. "Part of the bridge had collapsed soon after a cargo train crossed it while the passenger train behind was about to cross it," Rajshahi's district's Arani railway station master Sadrul Alam said. Seeing the bridge collapse, a gateman named Layebuddin made a

frantic dash towards the approaching passenger train with a red flag. "The driver of the Uttara Chilhati Express was about to cross the bridge, but the driver managed to stop the train on time after seeing the gateman's red flag," Bangladesh railway's regional general manager Ashim Kumar said. Kumar said that two other trains, which were scheduled on that route, were stopped by railway officials. As for the Layebuddin, Bangladesh rail authorities plan to reward him for his act of bravado and presence of mind. We acknowledge the gateman's efforts and plan to reward him soon," Kumar said, adding that efforts were currently on to repair part of the bridge that had caved in.

Taliban sniper Damullah Mohibullah Mowaffaq becomes mayor of Afghan town

One of the top snipers in the ranks of the Taliban, Damullah Mohibullah Mowaffaq, was made mayor of Maymana, capital of Faryab province in the far reaches of northwest Afghanistan

(Staff Reporter) Strolling through the town of Maymana, the new mayor appears to inspire goodwill from war-weary constituents in the Afghan provincial capital. But Damullah Mohibullah Mowaffaq has a reputation as one of the top snipers in the ranks of the Taliban, until last summer waging war to take control of the country. Mowaffaq was made mayor of Maymana, capital of Faryab province in the far reaches of northwest Afghanistan, in November, three months after the Taliban ousted the Western-backed government and seized power. He rose to prominence as a fighter, but now his schedule is packed with the daily tasks of local government — unblocking sewers, planning roads, and smoothing over neighbourhood quarrels.

His switch reflects the broader transformation that the Taliban are undergoing, as the insurgents grapple with administering territory.

"When I was fighting my objectives were very specific: to end the foreign occupation, discrimination and injustice," the 25-year-old told AFP.

"Now my goals are also clear: to fight corruption and make the country prosper."

'Ups and downs'

On a walk through the streets of Maymana, the new mayor talks with municipal workers clearing roadside gutters.

Residents of the city of 100,000 approach with complaints and suggestions, which are dutifully added to an ever-growing to-do list.

"The new mayor is young, well-educated and, very importantly, from the city," says his non-Taliban deputy, Sayed Ahmad Shah Gheyasi.

"He knows how to deal with people."

Unlike the poor, madrassa-educated rural men who make up the Taliban rank and file, Mowaffaq comes from a family of wealthy traders and grew up in Maymana, where he excelled at school and in sport.

Memorabilia from his youth decorates his office including a certificate from a martial arts competition as well as his high school diploma.

After joining the insurgency at 19, he was promoted to command a small unit deployed in Faryab



province.

Others describe him as one of the Taliban's most talented snipers, although he appears reluctant to be drawn into telling war stories.

But on walkabout with AFP he pauses in front of a house blemished with munition marks near the village of Doraye Khoija Qoshre, where his unit once held sway.

Here he used to hide himself away, scoping American troops with his rifle and honing a reputation as a crack shot.

"He killed an American with his rifle from this house, then a plane came and bombed him," said Saifaddin, a local farmer, who like many in Afghanistan goes by one name.

Although it cannot be confirmed Mowaffaq was responsible, in mid-2019 the United States announced a member of their special forces had been killed in fighting in Faryab.

A year earlier, the Afghan Analysts Network said Maymana was "practically under siege" owing to "an astonishingly widespread Taliban presence".

Mowaffaq witnessed several comrades killed in fighting but remains evasive about the horrors he both inflicted and suffered.

"I have had many ups and downs," he says.

Unconventional totem

The United Nations and rights groups have accused the Taliban of gross human rights abuses since they seized power in August.

The deaths of more than 100 members of the former government or security forces have been blamed on the country's new rulers, while women activists have been detained and journalists beaten

for covering their protests. The Taliban ideal of a thick beard and black turban may frame Mowaffaq's face, but in many ways he is an unconventional totem of their austere ideology.

Nationwide, the Islamists have effectively evicted women from the public sphere, shutting older girls out of education and largely barring the opposite sex from the workplace.

But in Mowaffaq's office, female employees have been allowed to keep working, and a public garden in the city is reserved for them. Under the first Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001, the all-covering burqa was mandatory for women. This time, religious police have stopped short of making the same diktat — although they have issued orders for women in the capital to cover their faces. In the Maymana mayor's office, "nobody tells us how to dress," said Qahera, his 26-year-old female director of human resources, who wears a hijab in line with current dress requirements.



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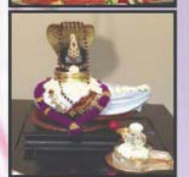
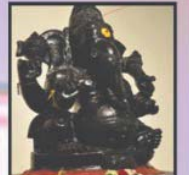
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US slams China for supporting Russia on Ukraine, calls it 'deeply alarming'

Calling it deeply alarming and more destabilizing to the security situation in Europe, US has slammed China for supporting Russia on Ukraine

(Staff Reporter) The United States said Monday it does not believe Russian leader Vladimir Putin has made a "final decision" on whether to invade Ukraine but he "could move with little or no warning."

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby also told reporters that US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin plans to leave for Europe Tuesday for crisis talks.

Austin will hold meetings at NATO headquarters in Brussels and visit Poland, where the United States plans to deploy 3,000 more troops, and Lithuania, he said.

Addressing a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine, Kirby said "we still don't believe that some final decision has been made."

"Military action could happen any day," he added. "It is entirely possible that he could move with little to no warning." State Department spokesman Ned Price

said meanwhile that the United States has seen "no tangible sign of de-escalation" at the Russia-Ukraine



border. "We believe that diplomacy continues to be viable," Price said.

"We believe that there still remains a window to resolve this through dialogue and diplomacy," he told reporters.

Citing a "dramatic acceleration" in the buildup of Russian forces around

Ukraine, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced Monday that the United States is relocating its embassy

in Kyiv to the western Ukrainian city of Lviv. The embassy will remain engaged with the Ukrainian government, coordinating diplomatic engagement in Ukraine," he said. "We are also continuing our intensive diplomatic efforts to deescalate the crisis."

Blinken "strongly urged" any remaining US citizens in Ukraine to leave the country immediately.

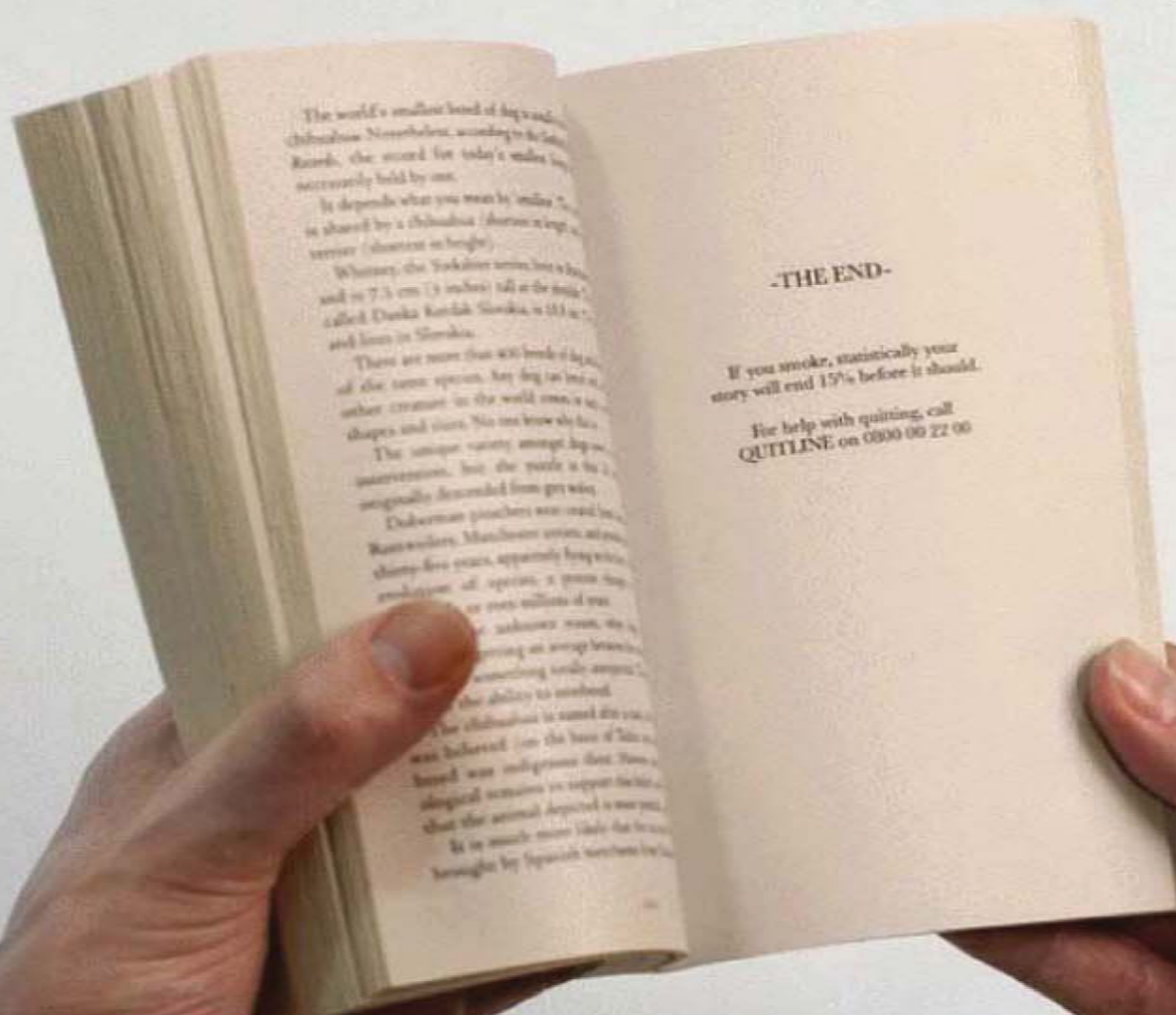
At the Pentagon, Kirby separately called out China over its implicit backing for Moscow in the high-stakes Ukrainian standoff.

"Their tacit support, if you will, for Russia is deeply alarming and frankly even more destabilizing to the security situation in Europe," he said.

Kirby said Austin, the Pentagon chief, will meet with allied defense ministers and NATO leadership in Brussels to discuss Russia's military buildup around Ukraine.

In Poland, he will meet with the Polish president and defense minister and visit US and Polish troops at Powidz Air Base. In Lithuania, Austin will meet with Lithuanian leaders and jointly with the defense ministers of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

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Biden warns Putin of 'severe costs' of Ukraine invasion

The two presidents spoke a day after Biden's national security adviser warned that US intelligence shows a Russian invasion could begin within days and before the Winter Olympics in Beijing end on Feb 20

(Staff Reporter) President Joe Biden told Russia's Vladimir Putin that invading Ukraine would cause "widespread human suffering" and that the West was committed to diplomacy to end the crisis but "equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House said Saturday. It offered

Biden also said the United States and its allies would respond "decisively and impose swift and severe costs" if the Kremlin attacked its neighbor, according to the White House.

The two presidents spoke a day after Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, warned that US intelligence shows a Russian invasion could begin within days and before the Winter Olympics in Beijing end on Feb. 20.

Russia denies it intends to invade but has massed well over 100,000 troops near the Ukrainian border and has sent troops to exercises in neighboring Belarus, encircling Ukraine on three sides. US officials say Russia's buildup of firepower has reached the point where it could invade on short notice.

The conversation came at a critical moment for what has become the biggest security crisis between Russia and the West since the Cold War. US officials believe they have mere days to prevent an invasion and enormous bloodshed in Ukraine. And while the US, and its NATO allies have no plans to send troops to Ukraine to fight Russia, an invasion and resulting punishing sanctions could reverberate far beyond the former Soviet republic, affecting energy supplies, global markets and the power balance in Europe.

"President Biden was clear with President Putin that while the United States remains prepared to engage in diplomacy, in full coordination with our Allies and partners, we are equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House statement said. The call was "professional and substantive" but produced "no fundamental change in the dynamic that has been unfolding now for several weeks," according to a senior administration official who briefed reporters following the call on condition of anonymity. The official added that it remains unclear whether Putin has made a final decision to move forward with military action. Yuri Ushakov, Putin's top foreign



policy aide, said that while tensions have been escalating for months, in recent days "the situation has simply been brought to the point of absurdity."

He said Biden mentioned the possible sanctions that could be imposed on Russia, but "this issue was not the focus during a fairly long conversation with the Russian leader."

Before talking to Biden, Putin had a telephone call with French President

Emmanuel Macron, who met with him in Moscow earlier in the week to try to resolve the crisis. A Kremlin summary of the call suggested that little progress was made toward cooling down the tensions.

Putin complained in the call that the United States and NATO have not responded satisfactorily to Russian demands that Ukraine be prohibited from joining the military alliance and that NATO pull back forces from Eastern Europe.

In a sign that American officials are getting ready for a worst-case scenario, the United States announced plans to evacuate most of its staff from the embassy in the Ukrainian capital, and Britain joined other European nations in urging its citizens to leave Ukraine.

The timing of any possible Russian military action remained a key question. The US picked up intelligence that Russia is looking at Wednesday as a target date, according to a US official familiar with the findings. The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly and did so

The conversation came at a critical moment for what has become the biggest security crisis between Russia and the West since the Cold War

only on condition of anonymity, would not say how definitive the intelligence was. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he told his Russian counterpart Saturday that "further Russian aggression would be met with a resolute, massive and united trans-Atlantic response."

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy tried to project calm as he observed military exercises Saturday near Crimea, the peninsula that Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014. "We are not afraid, we're without panic, all is under control," he said.

Ukrainian armed forces chief commander Lt. Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhny and Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov issued a more defiant joint

statement.

"We are ready to meet the enemy, and not with flowers, but with Stingers, Javelins and NLAWs" — anti-tank and -aircraft weapons, they said. "Welcome to hell!"

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu, also held telephone discussions on Saturday. Further US-

Russia tensions arose on

Saturday when the Defense Ministry summoned the US embassy's military attache after it said the navy detected an American submarine in Russian waters near the Kuril Islands in the Pacific. The submarine declined orders to leave, but departed after the navy used unspecified "appropriate means," the ministry said. Adding to the sense of crisis, the Pentagon ordered an additional 3,000 US troops to Poland to reassure allies.

The US has urged all American citizens in Ukraine to leave the country immediately, and Sullivan said those who remain should not expect the US military to rescue them in the event that air and rail transportation is severed after a Russian invasion.

The Biden administration has been warning for weeks that Russia could invade Ukraine soon, but US officials had previously said the Kremlin would likely wait until after the Winter Games ended so as not to antagonize China.

Sullivan told reporters on Friday that US intelligence shows that Russia could take invade during the Olympics. He said military action could start with missile and air attacks, followed by a ground offensive. "Russia has all the forces it needs to conduct a major military action," Sullivan said, adding that "Russia could choose, in very short order, to commence a major military action against Ukraine." He said the scale of such an invasion could range from a limited incursion to a strike on Kyiv, the capital. Russia scoffed at the US talk of urgency.

"The hysteria of the White House is more indicative than ever," said Maria Zakharova, a Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman. "The Anglo-Saxons need a war. At any cost. Provocations, misinformation and threats are a favorite method of solving their own problems."

Zakharova said her country had "optimized" staffing at its own embassy in Kyiv in response to concerns about possible military actions from the Ukrainian side.

China promised Trump a better deal for America; it didn't actually deliver

The world's eyes have been glued to an epic competition that has been unfolding in Beijing between the globe's leading contenders. The contest is fierce, and it's anyone's guess who will emerge the victor. No, we're not talking about the Winter Olympics. We're talking about the ongoing trade war between the United States and China

(Staff Reporter) The trade war is now almost four years old. In 2018, President Trump fired the first shots by imposing tariffs on various Chinese products. China retaliated, imposing tariffs on American products. The war kept escalating — with each side making their tariffs higher and more expansive.

Then, in January 2020, President Trump met with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He at the White House, and they both signed the "Phase One" trade deal. Think of it basically as a trade armistice. It prevented the war from escalating further, and it offered a roadmap for the two global powers to potentially become trade buddies again. Chad Bown has been following the trade war closely. He's a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and co-host of the Trade Talks podcast. He says that, from the beginning, the Phase One trade deal was pretty weird.

"The strangest part," Bown says, was a provision that instructed China to buy an extra \$200 billion of American-made stuff. That is, not only did China have to return to buying the amount of stuff it had bought before the trade war, it had to go above and beyond that. \$200 billion above and beyond that. And it had to do so in two years; by the end of 2021. "We had never seen a trade agreement like that before," Bown says. Now that it's 2022 — and China's deadline to buy boatloads of American-made stuff has passed — Bown recently crunched the numbers to see how much China ended up actually buying. "In the end," Bown says, "China actually bought none of the additional \$200 billion of exports that it promised in the agreement." Zilch. Nada.

But it's actually worse than that. While China did ramp up its purchases of U.S. agricultural products, when it comes to buying U.S. products and services overall, it still hasn't even returned to buying the amount of stuff it had bought from America before the trade war began.

From the beginning, Bown says, it was pretty clear that Trump's Phase One trade deal was unrealistic. By the time it was signed, the trade war had already been waged for almost two years. It had already



done tons of damage to business relationships between the two nations. Plus, the often punishingly high tariffs on each side remained (and still remain) in effect. Phase One didn't end them. It just prevented them from going even higher. The average tariff on goods affected is still about 20% on each side. "The fact that the Chinese tariffs were still in place discouraged the Chinese private sector from being the ones to buy American stuff," Bown says. Add to this, a slowing Chinese economy and slowing

US exports. "All signs pointed to this being a really, really big ask." Last week, the Biden Administration made clear it was not happy with Beijing failing to buy the boatloads of American-made stuff they promised they'd buy in the Phase One deal. As an anonymous U.S. official told Reuters: "Because we inherited this deal, we engaged the (People's Republic of China) on its purchase commitment shortfalls, both to fight for U.S. farmers, ranchers and manufacturers, and give China the opportunity to follow through on its commitments. But our patience is wearing thin," the official said. This official urged China to take "concrete actions" to fulfill its promise.

President Biden has, for the most part, continued Trump's

trade policy towards China. That's despite growing evidence that the policy has harmed the U.S. economy, while also not doing a whole lot to damage China's economy or change China's behavior. In 2021, China announced a record-breaking trade surplus.

While China did ramp up its purchases of U.S. agricultural products, when it comes to buying U.S. products and services overall, it still hasn't even returned to buying the amount of stuff it had bought from America before the trade war began

That is, it sold a heck of a lot more to the world than it bought from the world. Of course, there's a lot more than the trade war affecting China and the broader global economy. Worldwide, the pandemic shifted spending on in-person services to hard goods. And manufacturing hard goods is China's speciality.

But, that said, Bown believes the trade war has proven less effective than the Trump administration originally believed it would be. While the U.S. has leverage, that leverage is limited. "Ultimately, China might sell less things to the United States, but, you know, we're only 330 something million people and the world is 7 billion."

Some supporters of Trump's tariffs hoped the higher

costs of Chinese products would help revive American manufacturing. But, the tariffs targeted what economists call intermediate products, or inputs, which are parts, components, and materials that American businesses use to build stuff here.

Those tariffs have made it more expensive to do manufacturing in America.

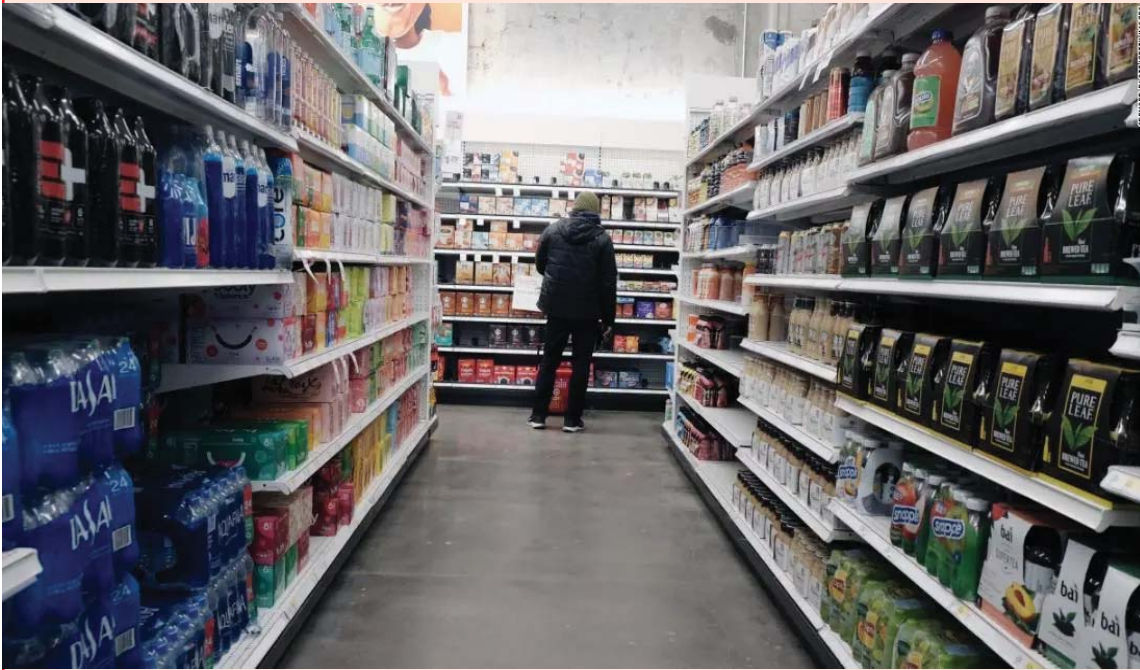
"We now have a huge body of economic evidence that basically makes the case that tariffs have made the American manufacturing sector less competitive," Bown says. "It's harder for American companies to compete with companies in Europe or Japan or anywhere else in the world that can continue to get those Chinese products at lower prices — so it actually harms the competitiveness of the American manufacturing sector." While you can find stories of American manufacturers reshoring because of either the trade war or the pandemic, or both, Bown says, there's not really any evidence that it's happening "at any sort of measurable level." Research also finds that American consumers are being hurt because businesses are

passing on the costs of high tariffs to them. Add to this the effects of China's high tariffs on American exporters, and there's a strong case to be made that the biggest loser from America's trade war with China is America.

There is clear evidence that the trade war has been beneficial to at least one group: other countries. A recent study by Pablo Fajgelbaum, Pinelopi K. Goldberg, Patrick Kennedy, Amit Khandelwal, and Daria Taglioni finds that, basically, the trade war resulted in mini export booms for many bystander countries. Bown points to some vivid examples of nations on the sidelines of the trade war directly benefiting from it. When China levied large tariffs on American soybean growers, for example, Brazil, Argentina, and other soybean exporters filled in the gap. When China levied large tariffs on imports of lobster from Maine, he says, Chinese consumers began purchasing more lobster from Canada. Some manufacturing commerce also likely left China and headed for neighboring countries, like Vietnam, Thailand, or Malaysia. But the trade war with China is about a lot more than economics. It's primarily about politics, both domestically and internationally. Polls of Americans show that China is very unpopular. Most Americans want the United States to be tough on the nation — and it seems they may be willing to have a slightly weaker economy to do that. The tariffs may be bad economics. And they may be failing to change China's behavior. But, Bown says, "Politically, it's very difficult to reverse course with these tariffs on China."

When we asked him about his concerns and hopes about US-China relations, Bown talked about worrisome trends in China. Over the last ten years, it's been sliding toward even greater authoritarianism, statism, suppression of human rights and oppression of minorities. As a result, Bown says, his big concern is that relations are only going to get worse. Interestingly, for a trade economist at least, Bown's answer had nothing to do with economics. "I can give you an economic answer," he says. "But unfortunately that falls on deaf ears at the moment."

No end to America's rising prices: Another inflation measure rose in January



(Staff Reporter) America's rising prices were unrelenting in January. Another key inflation measure showed prices rising more than expected last month. The producer price index, which tracks average price changes America's producers get paid for their goods and services over time, rose 9.7% in the 12 months ended in January, not adjusted for seasonal swings, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Tuesday. That was far higher than economists had

expected, albeit a 0.1 percentage point decrease from the revised series high set at the end of 2021. "PPI offers a window to the price pressures that businesses are facing, and which will likely be passed on to consumers in the way of consumer price inflation in the months to come," said PNC economist Kurt Rankin. For the month of January alone, prices rose 1%, adjusted for seasonal swings, dwarfing both the price increase from December and economists'

expectations. Forecasts had only been for a 0.5% price increase. Stripping out food, energy and trade services, which tend to have more volatile price swings, the inflation gauge rose 0.9% in January, the biggest jump since January 2021. Over the 12-month period, core prices rose 6.9%, a 0.1 percentage point decline compared with December. Last week's consumer price inflation data -- another key measure of prices -- also exceeded analysts'

expectations and climbed to nearly a 40-year high. Next week's consumer spending price index report rounds out the major inflation data releases for January. Economists are hopeful that America will see pandemic inflation reach its peak in the first months of 2022. It's not clear yet whether this peak was reached in January or if it's still to come. But consumers are expecting some relief. Consumer expectations for price hikes in the year ahead fell for the first time since October 2020 last month, according to the consumer expectations survey from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York released Monday. Over a three-year horizon, inflation expectations also fell, marking the largest one-month decline since 2013 when the survey was started. Where did prices rise? The PPI tracks prices for finished goods and services sold to consumers, as well as the goods, services, maintenance and repair construction sold to businesses that make or provide those finished products.

In January, prices rose across the board, including for motor vehicles and equipment, gas, clothing and accessories, transportation and hospital outpatient care. Last month's increase in energy costs won't get any better in February, said BMO senior economist Jennifer Lee in a note to clients. On Monday, US oil prices briefly rose to their highest level since 2014 amid heightened concerns about a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine. And even though oil prices fell early Tuesday, good inflation-related news is hard to come by. "An early look at February in one part of the country isn't bringing good news," Lee said, referring to the New York state manufacturing index that was released at the same time as PPI and sharply underperformed expectations. The high inflation has also been a challenge for Washington. President Joe Biden and administration officials have acknowledged how tough higher prices are for Americans.

US President Joe Biden says Russian attack on Ukraine still possible



US President Joe Biden said that a Russian attack on Ukraine is still a possibility

(Staff Reporter) President Joe Biden urged Russia to step back from the brink of war on Tuesday and said reports that Russia has withdrawn some forces from the Ukraine border have not been

verified. "To the citizens of Russia: you are not our enemy, and I don't believe you want a bloody, destructive war against Ukraine," Biden said in nationally televised

remarks from the White House. Biden said the United States is "not seeking direct confrontation with Russia" but that if Russia were to attack Americans in Ukraine, "We will respond

forcefully." Biden said the United States and its NATO allies are prepared for whatever happens and that Russia will pay a steep economic price if Moscow

launches an invasion. He said a Russian attack on Ukraine remains a possibility and reports that some Russian forces have moved away from the Ukraine border have not yet been verified by the United States. "We are ready to respond decisively to a Russian attack on Ukraine, which remains very much a possibility," said Biden.

Dangerous climate change scenario emerges as US West faces worst megadrought in 1200 years



(Staff Reporter) Climate change from the burning of fossil fuels is bringing hotter temperatures and increasing evaporation in the air, scientists say.

The American West's megadrought deepened so much last year that it is now the driest in at least 1,200 years and is a worst-case climate change scenario playing out live, a new study finds.

A dramatic drying in 2021 — about as dry as 2002 and one of the driest years ever recorded for the region — pushed the 22-year drought past the previous record-holder for megadroughts in the late 1500s and shows no signs of easing in the near future, according to a study Monday in the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

The study calculated that 42% of this megadrought can be attributed to human-caused climate change.

"Climate change is changing the baseline conditions toward a drier, gradually drier state in the West and that means the worst-case scenario keeps getting worse," said study lead author Park Williams, a climate hydrologist at UCLA. "This is right in line with what people were thinking of in the 1900s as a worst-case scenario. But today I think we need to be even preparing for conditions in the future that are far

worse than this."

Williams studied soil moisture levels in the West — a box that includes California, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, most of Oregon and Idaho, much of New Mexico, western Colorado, northern Mexico, and the southwest corners of Montana and Texas — using modern measurements and tree rings for estimates that go back to the year 800. That's about as far back as estimates can reliably go with tree rings. A few years ago, Williams studied the current drought and said it

qualified as a lengthy and deep "megadrought" and that the only worse one was in the 1500s. He figured the current drought wouldn't surpass that one because megadroughts tended to peter out after 20 years. And, he said, 2019 was a wet year so it looked like the western drought might be coming to an end.

But the region dried up in late 2020 and 2021.

All of California was considered in official drought from mid-May until the end of 2021, and at least three-quarters of the state

was at the highest two drought levels from June through Christmas, according to the U.S. drought monitor.

"For this drought to have just cranked up back to maximum drought intensity in late 2020 through 2021 is a quite emphatic statement by this 2000s drought saying that we're nowhere close to the end," Williams said. This drought is now 5% drier than the old record from the 1500s, he said.

The drought monitor says 55% of the U.S. West is in drought with 13% experiencing the two highest drought levels.

This megadrought really kicked off in 2002 — one of the driest years ever, based on humidity and tree rings, Williams said.

"I was wondering if we'd ever see a year like 2002 again in my life and in fact, we saw it 20 years later, within the same drought," Williams said. The drought levels in 2002 and 2021 were a statistical tie, though still behind 1580 for the worst single year.

Climate change from the burning of fossil fuels is bringing hotter temperatures and increasing evaporation in the air, scientists say.

Williams used 29 models to create a hypothetical world with no human-caused warming then

compared it to what happened in real life — the scientifically accepted way to check if an extreme weather event is due to climate change. He found that 42% of the drought conditions are directly from human-caused warming. Without climate change, he said, the megadrought would have ended early on because 2005 and 2006 would have been wet enough to break it.

The study "is an important wake-up call," said Jonathan Overpeck, dean of environment at the University of Michigan, who wasn't part of the study. "Climate change is literally baking the water supply and forests of the Southwest, and it could get a whole lot worse if we don't halt climate change soon."

Williams said there is a direct link between drought and heat and the increased wildfires that have been devastating the West for years. Fires need dry fuel that drought and heat promote. Eventually, this megadrought will end by sheer luck of a few good rainy years, Williams said. But then another one will start. Daniel Swain, a UCLA climate scientist who wasn't involved in the study, said climate change is likely to make megadrought "a permanent feature of the climate of the Colorado River watershed during the 21st century."



Top European Court rules EU can freeze aid to Poland and Hungary

(Staff Reporter) Hungary's national elections are just weeks away, and the European Union is trying to close ranks in the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine, a major threat of war at its eastern borders, even though any actual funding cuts could be months away.

The court had been called upon to rule whether a European Commission mechanism that would tie disbursing funds from its budget to the condition that a recipient member state is upholding standards such as judicial independence and transparent fund expenditure, had a sound legal basis. The ruling cannot be appealed, but member states will be able to appeal a possible decision to have funds withheld, when and if that comes about.

The decision was welcomed by a chorus of European actors across the political spectrum, in a rare show of unity. Similarly, several EU members, often at odds over difficult political issues and reluctant to pick sides against one another, said the ruling was a positive development, highlighting the growing isolation of Hungary and Poland.

In a tweet, the German foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, said the rule of law is the foundation of the European Union. "Violations not only cost our credibility, but our cohesion," she added.

In Budapest, shortly after Hungary and Poland's challenge was dismissed, Judit Varga, Orban's justice minister, accused the high court of rendering a "political judgment."

Zbigniew Ziobro, Poland's justice minister, said on Twitter that Wednesday was "a grim date that will be noted in history books." Ziobro, the leader of Poland's far-right junior coalition partner, added that the mechanism was introduced to "blackmail member countries financially," to "rebuild the European Union into a federal state, which excludes the existence of national states."

For Poland, the biggest recipient of EU money, and Hungary, where the population is



overwhelmingly pro-European Union, the ruling bites in both real and symbolic ways.

"The power of the EU is where the money is. And attaching some rule-of-law conditionality to EU funds is a very concrete way of making sure that the EU does not send money to the countries that actively promote rule of law breaches and destroy democracy, because otherwise, the EU is also supporting these kinds of policies," said Sophie Porschlegel, a senior policy analyst at the Brussels-based European Policy Center.

In the 2014-2020 EU budget, Poland received more funds than any of the 28 member states (Britain left the EU in 2020 and the bloc now has 27 members), with 104 billion euros — or \$118 billion — in aid in total. Hungary, a much smaller country, got 40 billion euros, or \$45 billion. The two would be eligible for even larger amounts in the five-year budget that ends in 2027.

Separately, the commission has frozen access for both nations to a special EU post-COVID stimulus package over concerns about corruption and the independence of the judi-

ciary.

The use of this mechanism is the latest in a series of legal and political battles over what EU officials see as a deliberate attempt by the government of Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orban, to capture the state apparatus and funding to benefit himself and his allies. Poland's case is quite different, but it is also in conflict with the EU over the government's moves to control the judiciary and dismantle its independent function.

The ruling on Wednesday introduces real-world risks to Orban at a precarious time. He faces his stiffest challenge from a six-party coalition in Hungary's national elections on April 3, and Hungary's ability to draw on EU funding has significant implications for the country's economic outlook.

Losing out on EU money is a touchy subject for Orban, whose stewardship of Hungary since 2010 has produced dramatic qualitative declines in assessments of Hungarian democracy, rule of law, press freedom and corruption.

"They are waging a holy war, a rule-of-law jihad," he said Saturday in an address to the nation. "And words, my friends,

rarely help in the face of jihad. We must show strength! Let the Reconquista begin!"

Ever since joining the EU in 2004, Hungary has been the beneficiary of generous subsidies to help its economy close the gap with wealthier Western neighbors. But critics have long argued that since Orban returned to power in 2010, these funds have been used to underwrite his quest to transform Hungary into what he has proudly called an "illiberal state."

While the Hungarian premier has used a vast propaganda machine to shield Hungarians from the nuances of his conflicts with the EU, the strategy highlights a peculiar domestic constraint. "The Hungarian electorate is extremely supportive of EU membership," said Balint Ruff, a Hungarian political strategist. "It's at nearly an all-time high."

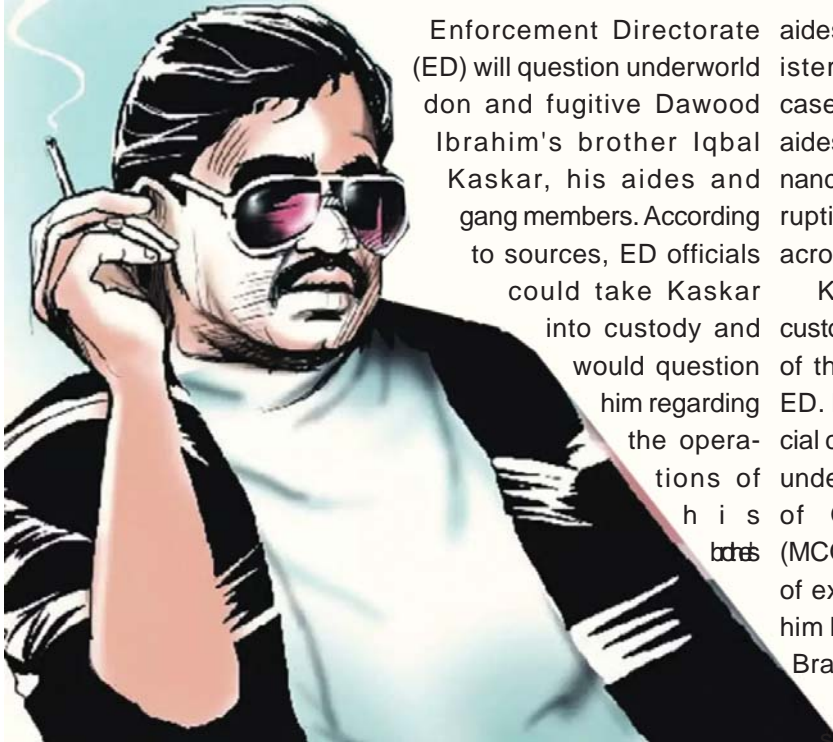
Laurent Pech, professor of European law at Middlesex University in London, said, "there is more awareness of industrial-scale corruption, and it has become much more costly for European actors to ignore corruption in Hungary." "It would be easier for the commission to start

with Hungary," he added, calling it "a more clear-cut case." Poland, which wants European support as the risk of Russian aggression grows, is less clear cut, experts note, and the Ukraine crisis could take the edge off the ruling.

"The Ukraine crisis is already taking attention away from this, and there will be a very strong push to stand united if the situation with Ukraine escalates," said Daniel Freund, a German member of the European Parliament with the Greens. Freund said he also worried that the commission would try to find ways to blunt the impact of the ruling, to shield itself from accusations that it is interfering politically in Hungary's elections. Any real impact on funding on the grounds of this decision would be months down the line, he said, so it was imperative that the commission took the first step to trigger the process as soon as possible after the court ruling. "If I have to make a bet right now, I would fear that not much will happen before the Hungarian election," he said, which is what Orban wanted all along, "so that he can be reelected without anyone saying anything bad."

ED set to question Iqbal Kaskar and aides in case against Dawood Ibrahim

The Enforcement Directorate is set to question Dawood Ibrahim's brother Iqbal Kaskar in a recently registered case. Earlier this month, security agencies arrested Abu Bakar, a 1993 Mumbai serial blast accused and a close aide of Dawood Ibrahim



Enforcement Directorate (ED) will question underworld don and fugitive Dawood Ibrahim's brother Iqbal Kaskar, his aides and gang members. According to sources, ED officials

could take Kaskar into custody and would question him regarding the operations of his

aides. The ED had recently registered a money laundering case against Ibrahim and his aides for their involvement in financing terror activities and disrupting law and order situation across the country.

Kaskar will be taken into custody following court approval of the application filed by the ED. Kaskar is presently in judicial custody after being charged under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), following three cases of extortion registered against him by the Thane Police Crime Branch in 2017.

ED on Tuesday morning started conducting searches

at various locations across Mumbai on elements related to underworld don Dawood Ibrahim. A team of ED officials also searched the residence of late Haseena Parkar, sister of Dawood Ibrahim, at Nagpada locality.

Other than Parkar, Salim Fruit who is brother-in-law of Dawood gang's top operative, Chota Shakeel was also examined by ED officials for over nine hours and could be called again. Kaskar's close aides booked in the extortion case could also be examined as their residences in Thane were also searched. A senior politician could also be

dealings in the past with people associated with Dawood Ibrahim and his aides. The ED raids were in connection with a recently registered case against Dawood Ibrahim by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and on the basis of which ED also registered a case and started an investigation. NIA registered a case under UAPA against Dawood after learning that he had been financing terror activities across India. NIA officials also mentioned that Ibrahim pumped money through hawala channels to finance those working for him to create unrest across India.

'Live in the future': Mark Zuckerberg revamps company values as Meta faces investment concerns



"Focus on long-term impact' emphasizes long-term thinking and encourages us to extend the timeline for the impact we have, rather than optimizing for near-term wins," Zuckerberg wrote in his post. "We should take on the challenges that will be the most impactful, even if the full results won't be seen for years." Zuckerberg has an ironclad hold on Facebook Inc. He holds the majority of the company's voting shares, controls its

board of directors and has increasingly surrounded himself with executives who don't appear to question his vision. Meta reported a decline in daily active users from the previous quarter for the first time as competition with rivals like TikTok, the video sharing platform owned by China's ByteDance, heats up. "As we build the next chapter of our company as Meta, we just updated the values that guide our work," Zuckerberg wrote.

Meta's new credo also co-founder and chief. Crit-calls for being direct, but ics have derided respectful to colleagues, Facebook's rebrand as an collaborating as attempted distraction from "Metamates." Meta, an avalanche of damaging Metamates, Me is about revelations from being good stewards of our whistleblower Frances company and mission," Haugen. The "Facebook Zuckerberg wrote. "It's Papers" revealed numerous about taking care of our instances where research-company and each other." ers and rank-and-file work-Facebook last reworked its ers uncovered deep-seated professed values in 2007, problems that the company according to the company's then overlooked or ignored.



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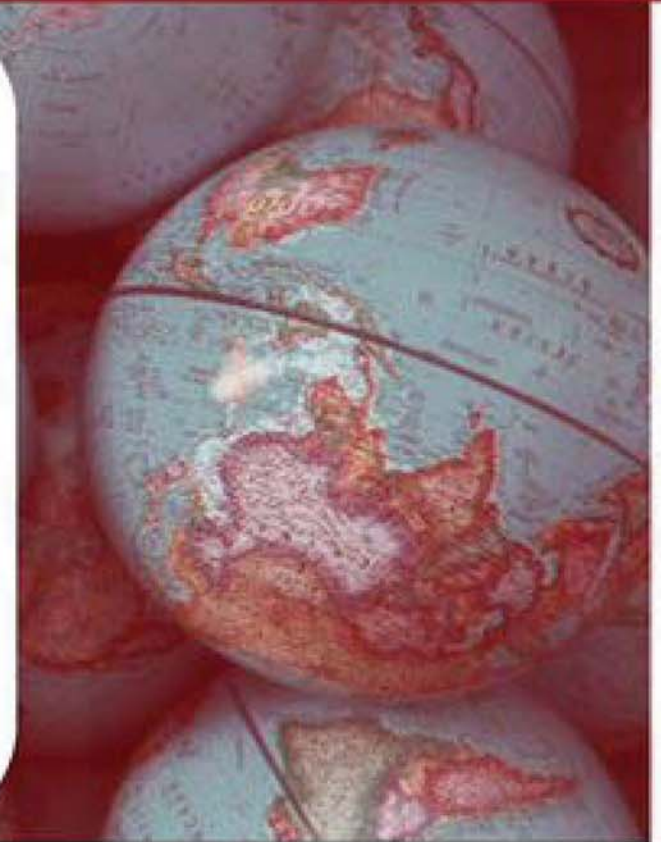
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Tracing DNA of related elephants reveals illegal ivory trafficking networks

fyng close relatives is going to be a much more common event, and can link more ivory seizures to the same smuggling networks," Wasser said.

Special Agent John Brown, study coauthor and a criminal investigator with US Homeland Security Investigations, has worked on environmental crime issues for more than 25 years. The forensic analysis in the study can provide "a roadmap for far-reaching multinational collaborative investigations," Brown said.

Targeted populations

The tusks came from both forest elephants and savannah elephants. Forest elephants represent about 6% of the remaining African elephant population and live in the humid forests of West Africa and the Congo Basin. Based on the tusk data from the seizures, tusks were heavily poached from Gabon and Republic of the Congo.

Savannah elephants roam across the grassy plains and bushlands in West and Central Africa and most of East and Southern Africa. Many of their tusks were poached in Tanzania, northern Mozambique and southern Kenya -- including some from the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conser-

vation Area of southern Africa most recently.

Then, the tusks were shipped from ports in different countries. But the fact that the separated tusks were still shipped from the same ports helped the researchers determine there were fewer networks moving mass ivory shipments than previously suspected, Wasser said.

In elephant populations, females tend to remain in the same family group and males don't

move very far even when they emigrate. The genetic connection between the tusks showed how the poachers were targeting specific populations. Dozens of shipments were found to have tight familial connections, some of which spanned years.

"Identifying close relatives indicates that poachers are likely going back to the same populations repeatedly -- year after year -- and tusks are then acquired and smuggled out of Africa on container ships by the same criminal network," Wasser said.

"This criminal strategy makes it much harder for authorities to track and seize these shipments because of the immense pressure they are under to move large volumes of containers quickly through ports."

Holding traffickers accountable

A small group of smuggling



networks are the most likely ones responsible for large ivory shipments, which can move mass quantities of tusks on container ships. The genetic data from the tusks linked seizures from the Ivory Coast along the Atlantic Ocean to Mozambique, bordering the Indian Ocean.

"There has been a lot of movement to make the sale of ivory illegal in many countries around the world," Wasser said. "However, it has not had a great impact on the kinds of trade that we are talking about when we're getting these big seizures. And when I say a big seizure, it's a minimum size of a half-ton and that can go up to 10 tons or more." The 17-year span of the study also showed how the networks have shifted to different ports over time, moving from Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda to Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Criminals are often linked with one ivory shipment seizure, or "one block of physical evidence," Brown said. But tracking this kind of data could help prosecutors establish links and ensure the criminals are held accountable for everything they've done.

"Extinction of species and ecological collapse through wildlife trafficking can have long-lasting, irreversible, catastrophic impacts on our global community as a whole," Brown said. "So the global effort to combat these illicit crimes is paramount to protecting our environment."



Researchers used genetic testing on ivory shipments seized by law enforcement and were able to trace the international crime ring shipping the ivory from Africa.

The team tested more than 4,000 elephant tusks from 49 different seizures, made between 2002 and 2019, across 12 different African countries. The findings published Monday in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*.

The study establishes familial connections between the elephants that are being poached for their ivory tusks and reveals the poaching and shipping practices and interconnectedness of the traffickers.

This kind of DNA detective work can expose the tactics employed by transnational criminal organizations, believes the research team, comprised of scientists and US Department of Homeland Security special agents. These illicit organizations have operated out of Africa for decades, leading to the heavy decline of thousands of elephants in recent years, according to the study.

"These methods are showing us that a handful of networks are behind a majority of smuggled ivory, and that the connections between these networks are deeper than even our previous research showed," said lead study author Samuel Wasser, a University of Washington professor of biology and co-executive director of the Center for Environmental Forensic Science, in a statement.

Linking elephant family members

Drawing connections between the separate seizures of ivory made at ports that were thousands of miles apart can create a trail of evidence and strengthen cases against those arrested for poaching and smuggling the tusks.

This study builds on previous

work, published by Wasser and his colleagues in 2018, which showed tusks from the same elephant were often separated and smuggled in different shipments before being seized. These identifications linked the trafficking networks that smuggled ivory from three African port cities in Kenya, Uganda and Togo.

The new research broadened the DNA analysis to find elephants that were related in some way, including parents, offspring and siblings. Drawing connections between families of elephants, rather than trying to match individual tusks, helped the researchers understand the scope of the trafficking network.

The three networks established in the 2018 study "are involved with many more seizures and more connected to each other than previously discovered," according to the new paper.

"If you're trying to match one tusk to its pair, you have a low chance of a match. But identi-



How Indian economy's key wheel is facing funding crisis

It is estimated by one of the reputed companies in trade credit insurances suggested that over 80 per cent of businesses that are shutting down are due to cash flow problems. Overall, the network effect is so huge that it creates unrest among a significant number of institutions in the MSME sector. India has approximately 6.3 crore MSMEs. Registered micro-enterprises stood at 5,441,220 (94.34 per cent), followed by small enterprises at 293,555 (5.09 per cent) and mid-sized enterprises at 32,959 (0.57 per cent). The Indian MSMEs sector contributes about 29 per cent towards the gross domestic product (GDP) through its national and international trade. The issue of cash flow in the sector, therefore, affects 29 per cent of India's GDP.

LEGAL INTRICACIES

While there is no dearth of opinions on the need to see improvement in the access to finance for MSMEs, the MSME Development (MSMED) Act of 2006 proved inadequate in addressing the issue. The MSMED Act, 2006, provides that buyers should make payments to MSMEs within 45 days. The Act stipulates that payment for the supply made by an MSME should be mandatorily cleared by the buyer within the outer limit of 45 days from the date of acceptance or deemed acceptance of

the supply unless agreed otherwise by the parties. Payment delays attract compound interest monthly and rests on the defaulter at three times the bank rate notified by the Reserve Bank of India. But several loopholes in the system ultimately favour the defaulters to get away without making the payments. Often enough, the buyer fails to attend the hearings before MSEFC (Micro and Small Enterprise Facilitation Council) for settlement of disputes and keep pushing the case for years because there is simply no penalty for doing that. Even when the arbitration goes in the favour of an MSME to collect the dues, the business is forced to approach a local civil court to collect its dues.

SUPPLY CHAIN FINANCE

Supply chain finance or reverse factoring, however, proved beneficial. Unlike traditional factoring where a supplier wants to finance its receivables, supply chain financing is initiated by the ordering party (i.e. the customer) in order to help its suppliers to finance its receivables more easily and at a lower interest rate than what would normally be offered. RBI had steered the launch of the Trade Receivables Exchange system, wherein small businesses can get invoices accepted by their buyers discounted and receive payments from financial institutions that will collect the

receivables on their due dates. On its part, the government made it mandatory for companies with a turnover of Rs 500 crore or more to get registered on the TReDS platform. The Government's e-Marketplace (GeM) is automatically linked to TReDS. That is, invoices raised for procurements made by the government through the GeM can be easily discounted on TReDS platforms and payments collected by small suppliers. However, many big government procurers lie outside TReDS coverage as could be seen in the outstanding dues reflected in the Samadhan portal.

MSME SUPPLIERS, CORPORATE BUYERS, FINANCIERS

This system involves three parties — MSME suppliers, corporate buyers and financiers. The financier discounts the invoice after the corporate buyer accepts the invoice and bills uploaded by the MSME supplier. In order to expand the number of financiers the government amended the Factoring Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2021. This will expand credit facilities for small businesses, and will help them in accessing funds from 9,500 non-banking financial companies (NBFC). The reverse factoring method is an effective cash flow optimization tool for companies outsourcing a large volume of services. An example could be clinical research activities by Pharmaceutical

companies. The benefit to both parties is that the company providing the services can get the outstanding value of their invoices paid immediately while the ordering party can delay the actual payment of the invoices to its financing bank thus increasing its cash flow.

GOA EXPERIENCE

Experience of the state of Goa proved the benefit of the reverse factoring TReDS system when it got itself on-boarded on TReDS platform. MSME sellers in Goa received the cash flows they needed on time, while the government, as the buyer, was able to make payments on favourable terms and avail the support of financiers, including banks, to ensure timely payments to MSMEs in need. Reportedly, over Rs 575 crore of MSME funds have been cleared via the TReDS platform, helping over 250 MSMEs in the state. Should all other states and central departments and state enterprises adopt the Goa example the late payment realisation ailment faced by MSME sector can be effectively addressed.

RESOLUTION

What is needed is a resolve to solve the malaise and adopt the digital supply chain finance system which has been thriving since the Covid disruption. Supply chain finance or reverse factoring is a solution for cash-strapped MSMEs. Policies are in place, adoption is the issue.

What is Lassa fever and what are its symptoms?

What is Lassa fever, how does it spread and what are its symptoms?

The Lassa fever-causing virus is found in West Africa and was first discovered in 1969 in Lassa, Nigeria, the Centers for Disease Control and Pollution (CDC) notes. The discovery of this disease was made after two nurses died in Nigeria. The fever is spread by rats and is primarily found in countries in West Africa including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and Nigeria where it is endemic. A person can become infected if they come in contact with household items of food that is contaminated with the urine or feces of an infected rat. It can also be spread, though rarely, if a person comes in contact with a sick person's infected bodily fluids or through mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose or the mouth. Person-to-person transmission is more common in healthcare settings. Even so, people don't usually become contagious before symptoms appear and cannot transmit the infection through casual contact such as through hugging,

shaking hands or sitting near someone who is infected. Symptoms typically appear 1-3 weeks after exposure. Mild symptoms include slight fever, fatigue, weakness and headache and more serious symptoms include bleeding, difficulty breathing, vomiting, facial swelling, pain in the chest, back, and abdomen and shock. Death can occur from two weeks of the onset of symptoms, usually as a result of multi-organ failure. The CDC notes that the most common complication associated with the fever is deafness. Nearly one-third of those infected report various degrees of deafness. In many such cases, the hearing loss can be permanent. Significantly, deafness can occur in both mild as well as severe presentations of the fever. The best way to avoid getting infected is to avoid contact with rats. This means avoiding contact with rats not only in places where the disease is endemic, but also maintaining hygiene in other areas to prevent rats from entering the house, keeping food in rat-proof containers and laying down rat traps, the CDC advises.

India must prioritise stability in Myanmar

Since the coup, India has taken an arguably balanced diplomatic approach on Myanmar, calling for restraint, restoration of democracy and release of political prisoners, but also maintaining its lines of communication with the military. Delhi has also firmly stayed away from imposing sanctions on the junta. In December, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla broke the diplomatic freeze and visited Myanmar, during which he met the junta chief, members of the key opposition party, National League for Democracy (NLD), and civil society members. That visit was lauded by several Indian commentators who continue to argue that India must maintain its relationship with the junta to counter China and secure its "national interests". But Delhi must realise that the military is no longer a force for stability in Myanmar. The last 12 months have made it clear that the military is incapable of providing the kind of political, economic and social stability that India needs in Myanmar to advance its interests, including development projects. The economy too is rapidly sinking into an abyss. Public faith in the military as a state institution is at its lowest, thanks to its pathological authoritarianism. More and more people are willing to support an armed revolution, including political

moderates who were earlier sceptical of it. Almost the entire Bamar heartland, which the military considers its turf, is up in arms against it. Thus, Myanmar's generals might enjoy all the hard power, but that is unlikely to see them through for long. Firepower without popular will is almost always a recipe for failure. Even on hard power, the military is facing a historic, multi-front guerrilla warfare.

For New Delhi, India's Northeastern border with Myanmar remains on top of the bilateral agenda. However, even on this, the military has damaged whatever semblance of stability was left. Sagaing region, which borders three Northeast Indian states, has seen the highest number of clashes so far. Chin state, bordering Mizoram and Manipur, has seen dramatic military offensives in civilian areas, which have forced thousands to flee into India. The Myanmar military has roped in Manipuri insurgents as mercenaries to attack anti-junta forces, in exchange for safe haven. At least four Indian insurgent groups have reestablished their camps inside Myanmar, which could act as staging posts for attacks inside India. The deadly ambush on an Assam Rifles convoy by two such groups in November was perhaps only a warning of worse things to come.

The myth of the trickle-down

The Indian economy is suffering from a chronic “demand-side” problem that is becoming worse with misguided economic policies. Young people who have been getting educated in larger numbers than before, even learning vocational skills, cannot find jobs. They are dropping out of the job market seeing no hope in it. The CMIE estimates that in UP, the number of persons of working age who have a job has decreased in the last five years from 43 per cent to 33 per cent; in Punjab from 49 per cent to 30 per cent; in Goa from 49 per cent to 32 per cent; and in Uttarakhand from 40 per cent to 30 per cent. If people don’t earn, demand will not increase, and investments in businesses will not be attractive. Moreover, frustrated youth are tinderboxes for social unrest.

Around the world, there is reaction to the financial globalisation of the last 30 years. Speaking to leaders of the

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in May 2007, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, celebrated as the freedom provider for business with the 1991 reforms, had warned: “The time has come for the better-off sections of our society to understand the need to make our growth process more inclusive; to eschew conspicuous consumption; to care for those who are less privileged.” He invited corporate India to “be a partner in making ours a more humane and just society”. Business feared he was returning India to “socialism”—a bogey for neo-liberal economists and their “Washington Consensus” of “minimum government”, “ease of doing business”, and lower corporate and wealth taxes.

In his book, *Davos Man*, Peter Goodman explains how the wealthiest people have influenced economic policies in democratic countries from the 1990s to make themselves

wealthier. Thomas Piketty has documented how wealth inequalities have increased alarmingly in Capital and Ideology. Wealth has accumulated at the top, with regressive tax policies along with deregulation. Government expenditure on social reforms has been crimped. Piketty reveals how the most inclusive periods of economic growth — when a rising tide lifted all boats — have always coincided with periods of high taxation of wealth to fund public education, health, and social security. He also reveals that when inequalities increase intolerably, governments divide to rule and persecution of minorities increases with politics of national identities.

Goodman says the “Davos Man” has propagated the “cosmic lie” that “cutting taxes and deregulating markets will not only produce extra riches for the most affluent but trickle benefits down to the lucky masses —

something that has, in real life, happened zero times.”

He says the Davos Man “would have us believe in a false binary choice as a defence of the status quo, that we either accept globalisation as we have known it for decades or we throw in our lot with Luddites operating in the thrall of backward ideas”.

The global economy must move on from hyper-financial, deregulated capitalism, which has given easy money too much freedom. Neo-liberal Indian economists also frighten us with false binary choices: That we must carry on the way we are, or we will go back to the pre-1991 control era. They must move out from their ideological ruts. One, that until the economy grows there will be no resources to invest in human development — whereas China invested in human development before its economic take-off. Two, that an

unprepared industrial sector will thrive in global free trade — whereas the UK and US (and Japan and China too), grew their industrial sectors behind walls of protection, and then demanded that the rest open their markets to the might of their enterprises. Political divisions by religion and caste are tearing India’s social fabric again. The Indian economy must grow inclusively to repair it. To grow, it must make up for shortfalls in human development, and build domestic industrial capabilities. Until then, it will remain a colony for stronger countries to expand their enterprises with their intellectual property. India will remain strategically vulnerable against its mighty neighbour across the border, which did not adopt Davos Man’s theories. Indian policymakers must urgently discover India’s own, contextually appropriate model of development and shed defunct economic theories.

Six months of Taliban Afghans safer, poorer, less hopeful

The other USD 3.5 billion would be freed for Afghan aid. Girls in grades 1-6 have been going to school, but those in the higher grades are still locked out in most parts of the country. The Taliban promised all girls will be in school after the Afghan new year at the end of March. Universities are gradually reopening and private universities and schools never closed. Poverty is deepening. Even those who have money have a hard time accessing it. At banks, lines are long as residents wait for hours, sometimes even days, to withdraw a limit of \$200 a week. More than USD 9 billion in Afghanistan’s foreign assets were frozen after the Taliban takeover. Last week, President Joe Biden signed an executive order that promised USD 3.5 billion — out of USD 7 billion of Afghanistan’s assets frozen in the United States — would be given to families of America’s 9/

11 victims. The other USD 3.5 billion would be freed for Afghan aid. A Taliban fighter with his family watches his daughter enjoying at a park, near Kabul, Afghanistan, Friday, Feb 11, 2022. Afghans across the political spectrum have decried the order, accusing the US of taking money that belongs to Afghans. The Taliban have campaigned for international recognition of their all-male, all-Taliban government, but they are being pressed to create an inclusive administration and guarantee the rights of women and religious minorities. Graeme Smith, a senior consultant for the International Crisis Group’s Asia Program, warned against using sanctions, saying that would backfire.

“Keeping economic pressure on the Taliban will not get rid of their regime, but a collapsing economy could lead to more people fleeing the

country, sparking another migration crisis,” he said. He also noted that this round of Taliban rule “probably ranks as the most peaceful six-month period that Afghanistan has enjoyed in four decades.” The Taliban have reopened the country’s passport office, which is clogged with thousands of people a day. The Taliban have promised Afghans they can travel but only with proper documents. Those trying to leave seem largely driven by fear of a failing economy or the desire for greater freedom in a more liberal society. Several officials linked to the former US-backed government have returned. One of the returnees, former ambassador Omar Zakhilwal, said he encountered no rancour from the Taliban. He said he hoped that the Taliban will “find the courage” to open their ranks, guarantee minorities a say in the government and go further to guarantee rights of all Afghans.

Rise and fall of Gujarat’s ABG Shipyard, now under probe for fraud

which repaired ships of the Navy, Coast Guard and private players. It recorded its highest turnover of Rs 114 crore in 2010-11, before slipping into the red in 2012-13. The company suspended ship repair operations in 2016. In 2015-16, its promoters decided to disinvest from it. ABG International Pvt Ltd was the holding company. ABG Shipyard had a controlling stake in Eleventh Land Developers Pvt Ltd, ABG FPSO Pvt and Vipul Shipyard. At various points, it had over 55 subsidiary companies. Eeizure and liquidation In 2007, ABG Shipyard had inked a Rs 50-crore MoU for a maritime university. On Monday, the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) on Monday took possession of 1.21 lakh sq m land allotted in Icchapore, Surat, for the university. “We have taken back possession of land as it was not used for the purpose allotted to the company,” GIDC vice-chairman M Thennarasan said. The plot had been allotted at Rs 700/ sq m,

50% of the prevailing premium price of Rs 1,400/ sq m, a concession red-flagged in the CAG report tabled in the Assembly in 2014. The CAG had also found the Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) not taking action against the shipbuilder for non-payment of lease rental. GMB officials confirmed that dues from ABG Shipyard are still pending. In an order on April 25, 2019 in ICICI Bank vs ABG Shipyard, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) ordered the liquidation of the company under Section 33 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. In December 2020, the NCLT’s Ahmedabad bench allowed the liquidator to carry out private sale of assets, after an auction found no bidders. Apart from five ships, the assets being liquidated are 92,000 sq m residential land in Bharuch and Gaviar, 4.14 lakh sq m industrial land near Magdalla port, and 27 acres agricultural land in Diamond Harbour, Kolkata.

UN to finalise science report on how climate change disrupts, lives, environment, planet

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a collection of hundreds of the world's top scientists, issues three huge reports on climate change every five to seven years

Scientists and governments will meet Monday to finish a major United Nations report on how global warming disrupts people's lives, their natural environment and the Earth itself. Don't expect a flowery valentine to the planet: instead an activist group predicted "a nightmare painted in the dry language of science." The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a collection of hundreds of the world's top scientists, issues three huge reports on climate change every five to seven years. The latest update, which won't be finished until the end of February, will explain how climate change already affects humans and the planet, what to expect in the future, and the risks and benefits of adapting to a warmer world.

"We're concerned that the physical climate around us is changing," said panel co-chair Debra Roberts, a South African environmental scientist. "But for most people in their day-to-day lives... they want to know: so what? What does it mean for their lives, their aspirations, their jobs, their families, the places where they live." The report features seven regional chapters "about how physical changes in the climate change people's lives," she said. And she said it will have a strong emphasis on cities. Even without seeing the final report, activists call it a warning sign for the planet. "The IPCC's horrifying evidence of escalating climate impacts is set to show a nightmare painted in the dry language of

science," Teresa Anderson, who heads climate justice issues at ActionAid International, said in a statement. Scientists won't yet say specifically what's in the report because its critical summary is still subject to intense negotiation between the authors and governments over next two weeks, with consensus needed for the final version. The meeting opens with a press event Monday in Berlin. Drafts that have circulated publicly will be changed, sometimes dramatically.

Last August, the first of the three reports, which prompted the U.N. to declare "code red," outlined the physical science of climate change while a third report coming out in March will be more about what can be done to curb and adapt to global warming. Without getting into specifics, report co-chair Hans-Otto Poertner said the science is clear that there are limits — including temperature limits — to what key ecosystems, species and humans can withstand. And in some places, warming is near those limits and in a few cases, such as much of the world's coral reefs, have even passed them. "We are losing living spaces for species and for ourselves as well," Poertner, a German

biologist said in a press briefing last week. "Because with climate change, some parts of the planet would become uninhabitable."

The report will also address ways to adapt to an ever warming world, including how some technological fixes may have unwanted side effects. "In some countries in the Northern Hemisphere, there has been an assumption (of) 'Oh, well, if we cannot control climate change, we just let it go and we adapt to it. So we adapt out of the impacts of climate change'," Poertner said. "And this is certainly a very illusive approach." Environmentalists argue that the extreme weather already seen in parts of the world in recent years shows how urgent it is for governments to address the rising cost of climate change. "The

forthcoming IPCC report will confirm what we already know about the crushing toll of heatwaves, drought, floods, storms, wildfires and ocean acidification for people and critical ecosystems," said Rachel Cleetus of the Union of Concerned Scientists. "This comprehensive scientific assessment will underscore how much worse the climate crisis is likely to get if we fail to take bold global action." Poertner warned of "tipping points" and a risk of mass extinction like the one that did away with Earth's dinosaurs. These reports — which earned the science panel a Nobel peace prize in 2007 — are used when governments meet every year to negotiate how to curb climate change. "You need not just incremental change," Roberts said at a United Nations Foundation briefing last week. "You need systemic change."



Glaciers in Karakoram region stable but others melting faster, says Centre

The Earth Sciences Ministry, through its autonomous institute National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), has been monitoring six glaciers in the Chandra basin in western Himalaya since 2013

Glaciers in the Karakoram region are in a stable condition, but those feeding the Ganga and the Brahmaputra river basins are melting at a faster rate, the Earth Sciences Ministry has said. In reply to a written question in the Lok Sabha, the ministry said the mean retreat rate of the Hindukush Himalayan glaciers was 14.9-15.1 metres per annum, which varied from 12.7-13.2 metres per annum in the Indus, 15.5-14.4 metres per annum in the Ganga and 20.2-19.7 metres per annum in the Brahmaputra river basins.

"However, glaciers in the Karakoram region have shown comparatively minor length change (-1.37 ± 22.8 m/a), indicating the stable condition," the ministry said, citing studies carried out by various institutions associated with the ministry. The ministry, through its autonomous



institute National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), has been monitoring six glaciers in the Chandra basin (2,437 square kilometre area) in western Himalaya since 2013.

The Geological Survey of India

has taken up a project on melting of glaciers in the Beas Basin, South Chenab basin and the Chandra Basin in Himachal Pradesh, and the Shyok and Nubra basin in Ladakh during Field Season 2021-22. It said the

Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG) was monitoring a few glaciers in Uttarakhand which reveal that the Dokriani Glacier in the Bhagirathi basin was retreating at 15-20 metre/annum (mpa) since 1995,

whereas Chorabari Glacier in the Mandakini basin was retreating at 9-11 mpa during 2003-2017. WIHG was also monitoring Durung-Drung and Pensilungpa glaciers in Suru basin, Ladakh, which are retreating at 12 mpa and approximately 5.6 mpa, respectively, the ministry said. Melting glaciers have a significant impact on water resources of Himalayan rivers due to change in glacier basin hydrology, downstream water budget, impact on hydropower plants due to variation in discharge, flash flood and sedimentation, it said.

They also increase the risk related to glacier hazards due to enhanced number and volume of glacier lakes, accelerated flash flood and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), impact on agro practices in high Himalayan region, the ministry said.

India's shipment of wheat to Afghanistan via Pak to begin next week: Sources

According to sources, India's wheat shipment to Afghanistan via Pakistan will begin next week

India's 50,000 tonnes of wheat shipment to Afghanistan as part of its humanitarian aid to the trouble-torn country through Pakistani soil will start from next week, officials said here on Monday. India has been pitching for providing unimpeded humanitarian aid to Afghanistan to address the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the country. It has already announced plans to send 50,000 tonnes of wheat and medicines to Afghanistan by road transport through Pakistan. Pakistan last year allowed India to send 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan by using its land route after the humanitarian situation worsened in the wake of the Taliban's takeover of Kabul. All hurdles have been removed and the Indian side has shared with Pakistan the list of Afghan truck drivers and contractors who would carry the wheat to Afghanistan via Pakistan, diplomatic sources told PTI in

Islamabad. "The shipment of wheat will begin from next week," according to the sources. As per the bilateral understanding, India should complete the shipment within 30 days of the first consignment sent through the Wagah border. India also on Friday signed an MoU with the World Food

Programme (WFP) on the distribution of wheat to Afghanistan. India would hand over the wheat to WFP in Afghanistan that would then distribute it among the people. Initially, Islamabad wanted the transportation of humanitarian assistance goods to Kabul on Pakistani trucks under the banner of

the United Nations. But India made a counter proposal and wanted the food grain to be shipped to Afghanistan either



in Indian or Afghan trucks. The two sides then agreed that wheat would be carried by Afghan trucks and a list of Afghan contractors was shared with Pakistan. India had sent a proposal to Pakistan on October 7 seeking the transit facility to send 50,000 tonnes of wheat to the people of Afghanistan via Pakistani soil

and it received a positive response from Islamabad on November 24. Following the Pakistani response, both sides were in touch to finalise the modalities for the transportation of the shipments. The food grains provided by India are expected to help Afghanistan deal with shortages. According to international aid agencies, about 23 million Afghans are in need of urgent support. Afghanistan has been under Taliban rule since August 15 last year, when the Afghan hardline militant group ousted the elected government of president Ashraf Ghani and forced him to flee the country and take refuge in the UAE. India has not recognised the new regime in Afghanistan and has been pitching for the formation of a truly inclusive government in Kabul, besides insisting that Afghan soil must not be used for any terrorist activities against any country.

Work from home or 100% attendance? What private employees can expect



Initially, the work from home was seen as a stop-gap measure, but after the emergence of multiple variants of Covid-19, it may become a long term solution

The covid pandemic forced employers to adopt a work-from-home strategy for its employees to ensure uninterrupted workflows. Now with the daily number of cases in India going down day by day, employees are curious to know whether there will be 100 per cent attendance, work from home or remote and hybrid working models. Initially, the work from home was seen as a stop-gap measure, but after the emergence of multiple variants of Covid-19, it may become a long term solution. Private companies such as Tata Steel, Meesho

and global tech giants are also undergoing rapid evolution. Remote and hybrid working models, global talent pools, work schedule flexibility and changing jobs have reformed the worker-employee relationship," Yogita Tulsiani, MD & Co-founder, iXceed Solutions said. "CEOs can no longer afford to follow rules of the past and must think outside the box to cater to the needs of their workforce and organization. Business leaders should strive to build strong relationships with their

"As our world evolves, our work, workforce and workplace

workforce, cultivate a progressive work culture and anticipate the needs of their employees," Tulsiani said. Human resource managers have opined that 100 per cent attendance or full strength in office may become a thing of the past. Several sectors, including IT, are witnessing the trend of employees insisting on working from anywhere, the cnbctv18 report says. While many employers are willing to become flexible, there have been concerns over data privacy and moonlighting.

How a documentary could be the first ever Indian film to bag an Oscar

The film on India's only Dalit-women led news outlet has wowed the festival circuit. Can it score where Lagaan missed in 2002?

One of the posts on filmmaker Rintu Thomas' Instagram page is a poster of Writing with Fire, which became the first Indian documentary to be nominated for an Oscar. What stands out in the image is the number of international festival awards the documentary has won—28. Could the coveted Oscar be the next?

The accolades for directors Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh began pouring in from January 2021 when their film won two awards at the Sundance Film Festival, including the audience award. Festival goers have connected with Thomas and Ghosh's work on the intrepid female reporters of newspaper Khabar Lahariya, India's only Dalit-women led news outlet, not just at Sundance in Utah but at innumerable festivals across the globe, including the prestigious International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam (IDFA). "Each screening was so emotionally powerful, there were tears and applause—the best ways to receive love from an audience," wrote Thomas about the film's reception at IDFA. In addition

to the Oscar, Writing with Fire has also earned nominations from the Producer's Guild of America and the International Documentary



Association.

No film made by an Indian has won an Oscar yet. Satyajit Ray received the Honorary Academy Award while Oscar-winners Bhanu Athaiya (Gandhi) and A.R. Rahman, Gulzar and Resul Pookutty (Slumdog Millionaire) all worked on films set in India and about Indians, albeit they were international productions made

by British directors. Ashutosh Gowariker's Lagaan came close, but lost to Bosnian film No Man's Land for what was then best foreign

language film award. The documentary field is packed with strong contenders such as Flee (also nominated for best international feature and best animated feature) and Summer of Soul (...Or, When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised). But if Thomas and Ghosh were to win, history will be made. With Writing with Fire, there's a triumph-against-

all-odds, underdog story which makes it both compelling and inspiring. Its protagonists are three resilient and brave journalists—Suneeta, Shyamkali Devi and Meera Devi—who report stories of gender and caste discrimination and practice journalism that makes a difference. The documentary also tracks the publication's transition from print to digital.

History tells us that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has a soft spot for films about journalists. Its winners for Oscar for best picture include All the President's Men (how Robert Woodward and Carl Bernstein broke the Watergate scandal that led to the fall of President Richard Nixon) and Spotlight (The Boston Globe's expose of sexual abuse of minors in the Roman Catholic Church). Network and The Killing Fields are two other media-centred titles to have won multiple Oscars. Will the Academy members reward the wonder women of Khabar Lahariya? India will have to wait until March 28 early morning to know.

How bad is the Western drought? Worst in 12 centuries, study finds

The megadrought in the American Southwest has become so severe that it's now the driest two decades in the region in at least 1,200 years, scientists said Monday, and climate change is largely responsible.

The drought, which began in 2000 and has reduced water supplies, devastated farmers and ranchers and helped fuel wildfires across the region, had previously been considered the worst in 500 years, according to the researchers.

But exceptional conditions in the summer of 2021, when about two-thirds of the West was in extreme drought, "really pushed it over the top," said A. Park Williams, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who led an analysis using tree ring data to gauge drought. As a result, 2000-21 is the driest 22-year period since A.D. 800, which is as far back as the data

goes. The analysis also showed that human-caused warming played a major role in making the current drought so extreme. There would have been a drought regardless of climate change, Williams said. "But its severity would have been only about 60% of what it was," he said. Julie Cole, a climate scientist at the University of Michigan who was not involved in the research, said that while the findings were not surprising, "the study just makes clear how unusual the current conditions are."

Cole said the study also confirms the role of temperature, more than precipitation, in driving exceptional droughts. Precipitation amounts can go up and down over time and can vary regionally, she said. But as human activities continue to pump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, temperatures are more generally rising. As

they do "the air is basically more capable of pulling the water out of the soil, out of vegetation, out of crops, out of forests," Cole said. "And it makes for drought conditions to be much more extreme." Although there is no uniform definition, a megadrought is generally considered to be one that is both severe and long, on the order of several decades. But even in a megadrought there can be periods when wet conditions prevail. It's just that there are not enough consecutive wet years to end the drought.

That has been the case in the current Western drought, during which there have been several wet years, most notably 2005. The study, which was published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, determined that climate change was responsible for the continuation of the current

drought after that year. "By our calculations, it's a little bit of extra dryness in the background average conditions due to human-caused climate change that basically kept 2005 from ending the drought event," Williams said. Climate change also makes it more likely that the drought will continue, the study found. "This drought at 22 years is still in full swing," Williams said, "and it is very, very likely that this drought will survive to last 23 years."

Several previous megadroughts in the 1,200-year record lasted as long as 30 years, according to the researchers. Their analysis concluded that it is likely that the current drought will last that long. If it does, Williams said, it is almost certain that it will be drier than any previous 30-year period. Tree rings are a year-by-year measure of growth —

wider in wet years, thinner in dry ones. Using observational climate data over the past century, researchers have been able to closely link tree ring width to moisture content in the soil, which is a common measure of drought. Then they have applied that width-moisture relationship to data from much older trees. The result "is an almost perfect record of soil moisture" over 12 centuries in the Southwest, Williams said.

Using that record, the researchers determined that last summer was the second driest in the past 300 years, with only 2002, in the early years of the current drought, being drier. Monsoon rains in the desert Southwest last summer had offered hope that the drought might come to an end, as did heavy rain and snow in California from the fall into December.

Hundreds of yellow-headed blackbirds fall from sky in Mexico. Want to know why?

In a viral video, hundreds of yellow-headed blackbirds can be seen appearing to fall from the sky.



Some of the birds couldn't survive the fall and died. The mysterious incident has happened in the northern Mexican city of Cuauhtémoc. The cause of the incident is still unclear. But experts say that a predatory bird making efforts to make the kill may be the reason. The video is actually the footage from a security camera. In it, a flock of migratory birds descended on to the houses like a cloud of black smoke. Some birds managed to fly off but others couldn't make it and perished. In subsequent footage, carcasses of the distinctive black and yellow birds can be witnessed scattered on streets of the city. According to local

reports, the incident occurred on the morning of February 7. These birds usually breed farther north in the US and Canada. They migrate to south in Mexico for the winter. Dr Richard Broughton, ecologist, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, said that although a raptor cannot be seen in the footage, it must have been caused by a predatory bird only. "This looks like a raptor like a peregrine or hawk has been chasing a flock, like they do with murmuring starlings, and they have crashed as the flock was forced low. You can see that they act like a wave at the beginning, as if they are being flushed from above," Broughton said.

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APOLLO
FARMS & RESORTS

Are markets in trouble? Sensex dip and Rupee volatility explained in four charts

Stock markets in many countries have been hit due to several reasons like global tension caused by a possible Russia-Ukraine war, rising inflation around the world, and the fear of an interest rate hike by the United States

Global tension caused by a possible Russia-Ukraine war, rising inflation around the world, and the fear of an interest rate hike by the United States have taken a combined toll on the stock markets in many countries. The Sensex fell 5.17 per cent in the last 30 days, the DAX fell 3.58 per cent, Dow Jones fell 2.27 per cent, and the FTSE fell 0.31 per cent, as of 8 pm IST, February 15, 2022.

"With inflation at multi-decadal highs in a number of countries, the evolving macroeconomic environment is being rendered highly uncertain by divergent monetary policy intentions and actions," said RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das. Financial market volatility and geo-political tensions are adding layers of ambivalence to the outlook, he added. However, experts

believe that more than inflation, geopolitical tensions rising from the Russia-Ukraine event are responsible for the turbulence in the stock market. "Inflation is not a big worry and it has not shaken the market too much. Geopolitical tensions are happening at a time when India's growth is not very good and they are weighing more than interest rate hikes in the US," Madhavi Arora, Lead Economist, Emkay Global Financial Services, told India Today. Emerging markets generally pay the price of global tensions and now, too much is happening in too short a time, thus changing the behaviour of foreign investors, she added.

Record FPI pullout from India

Foreign investors have pulled out thousands of crores of rupees from the Indian market amid these uncertainties.

A record net of Rs. 48,538 crores in Foreign Portfolio Investments have been pulled out from the Indian market in this fiscal year as of February 14. In fact, after pouring in more money into the Indian stock market, foreign investors pulled out Rs. 72,661 crores alone in the two-and-a-half months since December 2021. "Rate hike indications by the central government in the US and a few other big economies fueled fund outflow from equities towards other asset classes," Mitul Shah, Head of Research at Institutional Desk at Reliance Securities, told India Today.

India is no exception to this phenomenon, Shah explained. India has witnessed a sharp FPI outflow over the last four months on account of the Fed's likely rate hike, withdrawal of

stimulus support, and rising inflation, he added. With the Dollar index rising due to higher interest rates and rising tension on the war front, the strength of the Rupee has also depreciated significantly since the beginning of 2022. From an exchange rate of Rs. 74.4 to a Dollar on January 3, 2022, the rupee depreciated to Rs. 75.7 per \$1 on February 14. The Rupee traded with high volatility today as it was under pressure in the first half of the session following increased uncertainty between Russia and Ukraine. But in the latter half, the Rupee appreciated sharply after reports that some Russian troops were asked to return to base," Gaurang Somaiya, forex and bullion analyst at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, told India Today.

New species of crocodile who preyed on a young dinosaur found in Australia, say scientists

In a new discovery, a species of crocodile has been found in Queensland, Australia. It seems to be dating back to the Cretaceous period.



What's special is that this Australian Age of Dinosaurs 2.5-meter-long crocodile had a young dinosaur for its last meal, said scientists. In 2010, the fossilized bones of a *confractosuchus* were excavated. The discovery was made at a sheep station near the Winton Formation, which is about 95-million-year-old geological rock bed. Scientists have also identified the partly digested remnants of a young ornithomimid inside the stomach of the crocodile. The findings of the research were published in the scientific journal 'Gondwana Research' on February 11. In a statement,

Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum, which made the discovery, said that this is the first evidence of a crocodile preying on a dinosaur in Australia. Initially preserved in a siltstone mass, the crocodile sample had been partially crushed. But still, the damage revealed a number of small bones from the skeleton of a small Cretaceous creature. To locate the bones inside the crocodile specimen, scientists used X-ray and CT scanning technologies. It also took around 10 months of computer processing to create a 3D reconstruction of the bones.

On it.

Ending racial injustice requires all of us to work together and take real action.

What can you do to help?

- ☒ Educate yourself about the history of American racism, privilege and what it means to be anti-racist.
- ☒ Commit to actions that challenge injustice and make everyone feel like they belong, such as challenging biased or racist language when you hear it.
- ☒ Vote in national and local elections to ensure your elected officials share your vision of public safety.
- ☒ Donate to organizations, campaigns and initiatives who are committed to racial justice.



Let's come together to take action against racism and fight for racial justice for the Black community. Visit lovehasnolabels.com/fightforfreedom



What's next for Isro after first successful PSLV launch of 2022?

With the launch of PSLV-C52 declared successful with all objectives accomplished beyond Earth, the agency will set its eyes on the PSLV-C53 mission that will be lifted off in March this year



(News Agencies) The Indian Space Research Organisation conducted a textbook launch of the polar satellite launch vehicles in the wee hours of Monday. The launch set the stage for 18 other planned missions in 2022 as the agency set to regain its lost pace. The Monday launch saw the deployment of three satellites, one of which was pushed into the Sun Synchronous Orbit nearly 529 kilometers from the surface of Earth. The launch comes months after the failed attempt to deploy Earth Observation Satellite-03 on the PSLV-C51 mission in August last year.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR ISRO?

With the launch of PSLV-C52 declared successful with all objectives accomplished beyond Earth, the agency will set its eyes on the PSLV-C53 mission that will be lifted off in March this year. The mission will carry OCEANSAT-3 and INS 2B ANAND into Low Earth Orbit.

Isro is yet to release details of the launch window for the mission. The agency had said that it will lift off five missions in three months kickstarting an eventful year. The launch of PSLV-C53 will be followed by the SSLV-D1 Micro SAT mission getting off the ground in April 2022.

BIG TICKET MISSIONS IN 2022

Isro chief S Somnath, who was at the mission control for the PSLV-C52 launch had earlier said that the Department of Space has planned 19 missions to be launched in 2022 as it picks up pace following successive delays. During the year, Isro will lift off 08 launch vehicle missions, 07 spacecraft missions, and 04 technology demonstrator missions. Monday's successful launch laid the groundwork for 2022 where Isro will look to regain launch momentum if missions that had been lost due to Covid-19 and successive lockdowns. Several missions that

had been delayed will be aimed to return on track throughout the year. Apart from PSLV missions, the two big high profile launches this year include the much-awaited Chandrayaan-3 to the Moon. Isro has said that the mission will lift off in August this year as the required tests for the mission have been completed. The successor of the failed Chandrayaan-2 mission will be an orbiter, lander, and rover module. However, Isro will only launch the lander and rover combination and use the orbiter from Chandrayaan-2 that is already in lunar orbit. This will be followed by the maiden launch of the uncrewed Gaganyaan mission. India's ambitious Gaganyaan mission that aims to send the first batch of Indian astronauts into space on an indigenous developed spacecraft will see a renewed push in 2022. The first

uncrewed mission is likely to be conducted in the second half of 2022. The second uncrewed mission has been scheduled for the end of 2022 after which, three Indian Air Force officers, undergoing training, will launch into space.

WHAT HAPPENED TODAY?

In the first launch of 2022, Isro successfully deployed three satellites into orbit. The main payload was the Earth Observation Satellite-04 is also called Radar Imaging Satellite (RISAT), which has been designed to provide high-quality images under all weather conditions for applications such as agriculture, forestry, and plantations, flood mapping, soil moisture & hydrology. The four-stage rocket also had a student satellite INSPIRESat and a spacecraft dubbed INSAT-2DT that is a precursor of a joint India-Bhutan mission in the future.



US govt extends environmental review of SpaceX Starship craft in Texas

SpaceX founder Elon Musk said on Thursday he was "highly confident" his new SpaceX Starship, designed for voyages to the moon and Mars, will reach Earth orbit for the first time this year

(News Agencies) The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said on Monday it was extending its target date to complete an environmental review of the proposed SpaceX Starship spacecraft and Super Heavy rocket program in Boca Chica, Texas, to March 28.

The FAA's previous target date was Feb. 28. The FAA noted that completing the environmental review does not guarantee that a vehicle

operator license will be issued, which must also meet FAA safety, risk and financial responsibility requirements.

More than 19,000 public comments were received on the draft environmental review



by FAA, which said it "is continuing consultation and coordination with other agencies." SpaceX founder Elon Musk said

on Thursday he was "highly confident" his new SpaceX Starship, designed for voyages to the moon and Mars, will reach Earth orbit for the first time this year.

The FAA is deciding whether the planned build-out in Texas poses a significant environmental impact to the area - including an adjacent wildlife reserve - and must therefore undergo a far more extensive study before expanded operations at SpaceX's rocket production facility and spaceport in Boca Chica can be licensed.

Asked Thursday what he knew about the status of the FAA review, Musk

said, "We don't have a ton of insight into where things stand with the FAA. We have gotten sort of a rough indication there may be an approval in March. But that's all we know." The company would shift its entire Starship program to the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida, where SpaceX already has received the environmental approval it needs, Musk said. Such a move would cause a setback of six to eight months, he added. In any case, SpaceX is still shooting for a 2023 launch of what it calls the world's first private lunar mission, flying aboard a Starship to loop around the moon and return to Earth.

Share market crashes: Factors that are spooking Sensex, Nifty

Investors will be keeping a keen eye on India's January retail inflation data, due out later in the day. Higher crude oil price is another major macro concern for India



(News Agencies) The share market fell about 2 per cent in early morning trade on Monday as Indian shares joined a global sell-off that was triggered by escalating tensions between Russia and the West over Ukraine, and as banking stocks extended their

decline.

SENSEX, NIFTY TANK

The NSE Nifty 50 index fell 2 per cent to 17,029, while the S&P BSE Sensex dropped 1.9 per cent to 57,023.63. The Nifty volatility index, which indicates the degree of volatility traders expect

over the next 30 days in the Nifty50 index, jumped as much as 21.61 per cent.

WHY STOCK MARKET IS DOWN

"The correction in domestic markets is part of the global phenomenon. Foreign institutional inves-

tors are selling due to a high-inflationary environment and tensions between Russia and Ukraine. That's giving jitters to the market," said Saurabh Jain, assistant vice president at SMC Securities, according to Reuters report.

Energy and metal prices are on the rise, which is essentially stoking inflationary pressure across the global economy, Jain was quoted as saying by Reuters.

INFLATION, CRUDE OIL

Investors will be keeping a keen eye on India's January retail inflation data, due out later in the day.

Higher crude oil price is another major macro concern for India and if it remains at \$95/barrel levels for an extended period, continuation of the accommodative monetary stance would be difficult, said V K Vijayakumar, chief in-

vestment strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Meanwhile, India's federal investigation agency filed a police complaint against ABG Shipyard Ltd and its promoters accusing it of defrauding lenders of 228.42 billion rupees.

The Nifty banking index fell 2.9 per cent, while the public sector banking index dropped 3.4 per cent. State-run Life Insurance Corp of India filed draft papers with the market regulator on Sunday to sell 5 per cent of its shares to potentially raise nearly \$8 billion, dwarfing the biggest IPO in Asia's third-largest economy by a considerable margin. Among individual stocks, driller Oil and Natural Gas Corp rose as much as 4.9 per cent as strong crude prices boosted its quarterly profit by seven-fold.

Cryptocurrencies worse than Ponzi schemes, banning them advisable: RBI Deputy Governor

RBI Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar has said that banning cryptocurrencies is the most advisable choice for India as they are akin to Ponzi schemes and "may even be worse"

(News Agencies) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar on Monday said that banning cryptocurrencies is the most advisable choice for India as they are akin to Ponzi schemes and "may even be worse". Addressing an Indian Banks Association event, Rabi Sankar said, "We have seen that crypto-technology is underpinned by a philosophy to evade government controls. Cryptocurrencies have specifically been developed



to bypass the regulated financial system. These should be reasons enough to treat them with caution. We have also seen that cryptocurrencies are not amenable to definition as a currency, asset or commodity; they have no underlying cash flows, they have no intrinsic value; that they are akin to Ponzi Schemes, and may even be worse."

"Banning cryptocurrency is perhaps the most advisable choice open to India and there are strong reasons to keep cryptocurrencies away from the formal

financial system," he added. Rabi Sankar said that cryptocurrencies can wreck the currency system, the monetary authority, the banking system, and in general,

the government's ability to control the economy. Rabi Sankar added that while Ponzi schemes invested in income earning assets, cryptos are just "gambling instruments". Rabi Sankar's statement comes after RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das expressed concerns over cryptocurrencies. Das had said that these instruments could be harmful to macroeconomic stability.

At a press conference after the latest RBI Monetary Policy Committee meeting,

Shaktikanta Das had cautioned investors while investing in cryptocurrencies. "I think it is my duty to tell investors that what they are investing in cryptocurrencies, they should keep in mind that they are investing at their own risk. They should keep in mind that these cryptocurrencies have no underlying (asset). Not even a tulip," Das said.

'Cryptocurrencies threaten financial sovereignty'

Rabi Sankar said that the cryptocurrencies threaten the financial sovereignty of a country and make it susceptible to strategic manipulation by private corporates creating these currencies or governments that control them.

Rabi Sankar said that the very purpose of cryptocurrencies is that they "bypass established intermediation and control arrangements that ensure integrity of financial transactions", such as Know-Your-Customer regimes, Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) rules etc.

The fact that they are anonymous,

decentralised systems that operate purely virtually makes cryptocurrencies particularly attractive to illegal/illegitimate transactions which have been largely filtered out of the formal financial system, Rabi Sankar said. Quoting a report this year in the Wall Street Journal, Rabi Sankar informed that total crimes using cryptocurrencies in 2021 was estimated to be \$14 billion. "We have already noted that there is no basis for valuation of cryptocurrencies. Since valuation is largely based on beliefs, and not on underlying value, it is bound to have a destabilising effect on monetary stability of a country through large-scale wealth loss to investors (if it is adopted widely), even if it not allowed to be used as a currency," he said. The RBI deputy governor further shed light on the "socially wasteful energy use" of crypto infrastructure. "About 900 new Bitcoin a day require electricity worth \$ 45mn a day. By some estimates, electricity use of bitcoins equaled that of the entire country of Switzerland in 2019," he claimed.



DNA analysis of elephant ivory reveals trafficking networks across continents

(News Agencies) As few as three major criminal groups are responsible for smuggling the vast majority of elephant ivory tusks out of Africa, according to a new study.

Researchers used analysis of DNA from seized elephant tusks and evidence such as phone records, license plates, financial records and shipping documents to map trafficking operations across the continent and better understand who was behind the crimes. The study was published Monday in the journal *Nature Human Behavior*.

"When you have the genetic analysis and other data, you can finally begin to understand the illicit supply chain that's absolutely key to countering these networks," said Louise Shelley, who researches illegal trade at George Mason University and was not involved in the research.

Conservation biologist Samuel Wasser, a study co-author, hopes the findings will help law enforcement officials tar-

Researchers used analysis of DNA from seized elephant tusks and evidence such as phone records, license plates, financial records and shipping documents to map trafficking operations across the continent

get the leaders of these networks instead of low-level poachers who are easily replaced by criminal organizations.

"If you can stop the trade where the ivory is being consolidated and exported out of the country, those are really the key players," said Wasser, who co-directs the Center for Environmental Forensic Science at the University of Washington.

Africa's elephant population is fast dwindling. From around 5 million elephants a century ago to 1.3 million in 1979, the total number of elephants in Africa is now estimated to be around 415,000.

A 1989 ban on international commercial ivory trade hasn't stopped the decline. Each year, an estimated 1.1 million pounds (500 metric tons) of poached elephant tusks are

shipped from Africa, mostly to Asia.

For the past two decades, Wasser has fixated on a few key questions: "Where is most of the ivory being poached, who is moving it, and how many people are they?"

He works with wildlife authorities in Kenya, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and elsewhere, who contact him after they intercept ivory shipments. He flies to the countries to take small samples of tusks to analyze the DNA. He has now amassed samples from the tusks of more than 4,300 elephants trafficked out of Africa between 1995 and today.

"That's an amazing, remarkable data set," said Princeton University biologist Robert Pringle, who was not involved in the study. With such data, "it becomes possible to spot connections and make strong inferences," he said.

In 2004, Wasser demonstrated that DNA from elephant tusks and dung could be used to pinpoint their home location to within a few hundred miles. In 2018, he recognized that finding identical DNA in tusks from two different ivory seizures meant

they were harvested from the same animal and likely trafficked by the same poaching network.

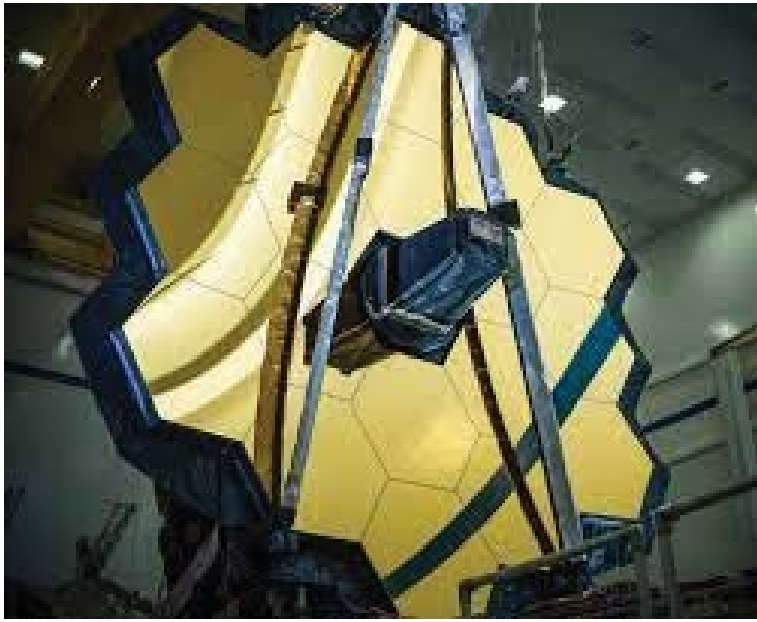
The new research expands that approach to identify DNA belonging to elephant parents and offspring, as well as siblings — and led to the discovery that only a very few criminal groups are behind most of the ivory trafficking in Africa. Because female elephants remain in the same family group their whole life, and most males don't travel too far from their family herd, the researchers hypothesize that tusks from close family members are likely to have been poached at the same time, or by the same operators. Such genetic links can provide a blueprint for wildlife authorities seeking other evidence cell phone records, license plates, shipping documents and financial statements to link different ivory shipments. Previously when an ivory shipment was intercepted, the one seizure wouldn't allow authorities to identify the organization behind the crime, said Special Agent John Brown III of the Office of Homeland Security Investigations, who has worked on environmental

crimes for 25 years. But the scientists' work identifying DNA links can "alert us to the connections between individual seizures," said Brown, who is also a co-author. "This collaborative effort has definitely been the backbone of multiple multinational investigations that are still ongoing," he said. They identified several poaching hotspots, including regions of Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana, Gabon and Republic of Congo. Tusks are often moved to warehouses in another location to be combined with other contraband in shipping containers, then moved to ports. Current trafficking hubs exist in Kampala, Uganda; Mombasa, Kenya; and Lome, Togo. Two suspects were recently arrested as a result of one such investigation, said Wasser. Traffickers that smuggle ivory also often move other contraband, the researchers found. A quarter of large seizures of pangolin scales a heavily-poached anteater-like animal are co-mingled with ivory, for instance. "Confronting these networks is a great example of how genetics can be used for conservation purposes," said Brian Arnold, a Princeton University evolutionary biologist who was not involved in the research.



James Webb Telescope captures image made of 2 billion pixels as it sees a star 18 times

NASA James Webb Telescope: To capture the first light coming from the distant star dubbed, HD 84406, Webb was repointed to 156 different positions around the predicted location of the star



began the three-month-long process of alignment. The team had to confirm that NIRCam was ready to collect light from celestial objects, and then identify starlight from the same star in each of the 18 primary mirror segments.

The resulting image that Nasa has released shows a mosaic of 18 randomly organized dots of starlight, the product of Webb's unaligned mirror segments all reflecting light from the same star back at Webb's secondary mirror and into NIRCam's detectors. This blurry image will become the foundation to align and focus the telescope in order for Webb to deliver unprecedented views of the universe this summer. "Over the next month or so, the team will gradually adjust the mirror

segments until the 18 images become a single star," Nasa said in a blog.

Looking at a star 18 times

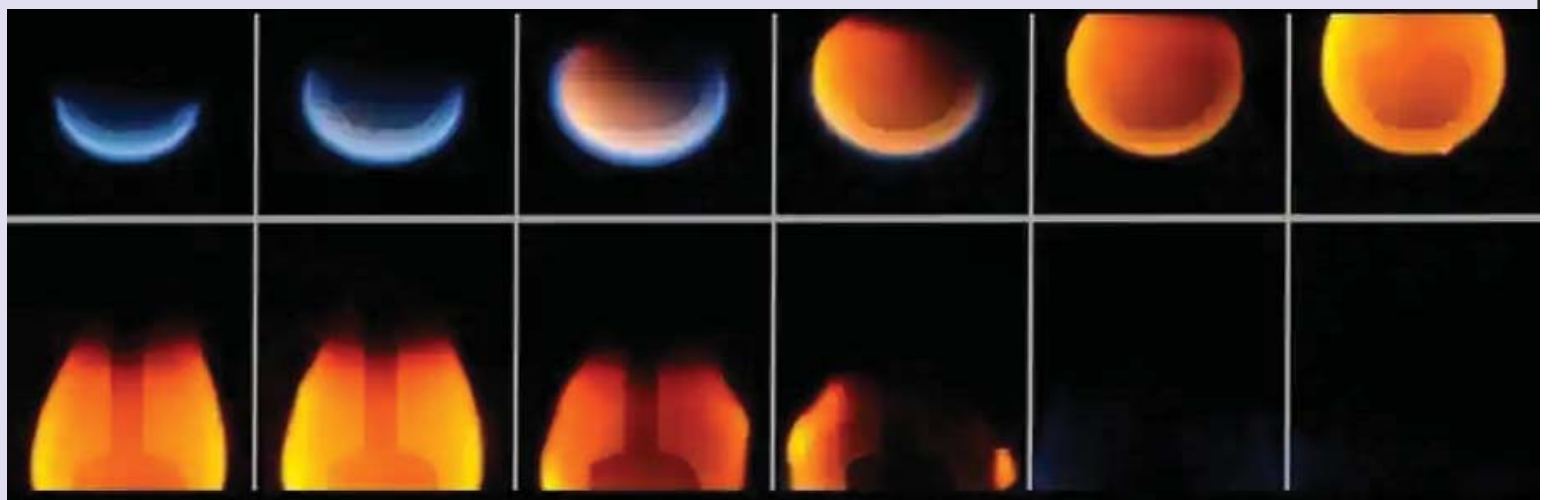
Nasa said that to capture the first light coming from the distant star dubbed, HD 84406, Webb was repointed to 156 different positions around the predicted location of the star. The telescope captured 1,560 images using NIRCam's 10 detectors in 25 hours. The ecstatic said that Webb was able to locate the target star in each of its mirror segments within the first six hours and 16 exposures. These images were then stitched together to produce a single, large mosaic that captures the signature of each primary mirror segment in one frame. "The entire Webb team is ecstatic at how well the first steps of taking images and

aligning the telescope are proceeding. We were so happy to see that light makes its way into NIRCam," said Marcia Rieke, principal investigator for the NIRCam instrument. The American space agency said that each dot visible in the image is the same star seen as imaged by each of Webb's 18 primary mirror segments. "The images shown here are only a center portion of that larger mosaic, a huge image with over 2 billion pixels," Nasa said. Nasa added that going ahead these images will get clearer and less blurry as its other three instruments arrive at their intended cryogenic operating temperatures and begin capturing data. The first complete image by the observatory is likely to drop in five months from now.

(Staff Reporter) Nearly 20 days after it arrived at its orbit, the James Webb Telescope dropped the first images in the form of a selfie as engineers near the completion of the first phase of the alignment process. The James Webb Telescope is using a star to align its mirrors to the minutest precision as it observes the distant body. The team was faced with two challenges as it

Fighting fire with fire: NASA to conduct experiments how things ignite, burn, & are extinguished in space

(Staff Reporter) In space, fire behaves differently; changes in gravity and air flow can alter its spread and make extinguishing it more difficult. Exactly how do engineers build fire-resistant homes on the Moon, where only 12 people have walked, or on Mars, where no one has even been? How do they research flammability in these unknown or little-known environments? Here's how they plan to do it. As part of Northrop Grumman's 17th cargo resupply mission to the International Space Station, NASA's Solid Fuel Ignition and Extinction project (SoFIE) will conduct experiments that will shed light on fire in space. SoFIE will run in a chamber inside the station's Combustion Integrated Rack, which features a safe chamber for burning experiments. "With NASA planning outposts on other planetary bodies like the Moon and Mars, we need to be able to live there with minimal risk," said Paul Ferkul, SoFIE project



scientist at NASA's Glenn Research Center in Cleveland. "Understanding how flames spread and how materials burn in different environments is crucial for the safety of future astronauts."

NASA will use the results of this experiment to select materials and designs for spacesuits, cabins, and habitats. As NASA prepares to go farther and stay longer in space, the experiments will also enable it to identify the best ways to extinguish fires or smoldering materials while in space. To demon-

strate flame growth, decay, and extinction in space, a preliminary test called Burning and Suppression of Solids (BASS) burned a synthetic resin on the space station several years ago. "On Earth, gravity has a profound influence on flames, but in the reduced gravity of space, fire can behave unexpectedly and could be more hazardous," Ferkul said. Scientists can study flames in the station's unique microgravity environment, where they are free from the effects of gravity. Data

from the experiment, which cannot be collected on Earth, can then be used to develop mathematical models that predict how those materials would burn on the moon, Mars, or anywhere else.

"SoFIE builds on NASA's prior flammability research," said Lauren Brown, a project manager at Glenn. "Like other flame studies, this research will home in on how things ignite, burn, and are extinguished in space. It will provide a foundation for continuing human spaceflight beyond low-Earth orbit."

The SoFIE project consists of five investigations that examine the flammability of plexiglass, cotton-based fabrics, and other materials commonly used in space flight. SoFIE is intended to study fire safety in spacecraft, but data from the experiments could also be used to improve fire safety on Earth. Data collected from the study will contribute to the body of knowledge that could be used to improve screening tests for materials that are fire safe for the home, office, aircraft, or other uses.



Women using Instagram to cope with miscarriage distress

The findings are based on a qualitative research study on 200 posts of text and pictures shared by Instagram users

(Staff Reporter) Despite its common occurrence, there is still a lot of stigma surrounding miscarriage and many women find that their emotional and psychological needs are unmet as they go through a devastating grieving process. But for some, Instagram has emerged as a tool to cope with such distress, a study says.

The study, published in the journal *Obstetrics & Gynecology*,

found that the content posted by Instagram users included rich descriptions of the medical and physical experiences of miscarriage, and the emotional spectrum of having a miscarriage and coping with those emotions, the social aspect, and family identity.

"I find it endlessly fascinating that women are opening up to essentially strangers about things that they hadn't even told

their partners or families," says Dr. Riley. "But this is how powerful this community is," said Amy Henderson Riley, Assistant Professor at the Jefferson College of Population Health, Thomas Jefferson University, US.

The findings are based on a qualitative research study on 200 posts of text and pictures shared by Instagram users. "What surprised me the most

was how many women and their partners identified as parents after their miscarriage and how the miscarriage lasted into their family identity after a successful pregnancy," said Rebecca Mercier, Assistant Professor at Thomas Jefferson University.

"The extent to which this loss affects women and their families, and the longevity of their grief is a blind spot for

clinicians," Mercier said.

These personal accounts also provided insight into patients' perspectives of typically defined experiences.

For example, in the clinic, the typical definition of recurrent pregnancy loss is after three pregnancies. However, the researchers found that many patients who had had two or more miscarriages identified with having recurrent pregnancy loss. "I'm hoping that this study will encourage clinicians to point patients to social media as a potential coping tool, as well as to approach this subject with bereaved and expecting parents with more respect and empathy," Mercier said.

Social media is becoming a common avenue for patient testimonials. For example, the short video-sharing platform TikTok has recently become a home for some users to make videos sharing their personal health struggles.

"As far as we know, this is the first study to look at the intersection of Instagram and miscarriage," Riley said.

"But this is a drop in the bucket. Social media platforms are evolving rapidly and a theoretically grounded research must follow," she added.

Our ancestors learnt to smile so that they can have sex



(Staff Reporter) Believe it or not but our forefathers were way smarter than us when it came to wooing the opposite sex for mating. According to a new study, Neanderthals learnt how to smile and make expressive faces in order to attract less-aggressive mates.

Researchers from the University of Milan focused on genetic samples from Neanderthals, which showed that gene mutations might have led humans to "self-select less aggressive mating partners". This behaviour finally led to the "self-domestication" of ancient humans.

The study suggests that modern humans domesticated themselves after they split from their extinct relatives - Neanderthals and Denisovans - approximately 600,000 years ago, reported sciencemag.org citing the study that was published in the journal *Science Advances*.

Giuseppe Testa, a molecular biologist at University of Milan in Italy, and colleagues knew that one gene, BAZ1B, plays an important role in orchestrating the movements of neural crest cells.

Most people carry two copies of this gene. Significantly, one copy



Our forefathers were way smarter than us when it came to wooing the opposite sex for mating.

of BAZ1B is missing in people with Williams-Beuren syndrome, a disorder linked to cognitive impairments and extreme friendliness.

Genetic data was gathered from human stem cells taken from the remains of two Neanderthals and one Denisovan.

These two groups of prehistoric ancestors lived around the same time and there is even evidence to suggest they interbred.

"BAZ1B" is the gene which allows dogs to make their eyes expressive in a way wolves cannot, reports NYPost.

"It is thought that selected breeding patterns of some Neanderthals led to the BAZ1B gene and could have contributed to Homo sapiens developing distinctively expressive faces".

When the researchers looked at hundreds of BAZ1B-sensitive

genes, they found that in modern humans, those genes had accumulated loads of regulatory mutations of their own.

This suggests natural selection was shaping them.

According to The Sun, Williams-Beuren syndrome causes humans to have what some people perceive as a welcoming expression with a wide mouth and a small nose.

Brain 'Clutter': What it is and How it Can Impact Memory as You Age

- Researchers say one reason older adults sometimes have trouble remembering things is that there is an abundance of memories and information to sift through.
- Experts say this brain "clutter" is not all bad. This extra data can help with decision making creativity.
- They add that exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy diet, and staying socially active can help with memory as you age.

(Staff Reporter) Most people past a certain age know the feeling. You've worked on many projects with Susan. Your desks are across the room from one another. You've even picked up coffee for her more than once and can remember her order. But her last name? You search your brain and just — in that moment — cannot find it. You scold yourself and wonder: Am I losing my memory? A research review published on Feb. 11 theorizes that this kind of difficulty — along with other memory challenges as we age — may be a result of too much information, not a lack of it. In other words, as we age, we may have an overload of data and memories to shuffle through to find that one piece we desire.

Tarek Amer, the lead researcher on the study and a postdoctoral fellow in cognitive

neuroscience at Columbia University in New York and Harvard University in Massachusetts, says the findings challenge some past assumptions about aging, the brain, and memory. "This goes against the idea that the older brain does not store as much. That it's impoverished," he told Healthline.

What memory lapses really mean

Amer and his team looked at research that compared memory storage between younger adults and older adults from 60 to 85 years of age. That research examined creative tasks to see what people recalled and forgot. It found that older adults held onto information and lacked the ability to ignore much of it. So, Amer said, given the notion of someone trying to recall Susan's last name, he said, "You have five or more people named Susan

(stored in your memory)," so you have to go through all that to find the correct one. He calls that process "interference." It could also be thought of as a big walk-in closet where you've piled sweaters and other clothes for years. You know you put your favorite blue sweater in there, but finding it takes time. Thomas Laudate, PhD, a clinical neuropsychologist at Tufts Medical Center in Massachusetts, described the concept of older adults' brains having added information to cull through like a photo with "too many pixels." He told Healthline that this theory — he does not see it as proof yet — possibly opens the door to more information on how the brain works as we age and what we can do about that. "It helps give us more information about the underpinning of memories," Laudate said. "It would be inter-



esting (to explore) if there are ways these theories can be applied to enhance memory." Dr. Glen R. Finney, a fellow of the American Academy of Neurology, said the findings are not surprising. "This is something that I have thought of for quite a while," he told Healthline. Several years ago, Finney said, a study showed college students pictures of famous people and timed how long it took them to name the famous person. The students were asked how many people they knew with various first names (including the first names of the famous people).

"The more people that they knew with the same first name as the famous person, the slower they were to retrieve that

name," he said. "This implies that the more you know, the longer it takes to find the specific information you are looking for, which makes sense," Finney noted. "I like to think of it as the price we pay for accumulating wisdom over the years and decades that we live."

Can 'clutter' be good?

Can we clean up our brains to work better around this? And should we? Amer said that as researchers dig deeper, they may also find that that excess information can be a good thing, too. "This is where some emerging evidence shows that this might be helpful," he said. "Sometimes information not retrieved in one (effort) could be useful in another."

Lifestyle coach shares the best ways to consume carrots for maximum health benefits



"Everything in moderation. There is something called toxicity when you over do carrot juice. More doesn't mean better. If it suits you, have it, if not, don't," said lifestyle coach Luke Coutinho

your levels behave," he said.

How to make carrot juice?

"I love carrot juice, not strained, with some fresh or dried parsley (especially good for breast cancers). Add a drop or two of an

extra virgin olive oil or coconut oil.

Build on it by adding beetroot, cucumber, or ginger, garlic, black pepper," he mentioned. However, just like everything else, carrot juice should also be consumed in

moderation. "Everything in moderation. There is something called toxicity when you over do carrot juice. More doesn't mean better. If it suits you, have it, if not, don't," he said.

How to deal with Childhood Emotional Neglect? Expert explains

"Childhood Emotional Neglect (CEN) is so common in our society. Learning to understand your emotions, set boundaries, meet your needs is so important in healing," Nicole captioned her post

(Staff Reporter) Childhood Emotional Neglect (CEN) is when our parents do not respond to our emotions in a healthy way in the childhood, which further leads to difficulty in emotional development in adulthood, leading to improper expressions and self-doubt. Psychologist Nicole LePera, who goes by the name The Holistic Psychologist on Instagram, is known for sharing interesting insights on relationships, emotional development and nu-

ances of human emotions through her posts. A day back, Nicole shared a video of herself addressing the issue of Childhood Emotional Neglect. She said that CEN happens when our parents minimise or do not pay enough attention to the emotions of our childhood. This leads to us having problems when we go on to create new relationships in our adulthood. Nicole further added that there are lot of ways to know if we are suffering from CEN.

(Staff Reporter) Winter vegetables are a must-have to stay healthy and strengthen the immune system. One such winter superfood is the carrot — a root vegetable that promises several health benefits. Lifestyle coach Luke Coutinho recently took to Instagram to share why and how one must incorporate carrots in their daily diet for better health. "Carrots — best consumed whole, chew them, that's good for your teeth, too. Great for the liver also," he said. The best part

about carrots is that you can have them raw or even juice them. "But, if you juice them, drink the juice with the fibre. Don't strain," recommended Coutinho. He also shared that cancer patients should always opt for organic and peeled carrots to reduce any chances of infection. "Make a carrot soup," he said. In case of diabetes, one shouldn't go overboard with carrot juice, he warned. "It's preferable that you eat the whole carrot, or maximum one mug of juice according to how

Madhuri Dixit recalls how a man entered her home pretending to be an electrician

'Hum aapko dekhne aae the'

Madhuri Dixit spoke about an incident when a man entered her home pretending to be an electrician. Here's what happened next

(Staff Reporter) Actor Madhuri Dixit shared an anecdote when she had to call electricians after a switchboard in her home stopped working. The actor shared the reactions of one of the men when she asked him to leave her house.

Madhuri will be seen in The Kapil Sharma Show along with Sanjay Kapoor and Manav Kaul for the promotion of their upcoming series The Fame Game. Speaking to show host Kapil Sharma, Madhuri Dixit said, "Once a switchboard had gone bad in my house and four people came to fix it."

One of them asked her, "Which one needs to be fixed?" She then pointed towards it and asked them to open and check it. She added, "One person opened the box, another person was checking it." Madhuri added, "After it was fixed, I told them, 'It's sorted now you guys can leave'." She enacted the reaction of the technicians as they smiled, nodded and left. Madhuri also said, "Ek aadmi reh gaya peeche, maine bola 'Aap nahi jarahe inke saat' (One person stayed behind so I asked him 'Aren't you not going with them?') He replied, 'Hum inke saath nahi hum toh aapko dekhne aaye hai (I didn't come with them, I came here to see you)'." All of them burst out laughing at the reaction of the man.

Madhuri will be seen next in The Fame Game, an upcoming Netflix series. The Karan Johar-backed series shows Madhuri as Anamika Anand, a Bollywood icon whose life comes under the spotlight after she disappears one day.

Recently during the virtual trailer launch of the show, the 54-year-old actor said she was intrigued by the

premise of the series and was instantly drawn to its world. "I loved the script, loved her journey. It is about fame, what follies and complications can happen when there is fame in your life. It is a story about this woman whose life is seemingly perfect, till she disappeared one day and everyone wonders what happened to her, where she is?" news agency PTI quoted her as saying. "Then, the 'Where is she?' changes to 'Who is she?' Do people know who she is? Does she know herself? Because they all have seen her on the screen, larger than life, (leading a) perfect life with a husband (and) kids. She is perfectly placed in her profession. So what happened to her? I thought it was intriguing. That really fascinated me," Madhuri had said. Filmmaker Sri Rao is the writer of The Fame Game while Bejoy Nambiar and Karishma Kohli are the directors. The series also stars Lakshvir Saran, Suhasini Muley, and Muskaan Jaferi. Produced by Karan, Apoorva Mehta, Somen Mishra, and Dharmatic Entertainment, The Fame Game will premiere on Netflix on February 25.



Kangana Ranaut calls Karan Johar her 'best friend', says she wants to put him in her Lock Upp jail

Kangana Ranaut, who is set to make her debut as a reality show host with Lock Upp, said that she wants to lock up 'best friend' Karan Johar in her jail

(Staff Reporter) Kangana Ranaut is Kapoor," she said. Kangana has been all set to make her digital debut as at loggerheads with Karan after her the host of a reality show titled Lock Upp, which is produced by Ekta Kapoor and will begin streaming on ALTBalaji and MX Player later this month. During the trailer launch in Delhi, she cheekily called Karan Johar her 'best friend'. At the event, Kangana was asked whom she would like to lock up in her jail first. "I would like to



lock up my best friend Karan Johar appearance on Koffee With Karan in ji, in my jail and host him there. Along 2017, in which she called him the with him, I'd even like to put Ekta 'flag-bearer of nepotism' and the

'movie mafia'. She has often accused him of sabotaging the careers of 'outsiders' or those with no film background and promoting star kids instead. Lock Upp, touted to be a 'first-of-its-kind captive reality show', will have 16 celebrities locked up for 72 days and stripped of their amenities. They will be given tasks by Kangana. The audience will have

the power to punish or award their chosen contestants and even play the 'khabri' to some.

Kajol buys two 10th floor apartments in Mumbai's Juhu for 11.95 crore



(Staff Reporter) Actor Kajol has bought two new properties in Mumbai's Juhu's Ananya building. According to a report, the combined cost of the two houses is ₹11.95 crore - both the apartments are said to be located on the 10th floor of the building. Kajol reportedly purchased the house in January, this year. Ananya building is located in the same vicinity as her current house, Shiv Shakti, which is in Juhu. Many celebrities such as Hrithik Roshan, Amitabh Bachchan, Akshay Kumar and others reside in Juhu as well. According to Squarefeetindia, the combined carpet area of both the apartments purchased by Kajol is around 2000 sq ft. The documents of the houses were signed by the name Kajol Vishal Devgan, said the report.

BAPPI LAHIRI

(1952-2022)

The man who brought disco to the mainstream in the '80s, set feet tapping across India

(Staff Reporter) Bappi Lahiri will forever be known as the musician who brought disco to the mainstream and catapulted the rise of it. Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russia of the 80s was crazy about Bappi Lahiri's 'Jimmy Jimmy, aaja aaja', a popular disco pop from Mithun Chakravarty's *Disco Dancer*. The largest country in the world, starved of any 'western' popular culture, heard and grooved to Lahiri's version of the disco, which came with glittery bell bottoms, hundreds of twinkling light bulbs, pelvic moves accompanied by synths, horns, rhythm guitars and syn-copated basslines.

Lahiri, 69, who heralded disco pop and ruled the 70s and 80s with a string of chart-topping songs in India, passed away in Mumbai on Tuesday of obstructive sleep apnea. The singer had been in the hospital for almost a month and had returned home on Monday. He is survived by son Bappa Lahiri and daughter

Rema Lahiri. Lahiri's music came from his parents who he grew up listening to – Bengali singers Aparesh Lahiri and Bansuri Lahiri – in Jalpaiguri in West Bengal, and his maternal uncle, actor and playback singer Kishore Kumar. After learning the basics of classical music from his parents, including some training in tabla, Lahiri moved to Mumbai when he was 19 and began creating music in an industry, which at the time was under the influence of the melodies from RD Burman, Laxmikant-Pyarelal and Kalyanji-Anandji, among others.

He may have begun his career with compositions for Bengali film *Daadu*, but his Bollywood debut came two years after he set foot in Mumbai with *Nanha Shikari* (1973) starring actors Deb Mukherjee and Tanuja. Directed by Tanuja's husband Shomu Mukherjee, the film didn't do too well on the musical charts. After a few unsuccessful attempts, Lahiri fi-

nally hit it out of the park with three films in three years – *Zakhmee* (1975), *Chalte Chalte* (1976) and *Aapki Khair* (1977).

While 'Aao tumhe chand pe le jaayen' (*Zakhmee*) sung by Lata Mangeshkar was noticed, it was Asha Bhosle and Kishore Kumar's 'Jalta hai jiya mera' that had the nation swinging to it. Then came 'Kabhi alvida na kehna', the title song for *Chalte Chalte* that was to become the farewell song for years to come followed by the fun 'Bambai se aaya mera dost'.

But Lahiri was yet to hit his commercial peak. That came in the 80s. Besides the chartbusting hits of *Disco Dancer* (1982), there was *Namak Halal* (1982), *Himmatwala* (1983) and *Sharaabi* (1983). Much of Amitabh Bachchan's film success in the 80s can also be credited to Lahiri and his unique songs such as 'De de pyaar de' and 'Ke paghunghroo baandh'. These songs had unique personali-

ties and extended themselves to the actors that portrayed them. Then there was 'Kaliyon ka chaman' (Jyoti, 1981), the Lata Mangeshkar song which became more famous as a remix in the 2000s. Lahiri's range also extended to ghazals, a genre that rose to popularity in the 80s in India. His composition 'Kisi nazar ko' (Aitbaar, 1985) is still celebrated for being one of the finest film ghazals. Lahiri also enjoyed singing and sang often for himself as well as other composers. 'Yaar bina chain' (Saaheb), remains one of his most popular ones, apart from 'Ooh la la' (*The Dirty Picture*) and 'Bambai nagariya' (*Taxi no 9211*) both of whom were composed by composer duo

Vishal-Shekhar. While the 80s aren't considered the finest years in terms of Hindi cinema music, Lahiri's melodies were incalculably influential, turning him into a pioneer of disco in India. He was the first Indian composer to make it to the Grammy Jury in 2012 and had a brief stint with politics. He joined the BJP in 2014 and fought the Lok Sabha election but lost. But Lahiri will forever be known as the musician who brought disco to the mainstream and catapulted the rise of it.

If one were still to visit Russia and sing 'Jimmy Jimmy', the Russians are likely to reply with 'Aaja aaja'. And that's the impact Lahiri leaves us behind with.





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