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How Kamala Harris can save her Vice Presidency?



Harris cannot be blamed for all of this. The last three Democratic presidents before Biden were relative newcomers to Washington who chose running mates with much more Washington, DC, experience -- specifically with Congress -- the reverse of the situation Harris finds herself in. That experience allowed Vice Presidents Walter Mondale, Al Gore and Joe Biden to become indispensable advisers on navigating Congress to Presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, respectively. No such dynamic could ever exist between Harris and Biden because the President has almost half a century of experience in Washington.

(Contd on page 36)

(SAI Bureau)-Since taking office in January, Vice President Kamala Harris has struggled to find her role in the administration and win the approval of the American

people. These problems have only gotten worse in recent weeks as stories about clashes between her staff and that of the President's have made the depth of the problem clear.

US travel advisory flags rape in India

Asks American visitors to exercise 'increased caution'



(SAI Bureau)- In its latest travel advisory for American travellers coming to India, the US has highlighted "rape" as a major concern, thereby putting India in the 'Level 2' category of travel destinations. The advisory, which was issued by the Bureau of Consular Affairs at the US State Department on 15 November, has asked American travellers to exercise

(Contd on page 36)

Ice on the edge of survival: Warming is changing the Arctic



(SAI Bureau)-While conducting research in Greenland, ice scientist Twila Moon was struck this summer by what climate change has doomed Earth to lose and what could still be saved.

The Arctic is warming three times faster than the rest of the planet and is on such a knife's

(Contd on page 33)

US Hindu Group Accused Of "Exploiting Labourers Lured From India": Report



(SAI Bureau)-A prominent Hindu organisation is facing new allegations in an updated lawsuit that it lured labourers from India and forced hundreds of workers to work for low wages at its temple sites across the United States.

were confined and forced to work for about USD 1 on constructing the massive Swaminarayan temple in New Jersey.

The New York Times said in a report on Wednesday that in the lawsuit

(Contd on page 34)

Inflation

The sleeping monster awakes



(SAI Bureau)-In 1919, the English economist John Maynard Keynes called inflation a means by which "governments can confiscate, secretly and unobserved, an important part of the wealth of their citizens." If allowed to run out of control, the falling value of currency turns "the process of wealth-getting...into a gamble and a lottery."

His warning came four years before inflation reached ruinous levels in the Weimar Republic, upending millions of lives and reducing the value of German

(Contd on page 34)



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Indian-Origin Ex Army Officer In Singapore To Lose Retirement Benefits For Drunk Driving

(Insider Bureau)-A retired Indian-origin military officer in Singapore who was given a week's jail sentence for drinking and driving, but appealed for a fine instead to save his retirement benefits, lost his plea on Thursday with the Supreme Court saying that future consequences that an offender may face cannot be taken into account in sentencing.

M Raveendran, a retired Singapore Armed Forces warrant officer, appealed against a week's jail for drink

driving seeking a fine instead, arguing that he risked losing a payout amounting to SGD 273,694 (Rs 1.5 crore) he was entitled to get upon retirement if a custodial sentence was imposed.

Rejecting the argument, Singapore Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon said downstream consequences that could befall an offender cannot be taken into account in sentencing. "Taking account of extrinsic factors could result in a fundamental assault on the criminal justice system," the

Indian-origin top judge said in his written grounds.

"If the court were to place weight on factors such as the financial consequences of a particular sentence, and reduce an offender's sentence on that basis, it would result in the more favourable treatment of certain individuals," Mr Menon explained in the case involving the 55-year-old Raveendran.

However, the chief justice cut Raveendran's jail term to five days after comparing the facts of the case with those of similar cases in the past, according to

a report by The Straits Times. On midnight of September 9, 2018, Raveendran was driving home after having beer with friends but lost control of his car which mounted the centre divider and hit the guard railings. He also failed the on-site preliminary breath test. A further test at the police station showed that he had 91 micrograms of alcohol per 100 ml of breath, which exceeded the prescribed limit of 35 micrograms. Raveendran later footed the bill of SGD 1,438.50 for repairs to the railings.

Indian-American Police Officer, 38, Critically Wounded In Dispute: Report

A 38-year-old Indian-American police officer was critically injured after a person fired at him and fled the scene while he was responding to a domestic dispute in the US state of Georgia, according to media reports on Monday.

Investigators in Georgia and NBA (National Basketball Association) Hall of Famer Shaquille O'Neal have offered a USD 30,000 reward for any information on the suspect who shot and wounded Paramhans Desai last week, abcnews.com reported.

Henry County Police Officer Desai was responding to a domestic disturbance on Thursday last and was attempting



to make an arrest when Jordan Jackson, 22, of McDonough, Georgia, allegedly shot at him and fled the scene in a car, the report

said, quoting a statement issued by the Henry County Police Department. Officer Desai was taken to Grady Medical Centre and was listed in critical, but stable condition on Sunday, police said. Officer Desai is married and has two children. He has been with the Henry County Police department for two years and previously worked for the Georgia Department of Corrections and DeKalb County Police, the report said, quoting police.

According to local news portal

fox5atlanta.com, officer Desai, a 17-year law enforcement veteran, was shot by Jackson while responding to a 911 call on Keys Ferry Road. Police announced a USD 30,000 reward leading to the successful arrest and indictment of Jackson. Henry County Sheriff's Office and the US Marshall's Service each put up USD 10,000 and Crime Stoppers Greater Atlanta and O'Neal, who took a role with the sheriff's office as director of community relations earlier this year, each contributing USD 5,000, the report said.

4 Sons Of S African Indian-Origin Trader Returned 3 Weeks After Kidnapping



(Insider Bureau)-The four young sons of a South African Indian-origin businessman have been safely returned to their parents after they were abducted on their way to school three weeks ago by armed gunmen. Police confirmed that Zidan (who turned 7 on Saturday while in captivity), Zayyad, 11, Alaan, 13, and Zia, 15, the sons of businessman Nazim Moti, who is based in Polokwane, were found unharmed and in good spirits on Wednesday evening. The boys were abducted by seven armed men wearing white overalls in two vehicles that blocked the car they were travelling in on their way to school on October 21. The driver was left unharmed.

Police spokesman Vish Naidoo said police received a call from residents of Tshwane in Pretoria, who said the four children arrived at their house, saying that they were dropped off at a road nearby.

The children were first medically examined before being handed over to their ecstatic parents.

"The doctor said they were in good health and our observation when they were handed back to their parents was that they were in very high spirits," Naidoo said, adding that a team of forensic and clinical psychologists would visit the family on Thursday to interview the boys to see what information they could provide.

Naidoo said they did not want to exhaust the children too much after their ordeal.

"The important thing now is to see what information we can get from them to help us in tracing and successfully arresting those that were responsible for this kidnapping," Naidoo said.

Naidoo dismissed suggestions that the police had been unable to make headway in the case as people across the country prayed for the safe return of the boys.

BSF refutes TMC MLA's molestation charges, says 'misdemeanour is not taken lightly'

The Border Security Force (BSF) has refuted the charge that its personnel molested women during frisking. A day after TMC leader and West Bengal MLA Udayan Guha levelled the allegation, YB Khurania, the additional director general (ADG) of the BSF's Eastern Command said "no misdemeanour was taken lightly".

The BSF is a disciplined force with a zero tolerance policy on such issues, Khurania said. Khurania said whenever any complaint was made or the force came to know of such cases, strict action was taken.

"The BSF is a disciplined force. Any act of misdemeanour is not taken lightly. If proven, stringent action is taken. Whenever such an incident takes place, we enquire and give information to the police. We have a zero-tolerance policy on such matters," Khurania said on Wednesday.



Earlier, during discussion in the West Bengal Assembly on a resolution against extension of the BSF's jurisdiction, TMC's Udayan Guha said: "When women cross the border, BSF personnel in the name of frisking, touch them inappropriately. No matter how

much they say 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', they can't be patriotic."

The BSF was quick to dismiss the charge, saying it was "a professional force that has always performed the mandated duties by adhering to the rules and regulations". It said: "The BSF

Mahila Praharis are the ones who do frisking of women. The allegations of inappropriately touching women by BSF personnel are utterly baseless." Khurania said the eastern command of the BSF had 4,000 women as praharis

for frisking women during security checks. "It is unfortunate that such things are said. Every allegation is taken seriously," Khurania said.

The state assembly of West Bengal, ruled by the TMC, a rival of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that rules the Centre, passed the resolution to oppose extension of the BSF's jurisdiction from 15 km to 50 km from the border. Before adopting the resolution by the West Bengal Assembly, TMC leaders criticised the Centre, alleging that the Central government was usurping the powers of the state using the BSF. BSF ADG Khurania refuted the claim, saying the force would hand over miscreants to the local administration for enquiry. He said: "Even after the notification, the BSF was not given more powers than it enjoyed before its territorial jurisdiction was expanded."



Singapore Sentences Second Malaysian-Indian To Death For Drug Trafficking



Munusamy Ramarmurth, a cleaning supervisor, was convicted by the Singapore High Court last Wednesday after he was caught with a bag of drugs in his motorcycle parked along Harbourfront Avenue

A 39-year-old Indian origin Malaysian who was caught with a bag of drugs in 2018 has been sentenced to death by a Singapore court for trafficking. The death sentence comes within weeks as another drug trafficker, a 33-year old Malaysian Indian, awaits the outcome of his last ditch appeal to be spared the gallows while his hanging, originally scheduled for November 10, has been stayed due to COVID-19 infection.

Munusamy Ramarmurth, a cleaning supervisor, was convicted by the High Court last Wednesday. He was caught with a bag of drugs in his motorcycle parked along Harbourfront Avenue, according to media reports.

He was caught with 6.3kg of a granular substance, which was found to contain 57.54g of heroin after analysis.

Justice Audrey Lim, in written grounds issued on Monday, explained her decision to convict Munusamy, saying she disbelieved his contention that he thought the bag contained stolen mobile phones.

The judge also rejected his claim that he had allowed a compatriot to store the bag temporarily in the rear box of his motorcycle so that another man could collect it later.

The law provides for the death

penalty if the amount of heroin trafficked is more than 15g.

In her 42-page grounds, Justice Lim also rapped investigating officer (IO) Derek Wong for prompting a witness on the stand during the trial, conduct that the judge said was "inappropriate and unacceptable".

"Attempting to prompt a witness who is testifying, even on a point which may turn out to be immaterial or inconsequential, is improper and unbefitting of an enforcement officer," The Straits Times quoted Justice Lim as saying.

The IO had signalled to Sergeant Mohammad Nasrulhaq on two occasions.

He picked up a field diary and showed it to Sergeant Nasrulhaq when the latter was being asked about whether the handover of a duffel bag was recorded.

He also mouthed the word "diamorphine" when Sergeant Nasrulhaq was asked by the court what the term "heroin" refers to.

The judge said that while the IO's conduct did not prejudice Munusamy's case, the same might not be said in other instances.

Justice Lim said she had directed the Public Prosecutor to raise the matter to the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) to take appropriate measures, and to ensure that

officers who are involved in investigations are properly briefed and made aware of the boundaries of their conduct in relation to cases pending in court.

Munusamy, who has worked in Singapore for 14 years, was arrested on the afternoon of January 26, 2018, in the cleaners' room at Harbourfront Centre Tower 2.

He was then escorted to his motorcycle parked at the open-air carpark at Keppel Bay Tower. A red plastic bag, containing bundles of drugs, was found in the rear box of his bike.

During his trial, Munusamy said he had allowed a Malaysian named Saravanan to store the bag temporarily in the box. He said Saravanan told him someone known as "Boy" would collect it.

Munusamy claimed that he thought the bag contained stolen mobile phones because in July 2017, Saravanan and Boy had asked him to help store some stolen phones in the box.

He said Saravanan told him the items in the bag were "panas". Munusamy said the term meant "stolen item" although his lawyer, Mahadevan Lukshumayeh, did not dispute that it could also refer to illegal drugs.

Justice Lim concluded that

Munusamy's story was made up. "I found his claim that he thought the red bag contained handphones or stolen handphones was an afterthought which emerged only at the trial," said the judge.

She noted that in his statements to Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), Munusamy made no mention of the alleged July 2017 incident or that the bag would be collected by someone later.

On the contrary, the judge found, Munusamy knew what was in the bag.

She noted that he knew Saravanan was involved in drug activities, yet he did not check the contents of the bag.

Under the law, the court has the discretion not to impose the death penalty if the prosecution certifies that a drug courier had substantively assisted CNB in disrupting drug activities.

"As the prosecution did not issue him with a certificate of substantive assistance... I passed the mandatory death sentence on him," said Justice Lim.

Meanwhile, Sarmila Dharmalingam, the sister, has urged Singapore to "give him a second chance" to his brother Nagaenthran K. Dharmalingam who is facing imminent execution despite concerns he is mentally disabled.

Indian-Origin Vicar Appointed Bishop In Central England



An Indian-origin vicar who grew up in the Syrian Orthodox Church in South India has been appointed as the new Bishop of Loughborough, in central England.

The Reverend Malayil Lukose Varghese Muthalaly, known as Saju, is the Vicar of St. Mark's Gillingham, in the Diocese of Rochester - southern England. His appointment to the Diocese of Leicester has been approved by Queen Elizabeth II, according to a Downing Street announcement on Friday.

"The Queen has approved the nomination of The Reverend Malayil Lukose Varghese Muthalaly (known as Saju), Vicar of St Mark's Gillingham, in the Diocese of Rochester, to the Suffragan See of Loughborough, in the Diocese of Leicester, in succession to The Right Reverend Dr Gulnar Francis-Dehqani following her translation to the See of Chelmsford," reads the announcement.

Saju, from Kerala, was educated at the Southern Asia Bible College in Bangalore and trained for ministry at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. He served his title at St Thomas', Lancaster in the Diocese of Blackburn and was ordained Priest in the Church of England in 2009.

According to 'The Church Times', it is understood that he will be the youngest bishop in the Church of England when he is consecrated next year at the age of 42.

"If I have felt anointed in anything, it is in forming friendships, gathering God's people, and creating hospitable and loving spaces in which people can grow in faith, hope, justice and love. I have a deep desire for the flourishing of all people, particularly the poor, those at the margins of our world," Saju was quoted by the paper as saying.



Top commander of The Resistance Front, 4 others killed in encounter in J&K's Kulgam

(News Agencies) -Five militants, including the commander of terror outfit The Resistance Front (TRF), were killed during an encounter with security forces in Pombay and Gopalpora villages of Kulgam district in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday. While three militants were killed in Pombay, two were killed in Gopalpora.

Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Gopalpora area, following inputs about the presence of militants, PTI reported. After the militants fired upon a party of security forces, they retaliated. In the ensuing encounter, two militants were killed.

Afaq Sikander Lone, the militant commander of proscribed terror outfit The

Resistance Front, was killed by the security forces in Gopalpora. Another TRF member, Irfan Musthaq Lone, was killed in the encounter. "Terrorist Commander of proscribed terror outfit TRF Afaq Sikander killed in encounter," Inspector General of Police (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar said in a tweet.

Further, the security forces in Pulwama apprehended two

active terrorist associates of proscribed terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba. Pulwama resident Amir Bashir Dar and Shopian resident Mukhtar Ahmad Bhat were held by the forces. Two ready-to-use IED's were recovered from their possession.

On Monday, two terrorists were killed in a brief encounter with security forces in Hyderpora area of Srinagar.

CBI arrests 3, detains over a dozen for circulating online child sexual abuse material



The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested three people from Delhi for their alleged role in online child sexual abuse and exploitation, officials told India Today. India Today has learnt that at least a dozen other suspects have been detained by the CBI, out of which few of them will be arrested soon.

The arrests were made by the CBI after a nationwide crackdown against sexual abuse of children in which over 77 premises in 14 states were raided by officials on Tuesday.

Purushottam Jha, Raman Gautam and Satyendra Mittal were placed under arrested by the CBI based on the evidence gathered against them by the officials during the raids, sources said.

The CBI has unearthed international rackets with nationals of over 100 countries involved in online child sexual abuse after it initiated a crackdown on Tuesday. The officials also found that over 50 groups with 5,000 offenders from over 100 countries including Pakistan, Canada, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, USA, Azerbaijan, UK, Belgium and Yemen were involved in sexual abuse against children through online platforms.

"It has been alleged that various syndicates of individuals based in different parts of India and foreign countries were indulging in circulating, storing & viewing Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM) through various social media platforms and groups. It was also alleged that persons were disseminating CSEM by way of sharing links, videos, pictures, texts, posts and hosting of such content on social media groups or platforms and third party storage or hosting platforms," said a CBI officer.

Nearly a week after being held captive, sub-engineer released by Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur

(News Agencies) -A sub-engineer in Chhattisgarh was released by Maoists on Wednesday, almost a week after he and a government peon were abducted, while they were surveying an under-construction road at Bastar region in insurgency-hit Bijapur district.

Sub-engineer Ajay Lakra (35) and peon Lakshman Partagiri had gone missing on November 11. Ajay Lakra works for the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY). While the peon was released last week, the sub-

engineer was held captive by the Maoists. Following a 'Jan Adalat',



Ajay Lakra was released today

at Gangloor Road in the afternoon, a senior police officer said. During the release, his wife Arpita Lakra was also present.

However, it is still not clear whether Lakra was assaulted or threatened by the ultras, he said, adding that the sub-engineer will be subjected to medical examination once he reaches the district headquarters.

For nearly a week, journalists and civil society groups working in the Bastar region were

pursuing Maoists to release the sub-engineer. Lakra and his department's peon Lakshman Partagiri (24) went missing on November 11 when they had gone to conduct a survey of a road being built on a 15-km stretch between Bijapur town and Gorna-Mankeli. As the duo did not return to Bijapur district headquarter the next day, a search was launched and later, the police confirmed that they had been abducted by Naxals from Kanhaiguda village. Partagiri was freed by Naxals two days later. '



Maharashtra violence



Cyber Cell lists 36 social media posts for spreading 'misinformation'

(News Agencies) -Fake news Police has said.

shared on social media was responsible for the recent incidents of violence in some areas of Maharashtra, the Cyber Cell Department of Maharashtra

In a report submitted to the state home department, the Cyber Cell Department has listed a total of 36 social media posts -- 25 on Twitter, six on Facebook and five

on Instagram -- that spread 'misinformation'.

On November 12, stone-pelting took place during the rallies taken out by some Muslim organisations in Maharashtra in

protest against the purported communal violence in Tripura.

The incidents mainly occurred in Amravati, Malegaon and Nanded city.

At least ten police personnel,

including three officers, were injured in Malegaon. In Nanded city, eight police personnel had sustained injuries, a police official said, adding that the mob had damaged four police vehicles. In Amravati, over 8,000 people had gathered outside the district collector's office on Friday to submit a memorandum demanding that atrocities against the minority community be stopped.

When people were leaving, stone-pelting took place at three places between Chitra Chowk and Cotton Market under the limits of the Kotwali police station.

On Saturday, a mob hurled stones at shops in Amravati's Rajkamal Chowk area during a bandh called by the BJP, prompting the police to impose a curfew.

The rallies were organised by Raza Academy, a radical Muslim outfit that publishes literature by Sunni scholars. Maharashtra Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil said the protest rallies by the Raza Academy were illegal as they were given permission only for submitting memorandums, not for taking out a march.



Geeta Sexena
Bureau Chief (Punjab))

Gagandeep Singh
Deputy News Editor

Sharanjit Singh Thind
Editor in Chief

Susmita Ghosh
Deputy Managing Editor





PM Modi inaugurates 82nd All India Presiding Officers Conference in Shimla

PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the 82nd All India Presiding Officers Conference in Shimla. While inaugurating, the Prime Minister said democracy is not just a system for India, it is ingrained in our nature and a part of life.

(News Agencies) -Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 82nd All India Presiding Officers Conference (AIPOC) in Shimla on Wednesday. While inaugurating the conference, the PM said democracy is not just a system for India. Democracy is ingrained in our nature and part of life in India.

He said: "We have to take the country to newer heights, achieve extraordinary goals in the years to come. These resolutions will be fulfilled only by 'Sabka Prayas'."

Highlighting the role of states in the federal system, the PM mentioned that when we talk about 'Sabka Prayas', "the role of all the states is a big basis for that". Citing India's successful fight against Covid-19, the PM said, "Many such works in the country have been done in the past few years, and they have been done by everyone's efforts."

Emphasizing that the traditions and

systems of houses of our legislatures should be inherently Indian, the Prime Minister called for policies and laws of the government to strengthen 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'.

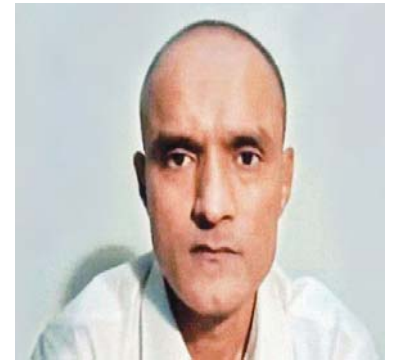
"Our own conduct in the house should be according to Indian values. It is all our responsibility," said the Prime Minister. Referring to India's diversity, the PM said, "We need to cherish and preserve this unbroken stream of unity. The Prime Minister asked whether 3-4 days in a year could be reserved in the house, for the public representatives, doing something special for society."

Addressing the delegates, Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla, said that the objective of the legislative institutions is to ensure active participation of the people and their representatives towards making progressive legislation so that positive socio-economic changes can be brought to the lives of the people.

At AIPOC, Birla said: "There have been consistent discussions on issues related to maintaining an ideal balance between the three organs of the state in their respective roles, making legislative bodies more efficient and effective, changing the rules and procedures of legislative bodies so that these bodies emerge as effective platforms for fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people, and democracy is strengthened."

Expressing concern over the decreasing number of sittings of the legislatures and lack of quality discussion in the legislatures and referring to Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, Birla called upon the legislative bodies to frame a model document with a commitment so that when the country celebrates one hundred years of independence, there will be uniformity in the rules and procedures of all legislatures across the nation.

Kulbhushan Jadhav gets right to appeal, Pakistan enacts law to implement ICJ ruling



(News Agencies) -In a joint sitting, the parliament of Pakistan passed a Bill to grant Kulbhushan Jadhav --- a 50-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, who was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017 --- the right to appeal as per the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The Pakistan National Assembly had on June 10 (Thursday) adopted the Bill to give the right of appeal to Indian prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav in regard to the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) ruling.

The ICJ ruling had directed the assembly to give it an "effective review and reconsideration".

In 2020, the Imran Khan-led Pakistan government presented an ordinance in the National Assembly in view of the ICJ's ruling in the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav, despite protests by the Opposition parties.

The 'International Court of Justice Review and Reconsideration Ordinance 2020' was enacted on May 20 last year.

Kulbhushan Jadhav Case
Kulbhushan Jadhav, a 50-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

Hyderabad court acquits AIMIM MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi in 2004 hate speech case

(News Agencies) -All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader and MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi has been acquitted by a special court in Hyderabad in connection with a "hate" speech case registered against him in 2004.

On Tuesday, the Special Sessions Court for the trial

of MPs/MLAs acquitted Akbaruddin Owaisi after it found him not guilty of the offences/allegations against him.

Chandrayangutta MLA Akbaruddin had allegedly made a "communally inciting speech" at a public meeting in 2004 during election campaigning. Following this, a case was registered under

relevant IPC sections against him on a complaint from a police official, saying he tried to instigate the public.

He was booked by the Chandrayangutta police under Sections 153 A (Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion), Section 188 (disobedience to order duly

promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code and Section 125 of Representation of the People Act (Promoting enmity between different classes), the Times of India reported.

Later, the city police wrote to the government seeking permission to prosecute Akbaruddin Owaisi.

Subsequently, a charge-sheet was filed by police after the Andhra Pradesh government gave permission to prosecute Akbaruddin Owaisi.

After hearing arguments and counter arguments on Tuesday, the court acquitted Akbaruddin Owaisi for lack of evidence as no independent witness supported the case.

Boost to firepower:

Indian Navy to get stealth-guided missile destroyer, submarine

Indigenous stealth-guided missile destroyer Visakhapatnam and submarine Vela will be commissioned into the Indian Navy on November 21 and 24, respectively, in Mumbai

(News Agencies) -The Indian Navy's firepower will get a boost with a new warship and a submarine all set to be commissioned this month. Visakhapatnam, an indigenous stealth-guided missile destroyer and submarine Vela, also made in India, will be commissioned on November 21 and 24 respectively in Mumbai. The latest additions to the Indian Navy come as the force is ramping up its capabilities for the emerging challenges including China's increased presence in the Indian Ocean region.

Speaking about the significance of these new platforms, Vice Admiral SN Ghormade said the maritime environment is a complex one and it only

increases with more players involved.

Without naming China, Vice Admiral Ghormade said, "We live in a time when global and regional balances of power are shifting rapidly and the region of most rapid change is undoubtedly the Indian Ocean region. Continuous efforts are, therefore, on to ensure that our force levels grow progressively to enhance the capability of Indian Navy to meet the emerging challenges."

Vice Admiral Ghormade added that commissioning of 'Visakhapatnam' and 'Vela' are major milestones showcasing the indigenous capacity to build complex combat platforms.

"This will enhance our capacity and fire power to address the

threats both in the above water and underwater domains," he said.

Visakhapatnam

Visakhapatnam is the first of the four ships of this category which are a follow up of the Kolkata class destroyers. These are named after major cities of the country, Visakhapatnam, Mormugao, Imphal and Surat. By February 2023, Mormugao is expected to be commissioned followed by Imphal in 2024 and Surat in 2025. The overall indigenous content of the project is approximately 75 per cent.

The ship measures 163m in length, 17m in breadth with a displacement of 7,400 tonnes and can be regarded as one of the most potent warships to

have been constructed in India. The destroyer is packed with sophisticated 'state of the art' weapons and sensors such as Surface to Surface Missile and Surface to Air Missiles. It is fitted with a modern Surveillance Radar which provides target data to the gunnery weapon systems of the ship. The ship's Anti Submarine Warfare capabilities are provided by the indigenously developed Rocket Launchers, Torpedo Launchers and ASW helicopters. The ship is equipped to fight under Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) warfare conditions.

The construction of the ship is under the Project 15 B plan which has a thrust on better

surveillance radars, enhanced capabilities of electronic warfare and superior stealth characteristics.

Submarine Vela

Submarine Vela is the fourth submarine of the Kalvari Class under Project 75 that includes the construction of six submarines of Scorpene design. These submarines are being constructed at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) Mumbai, in collaboration with M/s Naval Group, France.

Three submarines under Project 75 that are functional are INS Karanj, INS Kalvari and INS Khandari. INS Vagir was launched last year and the sixth one, INS Vagsheer, is under construction.

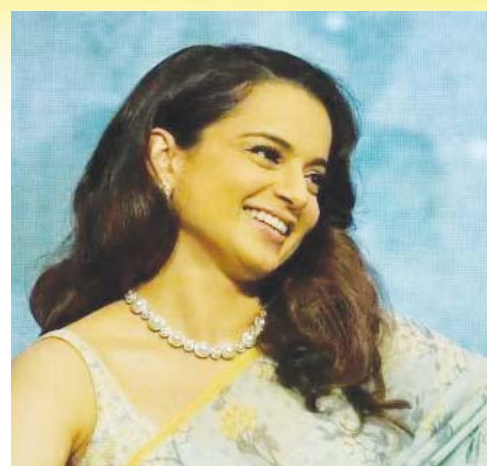
Mumbai AAP leader sends legal notice to Kangana over her 'bheek' remark

(News Agencies) -Mumbai Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Kashinath Kalmadarga has sent a legal notice to actor Kangana Ranaut over her recent "bheek" remark in relation to India's Independence.

Kalmadarga, the joint secretary of AAP's Mumbai unit, and son of a freedom fighter, on Wednesday said he has sent the notice to Ranaut.

In a statement, he said: "My father, Vitthalrao Kalmadarga was a freedom fighter, who dedicated his whole life to the freedom struggle in order to uproot the oppression of the British rule. This abominable statement (by Ranaut) insults and discredits the Indian freedom struggle and its revered leaders."

"The AAP has sent a letter to Maharashtra Chief Minister



(Uddhava Thackeray), requesting him to apply to the Union government for the withdrawal of her civilian award," he said.

Ranaut, who was recently given the Padma Shri award, started a controversy for

declaring that India attained "real freedom" in 1947, when the Modi-led government came to power. She had described India's Independence in 1947 as "bheek" or alms.

Last week, AAP leader Preeti Sharma Menon had submitted an application to the Mumbai Police, requesting action against Ranaut for her "seditious and inflammatory statements".



Did you pay bribes for postings, Rajasthan CM asks teachers; here's how they responded

Rajasthan's education minister Govind Singh Dotasra was left red-faced on Tuesday after several teachers told CM Ashok Gehlot in his presence that they had to pay bribes for postings.

(News Agencies) - Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot left his own education minister and state Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra red-faced on Tuesday.

Addressing a state-level programme to honour teachers at Birla Auditorium in Jaipur, the Chief Minister asked educators whether they were asked for bribes in exchange for approval of transfers or

postings.

Several teachers responded to CM Gehlot's question by raising their hands to reply in the affirmative.

An embarrassed Dotasra, while addressing the teachers, thereafter, said, "Because sir raised the issue, if anyone from my staff even asked for a cup of tea, then tell me. The education policy was brought under me and sir [CM Gehlot] brought

[corruption in postings] to a complete end."

#WATCH | Rajasthan Minister for School Education, Govind Singh Dotasra says, "...CM wanted to indicate that people pay money. It will be scrapped with the implementation of a policy for the transfer of teachers during the tenure of CM and me." pic.twitter.com/PLAn5cgjbY

While the exchange left Govind

Singh Dotasra red-faced, it could also provide ammunition to the opposition BJP that has sought to corner the ruling Congress over alleged irregularities in the 2021 Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers.

Just last month, BJP MLA Ramlal Sharma had demanded education minister Dotasra's resignation over the alleged 'irregularities'. The BJP even sought a CBI probe into the

matter, accusing a Congress worker of overseeing the 'irregularities'.

Congress MLA and former deputy CM Sachin Pilot, while denying the claims, had promised strict action against anyone found responsible.

Interestingly, the programme on Tuesday was held at a time when speculation is rife about a possible reshuffle of CM Ashok Gehlot's Cabinet

Govt has no collective record of internet shutdowns, says report by Parliamentary Standing Committee

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology adopted a report on the suspension of telecom services, the internet and its impact on Tuesday.

Interestingly, sources said the report mentioned how the government of India has no collective record of how many internet shut downs have taken place in the country.

Sources added the report makes



strong observations of the lack of data and has now suggested a mechanism to collect data on internet shutdowns to understand its effect.

Another strong observation made in the report is how there is no set of guidelines for the implementation of the internet shutdowns.

Sources say the two examples mentioned in the report also talk about the full restoration of the

internet in Jammu and Kashmir, which took almost 18 months and further the kind of impact it has had on economies of the regions where the internet is shutdown.

The report was adopted after multiple review meetings, which were held with the officials of the Home Ministry and Telecom department, state police, trader associations and organisations working towards freedom of the internet.

**It's a fair probe, say
Bengaluru cops to
Congress claims of
'irregularities' in Bitcoin
scam investigation**



Bengaluru: In a reply to the Congress party's allegations of irregularities in the multi-crore bitcoin scam, Bengaluru police in a statement claimed that the investigation was carried out "in a fair and professional manner". The statement released by Commissioner of Police Kamal Pant's office read: "Since distorted reports have appeared in the media about the bitcoin case, it is stated that the investigation conducted by CCB was fair and held in a professional manner. It is to emphatically state that such misleading versions are being floated based on incomplete/distorted facts. All such versions are vehemently denied."

Further, the commissioner claimed that the investigation was conducted by a team of professionals under close supervision and in continuous consultation with reputed experts without any external influence or interference.

SRIKRISHNA CONFESSES TO HACKING CRYPTO-CURRENCY WEBSITES

Pant claims that it was during an investigation of the seizure of 500 gms of Hydro Ganja consignment that 10 accused persons, including Srikrishna, were arrested.

During the investigation, Srikrishna confessed to his involvement in the alleged hacking of many crypto-currency websites.

The police chief stated that neither any Bitcoins were transferred from Srikrishna's account nor was any Bitcoin lost. He said that for the purpose of investigation, a government account was obtained. The accused, Srikrishna, showed a wallet which contained 31.8 Bitcoins and the wallet password was changed in the presence of cyber experts.

"Government panchas, and the entire procedure was recorded and submitted to Hon'ble court," the commissioner stated.



As woman, such comment is wrong:

Priyanka slams Smriti Irani over 'ghar par ladka' remark on Rahul Gandhi

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday slammed Union Minister Smriti Irani over her "ghar par ladka hai par lad nahi sakta" remark on Rahul Gandhi, saying that she should not make such statements being a woman herself.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday hit out at BJP leader and Union Minister Smriti Irani over her 'ghar par ladka hai' remark on Rahul Gandhi, saying that she should not have made such statements being a woman herself. Smriti Irani had made the comment on Rahul Gandhi in response to his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's 'ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon' (I am a girl and can fight) slogan, which she had coined for the grand old party for the 2022 Assembly election in Uttar Pradesh.

"Smriti Irani's comment on Rahul Gandhi that 'ghar par ladka hai par lad nahin sakta' (There is a boy at home who cannot fight) is wrong. Being a woman, such a statement is incorrect. Instead, she should encourage women by saying that they should fight for themselves," Priyanka Gandhi

Vadra said.

Priyanka Gandhi exhorts women to support Congress. Meanwhile, Priyanka Gandhi exhorted women to support Congress in the upcoming UP polls, while asking them why to help a government which is doing nothing for them.

She urged women to participate in politics, recognise their power and stand against atrocities in society.

"I have come here to talk to you as you have to make up your mind. You are half the population, raise your voice. Come together and seek your rights in politics," she exhorted women.

"Why are you helping the government, which is doing nothing for you?" she asked.

"If a woman is contesting, close your eyes and vote for her without thinking anything else at the time of voting as she will keep standing for you and will

be along with you in your struggle," Priyanka Gandhi said, seeking support apparently for female Congress candidates.

Referring to her party's resolve of giving 40 per cent tickets to women, she said, "Your participation in politics is definite, the initiative that has been taken by the Congress cannot be reversed, women fighting in elections will bring a change in politics and society." "No political party will be able to stop them, all will have to take the same initiative and give women their rights," she asserted.

Jibe at UP govt, SP

Responding to the war-of-words between the Yogi Adityanath-led government and SP president Akhilesh Yadav over taking credit for building the Purvanchal Expressway, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said that there should be a change

and people should stand up for their issues which they are facing.

"Whoever wants to do politics, let them do it. We have brought the message that there should be a change. People have to stand up for their own problems and needs. They should fight for themselves," she stated.

The Congress leader urged the people of Bundelkhand to bring change in the nature of politics.

"My message for Bundelkhand is to bring change because of the way politics is happening, the way farmers are being crushed. Even Dalits and women are not being spared. All such things are wrong," she further said.

Meanwhile, Priyanka Gandhi also visited the Kamtanath Temple in Chitrakoot to offer prayers and left a comment in the visitor's book, saying "It is my privilege to come to the holy land of Chitrakoot."



Telangana uses drones to inspect power lines and towers, project expected to be scaled up

The Telangana government on Tuesday announced that it had successfully completed a pilot project that sought to explore the use of drones for inspection of power lines and towers. The project is expected to be scaled up soon.

The Telangana government on Tuesday announced that it had successfully completed a pilot project that sought to explore the use of unmanned aerial vehicles or drones for inspection of power lines and towers.

The project aimed to leverage drones and artificial intelligence (AI) to overcome the limitations of manual tower inspections. As part of the project, extra high tension (EHT) transmission line towers of the Transmission Corporation of Telangana (TS-TRANSCO) were aerially surveyed.

The Emerging Technologies wing of Telangana's Information Technology, Electronics and Communications (ITE&C) Department initiated the project in partnership with TS-TRANSCO.

HIGH QUALITY CAMERAS,

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE For the project, a Hyderabad-based start-up named Centillion Networks demonstrated its capabilities in using drone technology for inspection, monitoring and patrolling of EHT transmission towers, lines, and substations. For this, high quality 4K resolution cameras and AI-based image recognition systems were used.

In the pilot project, EHT transmission line towers for 220 KV Chandrayagutta Ghanapur line, 220 KV Shivarampally - Gachibowli line, 132 KV Minpur -Jogipet line, 220 KV Budidampadu - Waddekothapally line and another ten towers were inspected. The locations were surveyed using drones and the subsequent tower inspections were conducted by Centillion Networks in the presence of officials from TS-TRANSCO and the ITE&C department.

During the inspection, high-resolution imagery from the drones and feature identification were successfully demonstrated to the officials. The inspection of each tower was conducted within twenty minutes.

Inspection reports were prepared for each tower. These reports included photos, videos, identification of the exact issues and actionable interventions.

'REDUCING RISKS, COSTS' "Telangana is one of the leading states in leveraging drones across various use-cases, and the inspection of towers for TS-TRANSCO is one of the most innovative of them," said Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary to the Telangana government.

He added that the use of drones can speed up activities and reduce hazards to humans in various situations. With the new drone rules liberalising the sector, adoption of the same

can be rapidly scaled up, he said.

Venkat Chundi, founder of Centillion Networks, said, "Tower inspection by drones is useful for complete and accurate data collection and analysis. In addition, there can be reduction in maintenance costs if there are periodic inspections. Since accurate data is collected, the risks involved during manual repairs can be reduced to a great extent."

It is estimated that automated inspections using drones can reduce man-hours and costs by approximately 50 per cent, in addition to reducing the potential life risk that is posed by manual inspection of high-tension lines. Further, the reports generated by drones can help the department to resolve issues quicker.

The drone inspection project is expected to be scaled up by TS-TRANSCO soon.

Arrested in Param Bir Singh extortion case, 2 Mumbai police inspectors sent to judicial custody



(News Agencies) -Two Mumbai police inspectors, Nandkumar Gopale and Asha Korke, were arrested in an extortion case earlier this month. On Tuesday, the Esplanade Metropolitan Magistrate court in Mumbai sent them both to 14-day judicial custody.

Both inspectors have been in police custody for the last seven days, after they were arrested in an extortion case in which the prime accused is former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh.

COURT REJECTS PLEA FOR EXTENDED POLICE CUSTODY

On Tuesday, Special Public Prosecutor Shekhar Jagtap sought seven more days of police custody for both of them. He argued that extended police custody was required because forensic evidence was still being gathered in the case and the two had not been cooperating in the investigation so far.

However, the inspectors' advocates opposed the plea. After hearing both sides, the court rejected the prosecutions' request and sent them to judicial custody. Their bail applications, which have been filed, will now be heard on Thursday.

ACCUSED INSPECTOR SEEKS 'SAFE' PRISON

Meanwhile, Advocates Aniket Nikam and Tarun Sharma, appearing for Nandkumar Gopale, requested the court that he be sent only to Taloja Central Prison in Navi Mumbai and no other jail while being transferred to judicial custody. The lawyers said that lodging the police inspector with criminals who had been arrested by him in the past could endanger his life.

Additional Metropolitan Magistrate RM Nerlikar, however, refused to intervene in the administrative decisions of the prison authorities. Instead, he asked the jail officials to ensure the safety of Nandkumar Gopale and to shift him to a safer prison in case required.

Kyle Rittenhouse has walked free. Now it's open season on protesters

Kyle Rittenhouse – the armed white teenager whose mother drove him from Illinois to Wisconsin to allegedly “protect” local businesses from anti-racism protesters in Kenosha, whereupon he shot and killed two people and injured another – has been acquitted of all charges. I don't think anyone who has followed the trial even casually will be surprised by this verdict. After the various antics by the elected judge, which seemed to indicate where his sympathies lay, and the fact that the prosecution asked the jurors to consider charges lesser than murder, the writing was on the wall.

I do not want to discuss the legal particulars of the verdict. It is clear that the prosecution made many mistakes and got little to no leeway from the judge, unlike the defense team. Moreover, we know that “self-defense” – often better known as vigilantism – is legally protected and highly racialized in this country. Think of the acquittal of George Zimmerman of the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2013. In essence, the Rittenhouse ruling has created a kind of “stand your ground” law for the whole country. White people now have the apparent right to travel around the country, heavily armed, and use violence to protect the country from whatever and whoever they believe to be threatening to it. Given the feverish paranoia and racism that has captured a sizeable minority of white people in the US these days, this is a recipe for disaster.

In the coming hours and days, many media outlets will eagerly await riots or other potentially violent reactions from the other side – from the anti-racists and progressives of all colors and races who are disturbed by this verdict – and use the existence of those riots, if they occur, to push a misguided “both sides” frame. If there is protest or rioting, don't expect the police to be as courteous and supportive as they were towards Rittenhouse and his far-right buddies. The most worrying effect of this verdict may be this: giving rightwing vigilantes a legal precedent to take up arms against anyone they consider a threat – which pretty much runs from anti-fascists to so-called Rinos (Republicans in Name Only) and includes almost all people of color – means it is now open hunting season on progressive protesters.

Don't get me wrong; this ruling alone did not start this kind of lopsided law and order. It is just the latest in a centuries-old American tradition of protecting white terror and vigilantism. Civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s, particularly but not exclusively in the south, were not just denied police protection; the demonstrators were

attacked and abused by the police. That was also the case at many Black Lives Matter demonstrations last year.

A Boston Globe investigation found that “between [George] Floyd's death on 25 May 2020 and 30 September 2021, vehicles drove into protests at least 139 times”, injuring at least 100 people. In fewer than half of the cases the driver was charged, and only four drivers have been convicted of a felony. Moreover, in response to these attacks, Republican legislators have proposed laws to protect the drivers from legal action in case they hit a protester. Florida, Iowa, and Oklahoma have already passed such laws.

It takes courage to publicly protest in any situation, particularly when protesting state powers. Now protesters in the US will have to fear not only police brutality but an emboldened and violent far right, fired up by the Republican party and the broader rightwing media and protected by the local legal system.

All of this comes at a crucial point in US democracy. From Georgia to Wisconsin, the Republican party is attacking the electoral system, while their supporters are terrorizing poll workers and those signing up to be poll workers in the next elections. In the event that Democrats win important elections in conservative states in 2022 – think Stacey Abrams in Georgia or Beto O'Rourke in Texas – there is a big chance that these results will be contested and judged by highly partisan forces protected by state politicians.

Similarly, should President Biden or another Democrat win the 2024 presidential election, the result will again be challenged in conservative states, but this time independent poll workers could be absent or outnumbered and the few Republicans who withstood Donald Trump's pressure in 2020 will have been replaced or have fallen in line.

At that point, Democrats, and indeed all democratic-minded citizens, will have to go into the streets to protest. They will confront an alliance of heavily armed civilians and police and national guard, who can attack protesters with effective immunity. Remember: Kyle Rittenhouse has just been acquitted after killing two people and injuring a third at a protest.

In my home country, the Netherlands, we have a saying that is used regularly in political discussions: “Democracy is not for scared people.” Most of the time when it is used, we mean that democracy is not for people who are afraid of change or of critique. In the US, in the wake of today's verdict, this saying has become both more real and more sinister.

By Cas Mudde

Indira Gandhi Learnt The Hard Way. Modi, Too

The Prime Minister has stuck to his reputation of springing surprises. The announcement of the decision to repeal the three farm laws came as a huge surprise last morning, which, apart from being the pious day of Guru Parab, was also the birthday of Indira Gandhi. The comparison with Indira Gandhi is apt because she also withdrew the Emergency when she realised it had become untenable. Despite all his bravado, the Prime Minister came to the same conclusion, and because he is an 'election-jivi', and elections to five states including the all-important state of UP, are around the corner, and because defeat was staring him in the face, he was left with no option but to withdraw these black laws. In my tweet after the announcement I said, “While I congratulate the Kisans on their victory over the government for the repeal of the farm laws, I attach no noble sentiment to the government for this move. It is a calculated step for the UP elections. For this government, democracy begins and ends with elections.” So this is it: nothing more than an election gimmick.

The passage of these laws in parliament, specially the Rajya Sabha, had raised many issues of constitutional and parliamentary morality and the conduct of the government. Should the centre legislate on a subject which falls within the legislative domain of the states? Should the laws have been promulgated first as ordinances, violating all the norms for promulgating ordinances? After all, the problems of

agriculture in India are as old as agriculture itself, so what was the hurry to promulgate ordinances on these subjects? Next, should they have been ramrodded through parliament in such a shoddy fashion without reference to the Standing Committee of parliament? Scrutiny by the Standing Committee would have enabled consultations with all stakeholders, something that has become standard parliamentary practice now. Will someone in the government stand up even now and explain what was the tearing hurry to enact these laws first as ordinances and then rush them through parliament? Does the act of repeal absolve the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha of indulging in unparliamentary conduct and favouring the government out and out?

The humility the Prime Minister exhibited when he addressed the nation - and even his apology - failed to impress because the intent was not pure but tainted. Why did it take him so long to understand that the farmers of India were opposed to these laws? Why did it take the deaths of hundreds of farmers to convince him that they did not welcome these laws? Why was the Prime Minister not moved by thousands of farmers sitting in the open and suffering under a cruel sun or braving the bitter cold? Why was he so impervious to all that was happening in such close proximity of the national capital? Why did he not send a ministerial colleague to commiserate with the farmers at the site of their sit-in?



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Editor in Chief & Publisher :

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) :

Aruna Singh

Susmita Ghosh (Dy Managing Editor India)

Anusha Syed (Legal Columnist)

Special Correspondents:

Gagandeep Singh (India)

Geeta Saxena (Insider Show Host)

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

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REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

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Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

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The Americans who are getting the worst of the surge in inflation

With inflation at a 30-year high, Americans are about to face a holiday season marked by surging food prices.

Thanksgiving is predicted to be the most expensive in history, as pandemic-induced supply chain issues and labor shortages help drive the cost of many foods -- turkeys included -- higher and higher.

These surges impact grocery expenses for everyone, but they disproportionately harm low-income, Black and brown families. If left unaddressed, escalating food costs will not only make it difficult for these families to put holiday meals on the table; such costs will

significantly exacerbate longstanding inequities in hunger and nutrition.

The pandemic didn't create these inequities. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 1 in every 10 US households experienced food insecurity, or unreliable access to enough nutritious food. This was already a striking and shamefully high rate among wealthy, developed nations. But food insecurity rates have long been even higher for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous American households, single parents (especially mothers) and families with children.

Over the past two years, we've only seen these gaps widen.

Pandemic relief efforts helped prevent American hunger rates overall from exploding, but they failed to address deeply rooted inequities. While hunger in White households decreased from 2019 to 2020, according to research from the US Department of Agriculture, it increased in Black households and those with children, and it stayed the same among Latinx households. Compared to White households, Latinx and Black households now experience roughly double and triple the rates of food insecurity. As we enter the holiday season facing double-digit increases in supermarket costs, hunger-relief organizations

and food banks are working tirelessly to ensure families have enough to eat.

But these food charity efforts are painfully limited in what they can accomplish. America's hunger problem is too big and its inequities too wide for any number of individual food donations to solve. Only swift and sweeping government action can do that. Such action must effectively reduce hunger rates overall -- bringing them far below the 1 in 10 figure we've come to accept as "normal" -- while simultaneously tackling enduring inequities in who experiences hunger in the first place.

Accomplishing both goals will

require pairing the reform of anti-hunger policies that directly impact food access with bolstered social policies that tackle food insecurity's root causes. Core to this agenda must be acknowledging that food banks will never singlehandedly solve hunger. Rather, the government must dismantle hunger by making permanent changes to food assistance legislation and broader social policies. These changes include -- among others -- instituting food assistance benefit increases that keep pace with rising costs of living, removing discriminatory flaws that systematically exclude racial/ethnic minorities from accessing safety net benefits, expanding childcare assistance and child tax credits and providing regular cash aid to families.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) -- America's premier federal food assistance program -- has the power to tackle hunger across the board, but only if its monthly benefits are increased and its barriers to entry are lowered.

The government's recent -- and long overdue -- permanent 27% increase in SNAP benefits must be just the beginning. Currently, 80% of families' SNAP benefits are spent within the first half of each month, leaving them increasingly vulnerable to hunger in the second half. Now, with the price of foods like meat and eggs up as much as 15%, more substantial increases to SNAP are essential to cover families' monthly food costs.

Moreover, income requirements for food assistance programs like SNAP are stringent and out of touch with modern living costs.

When 'old friends' Biden and China's Xi met, it was bad for America

On Monday evening China's President Xi once again bullied President Biden and in turn, the American people.

President Biden has spent months attempting to convince America and the world that he would stand up to President Xi, and that it was "pure business" between the two leaders; that they were not "old friends." But Xi started by greeting Biden as an "old friend," an act of rhetorical bullying in a meeting that only benefited the Chinese Communist Party and China's president.

It was Biden who acquiesced to Xi's demand for the virtual



summit, which served to legitimize the global malign acts of the Chinese Communist Party and damage America's prestige.

It was Xi who had a clear agenda of intimidating Biden, and when

matched against his weakness, ended in the American president talking for talking's sake, strengthening Xi and the Chinese, and eroding American power.

What is notable is what was not

discussed in their three and a half hour summit; the global coronavirus pandemic and its causes that has killed over five million people globally and upended our economy.

Biden failed to press Xi for a more thorough investigation into the causes of the coronavirus pandemic and did not demand accountability for the spread of the deadly virus.

He also had no agenda to hold China accountable for the Xinjiang genocide, the Hong Kong abomination, Taiwanese intimidation, sweeping IPR theft, global predatory trade and economic activities, and bellicose military postures.

Instead, Biden's posture for the summit was one of moral capitulation and the surrender of American leadership and values to the Chinese Communist Party.

While Biden may have offered impotent verbal protests to Xi over some of these topics; it amounts to little more than talk without the backing of strong action to deter or hold the Chinese accountable for their predatory actions. The reason for Biden's weakness in regard to China is simple. He refuses to see China in the same way Xi and the Chinese Communist Party view the United States, as an adversary.

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Vir Das And Kangana - We Need Them Both - by Shobhaa De

The tornado raging over Vir Das' recent monologue at the Kennedy Centre raises far many uncomfortable questions. For starters, let's ask ourselves who exactly qualifies as a 'Good' Indian? Does speaking up about issues that impact every citizen make a person a 'Bad' Indian? Going by the organized campaign to arrest Vir Das for his six minutes of carefully-constructed venting at the Kennedy Centre in Washington DC, one thing becomes abundantly clear - a section of our hyper-loyal society does not want to hear, see, much less speak about the ugly Indian - ugly in thought, word and deed, the Indian who has assumed the power to appropriate what being an Indian means in today's times. It was never easy being an Indian - the very notion is riddled with contradictions! Just as Vir Das spoke about the 'Two Indias' in his inimitable way, there are others who can identify multiple Indias - each one complete and flawed in itself. Every Indian has the right to define his/her version of the nation. Every version has validity. There are as many Indias as there are citizens. No single India can win the race to claim supremacy or superiority over the other Indias. We have lived with suspended realities of countless versions of ourselves for centuries. And survived! So why this sudden over-reaction? The "How dare he run down the country on foreign soil" argument is hollow if not downright stupid. We occupy a virtual universe, in which the physical location is rendered irrelevant. Vir Das could as well have addressed Martians on Mars, and his post would still have gone viral. I am waiting for those who described Vir's performance as "venomous and inflammatory", besides being specifically orchestrated to 'defame India on foreign soil', to accuse him of being a Pakistani agent who was paid zillions to run down India in America. Soon

he will be told to pack his bags and move to the neighbouring country. Because, in today's India, there is no place for a Vir Das. At the moment, at least on social media platforms, there seem to be two distinct Indias at war with one another - Vir Das' and Kangana Ranaut's. Both individuals represent showbiz albeit in entirely different contexts and disciplines. Both have massive fan support and enjoy cult status in the eyes of their followers. To the best of my knowledge, Vir Das has not aligned himself to any political party/ideology, and cannot be accused of playing power politics for personal gain. At the moment, he is being intimidated and threatened by forces which have gone so far as to want him charged for sedition. Kangana has called him a criminal and accused him of "soft terrorism". Das has not been sufficiently blessed to receive political patronage, forget protection. Padma Shri Kangana Ranaut (who I genuinely admire on many levels) is privileged enough to get Y-category police protection, paid for by citizens and provided by the State of Maharashtra. Vir Das is a lone ranger who talks directly to his fans through material he writes himself as a hugely successful stand-up comic. Das is from Dehradun, Ms. Ranaut is from Bhambla. In that sense, both function outside the charmed circles of the entertainment industry they belong to. And yes, neither can be accused of benefitting from nepotism. There, the commonalities end. Ranaut's strident posts on Instagram are designed to generate heat (refer to her recent "bheekh" comment), Vir ends his impassioned Kennedy Centre monologue appealing for love over hate. He repeatedly calls India "great". Their respective versions of being patriotic occupy opposite ends of the spectrum. And yes, both qualify as 'disrupters' of the status quo. Frankly, we need them both! Enough of smugness,

enough of denial, enough of pretending 'AAL EEEZ WELL'. Hell, it's not! Vir's 'truths' have made us cringe. So do Kangana's. But for entirely different reasons. Padma Shri Kangana's version of history and the Independence movement challenges all recorded accounts by eminent individuals and attempts to alter the widely endorsed and popular perception of Mahatma Gandhi as the Father of the Nation. She claims true Independence for India only began in 2014 (errrr - ignore the coincidence!). In a way, Vir insists true loss of Independence also began in 2014! Both are entitled to their viewpoints. Isn't that what one recognizes as an important arm of a functioning a democracy where every citizen has an equal say? Vir's comments on the status of women in India has enraged millions - those virulent critics too have the right to feel enraged. But is he entirely wrong in saying what he did about women's safety in a country that supposedly 'worships' women? Ditto when he spoke about India's under-30 population having to listen to leaders over 75 who propagate 150-year-old ideas to thunderous applause in the packed-to-the-rafters Kennedy Centre. Were those hired/paid crowds? Tickets to hear Das at the Kennedy Centre were priced between \$29 to \$59 - not exactly cheap. It was a sell-out performance as was evident from the clips he put out. He was not exulting, nor playing to the galleries. He was merely saying it like it is - but hey, we absolutely cannot stand people who do that and upset our complacency. There was no dramabaazi in his delivery. No 'stuntbaazi' either. At the end of those six minutes, most of us felt numb. Why? Because Vir Das had cut too close to the bone - and we were afraid to bleed.

We Didn't Know What We Signed With Amazon, Says Future's Board



Two of the world's richest men, fighting over a near-bankrupt Indian retailer, have made so much noise that its board has woken up super cranky. In less than a week, the three independent directors of Future Retail Ltd. have shot off two letters to the country's competition authority, alleging that Amazon.com had deliberately misled the regulator about the true nature of its 2019 investment in a related entity. They want the antitrust watchdog to cancel the transaction. The 2025 dollar bonds of Future Retail rose a little Monday, though they still trade at 61 cents to the dollar. Based on what an arbitration tribunal in Singapore has had to say on the issue of alleged misrepresentation by Amazon, the maneuver looks like a long shot. But one never can predict the course of regulatory action in India. If the gambit succeeds, Asia's wealthiest businessman, Mukesh Ambani, may be able to get his hands on Future's retail stores after all, a deal Amazon boss Jeff Bezos has so far managed to block using judicial proceedings. A scrapping of Amazon's investment would leave the U.S. retailer with no valid contract to stop the sale of assets to Ambani. It's rare for Indian boards to question the legality of agreements that they've been involved in. But then, the stakes are high in the Ambani vs. Bezos battle. The outcome could go some way toward determining which of the two billionaires would ultimately control India's \$800 billion retail market. This isn't a war the directors can sit out - not with Future sinking under the weight of 190 billion rupees (\$2.5 billion) of liabilities, and relentless losses that jumped 80% from a year earlier in the six months through September. The unraveling of Future, a pioneer of modern mass retailing in India with 1,500-plus stores spread across 16 million square feet, began some time ago. The \$192 million Amazon paid for a 49% interest in founder Kishore Biyani's Future Coupons Pvt. translated to indirectly owning roughly 10% of the publicly traded Future Retail, at a premium to the prevailing share price. Amazon, which gave the money expressly for Coupons to invest in the debt-laden Retail, insisted on a list of restricted parties to whom the physical stores couldn't be sold without the e-commerce giant's go-ahead.



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What we can -- and can't -- expect from the Rittenhouse jury



With closing arguments in the Kyle Rittenhouse homicide trial complete, the jury now faces the monumental task of delivering a verdict. The facts in this case are challenging. Any fair analysis of the evidence suggests this will be a complex deliberation. It's one made all the more difficult by the burden of expectations.

Intense media coverage pushes a public already sharply divided by political differences to expect a social and political message from the jury's verdict. But the law requires something entirely different: a strict analysis of the facts and law by 12 ordinary citizens insulated from outside pressure. The evidence presented during the trial has put a full menu of political issues front and center, triggering a divisive national debate. Should Americans, including a then-17-year-old, be permitted to police the streets of a town in a neighboring state when law enforcement appears to some to be inadequate? Was Kyle Rittenhouse acting as a vigilante when he chose to arm himself and enter the fray of protestors and others, claiming his purpose was to protect property and provide first aid? Should this be legal if he was? Was Rittenhouse looking for trouble, and should this restrict his right to assert self-defense? Are we headed toward an America where openly armed political factions and protesters can roam the streets openly carrying AR-15s like militias in other lawless and war-torn countries?

Yet the verdict sheet has no section devoted to social messaging. The jury's only job is to render a unanimous verdict of "guilty" or "not guilty" on each of the five felony charges Rittenhouse faces, including first-degree intentional homicide.

On August 25, 2020, Rittenhouse armed himself with an AR-15-style assault rifle and carried a medical kit as he went into downtown Kenosha, Wisconsin. Rittenhouse, who'd traveled there from Antioch, Illinois, testified he intended to protect businesses and provide first aid during a third night of protests following the police shooting of Jacob Blake. The now 18-year-old shot at four people that night, killing two and wounding a third. Prosecutors also allege the gunshots "recklessly" endangered the lives of other bystanders.

While the prosecution has argued that by arriving at the protests with a weapon he was provoking confrontation, Rittenhouse has made an extraordinarily powerful self-defense claim. During the two-week trial, Rittenhouse testified that one of the men he killed, Joseph Rosenbaum, threatened to kill him and chased him.

Banning Cryptocurrency Will Punish India



Recently, there has been a bombardment of advertisements around cryptocurrencies in newspapers and on billboards and digital media. The advertisements explicitly tap into the feeling of 'Fear Of Missing Out' or 'FOMO', promising outrageous (1,000x) returns and creation of wealth overnight, even for a first-time investor. Is this the reality? Keep in mind the volatility of this space - a single tweet from Elon Musk can bring down the value of Bitcoin, one among many currencies that are traded. But a naive investor, or any person wanting to create quick wealth, would definitely want a part of this based on the publicity, even it means entering a market space that is unregulated and ungoverned.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance had a detailed discussion with stakeholders on Monday and the Prime Minister then reviewed the matter alongside the Finance Minister and RBI, so there finally seems a ray of hope that some structure will be brought into this unregulated space. How will a structure help India rather than a ban? It will create a safeguard for retail investors, the crypto companies based in India will not move out of India, so there will be no flight of capital, it will create a healthy ecosystem for India and Indians to explore emerging technologies and become leaders and innovators in this space.

Bitcoin, Ethereum, Dogecoin, etc. are a few of the names that have become popular utterances these days, specially among the youth. When we say bombardment of ads, just to cite the recently-held World Cup T20, there were 51 cryptocurrency-related ads per match for an ad spend of 50 crores, 10 hours of ads most targeted at young investors. This sort of blitz

and glitz is bound to raise regulatory and governance concerns without a policy framework for the sector.

The three-trillion-dollar market has attracted investors from all around the world, especially retail investors. India is one of many countries which has not taken any clear stand on it. The Supreme Court in early 2020 had cancelled the RBI circular banning cryptocurrencies. Since then, there has been talk that the government will introduce legislation on cryptocurrency but nothing concrete has been done due to India's conservative approach. Which is only fair, considering the uncertainty of the space. It places around 15 million active subscribers on various cryptocurrency exchanges without a safety net. The lack of awareness, transparency and clarity puts the money of the investors, most importantly, retail investors, at risk. This industry which holds so much of capital is not monitored or regulated in India and that should be the point from where India's policy-making should begin.

As the popular saying goes, "You can love it or hate it, but you cannot ignore it". According to industry estimates, the value across various crypto currency exchanges is pegged at an overwhelming 6 billion dollars, a number too humongous to look the other way for the government, considering the huge economic impact it can have if it remains unregulated.

India cannot and should not exclude itself from a three-trillion-dollar market. A ban will only create an underground parallel economy, encouraging illegitimate use and will defeat the very purpose of the ban. Most importantly, it will also contradict the Draft National Strategy on Block Chain, 2021 of the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MEITY),

which hailed block chain technology as transparent, secure and efficient in putting a layer of trust over the internet. One cannot promote blockchain which is one part of the technology-driven innovation while stifling its ancillary, crypto assets instead of currency, if you may.

A regulatory framework will address the two key concerns associated with it - lack of transparency and unwarranted advertisements promoting risky behaviour. Regulation will protect investors and enable informed investments. Most importantly, regulation can aid in monitoring the money-laundering and terror-financing issues and also prevent scams (the recent Bengaluru hacking case, Squid Game currency scam, etc.). An efficient regulatory framework will provide accountability as also a grievance redressal mechanism for investors.

The US has been in favour of allowing all cryptocurrencies, Japan has permitted them, Singapore and Dubai seem to be the favourite for most, China has issued a blanket ban on all cryptocurrency transactions and mining, whereas the verdict in India is yet to come. It becomes imperative for the government to bring forward a legislation that understands the vision of the technology, takes into account the inputs of all stakeholders, and enables citizens to enjoy the benefits that entail with this new-age technology.

As the winter session of parliament approaches, everyone is watching and hoping that the government will introduce legislation that addresses and resolves the concerns of the stakeholders and regulates the growing market of cryptocurrencies. Till then, stakeholders, especially crypto-investors should HODL



Allowing Indian wheat for Afghanistan, reopening Kartarpur. Is peace on Pakistan mind?

Is peace in danger of breaking out between India and Pakistan? The 4.7-km-long Kartarpur Sahib corridor that connects Dera Baba Nanak in Punjab with the holy Sikh shrine in Narowal district of Pakistan Punjab, where Guru Nanak lived and died in the 16th century, is reopening today.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted to say that the reopening of the corridor, in time for Gurmurab celebrations on 19 November, reflects the "immense reverence" of the Narendra Modi government for Guru Nanak and the Sikh sangat.

Certainly, Shah is hoping that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will get the credit and earn its reward in the coming election in Punjab. Only on Sunday, a BJP delegation from Punjab met PM Modi and requested for the corridor to be opened, but other state leaders cutting across the political spectrum have not been left far behind.

Akali Dal MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal, who visited Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan in 2018, as the Modi government's representative - her party, the Akali Dal, was part of the BJP-led alliance at the time - for an informal inauguration, had recently written to the PM on this

exact account, while Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) president Bibi Jagir Kaur and Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu have made similar requests.

Significantly, Pakistan had said a fortnight ago it was ready to accept Sikh pilgrims to Kartarpur Sahib and requested India to open the corridor on its side that had been shut down when Covid hit last March.

So, is Pakistan signaling a peace overture with the move? Remember that only a week ago, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan had agreed that wheat consignments for Afghanistan would be allowed overland through Pakistani territory. That gesture, too, could not have happened without the powerful Pakistan military establishment being on board.

And so, the big question: Is the Pakistan military signaling that it is ready for a step-by-step overhaul of the relationship with India?

Of course, the jury is out on that question. First of all, even if the military is indeed making such an overture, what is its motive? Some astute political observers say the Pakistanis are overstretched on the Afghanistan front and they badly need some let up.

India's interest

But why are Indian political folks making such a big show of interest? Certainly, every political party would like to cash in on the genuine religious ardour associated with the Sikh gurus. But when the religious dust settles and the political chaos associated with the exit of Amarinder Singh from the Congress party resurfaces, every politician worth their salt will look at how the other stacks up.

Certainly, in Punjab, the Congress is substantially weakened, the BJP isn't strong enough, the state's Jat Sikh community isn't about to forgive the Akali Dal in a hurry, and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is hardly able to channel the confusion into a cohesive alternate narrative.

Every political party also knows that the BJP has an advantage on this count because it is in power at the Centre; moreover, a breakthrough is possible only if the Pakistan military establishment, which runs the country and manages all its foreign policy decisions related to India, is on board.

It is more than likely that Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu fancies he has a chance to firm up his own political stock.

He had travelled to Pakistan on the eve of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor's inauguration by Pakistan PM Imran Khan in November 2018 - a trip that resulted in a bear hug with Pakistan Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa. And since Bajwa remains the real power behind the Pakistani throne, the Congress leader may believe he is higher in his pecking order of affection than other Indian leaders.

Back, then, to the Pakistan military establishment, whether it is sending India a message despite the bad blood of the recent years and why.

A military vs Imran Khan show It is no longer a secret in Pakistan that Imran Khan, a protégé of the military establishment, is running afoul of his mentors, those who put him on the prime minister's chair in 2018. The recent brouhaha over changing the ISI chief, from Faiz Hameed to Nadeem Anjum, when Imran Khan held onto the formal announcement of the new man, was an indication of fraying trust.

There are three reasons why Imran Khan may no longer be the military's charmed favourite he once was in 2018. The first is the deep crisis in the Pakistan economy. According to the

World Bank, Pakistan is on the list of top ten economies with the largest foreign debt. Its gross external financing requirement is \$23.6 billion for the current year and another \$28 billion for the coming year. In June, as Covid swept the region, the economy contracted for the first time in 68 years.

Second, while Pakistan's assiduous cultivation of the Taliban has ensured it primacy of place in Kabul and the regime's interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani has brokered a deal between the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group and the Pakistan government, the fact remains that Afghanistan is in the middle of its own economic catastrophe and Pakistan is unable to help it. Third, the political scene in Pakistan is heating up, even though elections are not due until 2023. Former chief of Supreme Appellate Court Gilgit-Baltistan, Rana Shamim, has said in an affidavit that he was witness to Pakistan's former chief justice Saqib Nisar telling a high court judge that the latter must on no account release then-prime minister and PML(N) leader Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz from jail on the eve of the 2018 elections.

Smog of democracy

Why air pollution is not a political issue

Air pollution or climate change will not become a political issue by itself, no matter how acute the problem. It has to be made into an issue.

Why is air pollution not a political issue? If this thought crossed your mind last week, you are not alone. If you happen to live in the National Capital Region, you just had to look at yourself and your neighbours to notice bouts of coughing, breathlessness and eye irritation. Or just look outside the window. Thanks to media headlines over the last few days, a sizeable population is reasonably paranoid, as it should be, about Delhi's AQI levels. Why, then, are democratically elected governments not equally concerned?

This is not a lazy, naïve or moral question, but a genuine puzzle. This is not a routine indictment of politics and politicians for being corrupt and short-sighted, etc. Everyday quotidian politics is like a market. Just as a business works for profit, a political entrepreneur works for power. Just as we don't expect a shopkeeper to suffer losses to serve customers, we should not expect run-of-the-mill political leaders and parties to risk losing elections in order to serve the people. Political parties and political leaders do what they get rewarded for and desist from doing what they may be punished for. They don't act honestly and wisely, since they have little electoral incentive to do so. Air pollution is different.

Or so it would seem. Air quality is not a remote, invisible issue that escapes attention. You do not need the media to see it. It does not take medical knowledge to see that smog affects your health. Air quality is not just a temporary illness, it compromises lifespan. If there is one thing every voter needs desperately, it is clean air. So, political entrepreneurs should rush to meet this need, claim credit and enhance their electoral prospects. At least the logic of political marketing would suggest that.

Yet politics doesn't follow this logic. What happened in the Supreme Court last week has become an annual ritual: Delhi has pollution emergency, the government wakes up after the redline is crossed, someone rushes to court and the court gives a dressing down. And we wait for next year.

Inaction of AAP, BJP, MCD

While there can be a debate about the Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government's performance in other areas, not even its friends would accuse the Arvind Kejriwal government of having done a thing about improving air quality. During the last six years, the number of DTC buses has gone down. Metro fares have become prohibitive. Last-mile connectivity continues to be nonexistent. Except for cheap

gimmicks like smog towers, the Kejriwal government has not even tried to be seen doing anything against air pollution. It hasn't bothered to spend the tax collected in the name of environment. In retrospect, Sheila Dixit's introduction of CNG was the only serious step by an elected government in Delhi to improve the quality of the air that its voters breathe.

To be fair to the Delhi government, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the Narendra Modi government fare no better. The MCD has done almost nothing to control waste burning or construction-related pollution. The Modi government, ever so keen to snatch powers from Kejriwal, is happy to file affidavits in the Supreme Court, and do nothing else.

Here, then, is the question for you: How come governments don't care for something that routinely affects not just an overwhelming majority but every single voter? How can political parties turn a blind eye to an issue concerning life and death of the largest possible vote bank? This is a puzzle not just for you and me but also for democratic theory. You cannot resolve this puzzle unless you recognise that there is nothing magical about the mechanism called democracy. There is no reason

why democracy will fulfil the real need, even the deepest need, of an overwhelming portion of or the entire population. Democratic politics may respond to the needs of a majority, but only under certain conditions. The glossy advertisement for democracy tends to hide the small print that "conditions apply".

Awareness, articulation, aggregation - alternative Babasaheb Ambedkar hinted at these conditions when he exhorted his followers to "educate, organise and agitate" and make use of democratic spaces for the marginalised section. You need to reformulate these somewhat to tackle the air pollution issue.

First of all, competitive politics responds to demand, and not just needs. Except for some visionary political leaders, a politician need not respond to what the voters need, unless their need is articulated in the form of a clear demand. This requires a clear awareness and articulation. Voters must be able to connect the consequences to the cause: The visible fact of pollution to the inaction by the governments. And they must not keep it to themselves, but express it publicly. The first condition is: Voters must speak up on air pollution. The second condition is aggregation of demands. In

politics, demand is necessary but not sufficient. Some or many individuals shouting aloud is not an answer. Someone needs to bring together these demands and mobilise the disparate groups who favour the demand. Except for very smart and sensitive politicians who can anticipate a demand before it is presented to them, ordinary politicians do not move unless threatened by collective action. So the second condition is: Learn to organise. Form mohalla committees, air quality monitors' groups and collective strategies to name and shame leaders and bureaucrats responsible for this mess. Finally, such collective action may take you some distance but that is no guarantee of decisive and effective action. Mere criticism doesn't move voters unless they see tangible and effective alternatives. Corruption has always existed and has been critiqued, but it becomes a decisive electoral issue only when a leader or a party that is seen to be honest is in the electoral fray. The same holds true for air quality or for environment in general. Ordinary voters may be sick and tired or even disgusted with the government's performance, but this issue can become decisive only when another political party takes this up on its agenda and offers a credible alternative plan of action.



The Rittenhouse case is a cautionary tale for conservative legislatures

Power and prejudice of prosecution should worry anyone who advocates for the rule of law

Thousands of cases a day go through our nation's court systems, but most do not grab the headlines or scrutiny of the Kyle Rittenhouse trial. The power and prejudice this prosecution is wielding should worry anyone who advocates for the fair administration of the rule of law. As experienced prosecutors who have handled high-profile criminal cases and made difficult charging decisions, we leverage our decades of experience toward advancing reforms that translate to systemic support for the rule of law.

We do not typically engage with the latest case the media has chosen to circus. The probing and insightful Twitter analysis is best left to the great and renowned legal minds of our generation - LeBron James, Alyssa Milano and John Legend. Or better, the thoughts of tenured law professors in maze-like university buildings who pontificate courtroom knowledge from the safety of a quiet corner office. Like much of America, over the last couple days we have watched the Rittenhouse prosecutor exhibit the attitude that rules and the judge's rulings don't matter. Rather than apply the law to the facts, the prosecutor has exercised discretion so as to reflect his own self-righteousness, so the ends justify the means. The judge in this case has been criticized by the left and the media for the audacity of not rolling over. Instead, he has fiercely guarded the integrity of the proceedings, the rights of the defendant, and regularly checked the unabashed overreach by

the prosecution.

For this reason, the Rittenhouse case is a cautionary tale for conservative legislatures, where debates are waged around whether to infuse prosecutors with more power over the outcome of a criminal case, while reducing the influence of the judge. Proponents call it truth in sentencing. The result is the tipping of the state's criminal justice balance of power in favor of prosecutors, who, let's not forget, are partial actors in this system. What is happening in Kenosha should give lawmakers pause before choosing this course. The evidence presented in the case by both the prosecution and the defense clearly supports Kyle Rittenhouse's contention that he acted in self-defense as he attempted to guard property threatened by rioters. Video evidence shows individuals chasing, attacking and threatening a 17-year-old Rittenhouse with his life, with at least one pointing a gun at him before he fired, and another trying to take his own gun from him while shouting that he was going to kill Rittenhouse. Yet, the prosecution has pursued six criminal charges against him, including first degree reckless homicide and multiple weapons charges. Prosecutors review the facts, decide charges and determine how the case will resolve. If infused with the unmitigated ability to influence the outcome by a mandatory minimum sentence, the prosecutor also determines the defendant's sentencing fate.

Simply put, prosecutors are the most powerful actor within the criminal justice system, and since the 1980s, their power has only grown. Luckily for Rittenhouse, Wisconsin has preserved the authority of the judge in a criminal case. Another issue this case has brought into focus is the abject hypocrisy of wokeness. These woke criminal justice reformers claim to advocate for protecting the rights of a defendant but have lamented over what they perceive as the "pro defense" judge in the Rittenhouse case. There are some who would otherwise contend that a 17-year-old whose brain is not fully developed should never be charged as an adult, that now call for the young Rittenhouse to be made an example of in facing adult charges. Those who call for clemencies, commutations, second looks and pardons, and who actively search for mitigating facts to support a petition for the same, would ignore the glaring evidence of Rittenhouse's self-defense. Those who call for restorative justice would deny the extension of mercy, or even justice, to Rittenhouse simply because he does not fit their political narrative. Perhaps the most disappointing, Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., a co-sponsor of the First Step Act, has publicly called for such aggressively woke policies like the defunding of the prison industrial complex, and yet before all the evidence had even been presented, Jeffries tweeted "Lock up Kyle Rittenhouse and throw away the key."

The Bannon Contempt Case Shows Reform Is Needed at the DOJ



The Justice Department's recent decision to indict Steve Bannon on a contempt charge was justified by his blatant snubbing of Congress, but it was not as simple as many people claimed. In fact, prosecutors had to navigate a series of preexisting legal opinions from an obscure but powerful office within the department known as the Office of Legal Counsel.

The OLC is a relatively small office whose job is to provide legal guidance to the executive branch, but its role, particularly when it comes to government oversight, is much more significant - and poses much greater risks to our constitutional order - than it sounds.

The office has its origins in a statutory obligation from Congress - one that dates all the way back to the Judiciary Act of 1789 - that requires the attorney general to "give his advice and opinion on questions of law when required by the President" or by the "head of an executive department." The department's solicitor general's office inherited this responsibility by the late 19th century, but in 1950, Congress created a separate office within the department, with its own Senate-confirmed head, that was first called the Executive Adjudications Division and later renamed as the OLC. Today, the OLC is officially tasked with "preparing the formal opinions of the Attorney General" and "rendering informal opinions and legal advice to the various agencies of the Government." The OLC's role is straightforward, even if the issues it addresses are often tangled. Its most important job is to weigh in when there are important questions about the power of the executive branch - advice on what it can do, what it can't and where the limits of the president's power lie. Importantly, the governing legal framework means that the OLC's decisions are, as the office notes, treated as "controlling advice to Executive Branch officials." That word controlling is important - it means that other agencies must follow its guidance despite what their own lawyers may think. The office is also set up to respect its own precedent, much as courts do: Lawyers within the office are instructed to "consider and ordinarily give great weight to any relevant past opinions" and to "not lightly depart from such past decisions." An analysis in the Columbia Law Review concluded that the OLC "rarely openly departs from its prior opinions." The office's opinions can provide a powerful defense to officials whose decisions are challenged in court, since they can say that they relied in good faith on the OLC's legal analysis. Remarkably, most OLC opinions are not even made public, a prerogative that rests largely with the OLC itself unless an opinion is leaked or a judge requires its disclosure.



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Rahul Gandhi's Anti-Hindutva Remark Is A Good Move

Many political pundits believe that Rahul Gandhi is caught between the devil and the deep sea on the question of Hindutva. If he opposes it, then he is damned and if he does not, he is doomed. Now, in a bold move, he has made a scathing attack on Hindutva. While addressing a session of Congress workers in Maharashtra, he tried to emphasise the difference between Hindutva and Hinduism, saying, "Why do Hindus need Hindutva when they follow Hinduism? Is Hinduism about beating a Sikh or Muslim person? No. But Hindutva is. Is Hindutva about killing Akhlaq?"

This statement must be understood in the larger political context. In the last seven years, the BJP and the RSS, through their propaganda, have successfully blurred the lines between Hindutva and Hinduism so that they are understood as virtually interchangeable, and to attack or criticise Hindutva means criticising the Hindu religion per se.

Rahul Gandhi not only differentiates, but also defines Hindutva in terms of violence. Which is rather bold. He says, "I have read the Upanishad and nowhere is it written to kill a man. But I can see it in Hindutva. Our orientation comes from Lord Shiva, Kabir, Guru Nanak to Bapu." Rahul asks a simple question, "If you are a Hindu, why do you need Hindutva? Why do you need this new name?" Obviously, the BJP and the ruling dispensation moved quickly on a rebuttal. The BJP immediately retorted that Rahul was attacking the Hindu religion. "Rahul has a

pathological hatred for Hindus," said BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra. Why did Rahul choose to frontally attack Hindutva and what will be the political repercussions of his political diatribe? To understand the skepticism about Rahul's move within a section of political analysts as also within the Congress, the present political ecosystem has to be understood.

Since Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, Hindutva has become a hegemonic ideology which has tried to dislodge the left-liberal ideological base of the Indian political system. Hindutva, which once was thought to be socially regressive and backward-looking, has become a reflection and carrier of the dominant political discourse and which, with the conspiratorial support of the mainstream media, has been weaponized to demolish political opponents and silence the voice of dissent. The democratic space has shrunk and to be Hindutva Vadi has become fashionable. A narrative has been built that to criticise Hindutva is politically suicidal and to do would be to take on the RSS and all the advantages it enjoys on its home turf.

Therefore, it was assumed that instead of attacking Hindutva, the Opposition should take up developmental and policy issues to corner the Modi government. It was also understood that to be seen as Hindutva vadi could deliver more political dividends. And so, leaders earlier seen as close to or fraternising with Muslim leaders

suddenly changed gears. Opposition leaders raced to prove who was the bigger Hindu. Rahul Gandhi was temple-hopping, Arvind Kejriwal was reciting the Hanuman Chalisa and Mamata Banerjee proclaimed that she was a Brahman woman who performed the Chandipath.

This was tagged political opportunism and they all were criticised for pursuing soft Hindutva. But it does help these parties to neutralise the BJP's vicious campaign to project them as pro-Muslim leaders. It is in this context that Opposition leaders found it difficult to oppose the abrogation of Article 370 and the criminalisation of triple talaq. The riots in northeast Delhi and the Shaheen Bagh movement found muted response from these parties. It was believed that talking about these issues would annoy Hindu voters and embolden the BJP's campaign. The Muslim community felt orphaned.

But this strategy has a flip side. Hindutva had found for itself a moral high ground. It has been placed as beyond reproach. It was so ironic that the Opposition understood that Hindutva was damaging the basic fabric of the nation but found itself justifying and supporting its prevalence. But how can the Modi government be challenged without attempting to dislodge its main fulcrum? It appears that Rahul Gandhi has realised the logical fallacy of this strategy. But will his move provide beneficial?

Adam Schiff, Steele dossier and the death of shame in American politics



The famous philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal once declared that "the only shame is to have none." The problem with shame is it assumes a sense of guilt over one's actions. In the age of rage, there appear fewer and fewer actions that are beyond the pale for politics.

Take Adam Schiff and the Steele dossier. While even the Washington Post has admitted that it got the Russian collusion story wrong in light of the findings of Special Counsel John Durham, House Intelligence Committee Chair Adam Schiff, D-Calif., is still insisting that he was absolutely right to promote the discredited Steele dossier.

Schiff's interview on NBC's "Meet the Press" may be the final proof of the death of shame in American politics.

Schiff was one of the greatest promoters of the Steele dossier despite access to briefings casting doubt about Steele and the underlying claims. However, Schiff recently has attempted to defend himself by claiming that Steele was a respected former spy and that he was lied to by a Russian source.

Schiff told host Chuck Todd:

"I don't regret saying that we should investigate claims of someone who, frankly, was a well-respected British intelligence officer. And we couldn't have known, of course, years ago that we would learn years later that someone who is a primary source lied to him. [Igor] Danchenko lied to Christopher Steele and then lied to the FBI. He should be prosecuted. He is being prosecuted. And I'll tell you this, if he's convicted, he should not be pardoned the way Donald Trump pardoned people who lied to FBI agents, like Roger Stone and Mike Flynn. There ought to be the same standard in terms of prosecuting the liars. But I don't think there ought to be any pardon, no matter which way the lies cut."

Schiff's spin is enough to cause permanent vertigo. Some of us have spent years being pummeled for questioning the obvious problems with the Steele dossier, including the long-denied connection to the Clinton campaign. Schiff was the main voice swatting down such criticism and his endorsements were treated as dispositive for media from MSNBC to the Washington Post. After all, he was the chair of the House Intelligence Committee and assured the public that our criticisms were meritless and the dossier was corroborated. Schiff's spin, however, continues to deny the obvious about the Russian collusion scandal. First, many would guffaw at the claim that Steele was and remains a "well-respected British intelligence officer." Soon after the dossier was shopped to the FBI, British intelligence flagged credibility problems with Steele.

China fights biggest Delta outbreak ever as Covid-19 cases keep growing

(News Agencies) -China is battling its biggest COVID-19 outbreak caused by the highly transmissible Delta variant, with some areas restricting entry by people from a northeastern city where infections have grown faster than elsewhere in the country in the past week.

A total of 1,308 domestically transmitted infections with confirmed symptoms were reported in the mainland between Oct. 17 and Nov. 14, surpassing the 1,280 local cases from a summer Delta outbreak, Reuters calculations based on official data showed.

This marks China's most widespread Delta outbreak, which has affected 21 provinces, regions and municipalities. It is smaller than many outbreaks in other countries but authorities in China are anxious to block the transmission under the government's zero-tolerance guidance.

CHINA FIGHTS DELTA



OUTBREAK

A dozen province-level regions contained their flare-ups within weeks, thanks to quick implementation of a complex set

of curbs, including rigorous contact tracing, multiple rounds of testing of people in at risk areas, the closure of entertainment and cultural

venues and restrictions on tourism and public transport. However, the northeastern city of Dalian is locked in a struggle with the virus, Wu Liangyou, an

official at the National Health Commission, told a Saturday news briefing.

Since Dalian's first local symptomatic patients from the latest outbreak was reported on Nov. 4, the city of 7.5 million people has detected an average of about 24 new local cases a day, more than any other Chinese cities, according to Reuters calculation.

A few cities near Dalian, including Dandong, Anshan and Shenyang, have said that people arriving from Dalian had to be quarantined at centralised facilities for 14 days before they can move freely.

As of Nov. 14, mainland China had reported 98,315 confirmed coronavirus cases with symptoms, including domestically transmitted infections and those from overseas. There have been 4,636 deaths.

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Afghanistan doesn't want conflict with any country, including India: Taliban Foreign Minister

Afghanistan does not want conflict with any country, including India, the war-torn country's Taliban-led interim government's acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi has said.

Muttaqi made the comments while talking to BBC Urdu, which was also his first ever interview with a female journalist, who asked him about Afghanistan relations with New Delhi under the Taliban government.

"We do not want Afghanistan to have a conflict with any other country or to have challenges that could affect our nation. Therefore, we will continue to work on this issue," he said.

When asked whether there was a reaction from China or Pakistan on Afghanistan having close ties with India, instead of a direct answer, Muttaqi referred to recent meetings in Moscow. "When we participated in the Moscow conference, the

representatives of India, Pakistan and several other countries were also present. We had a positive conversation and will hopefully not oppose any country," he said.

His interview comes days after National Security Advisor Ajit Doval chaired an eight-nation dialogue on Afghanistan in New Delhi which was attended by officials from Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

At the dialogue on Thursday, the participating countries vowed to work towards ensuring that Afghanistan does not become a safe haven for global terrorism and called for the formation of an "open and truly inclusive" government in Kabul.

A declaration released at the end of the dialogue said Afghan territory should not be used for

sheltering, training, planning or financing any terrorist acts and that officials lent strong support for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan.

The Taliban, ousted from power



by the US shortly after the 9/11 attacks, seized control of Afghanistan in mid-August, ousting the previous elected government which was backed by the West.

Responding to a question on female education, Muttaqi rejected that the Afghan women were being excluded from

different fields.

"Women have 100 per cent inclusion in the health sector. They are also teaching in the education sector. They are working in each and every one of those sectors where they are required," he said.

He added that the Taliban government did not fire any female official who was working under the previous government.

He, however, accepted that educational institutions in some areas were still closed but said that it was due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The Afghan Taliban leader accepted that his country was mediating between Pakistan and the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) but no agreement was reached so far. He, however, said that the process had a good beginning

and a month-long ceasefire had been announced.

Muttaqi conceded that the Islamic State group or Daesh was a threat but announced that the Taliban government eliminated it from a major part of the country.

"Isolated incidents can take place anywhere in the world. Previously, 70 per cent of Afghanistan was under the control of the Islamic Emirate. Now, the Taliban have purged these areas of the presence of Daesh," he said.

He said currently Daesh was present only in areas which were ruled by the previous Kabul government.

He also said that the Taliban fulfilled the international community's demand for an inclusive government, which represented all stakeholders in Afghan society and urged the world to recognise their government.

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China, Russia join hands to establish space weather centre in Beijing

The new centre is aimed at increasing China's international influence in space weather aviation services.

In major cooperation between China and Russia, the two countries inaugurated a joint space weather centre in Beijing "to enhance meteorological services for international civil aviation," China Meteorological Administration (CMA) said.

Built and operated by CMA, the Civil Aviation Administration of China and the Russian Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring, the centre is the first in China and fourth in the world to get approval from the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

"Building a comprehensive system and mechanism for the centre can realize real-time monitoring of global space weather and warn of disastrous space weather. By cooperating with Russia, China will help space weather aviation services," CGTN quoted Yu Rucong, deputy director of the CMA.

Space weather is relevant to satellite operations, aviation safety and ground pipe networks, said the CMA. Space weather is triggered by solar eruptions

from the Sun that hurtles dangerous particles travelling at staggering speed toward the planet. These storms have the capability of damaging assets in space, including satellites, stations and astronauts.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), strong solar storms can cause fluctuations of electrical currents in space and energise electrons and protons trapped in Earth's varying magnetic field. These disturbances can cause problems with radio communications, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), power grids, and satellites.

The new centre is also aimed at increasing China's international influence in space weather aviation services, the CMA added. It comes as China has been developing its space programmes, having this year launched a crewed mission to build a space station. The new cooperation comes on the heels of Beijing and Moscow joining hands for a lunar research

station on the Moon. According to a roadmap released earlier this year, the stations will first operate autonomously before they are habituated by crewed missions in the future. While preliminary exploratory missions are likely to begin by the end of this year, construction for the lunar base will begin as early as 2025. While engineers are undecided on the final location of the lunar base, initial studies put the Amundsen crater on the South Pole as a potential site. The location runs parallel to the US Artemis mission, which is also targeting the lunar south pole for its return to the Moon. As humans push towards the Moon with several lunar missions in the final stages including India's Chandrayaan-3 and America's Artemis, studying and analysing space weather becomes even more critical. China has already built a preliminary framework for a space weather operational mechanism and is able to make short to long-term weather prediction forecasts, the CMA said.

Meet US Ambassador to Nepal who celebrates Chhath Puja, has Om tattoo on his arm

(News Agencies) -In Nepal, diplomats of big countries are usually embroiled in controversies, sometimes over their statements or sometimes due to their political meetings. But US Ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry has become a subject of discussion in the country for a different reason. Being an Ambassador to a Hindu majority nation, Randy Berry has gone beyond the custom of greeting on local festivals celebrated in Nepal and



himself indulges in festivities in the Embassy with employees. He also shares these moments on social media, due to which he has become popular among common Nepali citizens. Last week, Randy Berry was seen celebrating the Hindu festival of Chhath Puja at Janakpur and participating in all traditional customs. He also celebrated Diwali and Dussehra at the Embassy by lighting lamps and making rangolis. Ambassador Randy Berry also has an 'Om' tattoo on his right arm. Currently, the US Ambassador to Nepal is at Rara Tal, a tourist place of which most foreign tourists are not aware. Seeing the potential of tourism in Rara Tal, Berry visited the spot with the Australian Ambassador.



China-US should respect each other: Jinping tells 'old friend' Biden at summit

Chinese President Xi Jinping told his US counterpart Joe Biden that China and the US should respect each other, coexist in peace and pursue a win-win cooperation as the two leaders held a virtual summit on Tuesday.

Speaking at the summit, Xi called for developing a sound and steady China-US relationship and expressed his readiness to work with Biden to build consensus and take active steps to move the bilateral relations forward in a positive direction.

The highly-anticipated summit, which began early Tuesday, is the third engagement between Xi, 68, and Biden, 78, since February. The two leaders had a lengthy phone call in September.

BIDEN-JINPING MEET AMID HIGH TENSION

The meeting came amid high tension in China-US bilateral relationship over Beijing's actions on issues like trade, human rights, the South China Sea and Taiwan. In his opening remarks circulated by the official media here, Xi said the two countries faced multiple challenges and they must increase communication and cooperation.

China and the US should respect each other, coexist in peace, and pursue win-win cooperation, Xi said, expressing his readiness to work with Biden to build consensus and take active steps to move

China-US relations forward in a positive direction.

According to an AP news agency report, Biden at the start of the meeting said, "It seems to be our responsibility as the leaders of China and the United States to ensure that the competition between our countries does not veer into conflict, whether intended or unintended, rather than simple, straightforward competition."

A host of issues ranging from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet, besides the AUKUS -- a trilateral security pact between the US, the UK and Australia -- and the Quad alliance comprising the US, India, Japan and Australia, which Beijing says is aimed to contain its rise, were expected to figure in the discussions.

China is concerned that Biden is still continuing with the trade war initiated by his predecessor Donald Trump.

Since 2017, the US and China have imposed tariffs on billions of dollars of each other's goods after Washington accused Beijing of blocking access to its markets and stealing American intellectual property.

Despite tensions on a host of issues including Taiwan, the virtual summit came days after both the countries pledged to increase cooperation to rein in greenhouse gas emissions at the recently

concluded UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow.

Xi pointed out that both China and the US are at critical stages of development, and the "global village" of humanity faces multiple challenges.

He said as the world's two largest economies and permanent members of the UN Security Council, China and the US need to increase communication and cooperation, each run their domestic affairs well and, at the same time, shoulder their share of international responsibilities, and work together to advance the noble cause of world peace and development.

This is the shared desire of the people of the two countries and around the world, and the joint mission of Chinese and American leaders, Xi said.

He stressed that a sound and steady China-US relationship is required for advancing the two countries' respective development and for safeguarding a peaceful and stable international environment, including finding effective responses to global challenges such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Doing so will advance the interests of the two peoples and meet the expectations of the international community, he said

After nearly 6 months in jail in Myanmar, US journalist released and on his way home



American journalist Danny Fenster, who spent nearly six months in jail in military-ruled Myanmar and was facing a sentence of 11 years of hard labour, was freed Monday and is on his way home.

Fenster was handed over to former US diplomat Bill Richardson, who helped negotiate the release, and the two flew out of the Southeast Asian country together. Hours later, they landed in Doha, Qatar.

Fenster, the managing editor of online magazine Frontier Myanmar, was convicted Friday of spreading false or inflammatory information, contacting illegal organisations and violating visa regulations. He is one of more than 100 journalists, media officials or publishers who have been detained since the military ousted the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in February, and his was the harshest sentence yet.

OVERJOYED: DANNY FENSTER'S FAMILY

"This is the day that you hope will come when you do this work," Richardson, a former governor of New Mexico and past ambassador to the UN, said in a statement emailed by his office. "We are so grateful that Danny will finally be able to reconnect with his loved ones, who have been advocating for him all this time, against immense odds."

Fenster will return to the US via Qatar over the next day and a half, according to the statement. He has been in detention since he was arrested at Yangon International Airport on May 24 as he was headed to the Detroit area to see his family.

"We are overjoyed that Danny has been released and is on his way home - we cannot wait to hold him in our arms," his family said in a statement. "We are tremendously grateful to all the people who have helped secure his release, especially Ambassador Richardson, as well as our friends and the public who have expressed their support and stood by our sides as we endured these long and difficult months."

WHAT WAS DANNY FENSTER IN JAIL FOR?

It was never exactly clear what Fenster was alleged to have done, but much of the prosecution's case appeared to hinge on proving that he was employed by another online news site that was ordered closed this year during a crackdown on the media following the military's seizure of power. Fenster used to work for the site but left that job last year.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS IN MYANMAR

According to the United Nations, at least 126 journalists, media officials or publishers have been detained by the military since the takeover and 47 remain in custody, though not all of them have been charged.

Of seven journalists known to have been convicted, six are Myanmar nationals and four were released in a mass amnesty in October.

Facebook says Pak hackers targeted Afghan users amid Taliban takeover

Facebook has said that hackers from Pakistan targeted users in Afghanistan with connections to the previous government during the Taliban's takeover of the country.

Hackers from Pakistan used Facebook to target people in Afghanistan with connections to the previous government during the Taliban's takeover of the country, the company's threat investigators said in an interview with Reuters.

Facebook said the group, known in the security industry as SideCopy, shared links to websites hosting malware which could surveil people's devices. Targets included people connected to the government, military and law enforcement in Kabul, it said. Facebook said it removed SideCopy from its platform in August.

The social media company, which recently changed its name to Meta, said the group created fictitious personas of young women as "romantic lures" to build trust and trick targets into clicking phishing links or downloading malicious chat apps. It also compromised legitimate websites to manipulate people into giving up their Facebook credentials.

"It's always difficult for us to speculate as to the end goal of the threat actor," Facebook's head of cyber espionage investigations, Mike Dvilyanski, said. "We don't know exactly who was compromised or what the end result of that was."

Major online platforms and email providers including



Facebook, Twitter Inc, Alphabet Inc's Google and Microsoft Corp's LinkedIn have said they took steps to lock down Afghan users' accounts during the Taliban's swift takeover of the country this past summer.

Facebook said it had not previously disclosed the

hacking campaign, which it said ramped up between April and August, due to safety concerns about its employees in the country and the need for more work to investigate the network. It said it shared information with the US State Department at the time it took down the operation. Investigators also said Facebook had last month disabled the accounts of two hacking groups which it linked to Syria's Air Force Intelligence. Facebook said one group, known as the Syrian Electronic Army, targeted human rights activists, journalists and others opposing the ruling regime, while the other targeted people linked to the Free Syrian Army and former military personnel who had joined opposition forces.

Facebook's head of global threat disruption, David Agranovich, said the Syria and Afghanistan cases showed cyber espionage groups leveraging periods of uncertainty during conflicts when people might be more susceptible to manipulation.

The company said a third hacking network in Syria, which it linked to the Syrian government and removed in October, targeted minority groups, activists and members of the People's Protection Units (YPG) and Syria Civil Defense, or White Helmets.

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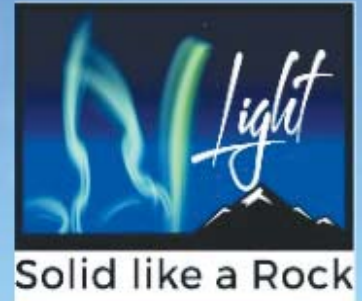
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US special envoy for Afghanistan meets India's foreign secy, NSA



US special representative for Afghanistan, Thomas West, is in Delhi after his visit to Pakistan to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. West met India's foreign secretary Harsh V. Shringla and national security advisor Ajit Doval.

Newly appointed US special representative for Afghanistan, Thomas West, is in Delhi after his visit to Pakistan to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. The American envoy met with India's foreign secretary Harsh V. Shringla and national security advisor Ajit Doval.

In a tweet, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi wrote: "Foreign Secretary @harshvshringla met US Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West @US4AfghanPeace and exchanged views on recent developments and issues of

common interest in Afghanistan."

While the discussions focussed on the current developments in Afghanistan, sources said the topics included the recently held Regional Security Dialogue of NSAs on Afghanistan in New Delhi, movement of people in and out of Afghanistan, coordinating global efforts on humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, regional security issues, and other bilateral and international issues of mutual interest.

India recently held the Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan, which saw the participation of security chiefs of

the five Central Asian nations (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), Iran and Russia. Before arriving in New Delhi, ambassador West visited Islamabad during November 11-13. A press release of the US embassy in Pakistan said: "In meetings of the extended Troika, participants discussed the way forward on Afghanistan. West also held bilateral meetings with Pakistani government officials in which both parties emphasized the importance of pressing the Taliban to uphold its commitments to counterterrorism, the right of

free passage for those who wish to depart Afghanistan, and the rights of all Afghan citizens, including minorities and women." The focus of America has been that of movement of Afghans in and out of the country and humanitarian aid reaching the people directly.

The visit comes as secretary of state Antony R. Blinken held a virtual meeting on November 15 with representatives of #AfghanEvac, an umbrella coalition of more than 100 self-organized groups of veterans, frontline civilians, social workers, attorneys, advocates, non-profits, Congressional staff,

and private sector employees. "Secretary Blinken thanked the organizations represented on the call for their tireless work, dedication and for their partnership with the State Department to help facilitate relocation efforts. The secretary noted the importance of their voices as leaders to continue to hold the government accountable and highlighted the invaluable ongoing, regular coordination between State, the Department of Defense, and #AfghanEvac," said State Department spokesperson Ned Price.

White House sends Kigali amendment on climate-warming gases to Senate

The White House sent an international agreement that requires countries to phase down greenhouse gases frequently found in refrigerators and air conditioners to the U.S. Senate on Tuesday for ratification.

The so-called Kigali amendment to the Montreal Protocol is a global treaty to reduce hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, that was adopted in 2016 but that the United States has not yet ratified. The amendment calls for

the phase-down of HFCs, gases that are significantly more potent than carbon dioxide in contributing to global warming. The move comes shortly after President Joe Biden's trip to Glasgow, Scotland, for the U.N. climate conference. Biden has pledged that the United States will cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 50%-52% by 2030 compared with 2005 levels.

Senior administration officials told Reuters that worldwide

implementation of the amendment could prevent as much as a half degree Celsius (0.9 F) in warming by the end of the century.

Biden, in a message to the Senate, urged ratification "at the earliest date" and said it would help the United States remain a leader in developing alternatives to HFCs and give American businesses access to growing refrigeration and cooling markets abroad.

"Ratification will also ensure the United States continues to have a full voice to represent U.S. economic and environmental interests as implementation of the Kigali Amendment moves forward in coming years," he said.

In September, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finalized a rule that would slash the use of HFCs by 85 percent over the next 15 years. The rule carries out legislation that was

passed with bipartisan support by Congress last year and would make the United States compliant with the Kigali amendment.

Administration officials noted bipartisan support for tackling the issue in the past. The request for the Senate to ratify comes shortly after Biden on Monday signed a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill into law that passed with support from his fellow Democrats and some Republicans.

Nicaraguan president, officials banned from US



US special representative for Afghanistan, Thomas West, is in Delhi after his visit to Pakistan to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. West met India's foreign

The United States on Tuesday imposed an entry ban on Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, his vice-president wife and his government, after elections that were internationally dismissed as illegitimate.

Before the November 7 vote, Nicaraguan authorities detained nearly 40 opposition figures, including seven would-be presidential challengers, assuring victory for long-time ruler Ortega and his wife Rosario Murillo.

"The repressive and abusive acts of the Ortega government and those who support it compel the

United States to act," President Joe Biden said in a proclamation.

"The Ortega government's undemocratic, authoritarian actions have crippled the electoral process and stripped away the right of Nicaraguan citizens to choose their leaders in free and fair elections." On Monday, the United States announced separate financial sanctions against Nicaraguan officials, describing the recent election as a "sham."

Britain and Canada also announced new sanctions against prominent Nicaraguans.

"The physical and psychological

abuse of political prisoners at the hands of police and prison authorities is intolerable and cannot stand," Biden said, accusing Ortega of overseeing corrupt courts, police and security services.

A firebrand Marxist in his youth, Ortega ruled Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990, after leading a guerrilla army that ousted US-backed dictator Anastasio Somoza.

Returning to power in 2007, he has won re-election four times, becoming increasingly dictatorial and quashing presidential term limits.

'Those who play with fire will get burned,' Jinping warns Biden over Taiwan



Chinese President Xi Jinping warned Joe Biden that US support for Taiwanese independence would be "like playing with fire", state media said Tuesday, as the two held a long-awaited video call.

"Taiwanese authorities have repeatedly tried to 'rely on the US for independence'," Xi Jinping was quoted as saying by state media agency Xinhua. "Some people in the US intend to 'use Taiwan to control China'. This trend is very dangerous and is like playing with fire, and those who play with fire will get burned," the Chinese President added.

BIDEN-JINPING SUMMIT

US President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping opened a virtual summit Monday with an appeal for better communication between the superpowers and "guardrails" to avoid conflict.

Speaking from the White House to Xi on a television screen, Biden said they must develop "guardrails" to "ensure that the competition between our countries does not veer into conflict, whether intended or unintended."

He said they would have a "candid" discussion. Xi, speaking from Beijing, called Biden "my old friend," but said the rivals must work more closely. "China and the United States need to increase communication and cooperation," he said.

Wall Street sees first Fed climate change review in 2023

While the US Federal Reserve trails other major central banks in tackling climate change, it's catching up on a critical front: figuring out if rising temperatures could topple a major bank or even the entire financial system.

The potential effects of climate change - namely through rising sea levels, worsening floods and fires, and government policies transitioning away from carbon-heavy industry - could destroy trillions of dollars of assets around the globe. As major lenders to the oil and gas industry, U.S. banks could be in the eye of the storm, according



to regulators and risk management experts. A U.S. Treasury Department-led report warned last month that rising temperatures were an "emerging threat" to financial stability and said regulators

should use scenario analyses to build robust predictive risk-management tools.

Despite being the most influential central bank in the world, the Fed has long lagged its peers in getting a grip on

those risks.

Over the past year, however, the Fed has ramped up pressure on big banks to scan their portfolios for climate change risks and could be in a position to run a formal scenario analysis and release broad findings to the public in 2023, according to seven industry executives with direct knowledge of the discussions who declined to be named.

The previously unreported growing industry consensus shows how regulators are trying to move quickly to execute President Joe Biden's agenda to

incorporate climate risk into the financial regulatory system, with major ramifications for Wall Street banks like JPMorgan Chase & Co (JPM.N) Citigroup (C.N), Wells Fargo & Co (WFC.N), Bank of America Corp (BAC.N), Goldman Sachs Group (GS.N) and Morgan Stanley (MS.N). A formal climate change scenario analysis would give regulators and investors the clearest picture yet of big banks' exposure to climate change, and increase pressure on the industry to make good on pledges cemented at this month's U.N.

Ice on the edge of survival: Warming is changing the Arctic

edge of survival that the U.N. climate negotiations underway in Scotland this week could make the difference between ice and water at the top of the world in the same way that a couple of tenths of a degree matter around the freezing mark, scientists say. Arctic ice sheets and glaciers are shrinking, with some glaciers already gone. Permafrost, the icy soil that traps the potent greenhouse gas methane, is thawing. Wildfires have broken out in the Arctic. Siberia even hit 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius). Even a region called the Last Ice Area showed unexpected melting this year.

In the next couple of decades, the Arctic is likely to see summers with no sea ice.

As she returns regularly to Greenland, Moon, a researcher with the U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center, said she finds herself "mourning and grieving for the things we have lost already" because of past carbon dioxide emissions that trap heat.

But the decisions we make now about how much more carbon pollution Earth emits will mean "an incredibly large difference between how much ice we keep and how much we lose and how quickly," she said.

The fate of the Arctic looms large during the climate talks in Glasgow - the farthest north the negotiations have taken place - because what happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic. Scientists believe the warming there is already contributing to weather calamities elsewhere around the world.

"If we end up in a seasonally sea ice-free Arctic in the summertime, that's something human civilization has never known," said former NASA chief scientist Waleed Abdalati, a University of Colorado environmental researcher. "That's like taking a sledgehammer to the climate system."

What's happening in the Arctic is a runaway effect.

"Once you start melting, that kind of enhances more melt," said University of Manitoba ice scientist Julianne Stroeve.

When covered with snow and ice, the Arctic reflects sunlight and heat. But that blanket is dwindling. And as more sea ice melts in the summer, "you're revealing really dark ocean



surfaces, just like a black T-shirt," Moon said. Like dark clothing, the open patches of sea soak up heat from the sun more readily.

Between 1971 and 2019, the surface of the Arctic warmed three times faster than the rest of the world, according to the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program.

The result?

"The Arctic isn't just changing in temperature," Abdalati said. "It's changing in state. It's becoming a different place."

The 2015 Paris climate agreement set a goal of limiting the warming of the Earth to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial temperatures, or, failing that, keeping it under 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). The world has already gotten 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer since the late 1800s.

The difference between what happens at 1.5 degrees and 2 degrees can hit the Arctic harder than the rest of the world, University of Alaska Fairbanks climate scientist John Walsh, a member of the Arctic monitoring team. "We can save the Arctic, or at least preserve it in many ways, but we're going to lose that if we go above 1.5."

The Arctic itself has blown past 2 degrees Celsius of warming, Stroeve said. It's approaching 9 degrees Celsius (16 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming in November, she said.

For John Waghiyi Jr., the Arctic is not a number or an abstraction. It's been home for 67 years, and he and other native Bering Sea elders have watched the Arctic change because of warming. The sea ice, which allows humans and polar bears to hunt, is shrinking in the summer.

"The ice is very dangerous nowadays. It's very unpredictable," said Waghiyi of Savoonga, Alaska. "The ice pack affects us all, spiritually, culturally and physically, as we need to have it in order to keep harvesting."

The ice is "at the core of our identity," said Dalee Sambo Dorough, international chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, representing 165,000 people in several nations.

This isn't just a problem for people living in the Arctic. It spells

trouble for regions much farther south.

An increasingly large number of studies link Arctic changes to alterations of the jet stream - the river of air that moves weather from west to east - and other weather systems. And those changes, scientists say, can contribute to more extreme weather events, such as floods, drought, the February Texas freeze, or more severe wildfires. Also, the melting of ice sheets and glaciers can add considerably to rising sea levels.

"The fate of places like Miami are tied very closely to the fate of the Greenland," said David Balton, director of the U.S. Arctic Executive Steering Committee, which coordinates U.S. domestic regulations involving the Arctic and deals with other northern nations.

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of things like new cars had been disrupted.

The short-term boost in inflation, Sachs argued, "should be controlled by ending stimulus spending, tightening monetary policy, slashing the budget deficit and increasing OPEC monthly oil production to counter the recent surge in global oil and gas prices." But he urged Democrats to pass Biden's "Build Back Better" social spending bill despite opposition from conservatives who say it will fuel inflation. "If BBB is paid for with taxes, then it won't add to the public debt or create long-term inflationary pressures." Trump gets a delay

"Presidents are not kings," wrote US District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan, "and Plaintiff is not President." She ruled on Tuesday against former President Donald Trump, who was trying to stop the National Archives from turning over records to the House committee investigating the January 6 attack on the Capitol. "Of course, she is right," wrote Michael D'Antonio. "Our government is set up with three branches to allow for checks and balances, and to prevent an all-powerful authoritarian from taking control. This scheme was fashioned by those who abhorred monarchy and sought to build a resilient democracy. Trump was, it seems, the president least interested in democracy and most envious of the world's dictators and strongmen, who are not burdened by oversight." On Thursday, a three-judge panel halted the planned turnover of records to give Trump's lawyers time to present arguments for an appeal. That is routine, wrote Norman Eisen, Joanna Lydgate and E. Danya Perry, but the courts need to act fast.

The sleeping monster awakes

marks so much that it took more than 4 trillion to equal one American dollar.

In the century since, central banks have taken pains to keep inflation in check, and for decades they've largely succeeded. But the global economic disruption sparked by the Covid-19 pandemic may have awakened the inflation monster. On Wednesday, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a 6.2% increase in consumer prices over the past 12 months -- the biggest jump in 31 years. Food prices are up 5%, used cars up 26% and the normally volatile price of gasoline is up nearly 50% over the past year.

Though no one is predicting Weimar-style hyperinflation, with

many economists viewing it as a "transitory" bump, the political danger is clear. President Joe Biden called the inflation surge "worrisome," as Julian Zelizer noted. "For all the attention that has been paid to education wars, the anti-vaccination movement or the fallout from Afghanistan, prices might turn out to be the biggest issue going into 2022."

He pointed out that even when inflation has been moderate -- under 3% -- Republicans were able to use it to score midterm election gains against Democrats in 1966. "For the sake of Democrats," Zelizer wrote, "the President will have to do more than say the situation is worrisome. He will need to forcefully address how he is dealing with these concerns

and how his policies will help to alleviate, rather than aggravate, the underlying pressures causing Americans to pay more for their goods."

Biden "has lost some of the connection he made with voters who embraced him as a centrist leader who would not only restore a sense of normalcy and decency to the country, but would improve the lives of middle-class Americans of all political persuasions, working with leaders of both parties," wrote Frida Ghitis. The economy is in better shape than many Americans realize, Ghitis observed, pointing to falling unemployment and higher household bank balances, but Biden's salesmanship has fallen

short.

Why did inflation rear up? Economist Jeffrey D. Sachs ties it to the partial shutdown of the economy caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. "With tens of millions of service-sector jobs quickly ended, the government resorted to a massive transfer of income -- payments to households and businesses funded by deficits -- especially to keep household disposable income from plummeting. Money sent by the government to most Americans prevented the disastrous loss of income of tens of millions of households, which could have led to a massive collapse of consumer spending." As the pandemic eased, Americans had money to spend but the supply

US Hindu Group Accused Of "Exploiting Labourers Lured From India": Report

filed in New Jersey federal court and amended last month, BAPS has been accused "of luring labourers from India to work on temples near Atlanta, Chicago, Houston and Los Angeles, as well as in Robbinsville, New Jersey, paying them just USD 450 a month."

"The amended lawsuit expanded those claims to include temples around the country where some of the men said they were also sent to work. Hundreds of workers were potentially exploited, the lawsuit claimed," the NYT report said.

The report had in May said that

the complaint had named six men who were among over 200 Indian nationals brought to the US starting from around 2018 on religious visas 'R-1 visas'. The men were made to work "gruelling hours under often dangerous conditions on the New Jersey site", the NYT report had said.

India Civil Watch International (ICWI) had said in a statement in May to PTI that starting in the early hours on May 11, an FBI-led raid rescued around 200 workers, "most of them Dalits, Bahujans, and Adivasis", from the

premises of the Swaminarayan Temple in Robbinsville, New Jersey, reportedly the largest



Hindu temple in the US.

The amended complaint accused BAPS officials of "violating state labour laws and the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act, better known

as RICO, which was created to go after organised crime," the report said.

The complaint lists allegations including "forced labour, trafficking with respect to forced labour, document servitude, conspiracy, and confiscation of immigration documents with the intent to engage in fraud in foreign labour contracting "as well as failure to pay minimum wage."

ICWI had said the workers were being paid USD 1.2 per hour, well below the current US federal minimum wage of USD 7.25 per

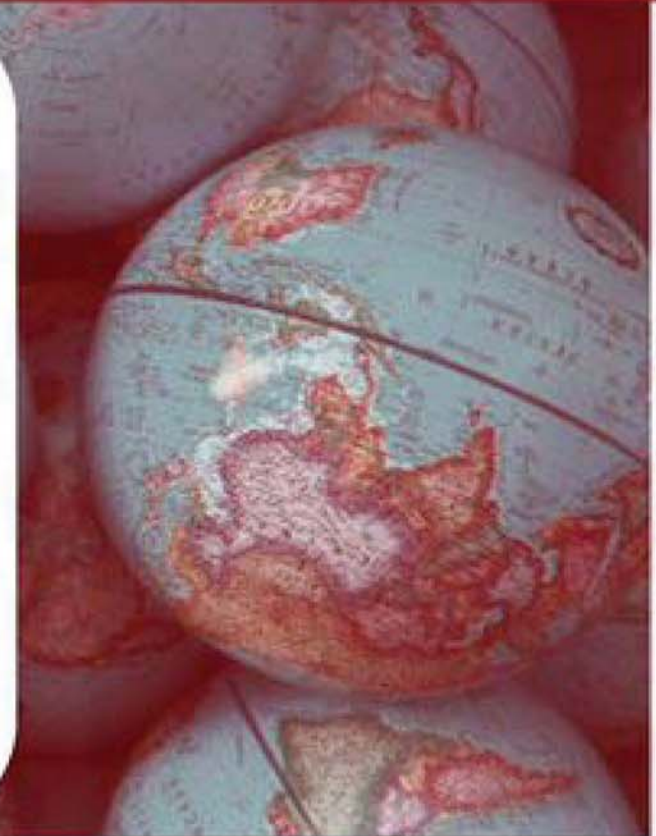
hour, and below even the minimum wage going as far back as 1963.

The NYT report had said the workers "lived in trailers hidden from view and had been promised jobs helping to build the temple" in Robbinsville with "standard work hours and ample time off." However, the workers did manual labour on the site, "working nearly 13 hours a day lifting large stones, operating cranes and other heavy machinery, building roads and storm sewers, digging ditches and shovelling snow, all for the equivalent of about USD 450 per month."

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How Kamala Harris can save her vice presidency

While attacks on Harris because she bought a piece of cake in Chicago or because of how she pronounced the word "the" on a recent trip to France are standard partisan attacks against a politician who has a good chance of being the future Democratic nominee for president, as the highest-ranking woman of color in American political history, Harris also faces a different kind of scrutiny and criticism. Nonetheless, Harris is not entirely blameless. She has flubbed interviews on important issues such as immigration and has clearly failed to emerge as a major player in the administration.

Harris's struggles create a significant dilemma for the Democratic Party as the 2024 election looms three years away. There is a lot that can, and will, change between now and 2024, but there also some certainties. Biden will be old enough that, at the very least, his health and age will be a major campaign issue even if his opponent is former President Donald Trump, who is only a few years younger.

If, for whatever reason, Biden does not run again in 2024, as the sitting Vice President, Harris will be the frontrunner for the nomination. Even if her poll



numbers are low, a competitive primary could be particularly divisive as whoever ran against Harris would have to aggressively go after a high profile African American woman, a move of dubious political wisdom or benefit for a party that relies on African-American women as their backbone. That is a primary fight that most Democrats would like to avoid. None of this is new -- Biden's age was an issue in the 2020 primary, and many understood that in nominating Harris to be his running mate, he was choosing the face of the future of the Democratic Party. That may or may not have been the

right decision, but the cost of revisiting it is high.

Fortunately, there is a way forward for Harris and the administration that could help solve this problem by bolstering Harris and putting her in a position to succeed and generate positive media coverage: Rather than give Harris a vague portfolio that includes tough issues such as immigration, Biden should make the Vice President the face of the administration's biggest success to date -- the infrastructure bill, which he signed into law on Monday.

The bill will lead to many new projects that will bring

investment and jobs all over the country. Every time ground is broken on a new project, such as on bridges and highways in Michigan, rural broadband in Texas or Georgia, or faster Amtrak trains in the Northeast corridor, Harris should be present and explain why it will benefit the community in question. The American people will begin to associate her not with the border or her lack of influence within the White House, but with important accomplishments for their community. Trips to the locations of these infrastructure projects would also give Harris exposure in local media outlets,

which are still important in various parts of the country. The interviews and media availabilities during these trips would provide her an opportunity to flesh out and explain the projects in question and why it is good for the community or state she is visiting.

Traveling around the country this way would also give Harris the opportunity to build relationships with local Democratic Party organizations and the people in those organizations who, at the state level, are extremely important in primaries. Some of these visits would be linked to fundraising for state parties which would further strengthen the bond between Harris and local Democratic Party organizations.

Despite her rough start, Harris is potentially a very strong candidate. Her progressive record in the US Senate is tempered by her years as a prosecutor. She has an impressive personal story and resume. And Harris has a natural base -- African American women -- without whom the Democratic Party has no chance of winning anything. She may not be the perfect nominee if Biden is not up to running again in 2024, but the cost of replacing her is too high and it is still early enough to redefine her vice presidential role.

US travel advisory flags rape in India, asks American visitors to exercise 'increased caution'

"increased caution" while travelling to India, as it said, "Violent crime, such as sexual assault, has occurred at tourist sites and in other locations".

"Indian authorities report rape is one of the fastest growing crimes in India. Violent crime, such as sexual assault, has occurred at tourist sites and in other locations," the advisory stated. This is not the first time that the US has highlighted sexual assault as a concern in its travel advisories for India. It was highlighted earlier in 2018 and 2019, when the US had asked women travellers to exercise caution.

The US State Department follows four categories of travel advisories for countries. Level 2 denotes "exercise increased caution", while Level 1 means "exercise normal precautions". Level 3



indicates "reconsider travel", and finally Level 4 is used for destinations where the advise is "do not travel".

Apart from sexual crimes, the advisory also refers to rise in terrorism, insurgency by ethnic groups and Maoist rebellion as some of the reasons why American travellers should exercise caution while travelling to India. Terrorist attack, civil

unrest in J&K

Apart from sexual crimes, the advisory has also advised American travellers to avoid visiting some popular tourist places in Jammu and Kashmir due to the risk of terrorist attacks and civil unrest.

"Terrorist attacks and violent civil unrest are possible in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Avoid all travel to this state (with the

exception of visits to the eastern Ladakh region and its capital, Leh)," the advisory stated.

It added: "Sporadic violence occurs particularly along the Line of Control (LOC) separating India and Pakistan, and in tourist destinations in the Kashmir Valley: Srinagar, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam. The Indian government prohibits foreign tourists from visiting certain areas along the LOC."

The advisory also talks of "strong military presence" on both sides of the India-Pakistan border.

Caution against travel to northeast, central and eastern India - The advisory has also cautioned Americans against travelling to the northeastern part of India owing to "incidents of violence by ethnic insurgent groups, including bombings of buses, trains, rail lines, and

markets", which "occur occasionally in the northeast."

US government employees are prohibited from traveling to the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Manipur without special authorisation from the US Consulate General in Kolkata, the advisory added.

About central and eastern India, it stated that in these parts Maoist extremist groups or Naxalites are "active in large swath". It has advised American travellers against going to areas of eastern Maharashtra and northern Telangana through western West Bengal, particularly in rural parts of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and on the borders of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Odisha.



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CAA next? How internet reacted to repeal of farm laws by PM Modi

While many sections of society, including the Opposition and farmers, welcomed PM Modi's decision to repeal the farm laws, many opposed the decision by saying the government backtracked on reforms.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced that the Centre has decided to repeal the three controversial farm laws. While many sections of society, including the

Opposition and farmers, welcomed the decision, many opposed the decision by saying the government backtracked on reforms. Addressing the nation on the occasion of Guru Nanak Jayanti,

PM Modi said the three laws were for the benefit of farmers but "we couldn't convince a section of farmers despite best efforts." As soon as PM Modi announced the roll back of the farm

laws, many on social media wondered what other legislations the government would roll back. Soon, #CAA and #Article370 started trending on Twitter in India.

PM Modi says farm laws to be repealed, apologises; Opposition links it to elections

PM Narendra Modi announced on Friday that his government would repeal the three farm laws in the upcoming Parliament session. The farmers have welcomed the move, but they are yet to decide on ending their agitation. On the occasion of Guru Purab, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced that the Centre would repeal the three farm laws, in a major step towards ending the stalemate over the controversial legislations over which hundreds of farmers have been camping at the borders of Delhi for nearly a year.

While PM Modi's move was welcomed by the farmers' unions and opposition parties, the protesting farmers are yet to give out a conclusive word to end their agitation.

Hundreds of farmers have been camping at three places on the Delhi border

since November 2020, demanding the repeal of the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

How did farmers react

The farmers' community, by and large, welcomed PM Modi's decision. Farmers at protest sites of Ghazipur, Tikri and Singhu borders celebrated by bursting crackers, distributing sweets and welcoming the Centre's move.

In a press statement, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of 40 farmers' unions that led the stir, called it a "historic, first victory of farmers". "Historic first victory of farmers who struggled resolutely, unitedly, continuously and peacefully for one year so far in the historic farmers' struggle.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement to repeal three farm laws is a welcome step in the right direction, and the farmers' struggle has led to a reinstatement of democracy and the federal polity in India," the statement read.

However, the SKM said that there are several demands pending, including that related to the minimum support price (MSP). "SKM hopes that the Government of India, which has experienced a major climbdown in this repeal-related announcement, will not allow the announcement to go waste, and will go the full length to fulfill all the legitimate demands of protesting farmers, including statutory legislation to guarantee a remunerative MSP," the SKM statement read. Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait welcomed the Centre's move, but said the protest will not be withdrawn immediately. "We will wait for

What did PM Modi say

Addressing the nation on the occasion of Guru Nanak Jayanti, PM Modi apologised over the three farm laws and said the government would repeal them. He also appealed to the protesting farmers to call off their agitation and return to their homes. "Whatever I did, I did for the farmers and whatever I am doing, I am doing for the country. With your blessings, there was no deficiency in my hard work even earlier. Today I assure you that I will work harder now so that your dreams can come true, the dreams of the country can come true," PM Modi said. PM Modi said the three farm laws were for the benefit of the farmers but his government "could not convince a section of farmers despite our best efforts". "I apologise to the people of the country with true and pure heart... we were not able to convince farmers. There must have been some deficiency in our efforts that we could not convince some farmers," he said.

the day when the farm laws are repealed in Parliament. Along with MSP, the government should talk to farmers on other issues too," he said. Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), an RSS-affiliated farmers group, released a statement saying the move to repeal laws was

okay to avoid further confrontation, but it would not help the farmers. "Such type of arrogant attitude of these so-called farmer leaders is not beneficial for the small farmers of our country in the long run, which comprises nearly 90 per cent of the farming community," it said.



Three farm laws to be rolled back. What were they all about?

More than a year after the Centre enacted the three agriculture laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced withdrawal of the legislation in the coming winter session of Parliament.

The three farm laws, which have meant unprecedented protests by farmers for over a year, will be withdrawn, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a stunning address to the country. PM Modi said the laws will be withdrawn in Parliament during the coming winter session. Here's a look at what these laws, kept in suspension by the Supreme Court, are all about. These laws are — The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act provides for setting up a mechanism allowing the farmers to sell their farm produces outside the Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMCs). Any licence-holder trader can buy the produce from the farmers at mutually agreed prices. This trade of farm produces will be free of mandi tax imposed by the state governments.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance

and Farm Services Act allows farmers to do contract farming and market their produces freely. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act is an amendment to the existing Essential Commodities Act. This law now frees items such as foodgrains, pulses, edible oils and onion for trade except in extraordinary (read crisis) situations. The government had presented these laws as reforms akin to the 1991-opening of the Indian economy linking it with the globalised markets. It had argued that the three laws open up new opportunities for the farmers so that they can earn more from their farm produces. The government had said the new laws will help to strengthen basic farm sector infrastructure through greater private investments. Successive governments have found financial constraints in investing in farm and rural infrastructure. It is argued that with food markets growing exponentially in India, private players would make agriculture profitable for the farmers. But farmers were, and still are, worried over MSP assurance. The MSP assurance emerged as the main sticking point in the farmers' protest.

There has been an apprehension among the farmers that allowing outside-APMC trade of farm produces would lead to lesser buying by the government agencies in the approved mandis. The protesting farmers have said the new laws would thus make the MSP system irrelevant and they would not have any assured income from their farming. Right now, the government announces fixed MSP for around two dozen crops. However, paddy, wheat and some pulses are the ones that are procured by the government agencies at the APMC mandis. The working of the MSP system has been such over the years that it benefits only a handful of farmers at all-India level. The Shanta Kumar committee set up by the Narendra Modi government in 2015 said only six per cent farmers benefit from the MSP regime. The catch here is that for farmers of some states such as Punjab and Haryana, the MSP system has worked well. In these two states procurement of paddy and wheat range around 75-80 per cent. So, the fear that the MSP system may crumble and get

dismantled after the new farm laws are implemented became a very emotive issue for the farmers of Punjab and Haryana. And, that is why they have been most vocal in their protest against the farm laws, demanding that the MSP should be made mandatory for both APMC and private mandis. **Why was the government reluctant?**

The MSP system is politically sensitive and financially unviable for the government. Some economists have called the MSP system of India one of the costliest government food procurement programmes in the world. There are around 7,000 APMC mandis across the country from where the government agencies including the Food Corporation of India (FCI) purchase farm produces. However, in a practical sense, only the paddy and wheat are procured by the FCI and other agencies for the want of funds. The FCI sells these foodgrains to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families through the Public Distribution System (PDS) at a concessionary rate. This is loss-making or welfare-oriented practice. The MSPs have seen consistent increase making the FCI pay more for

the farm produces and bear more losses as the PDS rates remain almost the same. Rising procurement means the FCI godowns are overflowing, and rising MSP means that the FCI cannot sell its stocks in the international market at a profit. The government compensates the FCI for its losses, and at times sells foodgrains to some countries under an agreement. The rising food bill under the existing MSP system of the government translates into pressure on the fiscal deficit in the annual budget. This is the reason why every government in the past several years has tried to find a way out. Some states have been unhappy with the farm laws as they deny them the right to collect fees from outside-mandi trade of farm produces. The fee varies from 1-2 per cent to about 8-9 per cent in different states, which argue that they already have limited sources of revenue collection and are heavily dependent on the Centre for meeting their expenditure needs. This explains why states, particularly those ruled by the Opposition parties, supported farmers' protest over the new farm laws.



The Cow-Shaped Hole in Biden's Methane Plan

Agriculture emits more methane than any other sector of the economy. So why is it getting a pass?

President Joe Biden made a bid for global leadership on climate change action by launching the first international agreement to reduce planet-warming methane pollution at this month's U.N. climate conference in Glasgow. Days later, the White House unveiled the details of its plan to reduce U.S. methane emissions, calling it a "whole-of-government initiative that uses all available tools," including "commonsense regulations," to reduce methane emissions "from all major sources."

That would be While the Biden action plan includes serious and essential new regulations on methane emitted by oil and natural gas operations, the plan includes no serious actions - none - to regulate our nation's largest industrial source of methane emissions: animal agriculture.

In fact, the Biden administration's action plan misrepresents and minimizes the livestock sector's contribution to the methane emergency. According to the action plan, the oil and gas sector is the "largest industrial source" of methane emissions in the U.S. Landfills are "the second largest industrial source." But the cited Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data does not support this. Take a look at the pie chart included in the action plan:

According to the EPA's own data, the

animal agriculture industry is the No. 1 industrial source of methane emissions in the U.S., contributing an estimated 37 percent of total human-caused emissions. As the chart shows, cows and other ruminant animals ("enteric fermentation" on the pie chart) emit 27 percent of the total methane emissions, and livestock manure ("manure management") emits another 10 percent. For some reason, the agency has chosen to list those two livestock sources separately, but together they clearly are the largest category. The oil and gas industries are second, responsible for 30 percent of emissions, and landfills are third, responsible for 17 percent. This creative accounting and the administration's policies belittle the livestock industry's role in the methane emergency. While Biden and other U.S. officials are preaching the importance of slashing methane emissions to prevent catastrophic warming and imposing tough new methane regulations on fossil fuel companies, they are allowing super-polluting meat and dairy corporations to continue to emit massive amounts of the same greenhouse gas with impunity.

Methane has driven about one-third of global warming to date and emissions associated with U.S. animal agriculture continue to grow. Reducing carbon dioxide pollution - which can warm the planet for centuries or millennia once released - is vital to stabilizing the climate in the long term, but it will take decades for those cuts to slow the planet's rate

of warming. By contrast, reducing methane - which is significantly more powerful than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere but mostly degrades within ten years - presents an unparalleled opportunity to slow the rate of warming nearly immediately.

It's an opportunity that the Biden administration is poised to squander. The Clean Air Act gives the EPA the power to regulate methane pollution from animal agriculture operations without congressional approval. Instead of using that power, the White House's climate plan for animal agriculture consists entirely of subsidizing "voluntary" and "incentive-based" methane-reducing technologies and practices. These industry-promoted measures, such as adding new ingredients to livestock feed that reduce methane production and capturing (and later burning) methane released by factory farm manure lagoons, promise to reduce "emissions intensity" - the emissions produced per pound of meat and dairy products - but they don't solve the problem.

Subsidizing these quick fixes does nothing to limit the sector's total emissions, particularly if production by the world's largest meat and dairy corporations continues to increase as expected. Nor does it address the forces driving our continued production of far more meat than the planet can sustain: consumer demand remains high because factory-farmed foods are artificially cheap.

Coal "Phase Down" Not India's Language, Introduced By US, China: Report



"Phase down" of unabated coal was not India's language at the recently concluded international climate conference COP 26 at Glasgow and was introduced by the US and China, government sources close to PTI said on Wednesday, and added it was "unfair" to criticise India for it.

On the condition of anonymity, the sources also asserted that the term "phase down" was already there in the text of the conference.

The Glasgow Climate Pact states that the use of "unabated coal should be phased down", as should subsidies for fossil fuels. Several countries had criticised India for making the wording weaker than the initial proposals, with the final text calling for only a "phase down" and not a "phase out" of coal.

Explaining how the whole situation unfolded, official sources said that many countries had objected to the initial text of "phasing out of coal and fossil fuel subsidies" after which a consensus was reached among the parties and a new text was arrived at which contained the term "phase down" instead of "phase out".

"It was the Chair of the COP 26, Alok Sharma, who had asked India to introduce the new text on the floor," an official said, adding that it was "unfair" on the part of those blaming India for promoting phase down, rather than phase out coal power, the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Almost 200 nations at COP 26 in Glasgow had accepted the deal on November 13, which aimed at keeping the key global warming target alive, but with a change in language from "phase out of coal" to "phase down".

Another official from the government said that the term "phase down" was already there in the text. He said that India was certainly not comfortable with "phase out" of coal because peak power load in India still comes from coal.

However, it did not introduce the term "phase down" for which it is being deeply criticised, he said.

The official said that "all fossil fuels are bad. Our concern was why coal was being singled out at COP 26. The US is done using coal and has moved to other fossil fuels so they were comfortable doing away with it. This was our problem. "However, we did not introduce the term 'phasing down'. It came from the US and China.



'People's Padma' Awards shows the best of India, and not just the elite

What does Karan Johar have in common with Sharif Chacha and Tulasi Gowda? Now, a Padma Award. On 8 November, President Ram Nath Kovind conferred the prestigious civilian awards in New Delhi to the 2020 and 2021 recipients. The Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri are the highest civilian awards - after the Bharat Ratna - recognising the contributions to various fields like social work, science, medicine, literature, sports, and art.

The list of winners has made headlines all week, signalling that it's no longer an award reserved for the elite. The inspiring stories of the winners - from the barefoot environmentalist from Karnataka Tulasi Gowda and transgender folk artist Manjamma Jogati to "elephant man" Dr Kushal Konwar Sarma and orange seller and school builder Harekala Hajabba - prove that the awards truly honour significant achievements to India's heritage and development.

Even industrialist Anand Mahindra, who would have been considered a typical recipient of the award five years ago, tweeted that he felt "undeserving" of the award in comparison to the individuals "making seminal contributions

to the improvement of society at grassroots levels." That's why the "Peoples' Padma" is ThePrint's Newsmaker of the Week.

Democratising the Padma Awards

Since the Padma Awards were first introduced in 1954, the type of awardee has slowly been changing. Counting former president APJ Abdul Kalam and Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen among its winners, the awards have begun recognising a wider range of people.

A major reason is that the awards themselves have become more democratic. While it had already begun honouring more Indians who weren't popularly known, the Narendra Modi government launched a website in 2017 where people could nominate candidates. The selection process was also changed, and the Padma Awards Committee was expanded. That year, winners included "granny with a sword" Meenakshi Amma who had been practising and teaching Kalaripayattu for about 70 years, and folk singer Sukri Bommagowda, the "nightingale of Halakki," for preserving cultural heritage and social activism.

The number of nominations for the Padma Awards has also increased manifold. The government received 46,000

nominations for the 2020 awards - in 2014, there were only 2,200 nominations. The government also launched the Padma Quiz in 2018, an online quiz that allows winners to attend the Padma Award ceremony in person at Rashtrapati Bhavan. From nominating deserving people to getting a chance to attend the awards ceremony, the government has changed the way people interact with the awards itself. They are now being referred to as "Peoples' Padma" because they're beginning to represent the best of what India's 1.4 billion population has to offer - and not just the elite.

This has clearly struck a chord. Videos of Manjamma blessing President Kovind went viral, and social media users have been celebrating unconventional winners as unsung heroes. It's proof that Indians like seeing public winners reflect the country's diverse social fabric - instead of highlighting how far we have left to go, it's a moment of congratulations for getting this far.

Encouraging people to participate in the award process has made it more accessible, and rightfully more audacious. Those who would never have considered themselves winning some of the country's highest civilian awards now can.

Rule of experts

That said, it's important to note that

the majority of the award recipients are more run-of-the-mill. This might be an ironic statement about people receiving an award for extraordinary achievements. Even if they don't like to admit it, government-led awards tend to favor a certain type of person: popular, well-educated, well-respected, and well-connected. Having influential friends is almost a prerequisite to being considered, and some pro-government campaigning also helps (à la Kangana Ranaut.) Civilian awards are also sometimes used as bargaining chips. In fact, the United Kingdom has a well-documented history of swapping civilian awards for favours. Just earlier this year, Prince Charles' closest aide quit his job after it was found that he offered a knighthood to a Saudi businessman who had donated £1.5 million to their charities.

This isn't to say that the more predictable winners are not deserving. They have undoubtedly contributed to their field of expertise in some way, even if it's debatable. However, academic and political theorist Timothy Mitchell, in his book *Rule of Experts*, wrote about how theoretical knowledge and expertise can actually work adversely in different contexts.

In open letter to US, Taliban warns of refugee exodus if assets remain frozen



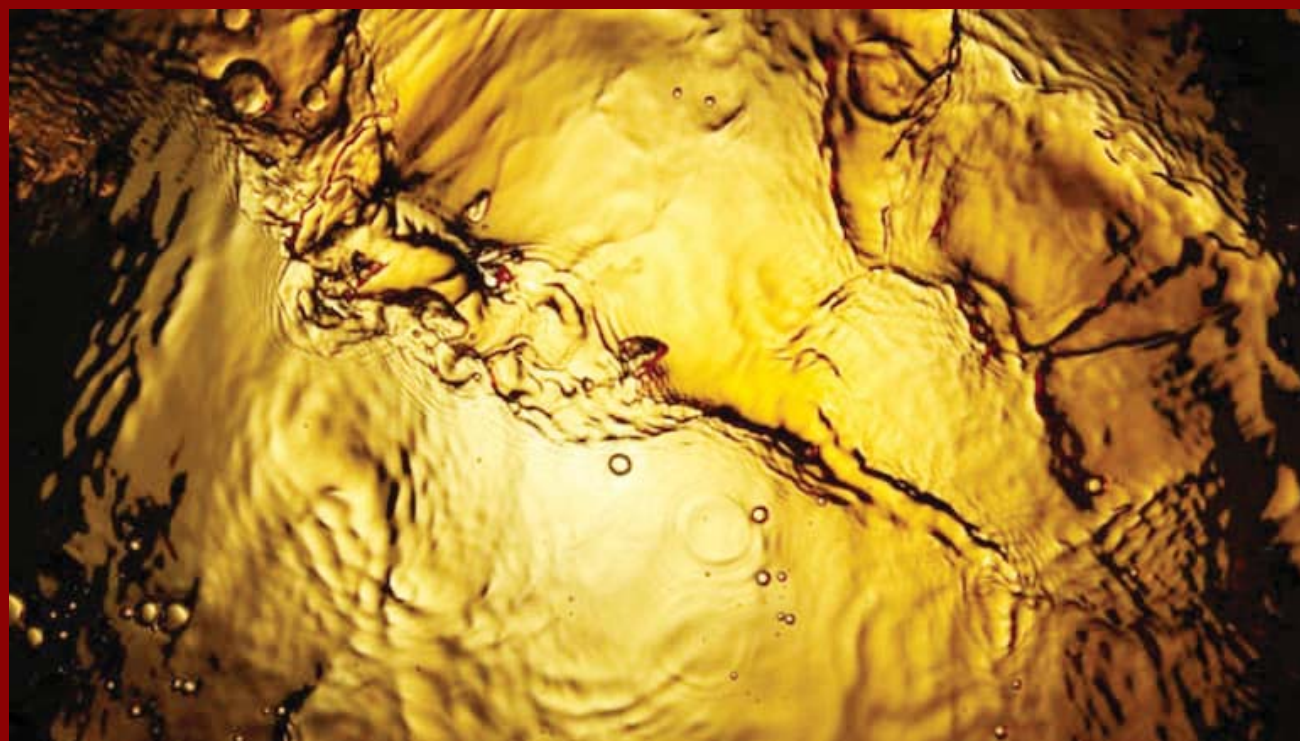
Taliban's acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said if the current situation prevails, it will exacerbate the humanitarian crisis.

The Taliban's top diplomat warned of an Afghan refugee exodus if the U.S. continues to block the release of some \$9 billion of the country's assets.

"We are concerned that if the current situation prevails, the Afghan government and people will face problems and will become a cause for mass migration in the region and world," Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban's acting foreign minister, said in an open letter to the U.S. Congress. It will also exacerbate the humanitarian crisis, he said. The statement comes shortly before the United Nations Security Council holds a meeting to address the Afghan crisis. The country's economy is reeling as the Taliban struggles to stabilize Afghanistan's finances, with the World Food Program saying more than half of the population faces acute food insecurity.

Muttaqi also said that Afghanistan is now secure under the Taliban leadership, posing no threat to the world and willing to engage in positive cooperation. He urged the U.S. to invest in the manufacturing, agriculture and mining sectors of the country. The U.S. had blocked the assets on concerns about the militant group's continued links with terrorism, human rights abuses and failure to build an inclusive government.

As many as 5,000 Afghans already illegally cross the border to reach Iran daily, with 300,000 having arrived in the country since August, according to a Nov. 10 report by the Norwegian Refugee Council. More than three million Afghan refugees are already in Iran and the other 1.5 million in neighboring Pakistan.



How did gold reach Earth?

German research team points to a black hole

Heavy elements that we find on Earth today were once formed under extreme conditions inside stars, in stellar explosions, and during the collision of neutron stars. The elements were deposited on the planet over millions of years of meteor bombardments that shaped Earth. However, research is still going on over the formation of elements like gold and uranium. A research team from Germany might have cracked the source of these elements: the biggest force at the centre of the galaxy, a black hole. Researchers from the GSI Helmholtzzentrum für Schwerionenforschung in Darmstadt, together with scientists from Belgium and Japan using computer simulations have shown the synthesis of heavy elements in black holes.

Researchers have long been looking at cataclysmic events as the source of production of these chemical elements and the detection of gravitational waves opened a new door

towards it. Observation of gravitational waves and electromagnetic radiation originating from a neutron star merger in 2017 suggested that many heavy elements can be produced and released in these cosmic collisions. "However, the question remains open as to when and why the material is ejected and whether there may be other scenarios in which heavy elements can be produced," the researchers said in a statement.

A high number of neutrons is a basic requirement for the synthesis of heavy elements like gold, as it enables the rapid neutron-capture process or r-process. Black holes with their accretion disk of dense and hot matter are a promising candidate as the system is formed both after the merger of two massive neutron stars and during a so-called collapsar, the collapse and subsequent explosion of a rotating star.

"In our study, we systematically investigated for the first time the conversion rates of neutrons and

protons for a large number of disk configurations by means of elaborate computer simulations, and we found that the disks are very rich in neutrons as long as certain conditions are met," explains Dr Oliver Just from the Relativistic Astrophysics group of GSI's research division Theory.

He added that the decisive factor is the total mass of the disk. The more massive the disk, the more often neutrons are formed from protons through the capture of electrons under emission of neutrinos and are available for the synthesis of heavy elements by means of the r-process. However, if the mass of the disk is too high, the inverse reaction plays an increased role so that more neutrinos are recaptured by neutrons before they leave the disk. These neutrons are then converted back to protons. The result provides strong evidence that neutron star mergers producing accretion disks with these exact masses could be the point of origin for a large fraction of the heavy elements.

How fast is the universe expanding? Indian researchers find answers in gravitational waves that hit Earth



It was Edwin Hubble who in 1929 proposed that the universe was expanding and galaxies moving farther away from us. This laid the groundwork for understanding the origins of our universe and its evolution, Indian researchers have now measured a significantly improved estimate of the expansion rate of the Universe, thanks to gravitational waves that have been detected recently.

An international team of researchers including Indian scientists from the LIGO-India Scientific Collaboration (LISC) have analysed the recently detected gravitational waves to measure an improved estimate of the expansion rate of the Universe, which is known as the Hubble constant. Gravitational waves are an invisible ripple in space that was first discovered by Albert Einstein over 100 years ago. The 35 newly detected gravitational waves take the total number of such observations to 90 since we first detected it in 2015. 32 of these ripples were detected from pairs of merging black holes, while three others likely come from the collision of a neutron star and a black hole.

Dr Surhud More of the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy & Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune played a key role in the planning, execution and review of the analyses of the determination of the Hubble constant using gravitational waves data and associated galaxy catalogues.

HOW IS THE EXPANSION OF THE UNIVERSE MEASURED?

Gravitational waves act as a siren in the universe, their distances can be inferred from how loud they appear on the detectors. A precise measurement of the expansion rate of the universe requires inference of how fast the galaxies that host these events move away from us.

Antibodies found in breast milk of both Covid infected, vaccinated moms: Study

Mothers who contract COVID-19 infection and those who get vaccinated against the disease produce breast milk with active SARS-CoV-2 antibodies, according to a study. However, the study published recently in the journal JAMA Pediatrics does not imply that breast milk antibodies can provide protection against COVID-19 for nursing children. The researchers collected samples from 77 mothers -- 47 in the infected group, 30 in the

vaccine group -- to determine the level of antibodies in breast milk over time.

Mothers who had disease-acquired immunity produced high levels of Immunoglobulin A (IgA) antibodies against the virus in breast milk, while vaccine-acquired immunity produced robust Immunoglobulin G (IgG) antibodies, they said.

According to the researchers, both antibodies provided neutralisation against SARS-CoV-2, the first time such

evidence has been discovered for both IgA and IgG antibodies.

A neutralising antibody defends a cell from an infectious particle by preventing any effect it has biologically.

"It's one thing to measure antibody concentrations, but it's another to say that antibodies are functional and can neutralise the SARS-CoV-2 virus," said study co-author Bridget Young, an assistant professor at the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC), US. "One of the

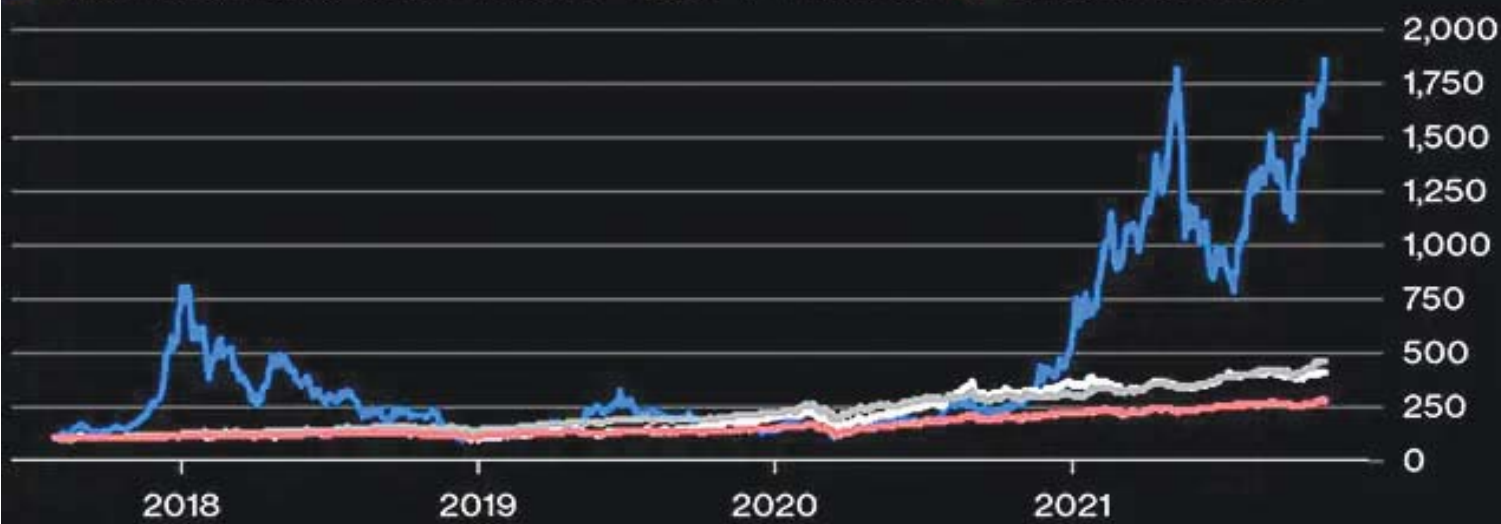
exciting findings in this work is that breast milk from both mothers with COVID-19 infection, and from mothers receiving mRNA vaccination contained these active antibodies that were able to neutralise the virus," Young said. The study represents the longest time period that disease-acquired antibodies have been examined post-illness, and the results showed that these antibodies exist for three months after infection, the researchers

said. For vaccinated mothers, the study found evidence of a mild-to-modest decline in antibodies, on average, three months post-vaccination. "The trend in breast milk antibodies aligns with what we see in vaccination sera," said study co-author Kirsi Jarvinen-Seppo, Chief of Pediatric Allergy and Immunology at URMC. "After a few months, the antibodies trend downward, but the levels are still significantly above what they were pre-vaccine," Jarvinen-Seppo said.

Volatile Market

Cryptocurrencies have experienced some wild swings in recent years

Bloomberg Galaxy Crypto Index / Apple / Microsoft / Nasdaq 100 Index

Source: Bloomberg
Results are indexed to 100 starting in July 2017

BloombergOpinion

Is Crypto Really Worth \$3 Trillion? Here's The Math

The total value of all cryptocurrency assets has just exceeded \$3 trillion, according to Bloomberg News. It's such a big number that it needs some context to be meaningful. Consider Microsoft Corp. and Apple Inc., which have market capitalizations that recently topped \$2.5 trillion. So, the entire crypto sector is around 20 per cent more valuable than the equity of the two biggest tech companies.

The previous crypto bull run peaked at the end of 2017 at about \$800 billion, also about 20

per cent higher than Microsoft and Apple at the time. Over the following year, crypto crashed almost 90 per cent, while Microsoft, Apple and the Nasdaq 100 Index didn't change much. By December 2018, crypto was worth only a bit more than 10 per cent of the largest tech companies. But over the next three years, crypto recouped the lost ground and is back at its peak valuation compared to tech companies. Analyzing crypto valuation is difficult. There are three main approaches. One is to consider

the sector like a tech company. There are thousands of crypto ideas out there, generating useful services. Some of them, like peer-to-peer financial services and smart contracts, are traditional services that crypto can arguably deliver cheaper and better than centralized finance. Others are entirely new end-user services, or are crypto-to-crypto, meaning things that do not deliver services directly to consumers but allow consumer-facing crypto to operate better.

How does the total future value

of all crypto services to end users compare to the potential future revenues of Apple or Microsoft? I'd say the potential of crypto is far greater than any one company today, but the risk is far higher.

Crypto may never generate significant profits to investors, while Apple and Microsoft have large revenues and profits.

Those companies also have employees and assets, and histories of developing valuable new businesses.

Even if crypto growth continues, the value may be captured by

users and developers, not by people who own coins today. Regulation may force crypto investors to take profits in crypto services rather than traditional currency.

Anyway, taking this view, you have to be an optimist to like crypto at current prices. The price-to-earnings ratio for the S&P 500 Index is near all-time highs, tech company valuations are particularly stratospheric and crypto is selling at its all-time high ratio to the largest tech companies.

Froth upon froth upon froth. Moreover, there's been no obvious breakthrough good news from crypto to justify the run-up in prices. Unless you're sure that "this time is different," crypto values seem likely to revert to mean. That doesn't mean a crash, but it could mean years of mediocre returns. Although there are plenty of crypto assets that are promising investments, it's hard to see much short-term upside for the fundamental value-based on real services delivered to real end-users-of the entire crypto universe.

A second way to get a handle on crypto value is to consider it a separate economy. This is what I did in 2013 when I forecast crypto would represent two per cent of the total economy in 10 years. So, I would keep two per cent of my portfolio allocated to crypto, buying when prices are low and selling when they are high. Over the years that has generated profits that now make up 40 per cent of my wealth. And if crypto goes to zero tomorrow, I'm still 38 per cent to the good.

Chinese Land Grab On Bhutanese Territory, 4 Villages Built In 1 Year

New satellite images tweeteout by a leading satellite imagery expert on Chinese military development, shows purported construction of Chinese villages in Bhutanese territory over the last year. Multiple new villages are seen spreading through an area roughly 100 square km. The disputed land lies near the Doklam plateau where India and China had a faceoff in 2017, after which China bypassed Indian defences to resume road construction activity in the region, the original point of contention between New Delhi and Beijing.

The new construction on Bhutanese soil is particularly worrying for India since India has historically advised Bhutan on its External Relations policy and continues to train its



Image tweeted by @detresfa

armed forces. Bhutan has faced constant Chinese pressure to renegotiate its land boundaries -- the

contours of this agreement have never been entirely spelled out and it remains to be seen if the construction of these new villages on its soil is a part of this agreement. The tweet by @detresfa --- a global researcher with The Intel Lab, which features deep analysis by geopolitical intelligence experts -- read:

The villages were constructed between May 2020 and November 2021. Last year, NDTV had reported by China was constructing a village close to the Doklam plateau, where the Chinese and Indian militaries had a tense standoff in 2017.

Images posted by a senior journalist with the Chinese state media showed that the village was 2 km within Bhutan's territory, very close to Doklam.



7.5 years of Modi:

Good 'output' numbers like houses & toilets but not 'outcomes' like poverty

Modi's pre-2020 economic record was not a 'disaster' like Manmohan Singh predicted, nor a march to double-digit growth. Covid saw a period of bungling, then learning from mistakes.

Narendra Modi is a fortnight away from the half-way mark of his second term in office, having been sworn in on 30 May 2019; and three-quarters of the way through the 10 years he had sought to transform India. How should one assess his economic record? Since Covid's impact was felt from late March of 2020, it would make sense to consider Modi's first six years as one group, and treat the subsequent period separately. That produces an odd coincidence: The official figures show that in his first six years GDP growth was almost exactly the same as in the last six years (2008-14) of the Manmohan Singh government: 48.6 per cent for Modi, compared to 48.4 per cent for Singh.

So Modi's economic record till 2019-20 was not the "disaster" that Singh had predicted, nor the confident march to double-digit growth that the NITI Aayog and others had blithely forecast. If anything, there was a steady loss of momentum. The prime minister's acolytes rightly argue that his record would have been better if he had not inherited the bad debt problem. On the other hand, he benefited from a sharp drop in oil prices as soon as he took charge, and that boosted GDP growth in his first couple of years even as it crimped inflation and improved the trade balance.

On their part, Modi's critics point to the damage caused by demonetisation and a defective goods and services tax, especially to the informal sector, and therefore to employment. If one were to set aside the human cost of disruption and unemployment and look at pure economic growth, India muddled along much like before. If, that is, you buy the official statistics. There are those who don't, who point to export stagnation and other faltering indicators since 2011, like credit growth, corporate profits, and investment. Modi's signature effort has been on two fronts. One is the use of technology to make government programmes more effective and better targeted, and the second is the expansion of mostly existing welfare programmes - in some cases achieving a quantum leap. The "output" numbers are impressive, whether it be new houses and toilets built, new bank and gas connections, the rapid expansion of renewable energy capacity, medical insurance, and now tap water. But the key "outcome" numbers that should reflect this output surge - e.g. better health and education attainments, a lower poverty headcount, or reduced air pollution - don't show up much, if at all. Poverty may, in fact, have increased if one takes into account the stagnation or drop in consumption as well as in employment. So we have a new duality: Many millions have access to benefits or mod cons that they did not enjoy before, yet they also wait for the promised "achhe din" (good days) - in essence more work for better pay. Then there is the Covid phase, a period of bungling, then learning from mistakes. The first national lockdown was a gross error (remember those migrants), so the second round was handled differently. The vaccination programme started slowly and late, but then picked up momentum - only to have lost it again. The country was not ready for the second round of Covid, having already declared victory over the pandemic, but the government scrambled to recover. The official death toll is approaching half a million, but independent estimates place it at multiples of that. The economy suffered sharply in 2020-21, but has seen an equally sharp recovery. On every metric, some countries have done better, others worse. Meanwhile, Modi's governance style has become clear: Make expansive promises (like doubling farmers' incomes), drive officials to deliver against ambitious programme targets, emphasise the successes and divert attention from the failures by presenting new goals, and do ceaseless image projection. If the output-outcome duality remains it is because this government focuses on specific programmes, has a patchy record on sector reform, and is weakest on the broad goals of faster growth, employment creation and poverty reduction.



Sensex, Nifty fall as pharma stocks underperform: Check top gainers and losers

Indian shares fell on Wednesday and touched their lowest level in about a week, pressured by pharmaceutical stocks and a 2% fall in shares of oil-to-chemicals conglomerate Reliance Industries.

The blue-chip NSE Nifty 50 index ended down 0.56% at 17,898.65 and the benchmark S&P BSE Sensex was down 0.52% to 60,008.33. Both indexes touched their lowest since Nov. 11.

Leading losses, the Nifty Pharma Index fell 1.3% to touch its lowest level in nearly three weeks after Strides Pharma Science and Glenmark Pharmaceuticals fell around 3%. Reliance and Axis Bank, weighed the most on the blue-chip Nifty 50, falling about 2% each. The Nifty Energy index, a sub-index of oil and gas companies such as Reliance, Indian Oil Corporation and Adani Transmission, fell 0.5% after crude prices declined. Auto stocks bucked the trend to rise 0.71%, helped by shares of Tata Motors and Maruti Suzuki India.

The sub-index has rallied this week on media reports of an easing chip shortage, with India's finance ministry also saying on Wednesday that it expected an improvement in semiconductor supplies. In global markets, the dollar jumped on Wednesday, as strong US retail sales data fuelled bets on an earlier Federal Reserve rate hike. Shares in Europe made slim gains after Asian markets had wobbled on worries about COVID-19. Top 5 gainers and losers on Sensex:

Gainers % Change

MARUTI	+2.77%
ASIANPAINT	+2.47%
POWERGRID	+2.08%
NTPC	+1.68%
ITC	+1.68%
Losers	% Change
AXISBANK	-1.95%
RELIANCE	-1.91%
KOTAKBANK	-1.51%
BHARTIARTL	-1.39%
TITAN	-1.28%

Top 5 gainers and losers on Nifty 50:

Gainers	% Change
MARUTI	+2.36%
ASIANPAINT	+2.36%
SBILIFE	+2.35%
TATAMOTORS	+1.80%
NTPC	+1.68%
Losers	% Change
UPL	-3.18%
RELIANCE	-2.19%
CIPLA	-2.09%
BRITANNIA	-2.04%
AXISBANK	-1.95%

Despite push, significant gap exists in private consumption, investment: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das



In a pragmatic assessment, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Tuesday said that India can grow at a remarkably quick pace and "there are numerous indicators that suggest that economic recovery is now taking hold". But he felt that the "economy is yet to cover a lot of ground before it gets broad-based and entrenched".

He also stressed the need for private investments as "there still existed a significant gap in both private consumption and investment, relative to their pre-pandemic levels in 2019-20".

He said, "This points to the need for sustained impetus so that growth could return to, or better still, exceed the pre-pandemic trend." Das was addressing the eighth SBI Banking & Economics Conclave on Tuesday, November 16, in Mumbai his first since the pandemic began in March 2020. The RBI governor's optimism about the economy reflected the central bank's unchanged 9.5% growth forecast for the fiscal despite economists revising their assessment to 8.5-10%.

Emphasising the need for a more inclusive and participatory approach, Das flagged the severe dent the pandemic had caused. He said, "While it is heartening to note that the economy is gradually getting back on its feet after a devastating second wave of Covid, recovery has progressed unevenly."

Realtor Lalit Goyal routed home buyers' funds to foreign countries, Rs 2,600 crore under pobe: ED

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday arrested real estate tycoon and IREO Group chief Lalit Goyal on charges of diverting funds of home buyers and investors through various entities based in tax haven countries and his involvement in round tripping. Lalit Goyal, who has been sent to the ED custody for seven days by a special court, is being investigated under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) for his alleged role in cheating, siphoning funds of home buyers, investors and others. The ED had initiated a money laundering investigation on the basis of FIRs registered by Haryana Police and Delhi Police against IREO Private Limited, IREO Fiveriver Private Limited, its chief Lalit Goyal and others. "Modus operandi adopted by the group includes routing of funds from various entities based in

tax havens countries like British Virgin Islands (BVI), Mauritius etc, diversion of funds by way of buy back of equity shares, recording of fictitious expenses in the books of accounts, writing off project in progress, loans and advances to sister concerns and round tripping of funds through shell companies," said the ED. The officials have also alleged that total funds involved in the case is over Rs 2600 crore, part

of which is proceeds of crime. Investigation, according to officials, has further revealed that Lalit Goyal is named beneficiary of a Guernsey-based overseas trust, which owns and controls entities holding assets outside India. Pandora Papers leak has also named four entities, which are allegedly beneficially owned by Lalit Goyal with a registered address in British Virgin Islands. These four

entities hold assets having total value of more than USD 77.73 million (Rs 575 crore). Lalit Goyal was detained at the Delhi airport in the wee hours on November 11, 2021 in the wake of the lookout circular issued against him by ED, while he was trying to leave the country. "During Investigation, Lalit Goyal was non-cooperative and did not divulge any relevant information," added the ED.

Explained: What is space debris and how dangerous is it



Russia's test on Monday to blow up one of its own satellites in space has drawn criticism for endangering the crew of the International Space Station and, experts say, created a debris field that has increased risks to space activities for years. **WHAT IS SPACE DEBRIS AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?**

Space debris, or space junk, consists of discarded launch vehicles or parts of a spacecraft that float around in space hundreds of miles above the Earth, risking collision with a satellites or a space station. Debris can also be caused by an explosion in space or when countries conduct missile tests to destroy their own satellites by missiles. Apart from Russia, China, the United States and India have shot down satellites, creating space debris.

As space debris orbits around the earth at tremendous speeds - about 15,700 miles per hour (25,265 kph) in low Earth orbit - it could cause significant damage to a satellite or a spacecraft in case of a collision.

"Every satellite that goes into orbit has the potential of becoming space debris," Professor Hugh Lewis, head of the Astronautics Research Group at the University of Southampton, said in an interview.

With the launch of more satellites from companies such as Elon Musk's Starlink and OneWeb satellite constellation, near Earth space will likely see more space debris.

HOW BIG IS THE DEBRIS?

The U.S. government tracks about 23,000 pieces of debris larger than a softball orbiting the Earth.

There are half a million pieces of debris larger than 1 centimetre and 100 million pieces of debris about one millimetre or larger.

Debris, particularly near the International Space Station, orbits the Earth 15 to 16 times a day, increasing the risk of collision.

The European Space Agency (ESA) estimates the total mass of all space objects in Earth orbit weigh more than 9,600 tonnes.

In a few decades, if the build-up of space debris continues, some regions of space might become unusable, Holger Krag, head of the ESA's Space Safety Programme Office, said in an interview.

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE CURRENT TEST?

The Kosmos 1408 satellite that was destroyed on Monday was launched in 1982 and weighed more than 2,000 kg (4,410 lbs), creating a significant amount of space debris.

The test generated more than 1,500 pieces of "trackable orbital debris" and would likely spawn hundreds of thousands of smaller fragments, the U.S. Space Command said in a statement.

The crew of the space station were directed to take shelter in their docked spaceship capsules for two hours after the test in case they needed to leave due to a collision with debris.

The discovery was done by the exoplanet search and study group at the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad.

Indian astronomers discover planet bigger than Jupiter orbiting its sun in just 3.2 days

Indian astronomers have discovered a planet that is bigger than Jupiter and is orbiting too close to a star in its system. The exoplanet is dubbed TOI 1789b, orbiting an ageing star that is 1.5 times that of our Sun and located 725 light-years away. The discovery was done by the exoplanet search and study group at the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad led by Professor Abhijit Chakraborty. Astronomers used the Advanced Radial-velocity Abu-sky Search (PARAS) optical fibre-fed spectrograph to detect the planet.

This is the second such exoplanet discovery to come out of the PRL by scientists using PARAS at 1.2 m Mt. Abu telescope; the first exoplanet K2-236b, a sub-Saturn size at 600 light-years away, was discovered in 2018. Scientists observed the planet between December 2020 and March 2021.

"It is one of the few nearby evolved stars with a close-in planet. The detection of such systems will contribute to our understanding of

mechanisms responsible for inflation in hot Jupiters and also provide an opportunity to understand the evolution of planets around stars leaving the main sequence branch," astronomers said in a paper published in the journal Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society.

The continued observations of the planet revealed that its mass is 70 per cent and size about 1.4 times that of Jupiter. Follow-up measurements using TCES spectrograph in Germany showed that it was a unique system in which the planet orbits the host star in just 3.2 days, placing it very-close to the star at a distance of 0.05 AU (roughly one-tenth the distance between Sun and Mercury). Due to this close proximity of the planet to its host star, it is extremely heated with a surface temperature reaching up to 2000 Kelvin giving it an inflated radius one of the lowest density planets known. "The detection of such system enhances our understanding of various

mechanisms responsible for inflation in hot Jupiters and the formation and evolution of planetary systems around evolving and ageing stars," it added. The Indian Space and Research Organisation (Isro) in a statement said that there are less than 10 such close-in systems known among the zoo of exoplanets known so far.

The new discovery comes just weeks after Indian astronomers found a new method to understand the atmosphere of a planet beyond our solar system. Astronomers from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics designed a method to study the atmosphere of these planets by observing polarisation signatures or variations in the scattering intensity of light using ground-based radars and observatories.

Astronomers have been scouring through the sky looking for planets that could show signs of habitability. Researchers have talked about finding signs of life on some of these exoplanets in the coming decade.

Chandrayaan-2 narrowly escapes collision with Nasa's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter over Moon's north pole

The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has said that it saved the Chandrayaan-2 orbiter from colliding with Nasa's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) over the Moon's north pole. Isro performed a Collision Avoidance Manoeuvre on October 20 to avoid the incident that could have triggered a major debris field and massive loss for the agency. Analysis showed that the separation between the two spacecraft hovering above the Moon would have been less than 100 metres and the closest approach distance would be only about three kilometres. The information it was mutually agreed was released nearly a month after the collision would undergo the CAM," Isro said in a statement. The manoeuvre was scheduled on October 18 and was designed to ensure a sufficiently large radial separation at the next closest conjunction between the two spacecraft.

Indian expedition arrives at Maitri station to study Antarctic climate, sea-ice changes



India has launched the 41st scientific expedition to Antarctica with the first batch of scientists arriving at the continent's Maitri research station. A group of 23 scientists and support staff reached the Indian Antarctic station Maitri last week. They will be followed up by four more batches by air and chartered ice-class vessel MV Vasiliy Golovnin by mid-January.

The scientists will be part of two major explorations on the continent, including geological studies centred on the Amery ice shelf at Bharati station. The second programme involves reconnaissance surveys and preparatory work to drill 500

meters of ice core near Maitri.

The research on the Maitri station will help improve the understanding of the Antarctic climate, westerly winds, sea-ice and greenhouse gases from a single climate archive for the past 10,000 years. The continent is going through record ice melt due to climate change and rising temperatures from global warming.

"The ice core drilling will be done in collaboration with the British Antarctic Survey and the Norwegian Polar Institute. In addition to accomplishing scientific programmes, the expedition will replenish the annual supplies of food, fuel,

provisions, and spares for operations and maintenance of life support systems at Maitri and Bharati," the Ministry of Earth Science said in a statement.

The crew will return to Cape Town in late March or early April, leaving a team of 48 members for winter. They will bring back the winter team of the preceding 40th expedition.

The 41st expedition is being led by Dr Shailendra Saini, a scientist with the National Centre for Polar & Ocean Research; Huidrom Nageshwar Singh, Metrologist, India Meteorological Department; and Anoop Kalayil Soman, a scientist with the Indian Institute of Geomagnetism.

While Nageshwar Singh will lead the Maitri station, the Bharti station will be headed by Anoop Kalayil Soman for the expedition. India has ensured that the research station remains free from Covid-19 contamination as the ministry said that the Indian contingent has reached Antarctica following a strict medical examination followed by training for snow-ice acclimatisation and survival at the Mountaineering and Skiing Institute, ITBP Auli and 14 days of quarantine at Cape Town.

INDIA'S ANTARCTIC PROGRAMME

The Indian Antarctic programme that began in 1981 has

completed 40 expeditions to the inhospitable continent, building three permanent research base stations named Dakshin Gangotri (1983), Maitri (1988) and Bharati (2012). Maitri is an inland station about 100 km from the shore at an elevation of about 50 meters above sea level. It can support 25 persons in the main building during summers as well as winters. The Bharti station is about 3,000 km east of Maitri, located between Thala Fjord and Quilty bay. The station can support 47 personnel on a twin sharing basis in the main building during summer and winters, with an additional 25 in emergency shelters.

Japanese firm genetically modifies tiny worms to detect early signs of cancer

Ascreening test using tiny worms to detect early signs of pancreatic cancer in urine has been developed by a Japanese biotech firm, which hopes it could help boost routine screening.

Scientists have long known that the bodily fluids of cancer patients smell different to those of healthy people, with dogs trained to detect the disease in breath or urine samples. But Hirotsu Bio Science has genetically modified a type of worm called "C. elegans" - around one millimetre long,



with an acute sense of smell - to react to the urine of people with pancreatic cancer, which is notoriously difficult to detect early.

"This is a major technological advancement," CEO Takaaki

Hirotsu, a former academic who studied the tiny worms known as nematodes, told AFP. The Tokyo-based firm has already used the worms to detect cancer in screening tests, though without specifying which type.

The new test is not meant to diagnose pancreatic cancer, but could help boost routine screening as urine samples can be collected at home without the need for a hospital visit, Hirotsu said at a press conference on Tuesday.

And if the worms raise the alarm, the patient would then be referred to a doctor for further testing, he said. He is hopeful it could help boost cancer detection rates in Japan, which like many countries has seen screening rates drop during the pandemic as people avoided medical visits. Even before the pandemic,

Japanese patients showed up for cancer screenings less often than many of their peers in developed countries, according to OECD data. "This is a game-changer. People need to change the way they think about cancer screening," said Eric di Luccio, head of the firm's research centre.

Hirotsu and Osaka University detailed C. elegans' cancer-detecting skills in a joint study published earlier this year in the peer-reviewed journal "Oncotarget".



Persistent efforts by countries driving steep decline in tobacco use in South-East Asia Region: WHO

Commending countries in WHO South-East Asia for achieving steep decline in tobacco use, the World Health Organization today said persistent and concerted efforts over the years, and which continue despite the pandemic, must be sustained and scaled up further to rid the Region of the scourge of tobacco.

"Sustained political commitment and relentless efforts by countries to strengthen surveillance, expand tobacco control measures including cessation services to help users quit tobacco are some of the key reasons for success," said Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region.

As per the WHO Global Report on Trends in Prevalence of Tobacco Use 2000-2025 (4th edition, 2021), WHO South-East Asia Region has achieved the fastest rate of decline in the use of tobacco with average

prevalence of smoking among men declining from 50% in 2000 to 25% in 2020 and tobacco smoking among women declining steeply from 8.9% in 2000 to 1.6% in 2020. This progress can be attributed to effective implementation of WHO's FCTC and MPOWER package, a set of six cost-effective and high impact measures to help countries reduce demand and supply of tobacco, along with best buys to successfully tackle the tobacco epidemic.

Tobacco use is one of the key risk factors for noncommunicable diseases and effective tobacco control is important for prevention and control of NCDs - a flagship priority of the Region since 2014. India and Nepal are among the countries likely to achieve 30% relative reduction in tobacco use to meet the target of Global NCD action plan by 2025.

If tobacco control efforts continue

at the current level, smoking rates in the Region can reach as low as 11% in 2025. This would be the second lowest Regional average rate after Africa - 7.5% in 2025.

"The best buys, a set of cost-effective measures to address NCDs, continue to be at the core of the Regional response, recognizing the need for countries to identify & implement the most effective, feasible, and affordable interventions whatever their resource setting," the Regional Director said, adding that WHO will continue to support Member countries towards tackling NCD's and controlling tobacco.

The Region currently has the highest rates of tobacco use, with around 432 million users, or 29% of its population. It is also home to 266 million smokeless tobacco users out of 355 million globally.

Countries in the Region sustained tobacco control measures during the pandemic.

Little kids can likely read your emotions even when you wear a face mask, study finds



Little kids can often tell how people are feeling, even if that person is wearing a face mask, a new study published Monday found.

There has been some concern that the face masks used at school during the pandemic may be hurting younger children's development, but this research letter published in JAMA Pediatrics suggests that kids recognize emotions about as well as they could without masks.

For this study, researchers from University Hospital Lausanne in Switzerland showed 90 pictures at random to nearly 300 children ages 3 to 6. The photos showed actors who expressed joy, anger or sadness. In half of the images, actors wore masks.

They were asked to either name the emotion, point to a card showing emoticons with these emotions, tell the researcher that they didn't know the answer or say that they wanted to quit the experiment.

The children got most of the answers right and were able to match the emotions to the picture on the card at a nearly identical rate, whether the figure was wearing a mask or not.

Kids described the correct emotion more than 70% of the time when the actor was maskless and got it right more than 67% of the time when the figure wore a mask. The older the kids, the more answers they got correct. About a quarter of preschoolers had a harder time distinguishing sadness from anger and about 21% occasionally confused joy for anger or sadness.

"Actual face masks depicted in static pictures were significantly associated with emotion recognition in healthy preschool children, although differences were small and effect sizes were weak," the study said.

Key decisions on Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine boosters for all adults could come this week

Key decisions on whether all adults will be eligible for a Covid-19 vaccine booster could come soon.

The US Food and Drug Administration is currently considering Pfizer and BioNTech's request to amend the emergency use authorization for their Covid-19 vaccine so that all adults would be eligible for a booster shot; Dr. Peter Marks, director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, told



CNN the request was the center's "highest priority."

On Tuesday, the agency confirmed its vaccine advisers, the Vaccines and Related

Biological Products Advisory Committee, will not be convened to consider the booster EUA decision -- which means the FDA's authorization decision

could come any time.

"While the FDA cannot predict how long its evaluation of the data and information will take, the agency will review the request as expeditiously as possible," FDA spokesperson Alison Hunt told CNN.

Also on Tuesday, CDC spokesperson Jason McDonald said the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices will meet Friday to

discuss expanding booster eligibility for Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine. CDC's vaccine advisers typically meet only once a vaccine has received authorization from the FDA.

If the FDA authorizes the boosters for all adults and CDC's vaccine advisers support recommending them, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky must sign off on the recommendation before they can be officially administered.



Disney's Hit Musical Aladdin Returns to Broadway

by Beguelin, and is directed and choreographed by Tony Award winner Casey Nicholaw (The Book of Mormon). Aladdin, adapted from the animated Disney film and centuries-old folktales including "One Thousand and One Nights," is brought to fresh theatrical life in this bold new musical. Aladdin's journey sweeps audiences into an exciting world of daring adventure, classic comedy and timeless romance. This new production features a full score, including the five cherished songs from the Academy Award-winning soundtrack and more written especially for the stage.

The animated film Aladdin was released by Disney in 1992 and was a critical and box office smash, becoming the highest-grossing film of the year. The film won the Oscar for Best Original Score and introduced the hit song "A Whole New

World," which won the second of the film's two Academy Awards as Best Original Song. The Peabo Bryson/Regina Belle recording of the tune soared to #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. Aladdin is designed by seven-time Tony-winning scenic designer Bob Crowley, six-time Tony-winning lighting designer Natasha Katz, two-time Tony-winning costume designer Gregg Barnes and sound designer Ken Travis. The production team also includes illusion designer Jim

Steinmeyer, hair designer Josh Marquette and makeup designer Milagros Medina-Cerdeira. The music team is headed by music supervisor and music director Michael Kosarin, who also created the vocal and incidental music arrangements, joined by orchestrator Danny Troob and dance music arranger Glen Kelly. Anne Quart serves as co-producer. For more information, visit AladdinTheMusical.com.

(Staff Reporter) Aladdin, the hit musical based on the Disney Academy Award®-winning animated film, opened on Broadway to critical acclaim at the New Amsterdam Theatre on March 20, 2014 and quickly established itself as one of the biggest new blockbusters in recent years, breaking 14 New Amsterdam Theatre house records. Worldwide it has welcomed more than 10 million people and grossed over \$1 billion. By the end of 2021, it will be playing in Holland, Germany and Mexico, in addition to Broadway. Produced by Disney Theatrical Productions, under the direction of Thomas Schumacher, the show features music by Tony Award and eight-time Oscar® winner Alan Menken (Beauty and the Beast, Newsies, Sister Act), lyrics by two-time Oscar winner Howard Ashman (Beauty and the Beast, The Little Mermaid), three-time Tony Award and three-time Oscar winner Tim Rice (Evita, Aida) and six-time Tony Award nominee Chad Beguelin (The Wedding Singer), with a book



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Nushratt Bharuccha happy to get back in full work mode: Can't believe we were ever in the pandemic

Things are back on track in Bollywood and actor Nushratt Bharuccha hopes that the situation remains the same going forward. The actor, too, has jumped back to work and is shooting back-to-back projects, making the most of the reopening of theatres and shooting schedules getting back like before. "When I was in the pandemic, I was like, 'What the hell, how are we stuck here and what are we doing.' I used to wonder how are we not working. And now when I am in this back-to-back hectic schedule, I can't believe we were

in the pandemic ever. I feel like we were working forever," say the actor, who will be seen in Hurdang, Ram Setu and Janhit Mein Jaari.

Bharuccha says that she felt glad that the OTT platforms - when the theatres were shut - gave an outlet to many films, which otherwise would have remained stuck for a long time.

"The fact that the acting fraternity and writers and the makers had another platform to thrive on was a blessing. They (OTT players) provided a platform to so many projects that got stuck and if that had happened then many people would have lost so much of their hard work and money. It is legit. And then when that got backed by great content coming on it, people were appreciating it," says the 36-

year-old.

The actor's projects, Chhalaang and Ajeeb Daastaans, were released on OTT, too and she feels this gave motivation for actors like her to get back to work. She says, "We knew that people would get to watch it, either via theatres or OTT." Bharuccha, who faces a setback recently when the shooting of her film Janhit Mein Jaari was halted after a crew members tested positive for Covid-19, says she will not stop going on sets. She adds, "When we work on a set, it gives so many people their work. They have food on their plate and money in their account which is such a responsible thing to do. I am going to go on sets for sure because just me showing up is going to pay a lot of people."

Aayush Sharma: I hope I don't let Salman bhai down, he's putting his hard earned money on me

Aayush Sharma's physical transformation for Antim: The Final Truth has left everyone impressed. The actor confesses that he puts in the extra efforts to escape the notion of his career being a big "family affair". The 31-year-old is aware that he represents his brother-in-law, actor Salman Khan with every move of his career, and doesn't want to let him down. "The



pressure and responsibility is there. But more than anything, I hope I don't let him (Khan) down. That is a big thing. He has been there [for me]. I take it as my personal responsibility (to not let him down)," says Sharma, who is married to Khan's younger sister Arpita.

He adds, "Somewhere down the line, people might say, 'Arrey, yeh ghar ki baat hai. Bhai ne picture produce ki hai toh kya ho gaya'. The only way that you can counter anything like this is by putting in the hard work."

Sharma knows what all is at stake for him as well as for Khan. "He has worked very hard for that money. It is not like his money grows on trees. When he is producing a film, it is his own money that is going to be at stake," shares Sharma, revealing that Khan has spent hours teaching him the craft.

Priyanka Chopra reacts to Nick Jonas' post about his 'support system' after being diagnosed with diabetes at 13

Singer Nick Jonas, in a lengthy post on Wednesday, opened up about being diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes when he was just a teenager. Nick, now 29, was all of 13-year-old when he was detected with diabetes, something he has been battling for 16 years now. Singer Nick Jonas, in a lengthy post on Wednesday, opened up about being diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes when he was just a teenager. Nick, now 29, was all of 13-year-old when he was detected with diabetes, something he has been battling for 16 years now. In an Instagram post, Nick Jonas wrote: "Today resonates with me personally

because it's the 16th anniversary of my diagnosis. I was thirteen, playing shows with my brothers... And I knew in my gut that something wasn't right, so I went to my parents and told them I needed to see the doctor. After going over my symptoms, my paediatrician informed me that I had Type 1 diabetes. All the symptoms were in line with an undiagnosed Type 1." Recalling how heartbroken he felt as a 13-year-old, Nick Jonas added: "I was devastated - frightened... Did this mean my dream of touring the world and playing our music had to end? But I was committed, just like I always have been, to not letting

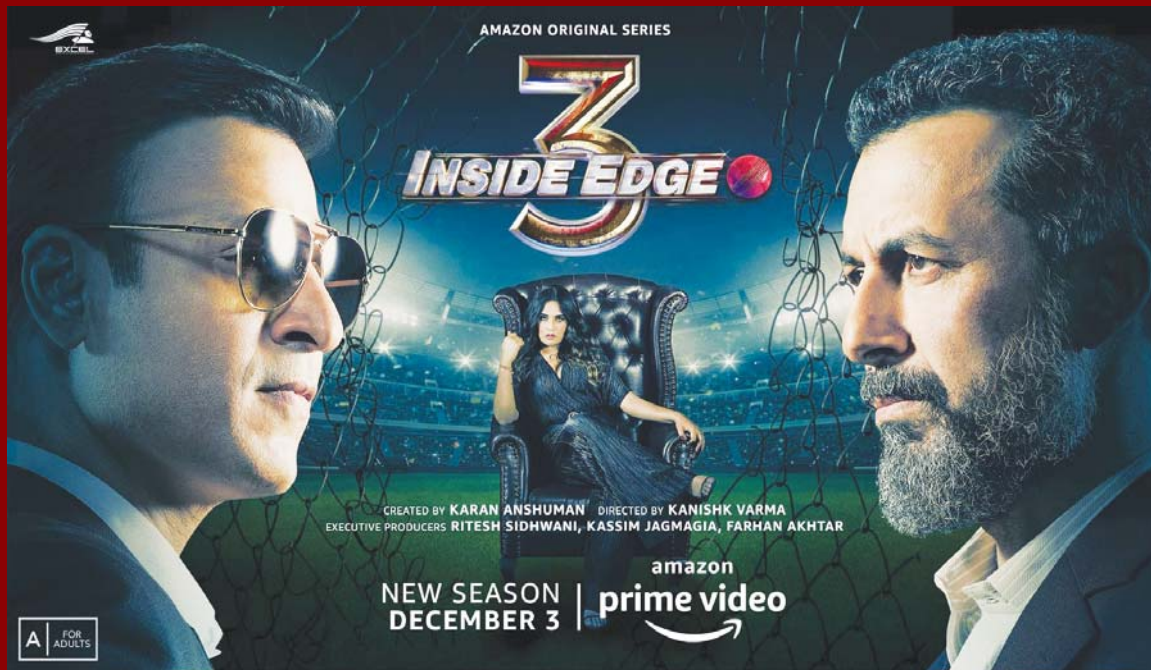
it slow me down." Nick also opened up about his 'incredible support system' and said: "There are tough days but I have an incredible support system I can rely on to help me push through and not be hard on myself when I'm feeling low." Actor Priyanka Chopra, who is currently in London, reacted to her husband's post with a heart-eye and clapping hands emoji. Nick's father Paul Kevin Jonas commented: "We will never forget that day. You inspire us all. Love you." In 2018, Nick Jonas had shared a similar post, in which he spoke about his diabetes diagnosis.



Prime Video and Excel Media & Entertainment Announce the Premiere of Amazon Original Series Inside Edge Season 3 on 3 December

- Created by Karan Anshuman, Season 3 of the hit show stars Vivek Oberoi, Richa Chadha, Tanuj Virwani, Aamir Bashir, Sayani Gupta, Sapna Pabbi, Akshay Oberoi, Sidhant Gupta and Amit Sial
- The stakes are higher in Season 3, as 'the game behind the game' becomes more intriguing and a personal vendetta takes the centre stage. Prime members can stream all ten episodes of Inside Edge Season 3 in more than 240 countries and territories worldwide

M U M B A I — 16 November 2021 — Prime Video and Excel Media & Entertainment today announced that the highly anticipated third season of Amazon Original series Inside Edge will premiere globally on 3 December 2021 in more than 240 countries and territories. Created by Karan Anshuman and directed by Kanishk Varma, this season, the stage is bigger, the stakes are higher and the game is more personal than ever. After the phenomenal success of the first two seasons, get ready to witness the dark underbelly of cricket as the ultimate game of power and greed is unleashed. Aparna Purohit, Head of India Originals, Amazon Prime Video India, said "The first one is always special! The International Emmys nominated series, Inside Edge was the first Indian Amazon Original that received immense appreciation, accolades and helped set a high bar for storytelling. Our association with Excel Media



and Entertainment has continually helped in bringing forth some compelling narratives spanning multiple genres. This season, the fans are in for a treat as the plot intensifies which will keep them on the edge of their seats. Replete with multiple twists and turns, the new season of Inside Edge has in store a lot more drama and

mystery that will unravel through a riveting story and would impress fans and audiences alike in India and beyond."

"The overwhelming response Inside Edge has received from viewers and critics alike has encouraged us to present yet another exciting season," said Ritesh Sidhwani, Producer, Excel Entertainment. "Inside Edge is

and will always be very special to us given that it is Excel's first original with Amazon while also being Amazon's first original in India. We are thrilled to chronicle the next gripping phase of the journey of Mumbai Mavericks, which will ultimately decide the fate of the team that has battled many odds. The third season of the Inside Edge franchise is a

testament to the fact that we are committed to bringing our creative vision to life through interesting and innovative formats. We're eagerly looking forward to the global premiere of the show on Prime Video." like The Tomorrow War, Coming 2 America, Cinderella, Borat Subsequent Moviefilm, Without Remorse, American Gods, One Night in Miami, Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, The Boys, Hunters, Cruel Summer, Fleabag, The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel and many more, available for unlimited streaming as part of a Prime membership. Prime Video includes content across Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi and Bengali.

Instant Access: Prime Members can watch anywhere, anytime on the Prime Video app for smart TVs, mobile devices, Fire TV, Fire TV stick, Fire tablets, Apple TV and multiple gaming devices.

Bhushan Kumar, Shahid Kapoor, Garima Mehta & Amar Butala's Bull to Release in cinemas Worldwide on 7th April 2023.

Mumbai, 17th November 2021: Bhushan Kumar, Amar Butala and Garima Mehta's much anticipated grand scale action extravaganza, Bull with Shahid Kapoor will open in theatres on 7th April 2023 i.e Good Friday weekend. The film directed by debutant director Aditya Nimbalkar, is set in the 1980's and is inspired by real-life events. This is the first co-production between T-Series and Guilty By Association. Bhushan Kumar, Managing Director, T-Series shares, "Bull is an ambitious project and one the biggest action movies coming out of T-Series stable, we continue to reassure audience's long standing romance with the silver screen with this release. It is a Shahid Kapoor film tailor made to be viewed at your nearest theatre"



Amar Butala, Producer, Guilty By Association (GBA) says, "Bull marks the beginning of our association with Bhushan Kumar ji and Shahid who will be seen in a new action avatar in the film. We hope to deliver a big screen extravaganza packed with adrenaline so it truly is a Good Friday at the box office" Garima Mehta, Producer, Guilty By Association (GBA) adds, "Bull is inspired by the valour of our men in uniform. It is sure to enthrall and inspire all at the same time". Bull is presented by Gulshan Kumar and T-Series, is a Guilty By Association production with story by Parveez Shaikh and Aseem Arrora and directed by Aditya Nimbalkar. Produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Amar Butala and Garima Mehta. The film is slated to hit the floors in early 2022.

Official Trailer for Prime Video Paranormal Horror 'Chhorii' Out

Prime Video today unveiled the highly anticipated trailer for the Amazon Original movie Chhorii. Directed by Vishal Furia and jointly produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishnan Kumar, Vikram Malhotra, Jack Davis, and Shikhaa Sharma, Chhorii stars Nushratt Bharuccha. Joining her in pivotal roles will be Mita Vashisht, Rajesh Jais, Saurabh Goyal, and Yaaneeta Bharadwaj. Chhorii is the Hindi remake of an award-winning and critically acclaimed Marathi film Lapachhapi, and will premiere on Prime Video in India and more than 240 countries and territories on 26 November.



The trailer gives you a glimpse into the world of Chhorii, the monsters that Sakshi (Nushratt Bharuccha) has to deal with, and much more. The tension builds with every scene, leaving audiences with questions to be answered-Will Sakshi be able to save herself? Will she be able to protect her unborn child? Sakshi's quest takes viewers on a journey that's got horror, thrills, and chills-all in equal portions. "Stepping into a new genre and unique genre like horror is a daunting-yet-exciting experience," lead star Nushratt Bharuccha said.



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Three farm laws to be rolled back. What were they all about?

More than a year after the Centre enacted the three agriculture laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced withdrawal of the legislation in the coming winter session of Parliament.



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