



The South Asian



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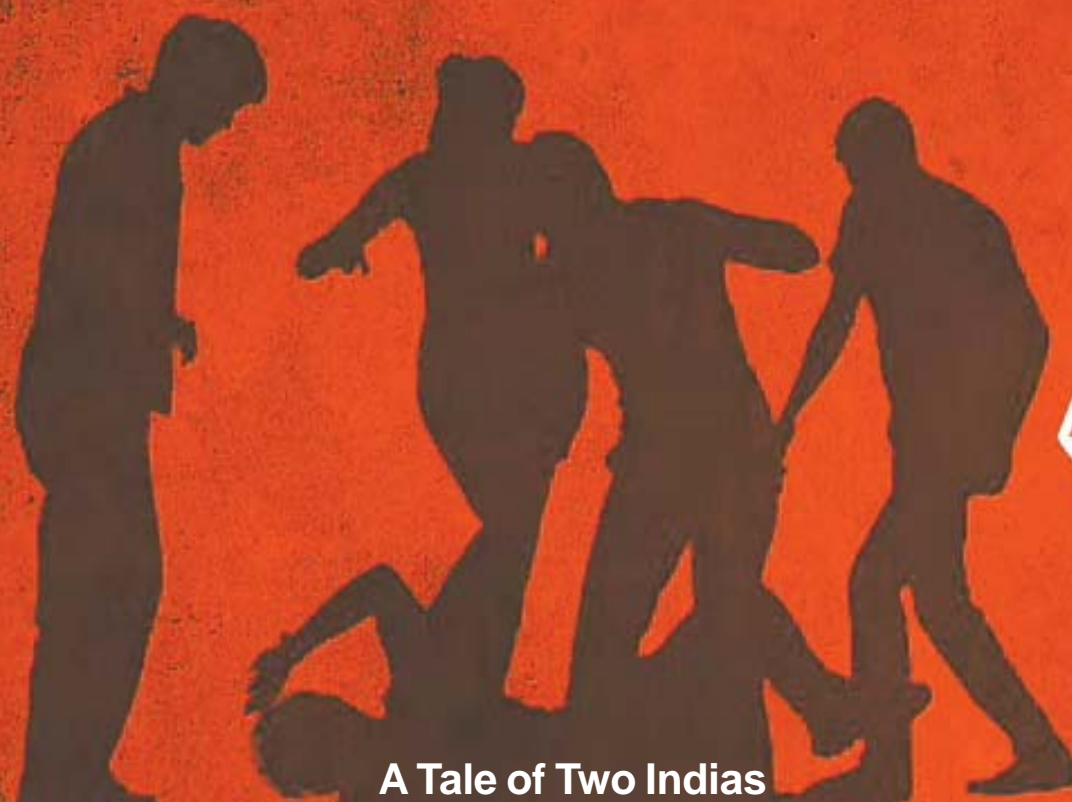
Friday 4 October to 11 October 2020

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"A Rape Is Rape"

Why do you bring caste into it?



A Tale of Two Indias

On 14 June, Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput died an unexpected death, sending the entire country into shock. More than three months later, the death of the Hathras rape victim has sent a similar sentiment of shock across the country. While it's unfair to compare the two events, one can't help but notice the difference in how the two tragedies have been treated by the media, the system and the people. Turns out, 'justice' looks different on everyone.

Story on
Pages
31 to 32

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India trashes '1959 LAC' claim

An Act Of God And Taxing Times

Foreign ministers of India, Bangladesh meet; review bilateral ties

'This is the worst nightmare for the Trump campaign'

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Indian-Americans for Trump Endorse Barrett for USSCJ

WARREN – NJ, (Insider Bureau)- The Indian-Americans for Trump endorses Trump's nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to fill the seat in the U.S. Supreme Court vacated by the passing-away of the Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. We believe that Trump followed all the protocols of the nomination process and conventions for such an opening, and delaying the appointment as called for by the democrats will not be

consistent with the practice of filling an empty seat on the U.S. Supreme Court bench. The Indian-Americans for Trump finds Professor Barrett to be an extremely well qualified appellate court judge who has the superior academic and judicial credential to fill this position. The Indian-Americans for Trump will promote her candidacy. Dr. Amar, President of the Indian-Americans for Trump, said, "The comparison of the nomination of

Amy Coney Barrett with that of Merrick Garland, nominated by President Obama in 2016, is very misplaced. While Obama nominated Garland, the Senate was controlled by the Republicans. The blocking of Garland's nomination by them was justified because they had to vote to have him approved. Obama could not have gone ahead, and rightly withdrew his candidacy. This time, both the White House and the Senate are

controlled by the Republicans. Asking Trump to wait for the outcome of the election in November is like asking someone to surrender one's due rights and responsibilities. Trump rightly did not do that." The Indian-Americans for Trump believes that actually waiting for the election to take place before filling this vacancy would have been wrong, especially given the uncertainty of the outcome of this election which will be conducted

by several contradictory state-by-state rules. Its outcome may have to wait far beyond the night of November 3, 2020.

The Indian-Americans for Trump is registered as a PAC by the FEC for promoting the candidacy of Donald J Trump for his reelection. It strongly believes that under the prevailing domestic and international conditions, Donald Trump is the best hope for America to remain strong abroad and peaceful and prosperous at home. The Indian-Americans for Trump urges all Americans, particularly those of the Indian Subcontinent extraction, to join its effort, and support Donald J. Trump. It encourages all Americans to become members of this Committee. Please contact Dr. A. D. Amar at amardamar@yahoo.com or Mr. Anura Rupasinghe at Anura@Rukyshipping.com or Ms. Pravesh Chaturvedi at Pravesh@mindspring.com. There is no membership fee or financial obligation to join the committee. **Trump -- Still the Best Hope to Make America Great Again**

Essential for the Debate of September 29

WARREN – NJ, (Insider Bureau) – This morning, the Indian-Americans for Trump conveyed to the President the following seven essential points pertaining to the presidential debate tonight:

1. Remain Presidential: State things by using the pronoun "We" only. Nothing like the behavior at the rallies. No attacks on ANYONE, including the Bidens or Harris. No bragging. Everybody already knows what you did. Do not talk much. Do not repeat. Give witty answers.

2. Place Emphasis on the Future: Quickly touch your past achievements and dwell on how you will recreate them in the future.

Like you fulfilled your 2016 promises, you will fulfill your promises for the next 4 years.

3. Health Insurance: Talk about what you will do about health insurance. People are really spooked.

Tell what are the shortcomings of the Obama Care.

Be specific about how the insurance you propose will be better.

4. Financial Security: Sooth Americans about their financial future.

Assure them that the way you built the economy in the last four years, by going around to the world leaders to bring business and employment to the USA, you will continue to do that and even at a brisker pace.

5. COVID-19. Briefly mention that, in the retrospect, you would have done differently had you known the size and scope of the virus.

Mention the responses your administration gave to New York,

New Jersey, Californian, etc. to combat COVID-19 such as the naval hospital, Abbott rapid testing.

6. Your Taxes.

Stress that as a businessman you availed off whatever the law allowed you to keep and grow your business, but you respected the law. 7. Why Keep America Number One in the World.

Our financial markets, the economy, diplomatic influence to keep peace around the world, all depend on it. **Trump -- Still the Best Hope to Make America Great Again**



LAURA CURRAN
NASSAU COUNTY EXECUTIVE

FARRAH MOZAWALLA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF ASIAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS

and the Office of Asian Affairs cordially invites you to the

VOTER ENGAGEMENT INFORMATION SESSION



Learn about the voting process, including voter registration, absentee ballot, important upcoming dates and early voting polling places. The webinar will be translated into Mandarin and Hindi/Urdu on our YouTube Channel!

Thursday, October 1st • 7:00pm

Event will be held live on the Office of Asian American Affairs Facebook Page.
Tune in at <https://www.facebook.com/NassauCountyOAA/>

For more information, please contact Program Coordinator Zaynab Ubaid
AsianAffairs@nassaucountyny.gov or call 516-571-3021

Collaborating Organization:
Nassau County
Board of Elections



1 in 7 children faces hunger.

There's more than enough food in America for every child who struggles with hunger. Help get kids the food they need by supporting Feeding America, the nationwide network of food banks. Together, we can solve hunger™.

Join us at FeedingAmerica.org




“Ekal Foundation” Embarks on a Trailblazing Goal



EGF Domain



Sustainable Farming



Rural Entrepreneurship



Health and Nutrition



Women Empowerment



Skill Development



Digital Education



(By Our Staff Reporter) From Friday Sept. 11 to Sun. Sept. 14., “Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation (EVF)” hosted its annual ‘International Conference’ in virtual mode with 600 registrants from USA, Canada, India and Australia. The multiple agenda-packed gathering, not only saw and discussed the presentations on what had been achieved to date, but also, the futuristic goals for the holistic development in 102,000 villages where it has intrinsic presence. As the youths are the future of any organization, ‘Ekal’, as EVF is popularly known, also involved youths in this conference at every level, under ‘Youth Leadership’ program. The seeds of this ‘youth element’ were sowed, in fact, in a grand scale event called “Parivartan Kumbh” (Transformation Convention) in Lucknow, India in February this year, which was convened specifically to assess overall changes brought upon by EVF

to rural India. Although rooted in education, Ekal in recent years has blossomed into healthcare, integrated village development, digitization, farming research and socio-economic empowerment. From this perspective, the conference was a total game-changer.

This year’s Covid-19 clampdown had posed an unprecedented challenge to Ekal for fund-raising which had been an essential part of this largest grass-root movement. Ekal overcame this hurdle by motivating its loyal donor-base in series of concerts and successfully raised almost 80% of the funds through them. Until now, Ekal had been tenaciously eradicating illiteracy by imparting functional literacy to 2.8 million youngsters each year through one-teacher schools, computer-equipped vans, - called ‘Ekal-on-Wheels’- use of ‘tablets’ where possible and empowering rural folks by adult-education & skill-training. Starting 2021,

having fulfilled the noble assignment given by the Hon. PM Modi to establish 100,000 schools in villages, two years in advance, Ekal set up a new trailblazing agenda for the next 5 years. In essence, Bajarang Bagra, CEO of ‘Ekal Abhiyan’ (umbrella organization of all ‘Ekal’ satellite-divisions) proposed to keep 102,000 school tallies ‘as is’ and embark on a transformative ‘roadmap’ that would revolutionize rural life in all its aspects. Among the primary goals adopted by the delegates were to increase - ‘Ekal On Wheels’ vans from current 25 to 85; ‘Integrated Village Clusters’ (30 villages each) from current 12 to 51; ‘Skill Development Ctrs’ from current 33 to 100; ‘Gramothan Resource Ctrs’ (GRC) from current 16 to 27; ‘Telemedicine’ from current 120 villages to 6,000 villages and ‘Intensive Health Care’ from current 1,200 villages to 6,000 villages. In addition, the most

ambitious project that Ekal wants to push forward is that of ‘E-Shiksha’ or digital education. It wants to spread it from current 1,200 villages to 100,000 villages by Yr. 2025. A new initiative, called ‘GRANE’ (Gramothan

Atma-Nirbharata for Ekal), was also introduced to bring E-commerce activity to the villages so as to avail villagers with new economic opportunities. There is a plan to accomplish this by rewarding farmers, empowering village women and providing necessary tools to the ground team. The conference also resolved to plant 10 Million trees in next 5 years. There were some break-out parallel discussions too. Youths from schools and colleges had brainstorming sessions of their own under the auspices of ‘Ekal Youth Leaders’ to formulate their own initiatives. The initiatives include getting connected to youths in schools & colleges, visiting Ekal villages, starting activities in slum-areas, raising funds every which way possible, promoting ecological aspect and healthy lifestyle. This year, youths connected to Ekal-USA played an important role during the corona pandemic. They, not only, kept the home-bound school children engaged through their DIY (Do-It-Yourself)

educational campaign, but also, raised donation through this effort. In last few years, ‘Arogya (Health) Foundation of India’ had been a force to reckon with in rural healthcare. Their Medical-camps, initiatives for Anemia control, child & women health-practices and Herbal-medicine & ‘Telemedicine’ have found wide spread acceptance. Now, for ophthalmic care, there are plans to deploy numerous mobile-clinic vans, called ‘Eye-Van’. Hon. PM Modi has said that, “no education in the world can succeed by giving up its culture and values”. Therefore, to prepare self-reliant and value-based rural India, Ekal has floated a fleet of ‘Kathakars’ (storytellers of India’s cultural identity and heritage) to reach out to the lowest strata of the society. From current strength of 1000 such ‘Kathakars’, the plans are under way to double that number by 2025. The price-tag for this 5-year wish-list is estimated to be \$80 Million and Ekal-USA has been challenged to bear at least 1/3



“PM Narendra Modi, looking more and more like a Hindu Sage, evoked India’s peaceful history and policy of Never a First Strike, largest democracy’s goodwill to all, and the safety-net that every Indian’s SOUL has principles and goals of American Exceptionalism and UN Charter’s Ideals to insist: UN Reforms are urgently needed to reflect actual reality. He re-affirmed India’s indivisible partnership with United States in the Indo-Pacific as a force for goodwill to all with added peace and security. A positive speech, that urged even more global positivism and abiding goodwill.”

By Ravi Batra

The issues that matter to Indian-Americans



Its latest poll tells a most consequential story, but one that has received little attention: Indian-Americans don't actually care much about US policy for South Asia.

the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) as internal matters in sharp contrast to the Biden campaign's criticism of India on these issues.

A group of Indian-Americans pressed Biden at a fund-raiser to moderate his position on these issues and dial up the campaign's pitch to Hindus in a bid to staunch the flow of the community's support towards Trump. They had the candidate's attention they believed, and came away with a distinct impression that one of them would get a follow-up call from the campaign.

Certifiably reliable election data for the community doesn't go far back enough to evaluate its voting behaviour relative to the highs and lows in the relationship. But did Bill Clinton, a Democrat, drive

them towards the Republican Party when he slapped multiple sanctions on India for the Pokhran-II nuclear tests in 1998, clearly the lowest point in bilateral ties in recent decades?

Or, did George W Bush, a Republican, trigger a rush of Indian-Americans to the party with the civil nuclear deal in 2008, which remains an unparalleled high-point of the relationship? Not really. In a 2008 pre-poll survey by AAPI Data, which has consistently polled the community since then with other Asian-Americans, Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee, led his Republican rival John McCain 53% to 13%, among Indian-Americans; 33% were undecided.

Its latest poll tells a most consequential story, but one that has received little attention:

Indian-Americans don't actually care much about US policy for South Asia.

Education was listed by 94% of Indian-American voters as extremely important or very important, followed by jobs and the economy (92%), health care (92%), environment (88%), racial discrimination (84%), policing reforms (84%), national security (84%), and immigration (80%). US foreign policy in Asia was marked way, way down in comparison (66%).

It is unclear if "US foreign policy in Asia" meant and covered US relations with India specifically. But as Milan Vaishnav, an Indian-American expert on India-US relations at Carnegie, said, "India and US-India ties might matter on the margins, but we don't have evidence it is a determining factor yet."

(Insider Bureau)-United States (US) President Donald Trump and Democratic contender Joe Biden's campaigns have pitched their candidates as the best bet for US-India relations to court Indian-Americans, who are expected to play an outsized role in what promises to be a close presidential election. Bilateral relations with India have become an issue in the US elections for the first time.

Biden has promised that relations

with India will get "high priority" and has bashed India's regional adversaries — China and Pakistan — to burnish his credentials as the better custodian of ties with New Delhi. The Trump campaign has released a video of clips spliced together from the "Howdy Modi" and "Namaste Trump" events touting close ties between the two leaders. And it has also cited the administration's position on the Kashmir status change and

Indian-American To Run For Republican Nomination For Virginia Lt Governor

Puneet Ahluwalia serves on the Northern Virginia Republican Business Forum and is an active member of local unit of the Republican Party.



"I came to the United States and Virginia almost 30 years ago. My first job was delivering electronics to retail stores and since then I have built businesses and created jobs and opportunities for others. Today, I work as a consultant to international businesses on client acquisition, marketing and strategic affairs," Mr Ahluwalia said.

Mr Ahluwalia serves on the Northern Virginia Republican Business Forum and is an active member of local unit of the Republican Party.

Describing himself as "pro-life, pro-liberty and pro-Virginia first", he said there is a need to reopen schools and economy and get the lives back together. In an interview to local Richmond Times-Dispatch, Mr Ahluwalia said, "As a person of colour, I sympathise with those who are frustrated and angry about race in this country."

He said progressives "make big promises, trap minorities in dependence and hopelessness, then expect we'll keep voting to re-elect them".

(Insider Bureau)- An Indian-American businessman has joined the race for the Republican nomination for Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, campaigning on a message of "hope, growth and opportunity".

"Virginia is in trouble right now and we're running out of time as Democrats offer the same old tired promises," 55-year-old Puneet Ahluwalia said announcing his run for the lieutenant governor nomination last week.

"My campaign will bring a message of hope, growth and opportunity to every person, every family and every community in Virginia," he said. Delhi-born Ahluwalia migrated to the US in 1990. His wife Nadia is originally from Afghanistan.

"As immigrants ourselves, my wife and I weren't born as Americans. We chose to become Americans and for good reason," he said, adding, "I am not a politician. I am a proud American living the American dream."

Indian-Origin Cop In Singapore Jailed For Seeking Sexual Favours From Women Under Investigation

(Insider Bureau)- An Indian-origin police official in Singapore has been sentenced to two years in jail after pleading guilty to four counts, including two for corruption in the form of seeking sexual favours from women under investigation.

Mahendran Selvarajoo, staff sergeant with the Singapore Police Force, pleaded guilty to

theft and lied to her that her company had contacted the police about the investigation. He told her that he would help her and sought sexual favours from her to which she complied, fearing she could lose her job.

Similarly, Mahendran exploited another woman for help in investigations and took explicit videos from her laptop under the

guise of investigations, the TODAY newspaper reported.

Court documents stated that Mahendran's duties were to carry out



the charges, including to the two other offences under the Computer Misuse Act for copying data - sexually explicit videos on his own devices.

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau arrested Mahendran, 32, on May 1 last year for seeking sexual favours from women, who he was investigating for shop-theft and credit card frauds.

As investigating officer, Mahendran contacted a woman linked to a case involving shop

commercial crime investigations that entailed interviewing witnesses, among other things. Despite being told by his senior that one of the cases was no longer with him, Mahendran went to a woman's home to get her signatures on an amended police statement that had new paragraphs inserted to highlight factors in her favour. Mahendran faced a jail term of up to five years or a fine of SGD 100,000 (USD 72,703) for each corruption charge.

Racism, Xenophobia: Joe Biden Campaign Focuses On Challenges Sikhs Face

The Joe Biden campaign, which launched the "Sikh Americans for Biden", said it has plans for protecting Sikh-American youths in schools.

(Insider Bureau)-The Biden campaign has launched an initiative to reach out to the Sikh community in the US and vowed to address the unique challenges, including xenophobia, being faced by the minority religious group in the country.

The Biden campaign, which launched the "Sikh Americans for Biden", said it has plans for protecting Sikh-American youths in schools.

Sikh-Americans experience bullying at rates twice the national average and have reported a spike in these encounters since 2017, the campaign said in a press release on Sunday.

"The Biden campaign plans to highlight the specific plans and policies that Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has outlined in his platform to address the unique challenges that the Sikh American community faces

with regards to racism, xenophobia and discrimination," it said.

Kiran Kaur Gill, a prominent civil rights activist and member of the Sikh American National Leadership Council, alleged that President Donald Trump has not only turned a blind eye to bullying and discrimination, but has also encouraged it.

The Sikh American National Leadership Council is an advisory council to the Sikh Americans for Biden.

With Biden as the US president, Sikh-Americans can feel safer in schools and on the streets, Kiran Kaur Gill said in a statement.

"(Former) vice president Biden has a track record of taking stances against hate, discrimination and bullying, and his leadership on these issues matter to our community," she said.

The Biden campaign has said that if voted to power, the Biden

administration would allocate additional federal funding for anti-bullying initiatives.

According to civil rights activist Valarie Kaur, "This election is unlike any other. Everything our Sikh ancestors fought for - a world of dignity, equality, and justice -- is at stake."

"A Biden presidency would give us a chance -- to save our democracy, heal the earth, and begin to birth a world where we 'see no stranger'. That's why I am proud to join Sikhs for Biden -- and do everything in power to get out the vote. Our lives depend on it," she said in a statement issued by the South Asians for Biden on Sunday.

Japjee Singh, an anti-bullying advocate, detailed the horrific bullying that took place at his high school in Georgia. In 2013, when he was 17-year-old, Singh was repeatedly targeted with verbal and physical harassment because of his Sikh faith. He



was called a "terrorist" and fellow students used to target him for wearing turban. Singh's bullying case led to the first US Department of Justice school bullying settlement on behalf of a Sikh student.

"A lot of the systems in place prevent victims of bullying from being heard and validated. Often these victims are perceived as the aggressors; they are not. Biden is committed to change these systems, so we can provide survivors of bullying with the support that they need," Singh said.

In a joint statement, Josh Dickson, the National Faith Engagement Director for the

Biden campaign, and Seema Sadanandan, a Policy Advisor for the campaign, said Biden has committed to a number of initiatives that garner strong support from the Sikh-American community.

"For example, a Biden administration would allocate additional funding to the Department of Justice and the Department of Education for anti-bullying initiatives. Biden has also cited specific plans to re-establish the Obama-Biden White House AAPI Bullying Prevention Task Force, which would partner with community organisations, including Sikh non-profits," they said

Indian-Origin Lawyer In Singapore Jailed For Company Fraud: Report



Zaminder Singh Gill, 57, who was legal associate at Hilborne Law between 2016 and last year, also failed to register the clients with the firm, the Straits Times reported.

deposited into Hilborne's client or office accounts".

On Monday, DPP Chew urged District Judge Toh Yung Cheong to sentence Gill to at least two years and three months' jail. She stressed that criminal breach of trust by lawyers is a "grave offence" and that he had

made no restitution.

Defence lawyer R Shiever pleaded for judicial mercy and said his client was truly remorseful. Gill cried as he addressed the court and said that he had lost everything, the report said. Gill was arrested when he returned to Singapore

in October 2019 after holidays with his family. He later said he had used the legal fees he misappropriated on various family expenses, the report said. He has not made any restitution to Hilborne Law for his offences. Gill was called to the Singapore Bar in 2005.

(Insider Bureau)-An Indian-origin lawyer, working at a law firm in Singapore, was on Monday sentenced to two years and three months in jail for collecting legal fees totalling more than SGD 31,000 from his company's clients and transferring the money to his personal bank account.

Zaminder Singh Gill, 57, who was legal associate at Hilborne Law between 2016 and last year, also failed to register the clients with the firm, the Straits Times reported.

He transferred the money to his personal bank account and used his ill-gotten gains for family expenses, the report said.

He was sentenced on Monday to two years and three months jail after pleading guilty to five counts of criminal breach of trust as an attorney involving more than SGD 20,000. These charges were linked to five victims.

Ten other similar charges involving the remaining amount were considered during sentencing.

A representative from the law firm lodged a police report against Gill on July 18 last year on receiving a client's complain.

The Hilborne representative said the clients "were not recorded in Hilborne's client register, and the amount collected were not

Indian Expat In UAE To Fly Home After 20 Years, \$204,195 Fine Waived

(Insider Bureau)-An Indian expat in the UAE will finally be able to return home after two decades after he was granted a waiver of nearly Dh 750,000 (USD 204,195) in overstay fines, according to a media report. Thanavel Mathiazhaagan, 56, arrived in the UAE in 2000 through a recruitment agent on the promise of a job. The agent, who also took Mr Mathiazhaagan's passport, later went missing and he had to illegally stay in the UAE to provide for his family in India by doing

part-time jobs, the Gulf News reported. Mr Mathiazhaagan, who hails from Tamil Nadu, sought help from two social workers in the UAE to return home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The only documents he possessed was his employment visa entry permit and a copy of the last page of his passport, the report said. AK Mahadevan and Chandra Prakash, who helped Mr Mathiazhaagan get an emergency certificate through the Indian embassy in Abu Dhabi, said he had failed to get identity

clearance from India during the pandemic as there was a mismatch in his father's name in documents back home and that shown in his passport. Emergency certificate is a one-way travel document issued to Indians without a valid passport, to facilitate their return home, it said. The duo said they approached the Indian embassy and the local departments in Mr Mathiazhaagan's village to rectify the mistake and process his documents, it said.

Indian Students Appeal To UK PM In Historic English Test Visa Row

The scandal relates to the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), a compulsory requirement in some student visa cases.

(Insider Bureau)- Several Indian students are among over 200 overseas student signatories of a letter delivered to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson at Downing Street in London on Thursday, seeking justice in the wake of being accused of cheating in a compulsory English language test six years ago. The scandal, believed to have impacted around 34,000 international students, relates to the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), a compulsory requirement in some student visa

cases. Many of the students caught up in the row are Indian and have consistently maintained their innocence and have been lobbying the government for a chance to prove their innocence. "We were innocent but our visas were refused or revoked and the government gave us no way to defend ourselves. Our futures were destroyed and we were left to fight a years-long legal battle costing each of us tens of thousands of pounds," reads the letter. "We write to you because it is within your

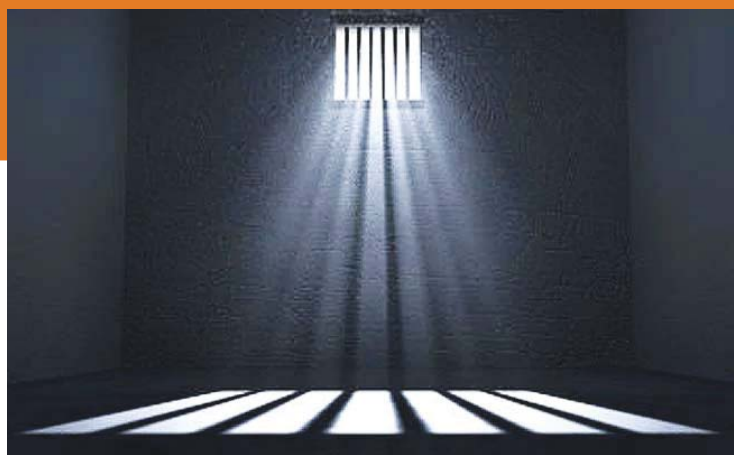
power to right this wrong, to put an end to our detention, deportation and humiliation. Allow us to prove our innocence by establishing a free and transparent scheme - independent of the Home Office - through which we can get our cases to be reviewed and clear our names," they wrote in a direct appeal to Johnson. The group has been supported in its long-running campaign by Migrant Voice activists and several parliamentarians including Labour Party MP Stephen Timms, Chair of the All-



Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on TOEIC. In the letter made our situation even worse. Our support networks have collapsed, the charities we rely on have been closed, our friends and families are unable to help as they are struggling themselves. The coronavirus pandemic has

Indian-Origin "Romance Fraudster" Jailed For Over 4 Years In UK

The court heard that Vimal Popat's victims were mainly, but not exclusively, women, most of whom he had met using dating sites such as Bumble.



(Insider Bureau)- An Indian-origin so-called "romance fraudster", who would trick victims he met through online dating sites to invest in a fake business, was sentenced to four years and four months of imprisonment for nine charges of fraud by a UK court on

Thursday. Vimal Popat, 41, from Slough in south-east England, appeared at Harrow Crown Court in London for sentencing, having previously pleaded guilty for each count of fraud by false representation causing all round losses of over 440,000

pounds. The court heard that Popat's victims were mainly, but not exclusively, women, most of whom he had met using dating sites such as Bumble. "This was a selfish and callous crime that parted trusting decent people from their savings," said Metropolitan Police Detective Constable Chris Collins. "So often victims of this type of offence don't come forward, embarrassed by their own naivety, but fraudsters such as Popat work hard on their back story and are incredibly convincing in the telling of their

tales," he said. "I commend the victims in this case for coming forward. Their actions have put a stop to Popat's crimes and have no doubt spared others from falling victim to his schemes. I hope that the sentence handed down today brings them some satisfaction," he added. Six of the total eight victims were female, four of whom were convinced by Popat that they were in a romantic relationship. After striking up an online friendship, Popat would typically go on to form romantic relationships with his victims in

person. After wooing them over a period of months and gaining their trust, he would persuade them to invest their money in a non-existent business. In all cases, he duped his victims into believing he was a successful Forex trader and they were investing in his business with the promise of healthy profits gained through the purchase and sale of currencies, the Met Police said. In reality, when the victim's money was transferred into one of Popat's bank accounts, he would use it to finance his lifestyle or gamble it away in casinos.

Indian Overseas Congress, USA condemns the rape and murder of Manisha Valmiki of Hathras, U.P.

(Insider Bureau)- Indian Overseas Congress, USA joins millions of non-resident Indians across the globe in condemning the horrific rape and murder of Manisha Valmiki of Hathras, U.P. The barbarity and the bestiality involved in the killing show the depraved and criminal mindsets of those who perpetrated such heinous acts against a Dalit woman who is from the lowest rung of India's caste system. The ghastly way this woman was raped and murdered has indeed shaken the nation to its core and terrorized the people of conscience across the world. The victim, who belonged to the

Dalit community, was raped by four men on September 14 in the heartland state of Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district. The woman's family told local media that they found her naked, bleeding, and paralyzed with a split tongue and broken spine in a field outside her home. On Tuesday, she died two weeks later after battling severe injuries in a hospital in New Delhi. To add insult to injury, the police barricaded her family members & locals inside the house and forcibly burned the body. The family was not allowed to see their daughter for one last time and say good-bye. As it has

been said by Yogendra Yadav, "even criminals are allowed dignified cremation. Here is a rape victim being cremated by police at 2.30 AM without family members". "Mr. Yogi Adityanath, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, it is your party which is in power. Given your supremacy within the party in U.P. and the centralized control you exercise, you more than anyone else have to be held responsible for this terrifying state of affairs," said George Abraham, Vice-Chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA. Your past statement, such as 'women not capable of being left alone and their energy should

be regulated, lest it becomes worthless and destructive," is not only despicable but misogynistic and chauvinistic. "while you have ordered an inquiry, Mr. Chief Minister, you haven't taken any steps to cure this rape culture in your state or shown any resolve to change the social, political, and administrative conditions under which such anti-Dalit hatred is bred," said Mohinder Singh Gilzian, President of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA. Your continuing inaction in this regard will gain you the title as the Chief administrator of the notorious Rape State in India," Mr. Gilzian added. "It is indeed the growing

culture of violence emanating out of the wrong-headed sense of ultra-nationalism and majoritarian arrogance that is polarizing the communities and dividing the nation. We call upon the Modi Government to stop paying lip service with slogans like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" and provide true leadership in bringing perpetrators of this pervasive rape and abuse of women culture across the country to justice regardless of their party affiliations and oust any government officials who remains stumbling blocks to that effort" the statement added.

By George Abraham

Maximum impact of Covid-19 faced by women, children and adolescents: Harsh Vardhan

Participating in a programme on maternal, newborn and child health via a video link, Vardhan said his ministry issued guidance to states to ensure that women, children and adolescents continue to get all the healthcare services.

(News Agencies)- The maximum impact of Covid-19 has been felt by women, children and adolescents, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said Tuesday.

Participating in a programme on maternal, newborn and child health via a video link, Vardhan said his ministry issued guidance to states to ensure that women, children and adolescents continue to get all the healthcare services, according to an official statement.

"We are in a constant dialogue to ensure that these services are made available to women, children and adolescents and

remain in focus despite the health systems being under severe strain due to COVID epidemic," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

"From instilling a behavioral change to help more women deliver in hospitals to entitlement for absolutely free services, we have come a long way now in providing quality care throughout pregnancy and childbirth with interventions like LaQshya and midwifery care," Vardhan said. "The idea is to have a fully responsive and accountable health system that will not only result in a positive birthing experience but also help end

preventable maternal and newborn deaths," he said.

He mentioned that India is transitioning "towards a phase of moderate levels of maternal mortality and analyses have shown that many of the maternal deaths occur due to delay in timely provision of comprehensive obstetric care" which could have been prevented.

He also talked about protecting primary health care workers from the pandemic.

"We have taken actions to create a safer work environment for our COVID warriors through uninterrupted supply of essential logistics, personal protective



gear and also made provision of life insurance cover for the people dedicated to COVID and healthcare services. "We have also been carrying out a spirited campaign to celebrate the Corona warriors and address stigma and discrimination that has come to be associated with this disease. I would say that this is not a single department's effort, it is actually a whole of

government approach that is helping us deliver to the last mile." The event was co-hosted by the White Ribbon Alliance (WRA) and Every Woman Every Child (EWEC). A recurrent theme this year was the effort to protect hard earned gains in the field of Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health from the COVID pandemic.

Its season comes to an end but monsoon yet to withdraw from most parts of the country

A nationwide break-up shows that the southern peninsular India; central; and east and the north-eastern parts of the country have received 29%, 15%, and 7% excess rainfall, respectively, to date since June 1.



(News Agencies)- Monsoon season officially comes to an end on Wednesday. Monsoon rainfall was 109% of the long period average (LPA) until Tuesday. The figure is higher than 102% of LPA with an error margin of +/-4%, which India Meteorological Department (IMD) had forecast

in June.

The final monsoon rainfall data will be released by the IMD authorities on Thursday. A nationwide break-up shows that the southern peninsular India; central; and east and the north-eastern parts of the country have received 29%, 15%, and 7%

excess rainfall, respectively, to date since June 1 while north-west India reported a 16% deficiency in rainfall during the corresponding period.

Usually, monsoon is expected to withdraw from the country by October 15.

However, IMD declares the end of monsoon on September 30. Monsoon months extend from June to September.

The conditions are becoming favourable for further withdrawal of monsoon from most parts of Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, western

Himalayan region and some parts of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Madhya Pradesh (MP) during the next two days, according to IMD's bulletin on Tuesday night. A cyclonic circulation is lying over west-central Bay of Bengal off the Andhra Pradesh (AP) coast between lower and upper troposphere. Under its influence, scattered rainfall with moderate thunderstorm and lightning is likely to occur over southern peninsular India during the next two days, IMD's bulletin said.

There is a forecast for heavy to

very heavy rainfall over Tamil Nadu (TN), Puducherry, Karaikal, AP, Telangana, Kerala and southern interior Karnataka until Wednesday.

Rainfall activity is likely to increase over the north-eastern states from Thursday. Widespread and heavy rainfall is expected over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura between Thursday and Saturday.

Dry weather is likely over most parts of north-western parts of the country during the next five days.

Make in India: In a first, citizens will buy Glock pistols armed forces use

The Tamil Nadu company has now set a target to sell the pistols to civilians by the end of March 2021.

(News Agencies)- Currently serving with the military, police and special forces in more than 70 nations, including India, America, England and France, the famous polymer-frame Glock pistols from Austria may soon be available to Indian citizens in non-service calibres.

In 2019, the Tamil Nadu-based Counter measures technologies pvt. Ltd. (CMT) and Glock Ges.m.b.H, Austria, entered into a partnership to produce the pistols at the CMT plant in

Tiruvallur district, which is part of the state's defence industrial corridor planned by the Centre. The joint venture was initially signed for supplying Glocks only to the government. With permission from the Centre, CMT has now set a target to sell the pistols to civilians by the end of March 2021, one of the Indian company's directors and major shareholder, Jayakumar Jayarajan, told HT.

For India's civilian arms market, the arrival of the Glock will be a

game changer, stakeholders feel. The pistol is sold to citizens in many countries, including the USA.

"The Covid-19 lockdown delayed our project by more than six months. We are trying to pick up speed. Our first priority is to supply the 9 mm pistols to the armed forces. Civilians will get the .22 LR, .380, .357 Sig, .40 and .45 calibre pistols. We have permission to set up our own proof testing facility," said Jayarajan.



"A team from Glock landed in Chennai in January 2019 and flew to Delhi to meet Union defence ministry officials after visiting our site. In the delegation was a man who was part of the team that helped

the designer, Gaston Glock, make the first pistol in 1981," said Jayarajan.

Today, Glock produces fifth generation pistols with competitors following its polymer technology.

Political tussle over new farm laws heats up

The Congress has launched a nationwide agitation against the farm laws and Gandhi too is expected to join the farmers' protest in Punjab later this week.

(News Agencies) - Political slugfest over the new farm laws intensified on Tuesday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the protesting opposition parties of "opposing farmers' independence", while Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that the laws were a "stab in the farmers' hearts".

Accusing the opposition of working against farmers' interests, the prime minister said, "A few days ago with the new laws, the country has freed its farmers from many shackles. Now a farmer can sell his produce to anyone, anywhere. But today, even when the central government is giving the farmers their rights, these people [opposition parties] have come down to protest and are opposing the independence of the

farmer." Referring to Monday's incident when members of the Punjab unit of Youth Congress set a tractor on fire at near the India Gate lawns in New Delhi, he said, "These people are now humiliating the farmers by setting fire to the goods and equipment that the farmer worships."

Modi was inaugurating six sewage treatment plants in Uttarakhand under Namami Gange via video conferencing. The three bills - the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Service Bill, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 - have become acts after President Ram Nath Kovind signed them

into law. Meanwhile, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in his video interaction with a group of farmers from across the country, said, "The new farm laws will promote an East India company-like culture. This time, a West India company has come in. There is no difference between GST [Goods and Services Tax], noteban and these three laws. The only difference is that this is directly stabbing your heart with a knife. But I have clarity in my mind that these have to be opposed. Not for farmers, but for the future of India." The Congress has launched a nationwide agitation against the farm laws and Gandhi too is expected to join the farmers' protest in Punjab later this week. West Bengal chief minister and Trinamool



Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee, too, hit out at the Centre saying that this legislation would devastate the farmers of the country and help the hoarders. "The farm laws will devastate the farmers of the country. It will only help the hoarders."

Farmers, especially in Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting against the legislation, which the government says will enable them to sell their produce

in any market of their choice rather than limit them to government-run mandis called APMCs. The protestors say the Centre's farm reforms could pave the way for the dismantling of the MSP system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big companies.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has walked out of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the centre to protest against the farm legislation.

How long will Mehbooba Mufti's detention last, Supreme Court asks govt



(News Agencies) - The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Centre and the Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) administration whether they intend to continue to keep former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti in detention, asking them to explain the

maximum duration for which a person can be held in preventive custody under the law.

An apex court bench headed by justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul was hearing a corpus petition filed by Mufti's daughter, Iltija, challenging her mother's detention under the

Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA), which allows a person to be held without trial for a maximum one year for acting in a manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order and for two years for acting prejudicially to the security of the country. "You should address us on two issues — one, what is the maximum period for which a person can be detained and two, what is your proposal and how long do you propose to continue the detention," the bench, which also comprised justice Hrishikesh Roy, told solicitor general Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre and the Union territory administration.

Mufti was among hundreds of people detained in 2019 to prevent protests against the Centre's move to divest J&K of its special status through the nullification of the Constitution's Article 370 and to divide the region into two Union territories.

Iltija alleged that her mother's continued detention was because of her refusal to sign a general bond affirming that in case of release, she would not make any comment on, deliver any speech or attend any public assembly related to the changes pushed through in Jammu and Kashmir. Mehta told the court that Mufti had been detained on the grounds that her conduct could

lead to public order issues, which allow a person's detention for a period of one year under the PSA. "Considering the ground of detention, can you detain her beyond one year," justice Kaul asked, asking Mehta to respond at the next hearing. Mehta informed the court that the J&K administration had filed a counter affidavit on the matter. The counter-affidavit filed by the district magistrate (DM), Srinagar, stated that the detention order was based on the subjective satisfaction of the detaining authority and the sufficiency or adequacy of material cannot be a matter of judicial review.

India trashes '1959 LAC' claim

India on Tuesday asserted it has never accepted the unilaterally defined 1959 Line of Actual Control (LAC), and pointed out that several agreements with China committed both countries to confirming and clarifying the alignment of the boundary.

The ministry of external affairs (MEA) was reacting to a report about China's foreign ministry saying in an official statement to Hindustan Times that Beijing abides by the LAC proposed by premier Zhou Enlai to prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter dated November 7, 1959

— the first time in decades the Chinese side clearly outlined its stance on the notional boundary by reiterating a position India has consistently rejected since it was first made 61 years ago. "We have seen a report in the Hindustan Times of 29th August, quoting a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement regarding China's position on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the India-China border areas," an MEA statement said. "India has never accepted the so-called unilaterally defined 1959 Line of Actual Control (LAC). This position has been consistent and

well known, including to the Chinese side," ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said. Srivastava pointed out that under several bilateral agreements — including the 1993 Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the LAC, the 1996 Agreement on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in the military field, the 2005 Protocol on Implementation of CBMs, and the 2005 Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question — India and



China have "committed to the clarification and confirmation of the LAC to reach a common understanding of the alignment of the LAC". He added, "Therefore,

the insistence now of the Chinese side that there is only one LAC is contrary to the solemn commitments made by China in these agreements."

There's only one way to fix the presidential debates

There's wide public agreement that the ugly, contentious presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden on Tuesday night was an irritating national embarrassment -- "must-flee TV," as CNN contributor Paul Begala wisecracked. But the Commission on Presidential Debates' announcement that it's considering changes to the format of the two remaining debates won't cure the problem. Tuesday's basic format -- two-minute answers, with opportunities for rebuttal -- wasn't the reason the debate got so ugly. The fatal flaw was not giving the moderator, Chris Wallace, the power to compel the candidates to follow the rules they'd agreed to. The only way to keep out-of-control debaters in line is to give the moderator the ability to turn off the candidates' microphones -- and the authority, if necessary, to eject them from the debate altogether. That might sound extreme, but I've learned the hard way that extreme measures are occasionally necessary. And they work.

Over the years, I have been a moderator or questioner for more than 100 political debates at every level of government. That includes obscure local city council and state legislative primaries, campaigns for prosecutorial offices, and hotly contested races for the US House and Senate. I have been part of at least one televised debate in every race for New York City mayor since 2005 (including the unforgettable year of 2013, when I moderated no fewer than 13 mayoral debates in venues all over the city). I also was a panelist at the CNN-sponsored final debate between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders in 2016, a 2-hour slugfest in Brooklyn.

Making sure that a debate is simultaneously lively, civil and informative requires a great deal of work, especially when candidates are determined to break the agreed-upon format. The rule-breaking is nearly always a deliberate attempt to knock an opponent off stride, usually by interrupting them or slipping in an insult, accusation or falsehood -- often, all three at the same time. When that happens, the moderator has to step in and restore order immediately, or risk watching the debate devolve into chaos.

When a candidate gets cheated out of time by a long-winded opponent, the moderator must have the power to reset the clock. If a candidate starts interrupting or overtalking their opponent, the moderator has to make them stop. And you have to be ready to take action when the first violation happens. In 2018, during a debate for New York State comptroller, one candidate pulled a document out of his breast pocket, purportedly to prove that his opponent had

approved hush-money public payments to settle sexual abuse cases. It was a cheap stunt and a violation of debate rules.

I stopped the debate.

"Let's bring all of this to a halt," I said, addressing the offender directly as the cameras rolled. "If you want to end the debate, you can go home tonight. Is that what you want to do?" I asked. "Put that crap away. We said no props and you agreed to it." It was heavy-handed, but that is what the situation called for. He put the papers back in his jacket pocket, and we continued on with a debate that ultimately turned out to be informative and even pleasant. The same couldn't be said about the raucous, out-of-control general election debate for New York mayor in 2017. One candidate, Bo Dietl, insisted on yelling, talking out of turn and shouting personal insults and other foolishness during the debate. We ended up cutting off his mic.

That same debate, held in a theater in Manhattan, included a handful of noisy audience members who kept shouting out insults at candidates. After a couple of warnings, I signaled to security and had one of the disrupters escorted out of the auditorium, which quieted down the rest of the crowd. Don't get me wrong: a spirited, free-form debate between candidates can happen without a lot of moderator involvement. In 2013, former New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer ran for city comptroller against a less well-known candidate, Scott Stringer, in what became a bitterly contentious Democratic primary. A few minutes into the debate, Spitzer and Stringer -- more or less unprompted -- began a series of bitter back-and-forth accusations of ethical and policy lapses. I and my co-moderator -- veteran public radio host Brian Lehrer -- silently let the two men go back and forth for about five minutes. There was no need to intervene because the issues were substantive and both candidates, although furious, each allowed their rival to answer. It was a rare example of an important truth: debate rules are guidelines to facilitate a good, substantive exchange. If a good discussion breaks out, the job of the moderator is to sit back and let it happen. But that was an exception.

In the age of Trump, presidential debates have to be ready for candidates who have deep contempt for the format, their opponent and, ultimately, the public. In such cases, aspiring to be "invisible," as Chris Wallace said he'd hoped to be, is a formula for disaster. A skilled moderator can transform even a rowdy debate from must-flee to must-see. But only if the commission gives them the power to do so.

Brutality of Hathras crime, brazen police abdication, have shaken and shamed us all

People who died of the plague or some other contagious disease were carried out of the village and their bodies were burnt without the dignity of a proper cremation. This indignity to our loved ones was accepted as a public health necessity. But Wednesday night, when images streamed in on social media and news channels, of a sobbing mother in Hathras being denied her young daughter's body, followed by the images of police personnel, deployed in full force, burning this young girl's remains, without any right in law, in a lonely field outside the village, it was an injustice that was morally and legally too much to bear. It was a reminder of a time when, in this country, a person relegated by oppressors through the unscientific and inhuman caste system as an untouchable, could be treated as worse than animals are - with social and legal impunity. A young woman, only 19 years old, hailing from the Valmiki community, was denied the promise of the Constitution of India of equality before the law and equal protection of the law, in both life and death. Ironically, she may have had a better chance of justice in British India, because all Indians were unequal to the coloniser and yet equal to each other as their subjects. Sadly, the Constitution which we the people of India chose to rid ourselves of caste and communal plague is being flouted brazenly. The sequence of events that saw the unforgivable forced burning of the body of the young woman in Hathras is as horrifying as the end that she met. As per media reports, the mother of the victim described how she had found the body of her daughter on September

14: "My daughter was lying naked with her tongue protruding from her mouth. Her eyes were bulging out and she was bleeding from her mouth, her neck and there was blood near her eyes. I also noticed bleeding from her vagina. I quickly covered her with the pallu of my saree, and started screaming." It was further reported that the brother and mother drove the victim to the Chandpa police station on their motorcycle and the brother alleged that "the police kept saying, 'Just take her from here'." The family took the victim in an ambulance to a local hospital where she was kept for two hours before being referred to the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College and Hospital, Aligarh. Statements by Dr Shahid Ali Siddiqui, principal of the JNM College and Hospital, in the media, reportedly stated that "due to spinal cord damage, the victim was suffering from quadriplegia", meaning complete paralysis in all four limbs. And the injuries on her neck, he added, were causing her "breathing problems". Thirteen days after the victim had been admitted to the hospital, the doctor said that they were yet to confirm if sexual assault had taken place. "The girl is serious but we cannot confirm sexual assault as of yet. A sealed report from our end has been sent to the district administration". According to an article published in The Indian Express, the four upper-caste men, charged with gang rape and attempt to murder, apart from charges under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, were arrested on a statement given by the victim on September 23, after she briefly regained consciousness. There is no explanation for the nine-day delay.



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An Act Of God And Taxing Times

The Centre struggles with the GST, and Anil Ambani with Chinese loans.

Who says you cannot have your cake and eat it too? The Modi government at the centre has done precisely that with GST. The takings have vanished with nary a sausage left for the states, an act of God according to our Finance Minister, thereby proving the point that God helps those who help themselves.

So, the Centre has, in turn, asked the states to help themselves by taking loans from the Reserve Bank, guaranteeing low rates of interest to tide themselves over this God-given crisis. Godless atheists, quite obviously also troublemakers, such as the Kerala finance minister, an economist and a Communist to boot, had suggested that the Central government should take the loan, disburse the funds to the state government and pay the interest. But the centre is having none of that.

Learned economists, all clearly anti-national elements, say that the Centre, in a desperate bid to balance the books, has cooked them as well, the books that is, overstating revenue collections to bluff global rating agencies and understating the fiscal deficit. And the fact has been revealed

by none other than the Government's own Comptroller and Auditor General.

In other words, the government is skint, broke, Khadka, and so, like Old Mother Hubbard's dog, the poor states have none. From Parmatmanirbhar to Atmanirbhar. Or should it be the other way around?

A stray observation here: If the central government says it cannot pay the state government's share of GST because of an act of God, then can the ordinary citizen do the same for the same reason?

A thought comes to mind in the sultry sixth month of the lockdown, and that is that the country is apparently teeming with conspirators and anti-national elements all wearing beards real and fake, with daggers between their teeth and smouldering bombs in their pockets. Like the Elgar Parishad case in which lakhs of Dalits turned out to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the 1818 Battle of Koregaon. Turns out the gathering was a cover for a plot to assassinate Narendra Modi, a modern plot with historic roots. Or, like the JNU case in which a handful of student activists were beaten black and blue by unknown masked

marauders and then charged with sedition. A more inept bunch of conspirators is yet to be seen. And now some of the JNU gang have been linked to the Shaheen Bagh anti-CAA protest and the Jamia Millia mayhem in which students hatching sinister plots in the library were discovered by the police to be reading the long proscribed works of Groucho Marx and from that to the Delhi riots earlier this year. And the activists of Shaheen Bagh are also part of this gigantic conspiracy, barring some 80 of them who joined the BJP a while ago. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal claims they were always in the BJP, and had been fomenting unrest in order to tarnish his reputation before the Assembly elections. However, they have not been charged with anything, leave alone sedition. It's time to call in Sherlock Holmes or Byomkesh Bakshi for the more nationalistically inclined to unravel the full extent of this tangled conspiracy.

Another stray thought comes to mind: Amidst all this agitation and unrest dampened down by the pandemic but flaring up again and that concerns the



farmers out on the streets in agitation against the farm/agriculture reform bills that will become Acts once the President signs his assent. They have not been charged either by lathis or for sedition because the late and much-loved Lal Bahadur Shastri once raised the slogan "Jai Jawan! Jai Kisan!" thus equating the two, and how can a Jawan be declared treasonous?

The Modi government, it seems, wants to free the farmers from the shackles of profiteering middlemen, known in the north as arhatiyas, who operate through Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs). The new legislation says these will be replaced by private enterprise. The farmers are evidently not of the same mind. They don't want to be freed. Wild

ideas are floating around that Zomato and Swiggy will replace the arhatiyas and Adani, Ambani (Mukesh not Anil who says he is skint) and maybe even Amazon will replace the APMCs.

Another observation at this point, or rather a question: If the Central government is so committed to market forces and firmly believes that the farmer in Punjab should be free to sell his or her produce to the consumer in Tamil Nadu, why has it gone and done just the opposite by banning the export of onions? Bangladesh and Nepal are crying out for Indian onions and it should be easier for farmers in northern and eastern India to sell in those two countries and at a higher price, perhaps, than in markets in Tamil Nadu.

The New York Times Confirms Trump Is a Genius

He may not be stable, but he has a coherent strategy for harnessing self-promotion for personal gain.

President Donald Trump's self-appraisal is that he is "a very stable genius," but now comes The New York Times with new evidence suggesting, as Joe Biden would put it, that this is malarkey.

The Times' writers themselves, in the introduction to their ground-shaking scoop, say that two decades of Trump tax returns "tell a story fundamentally different than the one he has told the public."

When someone makes a disparaging assertion about Trump, with his long history of thwarting conventional expectations, it is a good rule to ask: Are we sure about that?

As far as Trump's finances, the Times does indeed demolish the adjective. "Stable" is hardly the

right word to describe the reality of hundreds of millions of dollars in loans coming due, a long battle with the IRS over a questionable \$72.9 million tax refund, scores of dodgy deductions and dubious consulting arrangements with family members, all woven into a financial structure that revolves around the personal brand of a 74-year-old man with a history of bankruptcies, severed personal relationships and increasingly erratic behavior.

But it is the noun that Trump cares most about. What we learned from Trump's taxes does suggest he possesses an astonishing gift which could reasonably be called "genius" — if you accept that as a descriptive word rather than a term of praise. Genius, in this context, means something more

than "very smart." It means an ability to see connections and possibilities in circumstances that even people who are smart in conventional ways do not see. There are some people who possess genius of a certain type in certain arenas who might actually qualify as kind of dumb when it comes to more conventional intelligence of the sort measured in conventional arenas.

Trump's genius, as illuminated by the Times, isn't simply for self-promotion but for harnessing self-promotion to a coherent and comprehensive strategy for personal gain. Profit gets paid out in multiple ways: money, of course, but also reputational currency. The taxes also highlight his ability



to fully merge his personal and professional lives, in which houses and jets and hair stylists become business expenses (in some cases suspect ones). It is a simple fact that in this intersection of self-promotion, self-enrichment, and self-protection Trump has a mind that operates at a different level than most, and he has used it to fashion a historic career. Trump critics were eager to see in the Times report that the Trump reputation is total illusion. It looks

more accurate to say it is partial illusion. His taxes confirm that he does not have some kind of Midas touch. Several of his golf courses and other ventures look to be sucking wind financially. But it's also true that there is real money pumping through the Trump empire, including what the Times described as \$425 million from his half-ownership of his reality TV show, "The Apprentice," as well as "licensing and endorsement deals that flowed from his expanding celebrity."

2020 is the year of Indian-Americans, and they're not with Trump

There are many reasons the president hasn't been able to move the needle substantially with the Indian-American community. First and foremost is the former vice-president's long track record as a supporter of India, dating back to his Senate days.

Frank F Islam

Throughout the 232-year history of the United States (US) presidential elections, India had rarely been a campaign issue. The current election, pitting President Donald Trump and former vice-president Joe Biden, is changing that. With the election day less than seven weeks away and early voting already in progress in several states, both campaigns are touting their strong support for India.

Foreign leaders and the politics of other countries become issues in US presidential campaigns only when they have direct implications for the US or foreign policy consequences. The exceptions have been Israel and Cuba. They are perennial campaign issues because of the presence of a large number of voters who have an interest in the domestic politics of those countries.

India has become a campaign issue in the current election cycle for this same reason. Both the Trump and Biden

campaigns are touting their support for India to woo the 1.8-million Indian-American voters, who have a strong presence in battleground states such as Florida, Pennsylvania and Michigan.

Indian-American populations in swing states, such as Pennsylvania, Michigan and Florida are large enough to tilt the race one way or the other. According to a survey by AAPI Data, which tracks demographic data on Asian-Americans and Pacific Islander communities, there are 87,000 Indian-American voters in Florida, 61,000 in Pennsylvania, and 45,000 in Michigan.

These are among the dozen states that will decide the fate of Trump and Biden on November 3. To put the size of the Indian-American electorate in context, Trump won Michigan in 2016 by 13,080 votes and Pennsylvania by 44,292.

Trump's campaign was the first to start focusing on India. Trump, who had professed his "love" for "Hindus" during his

insurgent campaign in 2016, appeared with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in two public events over the past 12 months, in Houston last year and in Ahmedabad in February. For its part, the Biden campaign has also been courting the Indian-American community aggressively. On August 15, India's Independence Day, Biden and vice-presidential nominee Kamala Harris addressed the Indian-American community, where both vouched their strong support for India.

Until recently, neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party made any concerted effort to earn Indian-American votes. This was due to the relatively small size of the Indian-American electorate and the fact that it was concentrated in reliably Democratic states such as California, New York and New Jersey and routinely voted Democratic.

This year, the Indian-American electorate is on the radar screens of both Democrats and



Republicans. Around 56% of Indian-American registered voters told the AAPI Data pollsters that they have been contacted by the Democrats in the past year and 48% said they were approached by the Republicans.

Even though Trump was the first to begin targeting Indian-American voters, he doesn't appear to have made a lot of progress. The recent AAPI Data survey found that only 28% of Indian-Americans plan to vote for Trump. Two-thirds of the registered voters said they will vote for Biden.

There are many reasons the president hasn't been able to move the needle substantially with the Indian-American community. First and foremost

is the former vice-president's long track record as a supporter of India, dating back to his Senate days.

Second, Trump's approach to India, much like his approach to politics and governing, in general, has primarily been one of sloganeering rather than consistency in policy positions. Finally, similar to a vast majority of Americans outside of Trump's base, Indian Americans perceive the Trump presidency as one of chaos and confrontation for the US, India and the world.

At this point in time, however, it appears that verdict will be that Donald Trump should be a one-term president and that India should start developing its future relations with Joe Biden.

One million lives lost to Covid-19, writes WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

But it's never too late to fight back against the pandemic

One million people have now been lost to Covid-19 and many more are suffering because of the pandemic. This milestone is a difficult moment for the world but there are glimmers of hope that encourage us now and in the near future.

Just nine months on from the virus first being identified, some of the best scientists in the world have collectively developed tests to diagnose cases, identified treatments like corticosteroids to reduce mortality in the most severe cases of Covid-19, and produced vaccine candidates that are now in final phase three trials.

While we await further breakthroughs, we have seen that the virus can be effectively contained through the application of tried and tested public health measures.

Many countries have driven an all-of-government, all-of-society response. With the right preparedness infrastructure in place, they were able to act early to contain outbreaks before transmission got out of hand. Thailand has a well-resourced medical and public health system. Informed by the best available scientific advice, and a trained and

committed community health workforce, Thai authorities acted decisively to suppress the virus, to build trust and to increase public confidence.

Italy was one of the first countries to experience a large outbreak outside China, and in many ways was a pioneer for other countries. Learning from the



Wuhan experience, Italy put strong measures in place and was able to reduce transmission and save many thousands of lives. National unity and solidarity, combined with the dedication and sacrifice of health workers, and the engagement of the Italian people helped bring the outbreak under control. Although the Americas has so far been the most-

affected region, Uruguay has reported the lowest number of cases and deaths in Latin America, both in total and on a per capita basis. This is not an accident. Uruguay has one of the most robust and resilient health systems in Latin America, with sustainable investment based on political consensus on the importance of investing in public health.

Pakistan deployed the infrastructure built up over many years for polio to combat Covid-19. Community health workers who have been trained to go door-to-door vaccinating children against polio have been redeployed and utilized for surveillance, contact tracing and care. This has both suppressed the virus and, as the country stabilizes, the economy is also now picking up once again. Reinforcing the lesson that the choice is not between controlling the virus or saving the economy; the two go hand-in-hand. There are many other examples including Cambodia, Mongolia, Japan, New

Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Senegal, Spain, Vietnam and more. Many of these countries learnt lessons from previous disease outbreaks of SARS, MERS, measles, polio, Ebola and flu to hone their health system and respond to this new pathogen. But the key lesson is the same: No matter where a country is in an outbreak, it is never too late to turn things around.

There are four essential steps that all countries, communities and individuals must focus on to take control the epidemic. First, prevent amplifying events. Covid-19 spreads very efficiently among clusters of people. Second, reduce deaths by protecting vulnerable groups, including older people, those with underlying conditions and essential workers. Third, individuals must play their part by taking the measures we know work to protect themselves and others – stay at least one metre away from others, clean your hands regularly, practice respiratory etiquette, and wear a mask. Avoid the "three Cs": Closed spaces, crowded places and close-contact settings.

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BJP may be able to offset the impact of Akali exit

Punjab is the key as much to the country's food security as to its national security imperatives. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance can achieve the twin objective by reaching out to the restive peasantry without standing on prestige.

By Vinod sharma

Perception management will be the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) biggest challenge in Punjab and other agrarian states after the Shiromani Akali Dal's (SAD) decision to end their 24-year-old alliance on the controversial farm sector reforms.

The BJP wouldn't be that badly off without the SAD if it manages to set up a negotiating table with the agitating farmers to limit the bushfires. That'll set the stage for it to exercise the alliance options it has and the Akalis do not in the sensitive border province.

Given the history of the Khalistan Movement of the 1980s, the Centre's initiative to find a middle ground should come sooner than later. Punjab is the key as much to the country's food security as to its national security imperatives. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance can achieve the twin objective by reaching out to the restive peasantry without standing on prestige.

Also read: President Kovind gives his nod to all 3 farm bills, government notifies them

For its part, the SAD, derided as a fief of the Badal family, has apparently broken free of the NDA in search of its lost glory as a party of struggle and agitation. It had earned the spurs in the post-Independence Punjabi Suba movement and the way it fought Indira Gandhi's Emergency. Its 1975-77 court arrest campaign ran for 19 months when its top leadership was in jail.



That was also the phase when the SAD boasted of such tall leaders as Master Tara Singh, Sant Fateh Singh and Giani Kartar Singh (in the vanguard of the Punjabi Suba stir), Gurcharan Singh Tohra, JS Talwandi, HS Langowal and a much younger Parkash Singh Badal.

The parallel Prime Minister Narendra Modi drew a few years ago between Badal and Nelson Mandela was a tribute in fact to his SAD moorings, the years its leadership spent in jails for the causes to which they were committed. All that is part now of the folklore the SAD inherited but failed to preserve. In its traditional support base of Jat Sikhs, the Dal has today a challenger in SS Dhindsa's SAD (Democratic). The other breakaway faction that went by the name of the Taksali group has since faded out with many among its prominent faces teaming up with Dhindsa. Having served as a minister under Atal Behari Vajpayee, Dhindsa gained

proximity to the BJP at the cost of his mother party. The Padma Bhushan the Modi dispensation conferred on him in 2019 had taken the Badals by surprise. Little wonder then that Dhindsa is widely seen as a substitute for the Badals in the NDA's scheme in Punjab. A political observer who said it in as many words is former Rajya Sabha MP Tarlochan Singh, who had set up a meeting between Vajpayee and Badal to bring the SAD and the BJP together in 1996. The Akalis then had spurned the Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader HS Surjeet's efforts to get them to back HD Deve Gowda. The latter became PM when Vajpayee couldn't show the numbers he needed in Parliament after being in office for 13 days.

The other reason why the BJP could be confident of ploughing the furrow without the Badals is the inroads the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) has made in Punjab through its frontal organisation

with the same acronym, the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat. Its activities have riled the Sikh clergy but on the ground, it's believed to be making headway.

From its standpoint, the SAD has come to see the BJP's crisis of perception over the farm laws as an opportunity for the image makeover it direly needs. In the last assembly polls, the Dal lost the principal Opposition slot to the Aam Aadmi Party. That was after the 2014 parliamentary polls that saw it winning as many seats (two seats each) as the BJP.

The ground, therefore, is slipping from under the SAD's feet. While it fights to recover its lost appeal, the Dal's historical proclivity to show itself as the sole defender of the Sikh cause could divide on communal lines what's essentially a farmers' movement for economic rights. The possibility of such an eventuality in the state bordering Pakistan lends extra urgency to a dialogue between the Centre and the organisations leading the farmers' stir.

A helpful template from the past could be the civil society interface that came about in the aftermath of the events of 1984. The group comprised such men of gravitas as Marshal of the Indian Air Force, Arjan Singh, Lt Gen JS Aurora, Ambassador Gurbachan Singh and Inder Gujral.

A panel with matching eminence grise could be the bridge even now between the Centre and the leaders of the farm community. That could help prepare ground for direct talks — and a mutually agreeable accord.

Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW: If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

- **Stay home:** People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. Do not leave, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.
- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.



Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation

- **Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific “sick room” and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.
 - Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people with the virus limit contact with animals until more information is known.
 - When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick with COVID-19. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.



Call ahead before visiting your doctor

- **Call ahead:** If you have a medical appointment, call your doctor’s office or emergency department, and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



Wear a facemask if you are sick

- **If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider’s office.
- **If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live in the home should stay in a different room. When caregivers enter the room of the sick person, they should wear a facemask. Visitors, other than caregivers, are not recommended.



Cover your coughs and sneezes

- **Cover:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- **Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid sharing personal household items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.



Why herd immunity may not work

Since vaccines are at least another year away, the minister's comments are a reminder that India must keep its focus on preventive measures as it heads into the festive season.

On Sunday, as India crossed six million Covid-19 cases, the Union health minister Harsh Vardhan said the country is far from herd immunity. The minister cited the soon-to-be released findings of the second nationwide serological survey. The reality is that not enough Indians have built an immunological protection that could allow for going back to pre-pandemic behaviour. What is also established is

that India cannot pursue a herd immunity-focussed strategy. Letting the virus run its course will overwhelm the health care system. Mumbai is believed to have faced this scenario. In Delhi, hospital beds dwindled rapidly before additional resources were mobilised. Additionally, some research suggests achieving individual immunity may not last long enough to prevent future infections, making herd

immunity an even riskier gamble. Many scientists have pointed out that herd immunity is a scientific tenet that cannot be used in the context of infection-acquired protection; it is possible only through an effective vaccine. And since vaccines are at least another year away, the minister's comments are a reminder that India must keep its focus on preventive measures as it heads into the festive season.



Its citizens are battling and compulsory face-covering. behaviour fatigue and It is important to address these economic compulsion and may while keeping distractions like not adhere to social distancing herd immunity aside.

Campaign against drugs, save young people

It is clear that our TV channels are either incapable of or uninterested in providing a healthy balance of different kinds of news, especially during a crisis of this magnitude.

deemed undesirables. Did the illegal drug trade in the US end with the death of Escobar? The drug lord was a visible symbol of the malaise. His death did nothing to halt the flow of drugs flowing from various South American countries to other parts of the world including the US. The US in assisting in the hunt and finally the killing of Escobar treated the symptoms of the

deadly disease, it was not able to stamp it out. So in Escobar's death, one cog in the wheel was removed but the problem remained. Escobar was an easy target because he lived the high life. He liked to flaunt his ill-gotten wealth, graced various magazine covers and became something of a Robin Hood in his country. Unlike other old-fashioned drug lords who lived under the

radar, Escobar began to entertain ambitions of becoming the president of his country. Given his high profile, his death made headlines across the world. That was what the US wanted. It wanted a part in bringing down a notorious drug baron. There are many here who feel that the film stars who are being targeted are the victims of politics.

Crop burning: No end in sight

In a year of farm protests, the issue becomes more complex. Innovate to tackle it effectively

The harvest season has begun in northwest India, and so has stubble burning and the unending search for a permanent solution to a problem that leads to severe air pollution in the region, especially in Delhi and the National Capital Region, every winter. According to a report in this paper on Monday, stubble burning may continue this year because central subsidies on straw management machinery are not attractive enough for small farmers to switch to them. Last week, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote to Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar, saying that the Centre must look into the Indian Agricultural Research Institute's (IARI) suggestion of converting stubble to manure

using a chemical. Last year, an analysis of satellite data from the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center suggested no decline in the number of crop stubble fires in 2018 compared to 2017, despite the new policy for in-situ management of crop residue. The challenge of disposing agricultural waste in India is significant. According to IARI, the net cropped area is 141.4 million hectares, and crop residues are estimated to be around 600 million tonnes every year, with generation being the highest in Uttar Pradesh, followed by Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat. Over the years, several policies have been proposed to address the issue, but they have been mainly in-situ technologies. The failure

of these policies show that it is time to try out new multi-pronged approaches to tackle the problem: Incentivising farmers to shift away from water-guzzling paddy and diversifying cropping patterns is one. Utilising crop residue in power plants, brick kilns and biomass gasifiers is another. A report by the Council on Energy Environment and Water suggests that increasing farmers' accessibility to stubble managing equipment by setting up more custom hiring centres and promoting rental models may work. Last year, Punjab and Haryana provided incentives to farmers, at Rs 2,500 per acre, for managing the residue in alternative ways.



By Shashi Shekhar

If a research scholar were to conduct a study on the social and political discourse in today's India during the Covid-19 pandemic about 100 years from now, she would unearth many surprises. If she were to watch the videos from the archives of different news channels, she might not be faulted for thinking that the biggest problem India faced in the latter half of 2020 was the issue of some film stars ostensibly using drugs or other intoxicants. The enormous problems the country faces as a result of the pandemic in the form of unemployment, the plight of migrant workers, the encroachment by China's People's Liberation Army into Indian territory, the economic downturn, the lack of health care systems will probably feature as a footnote.

It is clear that our TV channels are either incapable of or uninterested in providing a healthy balance of different kinds of news, especially during a crisis of this magnitude. I am by no means underplaying

the problems of drug addiction or alcoholism among sections of the younger generation. It is well-known that the drug menace has taken on epic proportions in some areas. This goes far beyond India's borders and is an intractable problem in many countries and this has been going on for several decades. Former United States (US) President Ronald Reagan, who came to power on a nationalistic platform, made a heroic effort to tackle the drug problem in his country. In fact, he declared war on drugs — his wife launched the campaign with the famous slogan "just say no". The US set up a special task force with the sole aim of killing Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar. At that time, the US spent as much by way of resources to eliminate him as it did for Communist revolutionary Che Guevara. Che was the spirit behind the revolution in several Latin American countries. Many people find comparisons between the charismatic Che and Escobar unacceptable, but to US policymakers, both were



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Do you pay more than \$750 in taxes? You've given more than Trump

By Andrew Gawthorpe

Did you pay more than \$750 in taxes in recent years? If so, your contribution to the greater good of the United States has been substantially higher than that of Donald Trump. Thanks to a New York Times investigation, we can now see exactly how much the president of the United States has contributed to the public coffers each year over a period of several decades. The answer: usually zero, although he threw in the occasional \$750 when he absolutely had to.

The revelation that Trump would pursue his own selfish interests at the expense of everyone else – especially the nation he aspired to and then eventually did lead – cannot be that surprising to anyone. But we should resist the temptation to not be outraged. The American taxation system is indeed broken, but Trump's actions stand out as particularly egregious even within the context of a broken system, and he has paid far less tax than the average person of equivalent wealth (or at least, the wealth he claims to have). We should also consider the fact that the president of the United States should be held

to a higher standard than the average crooked businessman. Paying taxes is not just a concrete contribution towards government spending, but a symbolic affirmation that we recognize that we must all contribute towards the common good. Remarkably for a man who sought and then achieved the office of presidency (his first attempt came in the year 2000, when the Times data begins), Trump appears to have no concept of this. Throughout his business career, he has viewed contractors and partners as marks to be screwed over. It is now obvious that this view extends to the American people themselves, who he was happy to leave short-changed even as they struggled through terrorist attack, war and economic crisis. But paying taxes is not some altruistic action which we take out of the goodness of our hearts. It is also a recognition that our own success is dependent on the fruits of public spending. The American jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr once wrote: "I like to pay taxes. With them I buy civilization." Rich people might often try to live in a bubble insulated from the rest of society, but they ultimately are dependent for their wealth on the

infrastructure, the public safety and the stable business environment which only exist because the government has the money to create them. In fact, as unusually fortunate beneficiaries of these public goods, the rich have an even greater obligation to fund them. It is also clear that Trump considers himself much smarter than regular tax-paying folk, who cannot afford the fancy lawyers or use the tax loopholes which allow him to pay a much lower tax rate than they do. Part of Trump's appeal in 2016 was the promise that he was a smart, successful businessman who would put those talents in service of the interests of what he called "the forgotten people". But this was just another elaborate con, a trick played on his supporters. He is not so much a successful businessman as a TV celebrity with a heavily indebted property empire which he is running into the ground in slow-motion. Look closely and the success and the smarts necessary to advance his supporters' interests are a mirage. Only the con remains. This leads us to the final way in which Trump is taking the country for suckers, even today. Before and during the presidency, Trump has



continued to hemorrhage money. He desperately needs cash infusions and protection from creditors to whom he owes some \$421m, much of which he has personally guaranteed.

Given this, it is little surprise that there has never been a president who sought – successfully – to profit from the presidency as much as Trump has. He continues to bilk the taxpayer by having government employees stay at his wildly unprofitable hotels. Most worryingly of all, his businesses continue to court foreign investors and partners from countries which are both geopolitically important to the United States and financially important to him personally as supporters of his mismanaged business empire. How this has affected American policy, both foreign and domestic, is

impossible to say. When policy is made, where do the legitimate interests of the United States end and those of the chronically indebted president begin? The American public can have no way of telling. But everything we have learned from his tax returns strongly suggests that whenever there is a conflict between looking out for the common good and looking out for the good of Donald Trump, the president will choose the latter. Andrew Gawthorpe is a historian of the United States at Leiden University

Four more years of Donald Trump ... is a real possibility. America faces an epic choice on 3 November, and the result will have global repercussions for democracy, progress and solidarity for generations.

We need to rethink social media before it's too late. We've accepted a Faustian bargain



By Jeff Orlowski

When people envision technology overtaking society, many think of The Terminator and bulletproof robots. Or Big Brother in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, a symbol of external, omnipotent oppression.

But in all likelihood, dystopian technology will not strong-arm us. Instead, we'll unwittingly submit ourselves to a devil's bargain: freely trade our subconscious preferences for memes, our social cohesion for instant connection, and the truth

for what we want to hear. Indeed, as former insiders at Google, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube attest in our new documentary, The Social Dilemma, this is already happening. We already live in a version of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. As Neil Postman puts it in his 1985 book Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business: The technology that threatens our society, democracy, and mental health is lurking in our bedrooms,

sometimes lying on our pillows, as we fall asleep. We awake to its call, bring its chiming notifications to dinner, and blindly trust where it guides us. We scroll insatiably, unsuspecting that the technology that connects us, especially now in a distanced world, is also controlling us. Our social media platforms are powered by a surveillance-based business model designed to mine, manipulate, and extract our human experiences at any cost, causing a breakdown of our information ecosystem and shared sense of truth worldwide. This extractive business model is not built for us but built to exploit us. A third of American adults, and nearly half of those aged 18-29, say they are online "almost constantly". But, unlike the citizens of Brave New World, we're miserable. As our time online has gone up, so have anxiety, depression and suicide rates, particularly among youth. Social media is also derailing productive public discourse.

A largely ignored internal memo to senior executives at Facebook in 2018 explained: "Our algorithms exploit the human brain's attraction to divisiveness." Left unchecked, the algorithms will feed users "more and more divisive content in an effort to gain user attention and increase time on the platform".

In 2014, Pew Research Center found that partisan antipathy and division in America is "deeper and more extensive than at any point in the last two decades". Over the past six years, social media has only exacerbated these sentiments. In 2019, 77% of Republicans and 72% of Democrats said voters in both parties "not only disagree over plans and policies, but also cannot agree on the basic facts". In The Social Dilemma, Tristan Harris, a former Google design ethicist and the co-founder of the Center for Humane Technology, points out that far before technology overpowers human strengths, it will overwhelm

human weaknesses. Sophisticated algorithms learn our emotional vulnerabilities and exploit them for profit in insidious ways.

By surveilling nearly all of our online activity, social media platforms can now predict our emotions and behaviors. They leverage these insights and auction us to the highest advertising bidder, and they have consequently become some of the richest companies in the history of the world. But users aren't just being sold a pair of shoes. The targeting capabilities of these platforms give anyone with a motive the power and precision to influence us cheaply and with phenomenal ease. Disinformation campaigns have been cited in more than 70 countries, and doubled from 2017 to 2019.

The whistleblower Sophie Zhang has revealed how pervasive the problem is on Facebook's platform, and how little the company acts on it.

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Breonna Taylor's name is known around the world but she still can't get justice at home

By Arwa Mahdawi

Breonna Taylor: a million memes but still no justice. America cares more about property damage than black lives. How else do you explain the infuriating Breonna Taylor ruling? On Wednesday a grand jury in Kentucky brought no charges against the Louisville police for killing the 26-year-old emergency medical worker in her home. The two officers who shot Taylor were not charged in her death; instead a former detective, Brett Hankison, was indicted for recklessly firing into the walls of a white neighbor's apartment. As LeBron James noted, the neighbors' walls got more justice than Taylor did. Taylor hasn't got justice yet, but her death has got our attention: over the past six months she has become a household name. This, in part, is down to the "meme-ification of her death": "Arrest the cops who killed Breonna Taylor" became an online catchphrase and made her death a mainstream talking point. Taylor was on the September cover of Oprah Winfrey's magazine and Winfrey paid to put her face up on

billboards – which were swiftly vandalized. Celebrities wore T-shirts emblazoned with her face to award shows. Tens of thousands of people marched in the streets shouting her name: her memory became a movement.

But awareness can very easily tip into exploitation. While the memes around Taylor's death helped ensure nobody forgot her name, a large portion of them arguably trivialized her death. Her murder became a punchline. A way to sell expensive jewellery, face masks and baseball caps. When Taylor's name started trending after the grand jury decision was announced, it was quickly seized upon by the streaming service Hulu to promote a new documentary, *The Killing of Breonna Taylor*. Taylor has been commodified, meme-ified, monetized: nobody is paying for her death but plenty of people are profiting from it.

That, of course, includes the far-right: over the past week the "Truth About Breonna Taylor" content pushed by right-wing commentators has been going

viral on social media. These posts are full of lies about Taylor, but that hasn't stopped them from getting millions of views. On Wednesday, for example, a video by Charlie Kirk, the weaselly leader of a pro-Trump student group, was one of the most shared Facebook posts about Taylor. In the video Kirk tries to portray Taylor as a criminal, saying the Louisville police had a "no-knock warrant to go arrest Breonna Taylor"; that is a lie, the police simply had a search warrant for her apartment.

Earlier this month I interviewed Yusef Salaam, one of the Exonerated Five, and the author Ibi Zoboi: the pair recently teamed up on a book called *Punching The Air* which is a must-read.

"Social media has allowed us to be more aware [of oppression] but it doesn't seem that awareness alone makes anything change," Zoboi noted in that interview. "It seems like the more awareness we have, the more pushback there is. It seems like white supremacists have doubled down because of our awareness." I've been thinking



about that quote a lot in light of the Taylor grand jury decision. What does "awareness" really mean when the truth is distorted by the far-right and allowed to go viral by technology companies that only care about profit? What good is "awareness" when Taylor's name is known around the world but she still can't get justice at home?

Taylor deserves so much better than this. Her name may have become a symbol, but she was a human being. We must continue to say her name but, above all, we must remember her humanity.

Woman attacked in France for wearing a skirt

The French police are investigating an attack on a 22-

year-old woman in Strasbourg. The woman identified only as Elisabeth, says she was walking home when one of the men exclaimed "look at that whore in a skirt," and punched her.

In rather better French news: Emmanuel Macron is expanding paternity leave

Macron wants new dads to get 28 days and also be required to take at least a week off work.

Want to watch me interview Ilhan Omar on Tuesday?

Ruth Bader Ginsburg becomes first woman to lie in state at US Capitol

It took 168 years for this to happen. Meanwhile, Trump is gearing up to disrespect RBG's memory ASAP by announcing his nominee for her successor.

Kamala Devi Harris: Navigating The Political Spectrum Across Competing Cultural Lineages

The coming together of varied health, economic, political, and socio-cultural influences have drummed up popular enthusiasm for Senator Harris' s nomination for VP in the upcoming US elections.

Multiple constituencies across United States of America, India, Jamaica, and Canada are claiming Kamala Devi Harris as their "daughter" through birth, parental lineage, extensive familial and affective bonds, educational grounding, cultural legacies, and political work. Senator Harris, as the Vice-Presidential (VP) candidate of the US democratic party, invited immense media commentary across these locations. How does one understand the wide appeal and political ascendancy of the Senator? Is it the political moment that has risen to meet Harris' candidacy, is it her unique gendered and multi-racial identity markers that make her the subject of popular curiosity, or yet still, might it be the moral bankruptcy of the current Trump presidency that has fostered a deep desire to restore good and ethical leadership that's catapulted her to popularity and

extensive commentary? It is probably a combination of all these factors that would help us understand what Senator Harris' nomination conveys to people within the US and in locations as varied and distant as Canada, India, Jamaica, and beyond.

Rise of an Amriki Daughter in an Historic Moment

Let me unpack the backdrop within which Kamala Harris has emerged as the running mate of Democratic presidential nominee, Joe Biden. We are living in an unprecedented historic moment, one ravaged by global pandemic—where rates of infection and death are proportional to mindful national and local governmental public health directives or lack thereof. COVID has threatened human lives and destroyed livelihoods by shrinking employment and plunging the global economy into recession. This monumental health calamity and its corollary

economic melt-down, in the US, has been further exacerbated by blatant police brutality and targeting of colored bodies, especially Black bodies. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the fatal shooting of Jacob Blake, has reignited the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, energizing the demands for radically reimagining policing and community safeguards and marking this as a moment of national reckoning.

Gender identities further deepen the class, race, and ethnic fault lines within the current US national moment. This August marked the centennial passage of the nineteenth amendment, in celebrating this historic landmark in an election year, a collective "feminist" aspiration has emerged to end the perpetual national postponement of women's claims to highest political offices. Nor can one gloss over the



ongoing #Me Too movement's persistent dismemberment of patriarchal entitlement to women's bodies across varied professional locations.

The coming together of these varied and intersecting health, economic, political, and socio-cultural influences have drummed up popular enthusiasm for Senator Harris' nomination for VP in the upcoming US elections. There is a deep and widespread desire to reinstate the lost ethics of care and empathetic engagement across our differences. Let us watch and see how the campaign unfolds and if Senator Harris will indeed make

history this November as the multi-ethnic Amriki daughter of immigrant parents, breaking through the glass-ceiling of American politics.

Promises and Dilemmas of Holding Multiple registers of Identity and Heritage

Even as national elections are strictly confined to political participation of eligible electorates within its borders, favorable press abroad adds luster to politicians running for office. In her acceptance speech at the Democratic convention, Harris acknowledged her Indian heritage and graciously thanked the love and blessings of her Indian chittis (aunties).



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Pakistan's opposition, public increasingly irked by the military's role in politics

Whether this present front of opposition unity and better atmospherics between the leaders of the PML-(N) and the PPP, therefore, heralds something new happening in Pakistan is too early to say.

(News Agencies)- Whether this present front of opposition unity and better atmospherics between the leaders of the PML-(N) and the PPP, therefore, heralds something new happening in Pakistan is too early to say. Former Pakistan prime minister (PM), Nawaz Sharif's, defiant roar summarises both his biography and Pakistan's history over the past three decades. The occasion was an opposition conference on video on September 20. Quite apart from what the former PM said, the occasion was significant. The conference was hosted by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). It brought together all the major opposition parties and leaders. The Pakistan Muslim League (N) - Nawaz Sharif's party - coordinating action with the PPP has not been seen for some time. These two together make up a large chunk of the political spectrum and both are

now increasingly led by charismatic next generation leaders - Nawaz Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz and Benazir Bhutto's son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. What is common to both is that they attach to their names that of a parent who was the political face of Pakistan for long periods of its history - Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. This is dynastic politics, of course, but it is also real politics. What made the news most was Nawaz Sharif's broadside against Prime Minister Imran Khan and his government, of course, but more against those "who installed Imran Khan and who manipulated elections to bring an incapable man like him into power and thus, destroyed the country". Khan's failures of economic and foreign policy, on Kashmir, Pakistan's international isolation, alienation from Saudi Arabia and the Organisation of Islamic

Cooperation (OIC), the stagnation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), thus formed one aspect of the speech. The real firepower was in the references to the erosion and throttling of democracy, that "every child knows that no prime minister has been allowed to complete five years in power", of a "state above the state". All this refers to the role of the military - euphemistically called the establishment - in politics. What has been less reported than his references to the military and the generals were the comments about the judiciary and how it acts in concert with the military. Nawaz Sharif has been PM longer than anyone else - in all over nine years but spread over three terms in which the first (November 1990-July 1993) and the third (June 2013-July 2017) are separated by a quarter of a century. While the military, or at

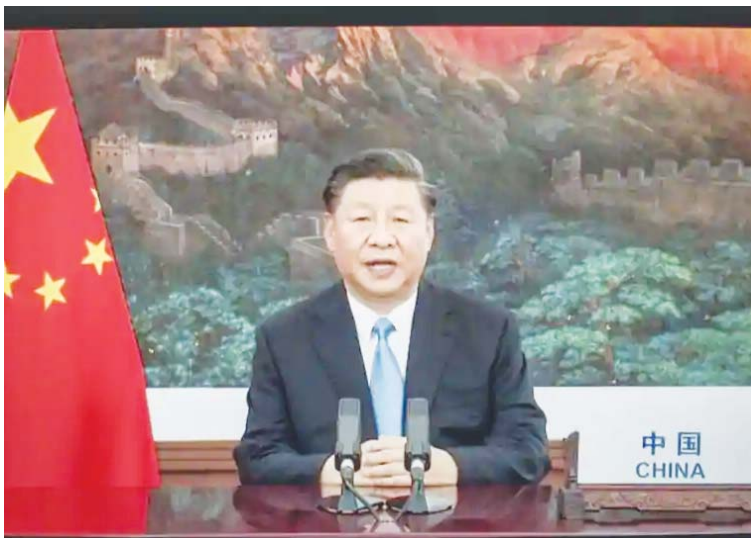


least certain generals, had much to do with his meteoric rise through the 1980s, once PM, Nawaz Sharif acted as if he was in charge. His first tenure ended, therefore, with a bitter feud with the president; the second with a coup after General Pervez Musharraf's Kargil misadventure; the third with what amounted to a judicial coup - or so at least many in Pakistan felt. In each of the three terms, his party had a majority but this was no defence against the forces arrayed against him. The third term was marked by near constant friction with the military on a whole range of issues. A close political associate and astute observer, former foreign

minister Sartaj Aziz, has recently written: "Nawaz Sharif's transition away from the military establishment grew incrementally when his core political interests or stakes were threatened by the absence of real democracy". Nawaz Sharif's second and third terms stand out for his willingness to walk Pakistan's most dangerous minefield - relations with India. That story is well known. The point, however, is that Nawaz Sharif understood intuitively that his authority as PM could be cemented only by limiting the role of the military and for this to happen some improvement of relations, if not normalisation with India, was essential.

China's push to be a climate leader

There are many devils in the details, including what Beijing defines as carbon neutrality or peak emissions, but this could well be a major turning point in environmental history



(News Agencies)- China's recent declaration that it will aim to be carbon neutral by 2060 has created a stir. Chinese leader Xi Jinping declared his country would slightly better its Paris Accord pledge by reaching peak carbon emission before 2030. There are many devils in the details, including what Beijing defines as carbon neutrality or peak emissions, but this could well be a major turning point in

environmental history. China produced 9.8 gigatonnes of carbon last year, a little less than the combined carbon emissions of the United States, European Union and India. Mr Xi, not known for his environmental concern, will have multiple reasons for the announcement. One is to place China firmly in a global leadership role when it comes to climate. Mr Xi's announcement will help boost

a Chinese image much tarnished by its bullying neighbourhood policy - and its handling of the coronavirus epidemic, which originated in Wuhan. Another is to help boost China's already considerable capabilities in green technologies such as electric vehicles, solar power plants and batteries. Green tech will determine manufacturing competitiveness in the coming decades. India has not shirked its responsibility when it comes to climate. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been an outlier among other leaders in his commitment to decarbonising India. But China's promise is a reminder that India can do more. The next economic stimulus should be infused with a more radical commitment to greening the power sector and a recognition that climate-friendly economics can be a large job creator.

In Pakistan, a tweet can bring a death sentence

(News Agencies)- Marvi

Sirmed is a Pakistani freelance journalist and human rights defender who previously served as a Special Correspondent for the Daily Times, an English-language newspaper in Pakistan.

Last month, I sent a tweet - intended as a commentary on Pakistan's problem of political abductions - that sparked a violent backlash of gender-based slurs, slut-shaming and death threats. By the next day, #ArrestMarviSirmed_295C became the top trending Twitter hashtag in my country, with countless people suggesting my extrajudicial murder. They took their inspiration from Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws. (Section 295-C makes it a criminal offense to use derogatory remarks about the Holy Prophet.) The hatred and calls for violence sent me into hiding, fearing that vigilantes might take matters into their own hands. The mere accusation of blasphemy has become a license to kill in most of the Muslim world, particularly

in Pakistan.

As an activist and journalist, I often speak about issues that my country's powerful military establishment does not want aired. This time, I tweeted satirically about the rising enforced disappearances in Pakistan, specifically referencing the Baloch people, an ethnic minority that has been facing state persecution for decades: "An Islamic clergyman was describing to his followers that Hazrat Eesa [Jesus Christ, as used by Muslims] did not die, he was actually picked by the Almighty. One simpleton follower asked, was he, too, a Baloch?"

Over the past 18 years, Pakistan's military has consolidated its control over almost every aspect of Balochistan's society, politics and governance. People there face intense oppression on suspicion of dissent. Anyone like me, who publicly criticizes the military or government, may find themselves targeted by blasphemy charges - which could mean assassination.

Foreign ministers of India, Bangladesh meet; review bilateral ties

(News Agencies)- India and Bangladesh on Tuesday created a high-level mechanism to monitor development projects funded by New Delhi even as Dhaka sought removal of non-tariff barriers and greater trade facilitation to enhance the export of its products. Bangladesh's long-standing demand for early resolution of the sharing of waters of the Teesta river and agreements on sharing of all common rivers also figured in the virtual meeting of the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) co-chaired by external affairs minister S Jaishankar and his Bangladeshi counterpart AK Abdul Momen.

Momen also expressed the hope that India, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council during 2021-22, would play a "more meaningful role for a lasting solution to the Rohingya crisis, including their early repatriation to Myanmar in a safe and sustainable manner", according to a statement from Bangladesh's foreign ministry. The two sides decided to form a "high level monitoring committee" headed by the secretary of Bangladesh's Economic Relations Division and the Indian envoy in Dhaka to regularly review the implementation of projects under three lines of credit (LoC) agreements, a joint statement said. Momen raised non-tariff barriers and lack of trade

facilitation that he said were impeding the flow of Bangladeshi goods to India, particularly the northeastern states. The Bangladeshi side asked India to address issues related to accreditation, certification, standardisation, port restrictions and developing port infrastructure to enable further exports. Momen also requested Jaishankar to look into export of essential commodities, such as onions, by India since it impacts the domestic market of Bangladesh. India's recent ban on onion exports had a huge impact on prices in Bangladesh, and New Delhi subsequently allowed the movement of onion supplies already contracted for by



Bangladeshi importers. Tuesday's JCC meeting was part of efforts by the two sides to set ties, hit by a string of irritants since last year, on an even keel. Foreign secretary Harsh Shringla had visited Dhaka in August, when he delivered a message from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina. The two ministers also agreed more steps can be taken to enhance trade and

investment between India and Bangladesh, the top two economies in South Asia, such as removal of all types of barriers. The Bangladeshi side appreciated India's decision for duty-free access of Bangladeshi products to the Indian market under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) pact, due to which Bangladeshi exports crossed the \$1-billion mark in 2018-19 though the balance of trade remains in India's favour.

China on their radar, India, Japan, US, Australia to hold Quad meet on Oct 6



(News Agencies)- Foreign ministers of the Quad, the informal security forum comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia, are expected to hold a much-awaited meeting in Tokyo on

October 6 with the objective of tightening strategic cooperation and advance the goal of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. The meeting is expected to be followed by consultations at senior officials' level in

The four Quad partners have their own reasons for being upset with China's aggressive posture under paramount leader Xi Jinping under the mask of the deadly coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic

November. The meeting will discuss collaboration among Quad countries in counter-terrorism, cyber and maritime security, development finance, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, according to South Block officials. The ministers are also expected to discuss practical collaborations in developing advanced technologies including 5G and 5G-plus telecom standards as well as securing the sea lanes of communications in the Indo-

Pacific. While Beijing is expected to take aim at the four partners for seeking to target China at the meeting, there has been a sea change since the ministers met informally on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly on September 26, 2019. Quad is expected to take steps towards an institutionalized dialogue at the meeting, where Chinese actions since the rise of global pandemic from Wuhan will come under a magnifying glass.

The Quad ministerial comes at a time when the Donald Trump administration has made a U-turn on US policy towards China, which was guided by the rapprochement policy tailored by Henry Kissinger 50 years ago under the Republican administration of Richard Nixon. The tough, new US policy towards Communist China was defined by US secretary of state Mike Pompeo in his Nixon Library address on July 24.

China says it doesn't recognise 'illegal' UT Ladakh, denies it's building military bases near LAC

(News Agencies)-China on Tuesday said it does not recognise the "illegally" constituted Ladakh union territory, adding it was opposed to India building military infrastructure in the border areas. The Chinese foreign ministry said neither India nor China should engage in activities in the border region that could complicate the situation, brushing aside its own infrastructure-building by saying it was on their side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Beijing also denied reports that it had built new military bases near LAC, saying they

were driven by "ulterior motives". Responding to a question on India building a high-altitude road network in Ladakh, foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said: "China has not recognised Ladakh union territory illegally set up by the Indian side. We are opposed to conducting infrastructure development for military purposes in the border area."

India's strengthening of infrastructure in the region comes amid the worst border tension with China in decades in eastern

Ladakh, where border troops from the two countries are locked in a face-off since May.



"Based on the two sides' consensus, no side should engage in the border areas in any activities that might complicate the situation to avoid undermining two sides' efforts to ease the

situation," Wang added. China had responded strongly in August, 2019, after New Delhi had stripped Jammu & Kashmir

of its special status and bifurcated the state as two separate union territories of J&K and Ladakh.

"China has always opposed India's inclusion of Chinese territory in India's administrative jurisdiction in the western part of the Sino-Indian border. This position is firm, consistent and has never changed," the foreign ministry had said in a statement at the time. "In recent days, the Indian

side has continued to undermine China's territorial sovereignty by unilaterally amending its domestic laws. This practice is unacceptable and will not produce any effect," the 2019 statement had said. When Wang was asked on Tuesday to comment on China's advanced infrastructure in the region, he initially denied that Beijing was building new military facilities in the region. "First, some institutions once released the so-called information on new military bases or facilities China has built on its side. Such reports are completely false. They are driven by ulterior motives," Wang said.

Revelations on Trump's tax returns stoke long-held national security concerns



(News Agencies)- The likelihood that President Donald Trump personally owes unknown creditors hundreds of millions of dollars has raised concerns about how the President's financial entanglements could influence his national security decisions, former officials and experts say.

It also highlights how if were Trump not the President, a role that grants him access to the country's most sensitive secrets, he would almost certainly have a difficult time gaining the security clearance that so many of those who work for him are required to have, according to legal experts familiar with the vetting process.

Trump is personally liable for debts and loans totaling \$421 million, The New York Times reported on Sunday evening, and most of it comes due in the next four years -- an amount that former intelligence officials, Democratic

lawmakers and legal experts warn could be used as leverage against him, and in turn, the US itself.

"A vulnerability could be exploited by an adversary," Robert Cardillo -- a former top intelligence official in both the Obama and Trump administrations -- told CNN on Monday. "If we as an intelligence community were assessing a foreign leader, and trying to understand his or her stability, and knew of outsized debts to a foreign or even to a national entity, we would see that as a risk," Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi told MSNBC she also saw the stunning revelations about Trump's chaotic finances as a national security problem.

"He has exposure to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. To whom? The public has a right to know," she said.

The fact is, over \$400 million in leverage that somebody has over the President of the United States," Pelosi added. "If he were going to be a federal appointee, that would be a major obstacle, because someone has leverage over him."

Debt is one of the items security officials who are adjudicating clearances look at because of the potential for an adversary to leverage it or, if the person is more desperate, use it as a basis for blackmail, experts say.

Massachusetts man dies from eating bags of black licorice

(News Agencies)- A many other foods and dietary Massachusetts construction supplements containing licorice worker's love of black licorice root extract. It can cause wound up costing him his life. dangerously low potassium and Eating a bag and a half every day imbalances in other minerals called electrolytes. for a few weeks threw his nutrients out of whack and Eating as little as 2 ounces of caused the 54-year-old man's black licorice a day for two weeks



could cause a heart rhythm problem, especially for folks over 40, the US Food and Drug Administration warns.

"It's more than licorice sticks. It

heart to stop, doctors reported Wednesday.

"Even a small amount of licorice you eat can increase your blood pressure a little bit," said Dr. Neel Butala, a cardiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital who described the case in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The problem is glycyrrhizic acid, found in black licorice and in

could be jelly beans, licorice teas, a lot of things over the counter. Even some beers, like Belgian beers, have this compound in it," as do some chewing tobaccos, said Dr. Robert Eckel, a University of Colorado cardiologist and former American Heart Association president. He had no role in the Massachusetts man's care.

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New Yorkers working together can slow the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in New York City.



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- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing.
- Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead wave or elbow bump.
- Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.



STAY HOME IF SICK

- Stay home and call your doctor if you have symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath, fever, sore throat.
- If you do not feel better in 24-48 hours, seek care from your doctor.
- If you need help getting medical care, call 311.
- NYC will provide care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.



PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE

- If you have chronic conditions like lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system, avoid unnecessary gatherings and events.
- If you have family or friends who have one of these conditions, do not visit them if you feel sick.



REDUCE OVERCROWDING

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- Stagger work hours, starting earlier or later.
- Walk or bike to work, if possible.
- If the train is too packed, wait for the next one.

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A man accused of driving into protesters is arrested for illegal firearms and setting up 'training camp' at family vineyard



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY, CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

(News Agencies)- A California man who allegedly drove his truck into a peaceful protest was arrested and charged with a federal crime.

Police said Benjamin Jong Ren Hung, 28, of San Marino, intentionally drove his truck into a crowd of protesters in Pasadena on May 31. The crowd scattered and no injuries were reported.

Hung was arrested the same day, and when police searched his truck, they found a loaded semiautomatic handgun, high-capacity magazines loaded with ammunition, an 18-inch machete, \$3,200 in cash, a long metal pipe

and a megaphone, according to the affidavit filed with the initial complaint.

He allegedly acquired the firearm from a friend who purchased it for him in Oregon and then transported it to California, police said. The friend falsely stated that he was the transferee of the gun and Hung kept the firearm at his home in San Marino before bringing it to the demonstration, they added.

Police said Hung also allegedly purchased at least three additional firearms in Oregon, transported them to California in March and was gathering other

weapons and tactical gear with plans to use his family's vineyard as a training camp to "prepare to engage in civil disorders."

He was released and arrested again September 21 and charged with one count of conspiracy to transport firearms across state lines and to make a false statement in acquisition of firearms.

Hung was denied bail at his hearing Tuesday and will remain in jail until his scheduled arraignment October 15. If convicted, Hung would face a maximum sentence of five years in federal prison.

Federal judge blocks attempt to hike naturalization fees by 80%

(News Agencies)- A federal judge in California blocked a Trump administration rule that would've hiked



that the public interest would be served by enjoining or staying the effective date of the Final Rule because if it takes

up naturalization fees by more than 80% and charged a first-time fee for asylum applicants, days before the regulation was set to take effect.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services, the agency responsible for the country's immigration and naturalization system, updated and finalized its fee structure after a nearly nine-month review earlier this year.

The agency increased the cost of online naturalization applications from \$640 to \$1,160 and included a \$50 fee for asylum seekers. Historically, asylum seekers around the world are not subject to application fees, according to the Migration Policy Institute. "Plaintiffs persuasively argue

effect, it will prevent vulnerable and low-income applicants from applying for immigration benefits, will block access to humanitarian protections, and will expose those populations to further danger," wrote Judge Jeffrey White in his ruling Tuesday. "Plaintiffs also cite comments and research that argue the public at large would be harmed if the Final Rule goes into effect because it will negatively impact tax revenues and would delay individuals seeking to naturalize from participating in essential civic activities like voting, service in public office, and jury service. Defendants do not counter those arguments," White added. The regulation was set to take effect on October 2.

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Parents of Mexico's missing students remain hopeful, six years after their disappearance

(News Agencies)- Luz María Telumbre still clings to the hope that her son is alive, even though many people in her town believe that he's gone forever.

"Very few people are still supporting us," Telumbre recently told CNN in her adobe house in the town of Tixtla, a rural area in the coastal Mexican state of Guerrero, where she was making corn tortillas on the griddle to sell them and help her husband Clemente Rodríguez make ends meet.

"Six years is a long time," she says. That's how long it's been since Telumbre last saw her son, Christian Alfonso Rodríguez. Affectionately known as "Lolo", Rodríguez was then a 19-year-old college student. He had just begun his first semester at the Raúl Isidro Burgos School for Teachers in the nearby town of Ayotzinapa.

In late September 2014, he joined a group of about 100 students from his college traveling in two buses they had commandeered to stage a protest in Iguala, a city two hours away by car. Sometime between the night of September 26, 2014 and the following morning, the buses were intercepted by local police and the federal military forces in Iguala, according to authorities at the time. The bullet-riddled buses

could later be seen in the city's streets. The windows had been shattered by the bullets and there was blood everywhere. And 43 students, including Christian Alfonso Rodríguez, had gone missing. Other students who were on the buses later spoke of a night of horror. Armed police officers and soldiers stopped the buses and suddenly opened fire, they said. The ones who were not immediately



shot had dropped to the floor to save their lives while yelling at the top of their lungs, pleading with the officers to cease fire. A student told CNN he saw one of his closest friends get shot in the head. CNN reached out to the Mexican Attorney General's Office and the Mexican Department of Defense about any inquiries into the alleged role of the military and police. So far there has been

no answer.

In October 2015, then-Mexican Defense Secretary Salvador Cienfuegos Zepeda rejected any involvement by members of the army under his command, though soldiers of the 27th Battalion -- which serves the region where the students disappeared -- were questioned by the Attorney General's Office at the time.

In spite of repeated pleas over the years, protests, marches, meetings with government officials and several investigations by two different administrations and international forensic experts, the parents of the 43 missing students feel they are no closer to knowing what happened to their children today than they were six years ago.

"There are [human rights and legal aid] organizations that are still supporting us [parents], but there are now fewer of them. There are fewer of them because too much time has gone by and they're probably getting tired," Telumbre said. There were initially dozens of arrests, but to date no one has been convicted

in connection with the disappearance of the students. The motive remains a mystery, and speculation about government corruption at the highest levels has run rampant in Mexico in the years that have passed.

During the administration of former President Enrique Peña Nieto, who was in power when the disappearance occurred, investigators first said the students had been murdered by a drug gang in cahoots with corrupt police and military officials, because they thought the students belonged to rival gangs.

Jesús Murillo Karam, who was the Attorney General when the students disappeared, said in November 2014 that the young men were abducted on orders of the local mayor, turned over to a gang that killed them, burned their bodies in Cocula landfill and tossed the remains into a nearby river.

But some elements of that version, described by the Peña Nieto government as "the historical truth," were rejected in 2015 by a group of independent forensic experts who were hired by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to investigate the case. In particular, the report refuted the landfill theory.

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Here's How the Pandemic Finally Ends

The future laid out above is the likeliest scenario for how the pandemic could end, based on interviews with 11 top-level experts who think about the future of those microscopic SARS-CoV-2 particles every day. They agree there's a lot of fog left in the Covid-19 crystal ball, but most accept several likelihoods: At least one effective vaccine—hopefully several—will be approved in the U.S. by early next year. Producing and distributing a vaccine will take months, with the average American not receiving their dose (or doses) until at least mid- or late 2021. And while widespread inoculation will play a large role in bringing life back to normal, getting the shot will not be your cue to take off your mask and run free into a crowded bar. The end of the pandemic will be an evolution, not a revolution, the vaccine just another powerful tool in that process.

That assessment dramatically contrasts with President Donald Trump's Panglossian certainty that the U.S. has "rounded the corner" in the pandemic, that a vaccine will be ready by Election Day and that every American can get the shot by April. Most importantly, it contradicts the underlying assumption of Trump's many proclamations: that life will immediately return to normal after a vaccine is administered.

"I don't see this pandemic ending as in like, you know, 'This is the day, the pandemic ended,'" says virologist Angela Rasmussen. "I see this as being a process that will go for a long time, potentially even years."

Experts' estimates of the timeline vary, but there seems to be some agreement that the virus could be in decline and under control by the second half of 2021, and that society could see pre-Covid "normal" within two years.

"I've said November 2021," predicts Zeke Emanuel, former Obama adviser and chair of the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy at the University of Pennsylvania. "I think you'll have enough herd immunity [in the U.S.] that we'll have an unrelenting decline." Herd immunity is the point at which so many people are immune that the virus can no longer spread widely.

Florian Krammer, professor of vaccinology at the Icahn School

of Medicine at Mount Sinai, put it this way: "What I think is going to happen at some point in [20]21 is the virus is basically morphing from a real spread into something that's in the way and causes some low numbers of cases and probably very low numbers of deaths."

The precise timing, of course, is uncertain—an elusive future that rests on a series of known unknowns, things like how many people continue to wear masks and social distance and whether rapid Covid-19 tests become widely available and properly deployed. Much will depend on how effective the vaccines are, how many people refuse to get inoculated and how many people forget to get their second dose if the vaccine requires two (yes, that is a significant concern). And then there's what epidemiologist Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, calls "the trillion-dollar word of the day with this disease": immunity. How long, on average, will immunity from natural infection and from the vaccine last?

"We can get [to herd immunity] with vaccination and clinical disease," he says. "The question is how long can we stay there. Meaning, if we get to, say, 75 or 80 percent immune projection, would it stay that way if we didn't do anything else?"

Perhaps that's the most important thing to understand about the pandemic right now: Though experts can make their best guesses, there is no certainty about Covid-19's future. "If this were an influenza pandemic, I would feel confident telling you how it would end," says Osterholm. "But this coronavirus keeps throwing us curve balls day after day."

This kind of unpredictability is why Sarah Cobey, an epidemiologist at the University of Chicago, chose her field in the first place: "One of the reasons I wanted to study infectious disease dynamics is that they can be really unintuitive. They can be mathematically very predictable, but they can always be unintuitive."

Before the vaccine: 'Masks and distance'

The pandemic is far from over. It's not even in decline. Cases of Covid-19 are on the rise in more than 19 states, and in just one

day this week, the U.S. saw more than 40,000 new cases and more than 1,000 deaths.

Experts don't expect those numbers to improve much as people move indoors for the fall and winter. Harvard epidemiologist Michael Mina sees norms shifting as social distancing fatigue settles in: "Little by little there's going to be fewer people wanting to sit outside, more people sitting inside," he says. "And then people are going to say, 'Well, you know, I was at dinner two nights ago and I was fine. I can go to this gathering of 30 people.' Then 'I can go to the gathering of 100 people.' And it will probably be just kind of a slow ... change of opinion about what the risks are."

"Unfortunately, this is all occurring ... at times that coronaviruses are very likely to potentially tick up due to seasonal effects," he adds.

The expected surge underscores the idea that Americans are not going to achieve "normal" before a vaccine, not with this country's outmatched testing system and total failure to contact trace. The key, then, to making sure that society finds some degree of normalcy in the meantime—meaning places like schools can stay open—continues to be "masks and distance," says Emily Landon, chief infectious disease epidemiologist at University of Chicago Medicine. That means avoiding places like restaurants where you can't wear your mask inside.

"Masks and distance really work," she says.

Continued social distancing is far better than the alternative. Disease experts all warned against White House adviser Scott Atlas' proposal to reopen the economy and reach herd immunity by letting natural infection tear through the population. Not only is the idea "a Russian roulette plan" that could lead to millions—millions—of deaths, says Landon, but the strategy might also be impossible, given that a sizeable chunk of the U.S. population is more likely to stay home than decide it's OK to venture out to inevitably get infected. In that case, the United States would hover below the herd immunity threshold while the economy stays stagnant, achieving neither of Atlas' goals.

There is another possibility, says Mina. There's been recent buzz surrounding rapid Covid-19 antigen tests—cheap tools recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration that can deliver results within minutes. Some experts have questioned their utility, because they aren't yet as accurate as more common lab-based tests. But Mina thinks that, if they're produced on a massive scale and authorized for at-home use, rapid tests can help quell the pandemic in surge areas. The idea is that people would use them not as passports to enter crowded spaces and do things they wouldn't ordinarily do, but as daily checks before they go about their normal business.

"They don't have to catch everyone, because the messaging would have to be you do exactly what you're going to do anyway. If the test is negative, you continue everything the same. But if the test is positive, then you definitely don't go out," he says. "We actually [can] use it as a tool to create herd effects so that you have enough people who are high transmitters not transmitting."

The vaccine arrives: 'I expect a little bit of chaos'

While many experts see value in strategies like vastly expanding testing, most agree that finding a working vaccine will be the biggest step on the road to normalcy.

The optimistic prediction that a vaccine will be ready for distribution by Election Day—put forth not only by Trump but also Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla—is looking increasingly unlikely. The two leaders in the U.S. race for the Covid-19 vaccine, Moderna and Pfizer, are still enrolling participants in their Phase III trials. In these trials, some participants receive a vaccine and the rest get a placebo, and then administrators wait to see who gets sick. U.S. presidents and CEOs can't control the speed at which that happens. "It depends upon the frequency of [Covid exposure in] the neighborhood, how loose a person is" with masks and social distance, says Emanuel. Remember: The trial participants are still being told, like all Americans, to take precautions against infection.

An October vaccine authorization would require either a lot of

participants to be exposed to Covid-19 in a short time, or a vaccine so effective that its power becomes apparent soon into the trial. But many experts doubt that the first-generation vaccines will be hypereffective. Plus, releasing a vaccine early carries the danger of missing a rare side effect, and drug companies in the world's glaring spotlight will be reluctant to take that risk.

Nonetheless, given the urgency across the world, it's probable that one or several approvals will happen at the end of the year or early next year. "Best-case scenario, we get a few vaccines that work by December," says Landon. It could take longer. Larry Corey, who is in charge of coordinating the clinical trials of U.S. government-funded vaccines, has guessed the first U.S. Phase III results won't be available until February.

Getting a vaccine out to the American people, of course, is a different problem—and a colossal one. Pharma companies and the U.S. government must produce, distribute and administer around 660 million doses of vaccine over the next year or so, because the vaccines furthest along in trials require two doses per person. Krammer says he expects "a little bit of chaos."

According to the U.S. government, hundreds of thousands of doses have already been made. But recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that only a few million doses of two leading vaccines—believed to be the Moderna and Pfizer candidates—will be available at first, to be given to essential workers and society's most vulnerable.

Many experts, including the director of the CDC, predict that vaccines could be widely available as early as late spring or summer. But Emanuel believes that they're underestimating just how difficult it will be to manufacture and distribute the doses at scale. In a report published by the Center for American Progress this summer, he and co-author Topher Spiro pointed out large gaps in the country's vaccine setup, including potential shortages of production capacity, syringes and packaging.

And then there's the problem of actual shot-in-arm delivery. Pfizer's vaccine, for example,

needs to be stored at minus 70 degrees Celsius. “No doctor’s office has negative 70,” says Emanuel. “You can’t do ‘the usual’—you know, this sort of hodgepodge we have of CVSes, Walgreens, doctor’s offices, schools.” CDC guidance suggests states prepare to distribute doses at hospitals and mobile clinics.

Making sure that most Americans receive two doses of the same vaccine four weeks apart smoothly and efficiently will be a massive government operation—one that Emanuel thinks the country can pull off no earlier than November 2021—and that’s if you have “good management skills, good logistics,” he says. “If there is some element of optimism and not just realism, it’s in that. There is no evidence this administration has the capacity to manage that.” After vaccination: ‘We have to wait to prove that it’s working’

It’s 2021, and you’ve just gotten your two doses. What happens next will largely depend on two factors: How effective the vaccine is and how many people get it. The goal is for the vaccine to be effective and widespread enough for the U.S. population to reach the herd immunity threshold—the point at which, theoretically, Americans can safely take off their masks and attend large sporting events. A rough, back-of-the-envelope estimate for Covid-19 (derived from calculating the point at which each infected person, on average, infects less than one other person) is that society will reach herd immunity when around 60 percent to 70 percent of the population is immune.

Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, walked through the math: Roughly, “the formula would state that about two-thirds of the population would need to be vaccinated if [the

vaccine] was 75 percent effective against shedding” (i.e., transmitting) the virus. If the vaccine is less effective than that, greater percentage of the population needs to get vaccinated to close in on herd immunity. And vice versa.

Experts aren’t optimistic that these first-generation vaccines are going to be highly effective at preventing transmission. “The likelihood that we are hitting a home run in the first at bat is just very low,” says Michael Kinch, director of the Centers for Research Innovation in Biotechnology and Drug Discovery at Washington University in St. Louis.

Nor has the FDA set the bar very high: The agency indicated that any approved vaccine must prevent Covid-19 or decrease severity in at least 50 percent of those vaccinated, but that means more than 50 percent of the population could continue to transmit the disease.

Without a highly effective vaccine, the country needs relatively high vaccination rates. And yet a whopping two-thirds of Americans say they won’t get the vaccine when it’s first available—and a quarter say they’ll never get it. Many scientists fear that so many people are going to refuse to get both doses of a vaccine out of distrust or fear or just plain forgetfulness that America won’t reach a high level of protection, much less herd immunity.

“Apparently, these shots with Covid ... they give you some fevers, some chills, you feel a little flu-like,” says Emanuel. “Well, how many Americans are coming back [to say], ‘Oh, I would like that again. I would like to feel like under the weather for a few days to get this vaccine.’ ... What I worry about is we have a lot of people

who are only partially immunized with one shot.” There’s also the problem of even distribution. Some places like Boston, with its robust medical industry, might see very high vaccination rates, while states like Idaho and Colorado, with the lowest measles vaccination rate in the country, might end up with a lot of unprotected residents—and more disease. This is also a risk in Black communities in particular, where the coronavirus has taken an outsized toll but where distrust of the U.S. medical establishment runs high after decades of horrific experiments like the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

“If you’re immunizing effectively above that immunity threshold, then it means that you can go back to business as usual,” says Cobey. “But that’s assuming ... you’ve got the vaccine pretty evenly distributed in the population. And vaccines are almost never evenly distributed. Which is to say that you could easily have pockets like we’ve seen in Marin County and other places with measles [where] you can still get outbreaks.” This isn’t a reason to panic. Any vaccine is going to be a big help in containing the pandemic. “Even if you don’t get herd immunity ... the closer you get to it, the slower the virus spreads,” says Krammer, who expects many of the vaccines in development to work. “Fifty percent [effectiveness] is not that little.” But it won’t enable people to attend the theater or cozy up in their favorite dive bar right away. “I’m not sure people get that,” says Offit. “What worries me in this is that people would think,

‘Great. I’ve got the vaccine. I’m good. I can engage in high risk activity.’ And that would put us right back to where we were.”

Adds former CDC director Tom Frieden: “I think even with a vaccine, for the indefinite future, handshakes are out and masks are in.”

The key to figuring out what’s possible with a vaccine, Landon says, is patience. “You have to treat the vaccine the same as a masking policy. You make a policy that everybody has to wear masks and then some percentage of people actually do.” Similarly, “You give people a vaccine, and then some proportion of people will actually get the vaccine and some proportion of them will be protected.” Next, you wait to see whether the Covid-19 disease and death counts go down, which will take about two months after people receive their doses—a few weeks for people to develop immunity and then four to six weeks for that protection to appear in the numbers.

If rates are coming down, says Landon, “then you say, ‘OK, I think we can allow people to eat inside at restaurants.’ And then the rates stay low even though you invited people back to restaurants.” Eventually, if the country doesn’t open too quickly, “we could find ourselves in a situation that China is in, that Taiwan is in, where we might still have limited little outbreaks here and there, but the majority of us can get back to most of the things that we used to do. We can have, you know, some parties ... some gatherings.” She thinks we could get there by spring 2021 but that it will still take a couple of years to put the pandemic in the rear-view mirror. It’s all about how many people in a given situation are likely to have Covid. Landon has been helping companies walk through the numbers as they consider whether to reopen their offices. If, for

example, the positivity rate in a given population is 2.5 percent, as is true in many communities today, and “you have a company that has 100 people in it, two or three of them would have [Covid-19] on the day that you come back to work,” Landon explains. “And as soon as [companies] see that, they’re like, ‘Maybe we should keep working remotely if we can.’ But if you get it so that it’s only one in a thousand people who have Covid, having one hundred people together in a gathering place and putting masks on them means that no one’s going to get sick.” This process is going to take much longer internationally. A coalition of international organizations—GAVI, the Center for Epidemic Preparedness and the WHO—are aiming to purchase and deploy 2 billion vaccines to the world’s most vulnerable in 2021. But Oxfam recently warned that 61 percent of the global population will not have a vaccine until at least 2022. Rich countries are not making equitable access easy: According to Oxfam, wealthy countries representing 13 percent of the world’s population have already reserved over half the supply of leading vaccine candidates.

Emanuel anticipates countries opening up international travel as they get and deploy vaccines, but that “it’s going to take a couple or three years to really get ... a full return to pre-Covid normalcy” in international travel.

The years-long outlook: ‘They might get the sniffles’ The world will probably live with Covid-19 forever, even after inoculation. “I think a lot of people seem to think that vaccines automatically eradicate viruses,” says Rasmussen.

Police should evoke trust, not fear

All four of us tumbled out, apologising profusely. Not only were we guilty of speeding, we were also visibly over the limit. Our appearance made denial impossible. I was convinced we were for the slammer. The policeman, however, was generous and understanding.

“Well, gentlemen, you’ve clearly had a good evening. Why spoil it by doing something stupid? Drive slowly and go home to bed. You look as if you could do with a good night’s sleep.”

The policeman could see we were young, exuberant, foolish and clearly in the

wrong. But in his eyes a telling-off was more in order than punishment. Such behaviour is typical of many British policemen. That’s why they’re affectionately called Bobbies.

Now consider the Delhi police who are investigating the February riots. Senior officers have cautioned the constabulary not to offend Hindu youth but no such concern is shown for young Muslims. Although 38 of the 53 people killed in the riots were Muslims, 13 of the 15 charge-sheeted are also of the same faith. While students protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and

the National Register of Citizens are accused of conspiracy, members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who clearly provoked hatred if not violence, are unscathed. Prominent Opposition leaders like Sitaram Yechury are alleged to have “provoked and mobilised the crowd” on the grounds one of the accused has said so. But the so-called deposition is unsigned and in garbled English.

So deep runs our dismay with the Delhi police one of their most highly-regarded former commissioners has forcefully and publicly criticised them. Before I remind

you of what he said, remember Ajay Raj Sharma was appointed by AB Vajpayee.

In an interview to me for The Wire on February 28, Sharma said he was worried the police have become communal. Videos of their behaviour during the riots clearly suggest this. Equally worryingly, the police seem scared of the BJP and intimidated by the government. “Lack of professionalism is the main problem here,” he honestly admitted. Their leadership, he added, lacks spine and moral character.

The TRP Race And Television Journalism In India

Diversion of media from their core democratic responsibilities is inevitable as its existence depends upon high ratings of TRP. In recent times, the electronic media showing their programmes in principle with truth, information, logical debating and aiming to create awareness receive low rating of TRP which subsequently leads to huge financial loss. Therefore, locating space for autonomy and freedom appears as an outrageous practice for media as its existence and survival always depends upon corporate and business entities. This article aims to highlight three trends of Journalism existing in India that pose a greater risk to democracy.

Aggressive Journalism

Aggressive journalism evolved over time as an offshoot of post-globalization when electronic media began live telecasting of news in 24-hours format. Initially, the media remained engaged in covering the news round the clock in order to create awareness among viewers. But, with the spike in numbers of private channels after 2000, a new pattern of attracting the viewers towards their own

channel by spreading the news quickly emerged. Sensationalised stories, media trials became common on channels.

Such practices in media are glorified as aggressive journalism on account of free media enshrined in the Constitution of India as freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 1 (a), which deals with 'Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc.

Although, at the same time, freedom of media is restricted under article 19 (2) in case of issues related to sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency, contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offense.

A few of such cases where persons were declared as guilty by the media even before the actual trial began include Jessica Lal case (2010), Priyadarshini Mattoo case (2006) and Bijal Joshi rape case (2005), Aarushi Talwar's Murder (2013), and the very recent media trial of Rhea Chakraborty etc. Though, the Hon'ble

Supreme Court in Sahara vs. SEBI (2012) strongly observed that such trials by the media are likely to affect the reputation of the judiciary and judicial proceedings adversely. While on one hand, a large number of media editorial teams have been covering issues keeping high TRP in mind, on the other hand, issues of national interest and societal importance do not find enough time on TV news channels as even the audience chooses news of sensation before news of sense.

Political Affiliations

Another effort towards securing higher TRPs manifests itself when the media channels display a clear association with any ideologies or political parties. Hence, news is selectively sensationalised in accordance to the political and ideological agenda which results in larger viewership. With more than 75,000 newspapers and well over a 1000 satellite channels in several languages competing against each other for their survival, overt political allegiance becomes a tool for media to target politically and ideologically inspired viewers. The period between 2009-2019

has seen an unprecedented TRP race. Leading media houses in India have been covering issues in accordance to a strict ideological allegiance and a steadfast commitment to a political party (in some cases many parties).

The meaning of freedom of media has changed significantly in India over the last decade as many media owners have direct or indirect links with politicians—some of them even represent a political party. The recent observation of the Hon'ble Supreme Court towards independent functioning of media must be viewed as a wake-up call for government as there are no regulatory safeguards against political control over the media and, at the same time, the laws of the land do not restrict political ownership in television or print media.

The Star News Anchor

The third trend of journalism existing in India derives its TRP from the individual personas of news anchors as the present electronic media has rather evolved as infotainment industry where TRP war is fought among the news anchors. Every news

channel is highly dominated by particular news anchor who are well versed with viewers choices of news and stories. Panel discussion, debate, prime hour news program, interviews, etc. attract a huge audience under the lead of the news anchor.

Therefore, anchors across Indian news channels engage in conflict, fear and tussle in order to secure a high TRP as viewers derive a sense of entertainment from the debates rather instead of information. Honesty, grit, and perseverance of the news anchors have become doubtful in the last decade as the quality of journalism emanating from news debates has been hitting new lows for a few years. This is also due to the prevalence of paid news. TV debates are being organized as propaganda without a certain amount of knowledge of professional ethics of journalism. With the beginning of TRP war among TV channels, a large majority of TV debates revolve around religion, whereas, according to a Supreme Court ruling of 1995, no news channel is supposed to mention the religion of the person especially in case of political news.

Asian American Republican Alliance had a grand launch



with special emphasis on the Congressional seats they hope to flip this year in New Jersey. MCRO Chairwoman Lucille Panos talked of how she was once a democrat and has now walked away once she realized what the Democrat party really stood for.

Dr Dhaduk gave a rousing speech on how Democrats are encouraging the creation of a welfare state and tearing down

traditional American values such as hard work and self-reliance. Other speakers included Gautam Patel who rendered Hindi poetry on the demolition of democracy and liberty by the Democrats. AARA national directors Praveen Thadkamalla, Pavan Kuchana, Krishna Vemuri, Piyush Patel and Hari Eppanapally were also present. NJ state Directors Dharmesh Patel, Atul Vadodaria, Nimish Patel, Bharat Rana,



Saurabh Gupta, Samir Raval, Media committee chair & Arun Kumar- Political committee chair were also present.

Jesal Amin and Brajesh Singh who are respectively campaigning to be mayors in East Brunswick and Piscataway made their campaign pitches.

AARA NJ State President and Somerset County GOP 2nd Vice-Chair Ravi Kolla spoke about supporting all Republican

candidates and party affiliation forms and voter registration forms and thanked all the supporters of the event. Finally a vote of thanks was given by AARA NJ State Director and Middlesex Country chair for AARA, Dharmesh Patel.

The event concluded with a hot dinner enjoyed by all the guests. Special Thanks to the many media CEOs & friends who covered this event – Mana TV,

Mana TV International, TV Asia, TV5, India Life, India Eye, The South Asian Insider, Zee TV, Radio Zindagi, Freelance Media. The event was compered by Nimish Patel and Samir Rawal. For people who want to join or know more about Asian American Republican Alliance (AARA), please visit the website at www.aarausa.org or email at info@aaarausa.org.

"A Rape Is Rape" why do you bring caste into it?

Though the 19-year-old burns in front of our eyes, what's on that funeral pyre are the unkept promises of our Constitution.

Speak, memory? Not in a country where tongues are cut off, literally and metaphorically. And capital punishment awaits the offender, by the roadside and in country fields. There's enough "real life" in India, too much of it-but let us consider fiction. Remember Article 15? Two young girls had asked for a hike in their daily wage, by a mere three rupees. The contractor taught them a lesson. (By raping and killing them. Since you ask, that's the normal currency in these parts.) How dare a "lower caste" ask questions? How dare these dispossessed people, supposed to sell their labour the way it's defined in the holy scriptures, demand rights? How dare they speak? The film, noticed, among other things, for placing a do-gooder Brahmin cop in the centre of the frame-

was based loosely on real life, the Badaun gangrape-cum-murder case. Remember Paatal Lok? A Dalit mother was raped by a hundred men-it was retribution for her rebel son standing up to dominant caste bullying. The Dalits and oppressed castes have to be terrorised and disciplined in order to ensure dominance, and what could be a more complete way to do it than violating a Dalit woman's body? It accomplishes real and symbolic violence together. That's why rape and gendered violence have always been used as a political tool to contain power within the sway of the ruling class/castes for a long time now. From the old "nidan" of a Shudra woman having to produce her first child with the "grace" of a Brahmin man to the horrific Laxmanpur

Bathe incident of 1997 where Ranvir Sena militia casually mixed rape with massacre, the Dalit woman's body has been created and recreated as a site of violence to rip apart the aspirations of the marginalised. Today, when we shiver with horror at Hathras gang-rape horror and our timelines get flooded with news containing graphic detail about the mutilation wrought on a Dalit girl's body, why does not even a single headline talk about who the rapists were? What was their caste? Why does this question never cross our mind? Why, even after a thorough search, the caste name of criminals is hushed? What is this fear, or this obsession we have, to make invisible the caste identity of the oppressor, particularly if they come from

dominant caste groups? The men who raped the 19-year-old girl in Hathras are Rajputs/Thakurs, the one community that owns perhaps the largest share of land in rural India. Why are media houses that were so comfortable reporting the victimhood of a Dalit woman so chary about exposing the immense power that dominant castes still hold on to?

"A rape is rape, why do you bring caste into it?"

India is primarily a caste society. Neither democracy nor a liberal Constitution has changed that. It's a caste society that determines your access to resources tangible and intangible (such as knowledge), and ownership of the means of production (such as land), almost exclusively on the basis of the family you are born into.

The 19-year-old girl, raped and left brutalised as she was collecting fodder near a bajra field, was born in a Valmiki family. According to the caste system designed by and for the elite castes, Shudras and those "below" are not allowed to own land. She and her kinsfolk are people who have nothing apart from their labour to sell to stay alive. They are the workers of the feudal economy: they plough the fields, build everyone's houses, clean toilets, cremate the dead. Work that not only requires physical labour but is also deemed "polluted" and "polluting": dvijas, or those believed to be born of Brahma's upper body, cannot engage in such activities. So, one whole section of the working class comes from the oppressed castes.

Why UP Police Downplayed Hathras Rape & What It Means For Society

The shocking gang rape and murder of a SC/ST (Dalit) girl in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh is not just another heinous crime; it will also be remembered as a classic example for the police - how not to handle a case like this.

The police showed rank insensitivity in this case, and from the very beginning, strove to downplay its severity.

The police say that, in her first statement, the girl 'had not mentioned' rape. Let us, for the sake of argument, accept that it is true. However, it begs a question: the victim's mother says that she had found her injured and unconscious daughter stripped of her clothes in the crop fields and that she was bleeding from her private parts as well. Since the victim could not be taken to the police station in that state, her mother

covered her up.

That is where the police failed. Why Didn't The Police Take A More Holistic View Of Circumstantial Evidence?

If a woman is found stripped and brutalised in the crop fields - a scenario historically associated with rape / sexual violence - what should have been the first impression in the minds of the police? Sexual assault, obviously. The police should have suo motu registered a case for attempt to rape or molestation and modified it later as necessary, even if the injured girl was unable to articulate 'rape' at the time.

It is entirely possible that she was unconscious or in a semi-conscious state at the time of rape, due to injury to her spine and being choked by her dupatta by the perpetrators.

So, it is likely that when she regained consciousness and the ability to communicate, the first thing that came to her mind was one of the accused choking her, which she mentioned. She did realise the act of rape soon after, and mentioned it in her subsequent statement.

The police, in this case, failed to take a holistic view of the circumstantial evidence.

Why Did The Police Downplay The Incident?

Why did the police fail in the above? The first reason is their desire to please their masters. By downplaying a rape, and that too concerning a victim from a disadvantaged community, they were trying to keep up the narrative of 'excellent' law-and-order in the state.

The second is their desire to keep their own investigation-related

workload low. The victim's family alleged that she was not given proper medical care at Hathras and Aligarh and that they were kept in the dark about her actual condition. While we do not have any information about the treatment meted out to her, we can indeed believe in the second part. Doctors in India are notorious for extremely poor communication with the patients and their relatives regarding the condition of the patient. That the police sought to downplay the incident is also evident from the fact that the ADG Law and Order reportedly did speak of the medical evidence from the Aligarh hospital regarding rape being 'inconclusive' at that stage. For their information, according to the definition of rape in Section 375 IPC (as amended by Criminal Law Amendment

Act, 2013), the definition of rape has been widened to include acts other than only peno-vaginal penetration. Here, an undue insistence on the medico-legal examination being 'inconclusive' about rape is strongly suggestive of ulterior motives. Inappropriate Cremation - Another Failure Of The Police The police failed miserably in the matter of the disposal of the dead body also. In the surreptitious cremation acutely reminiscent of the cremation of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru by the British in the dark of the night, they committed a legal faux pas. Even the possible argument - that they wanted to 'avoid the protest and agitations' which might have occurred had the victim been cremated at her native place - falters on two counts:

Hathras gang rape isn't a law and order issue, problem is regressive mindset of upper caste men

My heart bled as I read the news of a 19-year-old Dalit Valmiki girl gang raped and brutally killed in Hathras of Uttar Pradesh. The civil society and political parties in opposition are up in arms against the government and law enforcement agencies. I don't want to go into the details of how the girl was raped and killed - it's too traumatising to write every detail of this incidence about which almost everyone knows by now.

The intention of this piece is to point out the silencing of atrocities against the Dalit women for long. It is an elephant in the room. How can you eradicate a crime from the society without acknowledging it? Upper caste-dominated civil society - Right, Left or Center - reacted as if this is the first time a Dalit woman was raped. They should acknowledge that our Indian society is casteist to its core and women are the worst victim. As a historian working on

the Dalits in general, and Valmikis in particular, I want to intervene with the facts that upper caste men for centuries have been treating Dalit women as objects of sexual pleasure. Dalit women did not have the right to deny them sex. Moreover, unlike upper caste women, the Dalit women do not have 'dignity'. It is a truth often denied, silenced or excluded by the scholars. During my research, I came across a case in which Dalit women were

forced to sexually 'entertain' the upper caste men in the name of social and religious customs. The people who did not allow shadow of Dalits to fall over them, did not eat with them and excluded them from their society would feel it their social duty to rape Dalit women. Dalits were not given access to sexual freedom and dignity. While upper caste women were suppressed through purdah (veil) system and their bodies were used to protect the honour

of the upper caste men, Dalit women were used to 'dishonour' their communities. They were forced into sexual acts. The sexual subjugation was sanctified through social and religious customs with tacit support of the ruling classes. Harijan Sevak Sangh (HSS) was an organisation formed by Mahatma Gandhi in 1932 and was a part (in practice) of Indian National Congress to eradicate untouchability from the society.

Were Hathras Rape Victim's Kin Present for Cremation?

A hapless mother pleading to take her daughter's body home "one last time" as cops try to "advise" her to "listen" to them - the events leading to the cremation of the rape victim in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras in the dead of the night on 30 September were unusual.

But what's more unusual was the Uttar Pradesh Police's urgency to perform the last rites - and, as it has now emerged, without the presence of any family member. The rape victim's family members have alleged that they were not present at the time the pyre was

lit. However, the police, government officials, and right-wing affiliated handles on social media are refuting their claims, saying the family was "very much present" during the cremation.

What Happened on the Night of 30 September

The victim's brother narrated to The Quint the events that took place after the ambulance arrived in their village at 12:30 am. He said that the police took his sister's body directly to the cremation ground - where the mother pleaded that they be

allowed to take her body home "one last time."

"We wanted to do it in the morning as per our Hindu rituals. We told the police that our relatives were coming. But they asked us to do the cremation right away. We assured the police that there will be no disturbance from our side," the brother said.

The police insisted that the cremation be done immediately - without stating any reasons, he said.

He added the police even threatened arrest and humiliated the family at the cremation

ground. After a lot of pleading, the police agreed to bring the body to the house, but asked them to finish all the rituals within one hour.

Body Brought Outside House Briefly'

The brother claimed that an ambulance carried the body and was parked behind the house. They gathered around the police car and held discussions, he said, adding that the family decided to wait inside the house.

The policemen came inside the house and started pressurising the victim's father to accompany

them again to the cremation ground, the brother alleged. The Quint was not able to independently verify if the victim's body was brought inside the house or not.

"They told us to listen to them and that we would need their help during the course of investigation. But without our relatives, we couldn't start the funeral. Anyway, it can't be done in the night as per our religion. This happened around 2 am."

'Didn't Think They Would Cremate Her Without Our Approval'

Easy to say 'hang the rapists' but who will hold Yogi Adityanath accountable?

Brutal gang-rapes and murders happen all the time. When they become big news, as in case of 19 year old Manisha Valmiki in Hathras, some people start demanding death penalty for the rapists. It is easy to do that. The tough thing to do is to look at how the government of Yogi Adityanath handled this case from day one. Even a cursory examination will tell you that the Yogi government was more concerned about headline management than saving the young woman's life or getting her justice. The BJP's single-minded focus on PR and image has reached the level of becoming a disease so bad the UP

government and police have not even pretended to behave with dignity with the family of the dead girl, nor did they allow Manisha Valmiki any dignity herself in death. First, the UP Police didn't register a case of gang rape for days even though it was obvious. Instead they tried their best to downplay the incident by saying it was just a small dispute arising out of an old enmity. That was true, but doesn't mean it wasn't a caste atrocity or that the police should have tried their best to not see gang-rape. Then the police went on a spree arguing with journalists and activists on social media that her tongue had not

been cut or that her spine had not been broken. Fake news, fake news, they screamed.

Since Hathras is near Agra, the initial news reports were datelined Agra. So when some people on Twitter, such as journalist Rohini Singh, expressed outrage over such an atrocity in Agra, the UP government again screamed fake news! Fake news! No such incident in Agra! Chief minister Yogi Adityanath's media adviser could have simply explained the incident being talked about was in Hathras. Instead, he used the 'fake news' opportunity to say that police cases are being lodged against those spreading fake

news. To intimidate and silence those asking tough questions on this case, he added that 105 cases had been lodged and 26 people arrested so far!

Kidnapping a dead body

A government that delays filing an FIR on gang-rape is so alert in arresting people over alleged fake news. The obsessive headline management also meant they were reluctant to send the woman to a Delhi hospital for a better shot at survival. Delhi would mean national media attention. So they were having her treated at a hospital in Aligarh. It was only when Dalit politician Chandrashekhar Azad of Bhim

Army jumped into the issue that the UP government transferred her to Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi. When she was in Aligarh the administration was going to great lengths to point out that she was getting free treatment! Compare this to the high-profile case of Jyoti Singh who was sent to Singapore by the Congress-led government in Singapore. Until Manisha Valmiki died, the UP government and the ruling BJP did not visit her family, did not issue any serious statements. They ignored her plight. As they had feared, her being in Delhi caught national media attention.

Can Rahul Gandhi Seize The Hathras Moment For Reviving The Congress?

It's that question again. Is it Rahul Gandhi's 'Belchi' moment? Has the 'tried and failed' former Congress president finally found the issue that can re-launch him as the BJP's nemesis and pull his crisis-ridden party out of morass?

Rahul Gandhi being shoved around by UP police personnel at the Yamuna Expressway, on Thursday, was arguably the most politically potent image of the Congress leader yet. With his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and a large posse of supporters in tow, Rahul was trying to reach Hathras to meet the family of a 19-year-old Dalit girl who was allegedly gang-raped by upper caste men and later succumbed to the barbaric injuries inflicted on her. Predictable accusations of the Gandhi siblings politicizing the horrific Hathras incident have come from the BJP. The might of the Uttar Pradesh government was, undoubtedly, on display as

the police and district administration sprung into action to stop Rahul and Priyanka from reaching Hathras - the duo couldn't even cross Greater Noida. The accolades from critics of the BJP and sundry Twitter-happy folk came pouring in too - many hailing Rahul as the only Opposition leader who has consistently shown the courage to raise the right issues, others praising his audacity against a formidable political rival and imploring him to not give up the good fight.

But, what now?

Over the past six years, any defiant act by Rahul against the BJP regime, at the Centre or in states ruled by the saffron party, immediately brings back the 'Belchi' analogy. In August 1977, five months after she and her party had been thrown out of power in the post-Emergency general elections, Indira Gandhi had decided to visit Belchi, a small

hamlet in Bihar's Patna district. Though there was no 24X7 media circus back then, the visit had changed the course of Indian politics and also Indira's political fortunes at a time when the horrors of the Emergency and the result of the Lok Sabha polls had many writing obituaries of the Congress's electoral domination. Trudging through sludge atop an elephant, Rahul's grandmother had made the four-hour journey to reach Belchi where eight Dalits and three others from deprived communities had been killed a few weeks earlier by upper caste landlords. Indira met the families of the victims of caste violence and, in the weeks and months that followed, capitalized on the publicity that her arduous trek generated to project herself as saviour of the oppressed.

India's political landscape has changed much since then and the days of Congress's electoral domination are now a distant

memory. The Belchi imagery, however, has survived and remains, even 43 years later, a symbol of the Gandhi family's appetite for political combativeness and fortitude.

However, Rahul's uninspiring career graph; replete with instances of gaffes, electoral failures and the perception of him being a non-serious, transient politician, has often led to the impression that he lacks the credentials for laborious political combat. The recent upheaval within his party following demands by 23 senior leaders for a leadership overhaul too can be seen as an extension of this taint against Rahul. It is true that no political leader in recent decades has, perhaps, been as ridiculed by his peers and rivals alike as Rahul has been. That he still manages to trudge along is often dismissed as a 'lust for power' and rarely applauded as a mark of a leader. Can Rahul's Hathras

outing, interrupted as it was due to the scuffle with UP police, change the course of his politics and that of his party? What perhaps differentiates Rahul from Indira is that the latter never slipped into inaction after her Belchi sojourn. Rahul, on the other hand, has had a few moments of his own which have variously been touted as his Belchi encounter. The most recalled one is of his rebellious ride to Bhatta Parsaul villages - again in Greater Noida - in July 2011 to show solidarity with farmers after four people from the villages were killed in police firing while protesting against forcible land acquisition by the then Mayawati-led UP government. Rahul promised to always fight for the rights of the farmers and for a while, he did. The Land Acquisition Act passed during the UPA regime in 2013 was largely attributed to Rahul's push.

Joe Biden calls Donald Trump a 'clown' as candidates spar in first debate



(News Agencies)- President Donald Trump and Vice President Joe Biden sparred over their respective plans for U.S. health care, interrupting and

do you have any idea what this clown is trying to do?" Biden said to Americans as Trump talked over him. "Will you shut up, man," he grumbled moments later. The back-and-forth quickly degenerated after Trump answered the first question, about his nominee to replace the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Trump said he had the right to move swiftly to replace her, while Biden said U.S. voters should weigh in first. "We won the election," Trump said in answer to the first question, about his nominee

Amy Coney Barrett. "Elections have consequences. We have the Senate, we have the White House and we have a phenomenal nominee." Biden said that Trump and Barrett want to strike down the Affordable Care Act, costing 20 million people their health insurance. "The American people have a right to have a say over who the Supreme Court nominee is," Biden said. "What's at stake here, as the president's made it clear, he wants to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. He's in the Supreme Court right now trying to get rid

of the Affordable Care Act, which will strip 20 million people from having health insurance now, if it goes to the Supreme Court." The debate moderator, Fox News host Wallace, tried to intervene as the two candidates squabbled over their respective health policies, and Trump complained "I guess I'm debating you." Hours before the debate began, Biden released his most recent tax returns, signaling that he wanted new revelations about the president's taxes at center stage for their first face-to-face encounter.

Babri demolition case verdict today, D-day for Advani and 31 others

(News Agencies)-A special Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court will deliver its verdict in the Babri Masjid demolition case on Wednesday, almost three decades after the 16th century structure was razed by a mob in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya town, sparking communal tension and riots. Shortly around 10:30 am, CBI judge Surendra Kumar Yadav is expected to start reading out the verdict in a court room where many of the top accused are unlikely to be present. Some of the key accused, including former deputy

prime minister LK Advani, former Union minister MM Joshi, former Union minister Uma Bharti and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh, are likely to attend the proceedings through video conference because of the coronavirus pandemic. "At present I am not in a position to say who will be present in court for the final judgment. I have informed all my clients about the judgment date (September 30). Who will be present in court will only be clear on the judgment day," said KK Mishra, who is representing 25

out of the 32 accused persons. In all, 26 of the 32 accused are likely to be present in court. Ahead of the verdict, security has been tightened in the court premises in Lucknow and no one is allowed inside the court room except the defence and CBI lawyers, and the accused persons. Entry is permitted through only one gate and barricades have been put on nearby roads to restrict traffic. All 32 accused are facing charges under several sections of the Indian Penal Code, including criminal conspiracy, rioting,



promoting enmity between different groups and unlawful assembly. Shiv Sena leader Satish Pradhan and Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirath Kshetra

Trust chief Mahant Nritya Gopal Das are likely not to be present in court. Uma Bharti and Kalyan Singh have tested positive for Covid-19 and are hospitalised.

Hathras rape victim's body forcibly taken away for cremation by UP police, alleges family; police deny claim



(News Agencies)-The family of 19-year-old Dalit woman from Uttar Pradesh's Hathras, who died in a Delhi hospital of injuries sustained when she was gang-raped, has alleged that she was forcibly cremated. The family claimed that the woman's body was taken away by the police in the middle of the night for final rites. "The police have forcibly taken the dead body, and my father along with them for cremation. When my father reached Hathras, he was immediately taken (to the crematorium) by the police," the

woman's brother told news agency PTI. The body of the woman reached her village around midnight and the cremation was done by 3 am on Wednesday. The villagers claimed that they wanted to take the body of the woman to her house, but administration pressed for cremation at the earliest. The passage for ambulance was blocked and finally cremation took place in village. The police, meanwhile, said that the cremation of the woman was carried out by the family members. Superintendent of

Police (SP) Vikrant Veer denied any "urgency" by police in cremation despite the fact that cremation usually do not take place in night. He added that the cremation was done as usual after the body reached Boolgarhi village in Hathras district. He claimed that the situation is calm in the village, but heavy police force has been deployed

The woman was raped in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras village by four men on September 14 and died a fortnight later after battling serious injuries. The woman was first taken to Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College and Hospital in Aligarh, but shifted to Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi after her condition deteriorated. She was in a critical condition and on ventilator support. The brutality against the teenager has sparked outrage across the country with several political leaders, Bollywood actors and activists demanding justice for her.

India's Covid-19 tally crosses 6.2 million mark with 80,472 fresh cases, 1,179 new fatalities



(News Agencies)-India recorded 80,742 new cases of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) in the last 24 hours, according to the Union health ministry website on Wednesday. This pushed the nationwide tally to over 6.2 million. The country also saw 1,179 new fatalities in the last 24 hours, pushing the cumulative death toll at 97,497, according to health ministry. The ministry's bulletin on Wednesday showed 9,40,441 active cases in the country, which account for 15.42 per cent of the total cases India has seen so far. India has increased its testing capacity significantly in the last six months with tests per million population for coronavirus disease (Covid-19) crossing the 50,000-

mark, shows Union health ministry data. In the past 10 days alone, Covid-19 testing has gone up from about 46,000 tests per million population to about 53,000 tests

currently. Overall, 51,87,825 people have recovered from the disease so far, the ministry data showed. The national recovery rate crossed 83 per cent on Tuesday and the number of cases under treatment were less than 1 million. Ten Indian states which have seen the most number of coronavirus deaths in the last 24 hours include - Maharashtra (430), Karnataka (136), Punjab (75), Tamil Nadu (70), Uttar Pradesh (63), West Bengal (62), Delhi (48), Madhya Pradesh (39), Chhattisgarh (39) and Andhra Pradesh (35). The slight dip in India's Covid-19 number comes on the day when the central government is likely to release guidelines for the fifth phase of relaxations (Unlock 5).



The Surprisingly Limited Success of Trump's Signature **Anti-Poverty Program**

Cleveland's experience shows why "opportunity zones" help middle-income neighborhoods more than poor ones.

Donald Trump has spent months on the campaign trail touting his signature anti-poverty program as a way to attract support from Black voters. Opportunity zones, he has said, have drawn "\$100 billion of new investment ... into 9,000 of our most distressed neighborhoods" and created "countless jobs."

We'll undoubtedly hear more about opportunity zones from Trump at the first presidential debate in Cleveland on Tuesday night, when the topics will include the economy and "the Trump and Biden records." Opportunity zones were created in 2017 to allow wealthy investors to avoid the federal capital gains tax by reinvesting their profits in funds that invest in designated census tracts that are high poverty or low income, or next door to a tract that meets

those standards. Indeed, the debate, hosted by Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Clinic, will actually take place in one of Cleveland's opportunity zones.

Not surprisingly, Trump's eye-popping numbers, which were touted repeatedly by surrogates at the Republican National Convention last month, have already been debunked. The White House Council of Economic Advisers released a report claiming the program has

attracted an estimated \$75 billion in private investment since its creation in December 2017. But that estimate is based on incomplete samples and questionable assumptions-and it's probably 2½ to seven times too high. Independent estimates of investments in the zones so far range from \$10 billion to \$30 billion. But no one knows for sure. That's because no reporting rules track opportunity zone projects, so there's no central place to look up which

projects the tax break has helped fund.

So far, opportunity zones have mostly benefited neighborhoods already on the upswing and middle-class renters. The opportunity zone program has no job guarantees and no mechanism that requires projects to benefit the poor. Nationwide criticism of the program has focused on the tax incentive funding luxury apartments, hotels and office towers.

In search of Mahatma

By George Abraham

The world has witnessed an incredible amount of progress in the last five decades that has transformed lives and made people richer and many nations prosperous. The pace of the change has been so dramatic, and more people today have the means to lead a prosperous and peaceful life than ever before. However, what we are witnessing now is a turbulent world reeling from the effects of a Pandemic, fearful, and uncertain of their future having lost the faith in their leadership. The world has indeed seen destruction and human misery from the time immemorial. After the Second World War, the victorious powers decided to prevent another war by founding the United Nations. The primary motto of the organization was to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war. What happened since then is well documented. Cold war followed the world war with proxies of cold war antagonists fighting all over the globe. The

world was divided into first, second, and third worlds. Finally, the Berlin wall came down, and Communism was defeated, and the world was ready for a peace dividend! Did it happen? No, during the 1990's the pattern of the conflict has changed. Today, ninety percent of the conflicts are taking place within rather than between states. World politics have indeed entered a new phase. The fundamental source of conflict in today's world is not ideological or economic. The great source of conflict that is dominating today is cultural. The differences between cultures are real; they are basic. The people of different cultures have different views on the relations between God and man, individual and the group, man and woman, and differing views on rights and responsibilities. These differences are the product of centuries, and it will not disappear anytime soon. What has transpired in the former Yugoslavia is a clear example of this type of conflict. Orthodox Serbians and Muslim



Bosnians, and Croatian Catholics seemed to enjoy distinct cultures and were unwilling to compromise on a common platform. It is obvious that western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other cultures. Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state often have very little resonance in other cultures. The notion that there could be a universal culture is a western

idea that is in direct conflict with most Asian societies and emphasizes what distinguishes one person from another.

The late Indira Gandhi once commented, "never in the last two decades has the international outlook been so grim as it is today. This is not merely my own assessment but that of the scores of the world leaders from five continents whom I have met in the past year. I am not given to alarm or exaggeration. Yet, I must warn that at this time, we simply cannot afford to be complacent or sit back, hoping that matters will somehow be sorted out". Dag Hammarskjöld, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, once asserted, "I see no hope for permanent world peace. We have tried hard and failed miserably. Unless there is a spiritual awakening on a worldwide scale, the civilization is doomed". And one wonders why? One sees a world that is reluctant to accept remedies peacekeepers want to implement, how then we could understand, explain, or turn around tragedies? On 15 June 2007, United Nations passed a resolution to observe International Day of non-violence each year on the birth anniversary date of

Mahatma Gandhi, who helped lead India to its Independence and inspired movements of civil rights across the world. What it shows is that the UN recognizes that ultimately it is not discussion and dialogue, but an inner awakening of the soul will only make a real difference from the impasse of scores of issues that are confronting the world today. Martin Luther King, a great follower of the Gandhian method of non-violence, once said, "If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable; we may ignore him at our own risk."

Addressing the United Nations on the eve of passing the resolution, Sonia Gandhi, the Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance, said the following: 'the world is facing the violence of various kinds, and there was a collective failure of the International community in tackling terrorism and checking nuclear proliferation. Fallacies about non-violence are abound but to practice it in its true spirit demands strict discipline of mind: the courage to face aggression, the moral conviction to stay the course, and the strength to do so without harboring any malice towards the opponent,' she told the 192-member Assembly.

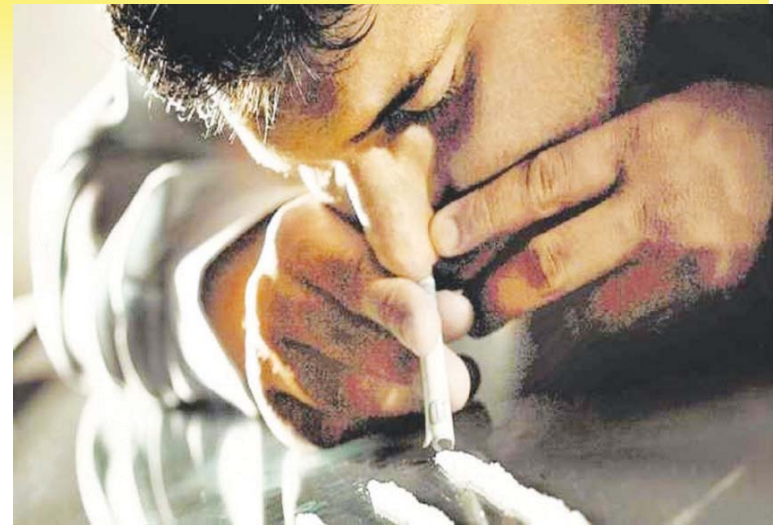
Ads, Bollywood, Corporates & Drugs: The Neo ABCD Of Brand Ambassadors' Game

As the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) steps up its investigations into the alleged drugs connection with Bollywood, it would be interesting to watch how companies whose brands are endorsed by actors who have been called in for questioning by the NCB react to this development.

Increasing examples of quite a few leading brands that have done away with celebrities indicates that companies can thrive even without engaging movie stars to talk about their products. As the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) steps up its investigations into the alleged drugs connection with Bollywood, it would be interesting to watch how companies whose brands are endorsed by actors who have been called in for questioning by the NCB react to this development. Will corporate groups temporarily choose to stop airing ads featuring these actors to insulate their own brands from getting dragged into any possible controversy while stopping short of replacing such endorsers immediately? Or would companies just wait it out till the results of the NCB investigations come in before taking a decision on the subject. Undoubtedly, this would be a

tough call for business organizations, and making a choice one way or the other could largely depend on an individual company's perception of the value being brought to the table by the celebrity endorser, particularly in this tough economic environment. Be that as it may, the bigger questions, though, that some already established brands should ask themselves are whether they really need endorsers from Bollywood (and if so, to what extent) and if marketing budgets are not better utilized, instead, ramping up spends on improving the quality of the offerings. Since the increasing examples of quite a few leading brands that have done away with celebrities does indicate that companies can thrive even without engaging movie stars to talk about their products. Moreover, given the growing awareness of Indian customers, banking on them to

lap up a product/service simply because some hotshot actor is its brand ambassador no longer remains the sure-shot formula for success as used to be the case earlier for many companies which banked on 'star power' to make their offerings stand out from competition. These days, the mere use of celebrity endorsers may briefly get people to discuss the commercial but not necessarily lead them in droves to buy the product or avail the service being mentioned in the advertisement. Especially, if two high profile actors are endorsing rival brands or the celebrity who is now endorsing product A was till the other day championing the virtues of competing product B. Reputed companies could be far better off by making the value proposition of their products/services take centre-stage in the ads instead of reducing this critical element to that of a support actor in a commercial



involving a Bollywood personality. After all, hardly much purpose is likely to be served by an ad (even if it goes on to win some advertising award in future) if the message that the company wishes to convey through it gets lost due to the target audience vividly remembering the celebrity and not what this endorser had to say about the product/service offering. Challenging times as the present requires that a company be prepared to dump its existing brand marketing playbook for a new one if such a need so arises. Continuing to stick to the template of using a

popular Bollywood actor in commercials (ostensibly for achieving a higher brand salience) purely out of a sense of ego and little respect for the intelligence or sentiments of prospective customers could only end up hurting the interests of business organisations. At the end of the day, companies owe it to themselves, and by extension all their stakeholders, that they are getting the biggest returns for every marketing rupee spend. If brand ambassadors drawn from Bollywood are not providing this currently, enterprises should not hesitate to start looking at options that do.

Yes, A Tax Scandal Can Take Down a Politician



There are thousands of words in the New York Times account of Donald Trump's taxes, and tens of thousands more will be published in the coming weeks. But it's the first 27 words of the piece that have the potential to inflict a serious wound on the president: "Donald J. Trump paid \$750 in federal income taxes the year he won the presidency. In his first year in the White House, he paid another \$750."

The body of the story recounts years of dissembling about his

finances: claiming huge losses to offset his tax liabilities, inflating his assets to obtain massive loans, asserting that: "Now, with his financial challenges mounting, the records show that he depends more and more on making money from businesses that put him in potential and often direct conflict of interest with his job as president." It is rich in detail, and those details—hundreds of thousands of dollars in "consulting fees" to daughter Ivanka, a disputed

easy to turn into a clear political message.

The proof of this can be found in a Tennessee Senate race in 1976. First-term Senator Bill Brock, who had defeated Al Gore Sr., years earlier, was in a difficult race against Democrat James Sasser. In mid-October, after being pressured by the press about his finances, Brock conceded that he'd paid \$2,026 on an income of \$51,670—a rate of less than 4 percent at a time when someone making that

\$72.9-million tax refund, among other things—are not the stuff of easy interpretation (although \$72,000 of deductible "business expenses" for hair styling, might raise a few eyebrows). But that opening number—\$750 in taxes from the self-proclaimed multimillionaire—is easy to grasp, and

much would have written the IRS a check for as much as 62 percent of his income.

Almost immediately, hot pink buttons began appearing reading: "I Paid More Taxes Than Brock." As the story spread, the chair of the State Labor Council held a news conference comparing Brock's taxes with those of an auto worker, steel worker and railroad engineer, each of whom paid far more taxes on far lower salaries than Brock. In November, Brock lost his seat by a 5-point margin. The story had resonance because it confirmed "populist" notions about how things really work: that one way or another those in positions of power manage to avoid the burdens that afflict "regular" people. It's what lay behind one of Richard Nixon's liabilities during his Watergate days: his taxes. In one case, he had claimed a \$500,000 tax deduction for donating his essentially worthless vice presidential papers. In another, it turned out he had paid \$792.81 in federal income taxes in 1970 and

\$878.03 in 1971, on a salary of \$200,000. (His taxes were not included in the Articles of Impeachment adopted by the House Judiciary Committee.) Asked about the story at his news conference Sunday evening, Trump explained (I use the word loosely) that the story was a hoax, a fake. A Trump spokesperson told the Times that Tump had paid huge sums in taxes—without explaining what kind of taxes—but did not deny the basic assertion that he had paid only \$750 a year for two years.

Perhaps the president, who has survived many seemingly fatal controversies, has so succeeded in convincing his acolytes not to believe anything critical of him that this latest story will have little effect. But I wonder: What if people start showing up in offices, factories, in malls and stores, with buttons and T-shirts reading: "I Paid More Taxes Than Trump"? There's an 89-year-old ex-Senator in Chattanooga who might be able to tell you what comes next.



Farmers Must Be Assured Of 'Amul' Farm-To-Folk Model; Not 'Jio' On Them

The biggest fear from the new farm bills is that it would end up exploiting the farmers by big corporate trading houses.

In their criticism of the farm bills cleared by Parliament in questionable manner, the political parties and frontline farmers' unions have described corporate houses as "sharks" who would swallow poor farmers. Corporate India, or a large part of it, is projected as a demon out to predate on farmers in cohorts with those in power. Somehow, even the common refrain is somewhat on similar lines. Millionaires and billionaires are no more viewed with great awe and respect. Their ultra luxurious 'in-your-face' lifestyle has started offending commoners equally in Mumbai local train, Delhi Metro or farmers in Punjab or Tamil Nadu. But then, who else would you depend upon as drivers of an economy dominated by market forces which are distorted to benefit a few. The socialist structure of public enterprises is struggling to hold on the straws and the new normal is not too great either.

We were never happy with the monopoly of MTNL but are wary of the Jio phenomenon? We were not quite pleased flying Air India, but remain equally circumspect about Indigo or SpiceJet? We knew it too well that the APMC (Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee) -controlled mandis have resulted in influential cartels of the commission agents (ahartiyas), but equally suspect the corporate trading houses.

Commoners are harassed a lot, moreso after this horrible pandemic that threatens the core of the modern age. The lurking fear makes us suspect everything that comes our way. That said, Corporate India or the big business has not earned itself a glory. Siphoning off bank money, out of depositors' cash with impunity, monopolizing the all-important sectors of health and education, dumping lakhs of home-buyers in unfinished real estate projects are not subjects of academic debates. These were real issues



even before the coronavirus outbreak, which has made it worse.

However much there is an effort to divert "national attention" to the bad boys and girls of Bollywood, farmers of Punjab and Haryana have managed to get noticed. Their concerns are genuine and must be allayed, better be addressed. Their biggest fear from the new farm bills is that they would end up being exploited by the big corporate trading houses, who would do a 'Jio' to the Indian agriculture.

The government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi downward, has given assurances about continuation of the Minimum Support Price along with the mandi infrastructure. But the farmers, their leaders and the Opposition parties insist on both 'letter and spirit' of the law. The Shiromani Akali Dal, which has pulled out of the Modi Government at the Centre was compelled to do so, as it faced threat of further losing base amongst its core constituents of farmers. Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United) may be confident about returning to power in Bihar, it too has conveyed its concerns on these bills - The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020,

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020. The unrest is palpable in states other than Punjab and Haryana.

Let's get back to the trust deficit that Corporate India is faced with. However powerful you might be, you cannot do a 'Jio' on the farmers; to succeed you will have to do 'an Amul' on them. The Gujarat Cooperative remains involved with the dairy farmers - from cattle breed to cattle feed. Granted, you might be able to get these bills notified and start investing in building sourcing infrastructure, a prosperous farmer, not an impoverished farmer would determine your success. The farmer and his family are not only

the producers but also the largest chunk of Indian consumers, inclusive of the entire rural landscape. As many as 65 per cent of Indians still live in villages and tehsils. This is why, every time there is an economic slowdown, we clamor so much about the rural demand!

Corporate India with big farm ambitions have to make farmers the most important stakeholders in the business of 'farm-to-folk'. At the same time, the rural folklore must survive the onslaught of distorted market forces. Market forces are not always distorted by the maligned middlemen but the government itself.

Take an onion example. When prices crash in Maharashtra's Lasongaon Mandi, who comes to the rescue of poor growers? Nobody! On the contrary, when prices become seasonally attractive in the domestic and export markets, a notification is issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade slapping a blanket ban on exports. Who loses the most? Growers for whom the political parties shed occasional tears and promise to double their income. You cannot double their income by stopping truckloads of onions, heading for exports.

My Neighbour, My Enemy: Estranging Ties of India & Pakistan

Pakistan is garnering support from other Muslim countries to politicise the issue of Kashmir, which is predominantly a Muslim state.

Pakistan's rejection of Jayant Khobragade as India's new chargé d'affaires in Islamabad citing his seniority for the post as a reason for rejection is in keeping with the bitter antagonism between India and Pakistan that has intensified in the last few years. It has reached almost a dead-end since the scrapping of Kashmir's special status last August.

Islamabad's official explanation is that Khobragade having already served as ambassador earlier was not eligible for the post which is normally slated for diplomats at a lower rung. The Foreign office spokesman said it was India's way of subverting the downgrading of diplomatic ties announced by Pakistan after article 370 was abolished by New Delhi. The spokesman said it must be made clear that ties between the two nuclear-armed neighbours were linked to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. It is part of the diplomatic norm to send the

name of senior diplomats for the host country's approval. In normal times not much fuss is made over this. But when India-Pakistan ties are strained diplomats become easy targets. Khobragade rejection is mainly to needle India and convey to ordinary Pakistani citizens that Prime Minister Imran Khan is not lowering his guard against India at every little turn.

In 2003, when India-Pakistan was going through another bad patch, Pakistan's acting high commissioner in Delhi, Jalil Abbas Jilani was forced to leave the country over allegations of funding Kashmiri separatists. Jilani said then that the charge was a crude attempt at harassing Pakistan, high commission officials. He was declared "persona non grata" but when relations improved he returned to India at the head of a Pakistan delegation for talks, as the Vajpayee government began re-engaging with Islamabad. But unlike in the past, chances of an India-

Pakistan rapprochement soon appear dim. Kashmir has always been a major stumbling block and now after India's latest move on August 5, 2019, it has become a Gordian knot.

And Pakistan does not let an opportunity go by without dragging in Kashmir. Even in the case of rejecting Khobragade the foreign office spokesman statement contained these lines on Kashmir. "A just and lasting solution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is critical for durable peace and stability in South Asia. Accordingly, India is once again reminded of its international obligations with regard to the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. India must listen to the voices of the Kashmiri people and the world community."

In a way, Kashmir has helped Prime Minister Imran Khan to galvanise the public behind him. At a time when his government was fumbling with little to show as achievement, New Delhi's decision on Kashmir helped to bolster his image as a crusader



for the rights of Kashmiris. He did not leave a stone unturned in projecting Indian atrocities in the valley. Unfortunately, Khan got little traction from the international community. A few countries supported him on the abolition of special status for Kashmir, which Delhi said was its internal issue. But there was criticism from several international quarters on the lockdown and the communication embargo imposed on Kashmiris.

Thanks to the internal jockeying for power within the Islamic world, Pakistan failed to get the backing of the powerful Sunni powers: Saudi Arabia and United Arab

Emirates. That was not just since both leading Gulf kingdoms had vastly improved ties with India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but because of the jostling among Sunni leaders for the leadership of the Muslim world. Turkey's Recep Erdogan and Malaysia's former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad were solidly behind Pakistan. Soon afterward India the largest buyer of palm oil from Malaysia stopped importing, to drive home the point that there is a price to pay for criticising Delhi's Kashmir policy. That was last year. But now it has gradually begun to lift palm oil again from Malaysia. Mahathir is no longer prime minister.

Trump mayhem takes over first debate

The president interrupted and bullied. Biden called the president a "clown." Chris Wallace, the moderator, despaired.



The mayhem Donald Trump subjected Americans to on Tuesday might have helped him if Joe Biden had disintegrated. Biden didn't.

Trump just left viewers worse off for having sat through the whole, weird thing.

The president interrupted and bullied. Biden called the president a "clown." Chris Wallace, the moderator, despaired.

"The country would be better served," the veteran journalist said to Trump, "if we allow both people to speak with fewer interruptions."

The result was a circus that will be viewed as one of the strangest confrontations in modern presidential history.

At one point, when Wallace asked Trump, as he did repeatedly, to let Biden finish one of his answers, Biden

responded, "He doesn't know how to do that."

The debate was unwatchable, in some ways a fitting conclusion to a day that began with Republicans peddling conspiracy theories about Biden wearing an earpiece.

He wasn't, Biden's campaign says. Nor was there any evidence, despite Trump's suggestions, that Biden was on drugs.

What is clear - just as much after the debate as before it - is that Biden is ahead in this race and Trump will leave the debate still desperate for something to pull him down.

He is running out of time, with early voting already underway in some states and few voters still undecided.

Here are the takeaways from Tuesday's debate:

Biden stood his ground. Trump's nonstop interruptions might have worked had the bulldozing made Biden look

small.

It didn't. Instead, it served to align Biden with Wallace - and through the moderator, viewers at home. Trump labored to talk over them both.

The effect of the chaos was that Biden could do little affirmatively to make his case for president. But as the frontrunner, the onus was not on him to. Instead, he stood in for the onslaught, at times laughing Trump off, at others belittling him. You're the worst president America has ever had," Biden said. "Come on." Trump had to know that Biden would be more difficult to flatten than he'd once anticipated. For months, Trump had portrayed Biden as confused and mentally "out of it," and everyone could see right through the course correction when it came. Biden was an "uneven" debater, Trump said Sunday - sometimes "okay,"

but probably because he used performance enhancing drugs. Before the debate, insinuating the presence of an earpiece (a claim Biden's campaign denied), Trump's advisers asked for a pre-debate inspection of Biden's ears.

It was too late. Trump pushed expectations for Biden so low that his supporters turned on their televisions expecting to see Biden - teleprompter-less - collapse in a puddle of his own drool. Since he didn't, they were in for a deflating night.

The kernel of truth in Trump's assessment of Biden is that he has, in fact, been an uneven debater. Viewers of the Democratic primary debates will remember him telling parents to keep "the record player on" at night, promising to "keep punching" at domestic violence and imploring an audience to "go to 'Joe 30330,'" as if they could text a website.

How Amy Coney Barrett Would Reshape the Court - And the Country



More than two dozen legal thinkers game out what President Trump's new Supreme Court pick means for America's biggest legal fights, the court's reputation, the fate of its "swing seat" and more.

Amy Coney Barrett has been a federal judge for just three years, but one thing is already certain: She'd mark a sharp turn from Ruth Bader Ginsburg on the Supreme Court. At just 48 years old, the former clerk to Justice Antonin Scalia would lock in a long-term conservative legacy for President Donald Trump, who is expected to nominate her officially this afternoon. Democrats are already anxious enough about the looming 6-3 conservative majority that they're openly considering expanding court-packing to counter it.

But what do we really know about her judicial philosophy, and how she'd rule on major issues? POLITICO MAGAZINE asked top constitutional law experts and Supreme Court watchers to weigh in. They see a strong legal mind who could help usher in serious changes when it comes to abortion and other legal issues-welcome, or concerning, depending where your social politics fall. Others highlighted that Barrett would be a role model for women, even if not in a traditional feminist mold, and a strong voice for constitutional originalism. Some suggested her tenure might be less predictable than we think. How so? Here's what they all said.

A serious scholar with a clear conservative bent

Tomiko Brown-Nagin is dean of Harvard's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and professor of constitutional law at Harvard Law School. If confirmed, Judge Amy

Coney Barrett will consolidate the conservative majority and shift the balance of power on the court decidedly to the right. She has called abortion "immoral" and written that judges are not always bound by precedent. And, consistent with the anti-abortion movement's current strategy, she has expressed openness to hollowing out *Roe v. Wade* through state regulations. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg made a mark as a strong supporter of reproductive freedom; she consistently voted against state encroachments on *Roe v. Wade*. A critic of Chief Justice John Roberts' role in the blockbuster case that upheld the Affordable Care Act in 2012, Judge Barrett is likely to give the law's opponents a sympathetic hearing in the case pending before the court. By contrast, Justice Ginsburg, a strong voice and critical vote in support of the ACA, would almost certainly have again sustained the federal law. On the question of gun rights, Ginsburg sustained regulations, whereas Barrett has questioned the constitutionality of a categorical ban on gun ownership by felons.

The contrast between the two jurists is evident on numerous other issues. Given the stark differences between Justice Ginsburg's voting record and that of her presumed replacement, Judge Barrett's nomination promises to transform the Supreme Court. That said, it would be a mistake to dismiss

Judge Barrett as a mere partisan or a zealot; her writings bear the mark of a scholar who reasons carefully about legal cases and controversies.

She 'will surprise her critics and fans' Saikrishna Prakash is a professor at the University of Virginia School of Law and the author of *The Living Presidency: An Originalist Argument Against Its Ever-Expanding Powers and Imperial from the Beginning: The Constitution of the Original Executive*.

Judge Amy Coney Barrett has all the qualities of a first-class Supreme Court justice: intellect, wisdom, temperament and restraint. In addition to serving on the 7th Circuit, she is an accomplished teacher and scholar at Notre Dame, with several learned articles discussing the intricacies and nuances of statutory interpretation, originalism and precedent. Her nomination will inaugurate the accompanying rituals of ruthless smears and wild prophecy. Some senators will attempt to provoke her or, worse yet, malign her, for that is standard operating procedure in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Almost everyone will wonder what she will do on the court, with predictions of doom and gloom the loudest. Everyone forgets that justices can surprise their nominating presidents, with Justice David Souter, Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Neil Gorsuch as recent

examples. And people overlook the many justices who actually disappoint their appointers, like Justice William Brennan. Precisely how a Justice Barrett will surprise her critics and fans is unknown. But with perhaps almost two decades of service in front of her, what is certain is that she will do the unexpected. She is not a results-first, principles-second sort of jurist. And her principled stances on interpretation and the judicial role will lead her to unexpected outcomes.

'She is the wrong choice for America right now'

Kimberly Wehle, a former assistant U.S. attorney, is a professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law and the author of *How to Read the Constitution-and Why and What You Need to Know About Voting-and Why*.

In the wake of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death, I identified two baseline criteria for her replacement. Amy Coney Barrett plainly satisfies my first, which could have been a problem given Donald Trump's penchant for breaking norms: She has the intellectual chops and experience for the job. A number of her former colleagues and students at Notre Dame have even praised her as an effective and creative teacher with an affable demeanor - all positive traits for the eight Americans with whom she would share the extraordinary powers of the U.S. Supreme Court and for the elite



members of that bar. But that's not the point.

Reportedly, President Trump's choice came down to Barrett and Judge Barbara Lagoa of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals - a first-generation American whose parents fled communist Cuba. A Lagoa pick would have potentially strengthened Trump's hand in Florida, a state he desperately needs to win in November, and where Joe Biden is nipping at his heels. It would have also increased his appeal among Latino voters across the country. In short, a Lagoa nomination would have signaled that Trump is serious about winning a legitimate election legitimately. Lagoa met my second criterion, too. Although she signed on to a controversial opinion upholding the Florida Legislature's insistence that would-be voters with felony records pay fines as a prerequisite to voting, her brief record on the federal bench left her views on hot-button issues pretty opaque. In that posture, Lagoa would not have served as a severe splitter, a divider or a source of deep existential agony for millions of Americans.

Barrett, like Justice Brett Kavanaugh before her, may well be a delightful person. And while her professed devotion to a theory of interpretation called "originalism" puts her solidly in the camp of conservative jurists, Lagoa is of that ilk, too. The difference is that Barrett's views on contentious issues like abortion, Obamacare, gun rights, sexual assault and immigration are well-documented and lean decidedly against majorities of the voting public. Her nomination is thus a political act of splitting. It is yet one more Trumpian assault on "We the People" of a democratic republic composed of many different views, beliefs and needs.

Trump's diagnosis throws election into chaos, threatens governing crisis



President Donald Trump's diagnosis with Covid-19 presents a stunning new twist in a tumultuous year, throwing an election that is only 32 days away into chaos and raising the grave possibility of more American crises over governance and national security at an already perilous moment.

Most immediately there is concern for the health of Trump himself, who as an overweight 74-year-old is at an elevated risk of complications from the virus, as well as for first lady Melania Trump, who also tested positive.

But attention will inevitably focus on the hubris of a President who mocked mask wearing and social distancing, ignored and downplayed the virus, courted disaster with packed campaign rallies, ridiculed his Democratic opponent Joe Biden for taking prudent precautions, and even now says the emergency is almost over.

Still, even amid the country's bitter cultural wars, stoked by Trump more than anyone, key political figures and his domestic adversaries will wish him well. A President in medical peril is a situation that calls for humanity. The most serious known threat to a commander-in-chief's health for decades also calls for unity since it can bear on the security of the nation itself should US enemies seek advantage and probe a potential leadership vacuum. An already weak economy is under additional pressure: stock futures dipped 400 points when news of the President's condition, which followed earlier confirmation that his close aide Hope Hicks had Covid-19, broke.

In virtual remarks to the Al Smith Dinner on Thursday the President who has said a "miracle" will sweep the virus away said: "I just want to say that the end of the pandemic is in sight."

But Trump's diagnosis underscores how a virulent pathogen takes advantage of any slip in vigilance and is everywhere as the emergency deepens ahead of an expected fall spike after another 857 American deaths were recorded Thursday.

It also provokes yet another serious national challenge in a season of tragedy and political and social unrest, that encompasses the pandemic, a consequent economic crisis, a generational racial reckoning and concerns for American democracy after Trump failed to guarantee a peaceful transfer of power.

Election turmoil

One critical question is what happens next in an election that is only a month away. Trump will now have no choice but to remove himself from the campaign trail for a prolonged period. Trump has mild symptoms of the virus, a White House official told CNN. According to people who interacted with the President Thursday, he appeared tired, but was not displaying major symptoms. Even if he and the first lady are not seriously affected, medical advice suggests that they should isolate for at least 10 days after symptoms appear -- nearly half the length of the time remaining in the presidential race.

Trump's positive test is a political disaster for his campaign -- given that he is lagging behind Biden in many swing states and already seemed to need a game changer event in his favor to come from behind in the limited time remaining.

The next presidential debate -- following Trump's tantrum-filled performance last week -- is in particular doubt. The clash is scheduled for October 15 in Miami. And though Vice President Mike Pence tested negative for the virus Friday morning, he has been around top aides and the President in a White House that is now a virus hotspot, so there must be doubts that his showdown with Democratic vice presidential nominee Sen. Kamala Harris of California can go ahead as planned on Wednesday night.

The staggering news of Trump's plight -- which he communicated in an overnight tweet -- means that Biden -- another elderly man vulnerable to Covid-19 complications, who was across an indoor stage from a shouting and venting President for 90 minutes at their debate on Tuesday night, will probably also have to be tested for the coronavirus which can spread through airborne droplets.

The image of the Trump entourage ostentatiously removing their masks in the audience before the debate is now especially resonant.

And another top Republican official, Ronna McDaniel, the chairwoman of the Republican National Committee, has tested positive for coronavirus, an official told CNN Friday.

A sensitive moment for Biden

The President's diagnosis creates a sensitive moment for Biden who must find the right tone in the days ahead and decide whether to reduce his own campaign commitments in deference

to the President's condition.

He tweeted Friday morning wishing the President and first lady "a swift recovery."

Unless he is incapacitated, Trump will still be able to use his Twitter feed to keep his increasingly desperate antics in front of Americans and will likely have an open line to conservative media during his confinement. In such circumstances, Biden may be loath to curtail his own visibility after a campaign in which he spent long periods self-isolating at home and holding virtual events. But as the candidate who is in the lead as more and more states begin early voting, he may accrue some political advantage from a frozen campaign given the President's inability to campaign outside Washington. Trump's condition now also seems to play into Biden's argument that the President has been criminally negligent over the pandemic for the entire year.

There may also be some discussion about the timing of the Senate GOP's breakneck push to confirm Amy Coney Barrett as Trump's third Supreme Court pick. The judge was with the President and others in a White House where few were wearing masks as recently as Saturday and may have to take measures to self-isolate if proper medical protocols are being followed.

Continuity of power

It now seems likely that the West Wing will have to shut down entirely and continuity of power precautions will need to be taken to secure Pence, who may already also have been exposed to the virus.

In an apparent attempt to project a sense of calm, the President's physician Navy Commander Dr. Sean Conley put out a memo.

"Rest assured I expect the President to continue carrying out his duties without disruption while recovering, and I will keep you updated on any further developments," he wrote.

There will also now be a premium on transparency and honesty from a White House that has trashed the truth at every turn for nearly four years. Officials have failed to offer the traditional visibility into the specifics of the President's health. There is still a mystery for instance over Trump's unscheduled trip to Walter Reed hospital in November 2019. According to a recently published book by New York Times reporter Michael Schmidt, Pence was put on standby to assume

temporary presidential powers in the event Trump needed to be anesthetized. The President added to the intrigue with an unprompted assurance that he had not suffered a "series of mini strokes."

As the days go by, especially if the President does not develop serious complications from Covid-19, there will be increasing discussion of his recklessness amid a crisis that has killed more than 200,000 Americans. His conduct not only endangered himself and those around him. It is causing uproar around a presidential election -- the most important symbol of American democracy. The President has become the third of a trio of world leaders who were cavalier about the virus, apparently for political reasons, to get infected.

Both British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro conquered the disease, though Johnson spent time battling for his life in a London hospital when he developed severe respiratory problems and had a prolonged period of convalescence.

The extreme negligence of Trump and close aides in allowing the President to share his Marine One helicopter with others -- Hicks was likely infectious while traveling with him on Wednesday -- meanwhile displays contempt for fate and the idea of competent government. It is in keeping with the chaotic manner in which he has run his White House all along. Trump's insistence on all but ignoring the danger of the virus and then getting infected is the most flagrant occasion in which he has put his own political aspirations ahead of the duties that he holds to his office and to the safe conduct of the election and leadership of the country as President of the United State.

International leaders immediately on Thursday sent support to the President.

"I send all my best wishes to Donald and Melania Trump. I hope that you will get over the #corona infection and will soon be completely healthy again," German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has frequently clashed with the President, tweeted. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he and his wife Sara were thinking of the Trumps. And Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "we certainly wish President Trump a speedy recovery."



'This is the worst nightmare for the Trump campaign'

A president who once seemed impervious to October surprises is suddenly confronting one big enough to alter the election outcome.

Donald Trump had done everything possible to shift the focus of the presidential campaign away from his handling of the coronavirus. His own infection now ensures that he can't — pulling Trump off the road 32 days before the election, throwing debates into question and fixing the public attention's more squarely than ever on a pandemic dragging down his prospects for a second term. A president who once seemed impervious to October surprises is suddenly confronting one big enough to alter the outcome of the election. "The campaign as we knew it is over," said Andrew Feldman, a Democratic strategist in Washington. "This is the worst nightmare for the Trump campaign." Practically speaking, Trump's announcement early Friday that he tested positive for the coronavirus will immediately remove him from in-person campaigning, though for how long is unclear. Sean Conley, Trump's physician, said in a memo that Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, who also tested positive, "plan to remain at home within the White House during their convalescence," and the White House removed a planned campaign rally on Friday night in Florida from Trump's daily schedule.

Trump's inability to hold rallies, even for a brief period, will hobble a campaign that has defined itself by its large, in-person gatherings, even during the pandemic. The second presidential debate, now scheduled for Oct. 15, is in doubt. And Trump's positive test will heighten scrutiny of the vice presidential debate scheduled for next week. Officials with the Commission on Presidential Debates declined to comment on what the president's diagnosis means for the schedule and format of upcoming forums. The second of three scheduled presidential debates is slated for Oct. 15 in Miami. The more significant problem for Trump is that, now Covid-positive, it will prove almost impossible for him to

steer public attention away from his biggest political liability. Americans disapprove of Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic by a wide margin. And cable news is going wall-to-wall with coverage of that — not U.S. Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett, mail-in balloting or Trump's latest outrage.

It is a perilous way to finish the campaign for a candidate already trailing in the polls. In the most conspicuous way imaginable, the positive test publicly undermines so much of Trump's rhetoric about the virus — from his faith in hydroxychloroquine to his cavalier pronouncements about a vaccine and his dismissal of Covid-19 as a disease that "affects virtually nobody." It was just this week, during the first presidential debate, that Trump mocked Biden for his mask-wearing, saying, "Every time you see him, he's got a mask." Trump's announcement of his positive test undercuts constant GOP criticism of Biden's decision to limit his own public appearances and choice to cloister for stretches at his home in Delaware. It also diminishes the effectiveness of Republican charges that Biden's cautious approach to travel is primarily designed to shield the 77-year-old Democratic nominee from public scrutiny. Trump's illness, one Republican campaign consultant who worked in the Reagan and George H.W. Bush White Houses predicted, will be viewed as validating "Biden hiding out in [a] bunker for preventative reasons," and not, as Republicans had maintained, the "onset of dementia." Rob Stutzman, a Republican political strategist who has been critical of Trump, described it as a "devastating blow" to the Trump campaign, "the ultimate rebuke to his callous mishandling of Covid." The full extent of the political fallout is unclear. If Trump becomes seriously ill, it stands to underscore Democratic arguments about his coronavirus leadership and mar the strong-man image he assiduously

cultivates. If the physical consequences are less severe, he might find an opportunity to downplay the seriousness of the disease. An illness could also serve to humanize one of the coarsest presidents in history.

In either scenario, the positive test will put enormous pressure on a White House known for its secrecy, chaotic internal operations and loose relationship with the truth to avoid any misstep or public confusion that could affect the campaign. There was uncertainty Friday within the president's political orbit about what this means for his re-election prospects. Some White House aides were eager for the president to go on TV and address the nation. Four years ago this month, Trump weathered both the release of the "Access Hollywood" tape and the Obama administration's assertion that Russia was meddling in the election. The implications of those events were widely overestimated.

"Something upends the campaign every day and it is not yet possible to see how this plays out," said Mathew Littman, a Democratic strategist and former Biden speechwriter. "I hope Trump gets healthy and then loses by a lot. Trump was already in deep trouble in this campaign with no real plan to turn this around." But it is also more than that, with potential health, national security and financial implications that will reverberate beyond the campaign. International financial markets were shaken overnight. "This is a geopolitical event," Stutzman said. "Our enemies are watching. If he falls gravely ill, the chaos could multiply ... If Americans of any political stripe reflect on this news, they should be shaken." Trump is overweight and, at 74, at higher risk for severe illness. But Conley said in his memo that Trump and the first lady are "both well at this time." The likelihood,

doctors said, is that he will recover. Robert O'Brien, the president's top aide on foreign policy, returned to the White House in August after a mild case of Covid-19. U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro also tested positive — in Bolsonaro's case, like Trump's, after long downplaying the virus' severity. But even the possibility that Trump might become seriously ill had strategists in both parties discussing the potential implications of succession or the 25th Amendment, under which Trump, if medically incapacitated, could transfer power temporarily to Vice President Mike Pence. Pence has tested negative for Covid-19, his spokesman said Friday, hours after the president revealed he had contracted the coronavirus. One Republican strategist said in a text message early Friday that the White House should "keep Pence in one of those giant plastic bubbles," attaching an image of a man inside an inflatable ball. For Biden, the attention that Trump's positive test will foist on the president's handling of the virus was a stroke of political fortune. If Trump is confined to the White House, one Democratic strategist said, Biden will benefit from having "the whole country to himself" to campaign. But Biden will also likely have to tread carefully to avoid appearing insensitive. It is hard to imagine him repeating the personal criticism he leveled at Trump during the debate this week, for example, when he said more people would die from Covid-19 unless Trump got "a lot smarter, a lot quicker." A Biden spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment overnight. But the former vice president tweeted Friday morning, "Jill and I send our thoughts to President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump for a swift recovery. We will continue to pray for the health and safety of the president and his family."

CBI files case against Rotomac for cheating Bank of India of Rs 806 crore

This is the third CBI case against the Rotomac group, run by Kanpur based Kotharis, for cheating banks.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a case against pen manufacturer Rotomac Global Pvt Ltd and its promoter Vikram Kothari, his wife Sadhna Kothari and son Rahul Kothari for allegedly cheating Bank of India of Rs 806 crores, people familiar with the development said.

This is the third CBI case against the Rotomac group, run by Kanpur based Kotharis, for cheating banks.

In February 2018, CBI filed its first case against Rotomac and Vikram Kothari for allegedly cheating a consortium of seven

banks including Bank of Baroda, Indian Overseas Bank, Union Bank of India, Allahabad Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Oriental Bank of Commerce and Bank of India for allegedly defrauding them of Rs 3,695 crore.

It was alleged that Kothari got loans disbursed based on foreign letters of credit (FLCs) on the pretext of making payments to his buyers and suppliers in places like Dubai, Sharjah and Hong Kong but they didn't exist.

The Kotharis allegedly provided incomplete documents or

photocopies of bills of loading to the banks on the pretext that original papers were sent to the importer.

The banks had alleged that Rotomac did not attach the packing list, mandatory insurance copies of goods, certificate of origin of goods, or the inspection certificate from third parties while submitting documents to it. When bank officials visited Rotomac's suppliers and buyers abroad, they found that the import/export business was allegedly running through shell companies. Later, a second case was registered



in February 2020 against the company for allegedly cheating Allahabad Bank of Rs 36 crore. In the latest FIR, CBI has alleged that the company took loans over a period of time from Bank of India for which there is outstanding of Rs 806 crore. It has been alleged that company

diverted most of the funds taken from the bank. With three cases registered by CBI, total amount pertaining to bank fraud involving Kanpur based Kotharis comes to around Rs 4,500 crore. Kotharis' legal representative could not be located by HT.

How Jack Ma built China's money supermarket into a \$200 billion company



When Jack Ma launched an obscure payment service to boost his online shopping empire 16 years ago, few expected it to succeed. Now that service forms the backbone of Ant Group, a financial behemoth that could be worth more than \$200 billion.

Named after a bug because of its founder's belief that "small is beautiful, small is powerful," Ant Group is anything but tiny in China. It's gearing up for a highly anticipated public offering in Hong Kong and Shanghai that could mark the second time Ma sets a record for the biggest IPO ever. "Ant Group really is the crown jewel of Jack Ma and ... of China's internet industry," said Edith Yeung, general partner at Race Capital. It is one of the biggest technology firms in the world and the biggest online payments platform in China. The app has established its presence in every aspect of financial life in China, from investment accounts and micro savings products to insurance, credit scores and even dating profiles. But it all started out as

a side project to plug a hole in China's nascent online shopping industry. Back in 2004, very few people had debit or credit cards, and buyers and sellers using Alibaba's (BABA) e-commerce platform needed a reliable way to handle payments.

Ma tasked Alibaba's finance team to create Alipay. The service would act as a trusted third party, holding money from buyers in escrow and only releasing it to sellers after the goods had been received and buyers confirmed they were happy with what they got.

"When I started [Alipay], everyone said: 'Jack, this is the most stupid model we've ever seen, nobody will use it,'" Ma said in a 2014 interview with CBS News' "60 Minutes." "I said I don't care if this model is scientific, whether it's fancy-looking, or not. As long as it works, it helps [to] build up the trust," he said.

Money supermarket

And work it did. Today, Alipay has 711 million monthly active users, and it handled 118 trillion yuan (\$17.2 trillion) in payments

in the 12 months through June, Ant Group reported in regulatory filings. The Alipay mobile app, which debuted in 2009, accounted for more than 55% of China's mobile payments market in the first three months of this year, while rival Tencent's (TCEHY) WeChat Pay and QQ wallet accounted for about 40%, according to market research firm eMarketer.

The app also connects millions of people to a ton of financial services. Alipay users can browse and select insurance products, pay bills, get loans,

pay staff and invest in money markets.

Yeung compares it to "a financial supermarket."

"Anything you want to do in financial markets" you can do through Alipay, she said.

Alipay was spun off from Alibaba into a separate entity in 2011, and became part of Ant Group in 2014. Ma, who took Alibaba public in 2014 in a world record IPO, retains overall control of Ant, according to regulatory filings.

Ant now offers so many financial services and products that it

"has become part of the everyday life of hundreds of millions of individuals and businesses across China," said Zennon Kapron, founder of financial technology consulting and research firm Kapronasia.

"It's very difficult to overstate the impact the company has had on Chinese individuals," he added. One of the most popular services is Yu'e Bao, a wealth management product launched in 2013 that allows users to invest money left over in their digital wallets. The minimum amount to invest is just 1 yuan (15 cents).

General Atlantic to invest \$498.31 million in Reliance's retail arm

The investment gives Reliance Retail a pre money valuation of 4.29 trillion rupees (\$58.17 billion).



Reliance Industries Ltd said on Wednesday US Fund General Atlantic plans to invest 36.75 billion rupees (\$498.31 million) for a 0.84% stake in its retail

arm, making it the latest in a series of investments at the Indian oil-to-telecoms conglomerate. The investment gives Reliance Retail a pre

money valuation of 4.29 trillion rupees (\$58.17 billion).

Reliance is India's biggest retailer with roughly 12,000 stores and has been looking to expand its so-called new e-commerce venture as it vies for market share in India's growing retail space.

General Atlantic had earlier said it would invest 65.98 billion rupees in Reliance's digital arm Jio platforms, which has raised over \$20 billion over the last few months.

The General Atlantic investment comes after Reliance raised around \$1.8 billion for its retail arm from KKR & Co and Silver Lake Partners.

(\$1 = 73.7500 Indian rupees)

Nassau Store Owner To Donate \$450K In PPE In Price-Gouging Case

The owner was the first person in the nation to be charged with violating the Defense Production Act of 1950.



healthcare workers and first-responders who will benefit from the personal protective equipment relinquished by the defendant in their continuing battle against the COVID-19 virus," DuCharme said.

Philip Bartlett, inspector-in-charge at the New York division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, said Singh "took advantage of being the 'only game in town' with PPE during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, by jacking up the prices on life-saving equipment needed by first responders, medical personnel and the general public."

"Singh held himself out as a local hero, but we now know this was totally untrue," Bartlett said.

Timeline

March 18 - President Donald Trump issues executive order invoking the Defense Production Act of 1950. The act outlaws the practice of acquiring medical supplies and devices designated by the Secretary of Health and Human Services as scarce in order to hoard or sell them at inflated prices.

April 14 - Postal inspectors search Singh's retail store and warehouse. They seize 23 pallets containing more than 100,000 face masks, 10,000

surgical gowns, nearly 2,500 full-body isolation suits and more than 500,000 pairs of disposable gloves.

April 24 - Singh becomes the first person in the nation charged with violating the act. Authorities said he had 40 shipments of disposable face masks weighing more than 1.6 tons, 14 shipments of disposable surgical gowns weighing more than 2.2 tons, six shipments of hand sanitizer weighing more than 1.8 tons and seven shipments of digital thermometers weighing approximately 253 pounds. Singh sold the items at inflated prices.

Sept. 25 - Singh agrees to donate \$450,000 in PPE to those on the front lines.

As Patch previously reported, the Nassau County Department of Consumer Affairs pursued and issued price-gouging violations to Singh "to the staggering tune of \$183,650 since March 18th," Laura Curran, the Nassau County executive, said in April. "It is simply unconscionable for anyone to prey on consumers during a unprecedented pandemic, especially as Nassau County leads the nation in confirmed coronavirus cases and fatalities outside of New York City," Curran said at the time.

"Price gouging is and remains illegal and Nassau County will continue to exercise its authority to prosecute any businesses that engages in this exploitative practice."

Singh had faced up to a year in prison if convicted on the charge. In reviews posted at the time on Google, two users complained within the last week of overpriced masks and even bogus products.

One reviewer said: "Everything is overpriced. Blue mask pack of 50 for \$50. It's crazy during these hard times."

In response, the owner said everyone is selling the same face masks for \$1.50 to \$2.25 each and that "we have kept the same price even though our cost from the back end has gone up tremendously."

"We apologize that you felt it was overpriced, we hope to see you again for other shopping needs," the owner said.

A second reviewer complained the retailer was selling fake products.

"Foremost, consumers should know that Tide is NOT sold in 5-gallon buckets to consumers. The 5-gallon product is fake says Procter & Gamble Senior Communications Manager, Anne Candido.

A Woodbury man charged in federal court with price-gouging of scarce personal protective equipment at his Plainview store has agreed to donate over \$450,000 in PPE to hospitals, health care providers, first responders and other essential workers on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic.

A retail store operated by Amardeep Singh, 45, who also goes by "Bobby Singh" and "Bobby Sidana," began stockpiling in mid-March vital PPE at WLC Warehouse Liquidation Center, and a nearby warehouse in Brentwood, authorities said. The store sells sneakers and clothes. At the time, Singh set aside part of the store for so-called "COVID-19 Essentials" that he sold at

inflated prices, prosecutors said. Items included N-95 filtering face piece respirators, face masks, surgical masks, face shields, gloves, coveralls, medical gowns and clinical-grade sanitizing and disinfecting products.

In April, Singh was charged with violating the Defense Production Act of 1950. He will donate PPE under the terms of his deferred prosecution agreement with the government, authorities announced Friday.

Seth DuCharme, acting U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, said Singh accepted responsibility for what DuCharme called "taking advantage of a public health emergency for personal profit." "Today's deferred prosecution agreement is a victory for heroic

Google Vs Paytm Saga: A Clear Case Of Global Giants' Discriminatory Behaviour In India

Google has been found guilty of abuse of dominant position and unfair trade practices by the European Commission, same could happen in India.

There was considerable brouhaha last week (on September 18) when Google removed financial services app Paytm from their Play Store platform for a few hours, before restoring it back, ostensibly for violating its anti-gambling policies.

In an official blogpost, Google India noted that as per its policy they do not allow 'online casinos or support any unregulated gambling apps that facilitate sports betting. This includes if an app leads consumers to an external website that allows them to participate in paid tournaments to win real money or cash prizes, it is a violation of our

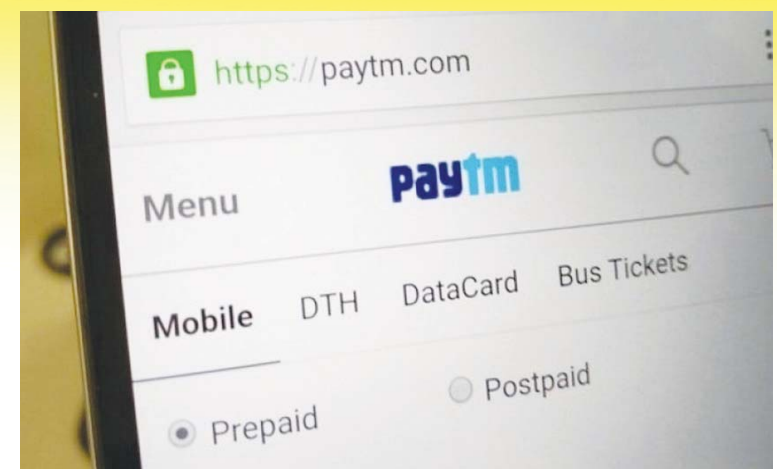
policies.' Google further noted that in case of violation of this policy, they notify the developer and remove the app from Google Play until the developer brings the app into compliance. It further warned that in case of repeated infractions, more serious action would follow, including termination of the Google Play developer accounts.

Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma reacted sharply to the move by slamming monopoly of certain global tech providers which ultimately harms the Indian startup ecosystem. He further called Google the 'judge, jury and executioner' and noted that the global giant had in the

past only raised concerns about another app 'Paytm First Games', which is a joint venture between the Alibaba Group and Paytm's parent company.

Sharma also added that the Paytm app did not have any real money gaming but merely had an offer where stickers can be availed on making certain payments under a scratch card scheme launched by the company ahead of IPL.

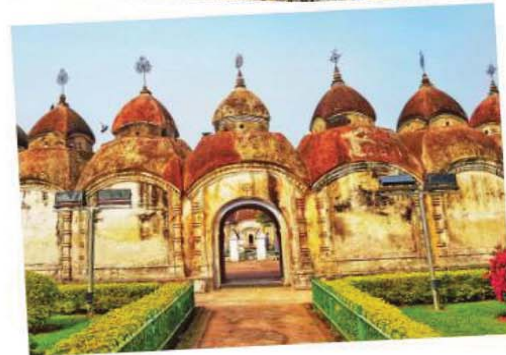
Following Paytm's removal of the aforementioned scratch card scheme from the app, Google quickly restored the app on Play Store, signaling a temporary truce between India's most valued startup and the global tech giant. Whilst the fracas



between the two behemoths seems to have been amicably resolved for now, larger issues surrounding Google's ostensibly arbitrary powers to remove content at will, the monopolistic position it enjoys and denial of access to gaming apps have been brought to fore and requires deeper examination.

Google's double standards- While Google Play has a clear

policy to not allow any real money gaming apps that require a user to pay any entry fee or stake money in exchange of a possibility to win something tangible of monetary value (including games of skill that are permitted as per Indian law) on its platform, the same policy is not followed for their search engine business.



Belur-Halebidu in Karnataka (top) and 108 Shiva Temple in Kalna, West Bengal, are great showcases for local architecture

By Satarupa Paul

Sometime in late February, just before the coronavirus pandemic sent India into lockdown, I found myself in Agra. The early morning mist had settled around the Taj and its grand dome was only partially visible in the distance. Its beauty held me spellbound, just like it had on several previous visits, but that morning, I felt inclined to explore more of what Agra had to offer. And so, I gave India's most famous landmark a miss and drove onwards through dusty lanes and busy marketplaces of the old city. Just beside the dilapidated Bhagwan Talkies cinema I stumbled upon the Roman Catholic Cemetery. The oldest Christian burial ground in North India, this cemetery is unlike any in the country since it features a predominantly Mughal influence, with tombs built of red sandstone instead of white marble, Persian inscriptions on the headstones, and designs that are more Islamic than Christian. The star attraction here is the tomb of Dutch mercenary John William Hessing, who served as a Colonel in the Maratha army and commandant of the Agra Fort until his death in 1803. Apart from the cemetery, Agra's churches, too, offer a glimpse of the city's Christian past - a chapter of its history that is often overshadowed by its more dominating Mughal past. Prominent among these is the quaint Akbar's Church - built by Jesuit Fathers in 1600 on the invitation of Emperor Akbar, who wished to learn more about Christianity; and the splendid St. George's Church - a protestant church built for British military personnel in 1826. These offbeat sites are now promoted by the Tourism Guild of Agra as part of a colonial tour for anyone who wishes to escape the milling crowds at the Taj and discover something unique while at it. Talking of unique discoveries, just about an hour away from the city of Vadodara in Gujarat - known for its magnificent Lakshmi

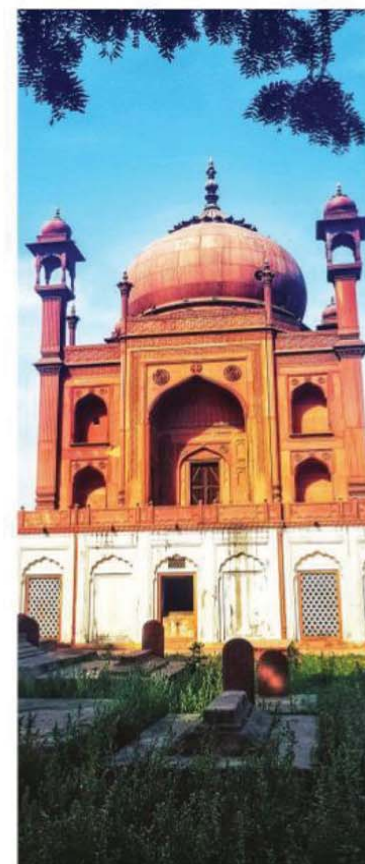
A STUDY IN HERITAGE

After the Covid lockdown, visit these off-beat monuments for a slice of culture



Above and right: Akbar's Church and the Red Taj in the Roman Catholic Cemetery offer glimpses of Agra's Christian past

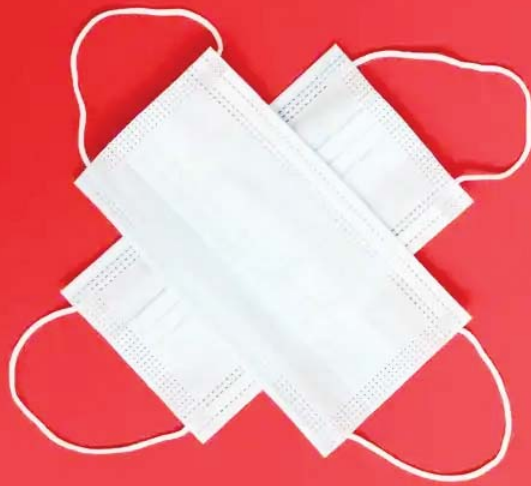
Left: Champaner-Pavagadh near Vadodara is a sprawling heritage site dotted with surprises.



Vilas Palace and the reputed Fine Arts faculty of MS Baroda University - lies the sprawling UNESCO World Heritage Site of Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park. Spread over a massive area of over 1,300 hectares, the site not only displays the transition from Hindu to Muslim culture and architecture, but according to UNESCO, it's also the "only complete and unchanged Islamic pre-Mughal city" that still stands. Archaeological findings from the Chalcolithic Period jostle for space with remains from the time of the Chadva Dynasty through the Khiljis, the Chauhan Rajputs, the Solankis, the Mughals right up to the British. Travel

farther down to southern India and the heritage landscape begins to wear a prominent Dravidian influence. The scores of famous temples and tourist favourites such as Hampi aside, there remain many lesser known monuments that are a delight to explore. On a day trip from Bengaluru a couple of years ago, I stumbled upon one such find - the twin temple complexes of Belur and Halebidu, a four hour-drive from the city and just 20 minutes away from each other. Built in the 12th century, these two temples are the best-known examples of Hoysala architecture. Built of soapstone and similar in their star-

shaped arrangement, they feature gorgeous hand-carved sculptures, intricate reliefs, detailed friezes and inscriptions that depict not just Hindu theology and legends but also the life and culture of 12th century South India.



Strong activation of anti-bacterial cells of immune system linked to severe Covid-19: Study

A type of the immune system's T cells known to fight against bacterial infections is strongly activated in people with moderate to severe Covid-19.

A type of the immune system's T cells known to fight against bacterial infections is strongly activated in people with moderate to severe Covid-19, according to a study which provides a better understanding of how the body responds to the novel coronavirus infection.

Researchers, including those from the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, noted that this component of the immune system called MAIT cells make up about one to five percent of T cells in the blood of healthy people, and are primarily important for controlling bacteria, but can

also be recruited to fight some viral infections.

They explained that T cells are a type of white blood cells that are specialised in recognizing infected cells, and are an essential part of the immune system. In the current study, published in the journal Science Immunology, the scientists assessed the role played by MAIT cells in Covid-19 disease. They examined the presence and character of MAIT cells in blood samples from 24 patients admitted to Karolinska University Hospital with moderate to severe Covid-19 disease, and compared these with blood samples from

14 healthy controls and 45 individuals who had recovered from Covid-19. Four of the patients died in the hospital, the study noted.

"To find potential treatments against Covid-19, it is important to understand in detail how our immune system reacts, and in some cases, perhaps contribute to worsening the disease," said Johan Sandberg, a co-author of the study at Karolinska Institutet. According to the study, the number of MAIT cells in the blood decline sharply in patients with moderate or severe Covid-19, and the remaining cells in circulation are highly activated. Based on these results, the scientists suggested that the MAIT cells are engaged in the immune response against the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-

2. This pattern of reduced number and activation in the blood is stronger for MAIT cells than for other T cells, they said.

The study also noted that pro-inflammatory MAIT cells accumulated in the airways of Covid-19 patients to a larger degree than in healthy people. "Taken together, these analyses indicate that the reduced number of MAIT cells in the blood of Covid-19 patients is at least partly due to increased accumulation in the airways," Sandberg said.

The scientists added that the number of MAIT cells in the blood of convalescent Covid-19 patients recovered at least partially in the weeks after disease, which can be important for managing bacterial infections in individuals who have had Covid-19. They said the MAIT cells

tended to be extremely activated in the patients who died.

"The findings of our study show that the MAIT cells are highly engaged in the immunological response against Covid-19," Sandberg said. The scientists believe the characteristics of MAIT cells make them engaged early on in both the systemic immune response, and in the local immune response in the airways to which they are recruited from the blood by inflammatory signals.

"There, they are likely to contribute to the fast, innate immune response against the virus. In some people with Covid-19, the activation of MAIT cells becomes excessive and this correlates with severe disease," Sandberg added.

Here's why drinking hot water with ghee can ease your constipation naturally



When your gut acts up, giving rise to constipation? then what would you say is your go-to remedy? If you put your trust in desi hacks, then today we've got a foolproof Ayurvedic nuskha for you that will ease your constipation in no time. Presenting the ultimate home remedy for constipation: drinking hot water with a spoonful of ghee.

By the way, it's not just us who's swearing by this remedy; rather the golden book of Ayurveda considers this a

"rambann" cure for constipation too!

Here's why ghee + hot water is the number one home remedy for constipation

Let's face it: Ghee has been misconstrued many times. That's because we don't know the proper way to consume it to reap its benefits. Ghee is a rich source of butyric acid, which according to many scientific studies? including one published in the Polish journal Przegląd Gastroenterologiczny

(Gastroenterology Review)? can ease constipation.

The study also states that consuming butyric acid improves the metabolism of the intestine and helps in the movement and frequency of stool. Plus, it reduces abdominal pain, bloating, and other symptoms of constipation.

Not to mention, ghee is also considered to be one of the best laxatives out there. Add to that its other benefits, like increased bone strength,

inducing sleep, and weight loss? and you've got yourself a winner. Dimple Jangda, an Ayurvedic health coach and founder of Prana Healthcare Centre, explains that ghee helps in providing lubrication to our body and clears the intestine passage. This improves the movement of waste, reducing your risk of constipation. So, how can you fix your constipation with ghee? Jangda suggests drinking 200 ml of warm water with a teaspoon of ghee mixed in it

every morning. For best results, she advises drinking this concoction on an empty stomach. "Constipation is caused due to a hard koshta, causing the digestive tract, gut and colon to become dry, rough, and hard. By lubricating the digestive tract with superfoods like ghee, we can soften the system and aid smooth evacuation of waste from the body," she explains. So, no more bad mouthing ghee as it is THE ultimate home remedy for constipation.

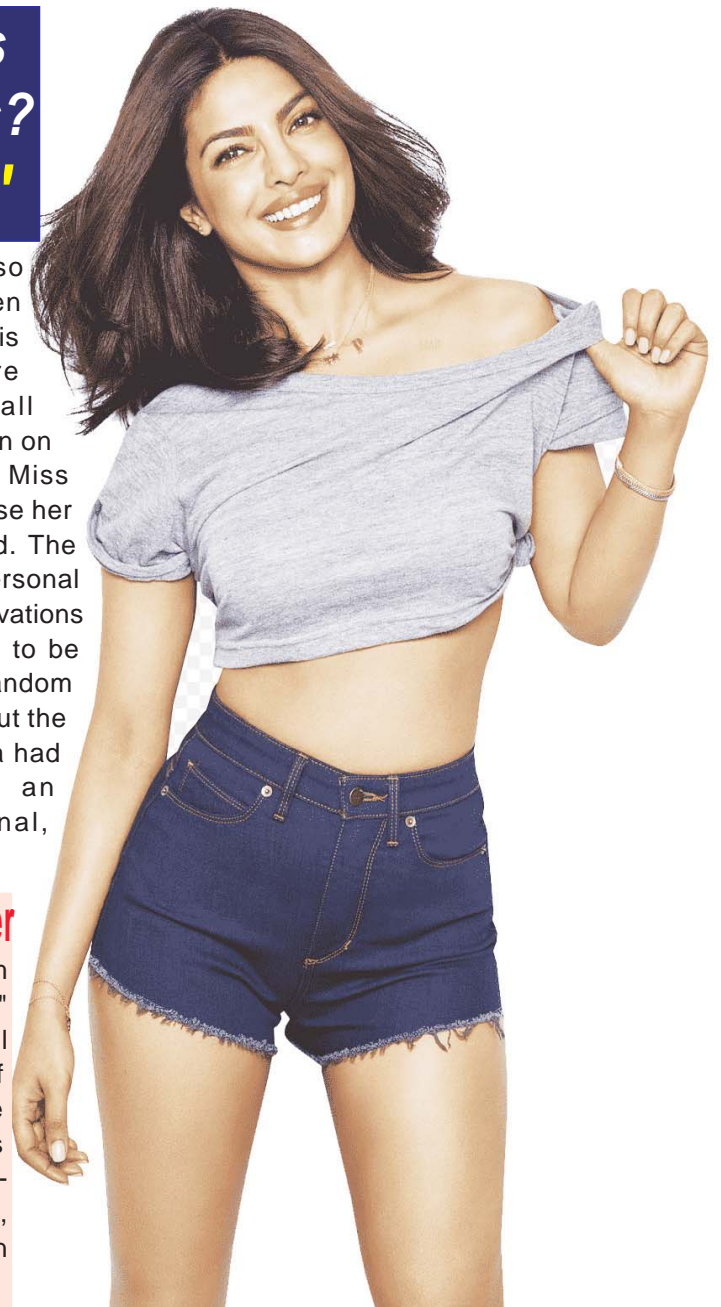
Priyanka Chopra shares frustration on Hathras gang-rape, asks 'Is the law mute to the screams? Are the parents raising boys listening?'

Priyanka Chopra has shared a heartbreaking note on the death of a village girl from Hathras in Uttar Pradesh, who was brutally gang-raped and then allegedly cremated by the police without her family's consent. The actor, who resides with husband Nick Jonas in Los Angeles, shared her message on social media and asked if the law is "mute to the screams".

She wrote on her Instagram Stories, "The disrespect and abuse, The frustration and anger, The sadness and helplessness, These emotions replay on loop. All they cry out is inhuman, barbaric Why? Again and again and again... Always the

women Always the young girls Rape after rape after rape... We cry, they cry and yet, no one hears the screams. Why the hate? Are the parents raising boys listening? Is the law mute to the screams? How many more Nirbhayas? How many more years? #Hathras." Priyanka been working closely with the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) for more than a decade and was made a Global Unicef Goodwill Ambassador in 2016. During the coronavirus pandemic which resulted in a lockdown in various parts across the world, Priyanka made an effort to encourage businesses run by women

entrepreneurs. She also shared stories of women heroes of coronavirus crisis and continues to share glimpses of small businesses run by women on Instagram. The former Miss World is now set to release her memoir, titled Unfinished. The book is a collection of personal essays, stories and observations of the 38-year-old actor, to be published by Penguin Random House India. Talking about the book in August, Priyanka had said it comes from an extremely personal, introspective space.



Akshay Kumar's Bell Bottom completes shoot, releases captivating new poster

Akshay Kumar has shared a new poster of his upcoming film, Bell Bottom, after his team completed the film's shoot amid the coronavirus pandemic. The actor is seen in a suit, with shades on his face and a bag in his hand. Sharing the poster on Twitter, Akshay wrote,



"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. Its teamwork and I am grateful to each and every member of the

cast and crew. #BellBottom Completed. Here's the poster." It's teamwork and I am grateful to each and every member of the cast and crew from the spot das to the light das to the technicians to the make-

Will add value, says minister on Shekhar Kapur's appointment as FTII president

Will add value, says minister on Shekhar Kapur's appointment as FTII president

Shekhar Kapur has been appointed to hold the FTII president's post till 3 March 2023

Celebrated filmmaker Shekhar Kapur, 74, has been appointed president of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) Society which runs the prestigious film school in Pune, people familiar with the matter said on Tuesday.

Kapur, who is known for movies from the Indian superhero film 'Mr India' to 'Bandit Queen' based on the incidents in the life of Phoolan Devi and an acclaimed biopic on Queen Elizabeth, will hold the post till March 3, 2023.

According to a person aware of the developments, the ministry of information and broadcasting has also appointed Kapur as the chairperson of the FTII governing council.

The tenure of the earlier members of the society had ended in March 2020. The other members of the governing council will be appointed soon,

the person cited above said. Kapur will head the premier film school at a time when, like many other colleges and universities, it is also grappling with the challenges posed by Covid-19. The FTII had earlier declared the results of the entrance test and is planning the future course. Online classes and training courses have been continuing. "Wherever it is difficult for students to attend classes, the institute has been putting up the material on

the website," said the person cited above.

Information and Broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar said "Kapur, who has a vast experience, will add more value to the Institute. I am sure everybody will welcome his appointment". "Shekhar Kapur, as a reputed film maker of international stature, is without doubt an excellent choice. FTII welcomes him as its Chairman. It's come a full circle from Dev Anand who started his career



working at Prabhat Studio Kapur as Chairman of FTII," within the campus of FTII said Bhupendra Kainthola, today, to his nephew Shekhar Director, FTII.

Anupria Goenka on extending support to Anurag Kashyap: I've great respect for him both as director and human being

Anupria Goenka feels the sanctity of the empowering #metoo movement should be maintained given the way it provides justice to those who has been wronged. Recently, filmmaker Anurag Kashyap was accused of sexual harassment by actor Payal Ghosh. And, Goenka, is among those who extended support to Kashyap. In a long twitter thread, she addressed the vilification of Bollywood and wrote how Kashyap is an "ardent advocate of human rights" and "women empowerment". "I've great respect for Anurag, both as a



director and a human being. He advocates human rights, talks against fascism, supports the idea of women having agency and choice, and it all reflects in his work and his everyday functioning as well. Strong, super talented and fiercely outspoken women (who've worked with him and are 'outsiders' as well) have come out in his support. That must stand for something," says Goenka, who collaborated with Kashyap in web series Sacred Games. The 33-year-old actor adds that the #metoo has done a lot of good, so it is our joint responsibility to protect its purity.



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Asian American Republican Alliance launched

Grand Dinner Event attended by several dignitaries

(SAI Bureau)- New Jersey: The Asian inaugural from Scranton PA, Republican Party has actually been

American Republican Alliance had a grand launch with an inaugural dinner featuring Candidate for US Senate Rik Mehta on September 30th 2020 at Royal Albert Palace in NJ. Among the distinguished guests were NJGOP Chair Doug Steinhardt, NJ State Senator Sam Thompson, MCRO Chair Lucille Panos, Candidate for



NJ's 6th Congressional District, Christian Onuoha, Sayreville GOP Chair Arthur J. Rittenhouse Jr. and others. The speakers included US Senate Candidate Rik Mehta, Chairman Doug Steinhardt, MCRO Chair Lucille Panos, Dr. Vishal Dhaduk who came in specially for the

Padmashri Dr. Sudhir Parikh and Asian American Republican Alliance (AARA) Founder & Chairman Sridhar Chillara. AARA Chairman Sridhar Chillara spoke of the importance of being involved in the political process for Asian Americans was especially emphasized and the fact the

more receptive of Asian Americans such as Nikki Haley, Bobby Jindal and now Rik Mehta in New Jersey. Asian Americans, He spoke about how the numbers can make a difference in a state like New Jersey towards tilting it away from being a solid Blue state. Mr. Chillara invited Asian Americans to stop shying away from the political process and register to vote and to join the Republican Party which closely aligns towards the traditional conservative values of many Asian Americans. NJGOP Chairman Doug Steinhardt assured his support to all Republican Candidates up and down the ballot (Contd on page 30)

Police should evoke trust, not fear



(SAI Bureau--I'm not the sort of person who has encounters with the police. In fact, it's only happened once. I was 21, an undergraduate at Cambridge, and clearly in the wrong. It's the contrast between how the British police treated me on that occasion and the behaviour of the Delhi police today that I want to point out.

With a group of friends, I was returning from Benazir Bhutto's presidential debate at the Oxford Union. We decided to take the village route which was lonely and dark. In high spirits, dishevelled dinner jackets and singing loudly we were tearing down hoping to get back before 2 am. Suddenly a police car appeared flashing: "Stop immediately".

(Contd on page 29)

The TRP Race And Television Journalism In India



(SAI Bureau)-- The recent observations of the Hon'ble Supreme Court on the functioning of media point towards an urgent need of redefining of the electronic media in accordance with the constitutional values, freedom of media, individual rights and right to privacy.

'Sensation above sense' has emerged as the blueprint for media houses trying to rig viewer's mind in order to get higher Television Rating Point (TRP)—a tool used to know about the popularity of a programme. Professionalism and media ethics have taken a back seat for the last few years as viewers themselves seem to have surrendered their preferences of news and have made peace with politically motivated and ideologically inspired news.

(Contd on page 30)

Here's How the Pandemic Finally Ends

A vaccine by early 2021, a steady decline in cases by next fall and back to normal in a few years—11 top experts look into the future.

(SAI Bureau)- The microscopic bundles of RNA, wrapped in spiky proteins, latch on to human cells, hijack them, use them as factories to replicate, and then leave them for dead. It's a biological blitzkrieg—an invasion so swift and unexpected that the germs are free to jump from host to host with little interference. Fast forward to the future. Now, when the prickly enemies invade the lungs, they slip past the human cells, unable to take hold. They're marked for destruction, soon to be surrounded and eliminated. Though some escape through the airways, they confront the same defenses in their next target—if, that is, they can get anywhere near the human cells. There are so few people

left to infect that the germs have nowhere to replicate, nowhere to survive. This is the end of the coronavirus pandemic. And this is how



it could happen in the United States: By November 2021, most Americans have received two doses of a vaccine that, while not gloriously effective, fights the disease in more cases than not. Meanwhile, Americans continue to

wear masks and avoid large gatherings, and the Covid-19 numbers drop steadily after a series of surges earlier in the year. Eventually, as more and more Americans develop immunity through exposure and vaccination, and as treatments become more effective, Covid-19 recedes into the swarm of ordinary illnesses Americans get every winter. "It will take two things to bring this virus under control: hygienic measures and a vaccine. And you can't have one without the other," says Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center and an attending physician in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

(Contd on page 28 to 29)

