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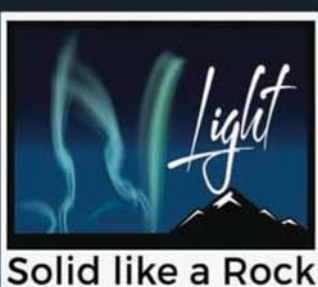
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Twitter's Double Standards



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Vogue To Release New Kamala Harris Cover After Original Sparks Controversy

Following the backlash, Vogue announced it would release some copies with a more formal portrait of Harris wearing a light blue Michael Kors pantsuit.

(Insider Bureau)- Vogue will publish a limited edition of its latest issue featuring a different photo of Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris after the original cover image sparked controversy, the magazine said Tuesday.

Critics slammed the photo that graced the hard copy of the February issue, saying it was poorly composed and diminished Harris's achievements as the first Black woman to be elected vice president.

Social media users criticised the lighting of the photo -- in which Harris wears a blazer, jeans and sneakers -- and also questioned whether the magazine had lightened her skin.

Following the backlash, Vogue announced it would release some copies with a more formal portrait of Harris wearing a light blue Michael Kors pantsuit. That image had been used for the digital cover.

"In recognition of the enormous interest in the digital cover, and in celebration of this historic

moment, we will be publishing a limited number of special edition inaugural issues," a spokesperson for Vogue said. Editor Anna Wintour was forced to defend the original image after it circulated online earlier this month, insisting it was not the magazine's intention to "diminish" Harris's "incredible" election victory.

Writing in the Washington Post, fashion critic Robin Givhan said the print cover was "overly familiar" and did not give Harris "due respect."



Both photos were taken by American photographer Tyler Mitchell, who in 2018 became the first Black photographer to shoot a Vogue cover with his portraits of music icon Beyonce. Harris, 56, did not publicly react but

sources close to her told US media that she was surprised by the choice of the more relaxed photo.

The controversy was the latest to hit Wintour, who found herself under pressure during the massive Black Lives Matter protests that swept the US last summer. She apologized for not making enough room for Black stylists and photographers in the magazine. Wintour added that she also took "full responsibility" for "publishing images or stories that have been hurtful or intolerant."

Biden Names Indian-American As Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Chief

(Insider Bureau)-US President-elect Joe Biden today named Indian-American Rohit Chopra as the head of a federal agency tasked with protecting the interests of consumers financially.

If confirmed by the Senate, Mr Chopra will succeed Kathleen Laura Kraninger as Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The bureau regulates the offering and provision of consumer financial products or services under the federal consumer financial laws and educates and empowers consumers to make better-informed financial decisions.

Mr Chopra is currently a Commissioner on the Federal Trade Commission. He has actively advocated to promote fair, competitive markets that protect families and honest businesses from abuses.

He was unanimously confirmed by the Senate in 2018, and he has pushed for aggressive remedies against lawbreaking companies, especially repeat offenders. Together with state and international law enforcement partners, he has worked to increase scrutiny of dominant technology firms that pose risks to privacy, national security, and fair competition, the transition said. Rohit Chopra previously served as Assistant Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), where he led the agency's efforts on student loans. In 2011, the



Secretary of the Treasury appointed him to serve as the CFPB's Student Loan Ombudsman, a new position established in the financial reform law. He also served as a Special Advisor at the US Department of Education. In these roles, Rohit Chopra led efforts to spur competition in the student loan financing market, develop new tools for students and student loan borrowers to make smarter decisions, and secure hundreds of millions of dollars in refunds for borrowers victimised by unlawful conduct by loan servicers, debt collectors, and for-profit college chains.

The announcement of Mr Chopra came along with Biden naming several key administrative positions.

"Our administration will hit the ground running to deliver immediate, urgent relief to Americans; confront the overlapping crises of COVID-19, the historic economic downturn, systemic racism and inequality, and the climate crisis; and get this government working for the people it serves," Joe Biden said.

"These tireless public servants will be a key part of our agenda to build back better - and I am

confident they will help make meaningful change and move our country forward," he said in a statement.

To meet the unprecedented challenges facing the American people, we will need deeply experienced and knowledgeable leaders across our

administration," Vice President-elect Kamala Harris said.

"These remarkable public servants reflect the very best of our nation, and they will help us contain this pandemic, create an economy that works for working people, and rebuild our country in a way that lifts up all Americans."



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



20 Indian-Americans Nominated For Key Roles In Biden-Harris Administration

Kamala Harris, 56, is also the first ever Indian-origin and African American to be sworn in as the vice president of the United States.

(Insider Bureau)-Less than 100 hours ahead of his historic inauguration, US President-elect Joe Biden has either nominated or named at least 20 Indian Americans, including 13 women, to key positions in his administration, a new record in itself for this small ethnic community that constitutes one per cent of the country's population. As many as 17 of them would be part of the powerful White House complex. The January 20th inauguration, the 59th in all, wherein Biden would be sworn in as the 46th President of the United States is already historic in the making as

for the first time ever a woman Kamala Harris would be sworn as the vice president of the country. Harris, 56, is also the first ever Indian-origin and African American to be sworn in as the vice president of the United States. It is also for the first time ever that so many Indian-Americans have been roped into a presidential administration ever before the inauguration. Biden is still quite far away from filling all the positions in his administration. Topping the list is Neera Tanden, who has been nominated as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget and Dr Vivek Murthy, who has been

nominated as the US Surgeon General.

Vanita Gupta has been nominated as Associate Attorney General Department of Justice, and on Saturday, Biden nominated a former foreign service official Uzra Zeya as the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights.

"The dedication that the Indian-American community has shown to public service over the years has been recognised in a big way at the very start of this administration! I am particularly pleased that the overwhelming majority are women. Our community has truly arrived in



serving the nation," Indiaspora founder M R Rangaswami told PTI. Mala Adiga has been appointed as Policy Director to the future First Lady Dr Jill Biden and Garima Verma would be the Digital Director of the Office of the First Lady, while Sabrina Singh has been named as her Deputy Press Secretary. For

the first time ever among the Indian-Americans include two who trace their roots to Kashmir: Aisha Shah, who has been named as Partnership Manager at the White House Office of Digital Strategy, and Sameera Fazili, who would occupy the key position of Deputy Director at the US National Economic Council (NEC) in the White House.

Indian-American Democrat Lawyer Announces Candidacy For Cincinnati Mayor

Aftab Pureval, who is the Hamilton County Clerk of Courts, confirmed his candidacy in a tweet on January 14.

Courts, confirmed his candidacy in a tweet on January 14.

"Our country is at a critical moment, and our city is too. And that's why I'm so excited to announce my candidacy to be Cincinnati's next mayor," the 38-year-old Democratic Party politician tweeted.

"I'm running for mayor to bring executive experience & a record of improving government services to the table - starting with an

economic COVID recovery that benefits every neighbourhood in our city & a plan to restore trust in City Hall," he said in another tweet.

According to a local newspaper The Enquirer, Aftab Pureval's parents migrated from India in 1980 to Xenia, Ohio. He lost the race for Congress in 2018. The truth is families are really struggling. Our city

is at a critical moment and the progress of the last decade is at stake. We have to come out of the gate swinging after COVID-19 to get our economy moving again," he was quoted as saying by the newspaper. The candidates in the fray for the post of mayor include four City Council members and a state senator, among others, it said.

Indian-American Seema Verma, Close Trump Aide On Health Issues, Quits

She was also appointed by Trump in May last year as one of the key members of the White House Coronavirus Task Force constituted by US President Donald Trump to combat the deadly disease.

(Insider Bureau)-Seema Verma, one of the highest-ranking Indian Americans in the outgoing Trump administration, has resigned from her top healthcare position, days ahead of Joe Biden's swearing in as the next president of the United States.

Ms Verma, 50, tendered her resignation to President Donald Trump on Thursday as Administrator of Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services, a position she served in the

Trump administration for the last four years. She was one of the close confidants of Trump on health care issues.

She was also appointed by Trump in May last year as one of the key members of the White House Coronavirus Task Force constituted by US President Donald Trump to combat the deadly disease.

"As the Trump administration comes to a close, I have submitted my official resignation and am preparing to turn the keys

over to the next administrator next week," she said in a tweet on Friday.

In her three-page resignation letter which she posted on Twitter, she said, "taken in their totality, the actions CMS has taken over the last four years will revolutionise healthcare for generations to come and transform healthcare for every American patient. They represent a true turning point and will leave a lasting imprint on our country." "Serving the American people with the talented



and dedicated staff at CMS for nearly four years has been an honour for which I will always be grateful," she said as she listed the achievements of CMS during

the last four years. Her resignation will become effective January 20, the day of the inauguration of Biden as the 46th President of the United States.

Indian-American Vidur Sharma Appointed As Covid Testing Adviser By Biden

The announcement of Vidur Sharma's appointment as Policy Advisor for Testing was made by Biden on Friday along with additional members of the White House COVID-19 Response Team.

(Insider Bureau)-Joe Biden has named Indian-American health policy expert Vidur Sharma as testing advisor in his COVID-19 Response Team, as the US President-elect laid out his ambitious goal to intensify vaccinations across the country to tackle the spread of the deadly pandemic. The announcement of Sharma's appointment as Policy Advisor for Testing was made by Biden on Friday along with additional members of the White House COVID-19 Response Team. During the Obama administration, Sharma served as a health policy advisor on the Domestic Policy Council. Sharma supported the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, aligned Federal Department and Agencies, and collaborated with community stakeholders to further the administration's health policy agenda. He also served as

Deputy Research Director with Protect Our Care, a coalition of advocacy organisations dedicated to preventing the repeal of the ACA. Since then, Sharma has advised health sector organisations on value-based care arrangements at PwC Strategy. Born in Wisconsin and raised in Minnesota, and the son of Indian immigrants, Sharma is a graduate of Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Saint Louis University.

Among other appointments announced Friday were Amy Chang, Policy Advisor; Abbe Gluck, Special Counsel; David Kessler, Chief Science Officer of COVID Response; Rosa Po, COVID Response Team Deputy Chief of Staff; Andy Slavitt, Senior Advisor to the COVID Response Coordinator; Ben Wakana, Deputy Director of Strategic Communications & Engagement; and B. Cameron

Webb, Senior Policy Advisor for COVID-19 Equity.

The Transition said that the appointees will play integral roles in implementing and executing Biden's strategy to effectively and equitably vaccinate as many people as possible, while also increasing testing and taking other important steps that will be key to changing the course of the pandemic. "We are in a race against time, and we need a comprehensive strategy to quickly contain this virus. The individuals announced today will bolster the White House's COVID-19 Response Team and play important roles in carrying out our rescue plan and vaccination programme. At a time when American families are facing numerous challenges, I know these public servants will do all that is needed to build our nation back better," said Biden. Biden on Friday



announced an ambitious goal of inoculating 100 million Americans with COVID-19 vaccines in the first 100 days of his administration.

During his election campaign, Biden, who will take over as the 46th President of the US, made tackling COVID-19 and the economic hardships it had put on Americans a core pitch to voters.

The US is the worst-affected country in the world with more than 23,523,000 COVID-19 infections and 391,955 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus tracker.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris said, "containing the coronavirus pandemic is one of

the defining challenges of our time. This outstanding team will help us defeat this challenge by helping get this virus under control, responsibly reopen our economy, and safely reopen our schools. I look forward to working closely with these dedicated public servants not only to address this urgent crisis, but also to build better preparedness for future pandemics and other public health threats."

"There is hard work ahead to contain COVID-19. These appointees are immensely qualified to join our White House efforts to contain the coronavirus and build our nation back better."

Indian-Origin Man Kills Daughter, Mother-In-Law In Double Murder-Suicide

(Insider Bureau)-An Indian-origin man in the US shot and killed his 14-year-old daughter and his mother-in-law before turning the gun on himself, police said. Bhupinder Singh, 57, shot his teen daughter, Jasleen Kaur, and 55-year-old Manjeet Kaur inside his home in the town of

Wednesday," New York State Police said. A fourth resident, 40-year-old Rashpal Kaur, sustained a gunshot wound to the arm but was able to flee the residence. She is being treated at Albany Medical Center and her wounds are non-life-threatening, it said. The wounded woman was taken to Albany

Medical Center with non-life-threatening injuries - with troopers waiting to interview her. Neighbour Jim Lundstrom said that he was resting that night when he heard his doorbell ring nonstop,

according to the Times Union, a daily newspaper in the area. "Help me! Help me!" he said he heard someone scream. When Lundstrom checked outside his window, he saw someone walk away from his home and stumble her way up the street to another house. Then he opened his door. "There was blood everywhere," Lundstrom said.



Schodack, about 19 kms south of Albany. "Preliminary investigation has determined that 14-year-old Jasleen Kaur and 55-year-old Manjeet Kaur, both of Castleton on the Hudson, died as a result of gunshot wounds sustained during a domestic incident that occurred at their residence at approximately 9:30 pm on

Justin Trudeau Shuffles Cabinet After Indian-Origin Minister Quits

(Insider Bureau)-Bains, who played a key role in Trudeau's leadership bid in 2013, issued a video statement on Tuesday wherein the 43-year-old minister said he was retiring from politics to spend more time with his family. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Tuesday made a former astronaut his new foreign minister in a Cabinet reshuffle, sparked by the sudden resignation of Indian-origin Canadian Sikh Navdeep Bains, the minister of innovation, science and industry. "Earlier today, @NavdeepSBains announced that he is stepping down as Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to spend more time with his family. To fill the opening created by his announcement, we are making the following changes to the Canadian Ministry," Prime Minister Trudeau announced on Twitter, giving the details of the reshuffle. Bains, who played a key role in Trudeau's leadership

bid in 2013, issued a video statement on Tuesday wherein the 43-year-old minister said he was retiring from politics to spend more time with his family. He is unlikely to run in the next



election. Bains, who was one of the four Sikh cabinet ministers appointed by Trudeau in 2015, also served as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister in 2005. He was an MP between 2004 and 2011. Now, Trudeau's Cabinet has only two Sikh ministers. Former astronaut Marc Garneau was moved from the transport ministry to the foreign ministry, while Francois-

Philippe Champagne has replaced Bains as minister of innovation, science and industry. "From his work as an astronaut to his time within government, Minister Garneau has always been a strong voice for Canada around the world," Trudeau said. "From leading Canada's efforts on the Safer Skies Initiative to his work on the Canada-US Relations Cabinet Committee, Marc will bring a great deal of experience to his new portfolio." The 71-year-old minister became the first Canadian in space when he flew aboard the US space shuttle in 1984.

"Garneau will bring experience acquired during his close work with international partners on the investigation into the Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 tragedy and as chair of the Cabinet Committee on Canada-United States Relations to his new portfolio, and will continue to be a leader on the world stage," the prime minister said.

Rafale to make Republic Day parade debut, culminate flypast with Vertical Charlie formation

The Rafale fighter jets, which were formally inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF) in September last year, will feature in India's Republic Day parade on January 26 and culminate the flypast by carrying out the 'Vertical Charlie' formation.

(Insider Bureau)- The Rafale fighter jets, which were formally inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF) in September last year, will feature in India's Republic Day parade on January 26 and culminate the flypast by carrying out the 'Vertical Charlie' formation.

The 'Vertical Charlie' formation is when an aircraft flies at low altitude, pulls up vertically and conducts rolls before stabilising at higher altitude.

"The flypast will culminate with a single Rafale aircraft carrying out a 'Vertical Charlie' formation," IAF spokesperson Wing Commander Indranil Nandi said at a press conference in Delhi. Five Rafale fighter jets were

formally inducted into the Indian Air Force on September 10, 2020, at a ceremony in the Ambala air base. The induction of the fighter jets was seen as a major boost to India's air power capability.

A total of 38 IAF aircraft and four planes of the Indian Army will participate in the flypast on January 26, Nandi said.

As is traditionally the case, the spokesperson said, the flypast will be divided into two blocks - the first is planned along with the parade from 1004 hours to 1020 hours and the second after the parade from 1120 hours to 1145 hours. In the first block, there will be three formations. The first will be the 'Nishan'

formation comprising of four Mi17V5 aircraft that will carry the national flag and logos of all three services, news agency PTI quoted Nandi as saying.

It will be followed by the 'Dhruv' formation by four helicopters of Army Aviation Corps, he said.

The last would be the 'Rudra' formation which will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the country's victory in the 1971 war, he said, adding that it will consist of a single Dakota aircraft flanked by two Mi17V5 helicopters.

On December 16 last year, India launched year-long celebrations of its victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh.



Nandi said the second block of the flypast will consist of nine formations -- 'Sudarshan', 'Rakshak', 'Bhim', 'Netra', 'Garuda', 'Eklavya', 'Trinetra', 'Vijay' and 'Brahmastra'.

One Rafale along with two Jaguar and MiG-29 aircraft each will conduct the 'Eklavya' formation in the second block of the flypast, he said. Wing Commander Tej Pratap Pandey

said models of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas and indigenously developed anti-tank guided missile Dhruvastra will feature in the IAF's Republic Day parade tableaux.

"It [tableaus] will showcase scaled-down models of Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, Light Combat Helicopter (LCH), Sukhoi-30Mki and Rohini radar," he said.

Suspend ratings, withdraw past data until you fix Republic fraud: NBA tells BARC



(Insider Bureau)- The News Broadcasters Association (NBA) has said in a statement that it is shocked to see hundreds of WhatsApp messages that have been exchanged between BARC India's former CEO, Partho Dasgupta, and Arnab Goswami, Managing Director, ARG Outlier Media Pvt. Ltd.

These messages clearly establish collusion between the two in manipulating ratings to garner greater viewership numbers for Republic TV month after month by fraudulently manually reducing ratings of other channels to give Republic TV an unfair advantage, the NBA has said.

"These WhatsApp messages not only reflect manipulation of ratings but are also about power play. The messages exchanged go on to refer to the appointment of Secretaries, Cabinet reshuffle,

access to the PMO and the workings of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. This only confirms the many and continuous allegations made by NBA in the last 4 years that ratings were being manipulated by a non-NBA member broadcaster in connivance with BARC's top

The News Broadcasters Association (NBA) has demanded that IBF membership of Republic TV should be suspended with immediate effect till the case related to manipulation of ratings is pending in the court.

management officials," the NBA statement reads.

The NBA has demanded that IBF membership of Republic TV should be suspended with immediate effect till the case related to manipulation of ratings is pending in the court. "NBA Board is also of the view that the manipulation of ratings by Republic TV has immensely damaged the reputation of the broadcast industry and therefore it should be kept out of BARC rating system till final court order," the NBA statement says.

"NBA has already conveyed to BARC that ratings are unreliable as far as we can see and should continue to be suspended in light of the recent revelations which show the arbitrary nature of functioning at BARC," the statement adds. It shows that there are no checks and balances and the ability of a few within BARC to easily change the ratings as they deemed fit, making the system subjective to the whims and fancy of the management versus being an objective transparent system," it further says. The NBA has said

that the Oversight Committee with no representation of broadcasters and just consultants paid by BARC is an eyewash to show autonomy. The NBA has strongly demanded that action should be taken by BARC against these dubious actors, legal and police action should also be taken against those who are responsible for ruining the credibility of BARC and threaten to damage the credibility of the news broadcast business have hitherto gone about their business without any consequences or fear thereof.

1,000 doses of Covishield vaccine found frozen, damaged at cold storage in Assam

(Insider Bureau)- Around 1,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine were found damaged at the Silchar Medical College & Hospital (SMCH) in Assam's Cachar district. The vaccine doses were found lying frozen in the vaccine store unit of SMCH. According to reports, about 100 vials of Covishield vaccine, containing 1,000 doses, were

stored at sub-zero temperatures. The Covishield vaccine require to be stored at a temperature of 2-8 degrees Celsius, but the temperature of the ILR at Silchar Medical College & Hospital went below zero. A health official at Cachar district said that the vaccines were found partially frozen. "There might be some technical fault of the Ice-Lined

Refrigerator (ILR). We generally regulate the temperature of ILR between 2-8 degrees Celsius. When the temperature goes down, the ILR machine sends a message. But our vaccinator didn't get any message and most probably it was a technical fault. The vaccines were stored the whole night and somehow the temperatures had dropped," the

health official said. Meanwhile, Assam health department has decided to send another batch of 100 vials of the Covishield containing 1,000 doses to the Silchar Medical College & Hospital as replacement. On the other hand, the state health department has sought a report from the hospital authority following the incident.

Sedition case: Kangana Ranaut faces contempt plea at Bombay High Court

A plea for initiating contempt of court proceedings against Kangana Ranaut has been filed in Bombay High Court after she posted a video about the investigation into the sedition case underway at the HC against her.

(Insider Bureau)-An application has been filed in Bombay High Court seeking initiation of contempt proceedings against Kangana Ranaut for allegedly breaching a statement recorded in the court.

Kangana Ranaut had given the high court an undertaking that she will not make statements pertaining to the Mumbai Police's investigation into the sedition case filed against her. However, on January 8, just before she went to the police station, she tweeted a video in which she is speaking to her fans about the investigation.

Feature film director Munnawarali alias Sahil Ashrafali Sayyed, who had filed the initial application seeking sedition case against Kangana and her sister Rangoli in Bandra Magistrate court for "promoting enmity between groups on grounds of religion" through their

tweets, on Monday filed a fresh application in Bombay High Court seeking contempt of court proceedings against her.

Sedition case against Kangana and Rangoli

Kangana Ranaut became controversy's favourite child after she launched an all-out attack against 'Bollywood mafia' soon after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. While the Mumbai Police ruled it out as suicide, Kangana Ranaut claimed that the local police was acting on behalf of the movie mafia, who wanted to suppress the truth about the death of an actor who was an outsider.

In the following days, Kangana Ranaut and her sister Rangoli waged a Twitter war with several political leaders, actors, BMC and police.

Taking exception to some of their tweets, Sahil Ashrafali Sayyed filed an application

before Bandra Magistrate Court, a direction to the police to register an FIR against the sisters under sections 153 A (promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc), 295 A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs), 124 A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code.

Subsequently, on October 17, the magistrate court ordered Mumbai Police to register an FIR against the two sisters for "promoting enmity between groups on grounds of religion" through their tweets.

Kangana and Rangoli then approached Bombay High Court seeking the quashing of that FIR. On November 14, Kangana was told by the high court not to make any statement regarding



the FIR in electronic or social media. She accepted. "Siddiquee (Kangana's lawyer), on instructions makes a statement that so far as subject FIR is concerned, the applicants will not make any comment on the social media/ electronic media. Statement accepted," the court order said.

Contempt of court plea against Kangana

Sayyed filed a fresh plea in front of Bombay High Court seeking initiation of contempt proceedings against Kangana Ranaut after she posted a video on Twitter about the case.

On January 8, before she visited

the Mumbai Police in connection with the case, she posted a video in which she claimed that she was being tortured.

In his submissions to the court, Sayyed's lawyer Rizwan Merchant wondered how can Kangana Ranaut equate going to police station as torture.

Sayyed has urged the high court to initiate contempt proceedings against Kangana for "interfering with the administration of justice and judicial proceedings, lowering the authority of Court, disobeying, committing the breach of the order dated 14th November 2020."

Shiv Sena raises concerns over reports of Chinese village in Arunachal Pradesh

(Insider Bureau)-In its Saamana editorial on Wednesday, the Shiv Sena raised serious concerns over reports of China building a village in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.

"This is a very serious matter. What China did in Ladakh, now it is doing in Arunachal Pradesh.

trying to break India internally," the party wrote in its mouthpiece.

"What India did to Pakistan during the surgical strike, and the air strike, the same should be done to China... Whenever there is an illegal construction, the officials of a local municipal corporation

Why Gujarat Is Renaming Dragon Fruit "Kamalam"

(Insider Bureau)-The dragon fruit will be known as "Kamalam" in Gujarat as the original name "is associated with China", Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said on Tuesday.

The Dragon Fruit will be renamed "Kamalam" in Gujarat as it is shaped like a lotus and the original name "is associated with China", Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said on Tuesday.

"The state government has decided rename the Dragon Fruit. As the outer shape of the fruit

resembles a lotus, hence Dragon Fruit shall be renamed as Kamalam," the Chief Minister was quoted by news agency ANI as saying.

"The name of Dragon Fruit associated with China and we have changed it," he added.

The word "Kamalam" is Sanskrit for the Lotus, which is the party

symbol of the ruling BJP. It is also the name of the BJP office in Gujarat.

According to the Chief Minister, the Gujarat government has applied for a patent to rename the exotic fruit, which is mostly imported from South America but is now grown in several states.

Fruit has become a popular addition to the diet in the country and has emerged as a money-spinner for farmers in Gujarat, mainly in Bhuj, Gandhidham and Mandvi.

In July last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had mentioned the fruit in his monthly radio

show "Mann Ki Baat" and had given a shout-out to the farmers of Kutch for growing the imported fruit as part of his government's mission of "Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-

reliant India)". PM Modi also listed the nutritional benefits of the fruit, which is high in vitamins and minerals. Farmers in Gujarat had already started branding it as "Kamalam Fruit" in local markets. According to the state government, the name has instant connect with local farmers.



China has made a whole village inside Arunachal Pradesh. How did nobody come to know about this? If someone makes a small house, the neighbours get to know about it. Here, a whole village has been built, with proper structures, and nobody came to know about it? China is daring India, and is

visit the site and destroy the whole structure. We should destroy the illegal structures built by China. We should not even think once before doing it, because it is our land. International rules and law should not interfere with our internal matter," said the Saamana editorial.



Amartya Sen asks Visva-Bharati to withdraw allegation that he is illegally holding land

Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen has written to Visva-Bharati demanding that the university authorities withdraw the allegation that his family is in "illegal" possession of land in its Santiniketan campus.

(Insider Bureau)-Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen has written to Visva-Bharati demanding that the university authorities withdraw the allegation that his family is in "illegal" possession of land in its Santiniketan campus and alleged that the accusations are a crude attempt at harassment. Sen had on Monday written the letter to Visva-Bharati Vice-Chancellor Prof Bidyut Chakraborty two days after the authorities of the central university asked the West Bengal government to measure the plot owned by him at Santiniketan as soon as possible to permanently resolve the dispute.

The noted economist said in the letter that his father had purchased free-hold land from the market and not from Visva-Bharati - to add to their homestead and he has been paying taxes for them.

Sen had also sent a legal notice earlier this year to the VC asking him to withdraw "false" allegation made to the news agencies that a plot of land owned by Visva-Bharati is unlawfully occupied by the economist.

While the university was not able to provide any justification for the allegation, it has requested the West Bengal government "to measure the area of our homestead, Pratichi, to compare with the long term lease of land taken by my father in 1940 from Visva-Bharati", Sen said in the letter.

"This sudden abuse of an 80-year-old document is clearly a crude attempt at harassment or worse," he said.

"Among other errors it ignores the big fact, which I have stated many times (even in the context of this dispute), that a substantial amount of free-hold land was purchased by my father (in the market -- not from Visva-

Bharati) to add to our homestead on which khajna and Panchayat taxes are paid by me yearly," the letter said.

Hence the officiating registrar's threat of legal action if the official discovers any additional land beyond the leased land seems hugely mischievous, Sen said. Stating that he is tired of the VC's repeated claims despite emphatic denials on his part about his phone call to Chakraborty in 2019, Sen said that the VC insisted that the call was made either on June 2 or June 14.

"On being informed that I was abroad for the entire month of June 2019 and came back to India only in July, the story was promptly altered by the V.C.'s office to assert that I had called in June or July but said the same things," the letter said.

"Rather than inventing new falsities and adding to their culpability, Visva-Bharati should



withdraw the false allegations made by them, as my lawyer has asked," Sen said.

A controversy had erupted on December 24 last year, the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the centenary celebrations of Visva-Bharati, when media reported that the university has written to the West Bengal government alleging dozens of land parcels owned by it were wrongfully recorded in the names of private parties including Sen. Sen, who now lives in the US, has said that the land, on which his house stands is on a

long-term lease, which is nowhere near its expiry.

Stating that the Visva-Bharati authorities had never complained to him or his family about any irregularity in holding the land, Sen has accused the VC of acting at the behest of the Centre "with its growing control over Bengal". Visva-Bharati officials were not available for comment on the letter. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and several prominent intellectuals of the state have expressed their supports to the economist on the row.

India, France to conduct bilateral air exercise at Jodhpur air force station



The Indian Air Force and the French Air and Space Force (Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace) are set to carry out a bilateral air exercise at Jodhpur Air Force Station from January 20 to January 24 this year.

(News Agencies)- The Indian Air Force and the French Air and Space Force (Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace) will conduct a bilateral air exercise, Ex Desert Knight-21, at Jodhpur Air Force Station from January 20 to January 24 this year.

France will participate with Rafale, Airbus A-330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT), A-400M Tactical Transport aircraft and approximately 175 personnel. Meanwhile, the Indian Air Force aircraft participating in the exercise will include Mirage 2000, Su-30 MKI, Rafale, IL-78 Flight Refuelling Aircraft, AWACS and AEW&C aircraft. The exercise marks an important milestone in the series of engagements between the two

air forces. As part of Indo-French defence cooperation, the Indian Air Force and the French Air and Space Force held six editions of

air exercises named 'Garuda' -- the latest being in 2019 at Air Force Base Mont-de-Marsan in France.

As measures to further the existing cooperation, the two forces have been gainfully utilising available opportunities to conduct 'hop-exercises'.

The French Air and Space Force deployment, while ferrying to Australia for Ex Pitchblack in

2018, was hosted by the IAF at the air force stations in Agra and Gwalior for exercise with fighters and MRTT aircraft.

Currently, the French detachment for Ex Desert Knight-21 is deployed in Asia as part of their 'Skyros Deployment' and will ferry in forces to Air Force Station Jodhpur.

The exercise is unique as it includes fielding of Rafale aircraft

by both sides and is indicative of the growing interaction between the two premier air forces.

As the two detachments commence their air exchange from January 20, they will be put into practice operational experience gained across terrains and spectrums and endeavour to exchange ideas and best practices to enhance interoperability.

Rajkot: 25-year-old woman locked in room for six months dies after being rescued

A 25-year-old woman was locked in a room for six months allegedly by her family. However, she died during treatment after being rescued. A 25-year-old woman was locked in a room at her residence in Rajkot allegedly by her family for over six months. She was rescued from her house on Sadhuvasani road by an NGO called Saathi Seva Group and

admitted to a hospital for treatment. However, the woman, identified as Alpa Sejpal, died during treatment.

"Alpa Sejpal was a chartered accountancy student who was locked inside her house for the past six months. As per reports, her family rarely used to give her food or water. Since the past eight days, she was not given food after which she slipped into

a coma," said Jalpa, head of Saathi Seva Group. When Jalpa and her team visited the house, they also found a plastic bag filled with urine. When the neighbours found out about this, they informed the NGO who came and rescued the girl. As per a report, "When cops reached the place, the family refused them entry. It took a lot of argument before the NGO and cops could enter the room. They

found the woman unconscious and foaming at the mouth". Alpa was admitted in a hospital but died during treatment. Her body has been sent for post mortem. The woman's family and parents are being accused of her death. Alpa's family used to ask for money from their neighbours and reports suggest that she was being fed urine as well.

Man, father of 1, is MP's first person to be arrested for 'love jihad': Report

The woman has alleged that the accused concealed his identity, sexually abused her and was forcing her to get converted.

(News Agencies)-Nine days after the Madhya Pradesh government notified an ordinance against forced conversion and the so-called practice of 'love jihad', the state police have arrested a married man under the MP Freedom of Religion ordinance 2020. He is the first person to be arrested under this ordinance, which is yet to get the state assembly's nod. The man was reportedly arrested under the new 'love jihad' law following a complaint by a 22-year-old woman in Barwani area of the state. In a report, Times of India (TOI), said the woman has alleged that the man "sexually abused" her for four years by "going under a false name and pretending to be from her community". Quoting Barwani police station in-charge, Rajesh Yadav, the report said the matter escalated when the man allegedly started "pressuring her to change her religion for marriage".



As per the report, the accused has been booked under Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Ordinance 2020. Police have also charged him with sections 376 (rape), 506 (criminal intimidation), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 294 (obscene act) of the Indian Penal Code. TOI said the woman in her complaint has claimed that she met the accused four year ago in Palsud town in Barwani. The accused worked as a driver and also played music at events. The accused met the woman at a function and introduced himself as Sunny and said he belongs to her community, the inspector told TOI. He added, "They exchanged mobile numbers. Soon they entered into a relationship. He established physical relations with the girl by giving her various inducements." The inspector further said that the woman has alleged that the accused recently revealed his identity and "began pressuring" her "to change her religion" so that they could marry. As per the report, the accused is married and has a child.

15 killed in Gujarat as truck runs over labourers sleeping on footpath, PMO announces ex-gratia to kin

(News Agencies)- Fifteen migrant labourers were killed after a truck ran over a group of 18 people sleeping on a footpath at Kim Char Rasta near Surat in Gujarat in the wee hours on Tuesday.



The victims, all of whom were daily labourers from Rajasthan's Banswara district, were sleeping on the footpath when a sugarcane-laden tractor crashed into another truck.

The truck driver lost control of the vehicle and veered off the road, onto the footpath, running over 18 people who were sleeping there.

While 12 persons died on the spot, three of the eight injured died in a nearby hospital, news agency PTI quoted police as saying. The truck driver has been arrested, police said. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) took to Twitter to announce ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each from PMNRF (Prime Minister's National Relief Fund). "Ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakhs each from PMNRF (Prime Minister's National Relief Fund) would be given to the next of kin of those who have lost their lives due to the accident in Surat. Rs 50,000 each would be given to those injured," the PMO tweeted.

Nearly a year after Covid-19 outbreak in India, Lakshadweep reports its first-ever case

(News Agencies)- Nearly a year after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, the first coronavirus case was reported in the Lakshadweep Islands on Monday. Lakshadweep Islands, until now, was India's only



Covid-free territory.

The Covid-infected man, belonging to the India Reserve Battalion, had left for Kavaratti by ship from Kochi on January 3 and tested positive on Monday, news agency PTI reported official sources as saying.

He is not a resident of the islands, they said.

The case has been reported two weeks after the Lakshadweep administration revised Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) by discontinuing the mandatory quarantine guidelines for those arriving from Kochi.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak in India in January last year, the islands had so far not reported a single positive Covid-19 case.

Taking measures to prevent the spread of the virus, the administration has directed all those who had come in contact with him to go on quarantine, they said.

The samples of his primary contacts have been taken for lab examination, officials said.

The administration also suspended all the inter-island movements, including ships from Tuesday, they said.

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Joe Biden's Unity Address

National healing doesn't require agreement on one point of view.

Whatever their partisan affiliation, all Americans can take pride in Wednesday's inaugural proceedings for President Joe Biden. The peaceful transfer of power from one party to another is a sign of underlying democratic strength no matter our current political distemper. The ceremony at the Capitol had an unabashed patriotic feel that is all too rare these days. Traditional anthems and prayerful invocations were the order of the hour. Former Presidents were on hand from both major parties as usual, even if Donald Trump wasn't. No one took a knee when Lady Gaga sang the national anthem.

And it was especially moving, at least to us, to see new Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband walk down the Capitol steps escorting Mike Pence and his wife to their waiting car. Mr. Pence in particular deserved this traditional show of respect after his role on Jan. 6 when he refused to reject the state electoral votes as President Trump demanded. He should be getting more praise than he is for that display of constitutional principle. These rituals send a message to a diverse country, and to the world, about America's fundamental institutional strength despite a bitter election campaign and the turmoil of recent weeks. In China the transfers of power are from one Communist Party cadre to another, and public political rites are limited to unanimous acclamation. Enemies have often misjudged America's raucous politics for national weakness—to their eventual regret.

Mr. Biden struck many good notes in an Inaugural Address that will be remembered more for its moment following the Capitol riot than for its words. The speech had a personal flavor with touches of his Catholicism, such as quoting St. Augustine and praying for the dead. In this and in other personal manners, the new President is refreshingly unwoke.

The overall theme was "unity," which he called "our path forward." His best note on that point was a call to "start afresh" and listen to one another. "Politics doesn't have to be a raging fire," he said. "Disagreement should not lead to disunion." Yet in this call to unify there was also too much of a suggestion that we are obliged to unite around one point of view. "I know that the forces that divide us are deep and they are real. But I also know they are not new," Mr. Biden said. "Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we all are created equal, and the harsh ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, demonization have long torn us apart." So our political differences are between those

who believe in American ideals and those who are racists and nativists? This sounds too much like Barack Obama's habit of casting differences of ideology or policy as divisions between enlightenment and bigotry. This is divisive in its cultural and moral condescension, as the Obama years proved in creating the political opening for Mr. Trump. Mr. Biden is right that there is a difference between "truth" and "lies," and too much political discourse is strewn with falsehoods. But that fault rests with partisans on all sides. Most political differences aren't between truth and lies. They are debates about the tradeoffs between core principles like freedom and equality, or over the best means to achieve good ends. On that point we heard too little in Mr. Biden's speech to reassure conservatives now being purged and ostracized that he will call off the emboldened progressive censors. If his pursuit of social justice becomes a drive to blame every inequity in American life on racism, he will divide more than unite. If he insists that those who disagree on climate change are "deniers" who care nothing for the planet, he will alienate millions (see nearby).

The test of Mr. Biden's unity pledge will be in how he governs. We'll give him the benefit of the doubt, which is what every new American President deserves.

Addicted to Trump

Clinton and Pelosi can't let go of their enemy.

Donald Trump's Presidency ends on Wednesday at noon, as the Constitution stipulates. One question to ponder is who will miss him more—his friends or his foes?

Our guess is the latter. And if you doubt it, consider the chat between Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton Monday on Mrs. Clinton's "You and Me Both" podcast. They're addicted to the man. "I would love to see [Mr. Trump's] phone records to see whether he was talking to Putin the day that the insurgents invaded our Capitol," Mrs. Clinton said. The former first lady, who has never accepted the results of the 2016 election, is immune to the irony that in claiming he really won the election President Trump is following her pre-election advice to Joe Biden to "not concede under any circumstance." Mrs. Pelosi said during the podcast that she once told Mr. Trump that "with you, Mr. President, all roads lead to Putin." She added that the Capitol rioters "were doing Putin's business when they did that at the incitement of an insurrection by the President of the United States." When Mrs. Clinton asked whether the country needs "a 9/11-type commission to investigate and report everything that they can pull together," Mrs. Pelosi responded "I do."

As Biden is sworn in as our 46th president, a prayer for our nation

There are times in prayer when I seem at a loss for words. This is one of those times. With all of the turmoil, confusion, anger, fear, division and upheaval as we transition to a new administration; with COVID keeping us confined and separated from each other, I know I need to pray, but how? And so I have turned to the familiar prayer that Jesus taught us to pray, putting it into my own words: Our Father. You are seated on Heaven's throne in glory, majesty and supreme authority. You are in charge. You don't make mistakes. You have promised that You will be with us, even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. You use hard times to get us to look up. So we look up! Now! We turn to You! Thank You for Your promise that when we come to You through faith in Your Son, Jesus Christ, You will hear our prayer because we are Your children. We reverence Your name. Yahweh. Yeshua. Jesus. You have declared that at the sound of Your name one day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that You are Lord. You have revealed that Your name is far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. You have been our Help in ages past, and You are our Hope for years to come. You are the God of our founding fathers. You are our God in whom we as a nation have put our trust. We pray that You would exercise Your authority, fulfilling Your purpose on this earth ... in this nation ... so that Your will is carried out here as it is in Heaven. Because we know Your will is good, perfect and pleasing to

those who live according to it. Your will works. All that is said and done outside of Your will is like chaff that the wind blows away. ow ... with so many of us in dire financial need ... with businesses shuttered and incomes shrinking ... please. Provide for us. Give us what we need each day: food, clothing, rent, house payments and other necessities. Protect us from this deadly pestilence. Restore health to those who are sick. Many of us feel deeply hurt by others. In response, we choose to forgive those who have attacked us, slandered us, divided us, betrayed us, belittled us, wounded us and deceived us. We know that if we don't forgive those who have sinned against us, You will not forgive us our sin against You. So we forgive one another. Now. As we do, heal our hearts. We pray You would deliver us from any evil agendas and powers, either foreign or domestic, visible or invisible, that would seek to take advantage of us at this vulnerable moment. Protect us. Guard us. Defend us. Keep us from giving in to temptation to believe the end justifies the means; to plot a course for this nation that is in opposition to You; to wound those who have wounded us; to seek revenge and retribution. We need You now, more than ever. On this day, Jan. 20, 2021, we acknowledge that Yours is the glory and the power. You have the final word. You keep the books. You are the Judge of both the living and the dead. One day each of us will stand before You and be held accountable for the way we have lived ... what we have said and what we have done.

By Anne Graham Lotz



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Uddhav Thackeray-Led Alliance Shows How To Defeat BJP

In Mahatma Gandhi's conception of India as a nation of 'Village Republics' (Gram Swaraj), the panchayat had the same prestige as parliament. Sadly, that is not how democracy evolved in independent India. Panchayats (self-government bodies at the village level) were progressively disempowered. Power got increasingly centralized at higher levels. Now, in Narendra Modi's government, we have witnessed unprecedented concentration of power at the centre. Even state governments are complaining that the powers granted to them under the constitution have been usurped by an "imperial" centre. Yet, even in this changed scenario, one aspect of electoral democracy - namely, "all politics is local" - remains fairly intact. Hence, the salience of Gram Panchayat elections cannot be overlooked. With 65 percent of India's population still in rural areas, village-level politics continue to be a yardstick - albeit not the sole yardstick - for assessing political trends in states. By no means do panchayat elections have any direct bearing on national politics. After all, India is too vast and diverse. Nevertheless, their influence on the politics of a major Indian state sometimes reveals features that may have national

significance. Viewed from this perspective, the results of the recently-concluded panchayat elections in Maharashtra have shown that Narendra Modi's BJP can be defeated by a cohesive 'Maha-Gathbandhan' (a big, multi-party alliance). Nearly half of the village panchayats (14,234 out of 29,700) in the state's 34 districts voted on January 15. The BJP has emerged as the party with the largest number of wins - 3,300-plus. However, remarkably, the combined wins of the 'Maha Vikas Aghadi' (the Marathi word for 'Maha-Gathbandhan', which became nationally famous after the keenly-fought assembly elections in Bihar in November last year) are nearly three times higher than the BJP's. The Shiv Sena, which heads the three-party coalition in the state, with Uddhav Thackeray as the Chief Minister, has emerged as the second-largest party with nearly 3,000 wins, closely followed by Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Even though the Congress, the third party in the coalition, has come fourth, its performance (2,200+ wins) is not unsatisfactory. (The numbers are somewhat imprecise because the candidates in panchayat elections cannot have official symbols of their political parties. As a result, every party makes exaggerated claims about



its wins.) Notably, the BJP has been defeated in the native villages of its state president Chandrakant Patil and its former president and union minister Raosaheb Danve.

The significance of these numbers lies in the fact that a fairly large section of the rural population of Maharashtra has endorsed the Thackeray-led coalition government. They also show that the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress have been able to work together at the grassroots level, by no means an easy feat, where cadre of even parties in alliance often clashed against each other. After all, the Sena was a strong political and ideological ally of the BJP for 35 years before parting ways in 2019. As a spirited advocate of 'Hindutva', it was also an ideological foe of the Congress

and its offshoot, Pawar's NCP. So long as the BJP was led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee and LK Advani, neither Uddhav Thackeray nor his late father Balasaheb Thackeray had any major problems with the BJP as senior political partner on a national level. The BJP, too, maintained good relations with the Sena, choosing to be its junior partner in state politics.

Cracks developed in the saffron alliance when the BJP, under the leadership of Modi and Amit Shah, decided, soon after its spectacular victory in the 2014 parliamentary elections, to weaken the Sena and become the Number 1 party in Maharashtra. The ugly culmination of this quarrel was the BJP's refusal to give the Chief Minister's post to the Sena after the 2019 assembly elections

which the two parties had fought together to win a majority of seats. The Sena, which had won fewer seats (56, as against the BJP's 105), claimed that the BJP had betrayed a pre-poll assurance on this score. Unable to form the government with the Sena's support, the BJP tried to form the government by attempting a split in Pawar's party. The ploy failed, but not before the Modi government totally discrediting itself in a murky midnight power-grab scandal with the help of the state's pliant governor, Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, a former senior BJP functionary. The failure of this trick led to the unlikely birth of a new three-party 'Maha-Gathbandhan' government led by Uddhav Thackeray. Last week's panchayat elections posed the first major political test to this coalition since it took charge of Maharashtra, and Thackeray and his new partners have won it convincingly. Their performance has also punctured the BJP's propaganda that the coalition is both illegitimate and unstable. For several months prior to these elections, BJP circles were also floating stories about the "imminent toppling" of the government. Any misadventure of this kind would surely boomerang on the BJP.

Trust, truth and the financial model of Silicon Valley are at odds

Jack Dorsey's new-found courage to silence Trump's Twitter handle may have been helped by the reality that an ex-president, now twice impeached, who incited a mob to attack his own seat of government, may command fewer advertising dollars.

The roads in Silicon Valley are paved with irony. The tech industry exists in a parallel universe in which Instagram head, Adam Mosseri, can say: "There is a lot of misinformation about the WhatsApp ToS [terms of service] right now," referring to WhatsApp, the messaging platform already known as one of the most efficient means of spreading misinformation. Mosseri was, of course, worried that WhatsAppers - especially in India, the largest market - would flee because of a recent announcement that WhatsApp would be sharing data with Facebook, Instagram and other partners. To add fuel to the fire, a January 7 tweet from Tesla founder and much-lionised

Silicon Valley legend, Elon Musk, recommended: "Use Signal," referring to an alternative messaging app. Inevitably, sign-ups on Signal surged with some enthusiasts anticipating a mass migration at a scale not seen since the time of Partition. It is no small irony that this is the same Elon Musk who is so untrustworthy on Twitter that he had to agree to have all his tweets reviewed by Tesla's counsel before posting. This was after his August 2018 tweet, "Am considering taking Tesla private at \$420. Funding secured." No, he did not have funding secured - and it was a scandal. And that hasn't stopped him from spreading COVID-19 misinformation. I guess Tesla's counsel is okay with that. But I digress from the biggest news of

the day. Today marks a momentous digital transition - and that, too, is laced with irony. The Twitter handles @POTUS and @WhiteHouse were transferred over to Joe Biden. President Biden did not inherit the millions of followers from his predecessor. He will start with a zero balance and borrow from a handle he had recently set up with a tiny following. The predecessor, Donald Trump, had considered signing on to an alternative right-wing site, Parler, using the handle "Person X," before Parler itself went dark because Google, Apple and Amazon shut off its oxygen. Irony indeed: The new president starts with zero followers and has to import them from other handles to get started and the



outgoing president was planning to become "Person X" on a site rendered homeless on the internet. And all this was because Trump's real Twitter handle, @realDonaldTrump, with which he ruled for four long years, had to be silenced after 59,558 tweets. It is ironic that Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey had not been particularly fussed about Trump

being named as the single-biggest superspreader of COVID-19 and elections misinformation, according to some very hardworking Cornell and Harvard number-crunchers. But the @realDonaldTrump-incited siege of Capitol Hill in Washington and Trump's expression of "love" for the mob was just too much and Jack had to take the handle down.

CPEC: China's designs, Pakistan's ambivalence, and India's opposition

Economic motivation apart, China seeks to use the CPEC to consolidate its presence in a disputed region. If internal instability overwhelms Pakistan in the future, the CPEC affords China an opportunity to claim Hunza on the basis of specious historical records.

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is earmarked as a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is a grand strategy aimed at restoring China's "rightful" great-power status in the world. With an initial outlay of \$46 billion, CPEC is envisaged as a hub with Gwadar's port, energy, transport infrastructure and industrial cooperation as its four main spokes. This project aims to create an alternative route to transport oil and gas to China and to spurt economic growth and development across its remote western regions. The CPEC cuts through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) and the trans-Karakoram tract of Shaksgam, which was illegally ceded by Pakistan to China on March 2, 1963 under a provisional boundary settlement. The entire region of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) through which the highway passes is located close to the Siachen Glacier as well as to Ladakh, the current flashpoint between India

and China. Following the effective nullification of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution on August 5, 2019, India has reiterated its long-standing claim to GB in POK.

Economic motivation apart, China seeks to use the CPEC to consolidate its presence in a disputed region. If internal instability overwhelms Pakistan in the future, the CPEC affords China an opportunity to claim Hunza on the basis of specious historical records.

For China, the CPEC is a beachhead in South Asia, to facilitate a broader thrust in the Persian Gulf. It also provides a maritime connect to Djibouti and the littoral states.

The CPEC is viewed with ambivalence in Pakistan. It is regarded as a panacea for Pakistan's ailing economy. The road and rail networks, especially the energy transportation systems, have the potential to stretch across to Afghanistan, Tajikistan,

Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and even to Mongolia. The project is also expected to give a shot in the arm to Pakistan's debilitated power sector, with China committed to spending US \$35 billion to build up to 19 new power plants.

But contrary to expectations that development in the wake of the CPEC project will bring peace to the insurgency-wracked province of Balochistan, the Chinese presence appears to have infused the Baloch nationalist movement with new energy. Chinese workers, seen as collaborators in the exploitation of the region's natural resources, have become a major target for insurgents. Even in the army's heartland of Punjab, media reports indicate clashes between Chinese workers and local police personnel.

The Pakistani military is determined to protect Chinese lives and investments, especially in the wake of serious incidents such as the attack on the Zaver



Pearl Continental Hotel in Gwadar. A Special Security Division (SSD) comprising 9,000 Pakistan soldiers and 6,000 paramilitary personnel has been set up as a dedicated force. The colossal CPEC project has extracted a high cost across Pakistan. In the case of the Sahiwal Coal power plant project in Pakistan's Punjab province, many people were forced to part with agricultural land. The police slapped terrorism charges against those who resisted. Some Sahiwal residents have reported health issues, attributed to water contamination caused by the coal-fired power plant. The prevalence of asthma, pneumonitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is on the rise in

the area. China realises that India's support for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), of which the CPEC is the lynchpin, is crucial to its regional success. India's non-participation in the BRI is predicated on the unacceptability of the CPEC traversing parts of Jammu and Kashmir illegally occupied by Pakistan and China. It is, as stated by India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, a project initiated without consulting India. Besides, BRI, as a whole, lacks transparency and is geared to advancing China's interests through "debt trap" financing. It should come as no surprise that India has maintained its consistent position in not endorsing the BRI.

The political economy driving farm protests

The concentration of political and economic power has made democratic contestation challenging. Citizens are finding other methods



Fearing that India's controversial proposed farm laws will disproportionately benefit a few corporate magnates, farmers have made Mukesh Ambani's Reliance storefronts and Reliance Jio infrastructure the sites of major protest over the past few months. While Ambani has insisted that his company has no plans to enter corporate farming, his purported political networks and accrual of wealth in the Narendra Modi-era have created a trust deficit between farmers and corporates. A section of analysts have focused on framing the recent farmer protests solely upon the

complexities of farm subsidies and crop diversification and production, the sort of debates that have animated rural-urban conflict over the past few centuries across the world. But what is missed in this simplistic class framing of the recent farmer conflict is the question of whether there is genuine credibility in restructuring markets given India's political economy. Moving beyond the narrative of agricultural reform, I wish to describe how the current political moment is informed by apprehensions about economic

centralisation and political financing in India and how it transforms the political responsiveness of government. India is the most centralised large economy in the world. According to the World Inequality Database, the top 1% of the richest Indians controlled 21.4% of the country's income in 2019, slightly more than Russia (21.3%), the poster boy for economic centralisation, and other major economies such as the United States (18.7%) and China (13.9%). To be clear, this is not only a product of the Modi era, but a steady accumulation of income among India's richest over the 2000s.

Far more noticeable has been the concentration of wealth by a few corporate actors. A recent analysis by Saurabh Mukherjee and Harsh Shah at Marcellus Investments shows that the top 20 companies in India are

responsible for 70% of India's profits (up from 14% in the early 1990s). While foreign direct investment (FDI) in India showed growth during the coronavirus pandemic, on the back of the Facebook investment in Jio, more than 40% of FDI inflows were captured by Ambani's Reliance Group. There are examples of explicit sales of State assets such as six airports, some profitable, controlled by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), eventually won by a group headed by Gautam Adani in 2019. The question is not about the legality of these sales, but its impact on the concentration of wealth. As Harish Damodaran recently argued, the concentration of wealth in a few corporate actors has upended the traditional model of funding for political parties. The ruling

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) requires extraordinary financial resources to maintain its dominance electorally (at a national level) and the strength of its party machine. No party in India can be successful unless it procures a stable source of funding; this is all the more pressing for a party such as the BJP, which requires significantly more resources. Until recently, a key source of funding came from "regional capitalists" - landed elite, liquor or sugar barons, builders. This diverse pool of regional capitalists provided for a reservoir of funding for myriad political parties, especially regional ones. The recent (and growing) concentration of wealth has weakened the political financing environment for opposition to the BJP in two important ways.

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Decoding India's move in Kabul

Its decision to support the Afghan government, at a time when Ashraf Ghani is weak, is intriguing. But there is a historical backdrop to it

India's powerful national security adviser, Ajit Doval, undertook a long-overdue visit to Kabul last week. It took place soon after external affairs minister S Jaishankar promised more military support to Afghanistan. Though the specifics of such support are unclear, whatever India offers is unlikely to tilt the military balance in Kabul's favour after the withdrawal of the United States (US). Why, then, is India opting to intensify support for the Afghan government when the world is hedging its bets and engaging with the Taliban?

With negotiations between Kabul and the Taliban in Doha gridlocked, intensification of fighting on the ground, including targeted assassinations of civilians, flourishing factionalism within Kabul, lack of clarity on how US President-elect Joe Biden will proceed with the withdrawal, and an assertive Pakistan, the main question facing India is how long can President Ashraf Ghani withstand these pressures, and what next?

The central driver of India's Afghanistan policy is its desire to ensure a strategic balance between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Given the power asymmetry between these two countries, such a balance, from an Indian viewpoint, then, is to enable Kabul to influence the terms of talks with Pakistan-supported forces such as the Taliban. To that effect, New Delhi has found determined, if embattled, allies in Ghani and Vice-President Amrullah Saleh. But there is no guarantee that New Delhi's approach will yield results. In fact, given India's mounting security challenges with both Pakistan and China, there are valid concerns about India losing ground entirely if Kabul collapses. So why intensify support for Kabul even if India is unwilling to overtly engage with the Taliban? After all, there is no need to bind itself further to the Ghani government. History offers clues to better understand India's decision.



In February 1989, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi dispatched AK Verma, the then chief of India's external intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), to assess the longevity of the Najibullah government, which was under pressure from Mujahideen attacks. Verma returned upbeat and said Najibullah can last "indefinitely" with Soviet support. Parallel to Verma's visit, India had begun outreach to different Mujahideen factions and found a surprising convergence of interest. Successful outreach to

the Mujahideen, hidden from public view and held anathema till that moment, helped India embrace the new realities after Najibullah's ouster in 1992 when Soviet support ended. For now, there is no evidence that India's unofficial outreach to the Taliban and vice-versa has generated an understanding of that sort. But even if such an understanding exists, it is unlikely to be made public by either side - similar to what happened with the Mujahideen. Overt engagement with India will complicate the Taliban's relations with Pakistan

when it can least afford this. For India, overt diversification risks expediting Ghani's political collapse instead of ensuring an internal balance within Afghanistan. Both New Delhi and the Taliban know that they can't remain aloof forever, especially if the latter comes to power. India's decision to support Ghani, then, is a sign that there are no endgames for India in Afghanistan. Thus, it would rather accept a setback in its pursuit of a balance between Kabul and Islamabad and securing the few gains that

Afghanistan has made over the last two decades, instead of coming across as an opportunistic.

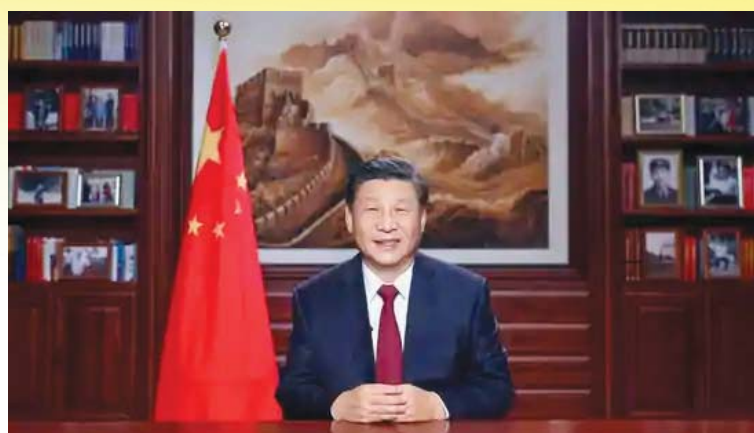
The other aspect of India's decision has a sharper edge. On August 15, 1975, India received a strategic shock in the form Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination in Bangladesh. The rise of the pro-Pakistan army chief Ziaur Rahman as president in Dhaka generated tremendous anxiety in New Delhi. In a now-declassified top-secret report, R&AW assessed that Pakistan would "exercise a pervasive influence in various ministries and departments of the Govt of Bangla Desh, especially in the foreign office [and] ... would widen the differences between India and Bangla Desh".

In response (in first of its kind archival evidence seen by this author), R&AW recommended that the political leadership take all feasible measure to "soften up areas which are contiguous to Indian territories where we are especially vulnerable" and sought re-appraisal of relations with Pakistan.

China is an economic winner, not an economic leader

Even as Beijing posts impressive GDP figures, it's a long way from setting the direction for global policy.

China's recovery from the depth of the Covid-19 slump is impressive, and the country will almost certainly be the only major economic power to end 2020 in positive territory. Another world-beating expansion is expected this year. But for all the superlatives, Beijing is years away from becoming a global economic leader. Gross domestic product rose 6.5% in the fourth quarter from a year earlier, the government said Monday, better than anticipated and a faster pace than recorded immediately before the pandemic. The performance brought the expansion for the year to 2.3%. That's a result few thought possible when the



economy shut down in early 2020 to contain the coronavirus. Growth may approach 8% this year, reckons the International Monetary Fund, outstripping America, Europe and Japan. The Communist state will supplant the U.S. as the world's largest economy in dollar terms in 2028,

five years earlier than forecast a year ago, according to the Centre for Economics and Business Research, a London consulting firm. Beneath the strong numbers are significant challenges. China's growth was slowing before the pandemic. Authorities had adopted an

accommodative stance, deploying fiscal and monetary loosening while the Federal Reserve was still tightening in 2018. Renewed large outbreaks of Covid-19 aside, one of the biggest risks facing China is a premature step back from this official support, the IMF said in concluding its annual review earlier this month. "Let's avoid a macroeconomic support cliff, let's make sure that we don't prematurely withdraw fiscal policy support, and that means, you know, some continuing support and for monetary policy, it means remaining accommodative," Helge Berger, the IMF's mission chief for China, told reporters Jan.

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.



The Capitol riot wasn't a fringe 'uprising'. It was enabled by very deep pockets

While law enforcement officials in Washington ought to be held accountable for their alleged culpability in the deadly violence at the US Capitol earlier this month, and the off-duty cops and members of the military who participated in it ought to be disciplined, the attempted auto-coup cannot solely be understood through the lens of policing and security. At least as much responsibility lies with the billionaire donors and corporate interests - in other words, the capitalists - who made this moment possible. Already a picture of the individuals, organizations, and institutions who lent their weight to the movement that stormed Congress has begun to emerge. Last year, the secretive and influential Council for National Policy (CNP), which author Anne Nelson describes as "connecting the manpower and media of the Christian right with the finances of western plutocrats and the strategy of right-wing Republican political operatives," called for state legislators in six swing states to reject Joe Biden's election victory. CNP leaders were scheduled to speak at the



rally on the morning of 6 January, where Donald Trump encouraged his supporters to march on the Capitol. Carrie Severino, president of the Judicial Crisis Network, which has contributed millions to the Republican Attorneys General Association (Raga), listed as one of the participating organizations in the rally. Raga's fundraising arm, the Rule of Law Defense Fund, sent robocalls encouraging Trump supporters to march on the Capitol ahead of the 6 January rally, at which the former chairman of Raga, Texas attorney general Ken Paxton, spoke. But major donors to Raga include not only rightwing bogeymen like Koch Industries, Walmart, or the

Adelson family but also household corporate names like Comcast, Amazon and TikTok.

Likewise, although Koch Industries is the single largest corporate donor to Republican representatives who pledged to try to overturn the election results, the next biggest contributors included defense companies like Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon, as well as tech (Amazon) and finance (Goldman Sachs) and insurance (Aflac), according to the Center for Media and Democracy. And while Charles Koch has maintained a posture of personal ambivalence, verging on distaste, for Donald Trump, super PACs heavily funded by the donor network he and his late brother founded have spent

millions supporting congressional Republicans who rejected the outcome of the 2020 election. Dick Uihlein, the chief executive of the Uline shipping company and a contributor to the Koch donor network, spent at least \$2m getting Josh Hawley elected to the US Senate and has contributed more than \$4m to the Tea Party Patriots, another one of the 11 groups listed as participating in the Stop the Steal coalition. In 2019, more than \$20m was funneled through DonorsTrust, a donor-advised fund that disguises the source of major giving to nonprofits, to a dozen organizations that would ultimately contest the integrity of the 2020 presidential election, including \$103,000 to Tea Party Patriots. In a statement provided to the Intercept, Tea Party Patriots cofounder Jenny Beth Martin denied spending any money on the Stop the Steal rally and condemned the violence that occurred. Investigative journalists will continue to trace and disentangle the funding networks that facilitated 6 January. The list of names will grow longer; the sum of individual and corporate

contributions greater. But already it is clear that what happened at the Capitol was not just the unintended consequence of specific capitalists' ill-advised campaign donations; it was an expression of a deeper, ongoing crisis of capitalism, and the ruling class's (sometimes contradictory) attempts to manage that crisis. According to a report released late last year by the Institute for Policy Studies and Americans for Tax Fairness, the 651 billionaires in the United States added more than \$1tn to their collective wealth since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing the total to slightly more than \$4tn. Meanwhile, the racialized distribution of labor in the United States - the concentration of workers of color in both essential industries, where they are more likely to be exposed to the pandemic, and service and hospitality industries, where layoffs have been rampant - means that Black, Latino, and Native Americans are significantly more likely to be hospitalized and die of Covid-19 than non-Hispanic white Americans.

Nidhi Razdan, Phishing, And Three Hard Lessons

Phishing has become such a sophisticated form of social attack that even seasoned journalists are taken for a ride.

Nidhi Razdan, a career journalist, became a victim of an elaborate phishing attack that made her quit her 21-year-old job and part with many of her personal details. So, what is a phishing attack? Phishing is a social engineering attack, where the victim's details and data are extracted by creating an elaborate story that the victim believes in. The victim is lulled into a make-belief story, wherein the victim willingly hands over her personal information to the initiator of the attack, believing that such an action is for her benefit. Is phishing new? No. we have had phishing attacks for ages. We have had fraud godmen and god women lulling people into an elaborate make-believe world and making their victims give up their wealth and much more, willingly. We also have the case of jihadis being made to believe

in a pleasurable afterlife, and thus making them willingly kill themselves. We also have apps like the recent case of Whatsapp, where the app makes you give up your personal data through your "willing" consent through a social engineering situation, where you are "willingly" compelled into giving consent to part with your personal data. All done in a manner where you believe that it is for your own benefit. So, in short, phishing is mind control of the victim, compelling them to give up their personal information, money and more through creating a make-believe situation through deceit. Obviously, phishing has accelerated with digital technologies, as such attacks can be done remotely, from thousands of miles away.

So, what happened to Nidhi Razdan, a TV anchor and a former Executive Editor at a well-known News Channel? Nidhi Razdan was approached by some people for the job of "Associate Professor" at a journalism school at Harvard University. After a single web-conferencing interview almost a year ago, she was "offered" the job through an email offer letter, which as per Nidhi Razdan, appeared totally genuine. Then through an elaborate web of deceit, she was made to believe that her stint at Harvard was getting delayed for many reasons, including COVID. In the meantime, Nidhi Razdan quit her 21-year career as a TV news editor and journalist and flew down to the US to take up her new "appointment". Unfortunately, the "job offer" was fake, and unfortunately, Nidhi Razdan did not smell anything



wrong till a few months ago, when she thought of putting her foot down and contact the senior management at Harvard University. That is when she got to know that she has been the victim of an elaborate phishing attack, wherein, through the job offer, the perpetrators have extracted her financial details and many other personal details. This must have been devastating for this seasoned journalist. The loss of career and the loss of face must have taken a terrible toll on this poor lady. It is a lesson for all of

us that the world has become even more dangerous place and that attacks on us do not come only from a dark alley that we wrongly take a turn into. Attacks are now coming from well-lit fibre optics, through cyberspace, through emails, telephones, video conferencing, forced consents and so on. And these phishing attacks are not just coming from the now infamous Nigerian emails, but from multiple channels that create the fine fabric of deceit, involving even the names of institutions of repute.



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Victorious, vindictive Democrats take power with a nation on the edge

As of noon Wednesday, the Trump administration will officially come to an end. If you supported Donald Trump, that's a sad thing to face after four years. On the other hand, if you're one of the many in our professional class who have made hating Donald Trump the very center of your life, you've gotten exactly what you wanted. You ought to be celebrating. But they're not celebrating. In fact, no one in the Democratic Party seems happy. Instead of taking victory laps, they are plotting revenge against the people they just beat. They're thinking of new ways to injure, humiliate and degrade their political opponents, make it impossible for them to work again, throw them in jail, and destroy their lives.

Imagine winning a tennis match in straight sets, then immediately leaping over the net and smashing your opponent in the face with your racket. It wasn't enough for you to win, you had to inflict physical pain. You couldn't be happy until another human being screamed in agony. What kind of person would do that? The kind of people we're watching now, the kind of people who are even more vicious when they win. The

leaders of the Democratic Party have now decided that 74 million Trump voters weren't just wrong or misguided. They didn't simply back the wrong guy or have incorrect opinions or fail to see obvious truths. No, the threat they pose is graver and more serious than that. These 74 million Trump voters are, in fact, terrorists. They are a looming physical threat to the rest of us, and must be dealt with in the way that you deal with threats like that.

To make that point as clear as possible, the Democratic Party has marshaled military leaders to deliver the news. Gen. Stanley McChrystal is among them. McChrystal, in case you don't remember, is the strategic genius who can take credit, if you can call it that, for running the longest losing war in American history, the one in Afghanistan. Monday, McChrystal took a break from collecting fat corporate directorship fees to note that based on his extensive experience mismanaging America's foreign policy, Trump voters look an awful lot like terrorists. "I did see a similar dynamic in the evolution of Al Qaeda in Iraq," McChrystal said, "where a whole generation of

angry Arab youth with very poor prospects followed a powerful leader who promised to take them back in time to a better place, and he led them to embrace an ideology that justified their violence. This is now happening in America." Thanks, Stan. Sometime when you can manage to spare a moment from getting rich from your failures and America's decline, we'd love to know exactly what went wrong in Afghanistan. Until then, though, Andy McCabe would like to put a finer point on the matter. You remember Andy McCabe, the former high-level FBI official who was canned for lying and corruption (in other words, a model federal employee). So when McCabe speaks, you can hear the moral authority in his voice. According to his considered judgment, Donald Trump's voters are very much like ISIS:

MCCABE: When we looked at those Americans who traveled to Syria for the purpose of joining the Islamic State, when you put all those faces and names down in one place, you had doctors, lawyers ... Some people are very vulnerable to and drawn into that that core lie of any extremist movement. And



that is exactly what we're seeing now with these this particular group of Trump supporters.

You've heard the word "insurrection" used a lot in connection with what happened at the Capitol Jan. 6. On Monday night, 28 people were arrested in a violent protest in New York City not held on behalf of Donald Trump. Those people attacked police officers, and a bunch of them went to jail. But were they insurrecting at the time? No, they weren't. How do we know? Because they weren't racists. Only racists can insurrect, as Rep. Ayanna Pressley, D-Mass., explains:

PRESSLEY: The threat of White supremacy looms large, and it is tragic that it took this insurrection and this attempt to interrupt the peaceful transfer of power

and moreover, injury and loss of life for many to appreciate just how formidable the threat of White supremacy is.

So what do you do with insurrectionists who are also White supremacists -- as they always are -- but also, and here's the tricky part, in some cases not even White? Simple force doesn't always work. These are hard cases. You need to reeducate people like that, possibly in camps, and deprogram them for the safety of the rest of us. Thankfully, Sandy Cortez has been thinking about this for quite some time. Some little girls play with dolls, she put her Barbies in a secure enclosure and educated them because they were thinking bad things:

OCASIO-CORTEZ: We had a program addressing white supremacists.

The US Capitol riot risks supercharging a new age of political repression

Following the fascist riot at the US Capitol, progressives and liberals have begun to mimic the calls for "law and order" of their conservative counterparts, even going as far as threatening to expand the "war on terror". While this may be well-intentioned, it fits neatly within the trajectory of attacks against civil liberties over the last two decades. A Biden administration with a 50-50 Senate will seek unity and compromise wherever it can find it, and oppressing political dissidents will be the glue that holds together Biden's ability to govern.

A wide array of actors within the United States government have long predicted, and begun to prepare for, a new age of protests and political instability. In 2008 the Pentagon launched the Minerva Initiative, a research program aimed at understanding mass movements and how they spread. It included at least one



project that conflated peaceful activists with "supporters of political violence" and deemed that they were worth studying alongside active terrorist organizations.

A 2018 war game enacted by the Pentagon had students and faculty at military colleges create plans to crush a rebellion led by disillusioned members of Gen Z. This hypothetical "ZBellion" included a "global cyber campaign to expose

injustice and corruption". A campaign that would in real life no doubt be monitored by the NSA's Prism program, which captures the vast majority of electronic communications in the United States. Prism was developed in 2007, partially out of fear that environmental disasters might lead to a rise in anti-government protest. These steps further the already oppressive post-9/11 surveillance apparatus

developed through the Patriot Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation championed by President-Elect Biden. Though some of these tools were developed to "fight terrorism", in practice they've also been used to monitor and interfere with the work of activists - leading to violations of civil liberties such as the placement of undercover NYPD officers in Muslim student groups across the north-east. And every post-9/11 president has added to this, steadily increasing federal and local agencies' power to surveil, detain and prosecute those who appear to pose a challenge to the status quo. This level of repression is also being carried out by states. Since 2015, 32 states have passed laws designed to discourage and punish those who engage in boycotts against Israel. Many states have also worked to dismantle once-institutionalized

statewide student associations such as the Arizona Student Association and the United Council of Wisconsin, in one blow destroying opposition to tuition hikes and eradicating an important ally to social movements, such as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. Republicans have long called for the increased repression of activists, but the chorus has reached a crescendo in the age of Black Lives Matter and climate protests. In the last five years, 116 bills to increase penalties for protests including highway shutdowns and occupations have been introduced in state legislatures. Twenty-three of those bills became law in 15 states. Following the killing of George Floyd and the subsequent uprisings, we've seen another flow of proposals. .

Brazilian officials were warned six days in advance of a looming oxygen crisis in Manaus



"The Health Ministry...became aware on (January) 8th through an e-mail sent by the product manufacturer," the report states. The provider, named in the report as White Martins, first notified the Amazonas State government, and then federal authorities, the report says.

It is not clear why notifying the federal government of oxygen shortages was allegedly left to a private contractor. According to the Solicitor General's report, the Manaus health department had been aware that the city's health system was on the verge of collapse since early January. Manaus City officials did not respond to a request for comment from CNN.

An Amazonas' state government spokesperson told CNN they would provide "clarifications" to the Prosecutor General's office, and added that the state continues to work to mitigate the crisis, including, "the transport of oxygen from other states to Manaus, the installation of mini oxygen in hospitals, the transfer of patients for assistance in other states and the requisition of all production from local oxygen

suppliers." Brazil's General Prosecutor Augusto Aras has ordered the Health Ministry to open a probe into the collapse of Manaus' health system, in addition to a separate investigation examining potential negligence by state and city officials.

But the Solicitor General's report raises questions about why the federal Health Ministry was not able to help prevent the collapse of Manaus' healthcare system, after it received advance notice. Officials from the Ministry traveled to Manaus in the beginning of January, and Pazuello personally visited the city from January 11 to January 13. Disaster struck the city's hospitals the next day. On January 14, Amazonas state officials announced that Manaus hospitals and emergency rooms faced crippling shortages of oxygen, amid soaring Covid-19 cases. "We are facing a lot of difficulty in getting medical supplies. And as everyone is following, our main difficulty now has been getting oxygen," Governor Wilson Lima told reporters. Though the Brazilian

air force responded by delivering emergency supplies of liquid and gaseous oxygen, shortages continue. Logistical problems have compounded the crisis, as Manaus' supplies mainly enter the city via the Amazon River. There is only highway out of the city, which connects it to the neighboring state of Amapá. Health Minister Eduardo Pazuello has defended his agency's response. "We took action immediately," he said at a press briefing in Brasilia on Monday. "There was no indication of lack of oxygen from our meetings in early January. The rise of the cases was very fast," he said.

"When we [visited Manaus] on [January] 4, the problem was not oxygen. The problem was bed structure, the number of Covid-19 patients, the queues," Pazuello also said. Bolsonaro's appointment of Pazuello, a former military commander, to lead the Health Ministry, have been heavily criticized by opponent as Brazil's Covid-19 death toll remains second highest in the world, behind only that of the United States.

(News Agencies)-Local and federal officials in Brazil were warned of looming oxygen shortages nearly a week before crisis struck in the city of Manaus, the country's Solicitor General has revealed.

In a country already hard-hit by the coronavirus, oxygen shortages and soaring Covid-19 cases have pushed Manaus, the capital of Amazonas state, into a healthcare crisis. Nurses in the city have been quoted in local news reports as saying patients have died of asphyxiation in the city's hospitals because there is no oxygen to give them.

The Brazilian government has come under sharp criticism over its handling of the crisis. Last

week, Supreme Court judge Ricardo Lewandowski ordered the government to present a response plan to solve the oxygen shortage, citing the Jair Bolsonaro administration's "omissive behavior" in addressing the emergency.

On Sunday, Bolsonaro's Solicitor General José Levi do Amaral sent a 16-page report defending the government's response to the court. The report discloses that the federal health ministry knew about the crisis six days before the situation became critical on January 14. It also stresses that the local government in Amazonas did not inform federal authorities about the looming oxygen shortage.

Biden to propose sweeping immigration bill on first day in office

(News Agencies)- President-elect Joe Biden will unveil a comprehensive immigration plan on his first day in office, a source familiar with the proposal tells CNN, describing an agenda that provides a multi-year pathway to citizenship for the millions of undocumented immigrants currently in the United States. The plan, which also would aim to address the root cause of migration from countries in Central America and improve the use of technology at the border, will be sent to Congress on Wednesday, shortly after Biden is inaugurated, the source said. Biden promised during the campaign that he would make immigration reform a priority as president, a move that ran directly counter to the anti-immigration rhetoric and action that defined President Donald Trump's four years in office. The

President-elect also received pressure from immigration groups throughout the campaign, many of whom worried that the deportation that happened during the Obama presidency would continue in the Biden administration.

The central tenet of Biden's plan is the pathway to citizenship, which would allow certain undocumented immigrants to achieve citizenship within eight years. The plan, according to the source, would give certain immigrants temporary status for five years, allow them to apply for green cards after that time and once they have met certain criteria, then allow them to apply for citizenship three years later. For recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals -- so-called Dreamers who were protected under a program first started by President Barack Obama -- the pathway would be streamlined,

allowing them to apply for a green card immediately.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris recently described the soon-to-be released immigration plan in an interview with Univision.

"It will be about creating a pathway for people to earn citizenship. We're going to reduce the time from what is now has been currently 13 years to eight years. We are going to expand protections for Dreamers and DACA recipients. "These are some of the things that we're going to do on our immigration bill. And we believe it is a smarter and a more humane way of approaching immigration." The plan, which was first reported by the Washington Post, would also require immigrants to have been in the United States by the start of 2021, a decision made to stop any mass migration to the US-Mexico border. Trump made



immigration one of the central tenets of his presidential bid, pledging to build a wall along the US-Mexico border as a way to curb undocumented immigrants from coming to the United States. While some of the wall has been built, Trump's actions have failed to live up to his words and he leaves office with only a handful of immigration accomplishments to tout. The likelihood of a sweeping immigration bill passing Congress is an open question. Previous attempts, like the

concerted pushed to pass an immigration bill in 2013, failed, and the Republican Party now includes more immigration hardliners after four years under Trump. "I would be privileged to work with Congress to pass immigration reform legislation that provides that path and provides a permanent solution to what is clearly a broken system," Alejandro Mayorkas, Biden's pick to lead the Department of Homeland Security, told senators on Tuesday.

India, Brazil Understand Russia, China Are Threats To Them: Pompeo

During the last four years, Mike Pompeo emerged as the Trump administration's vocal critic of Beijing and Moscow.

In a parting shot against China and Russia, US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo on Tuesday (local time) claimed that India and Brazil have understood that Beijing and Moscow are threats to their people.

"Remember BRICS? Well, thanks to @jairbolsonaro and @narendramodi the B and the I both get that the C and the R are threats to their people," Pompeo tweeted.

Pompeo made the remarks in his parting tweets as US secretary of state. On Wednesday,

President-elect Joe Biden will be sworn-in as US President.

BRICS is the acronym coined to associate five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

During the last four years, Pompeo emerged as the Trump administration's vocal critic of Beijing and Moscow.

He took every opportunity to highlight China's human rights abuses of Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities. Pompeo was at the fore of the Trump

administration's crackdown on China and Iran. Last month, the US imposed sanctions on a number of Russian and Chinese enterprises, which, according to Washington, cooperate with the armed forces of the two states. A total of 58 Chinese organisations and 45 Russian ones have been blacklisted, including the Admiralty Shipyard (part of USC), the United Aircraft Corporation and the Rossiya Special Flight Squadron (the official air carrier of the Russian president and prime minister).



US Army soldier allegedly attempted to help plan attack on soldiers abroad and 9/11 Memorial

(News Agencies)-A US Army soldier was arrested Tuesday on terrorism charges after federal prosecutors said he allegedly attempted to assist ISIS' efforts to plan attacks on targets in New York City and on US soldiers in the Middle East. Cole Bridges, a 20-year-old private, allegedly made the attempts while communicating with someone he believed to be associated with the terror group, prosecutors said. He has been charged with one count of attempting to provide material support to ISIS and one count of attempting to murder US military service members, both of which carry up to 20 years in prison. Bridges, who is from

Stow, Ohio, was arrested in Georgia, where he was based at Fort Stewart. He is set to have a court hearing on Thursday. CNN is attempting to reach Bridges' attorney for comment. An Army spokesperson said such a crime would be a betrayal.

"The Army is tasked with the duty and responsibility to protect our Nation from its adversaries, and Soldiers make incredible sacrifices in service to that cause. When any Soldier attempts to provide sensitive or classified information to an adversary, it is a betrayal of the oath they swore to the United States and the duty owed to their fellow

Soldiers," the spokesperson said in a statement. "This Soldier's recent arrest was the result of a joint investigation between the Army and the FBI, and the Army will continue to work closely with Federal authorities in this case," the spokesperson continued.

Prosecutors allege in a criminal complaint that in October, Stewart began communicating with an FBI covert employee online who was posing as an ISIS supporter in contact with ISIS fighters in the Middle East. Prosecutors allege Bridges gave training and guidance to purported ISIS fighters, as well as advice about possible targets in New York City, such as the



9/11 Memorial. Bridges also allegedly gave the FBI employee portions of a US Army training manual and "guidance about military combat tactics, for use by ISIS," the release said. Prosecutors said that in December, Bridges began supplying the covert FBI employee with "instructions for the purported ISIS fighters on

how to attack U.S. forces in the Middle East," including diagramming specific military maneuvers to help ISIS fighters "maximize the lethality of attacks on US troops," which included advice on fortifying an ISIS encampment by wiring certain buildings with explosives to kill American troops, according to the release.

Mega Millions \$865M jackpot: Here's the tax hit

(News Agencies)-The Mega Millions jackpot surged to \$865 million this week, after no winner was declared during last Friday's drawing.

Tuesday's winning numbers: 10, 19, 26, 28, 50, with 16 as the Megaplier.

The massive prize is the second-largest in the game's history, marking only the eighth time that the jackpot has exceeded \$500 million.

The largest Mega Millions jackpot was valued at \$1.537 billion and was claimed in South Carolina in 2018.

Game officials noted that three of Mega Millions' largest prizes have been won in the month of January. However, after the IRS takes its chunk of the winnings, the prize will be notably smaller. A person with a winning ticket is faced with two options: either take the money in the form of a lump sum or an annuity payment, which would be paid out over the course of about 30 years.

In the case of the lump sum, which is the more common choice, the winnings would be valued at \$628.2 million before taxes. Under the cash option, the

jackpot is subject to federal withholding, which is an immediate 24% before the winner ever receives a cent.

That would reduce the prize amount by about \$150.7 million. The IRS would also likely tax the winnings at the highest federal income bracket, which is 37% for people with incomes in excess of \$500,000. A winner would owe any difference left over between that tax rate of 37% and the federal withholding rate of 24% when the winner files tax returns at the end of the year, which would deduct another \$81.6



million. That means about \$232.3 million would be deducted in federal taxes and the lump sum jackpot would be worth roughly \$395.9 million. Depending on where the winner lives, the jackpot could also be subject to state taxes with rates that range

from up to 8.82%. Winnings are not subject to the 3.8% net investment income tax. If the winner plans on giving money away, he or she is allowed to give up to \$15,000 to as many people as desired without tax consequences.

Spanish police seize more than 2 tons of cocaine hidden in charcoal

Spanish police have seized more than two tons of cocaine and arrested 12 people allegedly involved in a large scale drugs smuggling network with connections to Paraguay and Brazil.

Authorities investigated the network -- members of which had attempted to cover their tracks by setting up legitimate businesses -- for more than a year, according to a statement from Spain's national police on Monday.

The investigation culminated in the arrests and the seizure of 2,065 kilograms (2.28 US tons) hidden in a shipment of 40,000 kilograms (44.1 US tons) of charcoal at the port of Algeciras in southern Spain.

At the beginning of 2020, police identified members of the organization based in the provinces of Murcia and Seville who were building an apparently legitimate business importing dozens of containers of charcoal from South America to the port of Barcelona. However, complications due to storage issues and the coronavirus pandemic meant the group moved their operations to the port of Algeciras in southern Spain in mid-April, said police. Police pieced together the structure of the network, which included two families with key members in Brazil and Paraguay who coordinated cocaine shipments, while others in Seville created businesses which appeared

to be dedicated to importing charcoal, rice, molasses or medical products.

Police said the leaders of the network recruited people to act as fronts for the businesses to hide their involvement, and a known money launderer based in Valencia acted as an emissary between them and the business owners.

Police said the money launderer used cryptocurrencies to hide money, and is known to work with "many criminal groups from Eastern Europe and South America" involved in the trafficking of drugs, weapons and people.

The sophistication of the network meant police had to tap more than 100 phones and follow suspects



in various Spanish provinces.

During the course of the investigation, agents also searched 16 homes and businesses as well as almost 200 containers sent to Spain from Brazil and Para-

guay, said the statement.

All 12 have been charged, with six being held in custody and six being released under specific conditions. Their names have not been publicly released.

Israel isn't a democracy, it's an 'apartheid regime,' rights group says

(News Agencies)-Israel is no longer a democracy but an "apartheid regime" devoted to cementing the supremacy of Jews over Palestinians, the country's best-known human rights group said in a report published Tuesday.

B'Tselem, which until now has confined its work to scrutiny of human rights issues in the Palestinian territories, has now also decided to look at what it calls Israel's "regime" between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean.

"More than 14 million people, roughly half of them Jews and the other half Palestinians, live between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea under a single rule," B'Tselem said in a new analysis titled: "A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid."

The human rights group says that the traditional view of Israel as a democracy operating side-by-side with a temporary Israeli occupation in the territories "imposed on some five million Palestinian subjects ... has grown divorced from reality."

"Most importantly, the distinction obfuscates the fact that the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River is organized under a single principle: advancing and cementing the supremacy of one group -- Jews -- over another -- Palestinians," B'Tselem said in its controversial analysis.

Years of injustice against Pal-

estinians, culminating in laws that have entrenched discrimination, mean that "the bar for labeling the Israeli regime as apartheid has been met," B'Tselem said.

The allegation that Israel is an "apartheid state" has often been dismissed by rightwing Israelis and their support groups as anti-Semitic. But this argument will be harder to make now that Israel has been labelled this way by such a well-respected Israeli institution, albeit one that enjoys only minority support in its home country.

Israel's embassy in London dismissed the report as "not based

on reality but on a distorted ideological view."

"The fact that B'Tselem chose not to present the report to the Israeli government for comment testifies to the fact that this is nothing more than a propaganda tool. Israel rejects the false claims in the so-called report ... Israel is a strong and vibrant democracy that gives full rights to all of its citizens regardless of religion, race or gender. The Arab citizens of Israel are represented in all branches of government -- in the Israeli parliament, in the courts (including the Supreme Court), in the public service, and even in the dip-



lomatic corps where they represent the State of Israel around the world."

Over the last decade there have been increasing concerns among Israel's traditional allies, especially in Europe, that the

relentless loss of Palestinian territory to Jewish settlements on the West Bank, which are illegal under international law, was not only undermining a long-term peace process but Israel's moral standing.

Iran unveils underground missile base on Gulf coast, state media says

(News Agencies)-Iran has unveiled an underground base for "strategic missiles" on its Gulf coastline, according to state media. Video broadcast by state media Friday showed the head of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards, Major General Hossein Salami, touring what appears to be a long underground tunnel lined with missiles and missile launchers.

Iran's ballistic missiles arsenal is one of the flashpoints in Tehran's long-running disputes with its Arab neighbors and the United States. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries have called for the curbing of Iran's ballistic weapons, but Iran's



leaders have repeatedly said the arsenal is not up for negotiation. When Tehran retaliated for the US's targeted killing of top general Qassem Soleimani in January 2020, it fired over a dozen ballistic missiles at US positions in Iraq. "What you see today is

one of several IRGC Naval strategic missile facilities," Salami said according to the MEHR news agency.

The base includes launching pads for long-range missiles that have a precision range of hundreds of kilometers, MEHR and

IRNA said citing Salam.

The unveiling of the base comes at a time of growing tensions between Iran and the US.

On Monday, Tehran announced it had resumed enriching uranium to 20% purity, far beyond the limits laid out in the 2015 nuclear deal, which US President Donald Trump walked away from in 2018.

US President-elect Joe Biden has pledged to reinstate the deal after he takes office on January 20. His national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, told CNN on Sunday that the incoming administration would also seek a "follow-on negotiation" over Iran's ballistic missile capabilities.

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Missing Russian-American climber Alex Goldfarb found dead in Pakistan

(News Agencies)-A Russian-American climber who went missing last week while trying to scale a mountain amid harsh winter weather in northern Pakistan has been found dead, the region's tourist police and the Alpine Club of Pakistan said on Tuesday.

The tourist police in the town of Gilgit made the announcement on Twitter, saying Alex Goldfarb went missing on Friday while he was trying to summit the Pastore Peak, not far from K2, the most prominent peak on the Pakistani side of the Himalayan range, and the world's second



tallest after Mount Everest. Contact with Goldfarb was lost and a helicopter rescue and search team was sent out. The Pakistan army on Monday found the body, after a day-long search, according to Karrar Haidri, the secretary of the Alpine Club of Pakistan. Muhammad Ali Sadpara, a Pakistani mountaineer who was part of the rescue team, also tweeted the news. Efforts are now underway to bring Goldfarb's body down with the help of Pakistani and foreign mountaineers. Goldfarb and Hungarian climber

Zoltan Szlanko had initially planned to scale Pastore together but Szlanko later decided to turn back. Haidri expressed condolences to Goldfarb's family, saying "I will never forget his kindness." Goldfarb was a doctor and lecturer at Harvard University. He had volunteered to treat Covid-19 patients during the pandemic according to his son, Levi.

"He thought [mountain climbing] was beautiful," Levi Goldfarb said. "He thought it was liberating, because up in the mountains it didn't really matter who you were at sea level - a doctor, a

lawyer, or even a thief, all of those labels were stripped away and you were playing by a different set of rules. He made great friends in the mountains, he saved lives and saved himself, and he travelled the world doing it."

On Saturday, a team of Nepalese climbers made history by making the first winter ascent of K2. Hundreds of local and foreign climbers travel to northern Pakistan every year and accidents are common because of avalanches and sudden changes in weather.

Conjoined Pakistani twins get 'new life' following rare separation surgery



(News Agencies)-When expectant parents Shaheen Bibi and Israr Ahmed went to a small government hospital in eastern Karachi for an ultrasound late in 2019, a doctor pointed out "two dots" on the scan but gave no further details. Months later, in March, Shaheen Bibi gave birth to twins Aman and Ayan who had a rare congenital disorder: The boys were conjoined at the abdomen and shared several internal organs, a condition that affects only one in 250,000

births. Although there is no known cause for the conjoining, it can be diagnosed in early pregnancy through an ultrasound. The Ahmed's were not so lucky.

The couple were told that surgery to separate the boys would cost millions of rupees, a sum they had no hope of ever raising themselves. But that was until a Dubai-based businessman stepped forward to pay for the procedure after an appeal by the Sarim Burney Trust International.

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China and Pakistan fall out over Belt and Road frameworks



(News Agencies)- China and Pakistan are embroiled in their most serious disagreement relating to the Belt and Road Initiative, causing the annual bilateral summit of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to be delayed. The Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) is CPEC's principal decision-making body. It is jointly chaired by Pakistan's minister for planning, development and special initiatives and the vice chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission. The first JCC meeting was held in August 2013 and the last in November 2019. The 10th JCC

was scheduled for early 2020, but remains postponed. Initially, the COVID-19 pandemic was the reason, but later disagreements between the two countries over the Main Line 1 (ML-1) railway project and special economic zones became the main points of disagreement, Nikkei Asia has learned from informed sources. Asad Umar, Pakistan's minister for planning, development and special initiatives, told local media in November that the 10th JCC would be held the following month. However, officials in the Planning Commission of Pakistan, who asked not to be named, recently told Nikkei that

the meeting will not take place for at least three months -- by far the longest JCC gap to date. ML-1 is the largest CPEC project and worth \$6.8 billion. China is expected to lend \$6 billion of this, which Pakistan wants to borrow at a concessional interest rate of less than 3%. China offers a mixture of concessionary and commercial loans for such projects. This could significantly increase the aggregate interest rate Islamabad will face, according to the planning commission officials. "China is reluctant to lend money for ML-1 because Pakistan has already sought debt relief to meet G-20 lending conditions and it is not in a position to give sovereign guarantees," Nasir Jamal, a senior journalist in Lahore covering business and the economy, told Nikkei. He said Beijing's appetite for lending money for large infrastructure projects has diminished because these projects are vulnerable to local politics that delay returns on investment for China. That has hindered agreement on the

finance framework for ML-1. Andrew Small, a senior trans-Atlantic fellow with the Asia program at the German Marshall Fund, a U.S. think tank, said China tends to base its decisions about interest rates for loans to Pakistan on a couple of criteria. Firstly, do low-interest rates encourage projects that do not make sense financially? Secondly, what precedents are set for other countries looking for similar concessions? "China is much more comfortable deferring payments or providing new financing than it is offering concessional rates in the first place," Small told Nikkei. He said this approach provides Beijing with greater leverage and control even if they are willing to be very flexible at the back-end. With host countries under pressure to repay at higher rates, China trades payment deferrals in return for influence, which helps it get more favorable arrangements. The delayed JCC meeting and unsettled ML-1 financial framework is complicating

matters for Pakistan. Early this month, Pakistan Railways asked the government for 11 billion rupees (\$69 million) to provide ML-1 security. Without the Chinese financing framework being agreed by the JCC, it is hard for Islamabad to come up with such a large amount given the state of the economy and severe budgetary constraints. The other major disagreement between Beijing and Islamabad delaying the JCC meeting relates to SEZs. In the second phase of CPEC scheduled for 2020 to 2025, Chinese companies are due to start producing goods in Pakistan and exporting from there. Currently, the industrial cooperation framework for the SEZs is limited to a memorandum of understanding without detailed modalities. Matters such as tax exemptions and requirements for employing local labor have not been finalized. These need to be agreed by China for confirmation at the JCC.

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Afghan journalists are being killed for their work, and they just "want to stay alive"

(News Agencies)-Nazifa worked for years as a journalist in Afghanistan's capital. Last month, she fled her country after repeated warnings from the national intelligence agency that insurgents were plotting to kill her.

She only made the difficult decision to leave after a would-be assassin, disguised as vaccination worker, made it into her home.

"The angel of death made it to my apartment doorsteps," Nazifa, who didn't wish to use her full name, told CBS News. "I thought I was dying gradually from the inside when the threats turned out to be serious."

Afghan officials have confirmed to CBS News that a terror cell was established jointly by the Taliban and the ISIS branch in the country and tasked with disguising themselves as social workers, including vaccine administrators, to assassinate journalists in Kabul. Nazifa said women knocked on the door of her home twice, but she wasn't there on either occasion. The

women spoke to her mother, who had no idea the visitors had come to kill her daughter.

Nazifa is the sole breadwinner in her family. She's still dedicated to her career as a journalist, but now she's in hiding, fearing for her life amid an unprecedented wave of violence against media workers in Afghanistan that has prompted many to flee.

Deadly work
The growth of a thriving, independent media has been

one of the greatest success stories in Afghanistan since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion to topple the Taliban regime. Journalists have worked to hold the government accountable for its shortcomings, and the Taliban for its atrocities.

But it has come at a price.

Mujib Khalwatgar is the director of Nai, a media watchdog and

advocacy organization that promotes free speech in Afghanistan. He told CBS News that security and financial threats forced at least 10 Afghan radio stations to close in 2020. Almost a dozen journalists were killed

last year, six of them in the last three months alone.

"We have recorded at least 11 cases of murder, 20 cases of injuries, 10 cases of kidnapping and over 30 cases of beatings in 2020," Khalwatgar told CBS News.

Journalists have faced constant threats, intimidation, and violence from state and non-state

actors. Many Afghan journalists have been threatened or intimidated for their work by government security agencies and civilian officials. Some have been attacked and beaten.

"I want to stay alive"

Mariam Alimi, a photojournalist who also teaches her trade, has covered the news in Afghanistan since 2006. Now, she rarely leaves her home, and she's trying to seek asylum in a Western country. Alimi's first battle was against her own culture, and even members of her own

family: She often traveled to different provinces for her work without a male relative, which is considered taboo in the conservative community in which she was raised. She was able to overcome those hurdles, proving the value of her work. But she's feels unable to fight a terrorist ideology that places no value on capturing the truth about what's

going on in Afghanistan through a camera lens. The extremists consider her work a violation of Islamic values.

"I want to leave Afghanistan because I want to stay alive and support my family," Alimi told CBS News. "If something happens to me, my whole family will fall apart and lose everything."

Leverage by threat

Journalists, government officials and the U.S. military say the ongoing peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban have coincided with an escalation in Taliban threats against journalists. "It is definitely the Taliban behind this terror and these threats," Nazifa told CBS News, referring to the visits paid to her Kabul home. "In the past few months, I was covering the peace negotiations and I was talking regularly with the Taliban spokesmen, and they have identified me." The U.S.-brokered negotiations between the government and the insurgents began in September and are still underway in Doha, Qatar.



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Twitter Under Pressure

Twitter takes 17 hours to act over tweet threatening to assassinate Trump that was posted by a 'fake' account pretending to be the Iranian Supreme Leader



(SAI Bureau) - Twitter finally suspended a fake account that was listed under Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's name 17 hours after it posted an image of drone targeting Trump-lookalike in revenge for US airstrike, and long after it was first reported on.

The photo was taken from an overhead view which tossed up immediate connotations of drone strikes, the likes of which was used to kill General Soleimani on January 3 last year. The tweet roughly translated to: 'Revenge is inevitable. Soleimani's killer and the one who ordered Soleimani's murder must take revenge.' It that it was possible 'at any time.' Khamenei has five official Twitter accounts where he posts the

same things in various languages - Arabic, English, Farsi, Russian and Spanish.

The Khamenei_site handle is not any of those but Reuters' attributed it to him on Thursday night and said he'd posted it.

Twitter did nothing and gave no statement to indicate whether or not it was investigating the tweet. On Friday, Reuters tweeted that it was in fact a fake account and was not that of the Iranian leader who has, in the past, tweeted antisemitic, anti-American and anti-COVID vaccine remarks.

Now, the AP is reporting the account has been linked to Khamenei's office but is not official. Nonetheless, Twitter still took 17 hours to do anything about the violent threat and then

only suspended the account but not because of the post. They said it was being suspended because it was fake.

On January 8, Twitter permanently deleted Trump's account over the riots at the Capitol two days earlier.

CEO Jack Dorsey was inundated with questions about the double standard.

'So Ayatollah Ali Khamenei gets a pass for threatening to assassinate a former US President?' one person asked.

Another said: 'Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States, was removed from this platform "due to the risk of further incitement of violence.'

'Today, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, shared an image bearing a resemblance to Trump which calls for "revenge."

Soleimani was killed in a U.S. airstrike on January 3 last year in Iraq, which was ordered by Trump.

Earlier this month, Twitter removed a tweet by Khamenei in which he said U.S. and British-made vaccines were unreliable and may be intended to 'contaminate other nations'.

The platform said the tweet violated its rules against misinformation. Tensions rapidly grew between Tehran and Washington since 2018, when Trump exited a 2015 deal between Iran and six world powers that sought to curb Tehran's nuclear programme.

Washington reimposed sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy. Iran called for action and 'not just words' shortly after Joe Biden was sworn in as U.S. president on Wednesday. Biden has said Washington will rejoin the nuclear deal if Iran resumes strict compliance. Earlier this month, an arrest warrant was issued by Iraq for former president Trump in connection with the killing of Soleimani. The warrant was issued on January 7 by a judge in Baghdad's investigative court tasked with probing the Washington-directed drone strike that killed Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the court's media office said. They were killed outside the capital's airport last January. Al-Muhandis was the deputy leader of the state-sanctioned Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella

group composed of an array of militias, including Iran-backed groups, formed to fight the Islamic State group.

Soleimani headed the expeditionary Quds force of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The arrest warrant was for a charge of premeditated murder, which carries the death penalty on conviction. It is unlikely to be carried out but symbolic in the waning days of Trump's presidency. The decision to issue the warrant 'was made after the judge recorded the statements of the claimants from the family of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis,' according to a statement from the Supreme Judicial Council.

The investigation into the killings is ongoing, the court said.

The killings sparked a diplomatic crisis and strained U.S.-Iraq ties, drawing the ire of Shiite political lawmakers who passed a non-binding resolution to pressure the government to oust foreign troops from the country.

Iran-backed groups have since stepped up attacks against the American presence in Iraq, leading to threats by Washington to shutter its Baghdad diplomatic mission.

Twitter's problems with content moderation and policy enforcement are only likely to grow in the wake of its decision to banish President Donald Trump its platform, experts say.

The ruling-the culmination of years of tension-came on January 8, 2021, as the social network decided enough was enough in the wake of the storming of the U.S. Capitol building by Trump supporters two days prior, silencing the president's account in an attempt to limit incitement of violence. The siege claimed five lives. A wave of Trump allies were also purged, including conspiracy-pushing attorney L. Lin Wood, former national security adviser Michael Flynn and ex-Trump campaign lawyer Sidney Powell, the latter two suspended as part of a crackdown on QAnon content after spending weeks fueling claims that the 2020 election outcome was illegitimate.

While many cheered Twitter's ban of Trump, the counter-arguments quickly emerged: The site was holding the president to a different standard than other world leaders. It was biased, hypocritical, and attempting to destroy free speech. Why, some questioned, was Trump being

policed so harshly as others were left alone.

Twitter 'slow' to confront problems

Brian L. Ott, a professor and Department Head of Communication at Missouri State University who co-authored a book titled The Twitter Presidency: Donald J. Trump and the Politics of White Rage told Newsweek "public pressure" was only one reason. He said: "My sense is that Twitter was slow to confront hate speech, violent content, and misinformation on its platform. The structural biases of the medium breed these dark and disturbing dimensions. The platform has ignored them for too long.

"In my judgment, Twitter wants it both ways," the professor continued. "On one hand, it wants to be seen as a public square that promotes free speech. On the other hand, it wants to be seen as a private company that is free to make decisions about what to publish or not publish. This tension is at the heart of current debates." It's not hard to find

allegations that Twitter's enforcement policies are inconsistent at best, or not fit-for-purpose at worst. One of the most-cited examples was posted in 2018 by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, who described Israel as being a "malignant cancerous tumor" that should be "removed and eradicated."

The tweet remains online without any of the warning labels or flags popularized by the social network as it sought to curb misinformation during the U.S. presidential election last year. Comments pointing out the apparent disparity now fill the responses.

Twitter typically gives world leaders more room to operate than general users as their updates are in the public interest, though "clear and direct threats of violence" and the promotion of terrorism are still against the website's official policy. In July last year, a Twitter spokesperson suggested Khamenei's post was "foreign policy saber-rattling" that didn't violate its policies, The Times of Israel reported. A Twitter spokesperson told

Newsweek on Friday via email: "We label government accounts associated with the Permanent 5 of the United Nations and will expand this soon. We've taken enforcement action on world leaders prior to this. Our recent action [against Trump] focuses on the harm presented by this account specifically." The Permanent 5 of the United Nations Security Council consists of the United States, China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom.

But it's not just Iran. Twitter was forced to address a tweet on January 8 posted by the Chinese Embassy in the U.S. which said Uighur women in Xinjiang were "emancipated" and health education meant they were "no longer baby-making machines."

According to Ars Technica, the Chinese government's tweet was initially deemed not to have violated any rules by a spokesperson, before eventually being taken down.

The Associated Press (AP) has previously reported China's attempt to limit its Muslim population included forced birth control, sterilization and abortion. China has been documented as detaining up to a million Uighurs in "re-education camps."



Twitter and Facebook Just Proved That Deplatforming Works

The peaceful protests on Inauguration Day show what happens when social media companies refuse to let white supremacists use them to organize and incite violence.

We now have evidence that the biggest threat to American democracy was not the violent rioters who stormed the Capitol on January 6, but the bad-faith Republicans who work at the Capitol and spent two months fueling the Big Lie that the election was stolen in the first place. We also have evidence that ex-president Donald Trump could never have threatened democratic self-government without the help of social media companies. And we now have a case study on what happens to insurrectionists when private companies refuse to let them use those platforms to recruit, organize, and incite violence.

The cowards melt away. Deplatforming works. Delegitimizing people like Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley and Trump works. Inauguration Day proved that. My fears of violence at the inauguration of President Joe Biden did not come to pass—thankfully. The day went off without a hitch. Covid-19 made this inauguration look different from all the recent ones, not white supremacists in red hats. Joe Biden still got to fist-bump Al Roker. Katy Perry got to sing "Firework" to fireworks. It was a

beautiful day. It's fair to say that putting 25,000 troops on the ground and locking down Washington, D.C., for a week probably played a bigger role in securing the inauguration than temporarily suspending Majorie Taylor Greene from Twitter. And one can only hope that militarizing the ceremonial functions of government does not become a "new normal" we all have to endure. But there was no analogous show of might at state capitols, which the Capitol insurrectionists and other extremist groups had also threatened to attack. While state governments beefed up security ahead of the inauguration, they didn't go with the full military burlesque. However, on the day of reckoning, after the months of threats and maskless protests and plots to harm elected officials, nobody showed up to the rumble. There was no "storm." There was no "Kraken." There was no West Side Story—just "The Sound of Silence."

Well, I shouldn't say "nobody." One person showed up in Albany, N.Y., to protest the election. A handful showed up in Sacramento, Calif., to do the same. One guy showed up in

Vermont... to protest the injustice of the automated customer service provided by AT&T. I tried to document the "protests" at state capitols around the country on Inauguration Day, because it turns out "lone Trump supporter" is actually my favorite phrase in the English language right now.

What changed between January 6, when these people gathered in significant numbers to invade the Capitol, and January 20, when these people couldn't maintain the intensity of John Cusack in *Say Anything*?

There are a lot of factors, but I would argue that the biggest one is that the social media companies took away their toys. One protester at the Texas state capitol in Austin even said so. Kaley Johnson, a reporter at the Fort-Worth Star-Telegram, cited a man who said he "expected more people to be here, but was banned from Facebook so didn't know if anything was planned." This is a truth that the social media companies have been denying all along in their attempts to justify making money off the forces that threaten democracy. Twitter and especially Facebook act like they are neutral platforms that are not



responsible for the recruitment and aggregation of violent extremists. But we've seen report after report from experts in radicalization who have exposed how social media platforms are tools that are used to coordinate violence. January 20 is what happens when these platforms take even minimal steps to block violent extremists from their services. After the Capitol siege, Facebook finally decided to ban QAnon accounts. It didn't even ban that many accounts: Reports suggest it restricted around 2,000 Facebook groups and around 10,000 Instagram accounts, barely a dent in its overall user base. Yet, scarcely two weeks after removing some of the most obvious bad users, the "violent insurrectionists" are already reduced to a couple of randos milling around state capitols with arts-and-crafts projects, wondering where the party

went. Facebook and Twitter also removed the most notorious bad user: Trump. The last 10 days have been blissfully void of his inane complaints about the election and terrifying love notes to white supremacists. And look what's happened. The New York Times reports that the Proud Boys, who pledged themselves to "Emperor Trump" not three months ago, are now calling him a "total failure." Removing Trump from his Twitter account for only two weeks has already helped to cause a rift between the militant forces of white supremacy and the head of the Republican Party. I will always believe that if Twitter had banned Trump's account the moment he started lying about the results of the election, five people would not have died in a riot at the Capitol. I will also believe that if Twitter had banned Trump's account the moment he started lying about the coronavirus, hundreds of thousands of people might have been saved from this disease. And I will always believe that if Twitter had banned Trump's account the moment he started lying about Barack Obama's nation of birth, he would never have been president in the first place. That tells us a lot more about Twitter and the social media universe that distorts reality than it does about Trump. After all, it's not like the man was "silenced." It's not like he, or anybody else who had their accounts blocked in the wake of January 6, were stripped of their First Amendment rights. Indeed, to me, the most beautiful thing about these state capitol protests around the inauguration was not the schadenfreude but how those protests proved that the First Amendment is alive and well, and people who exercise their rights pose no real threat to free elections or democratic self-government.

Twitter locks China's US embassy account for Xinjiang-related tweet

Twitter has locked the account of China's U.S. embassy for a tweet that defended China's policies in the Xinjiang region, which the U.S. social media platform said violated the firm's policy against "dehumanization." The Chinese Embassy account, @ChineseEmbinUS, posted a tweet this month that said that Uighur women were no longer "baby making machines," citing a study reported by state-backed newspaper China Daily. The tweet was removed by Twitter and replaced by a label stating that it was no longer available. Although Twitter hides tweets that violate its policies, it requires account owners to manually delete such posts. The Chinese

embassy's account has not posted any new tweets since Jan. 9. Twitter's suspension of the embassy's account came a day after the Trump administration, in its final hours, accused China of committing genocide in Xinjiang, a finding endorsed by the incoming Biden administration. The Biden administration did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Twitter's move. "We've taken action on the Tweet you referenced for violating our policy against dehumanization, where it states: We prohibit the dehumanization of a group of people based on their religion, caste, age, disability, serious disease,

national origin, race, or ethnicity," a Twitter spokesperson said on Thursday. The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a e-mailed request for comment. Twitter is blocked in China but is an increasingly favored platform by China's diplomats and state media. China has repeatedly rejected accusations of abuse in its Xinjiang region, where a United Nations panel has said at least 1 million Uighurs and other Muslims had been detained in camps. Last year, a report by German researcher Adrian Zenz published by the Washington-based Jamestown Foundation

think tank accused China of using forced sterilization, forced abortion and coercive family planning against minority Muslims. The Chinese foreign ministry said the allegations were groundless and false. Twitter's move also follows the removal of the account of former U.S. president Donald Trump, which had 88 million followers, citing the risk of violence after his supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol this month. Twitter had locked Trump's account, asking for deletion of some tweets, before restoring it and then removing it altogether after the former president violated the platform's policies again.

Twitter refused to remove child porn because it didn't 'violate policies': lawsuit



Twitter refused to take down widely shared pornographic images and videos of a teenage sex trafficking victim because an investigation "didn't find a violation" of the company's "policies," a scathing lawsuit alleges.

The federal suit, filed Wednesday by the victim and his mother in the Northern District of California, alleges Twitter made money off the clips, which showed a 13-year-old engaged in sex acts and are a form of child sexual abuse material, or child porn, the suit states.

The teen - who is now 17 and lives in Florida - is identified only as John Doe and was between 13 and 14 years old when sex traffickers, posing as a 16-year-old female classmate, started chatting with him on Snapchat, the suit alleges.

Doe and the traffickers allegedly exchanged nude photos before

the conversation turned to blackmail: If the teen didn't share more sexually graphic photos and videos, the explicit material he'd already sent would be shared with his "parents, coach, pastor" and others, the suit states.

Doe, acting under duress, initially complied and sent videos of himself performing sex acts and was also told to include another child in his videos, which he did, the suit claims.

Eventually, Doe blocked the traffickers and they stopped harassing him, but at some point in 2019, the videos surfaced on Twitter under two accounts that were known to share child sexual abuse material, court papers allege.

Over the next month, the videos would be reported to Twitter at least three times - first on Dec. 25, 2019 - but the tech giant failed to do anything about it until a fed-

eral law enforcement officer got involved, the suit states.

Doe became aware of the tweets in January 2020 because they'd been viewed widely by his classmates, which subjected him to "teasing, harassment, vicious bullying" and led him to become "suicidal," court records show.

While Doe's parents contacted the school and made police reports, he filed a complaint with Twitter, saying there were two tweets depicting child pornography of himself and they needed to be removed because they were illegal, harmful and were in violation of the site's policies.

A support agent followed up and asked for a copy of Doe's ID so they could prove it was him and after the teen complied, there was no response for a week, the family claims.

Around the same time, Doe's mother filed two complaints to Twitter reporting the same material and for a week, she also received no response, the suit states.

Finally on Jan. 28, Twitter replied to Doe and said they wouldn't be taking down the material, which had already racked up over 167,000 views and 2,223 retweets, the suit states.

"Thanks for reaching out. We've reviewed the content, and didn't find a violation of our policies, so no action will be taken at this time," the response reads, ac-

cording to the lawsuit.

"If you believe there's a potential copyright infringement, please start a new report. If the content is hosted on a third-party website, you'll need to contact that website's support team to report it. Your safety is the most important thing, and if you believe you are in danger, we encourage you to contact your local authorities."

In his response, published in the complaint, Doe appeared shocked.

"What do you mean you don't see a problem? We both are minors right now and were minors at the time these videos were taken. We both were 13 years of age. We were baited, harassed, and threatened to take these videos that are now being posted without our permission. We did not authorize these videos AT ALL and they need to be taken down," the teen wrote back to Twitter.

He even included his case number from a local law enforcement agency, but still the tech giant allegedly ignored him and refused to do anything about the illegal child sexual abuse material - as it continued to rack up more and more views.

Two days later, Doe's mom was connected with an agent from the Department of Homeland Security through a mutual contact who successfully had the

videos removed on Jan. 30, the suit states.

"Only after this take-down demand from a federal agent did Twitter suspend the user accounts that were distributing the CSAM and report the CSAM to the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children," states the suit, filed by the National Center on Sexual Exploitation and two law firms. "This is directly in contrast to what their automated reply message and User Agreement state they will do to protect children." The disturbing lawsuit goes on to allege Twitter knowingly hosts creeps who use the platform to exchange child porn material and profits from it by including ads interspersed between tweets advertising or requesting the material. Early Thursday, Twitter declined comment to The Post but later in the day, reversed course and sent a statement by email. "Twitter has zero-tolerance for any material that features or promotes child sexual exploitation. We aggressively fight online child sexual abuse and have heavily invested in technology and tools to enforce our policy, a Twitter spokesperson wrote.

"Our dedicated teams work to stay ahead of bad-faith actors and to ensure we're doing everything we can to remove content, facilitate investigations, and protect minors from harm - both on and offline."

How will Trump handle life without Twitter and Facebook? Ask Alex Jones.

What happens when the former leader of the free world gets deplatformed? We're going to find out.

Donald Trump is out of the White House. And he's been kicked off of the world's biggest tech platforms. Now what?

We don't yet have any idea what Trump really plans to do now that he's a private citizen (he probably doesn't either). We also don't know what will happen to Trump's reach and power without access to Twitter and the rest of his social media bullhorns.

In the past, we've seen big - but compared to Trump, comparatively tiny - right-wing figures diminish considerably once they've been deplatformed. But none of them used to be the leader of the free world.

"Trump is going to be an interesting case because he is so prominent," says Renee DiResta, a researcher at the

Stanford Internet Observatory. "He's not a fringe figure popular within a passionate-yet-small audience. He [was] the president of the United States."

So it may be useful to look at the experiences of some of the fringe figures who have had their social media plugs pulled over the last few years, like Milo Yiannopoulos and Alex Jones - who, not coincidentally, helped set the stage for Trump and the post-truth world he created for the last four years. For now, though, we can only make guesses about what happens to Trump without a platform.

A few things we are certain about right now: Trump is unlikely to command an audience - at least, directly - on mainstream social media services for a long time.

Although Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey posted a mournful thread last week about his company's decision to boot Trump in the aftermath of the Capitol riot, Twitter says the ban is permanent. (A Twitter comms rep did suggest to me, perhaps cheekily, that Trump could try the company's appeals page.)

Mark Zuckerberg hasn't said Trump would be banned from Facebook and Instagram forever; instead, he has said the ban would last at least "until the peaceful transition of power is complete." But informed people I've talked to at the company say there won't be any change now that Joe Biden is the 46th president, and they can't imagine a scenario where something does change.



YouTube, which waited several days after its Big Tech peers to ban Trump, and initially announced a ban that would run through the inauguration, has in theory given Trump the most hope: On Tuesday, the company said it would extend the ban another week instead of indefinitely banning him. But it's hard to imagine YouTube breaking from the rest of its peers and let-

ting Trump back in.

More to the point, while Trump's campaign spent heavily on YouTube, and he used it to broadcast his farewell address (via the official White House account, which YouTube said was okay), Donald Trump has yet to show any real interest in the video site. The same goes for Snapchat - which has officially banned Trump.



Lohri, Farmers, And The Enemy Within

Children go from one house to another demanding sweets and savories, just as bonfires are lit at village squares around which farming families sing traditional songs and toss treats into the fire.

This Lohri was markedly different. Large segments of the farming community have moved to the borders of Delhi to demand repeal of the agricultural laws. Through their protest they want to articulate this: The harvest season or the advent of new beginnings-is not going to be seasonal. The farmers we met at Tikri were clear that their demand for repeal was in sync with their yearning for a total transformation-an ouster of the suit-boot sarkar; end of

discrimination against minorities; and most vocally, the end of religious polarisation, which has escalated to unprecedented levels in recent years. The farmers were firm that change needs to be total and irreversible. Religious harmony held out as the strongest glue binding communities in their zeal for a break from past injustices. Kartar Singh, a 75-year-old farmer from Punjab who spent over two

decades serving the army, said farmers were in solidarity with those affected by the revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir and caste-based repressions, as well as the victims of riots and hate-crimes. Singh was insistent he

bouts of illness camping out in Delhi's harsh winter, said the Jat shopkeepers around their habitation had gone "over and beyond" for their family-from helping them wash their clothes to making them feel "included"

Singh, a local leader from Haryana. "If religion has been used to turn people against each other and marginalize minorities, we are using our spiritual centres to foster unity and tolerance."

egging tractors and trolleys packed with farmers to mobilize people of all faiths across the 18-km stretch in their common fight against injustices.

"We will not rest till our movement spreads like cancer

across the country," said Harsimran Sanjha from a farming community near Ludhiana. "If they say Khalistanis have infiltrated our protest sites, they must know we all uphold Gandhi's ideals of ahimsa and satya."

The local paper, The Trolley Times, produced out of a tractor by farmers themselves, was being widely circulated urging all communities to show the strength of their unity. Some farmers we spoke to, said,



would spend Lohri around a ritual fire tearing to bits farm bills along with his Hindu and Muslim brethren. The laws, he harped, have sparked the thirst for freedom just as the thirst to overthrow the yoke of colonial rule. "This is a historic moment in our country's fight for democracy, the only difference being the enemy is within and not outside," he said. Singh's sons who helped him survive severe

in the city. Singh's family, in turn, invited them to their langars and tea breaks. After Lohri, they want to bring their women to the protest site to join in the demand for recovery and healing from a multi-faced pandemic.

Thousands of women marched declaring the protests as not merely an agrarian-political movement but a long-term call to conscience. "This is a spiritual battleground for us," said Savitri

Unlike the more popular Singhu border where interfaith harmony was abundantly clear through the presence of Muslim farmers from Malerkotla serving langar, Khalsa warrior Sikhs in their electric blue attire mobilizing communities, or even small gestures of inclusion by fringe religious outfits, in Tikri the Lohri festival's message was more understated.

Farming women-seen as the bearers of spiritual wisdom-were

their tractors and the habitations around them were symbols of solidarity, and their local paper's cultural output would maximize during religious festivals such as Lohri.

If Lohri set the tone for religious harmony against hate and misinformation, the upcoming tractor march on January 26 from the borders into the streets of Delhi is geared towards furthering that.

The whole world is watching Biden as he takes charge

Some of these first day priorities he will be in a position to accomplish through a series of executive orders, drafted and teed up on his desk for his first hours.

But his most difficult task will be to convince the growing band of skeptics around the world -- most of whom want so desperately to embrace an America that may be long gone -- that the Biden years are not simply a golden interregnum as America takes a respite before again plunging ever more deeply into a toxic maelstrom of conservatism, isolationism and self-interest. "Day One, if I win, I'm going to be on the phone with our NATO allies saying, 'We're back,' " he told KPNX in Phoenix last summer. "We're back, and you can count on us again."

So what else should be on Biden's Day One priorities list? To begin, there's reversing a series of Trump withdrawals: return to the Paris Climate Accords; return to the World Health Organization and restore the \$90 million in funding the US owes. Both of these are unquestionably flawed, but they can be better reformed from within than without.

Equally, the United States needs to either find its way back into or find some way of restoring several treaties Trump bolted out of with little real understanding of the consequences. The Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty were both victims of Trump's ill-considered ire. Just last week, Russia joined the US in withdrawing from the Open Skies accord, which allows unfettered overflights of military sites by observation aircraft. About the only major East-West arms treaty still left is the New START agreement, set to expire next month and which needs desperately to be re-upped to prevent a new, unchecked nuclear arms race.

Then there's a succession of ongoing flashpoints or endemic crises that Biden, his Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan will need urgently to confront, but with a host of immediate obstacles that outgoing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has hardly hesitated to strew in their path.



Iran has already been doing its best to wait out the new administration in Washington and see what new directions it might be prepared to take. The ayatollahs seem to have shown some restraint in allowing the first anniversary of the assassination of their military hero Gen. Qasem Soleimani on January 3, 2020, -- ordered by

awaiting the Biden team, announcing a host of sanctions against Iran's military-industrial complex last week, against its shipping industry and against institutions controlled by Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his associates, who Pompeo described as "Iran's corrupt leaders." And he announced with little evidence

and Russia. Both are at once immediately pressing -- and long-term problems. The Biden team will need to develop a long-term strategy in dealing with China. To do so, they will need to understand and accept China's principal need -- recognition that it is a dominant world power in virtually every respect. No doubt this means the United States cannot hope to compete and emerge victorious on its own.

"Trying to compete one-on-one with China is a much more difficult prospect than trying to build partnerships with allies and like-minded states around the world to compete against them together," Michèle Flournoy, a foreign policy and defense veteran of the Obama presidency, told me in a recent interview. In a host of areas, from technology to Indo-Pacific security, to economics and trade, China will continue to grow and pose an ever-increasing threat at every turn. "What we want to try to do is figure out early in the game is how do we compete successfully with China in those areas without ending up in a war between two nuclear powers," Flournoy said. And then, six days before the inauguration, along came Pompeo with new visa restriction and sanctions against Chinese communist party members and corporations designed only to inflame relations.

The big question over sanctions also hovers over America's dealings with Russia, and especially Vladimir Putin. It took more than a month for Putin to recognize Biden's victory. But

Biden does not seem to have much appetite for the "reset" in relations with Russia that marked the early days of the Obama presidency. Which is not to say that eventually business might not be done. For the moment, however, it may best to monitor Putin's response. Will Russia continue buzzing US ships in international waters, infiltrating troops and materiel into eastern Ukraine, assassinating political opponents at home and abroad? As Ambassador Kurt Volker, deeply involved for years in east-west issues, told me in an interview last week, Biden needs to tell Putin early on that, "If you persist in this we will keep up the counter pressure on you, but you need to signal that you're willing to actually come to the table with us. For once, it's not on the US or the West to reset our policies. It's time for Russia to rethink its policies."

Seizing Putin-opponent Alexei Navalny at the Moscow airport Sunday on his return from Germany did not seem to be any move in that direction.

And lastly, there is North Korea. Already, dictator Kim Jong Un has thrown down the gauntlet. Last week, he gave a surprise preview of a massive pipeline of advanced new weaponry -- military drones, a nuclear-powered submarine, smaller and lighter missiles with greater range and multiple warheads. Without neighboring China and Russia on board, not to mention a Europe that is more immediately focused on Iran, there are few possible restraints on Kim's actions. After all, he's already wrung the principal benefit of global recognition as an "equal" of an American president out of his ill-conceived summits with Trump.

Inherent in so many of these challenges is the restoration of alliances and partnerships with many of America's natural friends and allies, particularly in Europe. Which brings us full-circle to Biden's overwhelming need to re-establish a global or at least Western order led by a newly rational and globalist America.

Gone must be "America First." Welcome, "America One Among Many" -- erasing as quickly as possible a host of toxic red lines that were the hallmark of the Trump years.



Trump -- to go largely unmarked. But a day after the anniversary, Iran did announce with some fanfare it would begin enriching uranium to 20% concentration -- a clear breach of the nuclear treaty known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action from which Trump withdrew and Biden has pledged to revive and re-enter. (After the killing of Soleimani, Iran announced that it wouldn't restrict itself to the plan.) Waiting in the wings is an expansion of Iran's ballistic missile program, which Jake Sullivan told CNN's Fareed Zakaria must be on the table to deal with early-on. Already, Iran has threatened to expel international nuclear inspectors if sanctions aren't lifted by February 21. Pompeo has further not improved the atmosphere

that Iran had allowed al-Qaeda to set up its headquarters in Tehran, then slapped on more sanctions.

All these moves are obstacles to building the kind of trust that Biden and his team must assemble if they are going to be able to return to the JCPOA agreement designed to restrain Iran's dash toward a nuclear weapon.

Meanwhile, Trump's interim Defense Secretary Chris Miller announced -- with apparent pride -- that the Pentagon has completed the reduction to 2,500 of American troop levels from Afghanistan and Iraq each, to the lowest levels in two decades. Whether this might embolden the Taliban or Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq remains to be seen. Then there are China

He may hold the winning ticket in tech and Silicon Valley knows it

Its super-cheap data has helped bring hundreds of millions of Indians online for the first time. When Ambani launched Jio, India had fewer than 350 million internet users. Now, it has 750 million.

"A lot of this change, especially in terms of bringing people online, has happened on the back of the positive disruption that Jio triggered," Ajit Mohan, Facebook's vice president and managing director in India, told CNN Business. "Jio has been the hero in that story in terms of providing that access, and I think that sets the context for our investment and Jio and our partnership, because... we saw alignment of the vision."

Ambani's vision keeps getting bigger.

After raising more than \$20 billion for Jio Platforms, Reliance went courting investors for its retail business. Between late September and early November, Reliance Retail raised around \$6.4 billion, much of it coming from Jio investors including Silver Lake, General Atlantic, TPG as well as the sovereign wealth fund of Saudi Arabia.

Ambani's retail chain is the biggest in India, with more than 12,000 stores. And he has made no secret of his ambitions to combine his retail and tech empires to take on two big US players. Amazon (AMZN) and Walmart's (WMT) Flipkart dominate online shopping in India, controlling more than 60% of the market between them. Ambani is making an aggressive play for a slice.

He's doing that with JioMart, an initiative announced in 2019 to bring online thousands of India's mom-and-pop stores known as "kiranas." And Reliance Retail recently acquired one of its biggest Indian rivals, Future Retail, for \$3.3 billion - a deal that has kicked off a protracted and complex legal battle with Amazon.

Even as he digests all of that, India's richest man is already looking to the next big thing - bringing 5G to India in the second half of 2021.

"It will be powered by an indigenous developed network, hardware, and technology components," Ambani told a virtual audience at the India Mobile Congress in November, in a possible nod to calls for China's Huawei to be excluded from



building the country's 5G network.

Any one of those plans on its own would be a big undertaking and executing them all together is a huge ask even for one of the world's top billionaires. His ambition is to fundamentally transform the way more than a billion people communicate, do business and make purchases. And the ultimate goal is to reach billions more.

"We are creating compelling homegrown solutions in education, health care, agriculture, infrastructure, financial services and new commerce," Ambani said in his speech. "Each of these solutions, once proven in India,

will be offered to the rest of the world to address global challenges."

Geography vs Technology

But the billionaire, who is reportedly looking to take Jio public in the United States, may find it challenging to parlay the company's meteoric rise in India into success on the global stage. "Reliance does not have any one area where it has a technological edge and superiority like say Google's search, Facebook's portfolio of social networks, Amazon's e-commerce engine, Alibaba's combination of strengths in e-commerce and payments or Tencent's super app," said Ravi Shankar Chaturvedi, research director at

the Institute for Business in the Global Context at Tufts University's Fletcher School.

Rather, Jio's dominance has been largely geographical, helped by a regulatory regime that supports homegrown players.

"One would be hard pressed to come up with a meaningful list of technological innovations and IP that Jio created that could be the basis for its expansion abroad," Chaturvedi added.

India is, of course, a massive prize in itself that Jio has largely already captured.

The country's online population of 750 million - second only to China, which has shut out US companies for decades - is the

biggest draw for global tech. Facebook, Google, Amazon, Netflix (NFLX) and Uber (UBER), to name a few, have already spent several years and billions of dollars to crack open the market.

"For Silicon Valley, the Indian market alone is bigger than the five next biggest consumer markets - by population - in the world combined," said Chaturvedi.

Where China has its "Great Firewall" of online censorship that keeps out US tech companies en masse, Ambani has succeeded in creating a "Great Indian Paywall" that runs through Jio, Chaturvedi argues. Global tech firms have been forced to navigate a series of regulatory hurdles from an Indian government that has shown a greater willingness to clamp down on foreign players - whether blocking Facebook's efforts to provide free internet, changing how companies can store and collect data or, more recently, shutting out Chinese tech companies over a border dispute.

Ambani has been the biggest beneficiary of many of those regulations, and the billionaire has been a vocal champion of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his campaign for a "self-reliant" India.

Donald Trump's farewell: We did what we came to do

The people who still believe Trump won What else did Trump say?

Mr Trump himself has been impeached for "incitement of insurrection" over the attack and will face trial in the Senate after he leaves office. If convicted, he could be barred from standing for public office.

He is the first president in US history to be impeached twice. At his first trial, he was cleared on charges relating to dealings with Ukraine by the majority from his own Republican Party.

The politically motivated violence has overshadowed the growing toll from the coronavirus pandemic, in which more than 400,000 Americans have died and 24 million have been infected. In his message, Mr Trump said his administration built "the greatest economy in the history of the world". US stock markets have rebounded from the coronavirus

pandemic, with the tech-heavy Nasdaq index up 42% in 2020, and the wider S&P 500 up 15%. However, the rest of the economy is facing more of a struggle. Employers cut jobs in December, ending a string of job gains. Retail sales have dropped in recent months, while jobless claims rise. "Our agenda was not about right or left, it wasn't about Republican or Democrat, but about the good of a nation, and that means the whole nation," Mr Trump said.

He leaves office with an approval rating of 34%, a record low for a departing president. Donald Trump, in his 20-minute pre-recorded farewell speech, said his administration did what it came to do and more. One can debate the significance of his accomplishments - whether 400 miles (640km) of rebuilt border wall, tax cuts, regulatory rollbacks, confirmed judges, trade

wars and modest Mid-East diplomatic agreements amount to much in the way of substantive achievement.

But at least in one way, his boast is certainly true. Trump ran for president in 2016 to shake up the existing political order. He campaigned as an outsider giving voice to those who distrusted the establishment and felt the system no longer worked for them. "I took on the tough battles, the hardest fights, the most difficult choices because that's what you elected me to do," he said. The unrest and resentment that Trump rode to the White House crested and crashed on the US Capitol two weeks ago, leaving behind wreckage - literal and metaphorical - that will take time and effort to clear. After four years of shattered norms and traditions, of turning expectations of presidential behaviour on their head, Trump leaves US

government changed - fundamentally and, perhaps, irreversibly. That, at least, was a promise made and a promise kept. How is Biden preparing for office? Mr Biden and his wife Jill Biden left their home state of Delaware on Tuesday to return to Washington, where the incoming president served as a senator for 36 years before becoming vice-president to Barack Obama from 2008 to 2016. "When I die, Delaware will be written on my heart," he said in an emotional farewell speech. On Wednesday, he will go to the White House and then the Capitol for his inauguration at 12:00 (17:00 GMT). This will be an inauguration like no other: Washington is under heavy security after the Capitol riots, with thousands of reserve soldiers from the National Guard deployed and metal fences around the White House.

Post-Trump, the need for fact checking isn't going away

This week, we ask the question: What comes next for America and disinformation? The past four years have seen an alarming erosion in the public trust in news, coupled with a spread of conspiracy theories, junk science and outright falsehoods by none other than the President of the United States. With a new president elected, how does Joe Biden help steer the country back toward facts, science and truth? SE Cupp talks to CNN Senior Political Analyst John Avlon about all this and more in our CNN Digital video discussion, but first Avlon tackles the future of fact checking in a CNN Opinion op-ed.

Fact checking has been a growth industry in the Trump era. The sheer velocity of Donald Trump's false and misleading statements -- along with the proliferation of disinformation on social media -- have demanded significant fact-checking to defend liberal democracy. The market responded to the demand: According to the Duke Reporter's Lab, global fact checking organizations grew from 145 in 2016 to 304 by mid-2020. But will the need for fact checking lose its urgency when Trump leaves the White House?

Let's start by recognizing reality. Fact checking Democrats this election cycle has offered a far less target rich environment. This is not because either party has a monopoly on virtue or vice, but because Democrats' falsehoods during their presidential debates have been comparatively pedestrian -- likely to focus

on



competing claims about calculating the 10-year cost of Medicare for All, or who wrote what gun control bill, or how many manufacturing jobs have been lost, or when a candidate really started supporting a raise in the minimum wage.

Make no mistake: It's essential to clarify policy disagreements and insist on fact-based debates. But it's not exactly got the moral urgency of fact checking the President's retweet of baseless

Osama Bin Laden conspiracy theories, or blaming rising Covid-19 infection rates on more testing, or demanding the investigation of political opponents, or saying that Joe Biden is "against God" -- all in the final weeks of the

campaign. But even if President-elect Biden is not going to be found the "single largest driver" of coronavirus misinformation in the world, as a Cornell University study declared Trump, the need for fact checking is not going away. That's because the disinformation ecosystem is still proliferating via social media and the hyper-partisan fragmentation of society. Trump is a symptom rather than its root cause. There

is every reason to hope that the presence of a president who does not lie all the time will not exacerbate our divides on a daily basis. But it would be dangerously naïve to believe that the underlying infrastructure of hate news and fake news will be solved with a new president. "If

we do not have the capacity to distinguish what's true from what's false, then by definition the marketplace of ideas doesn't work," former President Barack Obama recently told The Atlantic.

"And by definition our democracy doesn't work." Democracy depends upon reasoning together.

And that's what is being threatened. The old KGB hand, now Russian President Vladimir Putin understood that social media presented an unprecedented opportunity to proliferate disinformation, while most Americans were still waxing poetic about its potential to bring people together. In fairness, it can do both -- but without established guardrails and updated standards, we've learned the hard way that lies spread faster on social media than the truth. The prominence of the toxic nonsense QAnon

conspiracy theory in Republican circles, and exit polls showing that 51% of Americans think the efforts to contain the coronavirus are going well (when cases are spiking and our country has almost 20% of the world's deaths) indicate just how much the rot has set in.

Reforms are necessary. As I've written before on CNN Opinion, "Social media and tech platforms have a responsibility not to run knowingly false advertisements or promote intentionally false stories. They must disclose who is paying for digital political ads and crack down on the spread of disinformation. The Honest Ads Act would require the same disclosures that are required on television and radio right now. This is a no brainer. The profit motive from hate news and fake news might be reduced by moving digital advertising toward attention metrics to measure and monetize reader engagement and loyalty, incentivizing quality over clickbait. But perhaps the single biggest reform would come from social media companies requiring that accounts verify they are real people, rather than bots that bully people and manipulate public opinion."

Exclusive: Inside the migrant-smuggling cartel in West Bengal

An India Today TV investigation has found human smugglers doubling as money changers in poll-bound West Bengal, bringing illegal migrants via relatively weak defences along the international border.

With reported cases of infiltration along the Bangladesh border down because of stringent measures, people smugglers on both sides seem to be working in tandem to sneak illegal migrants in through less secured routes, an India Today TV investigation has found.

India's multi-pronged approach involving hi-tech surveillance, new observation posts, intense patrolling, fencing, and floodlighting has led to a drop in the number of arrests of illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators from 3,426 in 2015 to 1,351 in 2019, according to the home ministry. More than 5,900 infiltrators were deported to Bangladesh six years ago. Their number came down to 2,175 in 2019, official

figures show. DOUBLING AS MONEY CHANGERS

But an India Today TV investigation has found human smugglers doubling as money changers in poll-bound West Bengal, bringing illegal migrants via relatively weak defences along the international border.

Banka, who operated Sabhar Enterprise money-changing facility at the Petrapole integrated check post, about 80 km from Kolkata, solicited Rs 15,000 per head to facilitate illegal migration into India.

He confessed that people smugglers now work more closely on both sides of the Indo-Bangladesh border.

"Earlier people used to cross for Rs 3,000, 4,000, 8,000, 10,000.

Now that has gone up to Rs 15,000, 16,000, 17,000. People are demanding per their wish," he told India Today TV's investigative reporter.

He hinted that the ring also organised forged IDs of both countries to help free migrants in the event of potential arrests by border guards on either side. "If they are caught in Bangladesh, then a Bangladeshi address is needed and if they get caught in India, then an Indian address is needed. Then it becomes easier to free them," Banka said.

The operation, he said, takes place after it gets dark through routes like Maslandapur, Hanskhali, and Bangaon in West Bengal.



"It costs Rs 15,000 (per head). We have people over there. I will talk over the phone. Does your man have a Bangla (Bangladeshi) number?" he asked India Today TV's undercover reporter. "Give that number to us, I will make him understand. They can come from that side, from the Maslandapur side and from the Hanskhali side as well. They will come from the line where the condition is good." Just 50 meters

from the border, another money changer, Madhab Saha, guaranteed to smuggle Bangladeshi migrants if paid Rs 18,000 per person.

"There's a 200 per cent guarantee (to bring them in)," he offered. You will pay me 18,000 Indian rupees. It's a 200 per cent guarantee. You will give money and your job will be done." Saha confessed that his network smuggles three to four people every week.



US historians on what Donald Trump's legacy will be

At noon on Wednesday, President Donald Trump's term will end. It's been a whirlwind four years, so what might the legacy be of such a history-making president?

There's a lot to consider, so we asked the experts to break it down for us.

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

'His relationship with alt-right' Matthew Continetti is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, focusing on the development of the Republican Party and the American conservative movement.

What's Trump's key legacy? Donald Trump will be remembered as the first president to be impeached twice. He fed the myth that the election was stolen, summoned his supporters to Washington to protest the certification of the Electoral College vote, told them that only through strength could they take back their country, and stood by as they stormed the US Capitol and interfered in the operation of constitutional government.

When historians write about his presidency, they will do so through the lens of the riot.

They will focus on Trump's tortured relationship with the alt-right, his atrocious handling of the deadly Charlottesville protest in 2017, the rise in violent right-wing extremism during his tenure in office, and the viral spread of malevolent conspiracy theories that he encouraged.

" Trump's shock troops: Who are the 'alt-right'? US far-right is furious at impeachment"

What else stands out to you? If Donald Trump had followed the example of his predecessors and conceded power graciously and peacefully, he would have been remembered as a disruptive but consequential populist leader.

A president who, before the pandemic, presided over an economic boom, re-oriented America's opinion of China, removed terrorist leaders from the battlefield, revamped the space program, secured an originalist (conservative) majority on the US Supreme Court, and authorised

mentality. I don't think it succeeded, but the question is how profound has the damage to America's international reputation been - and that remains to be seen.

The moment I found jaw-dropping was the press conference he had with Vladimir Putin in 2018 in Helsinki, where he took Putin's side over US intelligence in regard to Russian interference in the election. I can't think of another episode of a president siding full force with a non-democratic society adversary.

the US with regimes that are the antithesis of values that the US says it wants to promote. That is something that I think was really quite distinctive.

Another aspect is extricating the US from any really assertive role in promoting human rights throughout the world, and changing the content of the annual human rights reports from the State Department and not including many topics, like LGBT equality, for instance.

" Melania's jacket and nine other defining images

'Putting democracy to the test'

Kathryn Brownell is a history professor at Purdue University, focusing on the relationships between media, politics, and popular culture, with an emphasis on the American presidency.

What's Trump's key legacy?

Broadly speaking: Donald Trump, and

his enablers in the Republican Party and conservative media, have put American democracy to the test in an unprecedented way. As a historian who studies the intersection of media and the presidency, it is truly striking the ways in which he has convinced millions of people that his fabricated version of events is true.

" 'Three quarters of Trump voters believe he won' What happened on 6 January at the US Capitol is a culmination of over four years during which President

Trump actively advanced misinformation.

Just as Watergate and the impeachment inquiry dominated historical interpretations of Richard Nixon's legacy for decades, I do think that this particular post-election moment will be at the forefront of historical assessments of his presidency.

What else stands out to you?

Kellyanne Conway's first introduction of the notion of "alternative facts" just days into the Trump administration when disputing the size of the inaugural crowds between Trump and Barack Obama. Presidents across the 20th Century have increasingly used sophisticated measures to spin interpretation of policies and events in favourable ways and to control the media narrative of their administrations. But the assertion that the administration had a right to its own alternative facts went far beyond spin, ultimately foreshadowing the ways in which the Trump administration would govern by misinformation. Trump harnessed the power of social media and blurred the lines between entertainment and politics in ways that allowed him to bypass critics and connect directly to his supporters in an unfiltered way. Franklin Roosevelt, John F Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan also used new media and a celebrity style to connect directly to the people in this unfiltered way, ultimately transforming expectations and operations of the presidency that paved the path for Trump.



Operation Warp Speed to produce a Covid-19 vaccine in record time. **'A surrender of global leadership'**

Laura Belmonte is a history professor and dean of the Virginia Tech College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. She is a foreign relations specialist and author of books on cultural diplomacy.

What's Trump's key legacy? His attempt to surrender global leadership and replace it with a more inward-looking, fortress-like

It's also very emblematic of a larger assault on any number of multilateral institutions and treaties and frameworks that Trump has unleashed, like the withdrawal from the Paris climate accord, the withdrawal of the Iranian nuclear framework.

What else stands out to you? Trump's applauding Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and meeting with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, really turning himself inside out to align

The Catalpa Rescue: The story behind one of Australia's most incredible prison escapes

It all began with a letter sent from inside an Australian "tomb," a document so convincing that it prompted a US gang to sail some 20,000 kilometers (12,427 miles) to execute what could arguably be considered one of the most outrageous prison escapes in Australian history.

The year was 1876. Using a series of codes and disguises, the bold group snuck into Western Australia to free six Irish political prisoners.

Now, 145 years later, a new generation of Australians is learning about this prison break thanks to WA Museum Boola Bardip.

The museum, which reopened in November 2020, was closed for four years for redevelopment. Featuring eight new galleries, it's located on the same site it has occupied since 1891, when it opened as a geological museum in the Old Perth Gaol.

Among the many displays on offer is a modern look at the Catalpa rescue -- named for the ship they journeyed to freedom on.

Featuring images of the prison they escaped from and the ship, the WA Museum Boola Bardip's new Catalpa display is part of the Reflections Gallery -- a permanent exhibit that examines the way "unique experiences and



perspectives have shaped our state's identity and sense of place."

The display explains how the escape created headlines around the world and inspired multiple folk songs, complimenting several tourist sites already available for visitors who want to follow the trail of the prisoners' wild journey.

Jailed for crimes of rebellion in a state where 10% of the population has Irish ancestry, the Catalpa escape remains a stirring tale of cunning, courage and revolt.

In the 1860s, many Fenians -- an Irish nationalist movement with strong membership in the

US that aimed to end the British occupation of Ireland -- were arrested by the British and jailed for crimes of rebellion, explains Irish-Australian writer Peter Murphy, author of the book "Fenian Fear."

The 62 Fenians sent to Western Australia were locked away in the infamous, British-run Fremantle Prison, located in the port of Fremantle in what's now the Perth metropolitan area. Built in the 1850s, this hulking stone jail -- Western Australia's only World Heritage listed building -- is now one of Perth's top tourist attractions, with its guided tours covering the story of the Catalpa. Murphy explains that one

of those 62 prisoners managed to escape Fremantle Prison in 1869: John Boyle O'Reilly, a famous Irish activist who later became key to the Catalpa mission.

Prior to O'Reilly, no other prisoner had ever managed to escape from Fremantle Prison. He wouldn't be the last.

The Catalpa escape took root when an Irishman living in New York, John Devoy, heard a "voice from the tomb" in 1874. This was the eerie wording that Fenian James Wilson used to describe his imprisonment in a letter to Devoy, begging for help to escape Fremantle Prison. Aided by an Irish priest, the Fenians were able

to smuggle such letters out of the jail to distant and free members of their brotherhood. However, Devoy was the only one who answered their desperate call.

He bought the Catalpa ship in the US state of Massachusetts and then, to create a cover story for his long trip to Western Australia, converted it into a whaling vessel, before setting sail for Perth with a small crew. The captain of the Catalpa was an American, George Smith Anthony, who was said to be sympathetic to the Fenian cause.

Escaping from prison? That was the easy part

Realizing they couldn't just cruise into Australia and snatch their imprisoned brothers, the rescue crew concocted a clever plot. Devoy sought advice from O'Reilly, hoping to exploit the experience of his own escape from Perth.

"Being a journalist, it was O'Reilly's keen observation of the Western Australia coastline, his knowledge of the (state's) penal system, and layout of Fremantle town (including its prison), that would make him the obvious choice to be involved in the rescue," says author Murphy.

Why Putin wants to keep Navalny locked up

With Alexei Navalny back in Russia five months after surviving a poisoning with the nerve agent Novichok, his courageous return presented Russian President Vladimir Putin -- who Navalny believes ordered his killing -- with two choices: allow the high-profile activist to continue to be a thorn in his side or lock him up in the hopes that he fades into obscurity. We learned Sunday that Putin chose the second option. And the question now is whether the Navalny's anti-corruption movement can survive with its incredibly telegenic and social media savvy leader isolated from the frontlines -- especially with factors like pandemic restrictions limiting public gatherings stacked against them.

We were also reminded, if we even needed it, of Putin's disdain for any form of dissent, his reflex

to reach for the most barbaric tactics to silence voices of opposition. These certainly are not the hallmarks of a leader who seeks a place in history among the great statesmen of the world. Unfortunately for Navalny, his brave gamble in going back to take on someone as ruthless as Putin appears to have been a miscalculation. The Russian leader can remain in office for years, cares little about the international opprobrium for his treatment of Navalny and no doubt expects little retaliation from a United States pre-occupied with the turmoil of Donald Trump's departure. That makes it unlikely to mean -- at least in the short term -- that Navalny's

supporters can make a heroic return to the protest barricades. Indeed, during a hastily arranged hearing on Monday at the Moscow police station where he



is being held, Navalny was ordered to remain in custody for 30 days. In what can best be described as a sham trial, a judge was brought in, defense lawyers were not informed until the last minute and only pro-Kremlin journalists were allowed to attend. The prospects for the 44-year-old politician -- expected

to be jailed for at least 3.5 years -- do not look at all favorable. Shortly before his arrest, he told journalists at Moscow's airport he was not afraid because "I know that I will leave and go home because I'm right and all the criminal cases against me are fabricated." Navalny probably wanted to end his stay abroad in order to avoid the risk of becoming

irrelevant or being seen as a foreign-backed agent. Likely he had an eye on two things: the situation of Belarus opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who was forced to go into exile in Lithuania last August and remains outside of her country, and the fact that Russians -- as I am told by many contacts in

the country -- rarely have sympathy for politicians who flee abroad (even though his departure from Russia last year was forced by his needing medical treatment after the poisoning attempt, which almost killed him). Putin, who typically refuses to acknowledge Navalny by name and has said that if Russian special services had wanted to kill Navalny they would have "finished it," probably wanted nothing more than to see the anti-corruption activist absent at least until later this year, after elections for the lower house of Parliament are held and where the ruling, pro-Putin United Russia party is hoping to be handed a loyal majority in the next State Duma.



INT soars higher, plans further expansion in USA

Indus Net Technologies (INT), the Indian-based firm work with mid-sized corporates in the USA and Canada. Ever since its launch in 1997, there hasn't been any looking back for Abhishek Rungta, the founder and CEO of INT.

According to Abhishek, the idea for a web hosting company established in 1996 when he came across the internet for the first time. It was an immediate

reaction on what he would want to work on for the rest of his life. INT quickly rose in the ranks and became a very reliable solution for organisations worldwide. It quickly up scaled and now offers sustainable digital solutions with the confluence of technology, analytics and marketing. The CEO informed, "we evolved from a web hosting company to a web design agency, to an agency for the agencies, to a digital

marketing outsourcing company, to a web and mobile application development

company to an enterprise-grade digital service company in a span of twenty-three years." Since establishing offices in the US and Canada, INT has grown by leaps and bounds. They have also provided digital solutions for the BFSI and Pharma sector in India and for clients in the UK, USA, Singapore, Australia and the European market as well. Presently, in process of expanding in the Middle East too. In the US and Canada, Indus Net Technologies works with mid-

(By Susmita Ghosh,
SAI Bureau)

sized corporates and local partners of which many are NRIs. Their idea is to create

strong, long-lasting partnerships and entrepreneurial organizations.

Abhishek believes that the South Asian community in the US is an extremely empowering community for their economy, absolute examples being Satya Nadela, Sundar Pichai and Madam Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

The INT has over 750 team members and has been working with many leading brands and prestigious government projects.

It has also played its part in the Digital India initiative. It has built several digital governance platforms including MyGov, Election Monitoring System and so on.

Developing a doctor-engagement platform to broadcast signature webinar series, the organisation has involved globally renowned specialists as speakers. The event had more than six thousand registered physicians' participation from over fifty countries on the very first day.

While discussing on the plans for any technology partnership deal in USA, Abhishek explains, "We have a few partnerships in the USA and are open to partner with open-minded organizations and entrepreneurs. It is best to play on an individual's strengths, our asset being delivering complex and scalable digital systems and solutions." "We have strategical plan to add on workforce in our USA office in 2021, help promote our intentions of rapid expansion," concludes Abhishek.



Janet Yellen says Treasury should focus on workers, women and minorities



Janet Yellen, President-elect Joe Biden's pick for Treasury secretary, urged Congress during her confirmation hearing Tuesday to move swiftly on bold stimulus spending to relieve the economic suffering that the pandemic has caused. Yellen, who would be the first female Treasury secretary in American history, underscored the urgency of Biden's proposed \$1.9 trillion stimulus proposal. With interest rates at historic lows, she said, "the smartest thing we can do is act big."

Yellen has broad bipartisan support, and Democrats are pushing to get her confirmed this week. Providing relief for those in the greatest need - especially minority workers and women, who have been hit hardest by the downturn - would give the government the most bang per buck. Yellen advocated for extended unemployment insurance and investing in the vaccine rollout to accelerate the recovery. Yellen, a former Federal Reserve chair, told the Senate Finance Committee at her confirmation hearing Tuesday that she would also overtime work to

get an additional stimulus package passed "to get through these dark times before the vaccination program enables us to go back to life as we knew it."

Yellen also defended Biden's plans to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, saying she believed job losses would be minimal if wages went up.

Biden last week proposed one of the largest relief packages in history in an effort to address the economic and public health crises he will inherit when he takes office Wednesday.

"The pandemic has caused widespread devastation," Yellen said in her testimony. "The damage has been sweeping, and as the President-elect said last Thursday, our response must be, too."

Lawmakers have already enacted trillions of dollars in relief funds under President Donald Trump to address the crisis created by the

coronavirus pandemic. But with job losses ticking up and millions still unemployed, Biden and congressional Democrats have made clear their first legislative priority will be a wide-ranging stimulus package.

America's role in the global economy

Yellen won't relax the United States' view on China if confirmed as Treasury secretary, she told senators. "China is undercutting American companies by dumping products, erecting trade barriers, and giving away subsidies," she said. She also said China was "guilty of horrendous human rights abuses." The Trump administration agrees, announcing Tuesday that China has committed crimes against humanity and genocide against Uighurs. "I believe we should try to address unfair trade practices, and the best way to do that is to work with our allies rather than unilaterally," Yellen said. She added that there would be a review of current US sanctions

under her leadership of the Treasury Department, to make sure they are strategic.

She called out the need for efficient taxation of multinational companies and said that negotiations through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development would pave the way for that.

Yellen said US firms would have to be able to be globally competitive and better taxation "would enable us to collect a fair share from corporations while maintaining competitiveness."

Yellen also said the United States does not seek a weaker currency in order to gain a competitive advantage on the global market.

A long to-do list ahead

Yellen reiterated during the hearing that the first priority of the incoming administration must be to get the nation and its people through the pandemic before addressing other concerns including the deficit and taxation.

How Parler is trying to get back online



Parler's service, Amazon's DDoS protections over Parler also ceased, Matze said.

Public records suggest Parler is now using a company headquartered in Russia, DDoS-guard, to shield itself from new DDoS attacks. Parler didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Reached for comment, DDoS-guard confirmed to CNN Business it is based in Russia, but declined to describe what specific services it is providing to Parler. DDoS-guard denied it is hosting Parler's website.

"We do not provide hosting services to Parler.com," the company said in a statement to CNN. "Any customer can access and use our services as long as his/her activities are not prohibited in the country and do not violate any laws. ... We do not want to be involved in the political scene in any countries around the world." Though mentions of Russia tend to inspire fears of foreign meddling by spies and trolls, there is no evidence to suggest that visitors to Parler's website currently face any risks - particularly since the company's social network still remains unavailable.

Parler tried to seek a hosting alternative to Amazon Web Services from at least six different potential providers once it became clear Amazon would no longer work with the social media platform - but was turned away, according to a court filing.

CEO John Matze said in Monday's filing that Parler does not have the resources to host itself on its own servers. Amazon (AMZN)'s ban forced it to seek alternative providers, he said in the filing - which is part of an ongoing lawsuit between the two companies.

Parler is an alternative social network favored by the far right that was removed from Google and Apple's app stores, along with Amazon's cloud hosting

service, in the wake of the deadly riot at the Capitol. Parler's website suddenly reappeared online Sunday afternoon with a message from Matze: "Hello world, is this thing on?" The message, dated January 16, marked Parler's first signs of life since being removed from Amazon's platform a week earlier. And it touched off widespread speculation over who may now be providing services to Parler, and when the app may fully regain functionality. In particular, Internet sleuths have increasingly zeroed in on what company Parler may be using to defend itself from distributed denial of service attacks. DDoS attacks occur when a malicious actor seeks to overwhelm a website with bogus traffic. When Amazon cut off

Netflix forecasts an end to borrowing binge, shares surge



Netflix Inc said on Tuesday its global subscriber rolls crossed 200 million at the end of 2020 and projected it will no longer need to borrow billions of dollars to finance its broad slate of TV shows and movies. Shares of Netflix rose nearly 13% in extended trading as the financial milestone validated the company's strategy of going into debt to take on big Hollywood studios with a flood of its own programming in multiple languages.

The world's largest streaming service had raised \$15 billion through debt in less than a decade. On Tuesday, the company said

it expected free cash flow to break even in 2021, adding in a letter to shareholders, "We believe we no longer have a need to raise external financing for our day-to-day operations."

Netflix said it will explore returning excess cash to shareholders via share buybacks. It plans to maintain \$10 billion to \$15 billion in gross debt.

"This is in sharp contrast to Disney and many other new entrants into the streaming market who expect to lose money on streaming for the next few years," said eMarketer analyst Eric Haggstrom.

It's 53% alcohol and tastes like fire. Here's how this liquor brand took over China



When Costco opened its first store in China in 2019, it wasn't just the hot rotisserie chickens and discounted Birkin bags that lured frenzied crowds. A fiery, throat-tingling liquor called Kweichow Moutai also flew off shelves.

At 1,498 yuan, or \$209 for a half-liter bottle, it might not sound like the kind of bargain Costco shoppers usually go for - but in this case, it absolutely was. That price represented a steep

discount over Moutai sold elsewhere - that is, if you could get your hands on it. The luxury spirit is so beloved in China, it sold out quickly.

Even amid a global pandemic, Kweichow Moutai, the company that makes the eponymous liquor, had a banner year: its stock surged around 70% on the Shanghai Stock Exchange in 2020. The company, which is part state-owned and part publicly-traded, is China's most

valuable firm outside of technology - worth more than the country's four biggest banks. Globally, its market cap has not only surpassed all other alcohol distillers like Diageo and Constellation Brands, but also Coca-Cola, which had long held the crown as the world's largest beverage maker by market cap. Valued at 2.7 trillion yuan, or \$421 billion, Kweichow Moutai is worth more than Toyota, Nike and Disney, too.

"Anytime they have any stock [of the product] available, it's going to be gone almost instantly," said Ben Cavender, the Shanghai-based managing director of China Market Research Group. "You'll see people clamoring [for it]."

Apart from the Chinese diaspora, however, Moutai is still virtually unknown overseas. Almost all - about 97% - of its sales come from China alone, according to its financial reports.

So how is a company that sells its products primarily in just one country now worth more than some longstanding global behemoths? And can Kweichow Moutai, which is described by some Westerners as "drinking liquid razor blades," succeed in appealing to non-Chinese consumers?

From historic icon to status symbol

Moutai has one unmistakable advantage: the drink is China's national spirit. Moutai baijiu - the type of liquor the company makes - is a clear, potent spirit that's been dubbed "firewater,"

thanks to the fact that it's 53% alcohol. The red-and-white bottles of its flagship product, "Feitian," or "Flying Fairy," are a staple at Chinese state banquets and business events. Known as the favorite tippie of Mao Zedong, founder of Communist China, and as the "drink of diplomacy," it was famously used to welcome former US President Richard Nixon on his historic trip to China in 1972, and again in 2013 when Chinese President Xi Jinping met with his US counterpart, Barack Obama, in California. Once, at a state dinner in 1974, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger told Deng Xiaoping, the future Chinese leader: "I think if we drink enough Moutai, we can solve anything."

"Then, when I go back to China, we must take steps to increase our production of it," Deng responded, according to an archived US government transcript. Being part of so many major public events in China "really set the brand in the national consciousness," said Cavender, who likened it to another giant beverage maker, Coca-Cola, in that regard.

Microsoft joins in a new \$2 billion investment in GM's self-driving car company



Microsoft has joined in a \$2 billion investment in Cruise, the self-driving car company mostly owned by GM.

The investment, announced Tuesday, puts Cruise's total value at \$30 billion, Cruise and Microsoft said.

Microsoft (MSFT) joins Honda (HMC), already a major investor and partner in Cruise, and various institutional investors in the \$2 billion total equity investment. The companies did not divulge how large of a portion of that investment Microsoft is making or how large of a stake in Cruise Microsoft will receive as a result

of its investment. However, a Cruise spokesperson confirmed that General Motors will retain a majority stake.

Cruise and GM (GM) will also use Microsoft's Azure cloud computing platform to help develop vehicles and services, the companies added.

Microsoft joins other tech companies that have ventured into self-driving vehicles. Apple has reportedly restarted plans to create its own electric

self-driving car. Waymo, a leading competitor to Cruise, is a subsidiary of Google's parent company Alphabet.

Cruise was founded in 2013 and acquired by GM in 2016 for an undisclosed amount. The company's current president, Dan Ammann, had been president of GM until joining Cruise in 2018.

GM executives said in 2017 that they expected driverless taxi services to one day be a bigger and more profitable business than

ready to serve paying customers by the end of 2019. Honda first teamed up with GM on Cruise in 2018, announcing then that it would invest \$2 billion over 12 years. Honda's participation in this latest round of investment is in addition to that, a Cruise spokesman said, Honda worked with GM to develop a purpose-built self-driving car, called the Origin, for things like taxi and delivery services. It has no steering wheels or pedals, and is

designed to function entirely without a driver. GM announced last fall that it will be built at GM's Factory Zero, formerly Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly, a factory in Michigan that is being modified to build only electric vehicles.

Cruise will need an exemption from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to operate the

Origin because it doesn't have traditional car components like a steering wheel.

The company has been using modified Chevrolet Bolt EVs to test its technology and has recently begun testing cars in San Francisco with no human driver inside the vehicle. Previously, the cars had always had a human driver in the driver's seat to take over if needed.

The company hasn't lived up to its projections so far. In 2017, GM said it would be mass-producing fully autonomous electric cars by the end of 2019. It also announced plans in 2017 to test self-driving vehicles in New York City, but has yet to do so.

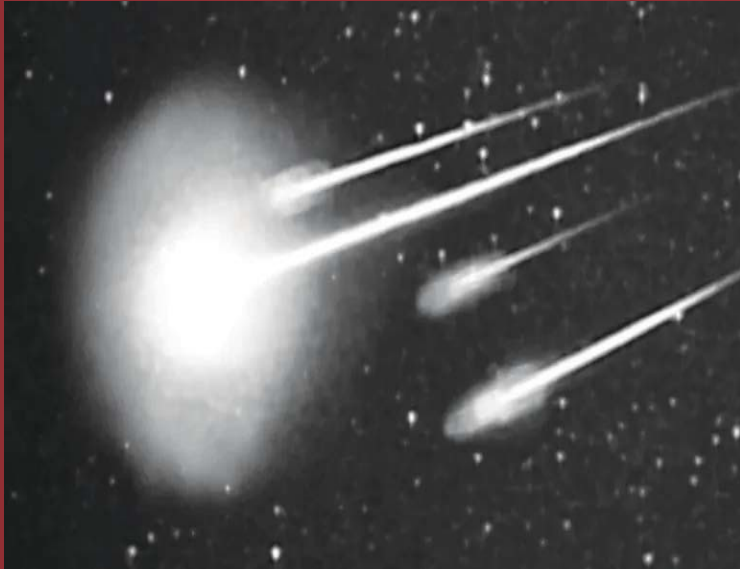
The entire self-driving sector has struggled to live up to the hype that has dominated much of the decade. Companies are realizing the immense challenge of building a self-driving car that works, and then proving to regulators that it is safe.

Matt McFarland contributed to this story.



selling vehicles directly to customers. At the time, though, they also expected Cruise to be

Did meteorites bring water to Earth? New evidence suggests so



Many scientists believe that the water on Earth came from meteorites. However, this theory has been difficult to prove because the meteorites that reached the blue planet till date didn't contain water. Keeping this fact in view, the evidence of water movement in meteorites that only recently collided with Earth has taken scientists by surprise.

According to a report in [phys.org](https://www.phys.org), a team of researchers found evidence of relatively recent water movement in meteorites that recently collided with the Earth.

In a paper published in the journal *Science*, researchers said they studied isotopes in carbonaceous chondrite (CC) meteorites that have landed on Earth over just the past century. They analysed uranium and thorium distributions in samples -- the former is water-soluble while the latter is not -- to find out if recently arriving meteorites have evidence of water movement.

Meteorites are characterised by their carbon compound. "Among stony meteorites are the chondrites which contain small round spheres called chondrules. These small spherules are principally made up of olivine and pyroxene [minerals made up of Mg, Fe and silicate]. The carbonaceous chondrites are composed not only of inorganic minerals but have a high abundance of carbon," researchers said while describing CC meteorites.

WHAT RESEARCHERS FOUND?

Scientists believe that if water ever existed in the meteorite, "it would have had to move as it melted, and that movement would be reflected in the

distribution of thorium and uranium isotopes," the report said.

Both these isotopes have short half-lives -- meaning, if their distributions in meteorites could be found, they would have occurred relatively recently on the order of a few million years. Researchers studied nine of the meteorites and found that water had been moving due to melting, likely within the past 1 million years.

They said that not only could such meteorites have delivered water to Earth during the planet's formative years, they could also have been doing so in the much more recent past. Researchers further said that to confirm the findings, this idea could be tested by sampling asteroids before they strike the Earth -- as done recently by Japanese and American spacecraft.

Initial studies suggested that most, if not all, carbonaceous chondrite (CC) -- class of chondritic meteorites comprising at least 8 known groups and many ungrouped meteorites -- were formed approximately 4.5 billion years ago as part of larger asteroids.

WHAT ARE METEORITES?

According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa), when a meteoroid -- objects in space that range in size from dust grains to small asteroids -- survives a trip through the atmosphere and hits the ground, it's called a meteorite.

When meteoroids enter Earth's atmosphere (or that of another planet, like Mars) at high speed and burn up, the fireballs or "shooting stars" are called meteors.

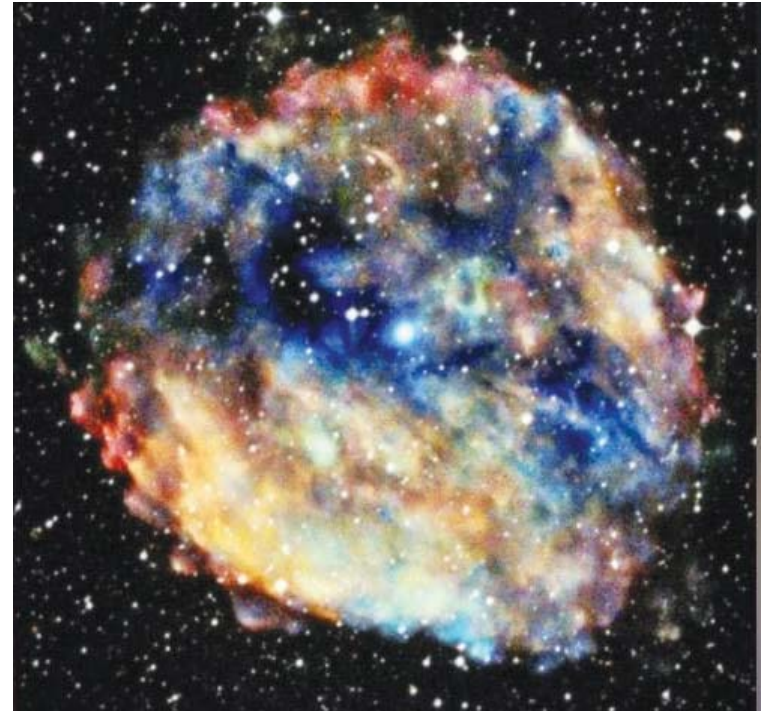
Nasa shares Chandra X-ray image of dazzling supernova

Nasa shared an image of a supernova captured by the Chandra X-ray Observatory and said the telescope captured a bright source of light at the center of the supernova.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) has shared a dazzling image of a supernova captured by the Chandra X-ray Observatory telescope. Nasa shared the image of the supernova on its Instagram page. Chandra Observatory, too, has shared the image of the supernova. Nasa said the telescope captured a bright source of light at the center of the supernova. Nasa said the source of light at the center of the supernova remnant it captured is a neutron star.

On its Instagram post, Nasa said, "The bright source at the center of supernova remnant RCW 103 is a neutron star."

"Matter in a neutron star is more than 1 billion tons - roughly the weight of Mount Everest!" Several social media users shared their thoughts on the



supernova image. While some said the image was beautiful, some called it fascinating. Here are some reactions:

In a first, researchers may have just detected background 'hum' of the Universe

Researchers have claimed they have detected a resonant "hum" produced by the gravitational waves in the Universe which can be imagined as a gravitational wave background of the Universe.



If you are a space enthusiast, there is some good news for you. In a new research, that could possibly open doors to many unknown aspects of the Universe, researchers have detected a resonant "hum" produced by the gravitational waves in the Universe. Experts say this can be imagined as a gravitational wave background of the Universe. This hum of the Universe was reportedly detected by the North American Nanohertz Observatory for Gravitational Waves (NANOGrav), and the

findings of the research was published in *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*. In a report, ScienceAlert said this gravitational wave background can be imagined as "something like the ringing left behind by massive events throughout our Universe's history". "It is incredibly exciting to see such a strong signal emerge from the data," astrophysicist Joseph Simon of the University of Colorado Boulder and the lead researcher for this study told ScienceAlert. This research has

excited the scientific community, and reports suggest that more than 80 papers have already cited it ever since its pre-print was published online. According to ScienceAlert, teams world over are working and analysing the data collected by the researchers and are trying to refute or confirm the team's results. "If it turns out that the signal is real, it could open up a whole new stage of gravitational wave astronomy - or reveal to us entirely new astrophysical phenomena," it said. As per the report, the signal that the team has detected comes from a "type of dead star called a pulsar". These dead stars are basically neutron stars which are oriented in such a manner that they flash beams of radio waves from their poles as they rotate at millisecond speeds comparable to a kitchen blender, it added.



Nasa investigating distant galaxy mysteriously shooting flares out every 114 days

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) is investigating a distant galaxy that erupts once roughly every 114 days and has been spotted 570 million light-years away. According to Nasa, scientists have studied 20 repeated outbursts, classified as ASASSN-14ko, as observed by its Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory and Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) by measuring different wavelengths of light. "These are the most predictable and frequent recurring

multiwavelength flares we've seen from a galaxy's core, and they give us a unique opportunity to study this extragalactic Old Faithful in detail," said Anna Payne, a Nasa Graduate Fellow at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. We think a supermassive black hole at the galaxy's center creates the bursts as it partially consumes an orbiting giant star," he added. If confirmed that a supermassive black hole at the centre of the galaxy is the cause

of the fluctuations in light, it could help scientists better understand our universe. How astronomers classify active galaxies As per information available on nasa.gov, astronomers classify galaxies with unusually bright and variable centers as active galaxies. These objects can produce much more energy than the combined contribution of all their stars, including higher-than-expected levels of visible, ultraviolet, and X-ray light. Astrophysicists think the extra

emission comes from near the galaxy's central supermassive black hole, where a swirling disk of gas and dust accumulates and heats up because of gravitational and frictional forces. The black hole slowly consumes the material, which creates random fluctuations in the disk's emitted light.

However, astronomers are interested in finding active galaxies with flares that happen at regular intervals, which might help them identify and study new phenomena and events, a nasa.gov report said.

"ASASSN-14ko is currently our best example of periodic variability in an active galaxy, despite decades of other claims, because the timing of its flares is very consistent over the six years of data Anna and her team analyzed," said Jeremy Schnittman, an astrophysicist at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, who studies black holes but was not involved in the research. "This result is a real tour de force of multiwavelength observational astronomy."

Three explanations for repeating lights

Nasa said that currently, there are three possible explanations for the repeating lights: One scenario involved interactions between the disks of two orbiting supermassive black holes at the

galaxy's center. Recent measurements, also under scientific review, suggest the galaxy does indeed host two such objects, but they don't orbit closely enough to account for the frequency of the flares.

The second scenario the team considered was a star passing on an inclined orbit through a black hole's disk. In that case, scientists would expect to see asymmetrically shaped flares caused when the star disturbs the disk twice, on either side of the black hole. But the flares from this galaxy all have the same shape. The third scenario, and the one the team thinks most likely, is a partial tidal disruption event. A tidal disruption event occurs when an "unlucky star" strays too close to a black hole, as per Nasa. "Gravitational forces create intense tides that break the star apart into a stream of gas. The trailing part of the stream escapes the system, while the leading part swings back around the black hole. Astronomers see bright flares from these events when the shed gas strikes the black hole's accretion disk." The star's orbit is not circular, meaning each time it approaches the black hole it gets closer and more mass is depleted - Nasa suggests that gas equal to three times the mass of Jupiter is lost with every orbit.

'Super Earth': NASA mission discovers 10 billion-year-old exoplanet 50% larger than our own

While exoplanet TOI-561b is a rocky, terrestrial planet with the same density as Earth, experts have reason to believe that it is far too hot to support life.

NASA's TESS mission (Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite) has discovered a hot and rocky planet that is about 50 per cent larger than Earth and has three times the mass but surprisingly, the same density as Earth. Referred to as an exoplanet owing to its location outside our solar system, it has been named TOI-561b. The discovery of this exoplanet was revealed in a study accepted for publication in The Astronomical Journal. This study was made public during the 237th meeting of the American Astronomical Society, which was held virtually owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. Interestingly, the exoplanet TOI-561b which has more mass but

the same density as Earth takes only less than half of 24 hours to complete one orbit around its host star. Owing to its features, the exoplanet is also being referred to as a 'Super-Earth'. In fact, the exoplanet was discovered by NASA's TESS mission orbiting one of the oldest stars in our Milky Way galaxy. Its name TOI-561b is derived from TESS Object of Interest (TOI). Launched in 2018, NASA's TESS mission surveys parts of the sky and monitors nearby stars to check if there are any planets orbiting them. Researchers then relied on the WM Keck Observatory in Hawaii to determine the exoplanet's mass, radius and density, according to a report by

CNN.

A University of Hawai'i postdoctoral fellow who authored the study, Lauren Weiss said in a statement, "TOI-561b is one of the oldest rocky planets yet discovered. Its existence shows that the universe has been forming rocky planets almost since its inception 14 billion years ago."

During a conference on Monday, Weiss was quoted as saying, "This planet formed at a time when the majority of stars in our galaxy were first beginning to shine."

It is important to note that The Milky Way galaxy was formed 12 billion years ago. Researchers believe the sun is only 4.5 billion years old while the planets in



exoplanet TOI-561b's solar system are believed to be 10 billion years old.

While exoplanet TOI-561b is a rocky, terrestrial planet with the same density as Earth, experts

have reason to believe that it is far too hot to support life. However, they are yet to determine whether the exoplanet was habitable at some point in time.

The rise of the fake commute, and why it's good for your mental health



If the blur between work and home is still a struggle, mimicking your route from the Before Times may be the solution you need.

For many people, commuting to work can be the worst part of their day: There is the chance of sitting in standstill traffic. Or, railway problems might leave you disembarking and on an unexpected journey.

For others, however, commuting may have been a ritual that was critical for their mental health and work-life balance. Enter the rise

of the "fake commute," wherein people replace that daily transition with walks, runs, bike rides and more.

Before the pandemic, Beth Kanter often spent her mornings boarding airplanes to business obligations. "I went back to looking at a journal entry from last year as I was reflecting on the year, and I was sort of complaining to myself saying it would be nice to not have to travel so much," said Kanter, a Bay Area, California-based author, virtual facilitator and trainer who

works in the nonprofit social change sector.

Not long into the pandemic, Kanter felt the stress and knew that to maintain resilience, she had to establish boundaries and routines by doing a fake commute in the morning.

"I realized that a lot of the time on airplanes was reflection time and thinking time," said Kanter, who has been doing an hour-long morning walk. She has learned neighborhood routes and looked for succulents and photographed them - birthing an "obsession"

that led to her own succulent garden.

"Routines and rituals are very beneficial to us, because they're things that we understand and know what to expect from them," said Lynn Bufka, the senior director of practice transformation and quality at the American Psychological Association.

"The routine sets up for us, without having to think about what we're going to do next, 'Here is how my day is going to flow,'" she said. "It helps us ease

from point A to point B."

Commutes are forced pauses that signal the time to transition from one's work identity to another identity, such as parent, spouse or friend, said Ravi S. Gajendran, an associate professor at Florida International University's College of Business. "Working full time from home during the pandemic makes it difficult to transition between work and home roles," he said via email.

"Many individuals are shifting between being a parent/spouse and an employee multiple times during a day," Gajendran added. "It's hard to smoothly hop on to a work-related Zoom call right after dealing with a demanding situation with kids at home. Likewise, it's hard to leave behind the stresses and mental worries of work-related Zoom call and instantly switch to being a loving and caring partner or spouse."

The bliss of boundaries Ilona Alcock, another faithful fake commuter, and her husband shifted from train rides and walks to enjoying strolls to "create a split between home and work."

"The fake commutes were an absolute lifeline for myself and my husband," added Alcock, cofounder of business development consultancy Elevate Greater Manchester in England.

New, contagious coronavirus variant could worsen pandemic, CDC warns

New, more contagious variants of the coronavirus will likely accelerate the spread of the virus and that means the US must double down on efforts to protect people, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday.

A variant first identified in Britain known as B.1.1.7 is being found in the US as well, and modeling indicates it could worsen the already terrible spread of the virus across the country, the CDC researchers said.

That means people need to try harder to wear masks, avoid gatherings and stay socially distant from one another.

"It means that it is going to be harder and harder to control it. Any of those measures we are going to have to do to a higher degree, including vaccination," Dr. Gregory Armstrong, who directs the Office of Advanced Molecular Detection at CDC's respiratory diseases division,

told CNN.

"Multiple lines of evidence indicate that B.1.1.7 is more efficiently transmitted than are other SARS-CoV-2 variants," Armstrong and colleagues wrote in the agency's weekly report, the MMWR.

"Variant B.1.1.7 has the potential to increase the U.S. pandemic trajectory in the coming months." Efforts to vaccinate people -- already slower than the federal government hoped for and promised -- need to be stepped up, CDC said.

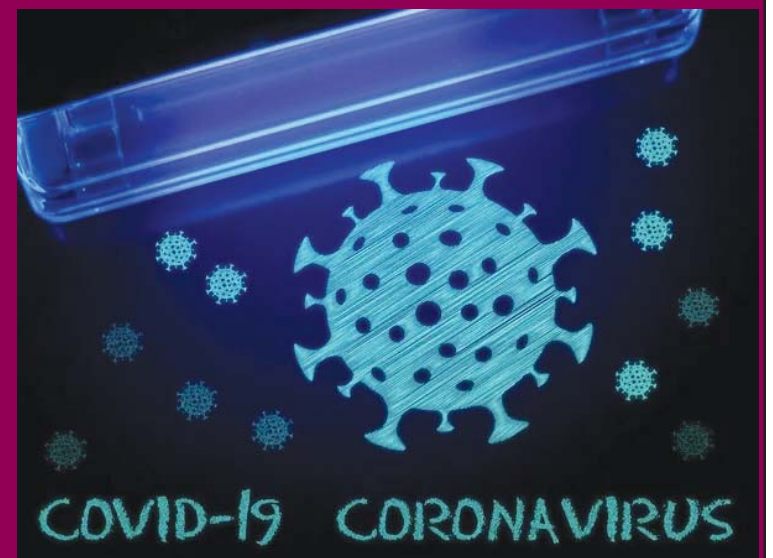
"Higher vaccination coverage might need to be achieved to protect the public," the researchers wrote.

The virus has already infected more people in the US and killed more than in any other country. As of Friday afternoon, according to Johns Hopkins University, the virus had been diagnosed in 23 million people in the US and killed more than 390,000.

The B.1.1.7 variant appears to more readily infect human cells, which would help it infect more people.

It has been detected in about a dozen US states, but the CDC also knows that surveillance is poor and it is likely far more common than that. It is also possible that the pattern of mutations that makes the virus more transmissible is arising independently as it circulates in people, because the more people are infected, the more chances the virus has to mutate.

The CDC team ran an experimental model to see what might happen in the near future. It's not known how much more transmissible B.1.1.7 is, and it's also not known how much immunity there already is in the US population because of previous infections, so the team made some assumptions. In one scenario, the new variant is 50% more infectious than currently



dominant variants circulating. "In this model, B.1.1.7 prevalence is initially low, yet because it is more transmissible than are current variants, it exhibits rapid growth in early 2021, becoming the predominant variant in March," the CDC team wrote.

"If this behaves like it has so far in the UK, Denmark and Ireland, yes it is going to become a

progressively larger and larger proportion of all the cases out there no matter what we do," Armstrong said.

"That's not to say that cases are necessarily going to go up," Armstrong added. "That's not to say we can do nothing."

The new variant does not seem to result in higher rates of hospitalization or higher rates of death, he noted.

Tribhanga review:***Noble intentions come to naught in Kajol, Renuka Shahane film***

Tribhanga movie review: Kajol, Tanvi Azmi and Mithila Palkar play mothers and daughters in a film about the impossibility of being the perfect parent.

Tribhanga Director: Renuka Shahane

Cast: Kajol, Tanvi Azmi, Mithila Palkar, Kunal Roy Kapur and others

After watching Tribhanga, one thing is for certain: you may be able to take Kajol out of Bollywood, but you can never take the Bollywood out of her. Channelling pre-makeover Anjali from Kuch Kuch Hota Hai at all times, Kajol makes sure to give her 150% to every scene, even if it requires a far more modest tempo. However, she cannot be the only one at fault for the weird concoction that is Tribhanga. From the director, to the dialogue writers, to each individual actor, all seem to be operating on different frequencies throughout the film, almost never singing the same note.

Directed and written by Renuka Shahane, Tribhanga sets out with noble intentions. At its core is a lesson in the futile effort of being

better parents than the ones you suffered, the large cost of living life on your own conditions and why, despite all of it, it is still the right way to live. The story is told through three generations of women. At the head of the totem pole is Nayantra (Tanvi Azmi), the acclaimed novelist with particularly bad choice in men. She hops from one divorce to another, dragging her two children along. In her ignorant selfishness, she causes unforgivable harm to her daughter, Anuradha (played by Kajol). Anuradha, starts believing her mother's ignorance is actually proof of her evil, stone-cold heart. She pledges to correct her mother's mistakes, decides never to marry, or bring any strange men close to her own daughter, Masha (played by Mithila Palkar), who is 'born out of wedlock'. However, for Masha, who was bullied all through her childhood for her mother's

modern relationships and many boyfriends, Anuradha was anything but a perfect mother. She, instead, promises herself a traditional family setup, conservative to the point of toxic, just so her child never has to suffer the same taunts as her. The cycle continues with every generation, proving nothing but that there is no perfect way to be a mother.

This family begins a journey to catharsis and forgiveness when Nayan, while in the process of recording her autobiography, suffers a brain stroke and goes into a coma. The triumvirate comes together, speaks of the hurt they have caused and the apologies they must make.

Overall, Renuka's story is not without merit. However, it's everything else that fails to shoulder it. Kajol and Tanvi get the lion's share of the story and Mithila gets merely a couple of scenes in a film that is supposed



to be about a trinity of women. Kajol eats up the screen with her personality and excessively initially surprising and later cartoonish usage of pure Hindi, pretentious use of colourful last heard in the summer of AD language. She screams and 2020, amid Doordashan's second swears, taking a breath only to wave of Ramayana fever. Kunaal shed a lonesome tear. She singlehandedly ruins a half fluctuates from hurt to absolutely decent film. But it is not just him, giddy to ugly crying and the the dialogues are clunky for transition is never subtle. Tanvi, everyone, especially when they still, manages to pull her weight are not in Marathi (I have no way despite being in a coma for half of proving it but it did sound nice her screen time. She is the less to my ignorant ears). Intentions chaotic, more mature foil (and and hearts change over just a respite) to Kajol. However, the couple of minutes, cathartic most annoying addition to the moments unfold in front of your mix is Kunaal Roy Kapur's Milan, eyes, people are forgiven, tears the writer charged with writing are shed and none of it makes Nayan's autobiography. He is half an impact on you..

One Night in Miami movie review:***Regina King's riveting debut traps four Black icons in a motel room***

One Night in Miami movie review: Debutante director Regina King extracts terrific performances from her four leading men, in a high-concept drama about power and responsibility.



One Night in Miami

Director - Regina King

Cast - Eli Goree, Kingsley Ben-Adir, Leslie Odom Jr, Aldis Hodge

Every community relies on its cultural icons. In moments of upheaval, they're the ones who can mobilise the masses with their power and popularity, and shine a light on matters that would otherwise have been ignored. Which is also why, in times of uncertainty, they're the first to be targeted by the establishment.

In India right now, it has taken the collective might of Punjabi superstars to regularly remind the nation's 1.8 billion people of the plight of the farmers who them. Watch the One Night in Miami trailer here

Adapted from a play by Kemp Powers, whose premise genuinely sounds like it was inspired by a question that he was asked a party, One Night in Miami imagines a fictional meeting of four Black icons, against the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement in America.

To celebrate his unexpected victory against Sonny Liston in 1964, Cassius Clay, played by Eli Goree, arrives at a Miami motel room, where he is joined by football star Jim Brown (Aldis Hodge), soul singer Sam Cooke (Leslie Odom Jr), and the revolutionary leader, Malcolm X (Kingsley Ben-Adir). He intends on announcing to the world that as of that moment, he must no longer be addressed as Cassius Clay, but as Muhammad Ali.

One Night in Miami, like so many adaptations of plays, is a chamber piece. But debutante director Regina King seems to be deliberately trying to make the story as cinematic as possible. Unlike, say, the recent Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, which was restricted to a couple of indoor locations, characters in One

Night in Miami routinely leave the motel room on one pretext or another.

By expanding the visual scope of the story, King gives the narrative some room to breathe. This sounds like a great idea on paper - spending a couple of hours locked inside a plain room with four alpha males can get suffocating - but these excursions significantly deflate the drama. I'd have preferred to be locked in with them, with no easy escape routes available.

But this approach allows for certain characters to have private moments, without three others being present in a close vicinity at all times. So when Sam storms off in a huff after Malcolm accuses him of kowtowing to the white man, the Nation of Islam.

it gives the rather stately Jim Brown an opportunity to take the firebrand leader aside. Aldis Hodge plays the football great as a man of few words. His opinions carry a certain weight. And in those brief moments alone with him, Jim asks Malcolm if, as a light-skinned Black person, he is insecure about his Blackness. One Night in Miami plays out like a last-ditch attempt by Malcolm to mobilise three people that he has identified as the future leadership of the Black community, almost as if he knows his time has come.

It's utterly absorbing to watch him interact with Cassius, as the young champion has second thoughts about becoming a 'Mooslim'. The irony is that at the time was on the verge of severing ties with the white man, the Nation of Islam.

Deepika Padukone shares new entry from her 'audio diary', reveals her favourite show as a child

Actor Deepika Padukone, who recently purged her social media accounts, kicked off 2021 with an 'audio diary' -- an aural record of her thoughts and reflections. She has just shared the second entry, in which she talked about her favourite television show as a child. Deepika said that her favourite show was *Small Wonder*. The hit series revolved around an engineer named Ted Lawson, who secretly creates a robot made to look like a little girl. He names the robot VICI (Voice Input Child Identificant, aka Vicki) and passes it off as the adopted daughter of the

In the second entry of her audio diary, Deepika Padukone said that she loved 80s sitcom *Small Wonder* as a child.

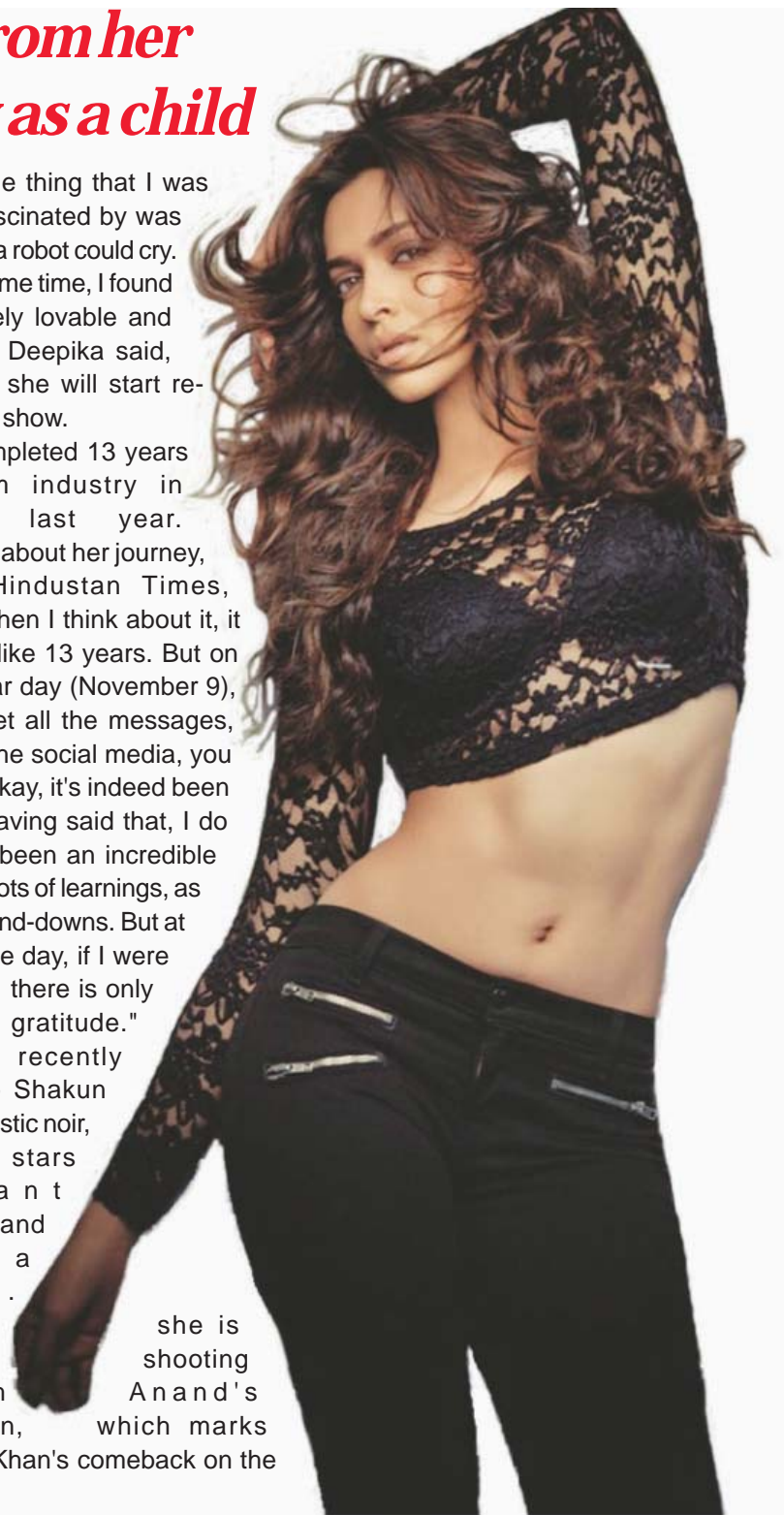
family.

"I remember coming back from school and looking forward to watching *Small Wonder*. It was a show that lasted for about 30-40 minutes if I am not mistaken. My most favourite character from the show was Vicki. I thought she was spunky, emotional, intelligent. I

think the one thing that I was the most fascinated by was the fact that a robot could cry. But at the same time, I found her extremely lovable and endearing," Deepika said, adding that she will start re-watching the show.

Deepika completed 13 years in the film industry in November last year. Reminiscing about her journey, she told *Hindustan Times*, "Honestly, when I think about it, it doesn't feel like 13 years. But on that particular day (November 9), when you get all the messages, and look at the social media, you realise, 'oh okay, it's indeed been 13 years.' Having said that, I do feel that it's been an incredible journey with lots of learnings, as well as ups-and-downs. But at the end of the day, if I were to look back, there is only a feeling of gratitude." Deepika recently wrapped up Shakun Batra's domestic noir, which also stars Siddhant Chaturvedi and Ananya Panday.

Reportedly, she is currently shooting for Siddharth Anand's next, *Pathan*, which marks Shah Rukh Khan's comeback on the big screen.



Varun Dhawan-Natasha Dalal's wedding is on January 24, confirms his uncle Anil

Actor Anil Dhawan has confirmed that his nephew, actor Varun Dhawan, will marry longtime girlfriend Natasha Dalal this month. The wedding will take place on January 24, he said. Reports suggest that Varun and Natasha will tie the knot in a private ceremony in Alibaug. It is being said that the wedding will be attended by



just 50 guests, including Shah Rukh Khan, Karan Johar and Salman Khan. "My nephew Varun is getting married on 24 January. I am looking forward to it," Anil told *SpotboyE*. On being asked if he would be a part of the celebrations,

he said, "Why not?"

Earlier this month, Anil denied it when asked to confirm rumours of Varun and Natasha's wedding. "Wow, I am surprised. They are marrying this month, and we didn't know? Are they going to invite us at the last moment? Itna secret rakh rahe hai kya (Are they keeping it that big a secret)?" he told *Bombay Times*.

"Whatever it is, as a family we have been persuading him to get married soon. I feel this is one ritual you got to do in time. There is no point prolonging it. Do it in time or just don't do it!" he added.

'Tandav' Makers Agree To Changes, Go Beyond Apology

The statement made on Tuesday came after the *Tandav* cast and crew had on Monday offered an "unconditional apology" following police complaints in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh that alleged some scenes "insulted Hindu gods and goddesses".

The makers of Amazon Prime series *Tandav* have said they will make changes in the content "to address concerns", a little over 24 hours after a police complaint was filed over hurting religious sentiments. The statement made on Tuesday came after the *Tandav* cast and crew had on Monday offered an "unconditional apology" following police complaints in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh that alleged some scenes "insulted Hindu gods and



goddesses".

"The cast and crew of *Tandav* have made the decision to implement changes to the web series to address the concerns raised towards the same... We once again apologise if the series has unintentionally hurt anybody's sentiments," the cast and crew of *Tandav* said in a statement.

"We have outmost respect for the

sentiments of the people of our country. We did not intend to hurt or offend the sentiments of any individual, caste, community, race, religion or religious beliefs or insult or outrage any institution, political party or person, living or dead," they said. The web series, which stars Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, was

released on Friday. It quickly triggered protests and drew criticism on social media. The makers of the web series maintain that the show runs with a disclaimer that's standard in the industry, and that *Tandav* was a "work of fiction" and "any resemblance to acts and persons and events is purely coincidental".

A complaint filed on by a policeman in Uttar Pradesh said that 17 minutes into the first episode, he saw "people dressed up in a very bad manner to represent Hindu gods and goddesses... shown to speak in a very uncalled for language... that hurts religious sentiments". The makers of *Tandav* increasingly came under criticism after an aide of UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath warned

those named in the police complaint to "be prepared to pay the price". "Be prepared to pay the price for hurting religious sentiments... UP Police has left for Mumbai in a vehicle," Mr Adityanath's advisor Shalabh Mani Tripathi tweeted in Hindi, alluding to gangster Vikas Dubey, who was killed in an encounter last year while being transported in a police vehicle.

The complaint filed with UP Police alleged that in one of the episodes of *Tandav*, there are "conversations that lead to caste conflict, there are similar scenes in many other episodes." "...The character of the person occupying the high post of India's Prime Minister has been shown in a very indecent manner.

Karren Brady's daughter Sophia Peschisolido displays her jaw-dropping figure in black lingerie as she shares sizzling snaps from her Dubai getaway



She is one of many social media influencers who escaped the UK's national lockdown by jetting to Dubai on a 'work' trip.

And Sophia Peschisolido looked like she was having a good time on her getaway as she posed for a series of sizzling lingerie snaps on Wednesday. The daughter of Apprentice star Karren Brady, 24, showcased her incredible physique as she wore a black two-piece that left little to the imagination

The garment featured a pale pink floral print while Sophia styled her blonde locks into loose waves. Fixing the camera with a sultry stare, Sophia also wore a silver necklace as she displayed her eye-popping curves. Wearing a light pallet of makeup, the star captioned her snap: 'The best @bouxavenue'.

Tory peer Baroness Brady, 51, was also in Dubai last month, with her daughter.

She told the Daily Mail she had travelled there for business, leaving Britain on December 18 and returning 'shortly afterwards'.

She said that 'no rules have been breached, by me or any member of my family'.

One picture Sophia put on Instagram from last month showed her walking up the stairs at luxury restaurant Bagatelle Dubai with the caption: 'Mum

getting the angles in lol.'

Although it was uploaded on Christmas Eve, Karren explained that 'bears no relation to the dates I was in Dubai or the date the pictures was taken'.

After Dubai was added to the travel corridor list in November, it became a playground for influencers keen to escape restrictions at home and seek out photo opportunities for their sponsorship deals.

Many have faced a backlash for posting pictures of themselves sunbathing and enjoying nights out while Covid cases in the UK soared and people faced more and more curbs on their lives.

Sophia has been in Dubai since at least December 22, although there is no suggestion she broke Tier Four rules to fly out.

In November Karren wrote an article for The Sun urging readers to be 'sensible' with regards to visiting family members amid the pandemic.

The multi-millionairess, who took her seat in the House of Lords in 2014, wrote: 'This virus doesn't know it's Christmas. It won't take a week off just so we can get together with our various beloveds.' She later told the Daily Mail: 'I went to Dubai for business on the 18th and returned shortly afterwards, my children did not travel with me. 'I have not breached any Government restrictions, to suggest otherwise would be totally incorrect.' Under the current national lockdown, people are banned from going on holiday and can travel internationally only for work or other legally permitted reasons.



TOWIE's Chloe Sims flaunts her tanned physique in a green cut out swimsuit in pool snaps after travelling to Mexico for a 'work trip she couldn't turn down'

She told her followers she had jetted to Mexico- not because her sister Demi had flown out, but because she had been presented with a work trip she 'couldn't turn down'.

And Chloe Sims made her followers green with envy on Instagram on Wednesday as she shared a slew of snaps basking in the sun in the pool at her luxury hotel in Tulum.

The former TOWIE star, 38, who has been working hard on her fitness, flaunted her toned physique in a forest green cut out swimsuit. Chloe flashed a hint of underboob in the one-piece as well as

her washboard abs. The reality star wore her brunette tresses in a high bun and complemented her swimwear with black sunglasses and silver hoop earrings. Chloe captioned the post: 'GRATEFUL. My first

time to Tulum, Think it could possibly be the most beautiful destination I've ever visited.' The television personality also took to her stories to share a clip of



herself dipping her toes into the water in a cave. Chloe showed off her ample curves in an off the shoulder tiger print bikini top and thong.

Earlier this week, the TOWIE star revealed she had travelled to

Mexico on a 'work related trip' amid Britain's coronavirus lockdown. Chloe took to Instagram and shared a series of bikini photos of herself after landing in celebrity hot spot Tulum. After several reality stars have received criticism for travelling to Dubai for 'work' trips recently, Chloe insisted an opportunity presented itself in Mexico that she 'could not turn down'. She wrote: 'I HAVE ARRIVED IN MEXICO.. SO I WANTED TO GET AHEAD OF ANY NEGATIVE STORIES TO MAKE IT CLEAR, THIS IS FIRST & FOREMOST A WORK RELATED TRIP.

SOME OPPORTUNITIES HAVE PRESENTED THEMSELVES, THAT I FELT I COULD NOT TURN DOWN & SO AFTER FULLY CONSIDERING THE LATEST GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES. I DECIDED TO TRAVEL.'





Donald Trump's farewell: We did what we came to do

(SAI Bureau)- US President Donald Trump has made his farewell address before leaving office, saying: "We did what we came to do - and so much more."

In a video posted on YouTube, he said he took on "the tough battles, the hardest fights... because that's what you elected me to do".

Mr Trump has still not fully accepted the result of last November's election, which he lost to Democrat Joe Biden. Mr Biden will be sworn in as president on Wednesday.

In his final hours in office, Mr Trump has issued dozens of pardons and commutations for people including Steve Bannon, his former advisor,



who is facing fraud charges. On the eve of his inauguration, Mr Biden led a national tribute to the 400,000 Americans who have died of Covid-19.

At sundown on Tuesday, 400 lights were illuminated in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC to honour those who have lost their lives to the disease.

The last two weeks of Mr Trump's term have been dominated by the fallout from the deadly riot on Capitol Hill, when a mob of his supporters stormed Congress, seeking to overturn the election result.

"Political violence is an attack on everything we cherish as Americans. It can never be tolerated," Mr Trump said in his video, in which he did not acknowledge his successor by name. "The 65 days that led to chaos at the Capitol

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Lohri, Farmers, And The Enemy Within



(SAI Bureau)- At 3.45 pm on January 13 when Lohri fires were kindled at the Tikri border outside Delhi, protesting farmers partook in a new Lohri tradition. Instead of their centuries-old rituals, they shredded copies of the farm laws. Soon, the protest site was studded with bonfires around which men and women danced, raised slogans, and mobilised their communities as the evening wore on. In the countryside in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, Lohri marks a joyous closure to weeks of laborious work on the rabi fields and the end of the winter solstice.

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The whole world is watching Biden as he takes charge



(SAI Bureau)- The whole world is watching.

From Day One, President-elect Joe Biden has a tall order -- to rebuild around the world the shattered image of America that Donald Trump had cultivated from his first day, four long years ago. At its core, this involves a restoration of the most critical underpinnings of America's national security and the world's well-being that Trump and his minions sought to dismantle, with increasing intensity through the final days and hours of his presidency.

And this process can, and indeed must, begin the very moment Biden takes his hand off the Bible after swearing to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution.

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He may hold the winning ticket in tech and Silicon Valley knows it

(SAI Bureau)-Between March and November last year, even as the coronavirus upended lives and devastated economies around the world, India's richest man was handed more than \$27 billion to make a bet on the future of the internet.

More than half that eye-popping amount came from Silicon Valley. It started with \$5.7 billion from Facebook in March, one of the biggest investments in the American company's history. Silver Lake

Partners, the private equity firm based eight miles from Facebook's (FB) Menlo Park headquarters, followed with its own investment just weeks later, as did Palo Alto's



General Atlantic and San Francisco-headquartered TPG Capital. Smaller investments from Qualcomm (QCOM) and Intel (INTC) came next, before Google (GOOGL) swooped in with \$4.5 billion to swell the impressive war chest.

The recipient of all those billions is Jio Platforms, part of Ambani's sprawling conglomerate Reliance Industries. Jio started as a mobile network in 2016. Since then it has amassed around 400 million users and launched a streaming service, a video conferencing app, a fiber broadband network and digital payments.

(Contd on page 30)

