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Profits and Poppy

The Business of Illegal Drugs

- Indian anti-smuggling intelligence officials have seized nearly three tonnes of heroin - reportedly worth around \$2.7bn (£1.9bn) - in a major operation at Mundra port in Gujarat state.
- Up to eight persons, including Afghan, Uzbekistan and Indian nationals, have been arrested in this connection.
- A large chunk of cocaine that is brought into India is from Colombia," according to a Narcotics Control Bureau official.



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Indian-Origin Brothers Agree To Sell UK Liquor Business To Pernod Ricard

The Whisky Exchange, founded in 1999, is one of the UK's largest online spirits retailers specialising in whiskies and fine spirits

(Insider Bureau)-London-based Indian-origin entrepreneur brothers Sukhinder and Rajbir Singh have agreed to the sale of their retail spirits business to French beverages major Pernod Ricard.

The Whisky Exchange, founded by them in 1999, is one of the UK's largest online spirits retailers specialising in whiskies and fine spirits, with a catalogue of over 10,000 products.

The family business also has three shops located in the heart of London at Covent Garden, Great Portland Street and London Bridge.

"After more than 20 years building The Whisky Exchange, we are delighted to be joining the Pernod Ricard family and working with them to take the business to the next level," the brothers said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The Whisky Exchange and our customers have always felt like a family,

and we are looking forward to maintaining this ethos with a partner that shares our values. Our mission remains the same: to offer the finest range of whiskies and spirits from the best producers around the world, educate and engage with consumers, and support the top on-trade establishments around the UK," they said.

The Whisky Exchange will continue to operate with its current team and structure, with Sukhinder, 53, and Rajbir, 49, managing the business as joint Managing Directors. The business grew out of their parents' wine and spirit store in west London and now counts 4,000 whiskies, including 3,000 single malt Scotch whiskies; 400 Champagnes, 800 Cognacs and Armagnacs; 700 rums; 600 gins; 300 aperitifs; 400 Tequilas and mezcal among its catalogue.

Pernod Ricard said closing of the transaction to acquire The Whisky

Exchange is subject to "customary conditions".

"E-commerce is a key channel in our long-term strategy. We are thrilled to work with industry pioneers such as Sukhinder, Rajbir and the whole team to bring The Whisky Exchange to a new step of its development," said Alexandre Ricard, Chairman and CEO of Pernod Ricard. The Whisky Exchange is dubbed an omnichannel player, expanding its activities to on-trade supply and physical stores in the UK. It is also active in private sales and online auctions of rare spirits, two expanding activities which are set to be further developed with Pernod Ricard. The French company said the acquisition is in line with Pernod Ricard's "consumer centric strategy" of meeting new consumer needs and expectations, in a context of solid e-commerce growth and strong demand for premiumisation.

For Easier International Travel, PM Calls For Mutual Recognition Of Vaccine Certificates



(Insider Bureau)- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday called for international travel to be made easier, through "mutual recognition of vaccine certificates", amid a row with the UK over double-vaccinated Indians still having to quarantine. "We also need to focus on addressing the pandemic's economic effects. To that end, international travel should be made easier, through mutual recognition of vaccine certificates," PM Modi said at the Global COVID-19 Summit hosted by US President Joe Biden. PM Modi is on a three-day visit to the US to participate in the first in-person summit of Quad leaders. Even though Covishield is now an approved vaccine on the UK's revised guidelines for travel, because of "vaccination certification issues", Indians are still required to quarantine. Officials have implied the problem is not Covishield but doubts over vaccine certification in India. PM Modi, at the Covid summit, also said India will be able to resume vaccine supplies to the world as production increases in the country, but for that, the supply chains of raw materials must be kept open. India had stopped exporting Covid vaccines in April. "As newer Indian vaccines get developed, we are also ramping up production capacity of existing vaccines. As our production increases, we will be able to resume vaccine supplies to others too. For this, the supply chains of raw materials must be kept open," he said.

Joe Biden To Nominate Indian-American Management Consultant To A Key Pentagon Position

(Insider Bureau)-US President Joe Biden has announced his intent to nominate Ashish Vazirani, an Indian-American management consultant, to a key Pentagon position.

Vazirani has been nominated for the position of Deputy Under Secretary of Defence for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defence.

Currently, he is the Principal of A2O Strategies, LLC where he provides advisory services to commercial and non-profit, high

growth and large enterprises, on the development, implementation, and execution of growth strategies. Most recently, Vazirani was Executive Director and CEO of the National Military Family Association (NMFA), where he provided strategic and operational oversight, and direction for all aspects of NMFA's advocacy and programming to support military families, the White House said on Tuesday.

During his tenure, NMFA regained its four-star charity rating and expanded programming, including



a child care fee relief programme. Before joining NMFA, he led development and programming at the Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) where he ensured

implementation and measurement of standardised programmes serving junior enlisted military families.

According to the White House, Vazirani was also selected to serve as a Member of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's Committee on the Well-Being of Military Families.

Prior to his work with the ASYMCA, he spent 22 years as a management consultant working with leading high tech and pharmaceutical companies to

create transformational change while delivering customer-centric solutions and profitable growth.

Vazirani served on active duty in the United States Navy as a Submarine Officer from 1986 to 1993, the White House said.

Vazirani holds a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Vanderbilt University, a Master of Engineering from the McCormick School of Engineering at Northwestern University, and an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

BJP attacks Gandhis after Captain's 'anti-national' remarks against Sidhu, Congress tweets Modi-Sharif pic

After former Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh dubbed Navjot Singh Sidhu as 'anti-national', the Opposition has raised questions about Sidhu's appointment as Punjab Congress chief.



(News Agencies)- Former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh's 'anti-national' remarks against Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu has given ammunition to the BJP and Shiromani Akali Dal. The Opposition has questioned the Congress high command on why Navjot Singh Sidhu was appointed the Punjab Congress chief when he was being dubbed as 'anti-national, dangerous and unstable' by party's senior leader Captain Amarinder Singh.

"Captain Amarinder describing Sidhu as a man having close

links with Pakistan was an alarming statement. If Sidhu is a threat to the nation why is the Congress high command, including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, supporting Sidhu as Congress chief of a border state," said BJP's national secretary Tarun Chugh.

Senior Akali Dal leader Dr. Daljit Cheema has asked Captain Amarinder Singh to clarify whether Navjot Singh Sidhu was pro-Pakistan and explain his relationship with a Pakistan

defence correspondent.

Another Akali Dal leader Bikram Majithia has already demanded a criminal case against Navjot Singh Sidhu for his silence on Pakistan. Congress downplays Sidhu controversy Captain Amarinder Singh's remarks against Navjot Singh Sidhu have given a new lease of life to the Sidhu-Bajwa controversy. Navjot Singh Sidhu had kicked off a controversy by hugging Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa in August 2018. The

photos showing him embracing Bajwa have gone viral once again. Meanwhile, Congress has not only downplayed the Sidhu-Bajwa controversy but AICC General Secretary Harish Rawat in a series of tweets has tried to justify Navjot Singh Sidhu hugging Pakistan Army Chief General.

"A question for the provincial and central leadership of #BJP. Today the friendship between Mr. Imran Khan and Navjot Singh Sidhu is an issue

because now he is in Congress. But when he was a BJP MP, then the BJP considered him as his savior in Punjab. At that time Sidhu had a great bond with Pakistan PM Imran Khan." "If PM Narendra Modi goes to Nawaz Sharif's house, eats biryani and hugs him, then it is the work of the country! If a person hugs Pakistan Army chief general for opening the way to religious pilgrimage site Kartarpur Sahib then it is anti-national? Why the double standards? BJP must understand this," Harish Rawat said in his tweets. Interestingly, Navjot Singh Sidhu is tight-lipped about the allegations made by Captain Amarinder Singh against him. It is not known whether he is in search of an opportunity to vent his anger or Harish Rawat is acting on his behalf. Former IPS officer Mohammad Mustafa and husband of former Punjab cabinet Minister Razia Sultana had also threatened to expose Captain if he dared to dub Sidhu as anti-national. Navjot Singh Sidhu himself refused to speak when media persons asked him to respond to Captain's allegations.

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Assam govt burns 2,500 seized rhino horns in special ceremony



Nearly 2,500 rhino horns, claimed to be the world's largest such stockpile, were consigned to flames in Assam on Wednesday.

On the occasion of World Rhino Day, the Assam government burned 2,479 rhino horns to bust myths associated with it. The ritualistic burning of the rhino horns was done publicly at Bokakhat on the occasion of World Rhino Day in the presence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, some of his cabinet colleagues, including Forest and Environment Minister Parimal Suklabaidya and local AGP MLA and Agriculture Minister Atul Bora, senior forest department officials and conservationists in a first of its kind exercise in the country. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the special drive is part of an effort to curb poaching of the endangered one-horned Indian rhinoceros. "We want to give a strong

message to the world that the rhino alive with the horn on its head is precious to us, and not a dead animal with its pride removed by poachers or those kept in the government treasuries," he said. The chief minister argued that since the horns have no proven medicinal values, allowing them to be sold tantamounted to cheating people and encouraging poaching. Out of 2623 reconciled horns, 94 will be showcased in a museum to be set up at Kaziranga National Park, while 29 will be kept for ongoing court cases. Among the samples being preserved, the longest horn is from Kamrup treasury, while the heaviest is from Nagaon. Samples for future genetic analysis were extracted from the rhino horns marked for destruction and preservation by drilling. The horns were recovered from the rhinoceros which died naturally in the forest zone, some

by drowning, others by infighting. Assam, the state that has 71 per cent of the world's population of one-horned rhinoceros, has sent a strong message that people of the state do not believe that the horns have medicinal values. Based on myths and with no scientific backing, rhino horn is being used in traditional Chinese medicines. The population of one-horned rhinoceros in Assam has increased from 1672 in 1999 to 2652 as per 2018 census. The one-horned rhino, which was earlier "endangered" as per the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, is now listed as "vulnerable." Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also said that in future, the horns of those rhinos that die naturally or in accidents will be burnt annually. He also announced that restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic will be lifted at Kaziranga National Park from

October 1 as people associated with tourism have been adversely affected with proviso that both tourists and local people associated with the trade, must be vaccinated. The Assam government had recently conducted verification of rhino horns stored in different state treasuries in order to reconcile and destroy those, barring the ones linked to court cases or required for scientific and academic purposes. In 2016, the Assam government constituted the Rhino Horn Verification Committee to study the specimens kept in 12 treasuries across the state. During the verification process, the Rhino Horn Verification Committee recorded the world's largest horn, weighing 3.051 kg and 36 cm in height. The horn was found in 1982 from a rhino in the Bagori range of Kaziranga National Park.

UP ATS arrests Maulana Kaleem Siddiqui in religious conversion racket from Meerut



(News Agencies)-The Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) has arrested a cleric from Meerut for allegedly running a "religious conversions racket", a senior police official said on Wednesday.

Maulana Kaleem Siddiqui, a resident of Muzzafarnagar, was arrested by the ATS, which is probing the racket, at around 9 pm on Tuesday from Meerut, Additional Director General (ADG), Law and Order, Prashant Kumar said.

He was brought to the ATS headquarters after being produced in a court, Kumar added. According to sources, Siddiqui has been running conversion activities through his trusts/NGOs situated in Delhi, mainly Shah Waliullah Trust, Global Peace Centre and Peace Mission (Mustafabad), Madrassa Sabeel-us-Salam (Jamia Nagar), Dawat-e-Ilsiam Trust (DEIT), Mewat, World Peace Organisation. Siddiqui is one of the biggest clerics from western Uttar Pradesh.

"Maulana Kaleem Siddiqui received funds from Darul Ulom Deoband, abroad through his trust Shah Waliullah, and the fund was reportedly used in the construction of Madrassas in Punjab and Haryana in the name of Shah Waliullah. His missionary work is spread over the states of Rajasthan, MP, UP, Chhatisgarh, MP, Punjab, Haryana and Orissa," sources said.

Following the arrest of Delhi's Jamia Nagar residents Mufti Qazi Jahangir Alam Qasmi and Mohammad Umar Gautam, who ran Islamic Dawah Center, an outfit allegedly working on the ISI funding for converting deaf-mute students to Islam, on June 20, the ATS is probing the conversion racket and has so far arrested 10 people besides Siddiqui, an official said.

Tamil Nadu: Woman beheaded by unidentified gang in Dindigul

(News Agencies)-A woman was allegedly beheaded by a gang in Tamil Nadu's Dindigul district, police said on Wednesday. The woman, identified as Nirmala Devi, is one of the 18 persons accused in a murder that dates back to January 2012. A man named Pasupathi Pandian, president of Devendrakula Vellalar Federation, was killed at his



house. Nirmala reportedly helped the accused after the murder. Though Nirmala was killed near her house by an unidentified gang at around 10:30 am on Wednesday, her beheaded head was found in front of Pandian's residence. The police have sent Nirmala's body for postmortem. The investigation is underway.

Union minister Hardeep Puri campaigns for BJP's Priyanka Tibrewal ahead of Bhabanipur bypoll in Bengal



(News Agencies)-Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri was in Bhabanipur area of Kolkata on Wednesday morning to campaign for the BJP's Priyanka Tibrewal. She is the party's candidate against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the upcoming Bhabanipur bypoll on September 30.

Hardeep Singh Puri embarked on a door-to-door campaign and placed stickers urging people to vote for Priyanka Tibrewal on some walls. Earlier, Hardeep Singh Puri visited the gurudwara on Elgin Road. Mamata Banerjee had visited the same one a few days ago.

'WE HAVE AN OUTSTANDING CANDIDATE'

Hardeep Singh Puri said on Wednesday, "It is reassuring to talk to people and see that they have full understanding of what the issues are and what is at stake here. They realize the importance of voting. And it [election] is made easier since we have an outstanding candidate. Our candidate has dedication and that is why I am seeking votes for her."

"People genuinely want a prosperous Bengal and they view this by-election as an opportunity. I have no doubt people will vote for Priyanka," he added.

During the Assembly election earlier this year, TMC's candidate Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay won in Bhabanipur. On being asked about this, Hardeep Singh Puri said it is natural that TMC feels confident about the bypoll. "But fact of the matter is that Mamata lost to Suwendu Adhikari in the previous election." **'BLESSINGS OF MY ELDERS'** Priyanka Tibrewal is aggressively campaigning in Bhabanipur for the upcoming bypoll. She said she is confident of taking on the chief minister.

ED, CBI officials meet Bengal Speaker over action against MLAs in Narada case

West Bengal Speaker Biman Banerjee summoned Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials on Wednesday over the chargesheet filed in connection with the Narada case.



Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials visited the West Bengal Assembly on Wednesday after Speaker Biman Banerjee asked them to meet him in connection with the

chargesheet filed in the Narada case. Officials from both the ED and the CBI submitted a letter after visiting the West Bengal Assembly. Speaker Biman Banerjee asked both the CBI and the ED officials to meet him over the names of MLAs mentioned in its chargesheet. He said the speaker's office was not kept in the loop and no permission was taken from it while initiating action against the MLAs.

The chargesheet filed in the Narada case mentions the names of three TMC MLAs including Firhad

Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee, former Kolkata Mayor Sovan Chatterjee and IPS officer SMH Meerza.

The ED and the CBI recently charged and summoned several MLAs of the ruling TMC, including ministers, for their alleged involvement in ponzi scam cases and the Narada sting operation case.

The CBI had also arrested Firhad Hakim, Subrata Mukherjee, Sovan Chatterjee and Madan Mitra in connection with the matter.

West Bengal Speaker Biman Banerjee had termed the arrest "illegal", saying that as per law, the CBI had not taken him in cognizance while making the arrest. Biman Banerjee said he has now summoned CBI and ED officers on Wednesday to explain why no permission was taken from the speaker's office before submitting chargesheets against legislators of the state.

App-based workers move SC seeking social security benefit from Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato

(News Agencies)-Various mobile app-based drivers and delivery persons have approached the Supreme Court demanding decent working conditions, social security and welfare benefits under multiple legislations. The petition has been filed before the top court on behalf of the gig workers by the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers (IFAT), which represents unions of the app-based transport workers and delivery workers across India. The petitioner also includes two individual drivers- Tulasi Jagadish Babu from Secundrabad and Kaushar Khan from New Delhi. Both Tulasi Jagadish Babu and Kaushar Khan worked for taxi

aggregator apps. While Babu works with Ola, Khan (currently unemployed) was earlier driving for Uber.

The petition also covers workers employed by food delivery apps Swiggy and Zomato.

The petition has sought for categorisation of "gig workers" and "app-based workers" as "unorganized workers" and be made eligible for various social benefits under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, Employees State Insurance Act, 1948 and Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 amongst others.

The petitioners further state that not providing them social security

violates their rights under Article 21 of the Constitution, including the right to decent and fair conditions for work.

The petition states that at present the aggregator companies exercise complete control and supervision over the work, due to which the platform workers were being exploited through forced labour. Additionally, at present they are not being provided social security benefits under any labour legislation organised or unorganised.

"This defeats the very purpose of the social-welfare legislations which seek to ensure the right to work and decent working conditions" the petition states.



The petitioners also seek formulation of special schemes for them, including health insurance, pensions, old age assistance, disability allowance, maternity benefits, education allowance, housing allowance etc.

App-workers say that the companies they work for ought to deposit a percentage of their total

annual turnover, with contribution from the government, as cess for operating schemes for the benefit of app-based workers. They are also demanding to be recognised as "frontline workers" so that their medical expenses, insurance, and vaccination is carried on at the cost of the aggregator company.

Gender equality can't be postponed: SC orders govt to allow women for Nov NDA exam

Saying 'gender equality issues cannot be postponed', the Supreme Court said women candidates must be allowed to appear for the November 2021 National Defence Academy exam.

(News Agencies)- The Supreme Court directed the Centre to allow women candidates to appear for the November 2021 entrance exam to the National Defence Academy (NDA), saying "gender equality issues cannot be postponed".

The direction comes a day after the Defence Ministry informed the Supreme Court that a notification allowing women candidates to appear for the exam would be out by May next year.

"Women must be allowed to take the November 2021 exams. Cannot defer for one year. Medical standards should be tentatively notified. UPSC to issue a corrected notification for the November

exam," the Supreme Court said. "Effectively, what is being requested is that the present exam of November 21 be skipped as far as entrance of girls is concerned. We have given thought to the submissions. It will be difficult for us in this situation as the aspirations of women have risen," the court further said.

On September 8, the government had assured the court that the induction of women into the NDA was already under consideration by the Armed Forces.

On Tuesday, the Defence Ministry submitted to the Supreme Court an affidavit on induction of women into the Army, Navy and Air Force through the National Defence

Academy.

"Entrance exams for entry into the NDA are held twice a year and the government proposes to have the necessary mechanism in place for induction of women candidates by May, 2022. That is the time by which UPSC is expected to publish its first notification for the entrance exam," it said.

The government said that keeping the timelines in mind, meticulous planning and preparation was called for to ensure smooth induction and training of women candidates.

"While medical standards for the male candidates exist, appropriate medical standards for women candidates are in the process of formulation. They need to be determined before



women join the academy. A body of experts will determine these, taking into account various aspects," the Defence Ministry said in the affidavit. The Supreme Court was hearing a petition filed by advocate Kush

Kalra. The petition raised the issue of exclusion of eligible and willing female candidates from joining the NDA solely on the ground of sex, which allegedly was a violation of fundamental right of equality.



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UK recognises Covishield but quarantine rule for vaccinated Indians to continue

(News Agencies)-The United Kingdom has announced changes in its travel and quarantine rules and said that the UK now recognises Covishield as a vaccine. This comes amid a growing row over UK not recognising the Covishield vaccine made in India. However, Indians who have taken the Covishield vaccine will still have to remain in quarantine due to a 'certification' issue according to the UK

government.

In its latest travel update, the UK has said that from October 4, one will qualify as fully vaccinated if they are "vaccinated under an approved vaccination programme in the UK, Europe, USA or UK vaccine programme overseas with a full course of the Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer BioNTech, Moderna or Janssen vaccines from a relevant public health body in Australia, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bahrain, Brunei,

Canada, Dominica, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, New Zealand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea or Taiwan". It further mentions, "Formulations of the 4 listed vaccines, such as AstraZeneca Covishield, AstraZeneca Vaxzevria and Moderna Takeda, qualify as approved vaccines." India on Tuesday warned of "reciprocal measures" if the UK does not address its concerns over the new travel rules relating

to Covid-19 vaccine certification, calling the new policy "discriminatory". External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also took up the issue of Covishield-vaccinated travellers being required to quarantine in the UK with newly-appointed British Foreign Secretary Elizabeth Truss at a meeting in New York on Tuesday. "The basic issue is that here is a vaccine, Covishield, which is a licensed product of the UK company, manufactured in

India of which we have supplied five million doses to the UK at the request of the government of the UK," said Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla. "We understand that this is being used under the national health system, and, therefore, non-recognition of Covishield is a discriminatory policy and does impact those of our citizens travelling to the UK," Shringla said at a media briefing.

Priest Aadya Tiwari, disciple Anand Giri sent to 14 days' judicial custody in Narendra Giri death case



Booked for abetment to suicide, Anand Giri and Aadya Tiwari have been sent to 14 days in judicial custody in connection with the death of Mahant Narendra Giri.

(News Agencies)- Anand Giri and Aadya Tiwari, arrested in connection with the death of seer Mahant Narendra Giri, have been sent to 14 days in judicial custody by a court. The two were taken for a medical examination prior to their court

appearance.

President of the Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad, Mahant Narendra Giri (72), was found dead inside his room at the Baghambari Math in UP's Prayagraj on Monday.

In a handwritten suicide letter

recovered from his room, the seer held his disciple Anand Giri and Hanuman temple priest Aadya Tiwari responsible for his death. Mahant Narendra Giri of the Niranjani Akhara wrote in the letter that he feared Anand Giri would circulate a morphed photo

of him with a woman to defame him.

Anand Giri, Mahant Narendra Giri's disciple, was taken into custody from Haridwar in Uttarakhand and booked for abetment to suicide. Investigators questioned Anand Giri for nearly 12 hours on Wednesday.

Hanuman temple priest Aadya Tiwari and his son Sandeep Tiwari were also questioned by the police. However, Sandeep Tiwari has not been placed under arrest as yet. The Uttar Pradesh government has formed a special investigating team (SIT) to probe

the circumstances surrounding the seer's death.

A team of five doctors, who conducted an on-camera autopsy of Mahant Narendra Giri on Wednesday, said his death was caused by hanging.

This adds to the police's initial theory that the seer's death was a prima facie case of suicide.

Speaking to the media on Wednesday, Uttar Pradesh ADG (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar confirmed both Anand Giri and Aadya Tiwari have been booked under Section 306 (abetment to suicide) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).



Six J&K govt employees sacked for having terror links

Six Jammu and Kashmir government employees have been sacked for working as overground workers of militant groups. This is the third such incident in recent months.

(News Agencies)-Six Jammu and Kashmir government employees have been sacked for having alleged terror links and working as overground workers, sources told India Today.

The employees were dismissed under Article 311 of the Indian Constitution under which no inquiry is held and dismissed employees can only approach a high court for relief.

This is the third such incident in recent months. In July, two police constables, sons of Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin, and some teachers were among 11 government employees sacked by the J&K administration for allegedly being involved in terror activities. Earlier, the administration had sacked three government employees in May.

The six employees who were sacked are Hamid Wani, a teacher from Anantnag; Jaffer Hussain, a constable from Kishtwar; Mohammad Rafi Butt, a junior assistant in the Road and Building department from Kishtwar; Liyaqat Ali Kakroo, a teacher

from Baramulla; Tariq Mehmood Kohli, a range officer of the Forest Department from Poonch and Showkat Ahmad Khan, a constable from Budgam.

Hamid Wani, accused of propagating secessionist ideology, was the district commander of the terrorist outfit Allah Tigers before joining government service. He reportedly secured the employment without any selection process by leveraging Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel) influence. Wani was the key speaker and organiser in 2016 of events following terrorist Burhan Wani's encounter.

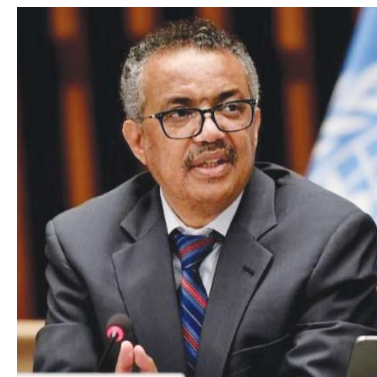
Jaffer Hussain Butt was arrested and charged by the NIA after an investigation revealed that he provided his vehicle to Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists and facilitated their safe movement. He has been out on bail since September 2019. Mohammad Rafi Butt also figures in the FIR registered by NIA. He was arrested for providing logistical support to Hizbul terrorists in Kishtwar and a safe environment to execute terror plans. He is also out on bail.

Liyaqat Ali Kakroo was first arrested in 2001 after it came to light that he was a locally trained terrorist. Explosive materials were recovered from his possession and an FIR was registered. Another FIR was registered in 2002 after a huge cache of arms was recovered from him. He was detained under PSA for two years in 2002. However, he was acquitted by a court in both the cases. In 2021, another FIR was registered against Kakroo after two grenades were recovered from his possession.

Tariq Mehmood Kohli has been accused of being allegedly involved in smuggling of arms, ammunition, explosives and Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) from Pakistan. He has been in touch with active militants.

Showkat Ahmad Khan was detained under the J&K Public Safety Act in 2019 and has been allegedly involved in looting weapons from the house of a Legislative Council member with whom he was posted as a PSO.

WHO's Tedros thanks India for resuming export of Covid-19 vaccines to COVAX



(News Agencies)-World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus thanked India for resuming the export of Covid-19 vaccines in order to fulfil its commitment towards COVAX.

"Thank you Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya for announcing India will resume crucial Covid-19 vaccine shipments to COVAX in October," tweeted Ghebreyesus on Wednesday. The WHO director-general further said India's decision to export Covid-19 vaccines "is an important development in support of reaching the 40 per cent vaccination target in all countries by the end of the year". Thank you Health Minister @mansukhmandviya for announcing #India will resume crucial #COVID19 vaccine shipments to #COVAX in October. This is an important development in support of reaching the 40% vaccination target in all countries by the end of the year. #VaccineEquity

- Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (@DrTedros) September 21, 2021 The central government had halted the export of Covid-19 vaccines in March owing to the sharp surge in cases of infection in the country. On Monday, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced that India will resume its Vaccine Maitri programme in October -- to provide Covid-19 vaccines to countries across the world. Surplus vaccines will be exported as per India's commitment to the collective fight against Covid-19, he said while addressing the media earlier this week. Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Morocco, South Africa, Afghanistan, Mexico, DR Congo, Nigeria and the UK were among some of the beneficiaries of the Vaccine Maitri initiative.

2-year-old Dalit child runs into temple in Karnataka, family fined Rs 25,000 for 'purification ritual'



(News Agencies)-A Dalit family from Karnataka's Miyapur village in Koppal district was fined Rs 25,000 after their two-year-old child entered a temple. According to a news report, villagers said that upper caste members sought money from the family for 'purification' rituals but the district administration intervened, resolved the issue and warned them. The toddler entered the temple on September 4 when his family had taken him there to offer prayers for his birthday. The child ran inside the temple premises when his father was praying. Temple priest and locals took objection to this and imposed a fine on the family on September 11. "It was my son's birthday and we wanted to offer our prayers at the Anjaneya temple in front of our

house. It started raining then and my son entered the temple. That is all that happened," says Chandru, father of the two-year-old child. According to another

news report, Chandru and his family are Dalits and are not allowed in the Anjaneya Temple in Miyapura of Koppal, much like in several other temples in the

region. After the incident came to light, members of the Channadasar community that Chandru belongs to held protests and approached the police.

HC denies bail to two cops accused of informing gangster Vikas Dubey, leading to Kanpur ambush



(News Agencies)-In an important development, the Allahabad High Court has denied bail to station in-charge KK Sharma and station officer Vinay Tiwari who were arrested for leaking information to slain gangster Vikas Dubey. Both the officers are accused of providing information to Vikas Dubey before conducting raids.

Due to the information passed on by the accused officers, Vikas Dubey was alerted and was able to counter the police, resulting in the deaths of eight police officers in the Kanpur ambush. The police arrested the accused officers in 2020 on charges of leaking secret information to Vikas Dubey. Significantly, when the police went to arrest Vikas Dubey, he had defences set up and was able to flee even after killing eight

policemen and injuring several others. Later, after a long hunt, the police arrested Vikas Dubey from Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh. He was later killed in an encounter during the transit to Uttar Pradesh. Earlier, former Supreme Court Judge BC Chauhan headed the probe into Vikas Dubey's death and gave a clean chit to UP police. Later, the police registered an FIR under IPC sections and also provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. On the other hand, Tiwari's counsel contended that there was no indirect or direct proof against Tiwari and that the raid was conducted against Vikas Dubey, which had resulted in the deaths of the policemen. It was further argued that there was no concrete evidence against the accused officers.

Delhi woman, 12-year-old son drown in Beas river while clicking selfie



(News Agencies)-A woman and her 12-year-old son drowned in the Beas river while clicking selfies on a riverside near Manali, police said on Tuesday. The mother-son duo had arrived in the area from Delhi on Tuesday morning.

When they had gone to the riverside in Bhang village to click some photographs, they accidentally fell into the Beas river and died.

An employee of a hotel spotted the two being swept away in the river. He tried to save them but in vain. He also sustained

injuries during the incident, the Hindustan Times reported on Wednesday.

After receiving the information, police launched a rescue operation, following which the bodies of the two were retrieved from the river 4km downstream.

The bodies of the woman and her child were sent to a hospital in Manali, Subdivisional Police Officer Sanjeev Kumar was quoted as saying. He also said the bodies would be handed over to the victims' family after the autopsy.

Rewarding migrants for illegally crossing our borders means they will keep coming



The Del Rio Bridge in Texas spanning the Rio Grande River from Mexico into the United States has become famous overnight. It is the scene of the largest makeshift camp of illegal immigrants and some of the most inhumane conditions imaginable in the history of the U.S. Border Patrol. By now, the world has viewed the constant aerial and ground footage as we all witness the largest single illegal immigration event in our history. But unless you are on the ground at the bridge every day to personally witness the smell, noise, confusion, pain and suffering it is hard to understand just how bad the situation really is.

One seasoned reporter with war zone reporting experience said the camp was just as bad as anything she had seen overseas. "BUT THIS IS IN AMERICA AND ON U.S. SOIL," she said in exasperation.

It is in America, and it is on the soil of the greatest country and beacon of democracy in the world. Or are we anymore? I would argue we still are, but President Biden and the hard left with their constant attacks on law enforcement and the rule of law are certainly challenging my optimism. In a desperate and pathetic attempt to deflect blame for the raging crisis at our border, which they alone caused, the Biden administration attacked its own Border Patrol agents.

Agents using split horse reins to control horses in dangerous situations were portrayed with a few misleading photos

and short video clips as committing "violence against immigrants" and using "whips", White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki went as far as calling it "horrific."

Vice President Kamala Harris also weighed in before an investigation could take place by insinuating Border Patrol Agents aren't law enforcement officers and shouldn't lay hands on someone even when they are refusing to follow lawful commands.

All lies, but the truth doesn't serve the administration.

On the campaign trail, Biden promised an orderly and humane immigration system. If what we are seeing now is humane, the world better brace itself for what the president considers inhumane. This administration would have you believe illegal immigration is based upon root causes in the countries of origin. They're correct.

What person from a third world country wouldn't want to come to the United States?

But the Biden administration cannot control conditions in foreign countries - reference Afghanistan. The administration can, however, control conditions and root illegal immigration causes in our country. Catch-and-release is the single biggest driver of illegal immigration right now. If we reward people for crossing our borders illegally, they will continue to come.

More than 40 years of evidence proves this. And the staggering catch-and-release figures this year show why

USA-Australia submarine deal results a rift with France

By Susmita Ghosh

Of late a multibillion-dollar Submarine deal was signed between the USA and Australia. It has a global political impact, resulted in one of their long-time associates, France, reeling with the feelings of betrayal.

According to France, it was a stab in the back, as their defense industry took a major hit. The development resulted in nullifying the US\$40 billion French submarine deal with Australia. The French foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian stated that the participating countries were disloyal, with a major breach of trust with France.

The road to this incident began with the formation of AUKUS - a strategic partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. It is primarily an anti-China alliance with targeted goals. The submarine agreement with the USA was a part of that, which cancelled the proposed French submarine deal. But the USA has accepted that they have kept France in dark about the deal with Australia for long.

Quite seriously, Paris is taking prompt political actions to voice their displeasure. France has called off the ambassadors to the USA and Australia for emergency discussion recently, which is quite an unparalleled move. They are dissatisfied with the UK, too, as they are a part of the AUKUS. Consequently, the French defense minister has cancelled scheduled meetings with Ben Wallace, the UK Defence Secretary.

However, the controversy didn't stop the

USA from going ahead in its strategic partnership with Australia. They are expanding the interoperability between the forces of the two nations as the US Air Force will be stationed in Australia too.

The long-term impact of these steps is to be considered in detail. While the USA takes the Chinese as the major threat now, this close partnership with Australia will help them counter the Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region quite tactfully. With a series of working bases in Australia, it will be easier to monitor any development and provide prompt counter-measures on any sudden developments and acts of aggression.

However, it all came at a high cost for both the USA and Australia. France is a powerful ally, not only in Europe but globally as far as the defense industry is concerned. While they wanted to be part of the USA's anti-China axis for long, this recent development may change their view. It has already an impact on the positive relationship between the countries.

While AUKUS is a group that focuses on steps against Chinese aggression, there are other groups with similar goals like QUAD and ASEAN. This development has positive sides for countries like India as it will counter the progress of China in the South China Sea, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. It might be costly if this development results in a permanent rift with France. The US submarines will be nuclear-powered, instead of traditional diesel

(Contd on page 35)



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AUKUS and Afghanistan

Now is the time for Modi govt to deploy every diplomatic instinct

It's a busy week for diplomacy. On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet with US President Joe Biden, for their first in-person summit. The Prime Minister will also attend the first in-person Quad leaders' meeting. On 25 September, he will address the United Nations General Assembly, or UNGA. On the margins, PM Modi is expected to meet separately with his counterparts Scott Morrison of Australia and Yoshihide Suga of Japan. No doubt, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who arrived in New York this week, will engage with a number of his counterparts and others.

There is plenty to discuss. The continuing effects of the pandemic and a sustainable, equitable, and greener economic recovery - the central issues of debate at the UNGA. Taking stock of US-India relations and working through a long list of operational and strategic issues - in Washington. Identifying key deliverables for the Quad. The leaders will also assess the progress of American-financed vaccines being manufactured in Hyderabad. No doubt, the imperatives of dealing with China will continue to shape many of these conversations. The current impasse over the AUKUS agreement, and French and even broader European dissatisfaction with the United States, is bound to occupy diplomatic oxygen both in New York and in Washington DC. Further, Afghanistan is central to the debates at the UN, and it will likely be so in the meetings scheduled in Washington DC. The Taliban have nominated an envoy to the United Nations. This will be considered, in time, by the UN's nine-member Credentials Committee. It adds a degree of urgency to the question of balancing recognition with the need to

work with the movement for the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian assistance.

In at least two ways, India's diplomatic advance in the United States could be pivotal with long-lasting effects in both South Asia as well as the future of the Indo-Pacific. If there was a time to deploy every diplomatic instinct and muscle internationally, it is now.

Help craft a global response to Afghanistan

First, India is well placed to moot and support a truly global humanitarian response to the tragic takeover of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. More than 18 million people in Afghanistan need immediate humanitarian assistance. According to the UN, only 39% of the current plea for \$1.3 billion of aid has been funded. The UN, and potentially the European Union, is best placed to organise and distribute aid within the country. They both played a critical role in the 1990s - when only three countries recognised the Taliban. Understandably, it will be a while before various nations and the UN itself develop a strategy of engagement with the brutal regime that won the war in Afghanistan. It is likely that most European nations will follow a collective EU lead, whilst developing bespoke approaches to diplomatic accreditation with Afghanistan.

For many reasons, India is the least likely actor to take a lead to shape a global response. The Taliban government is filled with individuals who have ordered attacks against Indian personnel and interests in Afghanistan. They remain closely tied to Pakistan. Yet, India's commitment in Afghanistan is to its people. It needs to find a way to reach them, while keeping its strategic

disinclinations squarely in mind.

On 17 September, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, Prime Minister Modi made a case for humanitarian aid. He spoke of the need to craft a global response to reach the Afghan people. He also outlined India's concerns, the need to monitor Taliban commitments - including making sure that Afghan soil is not used by international terrorists.

The high-level policy architecture for promoting and shaping a global response exists - as spelt out in the PM's speech. It is essential now to act on this with a sense of tearing urgency. Few countries have equitable relations with the United States, Russia, Iran, the Central Asian Republics and EU-member states. It's time to leverage these associations in and for the Afghan people. In doing so, it is essential that India pushes back against any formal move to recognise the Taliban at the UN and elsewhere. Global engagement for the distribution of humanitarian aid does not require recognition. It requires the full weight of international collective action.

Play a role in bridging the transatlantic divide

Second, India can play a role in the diplomatic fiasco with regards to AUKUS - the newly announced arrangement between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. This will, in time, develop into something more than a mere security partnership. French leaders are clearly more than miffed. There are moot questions with regards to France's own protectionist policies. Others point to the US' all-consuming "fixation" with China - that drove the need for AUKUS - that the EU is yet to grasp in full measure.

"Everyone Can Cook: Everyone Can Make Music"

(By Max Thind)

Just like a generation of chefs may have been inspired by media & icons like Ratatouille or Gordon Ramsay. A new generation of music producers should be inspired. Not by any particular media around us, but the ready ability to craft our own melodies. I often hear people say "I can't make music" or "It's not for me", when I see them loving their particular styles of music in what they're listening to. Music is inherently part of human life & culture. We've been humming, whistling & strummings our way straight through our dooms.

Everyone or anyone that's willing to have some fun should harness that in some way, shape or form. Start by downloading some type of DAW (Digital Audio Workshop), or grab an instrument and start strummin' some chords. I'd recommend the former, with the access to a laptop or PC, a DAW has a wide-array of digital buttons, knobs & dials to have some serious fun. An instrument is a beautiful way to express yourself, but it should be taken more seriously. The expenses & maintenance alone can be a bit staggering. But you could always just take a leap of faith & start singing!

Whichever path you choose, remember that what matters is your music should sound good to YOU. There is a beauty in the waves created by us, heard to us as sounds, rhymes & rhythms. If you've been debating creating your own tunes, then you have to start listening to you. Start by dissecting the tunes that make you groove. Then dive headfirst into expressing what's truly your own, moves.

Seriously, start creating your music. The ability to create my own melodies & listen to something that I haven't shared with anyone, creates an atmosphere where I know how important listening to oneself is. You could express your emotions through your music, to yourself. If you want to be a little selfish & keep some for yourself, that's perfectly fine. But sharing tunes with like-minded listeners is easier than ever. With access to the internet, the world is your stadium & only people that truly love what you do will appreciate your work & dedication to your expression.

By the way you can sing paragraphs 1 & 3 in your head, or all of them, or none of them. You do you.

"The Debt Ceiling, Default & Why It Doesn't Matter"



to travel across hills in historic Athens. Sometimes it's dramatized, but that's fine. What matters is the underlying IP, systems, frameworks & networks the US companies have in their arsenals. Some parts (not all) of our government may seem to dive headfirst into green eggs & ham a bit too much, but our companies are solid. We're the leader in innovation, the creator of inspiration. The world is big, & there's a lot more than just Americans, they're also human & we all should be equally ready for the upcoming economic/technologic/environmental events. The point I'm trying to make is that the best talent heads to the US, not for the country, but for the ideals of innovation & inspiration.

The best thing that can happen for the entire world, is if education became truly free. A university willing to close its

doors to a willing student should have their doors opened or torn off. The access to true higher education, without staggering debt would be the catalyst the modern world desperately needs for a new generation of hard thinkers. This is already done online, where you can become a learned disciple with no single professor. But with a world of knowledge seekers & givers, given a free public platform can discuss how we can focus on making all of our lives more fulfilling, long-lasting & eventful.

Would this spell the doom of a very lucrative business? Very much so, but the applications provided by allowing people to apply themselves would outweigh any cheap buck made at the expense of someone attaining knowledge to better themselves & the world. There will always be a private enterprise claiming to be prestigious & they will be



(By Max Thind)

rewarded the fortunes they seek. The knowledge provided isn't useful without access & strive to actively apply it, free labs, industry-environments, theoretical studies & innovative atmospheres should be readily available for all, without judgment nor persecution for unearthing the unknown.

See what I did there? We moved on from the topic that didn't matter onto something that does.

It's all in the title, the United States legislatures & media create an uproar every, single, year about why we have to increase our paper credit limit. When modern society knows that with the help of institutional & individual custodians, a forward thinking economy will be formed around a handful of decentralized currencies, traded amongst themselves & for all of our goods & paper bills. The true reason for this telenovela depicted every year lies behind the attitude of the US. The government tells Americans every year that they're bailing everyone out, they just don't tell us at whose expense, so you take a guess who's really footing the bill.

We get the great ability to see politicians duke it out on WWE...oops, wrong network. We get to see democracy at play every single day without having

Failure on Biden's Reconciliation Bill Is Very Much an Option

Joe Biden's domestic agenda at the moment is, like his presidency, in peril. It is caught between the Scylla of progressives

insisting the bipartisan infrastructure bill can't pass the House before the reconciliation bill passes the Senate and the Charybdis of moderates insisting the bipartisan infrastructure bill must pass the House before anything else happens. It is, to switch metaphors, a standoff out of an old Western, with the

intervention that will lead to all factions holstering their weapons not yet evident. Still, the conventional wisdom is that Democrats will get both bills in the end. They will stare into the abyss, recognize the partywide debacle that would ensue if they pass nothing, and agree, somehow or other, on the infrastructure bill and a reduced reconciliation bill.

It's certainly true that, whatever the intervening drama, must-pass spending bills always pass. (There are very occasionally government shutdowns, which are only temporary pauses until the bills pass anyway.) But the possibility of a complete meltdown over the Biden spending bill shouldn't be underestimated. The reconciliation bill isn't too big to fail, but

big enough potentially to fail spectacularly. It has the hallmarks of other signature presidential initiatives that, despite huge investments of presidential political capital, have gone down at the hands of a president's own party.

In an unimaginable defeat at the time, Bill Clinton couldn't get his health care bill through Congress, despite a roughly 80-seat House majority and 56 or 57 senators.

After his reelection in 2004, George W. Bush's Social Security reform fizzled in a Republican Congress.

Out of the gate, Donald Trump suffered an embarrassing defeat on Obamacare repeal in 2017. So, no, victory isn't inevitable, no matter how much Biden needs his bills. It is a well-established axiom that delay, which characterized the Clinton health care debate, is a killer. Momentum is lost. Entropy takes a hand. Presidents don't tend to get more popular after an election, and if a delay pushes a fight into a midterm-election year, members of his own party are likelier to conclude they need to go their own way to protect their interests.



If Quad doesn't start biting soon, India must look at newer partners that would

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first post-pandemic foreign visit has evoked great interest in the geopolitical, academic and strategic community in India and abroad. Besides reviewing India-US relations and exploring measures to expand trade and investment opportunities, the meetings will include multiple-level discussions on strengthening defence and security partnerships, including a meeting of four apex leaders of the Quad.

Among all the Quad meetings held so far, this one is probably the biggest because it involves the participation of the apex leadership of the member countries – India, US, Japan, and Australia. Besides the leadership, the timing of the meeting adds greater significance. This is the best time to determine the nature, agenda and the roadmap for the over one-and-a-half-decade-old multilateral experiment. In spite of holding several meetings at various levels, the Quad members have not yet clearly enumerated the grouping's

purpose, agenda, programmes and objectives. The progress of Quad, which began as a temporary and ad-hoc platform after the tragic Tsunami in December 2004, has been slow but steady if one were to consider its evolutionary story. After a promising start in 2007, the Quad was more or less dormant before it was revived in 2017 as Quad 2.0.

While it is too early to consider the institutionalisation of the Quad, it is necessary to conduct a stock-taking and cost-benefit analysis before we decide to invest more time and resources on this platform. As a curtain raiser to the Prime Minister's visit, foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla has reiterated India's stand that the Quad is "not a military alliance" and that it was designed to cater to requirements of the Indo-Pacific. Earlier, Quad meetings have discussed issues pertaining to climate change but without arriving at a consensus on programmes. Quad has discussed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on trade, commerce and economy, but it is not a trade body.



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Storytelling in times of Covid



Reed Hastings writes: India's storytelling traditions and growing creative community enable the country to be a leader in online entertainment

The last 19 months of the pandemic have been some of the most difficult of our lives. We all spent more time isolated in our homes than ever before. But we found a universal connection in the remarkable stories we watched. The world rooted for their favourite characters and was transported to a reimagined Regency England, a college campus in Jaipur, the Louvre in Paris, a 1960s chess tournament in Moscow, a karate dojo in Los Angeles and a bank in Spain with people wearing Dali masks. Stories have always been a source of comfort, joy and community for people around the world. Today the screen reminds us that great stories have the enduring power to unite, inspire

and entertain. Storytelling goes to the heart of what it means to be human. When we watch stories, we forge new connections and build a deeper understanding of the world, making us all feel more connected. We have the responsibility of providing choice and control to our members, especially parents, so they can decide what their children watch. India is home to the finest traditions of storytelling. Home to one of the world's most vibrant entertainment industries, India is remarkably well placed to lead in the era of internet entertainment. Brilliant creators and talent, spread across the country and united in their love for storytelling, are creating

shows and films that can be watched by Indians on hundreds of millions of screens, be it a TV or smartphone.

Earlier this year, we joined hands with UNESCO to celebrate India's rich cultural heritage through the family favourite animation, Mighty Little Bheem. India has the vision and talent to export its best stories; and with our subtitles and dubs in over 30 languages, more people can now discover even more Indian stories and culture - wherever they live. It's a huge privilege to be a part of the creative community in India. We've licensed hundreds of Indian films and shows for our members and invested in over 100 Netflix originals, almost all of which have been

commissioned by Indian executives who live locally, know the culture and speak the language. It's testament to India's breadth of storytelling that these originals have been filmed in over 25 cities and towns across the country, from Lucknow to Lonavla, Mumbai to Madurai, Gulmarg to Goa, Kolkata to Kochi. As a part of the growing creative community in India, we understand that telling stories that are made in India and can be watched by the world is a collective experience. These successful stories are born of partnerships with brilliant Indian creators, directors, writers, actors and crew. Our commitment to India is strong and growing. We want to deepen

our partnership with Indian creators as they reinvent genres, stretch boundaries, and inspire new ideas. In the last year, we have supported multiple production workshops, and editing courses with the New York Film Academy. We will continue to build and nurture the next generation of creative talent - whether young animators in partnership with Gobelins L'école de L'image, one of the world's finest animation schools, or entirely new talent through BAFTA Breakthrough India, an initiative to find 10 new voices across the country. Inclusion in storytelling is important to us and we are proud that more than half of our films and series in India feature women in central roles.

September 23, 1981, Forty Years Ago: US On IMF Loans

The US Treasury Secretary Donald Regan, who favours stricter IMF conditionalities about loans, says that his country still has questions about \$5 million SDR loan to India. In general Regan wants the IMF to be stricter about giving loans. The problems about India, he said, include continuing domestic and international deficits, failure to control the money supply and a general "inability to get their house in order." The Reagan administration's tough attitude towards the World Bank and

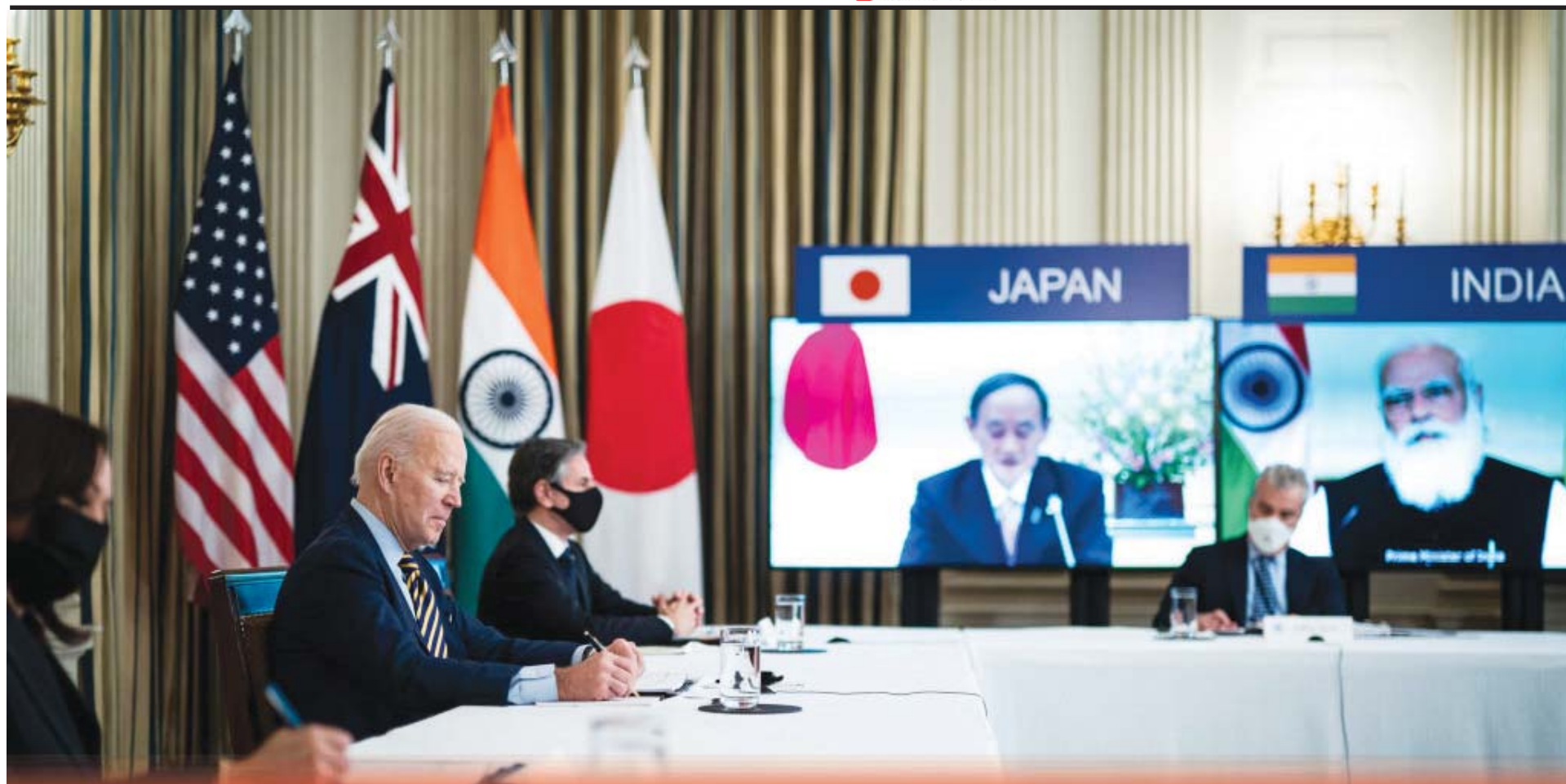
other lending institutions- also stressed by Regan on Monday- has been known for a long time. It is being further developed in a detailed study, parts of which have already been leaked presumably. Punjab Tension Appealing for communal amity in Punjab, the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on Tuesday expressed her anguish at attempts to exploit religion for political ends. Describing the Akali Dal charge that a clash of two personalities in the state Congress (I) was responsible for the present

tension as absolutely wrong, the Prime Minister told a news conference that the need of the hour was to create a congenial atmosphere. The clash of personalities was an apparent reference to reported differences between the Union Home Minister, Zail Singh, and the State Chief Minister, Darbara Singh, something the Prime Minister denied vehemently. Gromyko's Charges Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, has accused "certain quarters in Western countries" of interfering in Poland's internal



affairs and trying to loosen its socialist foundations. But he told the UN General Assembly in a speech that these attempts will

be futile. He also lashed out at what he termed hostile, criminal intrigues by the United States against Cuba.



The importance of Quad meeting amidst current geopolitical flux

Rajiv Bhatia writes: Grouping has to fulfil past commitments. Onus is on US to prove that Afghan experience has strengthened its resolve to defend its interests in the Indo-Pacific

Two meetings of the leaders of a plurilateral grouping within seven months is an exceptional development in world affairs, especially when it involves the US and its three Quad partners - Australia, Japan and India. Why the leaders are meeting again on September 24 and what they hope to achieve are matters of mounting public interest. This first in-person summit is especially significant - set against the backdrop of the Indo-Pacific region grappling with the repercussions of Afghanistan, the growing aggressiveness of China and the formation of AUKUS, a brand-new trilateral security partnership.

The leaders' summit of the Quadrilateral Framework will be hosted by US President Joseph Biden in Washington. It may be of greater substance than the inaugural virtual summit of March 12, because the context of the two summits is significantly different. In March, the Biden administration had just begun its innings; it was struggling to define its China

and Indo-Pacific policies, and expectations from the Quad were low.

A substantive joint statement, reinforced by a smart op-ed by the four leaders in The Washington Post, drew global attention. Now, three weeks after the chaotic and mismanaged withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, that country's future and regional security issues are bound to dominate the discussions. The onus is on the US to convince its partners that the Afghan experience has strengthened, not weakened, its resolve to defend its - and their - interests in the Indo-Pacific.

The AUKUS - the Australia-UK-US partnership - too will need some serious explaining, particularly to Japan and India, which worry about the emergence of an inner circle (US and Australia) within the Quad, which is now connected to the UK, a non-Quad partner. There are even reports that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson may be visiting Washington around the time of the Quad summit.

Indian experts are divided over the

impact of AUKUS on the Quad. Some argue that it reduces the Quad's salience, while others maintain that the Quad is strengthened by the new trilateral. However, a sober evaluation suggests that AUKUS will have both positive and negative implications for the Quad; these will become evident after the forthcoming summit.

Another consequential development is the September 16 release of the European Union's Indo-Pacific strategy. A shorter version presented in April has now been given a comprehensive form. It paints the EU and the Indo-Pacific as deeply connected in diverse realms ranging from trade and investment to security and defence. The EU's determination to scale up and diversify cooperation with democratic and like-minded nations could be a boost to the Quad, provided the Europeans are ready to stand up to China's assertive behaviour, violations of international law and norms and increasing use of coercion. These issues will dominate the headlines in Washington for sure. But the

Quad also has to do the necessary and backbreaking work of institutionalising itself, and the fulfilling of past commitments. For instance, the joint vaccine production programme seems to be on track and their distribution first to needy Indo-Pacific countries will begin in early 2022. The working group on emerging and critical technologies too is reporting progress. A principal endeavour is to leverage the Open Radio Access Network (O-RAN) to derive benefits of interoperability of the 5G technologies offered by different vendors in the west.

On climate change, the focus of the third working group, some key issues remain unresolved - specifically, India is unable to show "more ambitions" regarding its climate goals, despite two visits to New Delhi this year by John Kerry, the US president's special envoy on climate. But efforts are underway to finalise technology-sharing and other cooperation to meet the challenges of climate change. An expansion of the agenda is on the cards and will include new areas like infrastructure and

connectivity, education, cyber security and maritime security. Hopefully, it will also include cooperation in the Blue Economy, as all the four nations are endowed with immense oceanic resources.

The special attention to infrastructure comes from the US, given its announcement of the "Build Back Better World" (B3W) at the G7 summit last June, but which has yet to become a reality. What the US government will now propose and whether its package will include details such as planning, logistics, new financing and identification of specific projects, will be keenly observed. With the China challenge now recognised as being both multi-faceted and long-term, the Quad needs to devise a matching strategy. Joint innovative and practical recommendations are worth considering, like 'The Quad Economy & Technology Task Force Report: A Time for Concerted Action,' crafted by international experts and published by think tank Gateway House in August.

Understanding the American enthusiasm for the Quad

Tanvi Madan writes: The Quad fits with President Biden's desire to see democracies try to deliver, and the administration's broader foreign policy approach emphasising alliances and partnerships - and it helps provide a solution to its China problem.

On Friday, the leaders of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States will meet for the first-ever in-person Quadrilateral ("Quad") summit. A year ago, such a gathering would have been difficult to envision. Until January 2021, Delhi and Tokyo would not even use the word "Quad" in their statements. More significantly, with elections looming in the US, the fate of the Quad was unclear. The Trump administration had helped revive it in 2017, but the Joe Biden campaign had shown little interest in the Quad. Rather than take an Anything-But-Trump attitude, however, President Biden has not just embraced this coalition, but doubled down on it.

So, what explains the Biden administration persisting with the Quad, and even elevating it from the ministerial to the leader level? Utility trumped politics. The coalition fits with the president's desire to see democracies try to deliver, and the administration's broader foreign policy approach emphasising alliances and partnerships - and it helps provide a solution to its China problem.

Biden's embrace of the Quad came early in the administration. Within a month of taking office, the administration hosted a ministerial, and then, a month later, a virtual Quad leaders' summit. This was consistent



with the administration's desire to shore up alliances and partnerships, in part to build a "position of strength" from which to approach competitors such as China. As the first multilateral leaders' meeting that Biden hosted, the Quad summit also reflected - and stemmed from - the administration's intention to focus on the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, it helped signal that the administration would follow not a China-first approach, but an Indo-Pacific or Asia-first approach from which the China policy would flow. Moreover, like the Trump administration, Biden officials envisioned a significant role for non-ally India in their strategy for the region - and the Quad provided a way to work with India beyond bilateral platforms.

The Quad also fits with the administration's adoption of flexible multilateralism. This flows from a recognition that bilateral alliances and partnerships, as well as regional and international organisations are necessary but

insufficient mechanisms to deal with today's challenges. This is where coalitions come in, bringing together allies and partners aligned on certain issues or interests.

In the Indo-Pacific, a crucial interest for the Biden administration is maintaining a rules-based order, one that is being challenged by an assertive China. America's hub-and-spoke alliance system is critical; ASEAN is important. But they are not enough, and an Asian NATO is impossible. Enter the Quad, which brings together countries that meet the three requirements of ideal coalition membership: They are relevant, resourceful, and ready to work together to tackle the challenges in the Indo-Pacific. And make no mistake, for the Biden administration (and the other members), this challenge is significantly about China. The Quad leaders don't mention the C word explicitly in their statements. Yet that country's

assertiveness in recent years is what has made the Quad both necessary and possible. Necessary because the challenges China has generated in the Indo-Pacific are acute and cannot be tackled alone. And possible because Beijing's assertiveness - particularly vis-à-vis the Quad members themselves - has created the market for collaboration between these like-minded states who share concerns about Beijing's behaviour. This behaviour has also helped strengthen the four countries' bilateral and trilateral ties on which the Quad is built. And intensifying competition with China has contributed to the Biden administration overcoming any reluctance it might have had to embracing the Quad.

Nonetheless, the Biden administration and the other three governments have reframed the conversation around the Quad away from the Trump administration's more explicit China framing. They have

highlighted the Quad's origins in the four countries' collective response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which led to the short-lived Quad 1.0 in 2007. And the first major collaborative initiative of Quad 2.0 involves providing 1 billion Covid vaccine doses in the Indo-Pacific by 2022.

The first helps highlight the Quad's regional and organic origins. The second conveys a message that is more welcome in Asia - that the grouping is not against something (that is China) but for something (offering solutions to regional problems and preserving a rules-based order). And both help counter Chinese talking points that either dismiss the Quad as useless or accuse it of being a US-imposed, exclusive, anti-China security alliance that will destabilise the region.

That's not to say the Quad in the Biden era lacks a security dimension. The four navies and their special forces are indeed in the middle of conducting a military exercise. And the agenda at the summit will likely include a discussion on the state of the China challenge, maritime security cooperation, and critical and emerging technology collaboration. But it will also include combating Covid and climate change, enhancing regional connectivity, and fuelling innovation.



Here's the answer for those dreaming of beating Narendra Modi. And it's beyond any question

I read your recent article with great interest. In your popular column, National Interest, you posed three questions for those dreaming of defeating Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As one of the most eminent journalists with years of experience, you would agree that at the end of the day, in a vibrant democracy, it is the people who elect or remove a leader based on their performance.

So the government is formed of the people, by the people and for the people.

At the same time, people judge the role of the Opposition too.

You have invited your readership to answer the three questions on how Modi can be defeated.

I will take a more positive view in trying to answer your questions as to why Modi is so successful and why people are happy with his performance.

We are living in India during the most exciting and historic time. After a few years, when history is written, the present will be recorded as one which has seen generational changes, elevating India to a different level.

When I presented the railway budget in 2012, I had mentioned that my objective was to take the railways to the next generation

of development. I wanted a generational change, but unfortunately, the Manmohan Singh government at that point was more interested in protecting their seat of power than modernising the Indian railways. I am happy that the Narendra Modi government has taken the railways to a different level.

In the past seven years, India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, has emerged as one of the most powerful nations. India's image in the world is no longer that of a country that can be browbeaten. This is because, besides the fundamental developments, now the world knows that India is under a strong and decisive leadership that can't be taken for granted. The leadership has proved its intent during the Balakot incident and again during the recent Chinese aggression.

Reasons behind India's current confidence and strength are not far to seek. The basic well-being of the people of any country rests on four pillars - food security, health, military and economic power. Each of these four pillars is now stronger and taller than they have ever been in the past, and indeed this makes one proud. Strengthening of food, dignity and defence

Today, India's buffer food stock is three times more than required,

thanks to the policies of the Modi government and our farmers. In a true sense, the slogan "jai jawan, jai kisan", the dream of the late Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, is being fulfilled by the Modi government.

In a democracy, a common man wants dignity. PM Modi has touched upon the very basics of it all, starting with the Swachh Bharat mission, cooking gas facilities for the poor, Jan Dhan Yojana and now embarking on Jal Jeevan mission to provide piped water supply and tap connections to all households. It is a matter of shame that post-independence, these basic issues were neglected.

Numerous fresh policy initiatives, structural and organisational changes, economic as well as material resource planning, and, to top off everything else, insistence on self-reliance, have all added to the strength and reliability of India's defences and military power and preparedness under the Modi government.

The appointment of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) for closer coordination between the three Services, induction of Rafale, Apache, Chinook & S-400 in the air force, promotion of indigenous manufacturing in the defence sector and launching defence acquisition procedure 2020,

enhancing foreign direct investment limit in defence manufacturing under automatic route to 74 per cent and setting up of Rashtriya Raksha University are all examples of Modi government's result-oriented approach.

Modi's initiatives on health and the economy

In matters of public health and welfare too, steps taken by the Modi government have been transformative.

Where the Ayushman Bharat programme has begun a new era in public health, measures have been taken to make healthcare cheaper. Adding 15 more All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) and over 30,000 seats in medical colleges since 2014 is augmenting healthcare. The Modi government's foresight and forward planning to improve healthcare in the country are evident in these measures. Implementation of the world's largest vaccination programme and that too, largely with vaccines developed and manufactured indigenously, is yet another proof of this government's determination and result-oriented approach for ensuring sustainable improvements in standards of healthcare in India.

'Maut, mahant aur mystery' - Hindi news channels had a headline competition this week



It was a sleepy Monday evening and Hindi TV news channels were distracted, divided between admiration for the Congress' 'masterstroke' (Aaj Tak) in appointing a Dalit Sikh chief minister in Punjab and bewilderment at the continuing divisions within the party - 'disaster after disaster', gloated Republic TV.

Suddenly, a news flash had them wide-eyed and agog - Mahant Narendra Giri had died and left behind a 'suicide note' (why must Hindi channels strain our eyes by spelling out English words in Devnagiri script?)

The news was simply too unusual to resist - when was the last time a revered religious leader reportedly killed himself and wrote a death bed letter that named names? So news channels jumped in feet first, indulged every whim and fancy surrounding 'Maut ki Mystery' (News 24) with their super sleuth reporting team sniffing around for (news) leads.

The mysterious affair at the Baghdambri matt has everything the channels could want: an eminent seer, a death by hanging, which could be a murder ('Maut ya Murder' asked several channels); a suicide note, a video recording, a prime suspect (Anand Giri) and his accomplices, blackmail, property disputes, politicians, money, and perhaps even women.

But it was the last rites that took up most TV time on Wednesday with exotic long-haired saints and gurus, some bedecked in maalas, at every turn. There was even the guest mention of a nylon rope, apparently used in the death-who bought it and when, asked Bharat Samachar.



In Indian politics, the challenge of transition

In the absence of inner-party democracy, arriving at a fine balance between gen-next aspirations and an ageing political leadership seems difficult. In politics, the premium placed on experience and stature makes it even more problematic to bring about any overnight change. But there is a way out

Retire when people ask why and not when they ask why not," is a memorable quote attributed to cricketer great Vijay Merchant, who called it a day after scoring a masterful century against an English side in 1951. Timing your retirement right is never easy, but at least in cricket, there is a selection committee that can nudge you to call it quits. In politics, on the other hand, there is neither a retirement age nor an institutionalised mechanism to facilitate a smooth transition to a new order. As a result, ensuring a generational change remains one of the biggest challenges in Indian politics.

Take the recent political upheaval in Punjab, where a 79-year-old chief minister (CM) was virtually forced out of office in far-from-ideal circumstances. In 2017, Captain Amarinder Singh claimed he was fighting his last election. Then, earlier this year, he suddenly changed his mind, insisting that he would continue to "serve the people". By the end, an increasingly inaccessible Captain resembled a forlorn general, disconnected from his legislators and the people, and yet unwilling to withdraw from the political battlefield, pushing the Congress leadership into a difficult situation where the party dithered for months before finally showing him the door.

Singh is not the only Congressman wanting to cling to power after a long innings. In Rajasthan, 70-year-old Ashok

Gehlot is a three-time CM but will not cede an inch of space to his much younger rival, Sachin Pilot. In Uttarakhand, a 73-year-old Harish Rawat is still hoping to be the party's face in next year's election. In Haryana, the 74-year-old two-time former CM, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, is still dreaming he can pull off a hat-trick. In Madhya Pradesh, the Kamal Nath-Digvijaya Singh duo, both in their mid-70s, tried to squeeze out the youthful Jyotiraditya Scindia from the power equations. The Congress Working Committee has several septuagenarians and even the odd octogenarian in its ranks. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s age predicament wasn't too different from the Congress till Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi dramatically arrived on the scene seven years ago. One of the new PM's first acts was to create a margdarshak mandal, a body of "eminent leaders" to guide the party leadership. It was designed to keep out the previous generation of leaders from all the BJP's core decision-making bodies. At the time, what was labelled a retirement home was seen as a shabby, disrespectful way of treating those who had devoted their lives to the party, including Modi's mentor, LK Advani.

Seven years on, the idea is slowly beginning to make sense. By effectively putting a 75 years cut-off date for senior leaders, the BJP has effected a generation change within the party hierarchy without too much resistance.

Every BJP CM across states is now under 70, many in their 50s while the likes of Devendra Fadnavis and Yogi Adityanath became CMs in their 40s. The one exception to the rule was BS Yediyurappa, 78, who was forced to step down last month.

Modi's status as the BJP's unquestioned supreme leader vests in him unbridled power, as witnessed in the surgical strike on the Gujarat cabinet last week. A less-dominant leader would have struggled with the pulls and pressures of party factionalism as a weakened Congress leadership has realised in recent times. Only an imperious high command where the lines between decisiveness and dictatorial behaviour are blurred has the capacity to ease out the old guard without demur.

Interestingly, regional parties, which increasingly resemble tightly controlled family-run businesses, are controlled by leaders who will not retire or give way easily to even their children. The indefatigable Sharad Pawar at 80 remains the Nationalist Congress Party's tallest leader. For almost half a century, M Karunanidhi was the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam mascot. It is only illness that has almost forced Mulayam Singh and Lalu Prasad to relinquish power to the next generation of Yadav leaders. In Odisha, the 75-year-old visibly tiring Naveen Patnaik remains the Biju Janata Dal's solitary figure, with no clarity yet on who will succeed him.

Furore over Golwalkar and Savarkar texts reveals our failure to understand purpose of syllabus and pedagogy



Kannur University has reportedly decided to drop the writings of V D Savarkar and M S Golwalkar from its master of arts course on Governance and Politics. The university had included portions from Golwalkar's books, including Bunch of Thoughts, and Savarkar's Hindutva: Who is a Hindu? in the syllabus of PG Governance and Politics. This course is taught only in Brennan College, under Kannur University, so the syllabus was prepared by the faculty of the Brennan College, which is how it should be.

After opposition by the student wing of the Congress and the IUML, the CPM's student wing SFI, which was earlier silent on the issue, found the readings unacceptable. The student outfits of the opposition parties agitated, alleging that the university was saffronising the syllabus by including these two ideologues of Hindutva.

The state government led by the CPM sought an explanation from the university. Vice-Chancellor Gopinath Ravindran rejected the charges, saying: "The saffronisation allegation is completely baseless. If you raise such allegations against Kannur University, you can raise similar charges against Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi also. V D Savarkar is included in the syllabus of JNU also."

This is not a very sound argument. JNU cannot be a benchmark for all academic decisions. They should stand on their own merit. The VC was right to an extent when he said that the syllabus should have representation from all ideologies to allow students to study them critically with a comparative mind. But a syllabus cannot fight politics. So, the VC had to form an external expert committee, which has apparently suggested that it be removed from the third semester.

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Biden slips into political quicksand amid Haitian migrant buildup

The mass of thousands of Haitians at the U.S. southern border has put the Biden administration in the exact place it's tried to avoid: knee deep in immigration politics. In the past 24 hours, the White House has responded to images and videos of aggressive tactics used by Border Patrol agents to corral those migrants by supporting an internal investigation into the matter. What it hasn't done, yet, is figure out a solution to the crowding and sanitary issues arising in what's become a makeshift encampment - or stop its policy of deporting migrants upon arrival. That's left the president and his team with few supporters and allies.

A coalition of more than 38 civil rights and immigrant advocacy leaders sent the White House a letter Tuesday evening calling on Biden to immediately stop expulsions of Haitians, some of whom arrived at the border community of Del Rio, Texas, after fleeing violence and natural disaster in their home country. The letter, first provided to POLITICO, marks a "final straw," said Nana Gyamfi, executive director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration and president of the National Conference of Black Lawyers. The coalition, which includes the ACLU, Human Rights Watch, and the The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, described the moment as "an inflection

point" for Biden's commitment to a humane immigration policy. "Responsibility for the suffering and deaths resulting from summary expulsions and removals now falls squarely on your Administration and will be part of your enduring legacy," the letter states. "Deportation flights to Haiti must stop, and those seeking safety at our borders must be granted their legally assured chance to seek asylum." Members of the president's own party - from Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) on down - echoed the call to end the expulsions. Increasingly, they did so while directing their ire at the White House for its handling of

the situation. On Wednesday, 12 House Democrats, including Reps. Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.), Joyce Beatty (D-Ohio) and Veronica Escobar (D-Texas) will hold a press conference calling on Biden to halt the deportations. The White House condemned footage of Border Patrol agents on horseback appearing to use reins to deter Haitian migrants, which drew blowback from the agents themselves. Members of the president's own party - from Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) on down - echoed the call to end the expulsions. Increasingly, they did so while directing their ire at the White House for its handling of

the situation. On Wednesday, 12 House Democrats, including Reps. Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.), Joyce Beatty (D-Ohio) and Veronica Escobar (D-Texas) will hold a press conference calling on Biden to halt the deportations. The White House condemned footage of Border Patrol agents on horseback appearing to use reins to deter Haitian migrants, which drew blowback from the agents themselves. In sharply visceral terms, the national Border Patrol union blasted the White House on Tuesday, characterizing it as inept for failing to have a plan in place to deal with the influx of some 15,000 migrants that left agents overwhelmed.

India has two kinds of chief ministers. Regional stars, and BJP-Congress pick-and-throw

India is now a tale of two kinds of chief ministers - the rising stars of regional parties who are firming their grip over politics with each election, and the unsteady state faces of the two big national parties who are prone to collapsing like a pack of cards when their high commands decide.

Coinciding with the rise and rise of chief ministers like Arvind Kejriwal, Mamata Banerjee and Jagan Mohan Reddy is the increasing weakening of CMs of the Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with their high commands shoving them away and finding more 'beneficial' replacements when needed. From Uttarakhand's Trivendra Singh Rawat and Karnataka's B.S. Yediyurappa to Gujarat's Vijay Rupani and now Punjab's Amarinder Singh - the top leaderships of the national parties have had no qualms in sidelining and removing them when political compulsions or whims dictated. And, even though some like Yediyurappa and the Captain are stalwarts who hold clout, with the latter even managing to win the Congress elections braving the Narendra Modi wave.



Contrast this with the other set of CMs, the karta dhartas of regional parties, like Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal, Arvind Kejriwal in Delhi, Jagan Reddy in Andhra Pradesh, M.K. Stalin in Tamil Nadu. They're slowly acquiring a national face and stature, serving as tough opposition to the Modi-led BJP and emerging as fierce challengers. **The uncrowning** - The big underlying question is whether a CM face ahead of elections is important, and whether the vote is for that face, the party or the party supremo like Modi or the Gandhis. There are no easy answers to these, and it is often more

situation/state-specific than a general pattern.

But what is clear is that both the national parties - the Congress and BJP - seem to be more inclined towards the high command dictating terms, and CMs being largely used as props. The five-year trajectory national parties follow for states is populism, performance, and back to populism. Essentially, prop up a winnable CM face ahead of elections, look at performance once elected, and then just

before the next elections, go back to populism and drop the CM if she/he is proving to be more of a burden than an asset. The BJP removed three CMs in short succession - Trivendra Singh Rawat, Yediyurappa and Vijay Rupani. The Congress, meanwhile, has replaced Amarinder Singh in Punjab with Charanjit Singh Channi, and is grappling with a precarious leadership struggle in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. While Rawat and Rupani may have been political lightweights, what is undeniable is how politically and electorally powerful Amarinder Singh and Yediyurappa have been.



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China brought the AUKUS upon itself.



Australia couldn't bear the contempt and abuse forever

Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom announced a historic trilateral alliance 'AUKUS', which has the potential to significantly impact the geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific theatre, last week. The new alliance, among three English-speaking partners, commits the US and UK to enable Australia to join just a handful of countries that deploy nuclear submarines and the only one that is not a nuclear weapons power. Australia's initial fleet of eight nuclear submarines will greatly enhance its force projection capabilities, strengthen its deterrence against a major threat and, together with the associated advanced missile, cyber and aerospace capabilities included in the agreement, give the country an overtly offensive strike capability. While this does not make Australia a nuclear weapons state, it makes the acquisition of such capabilities potentially easier in the future. Other nuclear-capable states such as Japan and South Korea will be less inhibited to go in for nuclear propulsion systems after this for their submarine fleets. The US has broken a long-held nuclear taboo, which will come with its own consequences.

The US and Australia are already military allies under the Australia, New Zealand and the US Security Treaty (ANZUS). The triple alliance brings the UK back into the Indo-Pacific, but its role is to contribute to Australia's nuclear submarine capability along with the US. UK's inclusion is driven more by its post-Brexit effort to project a "global Britain". It will not be a significant military partner. France has island territories in the Indo-Pacific and has

deployed its naval forces in the region. It has a much better claim to be an Indo-Pacific power than the UK but for the present, its anger at having lost a deal worth \$100 billion for the supply of diesel submarines to Australia, makes it unlikely that it will become part of the new security arrangement in the foreseeable future. But its inclusion in the arrangement would be logical and add to the credibility of the alliance.

China is the target

The target of the triple alliance is China, which has been adding to its naval capabilities at an unprecedented rate in the past two decades. It has acquired a substantial nuclear submarine fleet armed with long-range nuclear missiles. It has a true second-strike capability. This is China's home fleet unlike the US naval forces deployed in the Indo-Pacific. Australia's much augmented naval capabilities will also be in the nature of the home fleet and that is an important advantage.

China must shoulder the blame for driving Australia into undertaking this historic shift in its national security strategy. For the past few years, China has treated Australia with contempt, heaping abuse and insults and inflicting significant commercial damage on it. Just a few years back, Australia projected itself as one of the most reliable of partners of China in the region, with an expanding and complementary economic and commercial relationship.

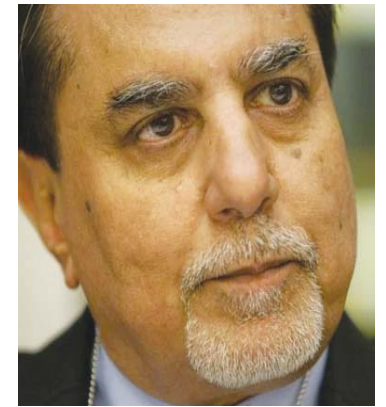
Several members of Australia's strategic community and leading political figures advised a certain distancing from the US

as a corollary of the growing partnership with China. Today, there are few takers for this line. There is virtually no serious opposition to the latest initiative despite the important departure it represents in Australia's national security strategy. The country has signed on to the American containment strategy against China. The US has been able to sweeten the deal by a major upgradation of Australia's security profile in the region. It is now the pre-eminent US ally in the Indo-Pacific. This marks the first serious setback to Chinese ambitions in the region. It will raise the risks of any Chinese invasion of Taiwan, and make its plans to dominate the regional maritime space more contested than it has been so far.

Implications for the Quad

Until the announcement of the triple alliance, it was the Quad among India, Australia, Japan and the US, which was crystallising as the core of a countervailing coalition to China in the Indo-Pacific. The Quad will have its first face-to-face summit in Washington on 24 September and this will reflect its continuing upgradation and formalisation. But with the triple alliance having been announced less than 10 days before the summit, there is little doubt that questions will be raised about the relationship between the two security arrangements - one that is built on a set of dense and legal commitments and another, which continues to be a loosely structured partnership. Sources in the US and Australia suggest that they see the Quad and the triple alliance as running on parallel and complementary tracks.

How Subhash Chandra Managed To Hold On To Zee 2



A 70-year-old Indian media magnate was about to lose his crown jewel to a campaign by a U.S. fund manager. But within a week, a Japanese conglomerate, itself a defiant survivor of several challenges by foreign activists, came to Subhash Chandra's rescue. Asian family values triumphed over American-style corporate governance? Not really. Everybody won the Indians, the Americans, and, of course, the Japanese.

Privately held Sony Pictures Networks India is merging with publicly traded Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. Sony Group Corp. will control the larger empire, and infuse an additional \$1.4 billion of cash into it. But the combined entity will be presided over by Punit Goenka, the current Zee chief executive and founder Chandra's elder son. What's more, the family gets an option to raise its near-4% stake to 20%.

Chandra, who will also get extra shares as a non-compete fee, should be thrilled. But the almost-32% jump in the stock suggests that minority shareholders aren't exactly grumpy, either, even though the merger is unlikely to trigger an open offer. Funnily enough, the shares had surged almost 40% last week after Invesco Developing Markets Fund and OFI Global China Fund LLC, between them owning 17.9%, had called for a shareholders' meeting to boot out Goenka and end the 30-year-sway of the family.

It seems the market can't make up its mind if India's largest private television network, with a 17% share nationwide, is more valuable with the founders in the driver's seat or out of the wagon entirely.

Fissure widens between Pak Army and ISI chiefs over control in Afghanistan

(News Agencies)-As Pakistan attempts to assert its influence in Kabul, there is a major tussle going on between Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt General Faiz Hameed.

Sources in the intelligence agencies said the tussle has come to a point where the Pakistan Army chief has been trying to remove Hameed from his post, but has not been able to do so due to the strong influence of the Pakistani spy agency.

"Over the years, ISI have nurtured and taken care of Taliban leaders and used them to run their interest and operations inside Afghanistan. Now, when the Taliban are in government, the Pakistan Army also wants to influence the decisions there, which is being resisted by the ISI," sources told India Today.

The ISI has strong links with

The tussle between Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and ISI chief Lt General Faiz Hameed has come to a point where the former has been trying to remove the latter from his post, as per sources in the intelligence agencies.



the Taliban leaders, including different factions including the Haqqani group which occupies a strong position in the new

Afghanistan government. ISI also has men on ground in Afghanistan, with warlords and other key players, as per

sources.

Most of the Taliban factions and their leaders have also allegedly fought against the US using the

ISI safe houses in Peshawar and Quetta.

Pakistan Army chief Bajwa has also been trying to push his agenda there, but Faiz Hameed has not allowed it to happen, the sources said. The sources added that Pakistan's attempt in interfering in Afghanistan's new government has also resulted in fissures inside Taliban grouping.

Due to ISI, the Taliban are also reportedly finding issues over each and every decision that they have to take on establishing links with foreign countries. Sources said that the ISI also wants a share of the money or aid that Afghans are to receive from western nations. Pakistan has always considered Afghanistan to be its B team and always tried to use it for having a strategic depth while dealing with India militarily, sources said, added that the Taliban factions are also fighting for control.

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Nepal president appoints new foreign minister, set to attend UNGA



(News Agencies)-Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Wednesday appointed Nepali Congress leader Narayan Khadka as the country's foreign minister on the recommendation of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Prime Minister Deuba is yet to give a full shape to the cabinet. It's been over two months since he has assumed the office and has been functioning under four cabinet ministers and a state minister.

Deuba himself was leading the

foreign ministry for the past two months among many other portfolios. "President Bidya Devi Bhandari on the recommendation of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba appointed Narayan Khadka as the Foreign Minister as per Article 76 (9) of the Constitution," Office of the president said in the appointment letter. The 25 member cabinet now has three Congress Ministers and one minister of State while the main power ally, the CPN-Maoist has two ministers at the Centre.

Leaders of coalition parties said that discussion on who will get how many ministries are still ongoing.

Deuba will remain prime minister for a year and a half until elections are held, two months gone and the government is yet finalise the distribution of ministerial portfolios among the ruling alliance.

The newly-appointed Foreign Minister Khadka is all set to lead a delegation to the 76th session of the UN General Assembly and will leave for the US tonight.

Taliban want to address UN General Assembly, appoint new envoy

(News Agencies)-The Taliban's foreign minister has asked to address world leaders at United Nations General Assembly, a UN spokesman said on Tuesday. The UN is yet to decide who will represent Afghanistan at the world body.

A nine-member credentials committee will now rule on the dueling requests, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told AFP, but it is unclear whether the committee will meet before the end of the convocation on Monday.

Dujarric said that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres received a letter from Taliban-appointed Amir Khan Muttaqi "requesting to participate" in the high-level debate.

The letter was dated Monday September 20, the day before the session got underway. The letter lists Muttaqi as "Minister of Foreign Affairs," said Dujarric.

The letter did not specify whether Muttaqi wanted to travel to New York to speak or whether the Taliban would submit a recorded video message, as many leaders are doing this year due to Covid-19.

The letter also indicated that Ghulam Isaczkai "no longer



represents" Afghanistan at the United Nations.

He was the ambassador to the UN of the Afghan government ousted from power in August as US military troops exited the country, ending their 20-year war. The letter said that the Taliban had nominated their Doha-based spokesman Suhail Shaheen as Afghanistan's permanent representative to the UN.

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SAARC foreign ministers' meet cancelled after Pakistan insists on Taliban participation

The annual SAARC foreign ministers' meet scheduled for September 25 stands cancelled after most member states refused to entertain Pakistan's request to allow the Taliban regime to represent Afghanistan in the meeting.

(News Agencies)-Pakistan is insisting that the Taliban regime in Afghanistan be allowed to send a representative to the upcoming SAARC foreign ministers' meet. This annual meeting was held virtually in 2020 owing to the coronavirus pandemic. The informal meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Council of Ministers was to be held in-person on September 25 on the sidelines of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York. However, the Nepalese Foreign Ministry issued a communiqué saying that the meet stands cancelled owing to "lack of concurrence from all Member States".

Sources tell India Today that most SAARC member states refused to entertain Pakistan's request to allow the Taliban regime to represent Afghanistan in the informal meeting. Pakistan also insisted that none of the representatives of the Afghan government led by Ashraf Ghani be allowed at the SAARC foreign ministers' meet at any cost. Owing to the opposition of most member states to these

requests, a consensus could not be reached and the SAARC foreign ministers' meet slated for September 25 had to be cancelled. The Taliban overthrew the democratically elected government in Afghanistan on August 15 of this year. Following the withdrawal of US troops from Kabul on August 31, the Taliban announced the formation of an interim cabinet to manage the country's affairs. Amir Khan Muttaqi was named the acting foreign minister in the Taliban regime led by Mullah Akhund, chief of the militant group's most powerful decision-making body - the Rehbari Shura. However, very few countries have recognised the Taliban regime as the legitimate government representing the Afghan people. Afghanistan is the youngest member state of SAARC, which has seven other member states - India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The SAARC Secretariat was set up in Kathmandu on January 17, 1987. The grouping also has nine observers, namely China, the European Union (EU), Iran, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Japan, Mauritius, Myanmar and the US.

Bangladesh's former premier Khaleda Zia's sentence stayed for another 6 months



(News Agencies)-

Bangladesh's government has stayed the sentence of former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in two graft cases for another six months following an appeal by her family members, allowing her to stay out of jail for that duration, a senior minister said on Sunday.

The 76-year-old chief of main Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), who is serving a 17-year jail term on charges of embezzling foreign donations, was temporarily released from prison in March 2020 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The suspension of Zia's prison sentence has been extended by six months twice before. It was last extended in March, 2021 and the extension expired on September 15.

"Khaleda Zia's family, specifically her younger brother made a petition to extend the time, subject to conditions," Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan was quoted as saying by the bdnews24.com on Sunday. "We scrutinised his application and then approved it."

However, Zia will not be able to leave the country during the extension period.

"She can receive her treatment at home in whatever way she wants. But she cannot leave the country. The conditions that were previously set for her release will be maintained," Khan said.

Zia contracted the COVID-19 virus in early April. As per the doctors, she has been facing post-Covid complications. In May, Zia's younger brother Shamim Eskandar met the home minister to seek permission for her treatment abroad. The application was forwarded to the Law Ministry. The government, however, rejected her petition to go abroad on a medical visit, saying "there is no judicial provision that permits a jailed convict to go abroad for treatment".

Myanmar's Suu Kyi goes on trial for incitement, pleads not guilty

(News Agencies)- Myanmar's junta has put ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi on trial for incitement, her lawyer said Tuesday, the latest in a list of charges that could see her jailed for decades.

Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy were deposed by the military in a February coup that sparked a mass uprising and a brutal junta crackdown on dissent.

The Nobel laureate, 76, has been under house arrest ever since,

with meetings with her lawyers and court appearances her only link to the outside world.

She pleaded not guilty to charges of incitement, her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw said, adding she "seemed to be in good health," a week after she skipped a separate hearing because she felt unwell.

Each charge carries a maximum of three years in prison. Ousted



president Win Myint has also pleaded not guilty to incitement. Tuesday saw the court hear

prosecution testimony that Suu Kyi flouted coronavirus restrictions during elections her party won by a landslide last year, her lawyer said.

Next month she will face a new trial on corruption charges, and she has also been charged with

violating a colonial-era secrecy law, although this has also yet to come to court.

Her NLD government was deposed by the military for alleged voter fraud during the 2020 polls, in which it trounced a political party aligned with the generals.

Security forces have killed more than 1,100 civilians since the putsch, according to a local monitoring group.

The military says the toll is much lower.

Taliban appoint hardline battlefield commanders to key Afghan posts



Afghanistan's Taliban rulers announced several senior appointments on Tuesday (Sept 21), naming two veteran battlefield commanders from the movement's southern heartland as deputies in important ministries.

Main Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir will be deputy defence minister, while Mr Sadr Ibrahim was named deputy minister for the interior. Both men had been expected to take major positions in the new government but neither was named in the main list of ministers announced this month.

The two were identified in UN reports as being among

battlefield commanders loyal to the former Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour, who were pressing the leadership to step up the war against the Western-backed government. The appointments add to the roster of hardliners in the main group of ministers, which included figures like Mr Sirajuddin Haqqani, head of the militant Haqqani network, blamed for a string of attacks on civilian targets.

But the appointments also appear to reflect concern within the Taliban to secure unity by balancing the regional and personal differences that have surfaced as the movement transitions from a wartime guerrilla force to a

peacetime administration.

According to a UN Security Council report from June, both Mr Zakir and Mr Sadr commanded significant forces of their own, called mahaz, that traditionally operated across several provinces.

They were considered so powerful and independent that there were concerns within the leadership that this could stoke tension over the loyalties of certain groups, particularly in the south and south-west of the country.

Mr Zakir, a former detainee in the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, was a close associate of late Taliban founder Mullah Omar. He was captured when US-led

forces swept through in Afghanistan in 2001 and was incarcerated in Guantanamo until 2007, according to media reports.

He was released and handed over to the Afghan government and was widely tipped to become defence minister in the new government before Mullah Omar's son, Mr Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, was appointed to the post.

Mr Sadr, a former head of the Taliban military commission from the southern province of Helmand, will be deputy to Mr Sirajuddin Haqqani, whose family comes from the eastern borderlands with Pakistan.

Under Taliban, thriving Afghan music scene heads to silence

(News Agencies)-A month after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, the music is going quiet. The last time the militant group ruled the country, in the late 1990s, it outright banned music. So far this time, the government set up by the Taliban hasn't taken that step officially. But already, musicians are afraid a ban will come, and some Taliban fighters on the ground have started enforcing rules on their own, harassing musicians and music venues.

Many wedding halls are limiting music at their gatherings. Musicians are afraid to perform. At least one reported that Taliban fighters at one of the many checkpoints around the capital smashed his instrument. Drivers silence their radios whenever they see a Taliban checkpoint.

In the alleys of Kharabat, a neighborhood in Kabul's Old City, families where music is a profession passed through generations are looking for ways to leave the country. The profession was already hit hard by Afghanistan's foundering economy, along with the coronavirus pandemic, and some families now too fearful to work are selling off furniture to get by.

"The current situation is oppressive," said Muzafar Bakhsh, a 21-year-old who played in a wedding band. His family had just sold off part of its belongings at Kabul's new flea market, Chaman-e-Hozari.

India likely to allow smaller gap between AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine doses sold privately: Sources

(News Agencies)-India is likely to allow a smaller gap between AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine doses for inoculations being carried out privately, in line with a court order, two sources told Reuters.

Private hospitals and clinics will give their paying patients the option to receive their second dose of the vaccine four weeks after the first, down from between 12 and 16 weeks currently, they said.

Earlier this month, the high court in the southern state of

Kerala ordered changes in the health ministry's vaccine-booking platform to give people paying for vaccination this choice, which is already being offered to those flying abroad. "Since the high court has given a judgement, it will have to be done," said one of the sources. "For the government's programme, the ideal gap remains 12 weeks."

India doubled the gap between the AstraZeneca vaccine's two doses in May to make sure more people were inoculated

with at least one dose when supplies were scarce at the height of the country's outbreak this year.

AstraZeneca recommends the second dose of its Covid-19 vaccine be taken four weeks after the first shot, but says on its website there is a "trend of increased efficacy with a longer than 4-week dosing interval".

The World Health Organization recommends an interval of eight to 12 weeks.

The sources, who declined to be named because they were



not authorised to speak to the media, could not say when the changes will be implemented. The health ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. India's total vaccine

output has trebled since May to 300 million doses a month. Less than a quarter of the production is sold by private hospitals while the rest is provided by the government free of cost.



Modi-Biden

Modi-Biden bilateral meet will strengthen India-US relations, boost Quad, says White House official

The maiden bilateral meet between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden on September 24 will allow taking the relationship between the two countries from strength to strength while helping in reinforcing and giving momentum to the Quad grouping, a White House official has said.

Biden will host Modi at the White House for their first bilateral meeting on September 24. Later on that day, Biden will host the first-ever in-person Quad Leaders' Summit at the White House with Modi, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison. Both Biden and PM Modi have spoken virtually on multiple occasions after the former, a Democrat, became US

president in January. The last telephone conversation between Prime Minister Modi and President Biden took place on April 26.

'SHARED DEMOCRATIC VALUES'

"The leaders will be focused on strengthening the deep ties between their people and shared democratic values that have underpinned the special bond between the United States and India for more than seven decades," a White House official told PTI.

"The Biden-Harris administration has enhanced our partnership with India by working together to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific, leading efforts to end the Covid-19 pandemic, and taking concerted action to address the climate crisis," the official said.

STRENGTHENING INDIA-US RELATIONS

Addressing a press conference earlier, a senior official of the administration said the Biden-Modi meeting would be an opportunity to go from strength to strength, from the point of view of the partnership with India. This can be done by working together to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific, by taking steps to contribute to a global solution to the Covid-19 pandemic and by taking concerted action to address the climate crisis, the official said.

"So, the bilateral discussion between the US and India will help reinforce and give momentum to the Quad discussion because many of the topics are very much interrelated," the official said.

TERRORISM, AFGHANISTAN ON AGENDA

"Additionally, in the bilateral meeting with Prime Minister

Modi, the two leaders will have the opportunity to talk about counter-terrorism, the Afghanistan situation and how we can work together to fight terrorism, our common enemy, as well as about a range of regional issues and developments where we'll have the opportunity to compare notes," said the senior administration official.

The official noted that the relationship between the United States and India goes so much deeper than just a government-to-government relationship.

"It is a relationship between the two peoples. I think Prime Minister Modi and President Biden want to talk about the ways of pulling our countries even closer together at basically every level of interaction between our societies," added the official.

Legalising weed: Here's why Amazon is lobbying the US government



In June, Amazon declared that it will no longer test employees for cannabis use in the majority of positions.

The corporation announced today that it is taking a step further and has begun lobbying the US government to make marijuana legal across the country.

Amazon also announced that it will reinstate the eligibility of terminated employees and candidates who failed drug tests throughout the employment process.

Beth Galetti, Amazon's head of human resources, outlined three reasons for the changes in a blog post.

To begin with, First, the jumble of conflicting city and state marijuana regulations makes it impossible for huge corporations to develop a sensible policy. Second, the corporation is aware that persons of colour have been disproportionately harmed by drug testing.

But it's the last and third reason she gives that may be the most explaining: "Amazon's rapid expansion means we're always seeking for talented new team members, and we've found that removing pre-employment cannabis testing allows us to increase our application pool," Galetti wrote.

US CIA officer experiences mysterious Havana syndrome symptoms on trip to India

(News Agencies)- A Central Intelligence Agency officer from the United States experienced symptoms consistent with the Havana syndrome while travelling to India this month, the New York Times and CNN reported. The officer was travelling with CIA director William Burns.

The unidentified victim had to receive medical attention as per sources, according to the CNN report. In a

statement to Reuters, a CIA spokesperson said the agency does not comment on specific incidents or officers.

Last month, US Vice President Kamala Harris delayed her arrival in Vietnam's Hanoi by three hours after the US embassy there said that someone had reported symptoms related to the Havana syndrome.

WHAT IS HAVANA SYNDROME?

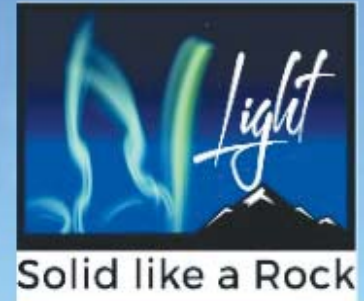
About 200 US officials and their family members have suffered from the Havana syndrome, which is a mysterious set of ailments including nausea, dizziness, migraines and memory lapses. It was first reported by officials stationed at the US embassy in Cuba in 2016.

In July, CIA director William Burns had appointed a senior officer as the head of a task force to investigate the Havana

syndrome and causes for the same. The same officer had once led the hunt for Osama bin Laden.

According to the US National Academy of Sciences, the most plausible theory is that "directed, pulsed radio frequency energy" causes the syndrome. There is a very strong possibility that the syndrome is intentionally caused and that Russia may be responsible, CIA director William Burns has said.

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US to lift travel bans for fully vaccinated individuals from November

On Monday, the US announced its new international travel system as per which individuals who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19 can enter the country from early November onwards. This includes passengers from India. Fully vaccinated foreign nationals will have to provide proof of their vaccination before they can board a US-bound plane, White House officials informed.

However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US will determine which vaccines are acceptable for entry into the US.

At the start of the pandemic early last year, former US president Donald Trump had imposed a ban on foreign travellers entering the country. The new system lifts the travel ban imposed on countries including India.

'MAKING INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL SAFER'

"Today, we're announcing a new international air travel system. This new system includes strict protocols to prevent the spread of Covid-19 from passengers flying into the United States, protecting Americans and making international air travel safer," White House Covid-19 Response Coordinator Jeff Zients said during a virtual press conference.

The development of the new and 'much stricter' international air travel system, he said, has been guided by science and public health. It seeks to increase the safety of local Americans while also making international air travel safer, Jeff Zients noted.

FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE DON'T NEED TO QUARANTINE On the existing quarantine

On Monday, the US announced its new international travel system as per which individuals who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19 can enter the country from early November onwards.

requirements and travel bans on countries like India, Brazil, UK, China and South Africa, the White House official said, "Nationals [will have] to be vaccinated, to prove they're vaccinated, and then to go to the

testing and contact tracing regimens."

"For [fully] vaccinated travellers, it is not required to be a quarantine going forward," he added.

CONTACT TRACING, MASKING, TESTING

While vaccination is the 'best tool' to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the new international travel system to be implemented by the US will employ other disease mitigation strategies as well. This includes enhanced contact tracing and masking, Jeff Zients said.

Fully vaccinated travellers will need to complete pre-departure testing within three days prior to boarding a flight to the United States. They will have to carry their negative test report.

Additionally, unvaccinated

American citizens returning to the US will be subjected to stricter testing requirements. They will have to be tested one day before departure and post arrival in the US as well.

Over the next few weeks, the CDC will issue a contact tracing order requiring airlines to collect the contact details and other information from all US-bound travellers. Public health officials will then follow up with the travellers if any of them have potentially been exposed to the novel coronavirus or other pathogens.

"Importantly, this enhanced contact tracing system will do more than help us fight this virus. It will also strengthen our public health surveillance system against any future public health threats," Jeff Zients said.

Looted ancient Gilgamesh tablet to be returned to Iraq by US this week

(News Agencies)-The 3,500-year-old Gilgamesh Dream Tablet, which is one of the oldest surviving literary works in history, is to be returned to Iraq by the United States later this week, the UN agency for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) said on Monday. The Gilgamesh Tablet, which is made of clay, is priceless. It features inscriptions in Sumerian, a civilisation of ancient Mesopotamia. After the start of the Gulf War in August 1990, the treasure was taken from a museum in Iraq.

In 2007, it was introduced fraudulently into the US art market. In 2014, the artefact was acquired by the craft retail chain, Hobby Lobby, for display at the Museum of the Bible, in Washington DC, which is funded by the family of Hobby Lobby's owner, as per news reports. In July, the US



Department of Justice announced that it was ordering the official handing over of the tablet, as it had entered the US "contrary to federal law", noting that federal agents had seized the tablet from the museum, in September 2019. At a ceremony at the Smithsonian Institution

in Washington DC on this Thursday, it will now be formally returned to Iraq.

In a celebratory message, UNESCO's Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, said, "By returning these illegally acquired objects, the authorities here in the United States and in Iraq are allowing the Iraqi people to reconnect with a page in their history. This exceptional restitution is a major victory over those who mutilate heritage and then traffic it to finance violence and terrorism."



US not seeking

'new Cold War', says President Joe Biden at UNGA amid tensions with China

(News Agencies)-In his first address at the UN General Assembly in New York on Tuesday, US President Joe Biden said that the country is not seeking a 'new Cold War'. His statement comes amid growing tensions with China.

Amid growing tensions with China, US President Joe Biden on Tuesday said that the country is not seeking a 'new Cold War' and is ready to work with any nation that pursues peaceful resolutions.

Without mentioning China

directly, Biden acknowledged increasing concerns about rising tensions between the two nations in his first address before the UN General Assembly.

"We are not seeking a new Cold War or a world divided into rigid blocs. The US is ready to work with any nation that pursues peaceful resolutions....because we have all suffered the consequences of our failures," Joe Biden said.

The President noted his decision to end America's longest war last month, in Afghanistan, and set

the table for his administration to shift US attention to intensive diplomacy with no shortage of crises facing the globe. He said he is driven by a belief that "to deliver for our own people, we must also engage deeply with the rest of the world."

"We've ended 20 years of conflict in Afghanistan," Biden said. "And as we close this period of relentless war, we're opening a new era of relentless diplomacy of using the power of our development aid to invest in new ways of lifting people up

around the world," he added.

Biden further said that the US is not the same country as it was 20 years ago when attacked on 9/11. "Today we are better equipped and more resilient....countering propaganda. We know the bitter sting of terrorism. Last month, we lost 13 American heroes and many Afghan civilians in the heinous terrorist attack at Kabul airport. Those who commit acts of terrorism against us will find a determined enemy in the United States," he added.

Speaking further about the current situation in Afghanistan, the US President said that the UNSC has adopted a resolution outlining how to support the people of Afghanistan and laid out the expectations of the Taliban. "We all must advocate the rights of women and girls to pursue their dreams free of violence and intimidation. The future belongs to those who give their people the ability to breathe freely, not those who seek to suffocate their people with 'iron hands'," Biden said.

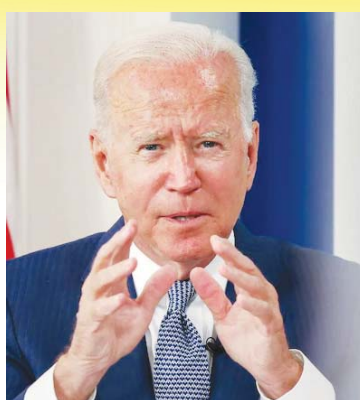
Producing 1 billion Covid-19 vaccine doses in India to boost global supply: Joe Biden

The Quad nations -- the US, India, Japan and Australia -- "is on track to help produce at least 1 billion vaccine doses in India to boost the global supply by the end of 2022," said US President Joe Biden as he spoke about measures to combat Covid-19 pandemic across.

Addressing the virtual Global Covid-19 Summit on Wednesday, Joe Biden said, "We're working with partner nations, pharmaceutical companies, and

other manufacturers to increase their own capacity and capability to produce and manufacture safe and highly effective vaccines in their own countries."

"For example, our Quad partnership with India, Japan, and Australia is on track to help produce at least 1 billion vaccine doses in India to boost the global supply by the end of 2022," Joe Biden said while addressing the summit on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.



Joe Biden further emphasised how vaccinating "is the ultimate

solution to Covid-19". He said, "To beat the pandemic here [America], we need to beat it everywhere." He said with the new commitments, "for every one shot we've administered to date in America, we have now committed to do three shots to the rest of the world."

Joe Biden also announced that the US is doubling its purchase of Pfizer's Covid-19 shots to share with the world to 1 billion doses as he embraces the goal of

vaccinating 70 per cent of the global population within the next year.

The US further announced to provide more than \$380 million to assist in the Global Vaccine Alliance - GAVI - to further facilitate vaccine distribution in regions in the greatest - with the greatest need. Joe Biden also announced the launch of the EU-US vaccine partnership to work more closely together on expanding global vaccinations.

Germany's election process explained: How does Europe's economic powerhouse elect its Chancellor?

(News Agencies)-Europe's most populous country, Germany, will go to the polls on September 26 to elect members of the lower house of parliament known as the Bundestag. The polls are crucial this time as they will determine who will succeed Chancellor Angela Merkel as she steps down after 16 years. With just a few days left for the German elections, here is everything you need to know about the process.

WHEN TO VOTE?

The polls will open from 8 am to 6 pm on Sunday in 299 electoral districts in the country and all the votes should be counted by Monday morning.

WHO CAN VOTE?

German citizens above 18 years are eligible to cast their vote and about 60.4 million people of the 83 million population are eligible to exercise their franchise this year.

German passport holders, who have lived in the country for at least three months, can also vote. German citizens living abroad are allowed to vote under certain conditions.

HOW DOES THE GERMAN ELECTION SYSTEM WORK?

Germany's Basic Law stipulates that its members should be elected in "general, direct, free, equal and secret elections".

It further states that "the elections are "direct" because citizens vote for their representatives directly without the mediation of delegates to an electoral college." Germany's electoral system is a combination of "first-past-the-post" election of constituency candidates (first votes) and proportional representation on the basis of votes for the parties' Land lists (second votes).

German citizens do not elect a chancellor directly, but their votes determine the makeup of parliament every four years and the representatives further elect the chancellor.

In Germany, each voter can cast two votes: one for a candidate standing in their constituency, and one for a party list of candidates in their federal state. The first vote decides which candidates are

sent to Parliament from the constituencies and the second vote determines the relative strength of the parties

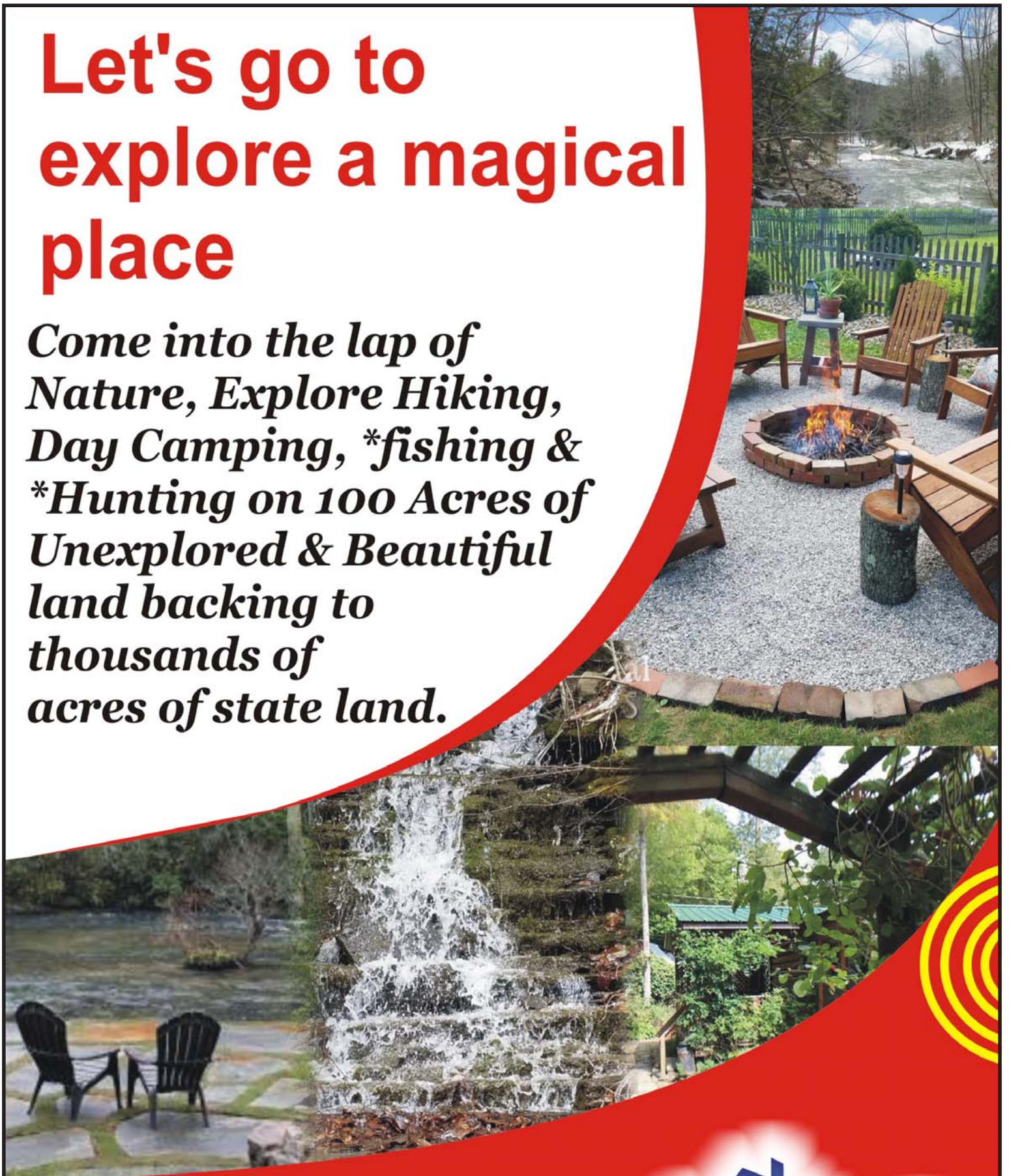
represented in the Bundestag. "Half of the members of the Bundestag are elected directly from Germany's 299

constituencies, the other half via party lists in Germany's sixteen Länder (states). Each of these 299

constituencies directly elects a lawmaker by a simple majority and the 299 seats go to candidates elected on party lists.

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America's meat supply is cheap and efficient. Covid-19 showed why that's a problem.

Thousands of workers fell ill, forcing processing plants to shut their doors for weeks at a time. Farmers and ranchers were left to compete for limited space at smaller plants, often called "meat lockers," that stayed open.

"All these hogs flooded all of the local lockers," Hladik said. "I had a list of maybe 18 to 20 lockers that I called before I found one to take some hogs." By that point, his pigs were up to 40 pounds overweight, eroding the quality of the meat. For many farmers who raise livestock, the consequences of the backlog were worse: Millions of chickens, pigs and other animals were euthanized - gassed, shot, even aborted - and buried in the ground.

Covid-19 was a shock up and down America's supply chain for meat, from farmers and ranchers who couldn't find buyers for their livestock and lost revenue and animals, to grocery shoppers who encountered steep meat prices, item limits and empty shelves.

But it wasn't the first or only such shock. Just a handful of giant companies process the vast majority of America's beef, pork and poultry. Take the beef sector: Four companies process about 85 percent of all the cattle fed and slaughtered for boxed beef, namely muscle cuts like ribs and steaks.

That means that when one or

more large meatpacking site is forced to shut down, it has ripple effects across the entire country, interrupting supplies and often raising prices. Just in the last three years, the meat supply chain has also been disrupted by a fire at a major Tyson Foods plant in Kansas and a ransomware attack that shut



down JBS plants that process a fifth of the U.S. beef supply.

Large, centralized processing plants offer efficiencies of scale that have helped keep meat relatively cheap for American families for decades. Moreover, concentration in meat processing isn't exactly new. Industry groups say the four-firm concentration of meatpackers has barely changed in 25 years, and that profit margins for cattle producers and beef processors have swung up and down over that period. Still, the pandemic has forced a reckoning, inside and outside the

industry. Even in Nebraska, the country's top cattle producer and a stronghold of the meatpacking industry, the state government is experimenting with ways to expand and diversify the meat supply system, such as helping smaller, local plants play a bigger role in the market or making it easier for farmers to sell their

meat directly to consumers. The goal is to create more capacity to process livestock outside of the biggest slaughterhouses - building a more flexible and resilient network before the next crisis.

"We need more local and regional processing," Democratic Rep. Cindy Axne said in July during an appearance at a local butcher shop in her western Iowa district. "We hear it over and over and over again."

But that's much easier said than done. Smaller plants face enormous challenges securing

access to financing, complying with strict food safety regulations and competing with more dominant players in the industry. Meat processing is controlled primarily by the Federal Meat Inspection Act, which requires any meat sold for public consumption to come from an animal slaughtered at a facility with an Agriculture Department inspector on hand. The law dates back more than a century - it was originally enacted after Upton Sinclair's groundbreaking 1906 expose on the meatpacking industry, "The Jungle," which exposed the harsh and unsanitary working conditions inside the slaughterhouses of the time.

In effect, the law limits farmers' access to thousands of small processors that aren't USDA-inspected, known as "custom-exempt" plants because they're exempt from continuous federal inspections (though they still must adhere to safety and sanitary standards).

The federal inspection regime funnels producers toward larger plants that are fewer and farther between in rural America. That can lead to severe bottlenecks - like when Hladik was desperately dialing up meat lockers at the start of the pandemic.

"What I realized is that the lockers that were hardest for me to get into were the lockers that had a USDA inspector on site,"

he said. "That's where all the backlog is."

Custom-exempt shops can slaughter livestock and process meat for an animal owner's personal use, but not for commercial or retail sale; products generally have to be marked "Not for Sale."

There are exceptions - under the law, for instance, customers can buy an entire cow beforehand, or a half or quarter at a minimum, and then it can be slaughtered at a custom-exempt facility. But for many customers, that's too costly and too much meat to easily store, compared to the ease of buying specific cuts or ground meats of their choosing in a supermarket.

Nebraska, seeking ways to avert another supply disaster, has taken the unusual step of helping farmers sell cuts of meat straight to individual buyers. The state law, modeled after a similar system in neighboring Wyoming, lets customers share ownership of an animal before it goes to slaughter. They can sign a contract and pre-pay for only the specific portions they want. It means farmers can take their livestock to custom-exempt processors and have the meat picked up afterward by customers. It's complicated, but potentially a critical avenue for livestock producers seeking an alternative to conventional marketing channels dominated by bigger meatpackers.

How media mogul Subhash Chandra managed to beat a US activist fund & hold on to Zee

defiant survivor of several challenges by foreign activists, came to Subhash Chandra's rescue. Asian family values triumphed over American-style corporate governance? Not really. Everybody won - the Indians, the Americans, and, of course, the Japanese.

Privately held Sony Pictures Networks India is merging with publicly traded Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. Sony Group Corp. will control the larger empire, and infuse an additional \$1.4 billion of cash into it. But the combined entity will be presided over by Punit Goenka, the current Zee chief executive and founder Chandra's elder son. What's more, the family gets an option to raise its near-4% stake to 20%.

Chandra, who will also get extra shares as a non-compete fee, should be thrilled. But the almost-32% jump in the stock suggests that minority shareholders aren't exactly grumpy, either, even though the merger is unlikely to trigger an open offer. Funnily enough, the shares had surged almost 40% last week - after Invesco Developing Markets Fund and OFI Global China Fund LLC, between them owning 17.9%, had called for a shareholders' meeting to boot out Goenka and end the 30-year-sway of the family.

It seems the market can't make up its mind if India's largest private television network, with a 17% share nationwide, is more valuable with the founders in the driver's seat or out of the wagon entirely.

In the early 1990s, the homegrown firm had brought non-state-controlled TV to India with Rupert Murdoch's help, before parting ways with the Australian-American

tycoon. (Full disclosure: I worked at the group's news venture in New Delhi in the late-1990s.) By all reckoning, Zee Entertainment is a more solid franchise than Sony India.



The pandemic, which saw a vicious surge during April and May, left Zee's advertising revenue in the June quarter down by almost 23% from the pre-Covid-19 levels. Even without short-term disruptions, the heydays of the traditional broadcaster may be over, with the hunger for content moving from television sets to smaller screens of smartphones and tablets. However, with 7 million daily active users, Zee isn't doing too badly in the faster-growing streaming market. The network is now seeking to offer digital programming in regional languages - such as Punjabi - hoping to open up new audiences both at home and among the large Indian diaspora. Sony's own digital platform could never have shaken the dominance locally of Disney Plus Hotstar. Combining with Zee gives it a decent shot.

In other words, the business, which has more cash than debt, could perhaps have commanded a better valuation than what the Japanese are paying: three times annual sales, which works out to a multiple of 13 on 18 billion rupees (\$241 million) earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, according to B&K Securities. But Zee's problem was founder Chandra's ill-conceived foray into infrastructure. Wanting to build roads with other people's money may be a great idea, but not when you're already making a killing by selling what folks crave even more than the missing infrastructure: Bollywood entertainment.

Maharashtra: 33 people, including two minors, rape 15-year-old in Thane for 8 months



accused, who raped her on multiple occasions at various locations, police said.

The alleged crime came to light recently after an aunt of the victim felt her personality had changed, and suspected she was under duress. Upon being prodded, the victim narrated her ordeal, police said.

According to police officials, the family consulted a social worker in their area, who advised them to try to catch the men who were exploiting the girl red-handed.

Nudged by her family, the girl called one of the accused to a particular spot on Wednesday, and got into a vehicle. The family

followed in an autorickshaw. However, the auto broke down after travelling some distance. It was then that the family called police.

The girl had managed to send her GPS location to her family, and police used it to locate her. They rescued the girl, and arrested the two men who were with her. However, the girl had by then been sexually assaulted again.

Police sent the girl for a medical examination. They registered an FIR, recorded her statement, and started rounding up the other accused.

All the 33 accused named by the girl are in the age group of

16-23 years. She has said that she was first assaulted on January 29, according to the FIR registered on Wednesday night. The FIR has been registered under Sections 376 (rape), 376 (n) (repeated rape), 376 (d) (gangrape), and 376 (3) (rape on a woman under sixteen years of age) of the Indian Penal Code, and provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, police said. Eknath Shinde, guardian minister of Thane district who is also the state urban development minister, said he has asked the Thane police commissioner to take strict action against all the accused.

According to police, the victim became friends with one of the accused minors on social media. He allegedly assaulted her sexually in January, and recorded the act on his mobile phone. This video was used to blackmail the girl, who was then forced to meet with the other

US rules out adding India or Japan to security alliance with Australia and UK



Biden is hosting the first in-person Quad summit at the White House on September 24. "On Friday...you'll have the Australians there (for the Quad summit). But then you also have India and Japan. Would you envision for them a similar kind of military role that you've now defined for with the Australians," a journalist asked.

"AUKUS? What would it become? JAUKUS? JAIAUKUS?" Psaki said in lighter moments before giving answer to the question.

The trilateral security alliance AUKUS, seen as an effort to counter China in the Indo-Pacific, will allow the US and the UK to provide Australia with the technology to develop nuclear-powered submarines for the first

time.

China has sharply criticised the trilateral alliance, saying such exclusive grouping has no future and will gravely undermine regional stability and aggravate the arms race and hurt international non-proliferation efforts.

The move has also angered France, an European ally of the US, which said it had been "stabbed in the back" and has publicly expressed its outrage at the AUKUS alliance. It recalled its ambassador to the US and Australia after the AUKUS security deal was announced. France also lost a lucrative contract to build conventional submarines for Australia.

Meanwhile, in a bid to mend ties, President Joe and his French

counterpart Emmanuel Macron agreed on Wednesday that the "open consultations" among allies on matters of strategic interest to France would have helped in having a better situation.

Biden and Macron have decided to open a process of in-depth consultations, aimed at creating the conditions for ensuring confidence and proposing concrete measures toward common objectives, a joint statement said after their meeting.

"Of course, it's an important topic in conversations with the French, with a range of countries who have a direct interest in the region," Psaki said at the White House briefing on Wednesday.

PM Modi meets Kamala Harris, says, 'her feat has inspired the entire world'



American CEOs from five different key sectors. He held one-on-one meetings with CEOs of Qualcomm, Adobe, First Solar, General Atomics and Blackstone.

PM Modi also met his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison ahead of the first in-person Quad meeting to be hosted by US

President Joe Biden and discussed a wide range of subjects aimed at deepening the economic and people-to-people linkages between the two countries.

Later in the day, Prime Minister Modi is also scheduled to meet his Japanese counterpart Yoshihide Suga.

USA-Australia submarine deal results a rift with France

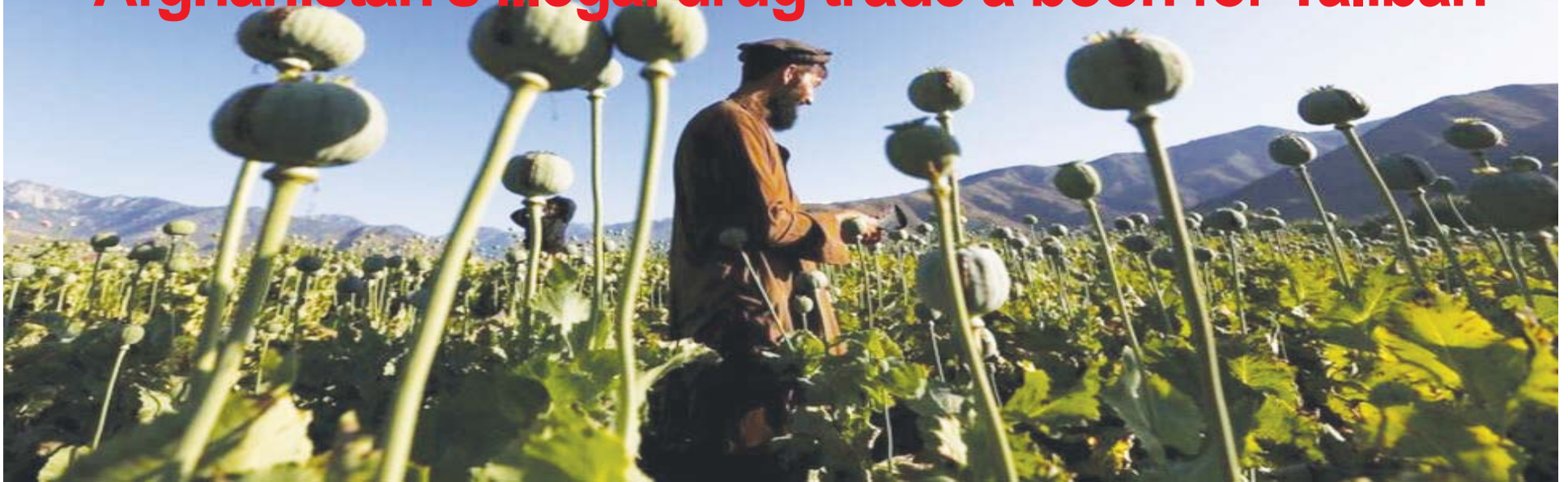
powered French submarines – this can be another worrying aspect of the deal. As it will be energy-efficient, it will go against the 1970 nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Australia is unlikely to weaponize the supplied nuclear fuel though. There are several other countries that can exploit this as an example to deal with weapon-grade nuclear fuel exchange, leading to a palpating political scenario worldwide.

China has already expressed its support to France. North Korea has also threatened the US over the submarine deal, mentioning that they would take necessary counter-measures if they find the deal to violate North Korean security in any way. Without a shred of doubt, it can be believed that the deal and the AUKUS alliance will surely change the direction of global politics in the coming decades.

By Susmita Ghosh

Profits and Poppy

Afghanistan's illegal drug trade a boon for Taliban



The United States spent more than \$8 billion over 15 years on efforts to deprive the Taliban of their profits from Afghanistan's opium and heroin trade, from poppy eradication to airstrikes and raids on suspected labs.

That strategy failed.

As the United States wraps up its longest war, Afghanistan remains the world's biggest illicit opiate supplier and looks certain to remain so as the Taliban is on the brink of taking power in Kabul, said current and former U.S. and U.N. officials and experts.

Widespread destruction during the war, millions uprooted from their homes, foreign aid cuts, and losses of local spending by departed U.S.-led foreign troops are fueling an economic and humanitarian crisis that is likely to leave many destitute Afghans dependent on the narcotics trade for survival.

That dependence threatens to bring more instability as the Taliban, other armed groups, ethnic warlords, and corrupt public officials vie for drug profits and power.

Some U.N. and U.S. officials worry Afghanistan's slide into chaos is creating conditions for even higher illicit opiate production, a potential boon to the Taliban. "The Taliban have counted on the Afghan opium trade as one of their main sources of income," Cesar Gudes, the head of the Kabul office of the U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), told Reuters. "More production brings drugs with a cheaper and more attractive price, and therefore a wider accessibility."

With the insurgents entering Kabul on Sunday, "these are the best moments in which these

illicit groups tend to position themselves" to expand their business, Gudes said.

The Taliban banned poppy growing in 2000 as they sought international legitimacy, but faced a popular backlash and later mostly changed their stance, according to experts.

Despite the threats posed by Afghanistan's illicit drug business, experts noted, the United States and other nations rarely mention in public the need to address the trade - estimated by the UNODC at more than 80% of global opium and heroin supplies.

"We've stood by on the sidelines and, unfortunately, allowed the Taliban to become probably the largest funded non-designated terrorist organization on the globe," said a U.S. official with knowledge of Afghanistan's drug trade. "The U.S. and international partners have continued to pull out and not addressed poppy cultivation," the official said on condition of anonymity. "What

you're going to find is that it has exploded." Asked for comment, a State Department official said the United States would continue to support the Afghan people, "including our ongoing counternarcotics efforts," but declined to say how aid would continue should U.S. assistance stop if the Taliban seize power. POPPY CULTIVATION SOARS Afghan farmers weigh myriad factors in deciding how much poppy to plant. These range from annual precipitation and the price of wheat, the main alternative crop to poppy, to world opium and heroin prices. Yet even during droughts and wheat shortages, when wheat prices rocket, Afghan farmers have grown poppy and extracted opium gum that is refined into morphine and heroin. In recent years, many have installed Chinese-made solar panels to power deep water wells. Three of the last four years have seen some of Afghanistan's highest

levels of opium production, according to the UNODC. Even as the COVID-19 pandemic raged, poppy cultivation soared 37% last year, it reported in May. Illicit narcotics are "the country's largest industry except for war," said Barnett Rubin, a former State Department adviser on Afghanistan. The estimated all-time high for opium production was set in 2017 at 9,900 tons worth some \$1.4 billion in sales by farmers or roughly 7% of Afghanistan's GDP, the UNODC reported.

When the value of drugs for export and local consumption are taken into account, along with imported precursor chemicals, the UNODC estimated the country's overall illicit opiate economy that year at as much as \$6.6 billion.

The Taliban and public officials have long been involved in the narcotics trade, experts said, although some dispute the extent of the insurgents' role and profits.

The United Nations and Washington contend the Taliban are involved in all facets, from poppy planting, opium extraction, and trafficking to exacting "taxes" from cultivators and drug labs to charging smugglers fees for shipments bound for Africa, Europe, Canada, Russia, the Middle East, and other parts of Asia.

Some of those shipments are hurled across the heavily patrolled border to traffickers in Iran with rudimentary catapults, reported David Mansfield, a leading researcher into Afghanistan's illicit drug trade.

U.N. officials reported that the Taliban likely earned more than \$400 million between 2018 and 2019 from the drug trade. A May 2021 U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan (SIGAR) report quoted a U.S. official as estimating they derive up to 60% of their annual revenue from illicit narcotics. Some experts dispute that data.

Mundra Drug Haul: 37 Kgs Suspected Heroin, Cocaine Seized In Delhi, Noida

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence has, since the seizure of close to 3,000 kilograms of heroin at Gujarat's Mundra port two weeks ago, recovered around 37 kilograms of the narcotic drug, along with cocaine -- or substance suspected to be the contraband items -- from Delhi and Noida in Uttar Pradesh. Up to eight persons, including Afghan and Uzbekistan nationals, have been arrested in this connection.

In the containers seized at the Gujarat port, run by the Adani Group, heroin was concealed in jumbo bags said to contain unprocessed talc powder, a Press Information Bureau release said today. The drug was placed in the lower layers of the

bags and then topped with talc stones to avoid detection.

As a result, the heroin had to be painstakingly separated from the talc stones, the release said.

"Immediate follow-up operations were carried out in New Delhi, Noida (Uttar Pradesh), Chennai, Coimbatore, Ahmedabad, Mandvi, Gandhidham, and Vijaywada. This led to recovery of 16.1 kilograms of heroin from a godown in Delhi, 10.2 kilograms of powder suspected to be cocaine and 11 kilograms of substance suspected to be heroin from a residential place in Noida," the release said today.

"A total of eight persons, including four Afghan nationals, one Uzbek National, and

three Indian nationals have been arrested in the case so far. The arrested Indian nationals include the holder of the import export code (IEC), which was used to import the consignment. He was arrested from Chennai. Investigations are in progress." The Enforcement Directorate has earlier initiated a money-laundering probe into the September 13 seizure valued at around ? 20,000 crore. The Andhra Pradesh duo arrested in this connection is likely to have been unaware of the contents of the container, sources in investigative agencies have said, referring to the husband and wife as "name lenders". The Adani Group has, meanwhile, said policing and examining containers was not its responsibility.

Prescription drugs, controlled chemicals fuel illicit drug trade in India

India ranks among countries reporting opioid seizures, and concerns are rising over prescription drugs and their ingredients being increasingly diverted towards recreational use and illicit trade

Prescription drugs and their ingredients--or 'precursors'--are being increasingly diverted for recreational use in India--the largest manufacturer of generic drugs in the world--as per the 2021 World Drug Report of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

In 2018, India amended its law to regulate the painkiller tramadol after being named a leading supplier in clandestine markets. The entire world's annual seizures of the drug fell from 125 to 32 tons in a single year. But tramadol is only one of India's growing drug problems.

India ranked among the 10 countries reporting the biggest opioid seizures in the world in 2019, the report said--India's opium haul in 2019 was the fourth biggest in the world, and of morphine and heroin the seventh largest.

But the diversion of pharmaceutical drugs and ingredients is a relatively new trend. Can this diversion be controlled without impacting their medical use? We investigate.

Existing opioid problem

Opioid use is rising in India, and users are increasingly turning from opium to its more potent, processed forms such as heroin, said a 2019 report by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE). This is happening even as opioids remain inaccessible to patients with legitimate medical needs and as dependent individuals fail to receive treatment for substance use, the report further said. There are two classes of opioids. One, naturally occurring opiates such as opium and its derivatives (doda/phukki/poppy husk and so on) and heroin, also referred to as brown sugar or smack. All these are mainly derived from the white gluey resin that oozes from the pod of a poppy plant. The second class of opioids includes synthetic or semi-synthetic ones, such as tramadol or fentanyl.

These "prescription opioids" are mostly prescribed for pain relief, and are illegally diverted for recreational purposes.

A recent report by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) of the USA implicated India in illegal fentanyl trade--including its clandestine manufacture and the shipping of its ingredients and "unregistered pill presses, stamps, and dies" via mail services to other countries. Among all drugs, opioids are by far the leading cause of disability, show global data. Each year, since the 1990s, opioids have accounted for more than two-thirds of all disability-adjusted life years or DALYs lost due to drug use disorders in India as well as the rest of the world, as per the data collected by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation centre at Washington University. DALYs refers to the sum total of an individual's healthy years lost to a cause--say, the lives cut short by opioid overdose or the decades spent out of the workforce due to substance use.

Caught in a trafficking junction

India lies sandwiched between two of the world's "three key production areas" for opium, leading to an illicit drugs crisis. But cross-border trafficking holds only part of the explanation for the illicit drugs trade that runs through India, as we explain later.

Afghanistan, on India's northwest, accounts for 85% of the global opium production. The political instability following repeated foreign interventions cemented its rise as a 'narco-state'. More than 40% of Afghanistan's agricultural land was dedicated to opium poppy cultivation in 2019, per UNODC. This grew by a further 37% during 2020, according to the Afghanistan Opium Survey 2020 report. There has also been a seven-fold increase in methamphetamine seizures in Afghanistan in 2019, suggesting the

country is fast becoming "an increasingly diversified market of synthetic drugs". Air strikes on Taliban-controlled areas blew up dozens of methamphetamine laboratories in a single day in 2019, UNODC reported; and the withdrawal of US troops from the country may have important implications for the flow of drugs into India.

Myanmar, towards India's east, is also recognised for its role in the opium and methamphetamine trade worldwide, as a part of the 'Golden Triangle' junction that links Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos. The pharma link

India's pharmaceutical industry is "the largest provider of generic drugs globally", as per the department of pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers. But there have been reports of clandestine manufacturing and siphoning of synthetic drugs, as well as illicit trade in chemical precursors.

Consider tramadol, the painkiller. For medical purposes, it is usually prescribed as a slow-release drug that works over an extended period of time and the dosage does not exceed 400 mg per day. But when crushed and inhaled or injected at once, it can produce powerful feelings of euphoria. Non-medical use of the drug leads to physical dependence and has been linked to seizures, psychosis and overdose deaths. In 2018, when India amended the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in 2018 to classify tramadol as a controlled psychotropic, the global annual seizure of the drug fell from 125 tons in 2017 to 32 tons in 2018. India's regulation may have pushed tramadol to the position of the second-most seized pharmaceutical opioid in the world; from 2014 to 2018, it had accounted for nearly 66% of all pharmaceutical opioid seizures, year after year.

The Taliban says it wants to ban drugs in Afghanistan. Here's why it can't



In a few months, farmers in Afghanistan will begin planting the fall poppy crop, eventually blanketing the dusty countryside in resplendent white, pink and red flowers.

It will mark the first time in 20 years that the illicit plant - the raw ingredient of opium and its derivative, heroin - will grow free of interference from U.S. and coalition forces. The role of policing poppy now belongs to Afghanistan's new rulers, the Taliban, which has spent years exploiting the crop to help fund its insurgency, cementing the country's longtime position as the world's leading producer of opium.

The militant group recently pledged to ban the production and sale of drugs, but weaning the country off the opium trade will be next to impossible given the nation's dire economic situation and the lifeline poppy cultivation provides for Afghanistan's vast rural population.

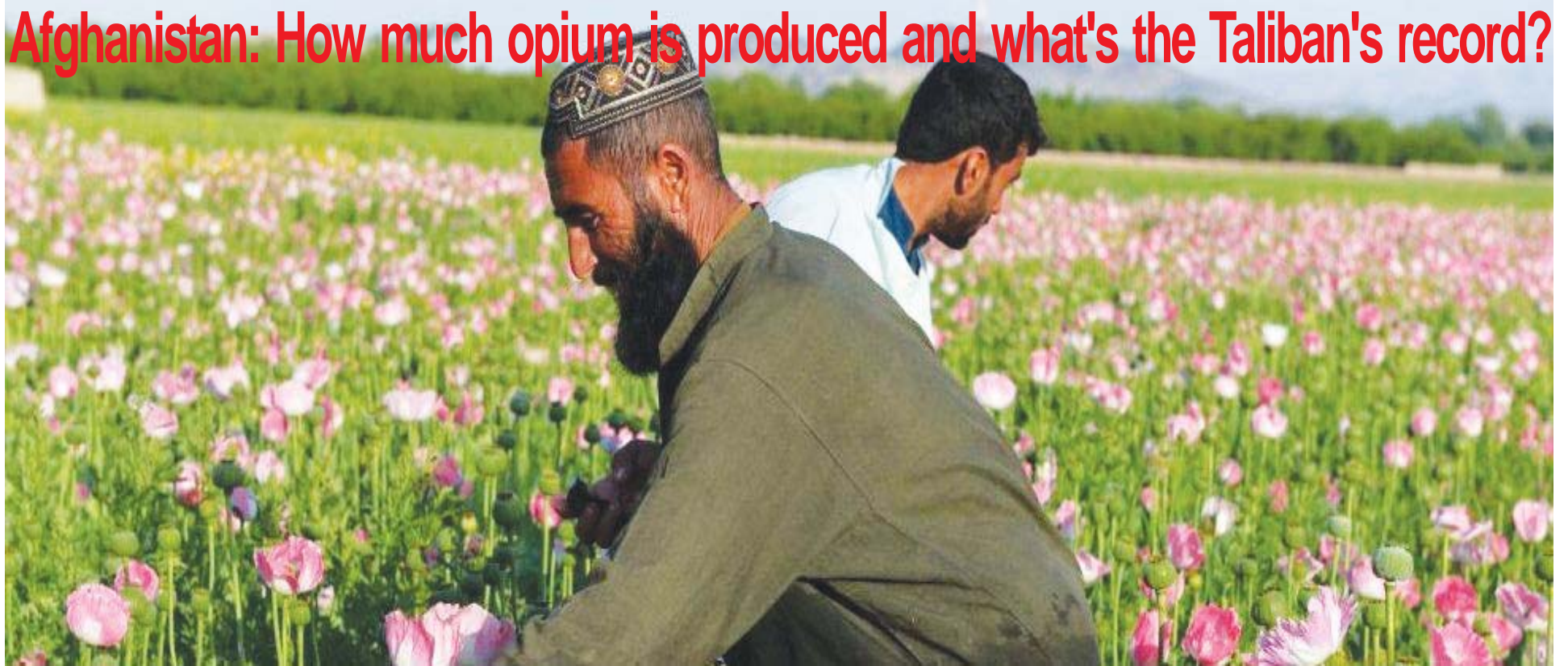
At its peak in 2017, annual opium production was valued at \$1.4 billion, or 7.4% of Afghanistan's gross domestic product, according to the United Nations. That tumbled to \$400 million, or roughly 2% of GDP, in 2020 because of falling prices for the narcotic in the face of competition from synthetic opioids and methamphetamines. But the crop remains one of the only reliable sources of income for farmers in a country ravaged by decades of war. The more unstable Afghanistan becomes, the more poppy is planted by those who have no safety net to hedge against the future.

"People who cultivate are often the poorest," said Angela Me, a senior researcher at the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, who places Afghanistan's share of the global opium market at over 80%.

The Taliban knows first-hand how difficult it is to sustain a ban. The first time the group ruled Afghanistan, it prohibited poppy cultivation in 2000, reducing acreage by 90% and cutting the world's supply of heroin by two-thirds. But the edict also plunged farmers into debt, leading to an unemployment crisis that damaged support for the Taliban in the run-up to its ouster by U.S. forces and their allies in 2001.

Experts say that by again declaring that it will not tolerate drugs, the Taliban is trying to persuade the world it should no longer be regarded as a pariah state so it can gain access to vital international aid and funding at a time when Afghanistan's economy is on the precipice of disaster.

Afghanistan: How much opium is produced and what's the Taliban's record?



How much opium is produced in Afghanistan?

Opium poppy plants can be refined to form the basis for several highly addictive drugs, including heroin.

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Its opium harvest accounts for more than 80% of the world's supply.

In 2018 the UNODC estimated opium production contributed up to 11% of the country's economy. What has the Taliban said it will do about opium?

After the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said: "When we were in power before there was no production of drugs."

He said "we will bring opium cultivation to zero again" and that there would be no smuggling.

What is the Taliban's record?

At first, opium poppy cultivation rose substantially under Taliban rule - from around 41,000 hectares in 1998, to more than 64,000 in 2000, according to the US State Department.

This was largely in Taliban-controlled Helmand province, which accounted for 39% of the world's illicit opium production.

But in July 2000 the Taliban banned opium poppy farming in areas they controlled.

And a UN report in May 2001 "observed the near total success of the ban in eliminating poppy cultivation in Taliban controlled areas".

Following the Taliban's ban on

opium poppy farming, there was a noticeable dip in opium and heroin seizures globally in 2001 and 2002.

However, things have since changed.

Although there has been cultivation in regions controlled until recently by the former government, most poppy growing has been concentrated in areas held by the Taliban.

Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, for example, had the most land used for poppy cultivation in 2020 when controlled by the Taliban.

How does the Taliban make money from poppies?

Opium farming is a major source of employment in Afghanistan, and in 2019 opium harvesting provided almost 120,000 jobs,

according to the UNODC Afghanistan opium survey.

The Taliban profits through taxes on the opium crop and indirectly through processing and trafficking, the US State Department says. A 10% cultivation tax is reportedly collected from opium farmers. Taxes are also collected from the laboratories converting opium into heroin, as well as the traders who smuggle the illicit drugs.

Estimates of the Taliban's annual share of the illicit drug economy range from \$100m-\$400m.

The drug trade accounts for up to 60% of the Taliban's annual revenue, says US commander General John Nicholson in the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (Sigar) report.

But some experts dispute this figure.

David Mansfield, a researcher on the illicit drug trade, says: "The taxation system as described by the UN and others is unrecognisable on the ground - it's unworkable both administratively and economically.

"The taxes earned on opiates could generate a maximum of \$40m per annum." "Where do the drugs end up? Heroin made from opium grown in Afghanistan makes up 95% of the market in Europe. However, only 1% of the US supply of heroin comes from Afghanistan, according to the US Drug Enforcement Agency. Most comes from Mexico.

Between 2017 and 2020, more than 90% of opioids were transported by road.

Explained: Could the Taliban form an alliance with Mexico's drug cartels?

Afghanistan and Mexico might appear distant from one another on a world map and are also separated by major historical, sociological and religious differences. But the Taliban and the Mexican cartels are united by the fact that they are both financially dependent on drug trafficking and use extreme violence to expand their political power and control of territory. Ahead of the elections in Mexico in June, numerous candidates were threatened and killed by the cartels, which supported other candidates and bought votes more openly than ever before.

In 2009, renowned experts had already presented evidence to the US Congress of the global perils posed by the Taliban and

Mexico's cartels as "transnational drug-trafficking organizations" at a US Congress hearing, pointing out dangerous similarities that have only increased since then.

Afghanistan, Mexico and Myanmar control 95%

Roughly 95 per cent of the world's opium poppies are cultivated in Afghanistan, Mexico and Myanmar, with all the illegal production and trafficking of heroin and other opiates that this entails. In Mexico, drug cartels are responsible for this and have the support of government officials. In Afghanistan, according to US and UN documents, producers are in direct contact with the Taliban.

They also were complicit with the government - including the US-backed one. Experts at the US Congress hearing in 2009

estimated that 50% of Afghanistan's GDP that year stemmed from the proceeds of the illegal drugs trade.

The Taliban have always had an ambiguous attitude: Consumption of opiates is banned but not the cultivation and sale of opium poppies. According to a US State Department report released early this year, most opium production in Afghanistan was taking place in regions already under Taliban control or at least their influence. It said that the Taliban derived a considerable income from the trade, pointing out that this fueled conflict, undermined the state of law, encouraged corruption and was also a contributing factor to drug abuse in the country.

A UN report published in April

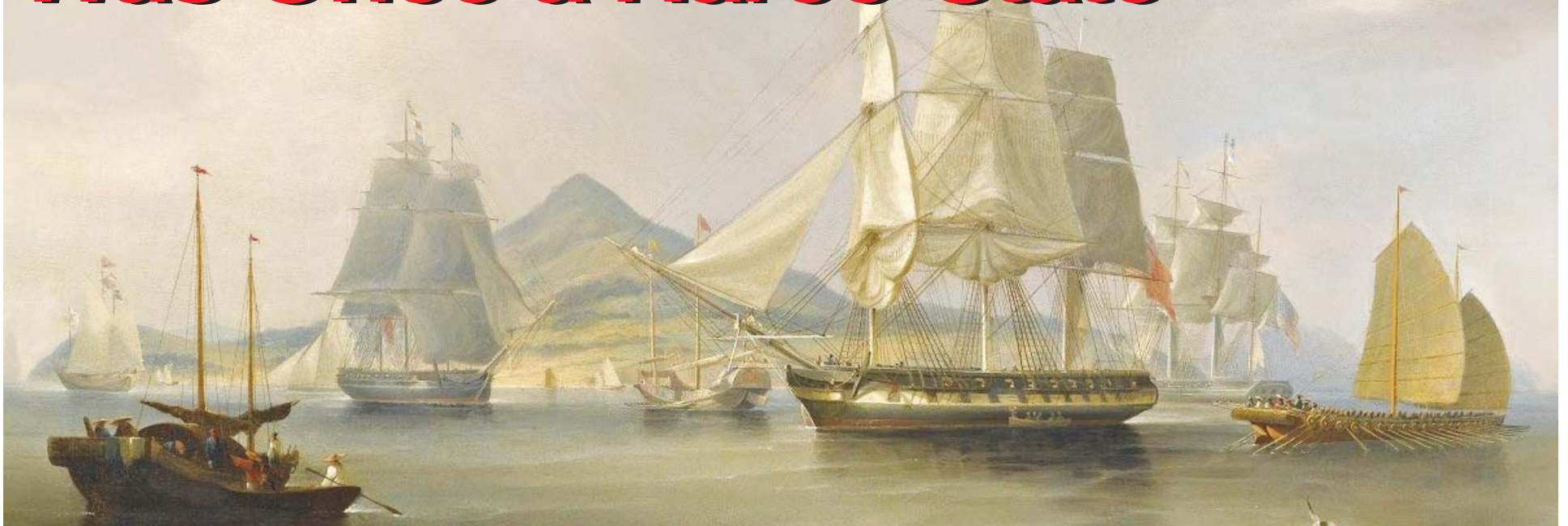
corroborated these findings and drew a direct link between the Taliban and opium poppy cultivation. It said that the total area under opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan had increased between 2019 and 2020 from 163,000 to 224,000 hectares (402,780 to 553,500 acres). Moreover, though 21 hectares had been eradicated in 2019, none had been in 2020. Could rivals work together?

The international narcotics business has spawned a number of cartels in Mexico. The Sinaloa Cartel is currently the fastest-growing one and controls the land where poppy cultivation is most profitable. It is thus a potential rival for the Taliban. But the fact that the cartel and the Islamist group serve different markets

means that they could actually complement each other.

According to the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Sinaloa Cartel almost has a monopoly on the US heroin market. The Pentagon believes it to be present in 60 per cent of the world's countries from EU and West African states to India, China and Russia - all nations where drugs from Afghanistan are also sold. For the moment, the Mexican cartel is mostly responding to demand for South American-made cocaine and synthetic drugs. But it would not be the first time that organizations, which are actually in competition, came together to increase their profits and political influence.

Book Review: The British Raj Was Once a Narco-State



Thomas Manuel's book 'Opium Inc: How a Global Drug Trade Funded the British Empire' shows how the Raj transformed entire farming economies in Bengal and Bihar into opium-producing machines.

Britain may claim it gifted civilisation to India but we know for sure that the Raj transformed entire farming economies in Bengal and Bihar into opium-producing machines over the 18th and 19th centuries. British agents smuggled tons of opium into China in exchange for tea, legally and illegally, taking silver in return. Millions were turned into addicts in China and India even as laws were passed against opium in Britain. Journalist-playwright Thomas Manuel asserts in his packed-with-facts book *Opium Inc: How a Global Drug Trade Funded the British Empire* that the British Raj in the 19th century was a narco-state - a country sustained by trade in an illegal drug. At its peak, opium was the third-highest source of income for the British in India - after land and salt. Thousands of farmers cultivated and harvested the milk of the poppy - on their own or due to coercion, but always trapped in indebtedness. This made the British East India Company, which entered the hugely profitable trade in the 1700s, a drug cartel. After 1857, the Raj took over, raining more misery on India and China before global events halted opium trade in the last century.

Of course, opium was produced even during Mughal times. By 1688, Bihar's annual output was over 4,000 chests. The East India Company accelerated poppy

growth. Between 1830 and 1839, the area under cultivation doubled. By 1860, it doubled again. In three years, it doubled yet again. So, over a century, the lands devoted to opium cultivation went up by almost 800%. A Benaras Opium Agency and a Bihar Opium Agency came up to cater to the business in Uttar Pradesh and Bengal/Bihar respectively. Obscene profits were generated because of back-breaking exploitation of the peasants.

The opium was shipped to China. But there was a problem. The British were allowed to enter through just one port: Canton (now Guangzhou). The Chinese didn't want to become another colony by letting the Europeans in to trade. Initially, in a bid to have more ports opened, the British shipped a huge quantity of gifts to the Qianlong emperor which needed 90 wagons, 40 barrows, 200 horses and 3,000 workers to ferry them to the Peking Palace. The emperor accepted the gifts but rejected the British request.

But the smugglers were so active that opium became a widespread addiction in China. When the Daoguang emperor discovered that his own son was smoking it, he ordered in 1838 a vicious crackdown that led to mass arrests, confiscation of 14 tonnes of opium and 43,000 opium pipes, besides a blockade of the European factories. The

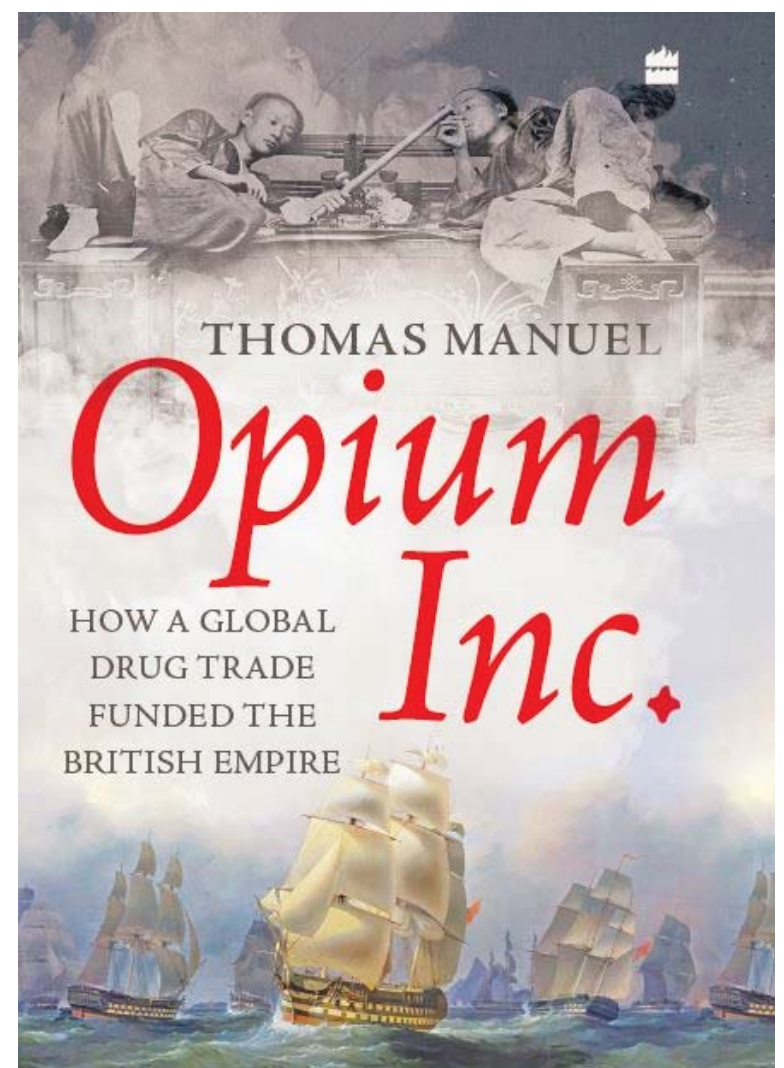
British capitulated, handing over 21,000 chests of opium which the Chinese burnt.

The British hit back - as viciously. After the First Opium War of 1842 that lasted two years, China was forced to open four new ports including Shanghai under the humiliating Treaty of Nanjing. It had to pay \$21 million, partially as compensation for the cost of the war and partially for all the opium destroyed. The British seized Hong Kong too. A second opium war in which the French joined the British and invaded the Forbidden City led to a more permissive treaty, legalising trafficking in opium. Opium trade boomed. In 1865, one British trading house alone shipped opium worth 300,000 pounds - around Rs 250 crore today. While poor Indians were squeezed to ensure bumper poppy harvest and production and sale of opium, many Indians made 'super profits' from the trade. Besides Calcutta, opium was shipped out of Bombay too, with the British collecting their fees and Indian merchants making a killing. One Indian who minted money thus was Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, whose wealth was estimated at Rs 40 crore when he retired from business. Many others from the Parsi and other communities were also involved in opium trade. Later, Jejeebhoy donated 245,000 pounds over time as he plunged into philanthropy and public life. He paid two-thirds of

the entire cost of the Pune waterworks, created the JJ School of Arts and founded the JJ Hospital. The Parsis would endow more than 400 educational and medical institutions in the 19th and 20th centuries. Queen Victoria named Jejeebhoy the first baronet of Bombay.

Surprisingly, the nationalist movement in India remained

silent on opium barring one notable exception: Dadabhai Naoroji. For the early Congress, nationalism meant fighting for better governance of India. Most leaders, while criticising liquor, felt the choice over opium was between national economic interests and the humanitarian costs. It was only in 1924 that the Congress passed its first resolution against opium.



The dark underbelly of Punjab's liquor problem

On the night of June 23, 2021, the sounds of qawwali rang out from a Sufi shrine in Dhotian, a village in Punjab's Tarn Taran district. The brutal second wave of the coronavirus pandemic hadn't yet receded, but hundreds were in attendance at the shrine, dedicated to a Sufi saint named Ramzan Shah Qadri.

On the walls of the shrine were numerous posters, some of which showed the saint with other figures. The most prominent among these others were the two brothers Rashpal and Gural Singh - shown in one poster as receiving bright beams of blessings that were shooting out from Ramzan Shah Qadri's palms.

The two brothers, who are the chief patrons of the shrine, belong to the Mazhabi Sikh community, which has roots that are at least 200 years old, and trace back to landless Dalit labourers who converted to Sikhism. The posters suggested that they intended to enmesh their reputations with that of the Sufi saint. As did the fact that they

Over 100 people died after consuming illicit liquor in 2020. The police have implicated two brothers, but the trade runs deep in the state's political economy.



officials and six police officials were suspended immediately after the tragedy.

Guralpal was named as a prime accused in the case after police alleged that he and his brother Rashpal had distributed the poisoned alcohol. Guralpal had already been arrested, 20 days

saint Baba Ramzan Shah Qadri. The singer assured the audience that everyone went through ups and downs. Then, encouraging the crowd to applaud for Guralpal, he took a cheeky dig at law enforcement authorities, telling Guralpal, "May god continue to grow your reputation in the Punjab Police."

The urgency of Punjab's alcohol problem is under-recognised - it is one of three states where, a survey found, more than half the male population consumed alcohol. While Punjab's drug abuse problem has drawn wide attention, the survey, done in 2019 by India's social justice ministry along with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre, suggested the state also had an alcohol dependence problem.

Over the past two decades, officials say an illicit liquor trade has grown in the state in parallel with a boom in the liquor industry. A retired government official, who worked with Punjab's Excise and Taxation Department for 15 years, pointed out the liquor business is one of the most regulated in India. "Each and every bottle is counted and accounted for. Smuggling is not possible without the connivance of police, politicians and excise officials."

Within days of the hooch tragedy, two Congress Rajya Sabha MPs had criticised their own party, accusing the state government, then led by Amarinder Singh, of "clear-cut failure". The Congress isn't the only party to have faced allegations of negligence, and

worse, with respect to the illicit alcohol trade. Small-time leaders of the Shiromani Akali Dal have been booked for illicit liquor smuggling over the years, especially when the party was in power between 2007 and 2017. The criticism of the Congress government by its own MPs last year was an early sign of an impending storm: last week, after months of fractious infighting within the party, Amarinder Singh resigned, and was replaced by Charanjit Singh Channi, the state's first-ever Dalit chief minister. Many see this as a strategic move ahead of the 2022 elections in the state, which has the highest percentage of Dalits in the country.

An Amritsar-based police officer who spoke on condition of anonymity told me that the brothers were only two of several figures in Punjab's illicit liquor trade, many of whom remain untouched by agencies. Others, too, pointed out that the brothers aren't the biggest players in the field. Anil Vinayak, an Amritsar-based social activist who has been vocal against the liquor mafia in his city, alleged, "Everybody from the police and excise officers to politicians are deeply involved in this business. That is why it has exploded out of proportion."

He added, "The entire rank and file of officials is involved, from the sarpanch to the top of the state. A kneejerk reaction after the hooch tragedy cannot bring long-term solutions to this problem." This story is part of Common Ground, our new in-depth and investigative reporting project.

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Liquor can be broadly classified into two categories: legal liquor, on which excise is paid to the state, and illegal liquor, which is smuggled to evade excise. Illegal liquor can be further classified into three categories: country liquor, which is known as lahan in Punjab; hooch, sometimes referred to as spirituous liquor; and illegal liquor that is bottled under the labels of existing brands.

Lahan is typically made in homes or outdoors, from raw materials such as rice and cane sugar, and distributed among friends, acquaintances and family. It may also be sold locally, outside the tax radar.

Hooch - which the Singh brothers allegedly distributed - is typically manufactured from Extra Neutral Alcohol, or ENA, the pure alcohol that is produced at distilleries and then processed into different liquors. The ENA is either made by the liquor company or supplied to it by a manufacturer. In the legal manufacturing route, it is then blended with flavours, colouring agents and other substances to make specific types and brands of alcohol.

Though different liquors such as rum, whisky and vodka, are supposed to have different raw materials, in India, definitional loopholes in the regulations allow the majority of them to be made from the same base ENA, most often manufactured from molasses, as a 2017 story in Outlook noted.

"From Punjab, ENA is smuggled to states as far as Assam, Gujarat and Bihar," said the retired official. (Gujarat and Bihar are both dry states.) "The ENA is also smuggled to local illegal distilleries inside the state to manufacture various illegal liquors."

ENA is often smuggled and sold, with or without further processing, as hooch, typically in packets or unlabelled bottles. Hooch is one of the cheapest forms of consumable alcohols, with a litre sold for as little as Rs 100. It is thus commonly consumed by the poor, who cannot afford more expensive branded liquor. Because it is not subjected to any quality controls, it is susceptible to contamination and can cause serious harm to, and sometimes kill those who consume it.



had appended the name Ramzan Shah Qadri to their own names. The all-night vigil was the first major event to be held in over a year at the shrine, which had lain silent during this period.

If the celebrations seemed particularly enthusiastic, there was a reason for it. Guralpal Singh was in attendance, after eleven months in prison, having secured bail just 15 days earlier.

The brothers are the prime accused in a tragic case that left Punjab reeling in mid-2020, even as the state struggled to combat the Covid-19 pandemic that was raging across the country. Over the end of July and early August, 123 people died after consuming hooch that contained denatured spirit, often used to make paint. Tarn Taran district was the worst hit, with 94 deaths. Seven excise

before the first hooch death, after allegedly being found with nearly 4,000 litres of spirit in the town of Phillaur, at a police checkpoint. Rashpal has been on the run since the tragedy.

A local court in Tarn Taran granted bail to Guralpal on June 8, 2021. The court noted, among other observations, that he had not initially been named in the First Information Report in the hooch tragedy, but that his name had been added later. It maintained that his culpability could "only be decided after the conclusion of the complete trial."

More than a year after the tragedy, the police investigation has not led to any convictions. At the qawwali night, during a break in the music, a singer thanked both brothers, describing them as the chief servants of the

India's cocaine addiction is worsening-and South American drug cartels are lining up



in the international market.

"We are pretty confident that the drugs we seized in Chennai were actually meant for other major cities, such as Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai," Prem Anand Sinha, zonal director for the Narcotics Control Bureau in Chennai, told Quartz.

The number of cocaine users in Chennai is relatively small, but Mumbai has become a key transit point and market for the drug due to its location. And Bengaluru is also following suit. Earlier this month, a Chennai-based CEO was arrested for allegedly receiving a courier of cocaine from the city.

According to NCB reports (pdf), cocaine from Colombia has traditionally been smuggled into the country by West African nationals.

"A large chunk of cocaine that is brought into India is from Colombia," Sinha noted. "But the

suppliers usually use nationals from African countries to smuggle in the drug."

However, the arrest of Enrique, and the recent seizure of 1.29kg of cocaine from a Peruvian national in New Delhi, suggest that South American drug cartels are now aiming for a larger share of India's drug trade as demand for cocaine has sky rocketed over the past decade.

With drug barons, such as Carlos Lehder and Pablo Escobar strengthening the cocaine trade in the 1980s, Colombia emerged as the largest producer of coca leaves-the main raw ingredient used to make cocaine-supplying as much as 74% of the world's coca leaves by 2000. Although the production has come down drastically since then, Colombia's drug industry is still estimated to be worth \$10 billion and exports 309 tons of the purest form of coke annually.

Drug boom

Enrique's arrest comes as India grapples with the rapid growth of the drug trade, centered around Delhi and Mumbai.

Between 2011 and 2013, according to government data, the quantity of drugs seized across the country jumped 455%.

Amid this drug boom, the number of cocaine cases has been steadily increasing. Between 2009 and 2013, according to the NCB (pdf), cases related to cocaine jumped 73%.

In comparison with the United States, which seized over 7,000kg of cocaine (pdf) from its Southwest border during the year 2012, and other countries in North America, South America and Europe (pdf), India's cocaine trade is still relatively small. But Colombian drug cartels seem to be working hard to make inroads.

Colombia's drug cartels-among the largest drug trafficking networks in the world-are trying out new, spectacular ways to bring their goods into India.

Last week, after a tip-off from intelligence sources, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in Chennai arrested a Colombian national-Edwin Enrique-for allegedly smuggling 2.35kg of pure cocaine into the country. He had the contraband stuffed inside more than 200 marker pens.

On June 22, Enrique arrived in

Chennai on a tourist visa. The Colombian claimed he was a boxing trainer invited by an institute called the All India Boxing Association, which was discovered to be faked.

The anti-narcotics authorities took Enrique under preventive custody while he was waiting for immigration and discovered the markers-each filled with 10 grams of cocaine-in his suitcase. According to the NCB, the confiscated cocaine is estimated to be worth Rs5 crore (\$786,349)

First China, Now India: How Drug Cartels Get Chemicals for Meth and Fentanyl



Shopping for the chemical ingredients used to make fentanyl, methamphetamine, and other illicit synthetic drugs is still easy-if you know where to look. These so-called "precursors" were once openly sold online, mostly by China-based dealers, but an ongoing crackdown by Beijing pushed the trade underground. New suppliers are already popping up to meet demand, and a recent series of busts and intelligence reports are pointing to a new source of supply: India.

Multiple vendors appear to offer precursors for sale on IndiaMart, a site that acts as a sort of Amazon-style clearinghouse,

connecting wholesale exporters to buyers for all types of industrial and commercial products. Searching for meth ingredients turns up several listings with pictures of crystalline white powders. IndiaMart officially bans these items, but keywords like "efedrine" and "efedrina" easily bypass the site's search filters for the common precursor ephedrine. It's no coincidence that "efedrina" is also the Spanish word for ephedrine. Mexican cartels dominate the meth trade in North America, and they rely on the precursor to manufacture one of their most lucrative products. Unlike cocaine, which is derived from coca plants, and heroin,

which comes from opium poppies, drugs like meth and fentanyl can be cooked from scratch in clandestine labs with a few relatively cheap chemicals. No growing or harvesting means fewer links in the supply chain and more profit on the bottom line.

The cartel pivot to synthetic drugs has brought deadly consequences in the United States, which hit another all-time record for drug deaths in 2020 with 93,331 fatal overdoses recorded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That total is up 30 percent over the previous year, a staggering surge largely driven by fentanyl. Synthetic opioids were directly

responsible for 57,550 deaths, according to the CDC, and were also a contributing factor in 70 percent of cocaine fatalities and half of meth overdoses.

China, which has a massive pharmaceutical industry, has long been the primary supplier of precursor chemicals to Mexico, according to both the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and independent reporting. Finding a Chinese precursor supplier used to be as easy as searching Google and chatting over Skype with an English-speaking customer service rep. But bowing to U.S. diplomatic pressure amid the surge in overdose deaths, the Chinese government restricted the most common fentanyl precursors in 2018. Since then, Chinese dealers risk facing harsh penalties (including death) and have become less open about their activities online. There's evidence that one of Mexico's most powerful drug trafficking

organizations has already turned to India as an alternative source of supply. In September 2018, Indian authorities arrested three men, including a Mexican national accused of working for the Sinaloa cartel, in the city of Indore, about 360 miles northeast of Mumbai. The suspects were caught in a clandestine lab wearing masks and gloves and in possession of 10 kilos of fentanyl, which they reportedly planned to ship from India to Mexico hidden in a suitcase on a commercial flight.

The Mexican, identified by Indian authorities as Jorge Solis Fernandez, ostensibly ran an import-export company that specialized in the trade of chemical and agricultural products, including tequila, according to Forbidden Stories, a nonprofit international news consortium that investigated the case last year.

Sensex, Nifty end lower as bank stocks drag. Check top gainers and losers

On Wednesday, the Sensex and Nifty 50 ended on the lower side as private bank stocks fell. Check out the top gainers and losers here.



Indian shares ended flat on Wednesday as major private bank stocks recorded a downfall and offset sharp gains in Coal India. Media firms soared on news of Zee Entertainment merging with Sony Group Corp's Indian unit. The blue-chip NSE Nifty 50 index closed 0.09% lower at 17,546.65, while the S&P BSE Sensex fell 0.13% to 58,927.33.

In addition to this, investors awaited the results of a two-day US Federal Reserve meeting later in the day, where the central bank is expected to give cues on a possible tapering of its bond buying program.

"An indication of tapering would likely impact the market and 'suck out some liquidity", said K.K. Mittal, an investment advisor with Venus India.

Erasing gains from the previous session, private banks dropped by 0.7%, with Housing Development Finance Corp shedding more than 1% to be among the biggest losers on the Nifty 50.

Media stocks posted their best day ever as Zee Entertainment surged 31% on its board approval for a merger with Sony Group Corp's Indian unit, a week after the Indian media giant's top shareholders had asked for a management reshuffle.

Real estate stocks jumped 8.5%, with Godrej Properties adding 13.2% to lead the charge in the sector. Auto stocks ended 1.3% higher, as analysts pointed to similar factors aiding gains in the sector. Consumer stocks fell, with Nestle India dropping nearly 1.5% to be the top loser on the Nifty 50. On Tuesday, the company's chairman told local media there were no sure signs that sustained consumption is here to stay.

Top 5 gainers and losers on Sensex:

Gainers % Change

TECHM +3.70%

M&M +1.92%

HCLTECH +1.29%

BAJAJ-AUTO +1.12%

RELIANCE +1.10%

Losers % Change

HDFC -1.46%

NESTLEIND -1.22%

KOTAKBANK -1.19%

ICICIBANK -1.12%

HDFCBANK -0.99%

Top 5 gainers and losers on Nifty 50:

Gainers % Change

Cryptocurrency prices today: Bitcoin, other virtual coins struggle as selloff continues



The cryptocurrency market has been struggling since the beginning of the week due to a sudden spike in volatility, triggered by Evergrande crisis that has made investors around the world nervous. Experts believe that volatility could last in the cryptocurrency market this week, at least till the Chinese real estate giant makes interest payment on bonds scheduled for Thursday. The company said it will make the interest payment as per schedule.

While the statement has provided relief to global equities, cryptocurrencies have still not gained momentum.

"There are a lot of uncertainties in the market right now due to Evergrande situation. The negative sentiment around Evergrande is building a fear amongst retail investors, which is reflected in the price action of bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies," said Hitesh Malviya, cryptocurrency and investment expert.

"On technical levels, Bitcoin recently bounced from the \$36,000-\$39,000 support range, which is a good sign as of now. The future price action depends on the overall development of Evergrande situation. An investor should rather observe the price action, and avoid any short-term positions at these current levels," he added.

Bitcoin, the world's largest cryptocurrency, was trading just above \$42,000 or 1.45 per cent lower than its price 24 hours ago at 11:55 am. The cryptocurrency's market capitalisation has dipped below \$800 billion and the 24-hour trading volume stood at \$1.93 billion.

Ether suffered a bigger fall in comparison to Bitcoin. It was trading at \$2,877 or 4.74 per cent lower than its price a day ago. The market capitalisation fell to \$337 billion and 24-hour trading volume was 1.92 billion.

Other altcoins such as XRP, Cardano, Polkadot, Stellar, Chainlink, Uniswap, Polygon and Litecoin were trading in negative territory.

Commenting on the cryptocurrency market, Edul Patel, CEO and Co-founder of Mudrex, a global algorithm based crypto investment platform, said, "The largest cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, struggled to hold on to its support level as the bears dominated the crypto market over the past 24 hours."

Zee Entertainment shares surge sharply after board approves merger with Sony

Shares of Zee Entertainment surged sharply on Wednesday after the media firm's board approved a merger with Sony Pictures Networks India. Zee Entertainment shares soared in morning trade to touch 15 per cent on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).

By the end of the trading session, shares of Zee Entertainment surged over 31 per cent on the BSE, signalling a massive surge in investor confidence. Shares of the firm closed 31.86 per cent on the BSE

at Rs 337.10. The media firm's stock had closed at Rs 255.65 on the BSE on Tuesday.

At today's closing, the market capitalisation of Zee Entertainment rose to Rs 32,000 crore as the stock hit a 52-week high of Rs 355.40.

Earlier in the day, the stock opened with a gain of nearly 10 per cent at Rs 281.20. It may be noted that Zee Entertainment shares traded higher than 5-day, 20-day, 50-day, 100-day and 200-day moving

averages. It may be noted that Punit Goenka will stay on as the managing director and CEO of the merged entity. Meanwhile, Sony Pictures Network India will hold a majority stake in the merged entity. The combined entity will own over 70 tv channels, 2 video streaming platforms (Zee5 and Sony LIV), two film studios and a digital content studio. It will become the largest entertainment network in India, bigger than Star and Disney India.



'The world must wake up'

Tasks daunting as UN meeting opens

In person and on screen, world leaders returned to the United Nations' foremost gathering for the first time in the pandemic era on Tuesday.

In person and on screen, world leaders returned to the United Nations' foremost gathering for the first time in the pandemic era on Tuesday with a formidable, diplomacy-packed agenda and a sharply worded warning from the international organization's leader: "We face the greatest cascade of crises in our lifetime."

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres rang the alarm in his annual state-of-the-world speech at the opening of the U.N. General Assembly's high-level meeting for leaders of its 193 member nations. More than 100 heads of state and government kept away by COVID-19 are returning to the U.N. in person for the first time in two years. But with the pandemic still raging, about 60 will deliver pre-recorded statements over coming days. "We are on the edge of an abyss - and moving in the wrong direction," Guterres said. "I'm here to sound the alarm. The world must wake up."

Guterres said people may lose faith not only in their governments and institutions but in basic values when they see their human rights curtailed, corruption, the reality of their harsh lives, no future for their children - and "when they

see billionaires joyriding to space while millions go hungry on Earth."

Nevertheless, the U.N. chief said he does have hope.

Guterres urged world leaders to bridge six "great divides": promote peace and end conflicts, restore trust between the richer north and developing south on tackling global warming, reduce the gap between rich and poor, promote gender equality, ensure that the half of humanity that has no access to the Internet is connected by 2030, and tackle the generational divide by giving young people "a seat at the table." Other pressing issues on the agenda of world leaders include rising U.S.-China tensions, Afghanistan's unsettled future under its new Taliban rulers and ongoing conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region.

The three most closely watched speakers on Tuesday morning are U.S. President Joe Biden, appearing at the U.N. for the first time since his defeat of Donald Trump in the U.S. election last November; Chinese President Xi Jinping, who in a surprise move will deliver a video address; and Iran's recently elected hardline President Ebrahim Raisi.

In his speech, Biden, too, called this moment "an inflection point

in history" and said that for the United States to prosper, it "must also engage deeply with the rest of the world."

Ahead of the opening, Guterres warned the world could be plunged into a new and probably more dangerous Cold War unless the United States and China repair their "totally dysfunctional" relationship.

The U.N. chief said in an interview this weekend with The Associated Press that Washington and Beijing should be cooperating on the climate crisis and negotiating on trade and technology, but "unfortunately, today we only have confrontation" including over human rights and geostrategic problems mainly in the South China Sea.

Biden, in his speech, insisted he was "not seeing a new Cold War or a world divided" and said Washington is ready to work with any nation, "even if we have intense disagreement in other areas."

On the latest speakers list released earlier this month, China's speech was supposed to be delivered on Friday by a deputy prime minister. But the U.N. confirmed Monday that Xi will give the country's video address instead. His speech and any comments about the U.S.

rivalry are certain to be closely watched and analyzed: China's presence in the world, and its relationship with the United States, affect most every corner of the planet.

Other leaders scheduled to speak in person during the meeting, which ends Sept. 27, include King Abdullah II of Jordan, the president of Venezuela, and the prime ministers of Japan, India and the United Kingdom along with Israel's new Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Leaders delivering prerecorded statements this year include the presidents of Egypt, Indonesia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. French President Emmanuel Macron was supposed to deliver a pre-recorded statement on Tuesday, but the government said Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian will now deliver the country's address virtually on the final day.

France and China have reacted angrily to the surprise announcement by Biden, alongside the leaders of Australia and Britain, of a deal to provide Australia with at least eight nuclear-powered submarines. Australia had signed a contract worth at least

\$66 billion for a dozen French conventional diesel-electric submarines and their construction was already under way. Le Drian told a news conference Monday that there is a "crisis of trust" between the United States and its oldest ally, France, as well as Europe, which has been excluded from the new US-UK-Australia alliance focused on the Indo-Pacific and aimed at confrontation with China. He said Europeans "should not be left behind," and need to define their own strategic interests.

By tradition, the first country to speak was Brazil, whose president, Jair Bolsonaro, isn't vaccinated. He reiterated last Thursday that he doesn't plan to get the shot any time soon, justifying his refusal by saying he had COVID-19 and therefore has a high level of antibodies. A key issue ahead of the meetings has been COVID-19 entry requirements for leaders to the United States - and to the U.N. headquarters itself. The U.S. requires a vaccination or a recent COVID-19 test, and the U.N. will operate on an honor system whereby anyone entering the complex attests that they do not have symptoms and have not tested positive in the last 10 days.

Mysterious new dark energy could be driving expansion of the universe: Study

Albert Einstein was the first person to theorise that space is not empty and that it is possible for more space to come into existence.

One of the biggest questions surrounding cosmology and astronomy is how the universe began. We know a lot about the evolution of the planet and the human species, however, the understanding of the origins of the universe and what drives this massive force, remains little. Cosmologists have now stumbled upon a unique phenomenon, which could be driving the expansion of the universe.

Cosmologists speculate that this unique energy may have existed just after the Big Bang happened, barely 3,00,000 years after the explosion. In a series of studies published in preprint, researchers identify it as Early Dark Energy which has been detected in data from the

Atacama Cosmology Telescope in Chile.

This data was collected between 2013 and 2016, and if confirmed, it could shed light on the early universe. However, researchers also maintain that it's not definitive proof and more research is required in the area. Researchers believe that this early dark energy was not as strong as today's to accelerate the expansion and would have caused the plasma that emerged from the Big Bang to cool down faster.

Cosmologists speculate that interpreting the observations from the telescope on the basis of this early dark energy may put the universe to be 12.4 billion years old, which is 11 per cent younger than 13.8 billion years calculated by initial observations.

"If this really is true - if the early

Universe really did feature early dark energy - then we should see a strong signal," Colin Hill, a co-author of the ACT paper, told Nature. He added that the current expansion would be about 5 per cent faster than the standard model predicts - closer to what astronomers calculate today.

What is Dark Energy?

It was initially believed that the Universe was expanding. However, astronomers thought that gravity was certain to slow the expansion. But observations from the Hubble Space Telescope showed that the expansion was not slowing due to gravity and instead has been accelerating, researchers knew a mysterious force was driving this expansion, which later came to be known as Dark Energy.

Albert Einstein was the first



person to theorise that space is not empty and that it is possible for more space to come into existence and his gravity theory proposed that space can possess its own energy. "Because this energy is a property of space itself, it would not be diluted as space expands. As more space comes into existence, more of this energy-of-space would appear." According to Nasa, we know how much dark energy

there is because we know how it affects the universe's expansion. "Other than that, it is a complete mystery," the agency said, adding that roughly 68 per cent of the universe is dark energy. Dark matter makes up about 27 per cent. The rest - everything on Earth, everything ever observed with all of our instruments, all normal matter - adds up to less than 5 per cent of the universe.

The CIA Spent 20 Years on the Front Lines of the War on Terror. It's Time For That to Change.

When Gen. David Petraeus became director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 2011, he filled his office with weapons, military challenge coins and other mementos of war - in other words, he made it look like the Pentagon.

The decor was telling. CIA directors often come from the world of intelligence, serving as agency careerists, congressional overseers or military intelligence leaders prior to assuming the top job. Petraeus was none of those. He was an infantry guy, not a

career intelligence officer, a retired four-star warrior who had commanded allied forces in Iraq and was fresh off the battlefields of Afghanistan.

As Petraeus was moving into Langley, his predecessor at the CIA, Leon Panetta, was heading to the Pentagon to become secretary of defense. The symbolism of the musical chairs was hard to miss: Intelligence and military operations had never been more fused. The leadership seats were literally interchangeable.

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks

ushered in many organizational changes in the federal government, including the creation of a behemoth new Department of Homeland Security, the establishment of a director of national intelligence and the largest restructuring of intelligence agencies in over half a century. But the integration of intelligence and warfighting may have been the most promising - and problematic - change of all. Before 9/11, who did what was much clearer: The military fought wars; the CIA collected and

analyzed intelligence (and carried out covert operations when it was important to hide official U.S. involvement). After the terror attacks, though, those distinctions blurred, fast. The CIA jumped into Afghanistan and became deeply involved in the day-to-day prosecution of the global war on terror.

Those efforts produced important successes. But along the way, the CIA became stretched thin. One of the more enduring legacies of the post-9/11 era is a style of spycraft that

does not serve America's national security interests as it once did. Waging two decades of war has taken time and talent away from the agency's original purpose of preventing strategic surprise - that is, anticipating major threats to the nation before they materialize. Twenty years after 9/11, the United States faces escalating threats from China, Russia, Iran and North Korea, conflict in cyberspace as well as physical space, and global challenges like climate change and pandemics.

India's plan for tighter e-commerce rules face internal govt dissent: Report



The plan to tighten rules for e-commerce firms operating in the country has faced internal government dissent as the finance ministry has termed some proposals as "excessive".

India's plan to tighten rules on its fast-growing e-commerce market has run into internal government dissent, memos reviewed by Reuters show, with the Ministry of Finance describing some proposals as "excessive" and "without economic rationale". The memos offer a rare glimpse of high-stakes policy-making governing a market already featuring global retail heavyweights from Amazon to Walmart, plus domestic players like Reliance Industries and Tata Group. The sector is forecast by Grant Thornton to be worth \$188 billion by 2025. It's not clear how the objections from the finance ministry - a dozen in total - will ultimately be reflected in the proposed rule changes, first floated in June. But watchers of the influential government arm say its complaints won't fall on deaf ears in the upper echelons of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration.

Read | E-commerce: New hurdles for big e-tail

"The ministry of finance raising such concerns would likely spur a rethink of the policy," said

Suhaan Mukerji, managing partner at India's PLR Chambers, a law firm that specialises in public policy issues.

India in June shocked the e-commerce world with proposals from its consumer affairs ministry that sought to limit 'flash sales', rein in a push to promote private-label brands push and raise scrutiny of relationships between online marketplace operators and their vendors. There is not yet a formal implementation timeline for the new rules.

Though the rules were announced after complaints from brick-and-mortar retailers about alleged unfair practices of foreign companies, they also drew protest from Tata Group, with more than \$100 billion in revenue <https://reut.rs/3hQinGB>, which is planning an e-commerce expansion. But the finance ministry, the ministry of corporate affairs and the federal think-tank NITI Aayog - an active player in policy-making - have all raised objections in memos reviewed by Reuters, saying the proposals go far beyond their stated aim of protecting consumers and also lack regulatory clarity.

An Aug. 31 memo from the Finance Ministry's Department of Economic Affairs said the rules appeared "excessive" and would hit a sector that could boost job creation as well as tax revenue. "The proposed amendments are likely to have significant implications/restrictions on a sunrise sector and 'ease of doing business'," said the three-page memo. "Care needs to be taken to ensure that the proposed measures remain 'light-touch regulations'."

The finance ministry did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

A spokesman for India's consumer affairs ministry said in a statement that "internal discussions among various stakeholders including government agencies is (a) sign of mature and healthy decision making process in a democracy."

'UNPREDICTABILITY' IN POLICY-MAKING

Voicing its own objections on July 6, NITI Aayog's vice chairman, Rajiv Kumar, wrote to Piyush Goyal, who is minister for commerce as well as consumer affairs minister, saying the rules could hit small businesses.

"Moreover, they send the message of unpredictability and inconsistency in our policy-making," Kumar wrote in the letter, a copy of which was reviewed by Reuters.

Minister Goyal and NITI Aayog's Kumar did not respond to Reuters requests for comment. The arguments put forth by the finance ministry and NITI Aayog are in line with concerns raised by sector operators, and even the U.S. government <https://reut.rs/2n6rBoM>. They say New Delhi has in recent years changed e-commerce policies too often and taken a hard-line regulatory approach that especially hurts American players. But Indian consumer affairs minister Goyal <https://reut.rs/39lsazN> and brick-and-mortar retailers disagree and have repeatedly said big U.S. firms have bypassed Indian laws <https://reut.rs/3EBODqI> and their practices hurt small retailers. The consumer affairs ministry has said the new rules were aimed to "further strengthen the regulatory framework" and were issued after complaints of "widespread cheating and unfair trade practices being observed in the e-commerce ecosystem."

Indian astronomers study how solar ejections affect space weather as Isro preps for Aditya L1 mission to Sun



Space weather is one of the most dynamic events beyond Earth that has effects not only on payload operating in the orbit but also on the ground telecommunication networks. A new study now sheds light on how conditions and events in the solar atmosphere like coronal mass ejections influence the accuracy of space weather prediction.

The study will aid the upcoming Aditya L1 mission to the Sun by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) set to be launched next year.

A team of astronomers led by Dr Wageesh Mishra of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bengaluru showed that plasma properties and Earth arrival times of CMEs from the Sun can vary substantially. The research published in Monthly Notices of Royal Astronomical Society is based on the study of observations of Interplanetary Coronal Mass Ejection (ICME) structures during the year 2011. The team studied the Earth-directed CMEs and ICMEs with data from NASA's STEREO spacecraft and the LASCO coronagraph located near the first Lagrangian point (L1) on the Sun-Earth line. Astronomers reconstructed a 3D view of the CMEs & ICMEs that happened on March 11 and arrived on Earth on August 6, 2011.

The astronomers studied the differences in the dynamics, arrival time, plasma, and magnetic field parameters of ICME structures at the locations in the heliosphere where the different satellites are located.

How the Debt Ceiling Turned into a Doomsday Cult



The end never actually comes but we love to obsess about it anyway.

An apocalyptic mood sweeps over the congressional press corps every couple of years as the federal government approaches its debt ceiling and representatives and senators meet to bicker over whether to raise the ceiling, temporarily suspend it or perform other legislative magic to finance the workings of the U.S. government. Take, for example, this page one, above-the-fold lede from the Sept. 22 edition of the Washington Post, which all but unleashes the Seven Plagues on mankind and tosses the unbelievers into a lake of fire. The lede reads:

The United States is careening toward an urgent financial crisis starting in less than two weeks, as a political standoff on Capitol Hill threatens to shutter the government during a pandemic, delay hurricane aid to millions of Americans and thrust Washington to the precipice of defaulting on its debt.

Careening! Urgent! Crisis! Standoff! Shutter! Precipice! Default! If you were new to the subgenre of debt-ceiling journalism, the tone of this piece might be enough to encourage you to make like a doomsday prepper, liquidate your market positions and start stockpiling rations, batteries, water and weapons. Because it's true that a default on the federal debt would fracture the economy and unleash a blood-dimmed tide

over humanity - but it's equally true that such a calamity has never happened, won't happen this time and will likely never happen because members of Congress who love to play chicken never follow through. They always chicken out. Checking the fossil record, we find that Congress has averted disaster at least 78 times in the past 60 years by passing legislation to forestall the debt-ceiling end times that would otherwise unfurl. We will be writing about the 79th time before the month is out.

The same day's New York Times avoided the Post's hysterical stylings in its coverage, pushing the debt-ceiling story inside to Page 14 and playing it as a standard "process" story. No "careening" or "crisis" here, but the Times does allow that House legislation, which passed with Democratic votes only and kicks the debt ceiling issue down the road to December, was "urgently needed." The Associated Press did the same, predicting a "high-stakes showdown" with Senate Republicans who are likely to oppose it.

Why do the Republicans oppose a new debt ceiling? They want to pretend that it's about taming out-of-control government spending, but this is very slim cover. Raising the debt ceiling merely allows the government to borrow to cover previously

approved congressional spending. As financial columnist Alan Sloan noted in the Washington Post earlier this month, Republicans approved three debt-ceiling increases and a debt-ceiling suspension during the Trump administration. What it amounts to, Sloan writes, is blackmail, something the Democrats have done but which Republicans now routinely inflict upon the Democrats. In 1995, the Gingrich Republicans forced two government shutdowns on the Clinton administration over raising the debt ceiling. They wanted spending cuts but settled for a couple of "Contract With America" initiatives. In 2011, the Obama administration horse-traded spending cuts for its debt-ceiling increase. (Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell currently says it's up to the Democrats to pass the debt-ceiling bill on their own. We'll see

about that.)

None of this is to suggest that playing political chicken over the debt ceiling is smart. It's a little like playing catch with sharp knives - if you're practiced at it and pay attention, nobody gets hurt. As the White House has warned Republicans, a federal default - something that has never happened - could push the economy into recession or worse. The GOP's financial "blob"-former Republican Treasury secretaries-have been warning McConnell and other party leaders that the economy might topple off a cliff if the ceiling goes unrepaired. But as Reuters reported a week ago, investors are betting that an increase or suspension of the debt ceiling is in the offing. The economic sky isn't cloudless, but neither is it falling.

Properly vetted, the current round of debt-ceiling "brinksmanship" isn't brinksmanship at all. The Democrats know that the Republicans know that they know how vigorously the entire debt-ceiling apparatus can be stressed before the springs and rivets start popping out. As POLITICO Chief Economic Correspondent Ben White put it succinctly in a tweet Wednesday morning, "We are not going to breach the debt limit and default. Simply no way Dems will ultimately allow that kind of a catastrophically unthinkable

own-goal to happen heading into midterms."

Donald Trump conveyed an unusually honest sentiment this morning in one of his "Save America" fundraising emails to explain why congressional Republicans are playing showdown with their Democratic colleagues. "The only powerful tool that Republicans have to negotiate with is the Debt Ceiling, and they would be both foolish and unpatriotic not to use it now," Trump wrote, using his best art-of-the-deal voice. "Therefore, Republicans have no choice but to do what they have to do, and the Democrats will have no choice but to concede." If it's so self-evident that the debt-ceiling problem is doomed to work itself out, why all the annihilation imagery of the Washington Post piece? There's a long journalistic tradition of juicing up a perfectly standard story without actually straying from the facts. It's called "writing your way onto Page One." And it works more often than not.

The debt-ceiling squabble is ugly. It's potentially perilous. And nerve-wracking for financial markets. But it's not about to uncork a Book of Revelation-type cataclysm. We'll muddle through as we always do. It's only a matter of what the Democrats will surrender in order to bring peace back to the kingdom.

\$1 000 000 000 000 000

That's how much UN needs to fight climate change every year, but it doesn't have



The UN pressed world leaders to contribute more to climate funds during a closed-door meeting at the UNGA

As the action-packed week of the United Nations General Assembly began, the message was clear on the climate emergency facing the planet: "decisive action now to avert climate catastrophe." Hours after the UNGA began, an emergency summit was convened behind closed doors to press for more action on climate finance and other measures from wealthy countries.

The meeting holds significance as the UN rallies countries ahead of the Conference of Parties (CoP-26) next month in Scotland's Glasgow. The Informal Climate Leaders Roundtable on Climate Action took place as UN Chief Antonio Guterres said

"Saving this and future generations is a common responsibility."

According to a statement by the UN, world leaders addressed the gaps that remain on the actions needed from national governments, especially the G20 industrialised powers, on mitigation, finance and adaptation. The roundtable was "a wake-up call to instil a sense of urgency on the dire state of the climate process ahead of COP26."

FINDING \$100 BILLION

One of the major agendas of the closed-door meeting was to gather resources in finances to fund the climate action initiatives. UK Prime Minister Boris

Johnson, who hosted the meeting with the UN chief, urged leaders of the world's major economies including the United States to deliver on their commitments toward a \$100 billion per year climate fund.

"Too many major economies some represented here today, some absent are lagging too far behind. I'll stress that again for this to be a success we need developed countries to find that \$100 billion," Johnson said during the annual high-level week of the UN General Assembly. Johnson told reporters that he is hopeful the United States can deliver on a promise to step up its share of money toward the \$100 billion annual goals but

"we've been here before" and "we're not counting our chickens."

Meanwhile, John Kerry, US Climate Envoy said that the country will deliver more climate aid ahead of the October 31-November 12 CoP-26 Climate Change Conference. "The United States is crucially important," Johnson said, adding that "it will send a massively powerful signal to the world."

My #UNGA message to world leaders this week:

We are on the verge of the precipice.

Wake up. Step back. Change course. Unite. pic.twitter.com/aKJDUCI393

- António Guterres

(@antonioguterres) September 21, 2021

NOT ENOUGH

An Oxfam International report on climate finance paints a grim picture of the situation and states that wealthy nations are expected to fall up to \$75 billion short of fulfilling their long-standing pledge to mobilise \$100 billion each year to help the most vulnerable countries from climate change effects.

The report comes in the backdrop of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) newly released data that showed that developed countries provided only around \$80 billion in climate finance in 2019.

Climate crisis dominates UNGA: US to increase funds, China says no more coal-fired power projects abroad

After UN Chief Antonio Guterres and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson pressed countries for more funds to fight climate change, US President Joe Biden assured that he will work with the Congress to double funds by 2024 to \$11.4 billion per year to help developing nations deal with climate change, as China announced it will not build new coal-fired power projects abroad.

The two leaders were speaking at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), being held in-person after a hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The announcement comes in the backdrop of imminent warnings issued by several agencies including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which said that Earth will hit the key temperature limit after which

reversal will be highly unlikely. The UN Secretary-General rang the alarm in his annual state-of-the-world speech at the opening of the UNGA's high-level meeting saying, "We are on the edge of an abyss - and moving in the wrong direction. I am here to sound the alarm. The world must wake up." Guterres also warned the world could be plunged into a new and probably more

dangerous Cold War unless the United States and China repair their "totally dysfunctional" relationship.

US TO DOUBLE CLIMATE AID FUND

Addressing his first UNGA as president of the United States, Biden said that he will work to increase the US' corpus to fight climate change and the funds will help achieve a global goal

set more than a decade ago of \$100 billion per year to support climate action in vulnerable countries by 2020.

"The best part is, making these ambitious investments isn't just good climate policy, it's a chance for each of our countries to invest in ourselves and our own future," Biden told the annual gathering of world leaders.

This telescope will provide 100 times bigger panoramic view of the universe than Hubble

The Roman Space Telescope will survey the sky up to thousands of times faster than can be done with Hubble.

The Hubble Space Telescope, hovering over Earth has been its eyes and ears peering into the vastness of the cosmos, however, the universe is so big that Hubble can not see it all, but engineers have an alternative in the pipeline. When the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope launches in the coming years, it will be able to supersede Hubble, providing a panoramic field of view "at least 100 times greater than Hubble's at similar image sharpness, or resolution."

The telescope will follow the James Webb Space Telescope, due to be launched in December this year and survey the sky up to thousands of times faster than Hubble with a combination of wide-field, high-resolution imagery. The telescope will look at answers pondering scientists on Earth for decades including how galaxies form and evolve over cosmic time? How did the

largest structures in the universe assemble? How did the Milky Way galaxy come to be in its current form?

"Roman will give us the ability to see faint objects and view galaxies over long intervals of cosmic time. That will allow us to study how galaxies assembled and transformed," astronomer Swara Ravindranath of the Space Telescope Science Institute said.

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

When the Roman Space Telescope takes to the skies in the mid-2020s it will try to understand the evolution of galaxies not only of the Milky Way but in its neighbouring regions as well. Galaxies are conglomerations of stars, gas, dust, and dark matter, which can span hundreds and thousands of light-years, while Hubble has shown them clustered together as well.

To study the evolution of

galaxies, studying the formation of stars and their evolution is critical. "Galaxies don't form stars at a constant rate. They speed up and slow down forming more or fewer stars under the influence of a variety of factors, from collisions and mergers to supernova shock waves and galaxy-scale winds powered by supermassive black holes," Nasa said. By studying a galaxy's spectrum in detail astronomers can get a peek into the life of stars. "Using Roman we can estimate how fast galaxies are making stars and find the most prolific galaxies that are producing stars at an enormous rate. More importantly, we can find out not only what's happening in a galaxy at the moment we observe it, but what its history has been," Lee Armus, an astronomer at Caltech said in a statement. Observations have shown that galaxies also stop

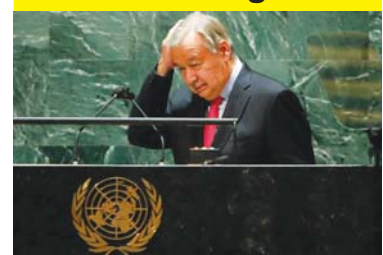
star formation after a period of time, however, what triggers this unknown and the Roman Space Telescope could shed some light on this phenomenon.

STUDYING THE EXPANSION OF THE UNIVERSE

Expansion of the universe at an accelerated pace has been observed by both ground-based telescopes and the Hubble Space Telescope. The expansion was confirmed by observing light being stretched from distant galaxies to longer, redder wavelengths. Nasa says that Roman's infrared detectors are ideal for capturing light emerging from those galaxies and can pick up signals from distant and fainter galaxies.

"Right now, with telescopes like Hubble, we can sample tens of high-redshift galaxies. With Roman, we'll be able to sample thousands," explained Russell Ryan, an astronomer at STScl.

Billionaires rocketing into space draw UN chief's red glare



When three billionaires rocketed into space this summer, they did more than escape Earth's surly bonds, they helped spread "a malady of mistrust" plaguing an all-too hungry world, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told other world leaders Tuesday. In his opening speech to the General Assembly, a grim Guterres highlighted the gap between the rich and poor with "billionaires joyriding to space while millions go hungry on Earth."

In July, billionaires Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos flew into space on private rockets that their companies built, gathering worldwide attention in their short trips that didn't make it into orbit. Both bank on space tourism business from their fellow space fans with big wallets.

After returning to Earth, Branson, 71, sprayed G.H. Mumm champagne over his crew and then chugged it from the bottle. Billionaire Jared Isaacman led the first all-private orbital mission that splashed down Saturday after three days in orbit. His flight was on a Dragon capsule and Space X rocket built by a fourth space-obsessed billionaire, Elon Musk. Unlike the other two missions, Isaacman's ride raised more than \$200 million for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital including \$100 million from Isaacman and \$50 million from Musk. Guterres lumped billionaire space hops with the maladies of hopelessness, corruption, curtailing of personal freedoms and "when parents see a future for their children that looks even bleaker than the struggles of today." After Branson and Bezos spaceflights and revelations that Bezos, the richest man in the world, didn't pay any federal income tax in 2007 and 2011, critics called for taxing billionaires with some wanting to tax them out of the 10-digit income level. So far those proposals, unlike the billionaires, haven't gotten off the ground.

Polish gene project to drop Chinese tech over data security concerns

A European Union-funded project to build a genomic map of Poland plans to drop gene-sequencing technology from China's BGI Group over concerns about data security, one of the project's leaders told Reuters. The Genomic Map of Poland's concerns stem from questions over how Polish genomic data may be used that relate to national security, said Marek Figlerowicz, a Professor at the

Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry at the Polish Academy of Sciences who steers the project. Figlerowicz said the concerns were initially raised by a report earlier this year from the U.S. National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence (NSCAI) which said BGI may be serving as a "global collection mechanism for Chinese government genetic databases." BGI told Reuters in response that the U.S. report was

"disinformation, not borne out by the facts;" China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has called it "groundless accusations and smears."

An NSCAI spokesperson said it stood by its report, and has recommended the United States and allies double-down on techniques to better protect patient privacy. Since 2015, Beijing has restricted foreign researchers from accessing gene data on Chinese people.

In August, a human genetics committee at the Polish Academy of Sciences said a "lack of compliance" by what it called "Far East companies" with the principles of genetic testing ethics raised serious doubts. It did not name any companies or countries but urged labs and scientific institutions that sequence genetic material abroad to stop using biotechnology companies there.

WHO chief discusses health situation in Afghanistan with Taliban leadership

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Ahmed Al Mandhari met with Taliban leadership on Tuesday to discuss the current health situation in Afghanistan.



World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus met with Taliban leadership on Tuesday to discuss the current health situation in Afghanistan and the needs of Afghan health workers.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who arrived in Kabul on Monday, is being accompanied by Ahmed Al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Following the meeting, the WHO chief tweeted, "Director Al Mandhari and I met with the Taliban leadership to discuss the current health situation in #Afghanistan and the needs of

Afghan #healthworkers to prevent the health system from collapsing."

He further added, "Health is a service that needs to be continued at all times. If Afghanistan's health system collapses, the tragedy will be worse and many more lives will be lost. We can prevent this from happening, together." Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is also expected to speak with officials in Kabul over the World Bank's aid cut to the Afghan health sector and possibilities for restarting it, acting health minister Wahid Majrooh was quoted as saying by TOLO news agency. According to Ahmadullah Wasiq, a member of

the Cultural Commission of the Information and Culture Ministry, the WHO chief will also meet with Prime Minister Mullah Hassan Akhund, deputy minister Mullah Baradar, and the acting foreign minister of the caretaker cabinet. WHO ON SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Following the Taliban's takeover of the nation, the WHO had expressed concerns over access to critical healthcare services in Afghanistan. "The people of Afghanistan need support and solidarity today more than ever. The gains of the past 20 years cannot be turned back," the WHO had said in a statement.

Earlier this month, the WHO said that hundreds of medical facilities in Afghanistan are at risk of imminent closure because the Western donors who finance them are barred from dealing with the new Taliban government.

Around 90 per cent of 2,300 health facilities across the country might have to close as soon as this week, the UN health agency's regional emergency director, Rick Brennan, told Reuters in an interview. The WHO was trying to fill the gap by providing supplies, equipment and financing to 500 of the health centres, he added.

Over 41 million dementia cases globally undiagnosed, claims study



According to a report by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI), over 41 million people living with dementia worldwide remain undiagnosed.

Experts are of the opinion that getting diagnosed with the disease is vital, as it will ensure that those affected would receive timely support and treatment, which is more effective the earlier it begins, and to take part in clinical trials. Meanwhile, another research done by McGill University in Montreal, Canada, showed that as many as 90% of people with dementia have not been diagnosed in some countries. Dementia is one of the biggest health challenges worldwide. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), it is currently the seventh leading cause of death among all diseases and one of the major causes of disability and dependency among older people worldwide.

Paola Barbarino, the chief executive of ADI, said a lack of awareness and stigma within healthcare systems was severely hampering efforts to support people living with dementia.

World Alzheimer's Day 2021: Different stages of the disease, and a recent study

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is a neurodegenerative disease that is characterised by worsening forgetfulness and getting lost in familiar places. Forgetting things, important dates or events, losing track of the day, date, time and place, losing way to the house, difficulty while reading, unable to identify relatives and friends are common traits of people with Alzheimer's or dementia. The disease progresses over

time and at later stages, a person may lose the ability to speak and walk.

To raise awareness about the disease, September 21 every year is marked as World Alzheimer's Day.

The disease is usually noticed when a person starts misplacing things, forgetting about recent events, conversations and common places.

A person close to the patient

may start noticing these changes.

Stages of the disease

Dr Rajesh Benny, Consultant Neurologist, Fortis Hospital Mulund explains the stages of Alzheimer's disease.

Stage 1 - No clinical impairment: Like other neurodegenerative diseases, this stage can precede the memory loss by many years where the affected individual is clinically okay.

Stage 2 - Very mild cognitive decline: This implies the forgetfulness associated with normal ageing, where an individual misplaces objects and can eventually find them after a period of search.

Stage 3 - Mild cognitive decline: Recent memory worsens, which becomes apparent to the relatives. The patient suffers in daily functioning such as bank work, money issues, etc. and may be confused occasionally.

Stage 4 - Moderate cognitive decline: Memory worsens further with difficulty doing tasks that need multitasking. The patients start losing their way around unfamiliar places and become socially withdrawn. Stage 5 - Moderately severe cognitive decline: In this stage, the patient may even forget their current surroundings, home address, telephone number and need assistance for simple tasks like dressing.

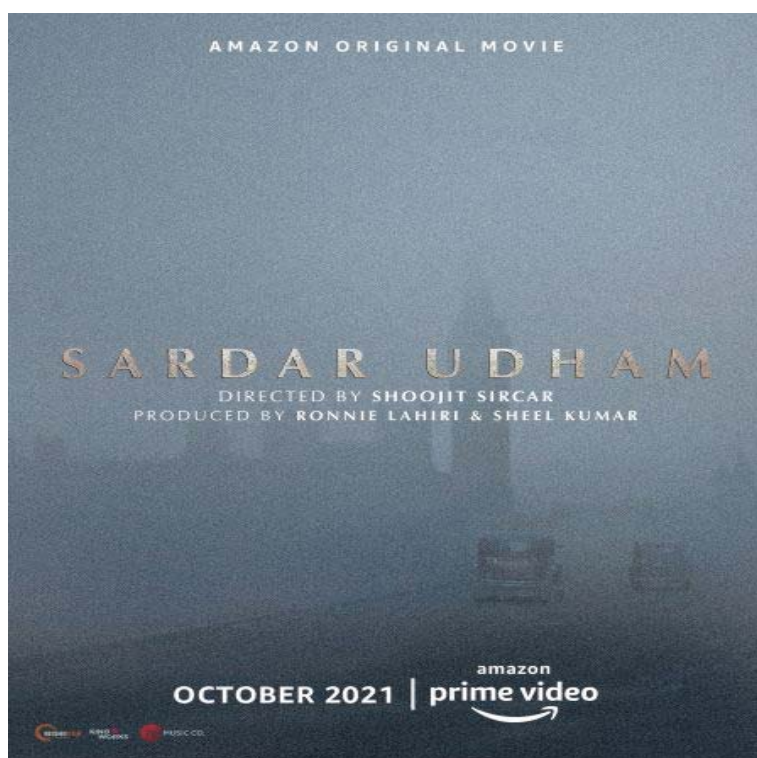
Amazon Prime Video Announces Worldwide Premiere of **Sardar Udham**

ensure that the narrative is replete with emotions and depth that finds a place in the heart of every viewer," said Vijay Subramaniam, Director and Head, Content, Amazon Prime Video, India. "Continuing a great partnership with Rising Sun Films, we are proud to present Sardar Udham, a stirring story of courage, fortitude and fearlessness, from the buried treasures of our history and culture. The untold heroic story of Udham Singh needed to be narrated to the world and we are certain that our viewers across the spectrum will be inspired by this film that honours the life of one of the greatest martyrs in Indian history, whose profound and heart wrenching sacrifice avenged the death of many innocents."

"It has been exhilarating to create this film that showcases and acknowledges Udham Singh's patriotism and deep-rooted, selfless love for his motherland,"

said Producer Ronnie Lahiri. "Two decades worth of research and understanding has been put by the team to present this untold story. Vicky has worked tirelessly to bring out the real essence of Udham Singh's myriad emotions throughout his life's journey. We are glad to continue our prolific collaboration with Amazon Prime Video and are thrilled to share this historical epic story with a global audience." Sardar Udham will join the thousands of TV shows and movies from Hollywood and Bollywood in the Prime Video catalogue. These include Indian-produced Amazon Original series Mumbai Diaries 26/11, The Family Man, Comicstaan, Breathe: Into The Shadows, Bandish Bandits, Paatal Lok, Mirzapur, The Forgotten Army – Azaadi Ke Liye, Sons of the Soil: Jaipur Pink Panthers, Four More Shots Please, Made In Heaven, and Inside Edge, Indian films such as Shershaah, Toofaan, Sherni,

Coolie No. 1, Unpaused, Gulabo Sitabo, Durgamati, Chhalaang, Shakuntala Devi, Sarpatta Parambarai, Putham Pudhu Kaalai, Soorari Potru, Ponmagal Vandhal, French Biryani, Law, Sufiyum Sujatayum, Penguin, Nishabdham, Maara, V, CU Soon, Bheema Sena Nala Maharaja, Drishyam 2, Halal Love Story, Middle Class Melodies, Hello Charlie, Malik, Narappa among others and the award-winning and critically acclaimed global Amazon Originals like Cinderella, Without Remorse, The Tomorrow War, Borat Subsequent Moviefilm, Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, The Boys, Hunters, Cruel Summer, Fleabag, and The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel. All this is available at no extra cost for Amazon Prime members. The service includes titles in Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi, and Bengali.



MUMBAI, India, 23 September 2021: This October, Amazon Prime Video brings to its viewers Sardar Udham, the untold story of an extraordinary young man whose love for his motherland and his people drove him to dedicate his life to India's freedom struggle. Starring Vicky Kaushal as Sardar Udham Singh, the Amazon Original Movie is directed by Shoojit Sircar and produced by Ronnie Lahiri and Sheel Kumar. Prime members in India and

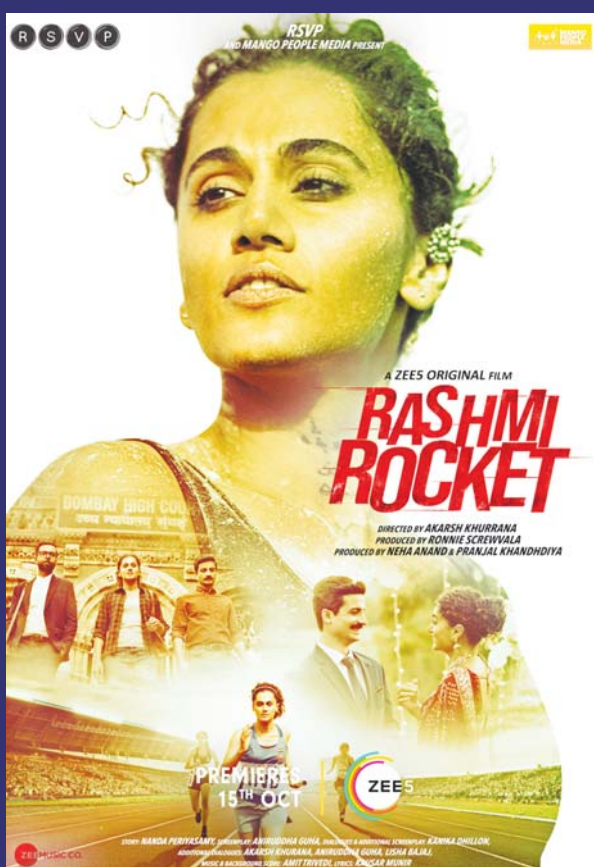
across 240 countries and territories worldwide can watch Sardar Udham this October only on Amazon Prime Video. A heart wrenching story of retribution, Sardar Udham showcases the journey of a gallant man who made sure the world never forgets the lives of his beloved brethren who were brutally killed in the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 1919. "With every story that we present on Amazon Prime Video, we

Running Towards Another Hit? ZEE5 Global ANNOUNCES NEXT ORIGINAL, 'RASHMI ROCKET' Taapsee Pannu Is Full Of Grit And Determination In The Poster. Film Premieres 15th October

Mumbai, 20th September 2021: After giving us consistently stellar performances, Taapsee Pannu is all set to run straight into Indian audiences' hearts with 'RASHMI ROCKET', streaming this Dussehra, 15th October on ZEE5 and produced by Ronnie Screwvala's RSVP & Mango People Media. Following the story of a young girl, who hails from a small village but is blessed with an incredibly large gift, 'RASHMI ROCKET', directed by Akarsh Khurana, is based on an original story by Nanda Periyasamy.

The poster gives viewers a quick glimpse of the adrenaline packed narrative in store, while Taapsee is the perfect picture of grit and determination. The story follows the tale of 'ROCKET', who finally gets the chance to realize her dream and compete professionally, only to realize that the race to the finish line is peppered with many hurdles. What seems like an athletic contest turns into her personal battle for respect, honour, and even her very identity. Produced by Ronnie Screwvala, Neha Anand and Pranjal Khandhdiya, 'RASHMI ROCKET' is written by Nanda Periyasamy, Aniruddha Guha and Kanika Dhillon and also stars Supriya Pathak, Abhishek Banerjee, Priyanshu Painyuli and Supriya Pilgaonkar.

Says Archana Anand, Chief Business Officer, ZEE5



Global, "We are truly excited to bring yet another blockbuster movie to our global audiences

with Rashmi Rocket. Staying true to our commitment to bring stories that are rooted in reality, here is a narrative that addresses the gender divide in the world of athletics. We're happy to have collaborated with RSVP and Mango People Media to bring this story of grit and determination to life and take it to our audiences across the globe."

Says Taapsee Pannu, "This film is very differently special. I've always been approached when either the script or the director is ready to make the film but one line of this story fell in my lap in Chennai and then from there to it becoming a full-fledged film has been a feeling I haven't experienced with any other film before. Everyone was just so sure about the story from day 1 that it was never a tough job to convince any of the stakeholders to join hands and give their best for this film. Hence the result of this film will affect me a lot more than my other films. Also, I'm extremely proud of it."

Adds director Akarsh Khurana, "As a viewer, I've always been fond of courtroom dramas, mature romances, and sports films. As a storyteller, I've always been drawn to characters on journeys, both external and internal. This film gave me the unique and exciting opportunity to work on something that had all of these elements, with a fantastic ensemble of actors."

Honsla Rakh producer shares update on Shehnaaz Gill resuming shoot after Sidharth Shukla's death

Shehnaaz Gill, who is mourning the loss of her rumoured boyfriend Sidharth Shukla, has stayed away from the public eye after his death. She was supposed to shoot for a promotional song for her Punjabi film, Honsla Rakh, on September 15 but the producers pushed it due to the tragedy. She is expected to resume work on the film, which also stars Diljit Dosanjh, soon. Sidharth died on September 2 of a suspected heart attack. Shehnaaz was inconsolable at his funeral and has gone off the radar since.

Producer Diljit Thind told a leading daily, "We are waiting for her to recover and heal from the grave loss. We had originally planned to shoot the song on September 15 in London, but that couldn't happen because of obvious reasons. We will finalise a new

date soon and would want Shehnaaz to be a part of it, too, as she is an integral part of the film. I am in touch with her manager and hoping that she will contact us in a few days."



In 2019, Sidharth and Shehnaaz participated in Bigg Boss 13 together. They made headlines for their displays of affection on the show and outside of it but never admitted to being in a relationship. They said on several occasions, however, that they were like 'family' to each other. Talking to Hindustan Times,

former Bigg Boss contestant Pavitra Punia said that Sidharth and Shehnaaz's relationship was no less than that of a husband and wife. "Aaj main jab Shehnaaz ko dekhti hoon, toh rooh kaanp jaati hai (When I see Shehnaaz today, it shakes my very core. People dream of having a pure bond like they had.

'Anushka Sharma, Shilpa Shetty have changed things for all women out there':

Isha Koppikar



Actor Isha Koppikar believes that stars such as Anushka Sharma and Shilpa Shetty have broken the myth that a woman's career is over after marriage. Anushka is married to cricketer Virat Kohli and Shilpa to businessman Raj Kundra. Speaking to a leading daily, Isha said that the two have changed things 'so much' for all women. "Actresses like Shilpa Shetty and Anushka Sharma have changed things so much for every woman out there. I feel that eventually, we had to come out of the bubble that life will be over for women after marriage. All we are up to is doing things that really excite us and if in the process, we are inspiring others then that is great," she said.

Anushka and Virat got married in 2017. After that, she starred in movies such as Pari, Sanju, Sui Dhaaga and Zero. After the release of Zero in 2018, she took a long break from acting but has been active as a producer. Her Clean Slate Filmz banner has backed projects such as Paatal Lok and Bulbbul.

Shilpa and Raj got married in 2009. She stopped working in movies after that but appeared as a judge on reality shows such as Zara Nach Ke Dikha, Nach Baliye and Super Dancer. She recently made her acting comeback with Priyadarshan's Hungama 2. Isha had tied the knot with hotelier Timmy Narang in 2009. They are now parents to their six-year-old daughter Rianna. She has appeared in movies such as Don (2006), Darna Zaroori Hai (2006) and Ek Vivaah... Aisa Bhi (2008). She will be seen next in Ram Gopal Varma's web series Kadapa and the Tamil film Ayalaan. Speaking about the rise of OTT, Isha said in an interview with Hindustan Times, "The variation in content that we get to see is amazing. Moreover, we are in direct competition with the world and that has enforced us to go absolutely world-class, which we were always capable of. It is wonderful to see actors get their due on OTT. It's a great space and via OTT we get new audiences as well."

Rani Mukerji wraps Estonia schedule of Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway



Rani Mukerji, who finished filming Bunty Aur Babli 2 in September 2020, has wrapped a month-long first schedule of her next feature film, titled Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway. The first schedule was being filmed in Estonia. Directed by Ashima Chibber, Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway is produced by Monisha Advani, Madhu Bhojwani and Nikkhil Advani's Emmay Entertainment and Zee Studios.

RANI MUKERJI WRAPS UP 1ST SCHEDULE OF MRS CHATTERJEE VS NORWAY

It's a wrap for the Estonia schedule of Rani Mukerji-starrer Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway. Sharing the news of the schedule wrap, the official Twitter handle of Emmay

Entertainment tweeted, "It's a wrap in Estonia for #MrsChatterjeeVsNorway! Mapping this dynamic journey, and a big thank you to each and every one (sic)." Along with the tweet, Emmay Entertainment also shared a group photograph featuring Rani along with the crew of the film.

Mrs Chatterjee follows the journey of a mother who wages a battle against an entire country. According to a PTI report, keeping in mind the Covid-19 safety protocols, the entire cast and crew shot in a bio bubble with all necessary precautions. The final schedule of the film is expected to begin shooting in India soon. **ON THE WORK FRON FOR RANI**

MUKERJI

Rani Mukherji was last seen on the big screen in 2019 in Mardaani 2. The film was produced by Yash Raj Films. Rani has another Yash Raj project Bunty Aur Babli 2 in her kitty. Touted as a sequel to the 2005 film, Bunty Aur Babli, Bunty Aur Babli 2 stars Saif Ali Khan, Siddhant Chaturvedi and Sharvari Wagh, along with Rani. The film was gearing up to release on April 23, 2021. However, owing to the rising Covid-19 cases across the country and the fact that theatres have still not opened up in Maharashtra and several other Indian states, the makers have decided to postpone the release. A new release date is yet to be announced.

PM Modi meets Kamala Harris, says, 'her feat has inspired the entire world'

(SAI Bureau)- Prime Minister Narendra meeting with Vice President Kamala Harris at the



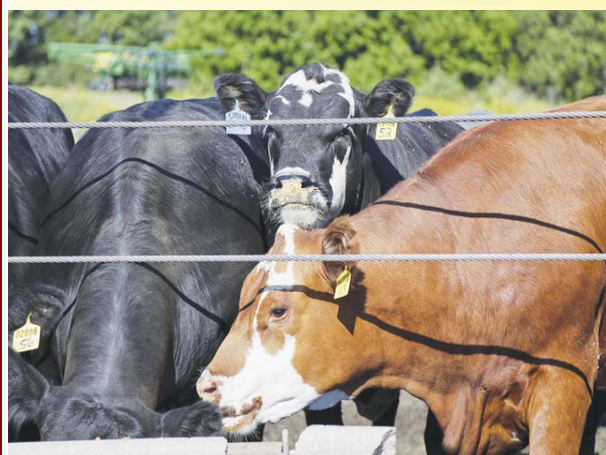
White House. During the meeting, the two leaders decided to further cement the Indo-US strategic partnership and discussed global issues of common interest, including threats to democracy, Afghanistan and the Indo-Pacific.

"Glad to have met @VP @KamalaHarris. Her feat has inspired the entire world. We talked about multiple subjects that will further cement the India-USA friendship, which is based on shared values and cultural linkages," PM Modi tweeted after meeting Harris. Earlier today, the Prime Minister kickstarted his engagements in Washington by

Modi Thursday described India and America as "natural partners" as he held the first in-person meeting with leading

(Contd on page 35)

America's meat supply is cheap and efficient. Covid-19 showed why that's a problem.



(SAI Bureau)- Johnathan Hladik was on his phone, calling one butcher after another, desperate to find a slaughterhouse that had space for a few of the Berkshire hogs that he raises on his family farm in eastern Nebraska.

It was spring 2020, the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the coronavirus was rolling through the country's massive slaughterhouses, where employees worked in crowded, indoor spaces at a time when protective gear like face masks was scarce.

(Contd on page 34)

33 people, including two minors, raped a 15-year-old in Maharashtra, India for 8 months



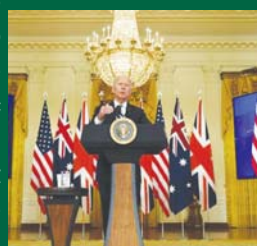
(SAI Bureau)-A 15-year-old schoolgirl has complained to police in Thane district that she was raped by 33 people including two minors at different places in Thane over the past eight months. Police have arrested 24 youths and detained the two minor boys.

"We have arrested a total of 26 people including two minors. Twenty-four of them were produced in a local court. Twenty-two of them were remanded in police custody until September 29, and the two minors were sent to a juvenile home," Sachin Gunjal, deputy commissioner of police (Zone 3), said. Police are looking for the rest of the accused, Gunjal said. A special investigation team (SIT) headed by a woman officer of the rank of assistant commissioner of police has been constituted to probe the case.

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US rules out adding India or Japan to security alliance with Australia and UK

(SAI Bureau)- The US has ruled out adding India or Japan to the new message the President also sent to (French President Emmanuel) Macron, that there is no one else who will be involved in security in the Indo-Pacific," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at her daily news conference on Wednesday. Psaki was responding to a question if countries like India and Japan whose leaders would be in Washington this week for the first in-person Quad Summit would be made part of the new security alliance. The Quad comprises India, the US, Japan and Australia. US President Joe



(Contd on page 35)

How media mogul Subhash Chandra managed to hold on to Zee



(SAI Bureau)-A70-year-old Indian media magnate was about to lose his crown jewel to a campaign by a U.S. fund manager. But within a week, a Japanese conglomerate, itself a

(Contd on page 34)