



The South Asian



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## OOPS! BANKS DID IT AGAIN

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broken enforcement  
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30 to 35

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# Insurance

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

**Thanavel Mathiazhaagan, 56, arrived in the UAE in 2000 through a recruitment agent on the promise of a job.**

(Insider Buearu)- An Indian expat in the UAE will finally be able to return home after two decades after he was granted a waiver of nearly Dh 750,000 (USD 204,195) in overstay fines, according to a media report. Thanavel Mathiazhaagan, 56, arrived in the UAE in 2000 through a recruitment agent on the promise of a job.

The agent, who also took Mr Mathiazhaagan's passport, later went missing and he had to illegally stay in the UAE to provide for his family in India by doing part-time jobs, the

Gulf News reported.

Mr Mathiazhaagan, who hails from Tamil Nadu, sought help from two social workers in the UAE to return home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The only documents he possessed was his employment visa entry permit and a copy of the last page of his passport, the report said.

AK Mahadevan and Chandra Prakash, who helped Mr Mathiazhaagan get an emergency certificate through the Indian embassy in Abu Dhabi,

said he had failed to get identity clearance from India during the pandemic as there was a mismatch in his father's name in documents back home and that shown in his passport.

Emergency certificate is a one-way travel document issued to Indians without a valid passport, to facilitate their return home, it said.

The duo said they approached the Indian embassy and the local departments in Mr Mathiazhaagan's village to rectify the mistake and process his documents, it said. "Indian



Ambassador to the UAE Pavan Kapoor was taken up with him," Mr Kapoor took special interest in solving this case after the issue by the Gulf News.

# Man Jailed For Killing Indian-Origin Son-In-Law In Singapore



(Insider Buearu)- A 72-year-old Chinese-origin businessman in Singapore was on Monday jailed for eight-and-a-half years for stabbing his Indian-origin son-in-law to death at a coffee shop in broad daylight following disputes over his handling of the family business and extra-marital affairs.

Tan Nam Seng pleaded guilty last month to a charge of culpable homicide not amounting to murder by stabbing 38-year-old Spencer Tuppani three years ago during a busy lunch hour in the central business district, according to a Channel News Asia report.

Justice Dedar Singh Gill said this was a "vicious and brazen killing" but noted the accused's major depressive disorder at the time, as well as his "fast-deteriorating" health, which the judge said weighed heavily on his mind, the report said.

Tuppani had made several business moves that Tan perceived as a ploy to cheat him of his company. They also lived in the same household, even after Tan's daughter discovered Tuppani's affair with another

woman and the couple was quarrelling frequently, it said.

On the day of the incident, July 10, 2017, Tan saw his son-in-law eating at a coffee shop. Tan retrieved a knife from the company's office at Cecil Court before approaching the younger man who was there with three friends, the report said.

The accused told Tuppani "you are too much" in Hokkien (a Chinese dialect), before stabbing him three times in quick succession and following the victim as he stumbled away and collapsed in front of an outlet, it said.

Tan stood over his son-in-law and stopped others from helping him, telling them to "let him die" and that "I wish to kill him", the report said, adding that before the police arrived, Tan kicked the younger man's face twice, before calling his daughter.

He said to her: "I can't sleep at night. I have done it. I have killed him. Don't cry. I am old already. I am not scared (of) going to jail."

The prosecution asked for 12 years' jail, saying that while Tan was suffering from a major

depressive disorder, there were "crucial" aggravating factors including the fact that it was "a revenge tragedy".

Tan exacted revenge on his son-in-law in a "brutal, public and unprovoked killing" in broad daylight, said Deputy Public Prosecutor Lim Jian Yi.

Defence lawyer Wee Pan Lee

asked for seven-and-a-half years' jail. He said Tan is a divorcee who received only primary school education, beginning work as a coolie for a transport contractor in his early teens.

He worked his way up to become a ferry clerk and later started his own shipping and transport cargo company at the age of 27.

At its peak, the group of companies employed more than a thousand people, and Tan intended to groom Tuppani to run the business with his daughters after retirement.

However, when Tuppani handled the sale of the business, Tan and his eldest daughter each received only 450,000 Singapore dollars (USD 3,30,990) instead of 1 million dollars.

"He used company funds to fund his own lavish lifestyle... for

expensive cars, luxury watches and the upkeep of (his) mistresses," said Wee.

Tan later discovered his daughter's marital woes with Tuppani, who had been "involved in a string of extramarital affairs".



## 1 in 7 children faces hunger.

There's more than enough food in America for every child who struggles with hunger. Help get kids the food they need by supporting Feeding America, the nationwide network of food banks. Together, we can solve hunger™. Join us at [FeedingAmerica.org](https://www.FeedingAmerica.org)



# "Are You Taliban?": Sikh Taxi Driver Assaulted By Passengers In UK

**Vaneet Singh, 41, said that a group of four men slapped and shoved him, and asked "are you Taliban" after he received them from the Grosvenor Casino in Reading, Berkshire, in the early hours of Sunday.**

(Insider Buearu)- An India-born Sikh taxi driver was subjected to verbal and physical abuse by passengers he drove from a casino in the city of Reading in south-east England, prompting a UK police force to launch an investigation.

Vaneet Singh, 41, said that a group of four men slapped and shoved him, and asked "are you Taliban" after he received them from the Grosvenor Casino in Reading, Berkshire, in the early hours of Sunday.

One of the four also tried to remove his turban.

"It was horrible, really

frightening, I will never work the nightshift again. I'm still very scared," he told the BBC.

Thames Valley Police are appealing for witnesses as they investigate the report of an assault.

Vaneet Singh, who worked as a music teacher at a school in Slough, Berkshire, turned to taxi driving after his teaching job was stalled during the coronavirus pandemic.

The musician, who lives in Tilehurst with his wife and three children, said he has been left shaken up by the assault and will be avoiding night shifts.

"It's very bad experience. It's my religion so I respect my turban," he said.

One of the four passengers, all described as white, pulled at his turban as he was driving and slapped him on the head, while others kicked and punched the back of the driver's seat.

He says he tried to explain the religious significance of the turban to them and asked them not to touch it.

He recalled the passengers being well behaved at the start of the journey but "totally changed" as it went on.

Vaneet Singh, who is suffering



from aches and pains since the incident, is convinced the attack was of a racist nature and believes he was a victim of hate

crime.

Thames Valley Police are yet to confirm their line of inquiry in the assault case.

## Pakistan Targeting Indian Professionals Working In Afghanistan: Centre



(Insider Buearu)- India on Monday said Pakistan was targeting Indian professionals working in Afghanistan through a variety of ways and several of them engaged in various development projects have been attacked and kidnapped over the past 12 years.

Minister of State for External

Affairs V Muraleedharan, replying to a question in Lok Sabha, said Pakistan attempted to designate four Indian nationals, who had previously worked in Afghanistan, as terrorists under UN Security Council resolution 1267.

"However, the 1267 Sanctions Committee, based on its internal procedures, has not approved the

**V Muraleedharan said Pakistan attempted to designate four Indian nationals, who had previously worked in Afghanistan, as terrorists under UN Security Council resolution 1267.**

request," he said.

V Muraleedharan said Pakistan has been targeting Indian professionals working in Afghanistan in a variety of ways. "Several Indians working in Afghanistan on various development projects have been attacked and kidnapped over the past 12 years. With the assistance of the government of Afghanistan, India has been able to secure the release of many Indians from captivity," he said.

Following India's persistent efforts, the minister added that there is enhanced concern

globally over terrorism emanating from Pakistan, including the activities by terrorist entities such as Jamaat-ud Dawa (JuD), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad and Hizbul Mujahideen.

"The international community strongly condemned the cross-border terrorist attack in Pulwama in February 2019. Several countries have called upon Pakistan to not allow its territory to be used for terrorism in any manner," he said.

V Muraleedharan said many terrorist entities and individuals,

who find shelter in Pakistan and are engaged in terror activities against India, have been proscribed by the United Nations (UN), the European Union and other countries.

"On May 1, 2019, the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee designated Masood Azhar, the leader of JeM, as a UN proscribed terrorist. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) at its plenary in June 2018, notified Pakistan in the 'Grey List' due to continuing terror financing related concerns," he said.

## Indian Jailed For 10 Years For Killing Wife Over Affair Suspicion In Singapore: Report



A 53-year-old Indian-origin man, who is suffering from delusional disorder, was on Friday

sentenced to 10 years of jail for stabbing his wife to death as he suspected her of having an

extramarital affair, a media report said.

Krishnan Raju, a self-employed bus driver ferrying factory workers and tourists, married Raithena Vaithena Samy when she was 17 and was "very possessive of her" throughout the relationship of 28 years, Channel News Asia reported.

Mr Raju suffered from delusional disorder-- a belief or altered reality that is persistently held despite evidence or agreement to the contrary, generally in

reference to a mental disorder-- and had developed trust issues. He started suspecting her of having an extramarital affair and often confronted her over the issue. In November 2016 Krishnan stabbed his wife at their Loyang Gardens condominium residence and fled to his brother's place in Johor Bahru in Peninsula Malaysia, the report said. Mr Krishnan pleaded guilty in July to a charge of culpable homicide for killing his wife. He was originally charged with murder for

the killing, in which he inflicted 13 stab wounds on his wife, five of which were on the chest. During the trial, the prosecution had asked for 12 years' jail while the defence asked for a maximum of eight. The Judge, Justice Hoo Sheau Peng, agreed with the prosecution psychiatrist's diagnosis that Krishnan was suffering from acute alcohol intoxication at the time, which contributed to the offending and impaired his attention or memory.



# Over 15,000 Families In US Helped By Group Of Indian-Americans Amid Covid



(Insider Buearu)- Amid the coronavirus pandemic, an initiative by the Indian American community in the Washington DC metro area, United States, to provide groceries and food has helped over 15,000 families since May.

For more than six months now, almost 250 cars lined up the

parking lots of designated churches and schools for a drive-thru food giveaway as part of an initiative to help those who are still struggling because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We have supplied groceries to at least 15,000 families in the area. And that last for about three to four days for people, a

***For more than six months now, almost 250 cars lined up the parking lots of designated churches and schools for a drive-thru food giveaway as part of an initiative to help those who are still struggling because of the coronavirus pandemic.***

family of four ...This was an effort on the part of the Indian-American community to tell people that our community is a giving community. We are here to help them in these tough times," Dr Suresh Gupta, a leading member of the Indian American community told ANI. Being able to do their part to help those in need "fills the volunteers with a great sense of accomplishment", Dr Gupta said. The food drive was in partnership with several members of the Indian American community, the local church and the county administration in the Washington DC metro area.

"Everyone is eager to help. In fact, many times we have to hold back the volunteers who want to come here and participate," said Rajiv Jain, an Indian American who has been volunteering.

About 250 plus families in their cars, line up-almost bumper to bumper on a Sunday morning to receive donated food items like fresh produce and packaged food -- a necessity for some in poverty or anyone else in search of a meal amid COVID - 19. People from different faiths show up early and lined up for the drive to begin.

"We are just so grateful that

you're helping the community," a couple thanked the volunteers. "This food drive is very important to us, it means a lot to my family, stay blessed," another overwhelmed lady thanks the volunteers while picking her supplies. The Indian American community shares information about the distribution through local NGO's, food banks and even reaches out to places of worship in the community to get the word out. The community plans to have their next drive on October 2 to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary followed by a food drive during Diwali.

## Deeply Concerned About India-China Border Issue, Says US Congressman

***Over the past few months, top American lawmakers have expressed their concerns over blatant Chinese incursions.***

(Insider Buearu)- An Indian-American Congressman has urged China to end its military provocations of India and pursue a diplomatic resolution to the tense border standoff in Ladakh. Raja Krishnamoorthi said this following a classified briefing on the issue by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, of which he is the first and only Indian-American member. The committee's meeting was the first ever on the

issue.

"I am deeply concerned about this issue, which is why I authored a bipartisan resolution overwhelmingly approved by the House urging China to end its military provocations of India and to pursue a diplomatic resolution," Mr Krishnamoorthi said.

"I will continue to closely monitor this dispute until it is fully resolved," he said.

Earlier Thursday, Lisa Curtis,

deputy assistant to the US president, told a top American think-tank the US is encouraged by India's strong yet responsible approach to the Chinese aggression. "While always seeking to de-escalate through diplomatic means, India also demonstrated military and economic resolve," she said.

"From a bilateral perspective, China's recent actions on Line of Actual Control has further reinforced the importance of the



US-India strategic partnership, and our resolve to strengthen the US-India ties as a bulwark against Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific," she said.

"Throughout this crisis, the United States has provided

strong and unambiguous support for India, and our cooperation has grown closer," Curtis said.

Over the past few months, top American lawmakers have expressed their concerns over blatant Chinese incursions.

## \$9,000 Fine For Singapore Manager For Confining 3 Indians For 40 Days



(Insider Buearu)- A company manager in Singapore was fined Singapore dollars 9,000 on Thursday for wrongfully confining three Indian nationals working for him in a room for around 40 days amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

The workers were first confined from May 12 to 15, and then over a five-week stretch, from May 19 to June 26, The Straits Times reported.

Shaun Pang Tong Heng had earlier pleaded guilty to three

***The workers were first confined from May 12 to 15, and then over a five-week stretch, from May 19 to June 26, The Straits Times reported.***

counts of wrongful confinement. The Indian workers are Ganesan Pandi, Pandiyan Jakakanthan and Muthuraj Thangaraj. Three other similar charges involving the same men were considered during the sentencing, the report said.

Lawyer Md Noor E Adenaan, who represented the 41-year-old Singaporean, told District Judge Prem Raj that his client is remorseful.

Shaun Pang Tong Heng saw the

men as "troublemakers".

The lawyer said that during the outbreak, Ganesan Pandi and Pandiyan Jakakanthan had left their place of residence in Tuas to buy alcohol despite being housed near a COVID-19 cluster.

Pandiyan Jakakanthan also drove a company lorry without a licence. As for Thangaraj, the lawyer said, he was previously caught for drink driving.

The court heard that the room the trio were confined in had clean

beds, a bathroom, as well as Wi-Fi connection. They were also given meals and ample water.

But Deputy Public Prosecutor Eric Hu said it was no excuse for the manager to take matters into his own hands.

Before handing out the sentence, the judge said the manager should have notified the police about the workers. For each count of wrongful confinement, an offender can be jailed for up to three years and fined.



# Government of India, Ministry of Health & Welfare new guidelines for new arrivals in India

(Press Release) New Delhi: (in supersession of guidelines issued on the subject dated 24th May 2020) (to be operational from 00.01 Hrs, 8th August 2020)

## Before Planning for Travel:

- All travelers should submit self-declaration form on the online portal ([www.newdelhiairport.in](http://www.newdelhiairport.in)) at least 72 hours before the scheduled travel.
- They should also give an undertaking on the portal that they would undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days i.e. 7 days paid institutional quarantine at their own cost, followed by 7 days isolation at home with self-monitoring of health.
- Only for compelling reasons/ cases of human distress such as pregnancy, death in family, serious illness and parent(s) with children of the age of 10 years or below, home quarantine may be permitted for 14 days.
- If they wish to seek such exemption under para (iii) above, they shall apply to the online portal ([www.newdelhiairport.in](http://www.newdelhiairport.in)) at least 72 hours before boarding. The decision taken by the government as communicated on the online portal will be final.
- Travelers may also seek exemption from institutional quarantine by submitting a negative RT-PCR test report on arrival. This test should have been conducted within 96 hrs prior to undertaking the journey. The test report should be uploaded on the portal for consideration. Each passenger shall also submit a declaration with respect to authenticity of the report and will be liable for criminal prosecution, if found otherwise. The test report could also be produced upon arrival at the point of entry airport in India.

## Before Boarding

- Dos and Don'ts shall be provided along with ticket to the travelers by the agencies concerned.
- All passengers shall be advised to download

Arogya Setu app on their mobile devices.

- At the time of boarding the flight/ ship, only asymptomatic travelers will be allowed to board after thermal screening.
- Passengers arriving through the land borders will also have to undergo the same protocol as above, and only those who are asymptomatic will be enabled to cross the border into India.
- Suitable precautionary measures such as environmental sanitation and disinfection shall be ensured at the airports.
- During boarding and at the airports, all possible measures to ensure social distancing to be ensured

## During Travel

- Travelers who had not filled in self-declaration form on the portal shall fill the same in duplicate in the flight/ship and a copy of the same will be given to Health and Immigration officials present at the airport/ seaport/ landport. Alternatively, such travelers may submit self-declaration form on the online portal at arriving airport/ seaport/ landport as per the directions of the concerned authorities, if such facility is available.
- Suitable announcement about COVID-19 including precautionary measures to be followed shall be made at airports/port and in flights/ships and during transit.
- While on board the flight/ ship, required precautions such as wearing of masks, environmental hygiene, respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene etc. are to be observed by airline/ ship staff, crew and all passengers.

## On arrival

- Deboarding should be done ensuring social distancing.
- Thermal screening would be carried out in respect of all the passengers by the Health officials present

at the airport/ seaport/ landport. The self-declaration form filled online shall be shown (or a copy of physical self-declaration form to be submitted) to the airport health staff.

- The passengers found to be symptomatic during screening shall be immediately isolated and taken to medical facility as per health protocol.
- Post thermal screening, the passengers who have been exempted from institutional quarantine (decision as indicated on the online portal in advance) will show the same to the respective State Counters on their cell phones/other mode before being allowed home quarantine for 14 days.
- The remaining passengers shall be taken to suitable institutional quarantine facilities, to be arranged by the respective State/ UT Governments.
- These passengers shall be kept under institutional quarantine for a minimum period of 7 days. They shall be tested as per ICMR protocol available at <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/Revisedtestingguidelines.pdf>

If they test positive, they shall be assessed clinically.

- If they are assessed as asymptomatic / pre-symptomatic/ very mild cases, they will be allowed home isolation or isolated in the Covid Care Centre (both public & private facilities) as appropriate.
- Those having mild/ moderate/ severe symptoms will be admitted to dedicated Covid Health facilities and managed accordingly.

If found negative, they shall be advised to further isolate themselves at home and self-monitor their health for 7 days.

- In case, any symptoms develop they shall inform the district surveillance officer or the state/national call center (1075).

**NOTE:** States can develop their own protocol with regards to quarantine and isolation as per their assessment post arrival of passengers in the state concerned.

## Queens Contractor and his Business plead guilty to violating prevailing wage labor laws

(Press Release) New York :Glen Oaks Resident and Laser Electrical Cheated Employees Despite Securing City Contracts That Required Prevailing Wage for Workers; Defendant and Business Will Repay Cheated Personnel as Part of Plea Deal

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, joined by the New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Margaret Garnett, announced today that Jagdeep Deol, 36, and his business Laser Electrical Contracting Inc. have pleaded guilty to a labor law violation on paying a prevailing wage to workers. The business owner pocketed more than \$1.5 million that should have gone to employees between 2014 and 2018. The defendant secured City contracts for his company worth millions of dollars. Any company doing business with the City is required to pay its workers union wages or the equivalent, if the

employees are not union members. District Attorney Katz said, "Earlier this year I created the Housing and Worker Protection Bureau to combat this kind of malfeasance. When an employee puts in a day's work, they deserve to be paid the prevailing wage. In this instance, the defendant paid his employees less than what was required and siphoned the difference into his own pocket. This is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in Queens County. I would like to thank the DOI Commissioner and her team for their hard work investigating this case."

DOI Commissioner Garnett said, "Earning a prevailing wage is vital for so many construction employees working on public works projects and the fair payment of that wage is protected by law. Today's guilty pleas underscore the seriousness of these crimes -- that willingly

cheating hard working employees out of more than a million dollars in salaries and benefits will result in vigorous investigation and prosecution, and ultimately, the full repayment of funds to those who were victimized. DOI thanks the Queens District Attorney's Office for its partnership in this case and its commitment to making these workers whole."

According to the charges, the defendant played out a scheme commonly referred to as a prevailing wage scam. Deol's company won contracts with the New York City School Construction Authority and the New York City Department of Education. With any City agency, company's doing City projects must pay a prevailing wage to its employees. For approximately four years, however, this defendant swindled 11 employees. He paid them substantially less and took the remainder of the funds for himself.

Deol, of 262nd Street in the Glen Oaks neighborhood of Queens, pleaded guilty today to a misdemeanor violation of the prevailing wage New York State labor law before Queens Supreme Court Justice Steven Paynter.

On behalf of his company, the defendant pleaded guilty to a felony failure to pay a prevailing wage. As part of the negotiated plea, Deol will be required to make full restitution and will also reimburse the City approximately \$160,000 to cover the cost of the investigation. Moments after pleading guilty, Justice Paynter granted the defendant a conditional discharge. However, if Deol does not pay the promised restitution, he could face jail time.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Robert Magrino of the New York City Police Department's Asset Forfeiture Unit, under the supervision of Sergeant Adam Bruno, Lieutenant Alfred Batelli,

and under the overall supervision of Assistant Chief Christopher McCormack, Commanding Officer-Criminal Enterprise Division. The investigation was also conducted by the New York City Department of Investigation's Office of the Inspector General for the New York City School Construction Authority's Deputy Counsel Celeste Sharpe, Investigative Accountant Raymond Dowd, Investigator Leonard Rein, Investigative Manager Charles Shevlin, Assistant Inspector General Nicholas Scicutella, under the supervision of Inspector General Felice Sontupe. DOI would like to thank the New York City School Construction Authority for their cooperation and assistance, especially the Labor Law Compliance Unit, and its Senior Director, Deborah Seidenberg, Investigative Accountant Emilio Serrano and Investigators Agnes Collazo and Adam Gilyard.



# Bengal CM Mamata inaugurates green projects to be built in collaboration with EU countries

**The memorandum of understanding (MoU) for these projects was signed at the global business summit held at the beach town of Digha in East Midnapore in December 2019.**

(News Agencies)- West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday virtually inaugurated two major green projects worth around Rs 1226 crore to be built by European Union countries in Kolkata and East Midnapore district.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) for these projects were signed at the global business summit held at the beach town of Digha in East Midnapore in December 2019. The ambassadors of Italy, Netherlands and the European Union and the deputy ambassador of Germany took part in the virtual inauguration. One project involves waste management and sustainable development at the Kolkata Leather Complex at Bantala in the eastern outskirts of the city. It involves foreign investment worth three million Euros (around

Rs 26 crore), said the chief minister and will be built in collaboration with Dutch partners. The second is a solar power project worth Rs 1200 crore to be set up in East Midnapore by a German company. The West Bengal government will invest Rs 200 crore in the project. Once complete, it will generate 350 million units of power annually. "I am happy to announce that the projects are being inaugurated within six months of signing the MoU. Where there is a will there is a way. The leather complex project will create five lakh jobs and help medium, small and micro enterprises grow. Several leather companies from other states have also set up units at Bantala," said Banerjee. State finance minister Amit Mitra said the solar power project will save the climate from 50,000 tons of carbon emission every year.

"Sustainability is the way to go forward in future. We look forward to friends and partners. India is the largest exporter of leather goods in the world and Europe is the largest market," said Ugo Astuto, the EU ambassador to India.

Addressing Banerjee, Italian ambassador to India Vincenzo de Luca said, "Without your leadership we could not have promoted our objective in West Bengal and could not have been able to share our expertise and technology. The challenge is to promote green energy in India and Europe."

Marten van den Berg, the ambassador of Netherlands, said, "We look forward to work internationally with West Bengal, Italy, Germany and European Union."

For Banerjee, who has been accused on numerous



occasions by the opposition parties of failing to bring in foreign investment despite her trips to many countries since 2011, Wednesday's development could help the Trinamool Congress politically in the run-up to the assembly polls to be held in 2021. Recently, even governor Jagdeep Dhankhar had taken up the issue and sought details of the outcome of the Global Business Summit that the state government holds every year.

"WORRISOME (ELOQUENT) SILENCE of otherwise vocal FM @MamataOfficial on details of Bengal Global Business Summit speaks

volumes. Baffling- Why not give details of claimed 'resounding success' investment of over Rs 12.30 lakh crores investment! Is there nothing to showcase!" Dhankhar tweeted on August 31.

"Surely there should be accountability of spending crores on 'futile' extravaganza @MamataOfficial. Corruption by way of favoritism and patronage calls for probe. My worst fear- was it 'dream merchant' affair! Just a PR exercise! Awaiting CM response!" he said in another tweet, tagging the chief minister.

## Programme code violation by Sudarshan TV, issued show cause notice, Centre tells SC

**A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud, Indu Malhotra and K M Joseph was informed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that Sudarshan TV has to give reply to the show cause notice by September 28, failing which an ex parte decision will be taken.**

(News Agencies)-The Centre informed the Supreme Court on Wednesday that it has prima facie found violation of the programme code by Sudarshan TV's 'Bindas Bol' show and has issued a notice to the channel. The top court said that the steps taken by the government in pursuance to the show cause notice against the channel will be subject to the orders of the court. A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud, Indu Malhotra and K M Joseph was informed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that Sudarshan TV has to give reply to the show cause notice by September 28, failing which an ex parte decision will be taken. "During the course of the hearing today, Tushar Mehta, Solicitor General of India stated that the Central Government has, in exercise of the power conferred upon it by sub-section (3) of Section 20 of the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act 1995, issued a notice to show cause dated September 23, to 'Sudarshan

News'," the bench said in its order. It said that since the notice is stated to be 'returnable' on September 28, Mehta has requested the Court to defer the hearing in the present case so as to enable the central government to take a considered view of the matter.

Since the notice has been issued today, the hearing is deferred to October 5, the court said. It added: "The notice shall be dealt with in accordance with law and the Central Government shall submit a report to this Court indicating the outcome of the notice." "Since the notice has been issued during the pendency of these proceedings, further steps in pursuance of the notice to show cause shall be subject to the result of the present proceedings and to such orders as may be passed by this Court." The top court also said that its interim order of September 15, 2020 (injunction the telecast of remaining episodes of the programme) shall continue to

remain in operation pending further orders. During the brief hearing, Mehta said that the four page notice to the channel has sought an explanation on various points regarding violation of the programme code and why action should not be taken against it. The detailed notice under Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995 has been issued today itself, showing facts that are, according to the government, prima facie not in accordance with the programme code, he said. The bench observed that if the case wasn't heard by the court then all episodes would have been aired by now. At the outset, it asked intervenors in the matter to file written submissions, if any. On September 21, the top court had pondered over the nature and extent of its order regulating 'Bindas Bol' programme on alleged infiltration of Muslims in bureaucracy saying it did not want to "curtail" freedom of speech as the programme has "public interest" involved on issues of "foreign funding" and



"reservation". The apex court, which has already imposed the pre-telecast ban on episodes of 'UPSC Jihad' on a plea raising grievances against it on grounds including hate speech, was irked over the fact that the channel, in his affidavit, has named one English news Channel for running two shows on Hindu terror earlier. "Why have you said about the programmes (of the English news channel)? Who asked about your opinion about the programmes," it had said. Lawyer Vishnu Shankar Jain, appearing for Editor-in-Chief Suresh Chavhanke, had said that his affidavit contained reference of the English Channel and their programmes on Hindu terror as he was asked earlier as to why the 'UPSC Jihad' episodes have "shown Muslim men in skull caps

and wearing greens". The bench then said: "Does this mean that every time, the judges asked questions you will shoot your mouth with your views? If that is the case then judges will stop asking questions. You are not supposed to file affidavits on all the questions which judges ask. Judges ask questions to elicit a better response." On being told by the petitioners that the episodes have violated the programme code under cable TV rules, the top court pondered over the extent of control and curb which can be imposed by it through its orders. "This programme ('Bindas Bol') has public interest involved on (issues of) foreign funding or on reservation. If we are to issue injunction (stay) then what kind of injunction will be like, whether it should be a blanket injunction.



# Scribe Prakash Swamy honored on PM Modi's birthday

(News Agencies)- Distribution of provision bags to 250 people, giving away Prime Minister's Ayushman Bharat Yojana medical insurance policies to 50 needy persons and honoring three eminent personalities with Narendra Modi Lifetime Achievement awards marked the 70th birthday celebrations of the Prime Minister organized by Muslim Rashtriya Manch at TN Rajarathinam Auditorium, Adyar in Chennai on Wednesday.

MN Raja, vice president of Tamil Nadu BJP, Dolphin Sridharan, State Secretary of BJP and Paul Kanakaraj, president of Advocates wing of the party presented the Modi Lifetime Achievement Awards to veteran Tamil actor Radha Ravi, senior journalist Prakash M Swamy and broadcast journalist Jaya Krishnan of Win TV.

Prakash Swamy, a veteran



journalist, served as UN Correspondent for 20 years before moving back to India. He served as a core committee member of Madison Square Garden Prime Minister Modi

reception committee to welcome Modi to New York in 2014. He was also assigned to help conduct AR Rahman's concert at the UN on behalf of India in the year 2016.

Addressing the gathering, Radha Ravi said most of the Muslims in India support Modi for his far reaching progressive measures. Tamil Nadu will witness a Modi wave in the

2021 Assembly elections. He regretted that some film personalities stir up unnecessary issues to be in the limelight knowing very well that there is no support from the masses for their cause.

Dolphin Sridharan and MN Raja congratulated the Muslim Rashtriya Manch, a wing of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, for organizing events to promote the welfare schemes of Modi among the masses in Tamil Nadu.

Ms. Fathima Ali, State President of Muslim Rashtriya Manch in her welcome address said several Muslim youth have been attracted by Modi and are joining the organization in large numbers. She said the awardees were chosen for their contribution to nationalism and promoting unity in diversity in their chosen field.

## 'Modi govt committed to farmers' welfare': Smriti Irani slams Opposition for protesting against farm bills



(News Agencies)- "It is clear that the Modi government is committed to farmers' welfare. We have to understand that when the government says something in the Parliament, it is a sovereign promise to people of the nation," Irani was quoted as saying by news agency ANI.

The Upper House of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) on Sunday cleared two key agriculture reform bills amid protests and uproar by Opposition parties. The Opposition, led by Congress, boycotted Parliament on Tuesday after Centre refused to accept its demand for withdrawal of the bills. Recalling the Swaminathan Report, Irani took a dig at the Congress and applauded Modi government for implementing the recommendations made in the report and giving 1.5 times higher minimum support price (MSP) to farmers.

"Congress in its 10 years in power didn't implement the Swaminathan Report. Modi government implemented the report and gave 1.5 times higher MSP. Under Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme, more than Rs 90,000 crore was transferred into the accounts of more than 10 crore farmers," Irani said, as quoted by ANI.

Irani also slammed the Opposition for standing against the farm bills. "The bills allow the farmers to trade their produce freely, secures the farmers' land and ensures that

traders have to mandatorily pay farmers within maximum three days. Then why is the Opposition opposing these bills?" she added.

The Opposition has, meanwhile, decided to press for the withdrawal of the bills. Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad met President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday, urging him to not sign the bills. The Congress party has also decided to launch a nationwide protest from Thursday demanding that the bills should be taken back by the government.

## Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia hospitalised due to Covid-19

**The 48-year-old Aam Aadmi Party leader has been admitted to the state-run LNJP Hospital.**

(News Agencies)- Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who had tested positive for novel coronavirus on September 14, has been hospitalised on Wednesday, news agency PTI reported.

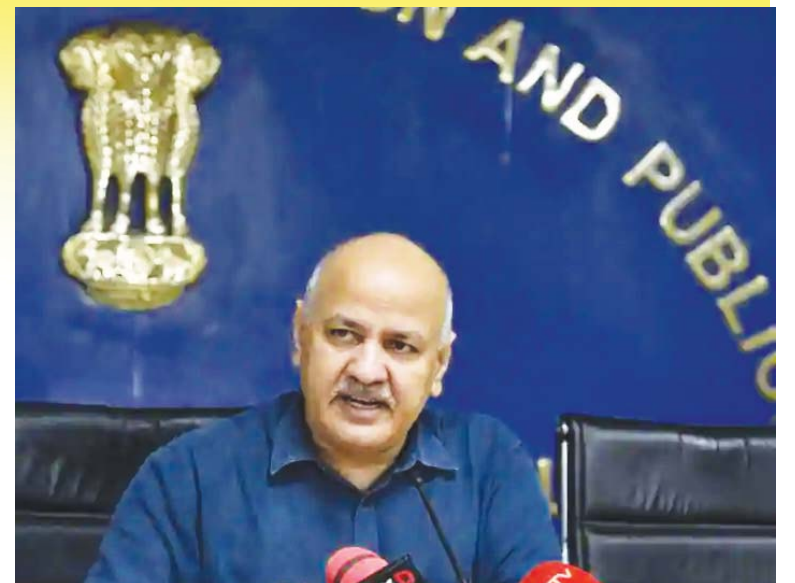
The 48-year-old Aam Aadmi Party leader has been admitted to the state-run LNJP Hospital.

Sisodia had tested positive for Covid-19 and was being treated for the viral contagion in home isolation.

After testing positive, Sisodia had confirmed

on Twitter and said, "Had got my COVID-19 test done after I had a mild fever. The report has come positive. I have gone into self-isolation. As of now, I have no fever or any other issue. I am fine. By your blessings, I will recover fully and return to work soon."

Sisodia is the second minister in the Delhi government to have tested positive for the viral infection. Earlier, Delhi's health minister Satyendra Jain had tested positive for Covid-19.





## CBI books BSF official, 3 traders for cattle smuggling at Indo- Bangladesh border

**The agency on Wednesday conducted raids at 15 places in several cities including Delhi, Kolkata, Siliguri, Murshidabad, Ghaziabad, Amritsar and Raipur after filing a case against a BSF Commandant - Satish Kumar and three traders - Mohammad Enamul Haque, Anarul SK and Mohammad Golam Mostafa.**

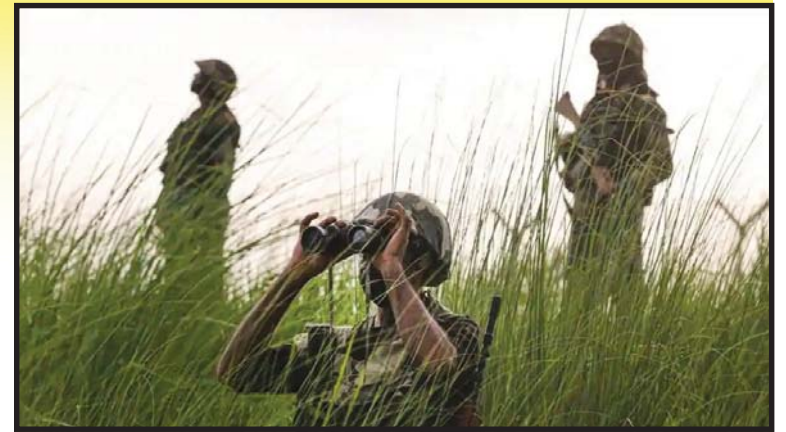
(News Agencies) - An investigation conducted by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the alleged cattle smuggling at Indo-Bangladesh border has revealed that the Border Security Force (BSF) and Customs Department takes play an active role in the illegal trade for which huge bribes are paid. The agency on Wednesday conducted raids at 15 places in several cities including Delhi, Kolkata, Siliguri, Murshidabad, Ghaziabad, Amritsar and Raipur after filing a case against a BSF Commandant - Satish Kumar and three traders - Mohammad Enamul Haque, Anarul SK and Mohammad Golam Mostafa. Interestingly, Enamul Haque was also involved in bribing another BSF Commandant Jibu D Mathew, who was arrested by

CBI in January 2018. It was alleged that Enamul had paid Rs 50 lakh to Mathew for letting the illegal cattle smuggling trade run smoothly at the border. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had also raided Enamul's premises in January this year. Based on the 2018 probe, CBI had launched a preliminary enquiry to investigate a larger conspiracy as well as role played by Kumar. The agency decided to register an FIR on Monday, which not only indicts Kumar but the border guarding force at large. The FIR states - "The enquiry revealed that cattle from India to Bangladesh across the International Border of these two countries are sent in large numbers not through ports of trade but illegally by paying bribes to the BSF personnel

responsible to prevent cross border movement of men and property, safeguarding interests of India".

Citing alleged bribe paid to Satish Kumar, CBI FIR says when the Commandant was posted in 36th battalion of BSF at Malda, West Bengal between December 2015 and April 2017, more than 20,000 cows were seized by the BSF before they could be transported across the border to Bangladesh. However, BSF didn't seize any vehicle carrying these animals or arrest the smugglers.

"Further, due to close nexus between the BSF and Custom officials with traders like Enamul Haque, Anarul and Golam Mostafa, the seizure list of such seized cattle was prepared arbitrarily categorizing the breed



and size of animals with an intention to reduce the upset price of the cattle during auctions," said CBI FIR.

Describing the role played by BSF and Customs after the seizure, CBI FIR says that these cattle were auctioned immediately (within 24 hours of seizure) with the help of nearest Customs station i.e. Jangipur, Murshidabad. "Since the cattle were shown mostly small in size/ common breed in the seizure memo of BSF, the auction value of such cattle were reduced

which were then procured at a considerable lower price by the above named traders due to their unholy nexus with the officials of Customs department".

The agency further alleged that Enamul Haque used to pay Rs 2,000 per cattle to BSF officials and Rs 500 to concerned Customs officials. "Besides, Customs' officials used to take 10% of the auction price as bribe from successful bidders like Enamul Haque, Golam Mostafa and Anarul SK etc," CBI FIR adds.

## Concerned over tar balls sully beaches, Goa writes to Centre



(News Agencies) -The Goa government has written to Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar seeking a solution to the recurring problem

of tar balls that wash ashore before as well as after the monsoon.

State environment minister Nilesh Cabral said that he has

sent a copy of a study on the sources of tar balls in Goa to the Union minister and that "discussions are in progress".

"We have tracked down the source of these tar balls after studying the phenomenon. We have written to the MoEF about the matter. The Central ministry will now study our findings before taking measures to address the issue which we have raised," Cabral said.

In 2013, a study by the National Institute of Oceanography had conducted

a study on the source of the tar balls that wash ashore on beaches of Goa, sully the water and the sand and coating it with a slimy coating that makes it unsafe to bathe in the sea. The studies had said that the source of the tar balls was from passing tankers that wash their tanks en route between the Middle East and Southeast Asia or from accidental oil spills. A subsequent study in 2016 found that the tar balls that washed ashore in late May were from

Bombay High, but the ones seen in August-September after the monsoon were from the tankers on the high seas. The soft and sticky tar balls are a huge deterrent to tourists visiting the beach and threaten the footfalls at beachside businesses. Tar ball deposition along the West Coast of India (WCI) is a common phenomenon during the southwest monsoon season, particularly along the coast of Goa and Gujarat, and it is a major concern to the stakeholders especially tourism stakeholders.

## Elephant electrocuted in Chhattisgarh, 9th death in last four months

A wild elephant got electrocuted in Chhattisgarh after coming in contact with a live electrical wire in Dharamjaigarh forest division of Raigarh district on Wednesday.

The elephant's carcass was recovered from a farm at Medharmar village, a senior forest official said.

The owner of the farm had laid live wires for running an electric borewell which the elephant ran into and was killed. The pachyderm's body has been sent for post-mortem.

This is the ninth elephant death in the state in the last four months.

In June, six elephants died in four districts of the state. While the carcasses of two tuskers were recovered from the Pratappur forest range in Surajpur district, another elephant was found dead in neighbouring Balrampur district. Two elephants were electrocuted in Dharamjaigarh under Raigarh district and a calf died after getting stuck in a marshland in Dhamtari district.

One elephant died in July in Jashpur district of the state.

Following the fatalities, the state forest department in July issued orders to divisional forest officer (DFO) of Dharamjaigarh in

Raigarh district, where maximum elephants have been electrocuted in the last ten years, to take necessary steps to contain such incidents.

The order said the forest department should ensure that the 11 KV electric lines, which have been instrumental in causing the deaths, should be 7.5 meters above the ground-level and insulated electric wires were used in these areas.

The department has also directed the forest officers to coordinate with Chhattisgarh state power corporation to find out each and every illegal connection or live wire in these areas frequented by



the elephants. In the last decade, the state has recorded an increase in its wildlife population including elephants, whose number rose from 225 to 290, as per the state forest department.

North Chhattisgarh is home to around 240 wild elephants, which roam in plains of the state. Several reports of human-elephant conflicts surfaced in the last few years in the region.



# Presidential debates will showcase Trump strengths and Biden weaknesses

## Trump has done more for the American people in 48 months than Biden has done in 48 years

The stakes couldn't be higher at the first presidential candidate debate in Cleveland Tuesday, moderated by Chris Wallace of Fox News. Due to limits on traditional campaigning because of the Chinese coronavirus, the presidential and vice-presidential debates this fall will be the most pivotal in American history.

With the recent death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the already tumultuous election campaign now heads into uncharted territory as we approach Election Day on Nov. 3. President Trump has announced he will nominate a Ginsburg successor on Saturday. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has said the Senate will hold a confirmation vote on the nominee before Election Day.

Obstructionist Democrats have rallied in opposition to the president's constitutional duty to fill the seat on the high court that was held by Ginsburg. They are threatening unhinged and irresponsible measures in response, such as packing the Supreme Court with liberals next year or even impeaching President Trump to derail the confirmation process for a new justice.

The Supreme Court showdown will be the central issue in the lead-up to the election and will certainly play a prominent role when Trump and Democratic presidential nominee and former vice president Joe Biden take the stage in Tuesday's debate.

It's indisputable that it is President Trump's obligation as chief executive to fill Supreme Court vacancies and it's the Senate's job to advise and consent on judicial nominations.

President Trump has pledged to nominate a highly qualified woman as Justice Ginsburg's replacement, and because of his decisive leadership it appears that Senate Republicans have the votes to approve the president's nominee.

Reacting to Ginsburg's passing, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, articulated why a full high court is so important in the coming weeks and months. If the results of the presidential election are in dispute and there are issues that must be litigated, the Supreme Court must have a full complement of nine justices, Cruz has pointed out.

Unsuccessful 2016 Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has stated that Biden should not concede the presidential race to Trump on election night because mail-in ballots will slow the tabulation of election returns.

"Joe Biden should not concede under any circumstances because I think this is going to drag out," Clinton said in an interview in August.

Clinton's declaration of war is perhaps the paramount reason why the Republican majority in the Senate must confirm the president's Supreme Court nominee without delay. President Trump is fearlessly guiding our nation through many enormous challenges, and the radical left's hyper-

partisan threats since Ginsburg's passing won't shake him, because he's a leader with a titanium spine.

By contrast, Biden spends his days opposing every decision the president makes — even if it's stopping travel from China to save American lives or defending our heroic police from left-wing lawlessness.

Ginsburg's untimely death makes it imperative that Biden explain his previous statements on filling Supreme Court vacancies in an election year, even though those statements differ with his party's present position. In 2016, Biden said that "the American people deserve a fully-staffed court of nine" — and he was exactly right.

For months, COVID-19 restrictions gave Biden a convenient excuse to hide in his basement and avoid the grueling hand-to-hand combat of the campaign trail. Biden's allies in the anti-Trump media allowed him to continue this minimalist strategy — something that would never happen for a Republican candidate for president.

Liberal journalists let Biden stay well-rested, while they dished out the harshest treatment imaginable to President Trump. The American people recognize this inherent bias. Case in point is the left-wing media's recent failure to demand from Biden his own list of potential Supreme Court choices.

With early voting already underway in this year's election in several states, the voting public remains in the dark about Biden's vision for America — or lack thereof. In fact, Biden has been coddled to the point that he's shown little urgency explaining to the American people why they should elect him president. Biden wants voters to just send him to the White House without earning an election victory.

By contrast, folks already know what President Trump will do if he's given four more years in office. This president is battle-tested and likes communicating with voters directly about his policies, accomplishments and vision.

This is an election about the future of America and everything is on the line. President Trump will win because he speaks in bold colors about today's important issues and why his vision for America is much brighter than Joe Biden's.

This president knows how to create a booming economy that lifts all Americans and will continue the greatest economic comeback ever when he is reelected. Biden would raise taxes and pile on job-killing regulations. President Trump will take on the Communist Chinese and will always put America first by continuing to renegotiate unfair trade deals. Biden's career is littered with support for bad trade deals that sent jobs overseas. President Trump will complete the border wall because he knows that walls work and the statistics prove it. Biden will open the floodgates to illegal immigrants and give away billions of dollars in taxpayer-funded benefits to them.

# Farm bills are seen by farmers to deliver freedom-not to them, but to private capita

On Friday, September 25, farmers' organisations across the country gave a call for a bandh to protest the three bills passed by Parliament. These bills, namely the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 (FPTC), the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 (FAPAFS), and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 were passed amid protests by the Opposition parties, without discussion in Parliament. Even the government's allies, such as the Shiromani Akali Dal, have raised apprehensions, lending their voice to the farmers' demands.

Projected as historic reforms, the government promises freedom to the farmers from the "villainous and exploitative" Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) mandis and from the middlemen who charge commission from trade in these mandis. Most farmers would agree that the functioning of the mandis is inefficient, opaque, politicised and often controlled by cartels. The attempt to reform the functioning of the mandis is not new and has been in process for the last two decades, starting from 2001 when the expert committee on agricultural marketing submitted its report. Since then, three different model APMC acts have been proposed by previous governments (in 2003, 2007, and 2013) and in 2017 by the current government, none of which led to the kind of protests that have been witnessed over the last two weeks.

Rather than welcoming the freedom from mandis, this time farmers are on the streets fighting for restoring the primacy of the mandis in agricultural trade primarily

because APMC mandis are an essential part of the agricultural trading ecosystem. While they may have a confrontationalist attitude to the functioning and administration of mandis, they also share a symbiotic relationship with the middlemen and the mandis extending beyond matters of transaction in agricultural produce. The middlemen are a source of information, inputs, and sometimes credit without collateral. The anger against the bills is not just about restoring the primacy of the APMC mandis but also over the manner in which the bills were thrust upon the farming community. Not only the farmers' organisations, but even state governments and allies have not been consulted. Secondly, all the earlier attempts at reforming agricultural marketing respected the constitutional separation of powers. While the Centre proposed the model acts, these were implemented by state governments. And most of these proposals were actually acted upon by state governments with waves of reforms in the functioning of the APMC in most states. Out of 36 states and union territories, 18 states have already enacted reforms allowing for establishment of private market yards/private markets, 19 states have enacted reforms allowing for direct purchase of agricultural produce from agriculturists by processor/bulk buyer/bulk retailer/exporter, 20 states have enacted contract farming acts. Kerala and Bihar do not have APMC mandis and Tamil Nadu has a different system. Most states have exempted levy of taxes and fees on sale of fruits and vegetables. Most of these reforms were enacted by the state governments and rules were framed with farmers welcoming these changes, even though the changes were suggested by the Centre.



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# The unrelenting horizonlessness of the Covid world

Six months into the pandemic with no end in sight, many of us have been feeling a sense of unease that goes beyond anxiety or distress. It's a nameless feeling that somehow makes it hard to go on with even the nice things we regularly do. What's blocking our everyday routines is not the anxiety of lockdown adjustments, or the worries about ourselves and our loved ones -- real though those worries are. It isn't even the sense that, if we're really honest with ourselves, much of what we do is pretty self-indulgent when held up against the urgency of a global pandemic.

It is something more troubling and harder to name: an uncertainty about why we would go on doing much of what for years we'd taken for granted as inherently valuable.

What we are confronting is something many writers in the pandemic have approached from varying angles: a restless distraction that stems not just from not knowing when it will all end, but also from not knowing what that end will look like. Perhaps the sharpest insight into this feeling has come from Jonathan Zecher, a historian of religion, who linked it to the forgotten Christian term: *acedia*. *Acedia* was a malady that apparently plagued many Medieval monks. It's a sense of no longer caring about caring, not

because one had become apathetic, but because somehow the whole structure of care had become jammed up.

What could this particular form of melancholy mean in an urgent global crisis? On the face of it, all of us care very much about the health risks to those we know and don't know. Yet lurking alongside such immediate cares is a sense of dislocation that somehow interferes with how we care.

The answer can be found in an extreme thought experiment about death. In 2013, philosopher Samuel Scheffler explored a core assumption about death. We all assume that there will be a future world that survives our particular life, a world populated by people roughly like us, including some who are related to us or known to us. Though we rarely or acknowledge it, this presumed future world is the horizon towards which everything we do in the present is oriented. But what, Scheffler asked, if we lose that assumed future world -- because, say, we are told that human life will end on a fixed date not far after our own death? Then the things we value would start to lose their value. Our sense of why things matter today is built on the presumption that they will continue to matter in the future, even when we ourselves are no longer around to value them.

Our present relations to people and things are, in this deep way, future-oriented. Symphonies are written, buildings built, children conceived in the present, but always with a future in mind. What happens to our ethical bearings when we start to lose our grip on that future?

It's here, moving back to the particular features of the global pandemic, that we see more clearly what drives the restlessness and dislocation so many have been feeling. The source of our current *acedia* is not the literal loss of a future; even the most pessimistic scenarios surrounding Covid-19 have our species surviving. The dislocation is more subtle: a disruption in pretty much every future frame of reference on which just going on in the present relies.

Moving around is what we do as creatures, and for that we need horizons. Covid has erased many of the spatial and temporal horizons we rely on, even if we don't notice them very often. We don't know how the economy will look, how social life will go on, how our home routines will be changed, how work will be organized, how

universities or the arts or local commerce will survive.

What unsettles us is not only fear of change. It's that, if we can no longer trust in the future, many things become irrelevant, retrospectively pointless. And by that we mean from the perspective of a future whose basic shape we can no longer take for granted. This fundamentally disrupts how we weigh the value of what we are doing right now. It becomes especially hard under these conditions to hold on to the value in activities that, by their very nature, are future-directed, such as education or institution-building. That's what many of us are feeling. That's today's *acedia*.

Naming this malaise may seem more trouble than its worth, but the opposite is true. Perhaps the worst thing about medieval

*acedia* was that monks struggled with its dislocation in isolation. But today's disruption of our sense of a future must be a shared challenge. Because what's disrupted is the structure of care that sustains why we go on doing things together, and this can only be repaired through renewed solidarity.

Such solidarity, however, has one precondition: that we openly discuss the problem of *acedia*, and how it prevents us from facing our deepest future uncertainties. Once we have done that, we can recognize it as a problem we choose to face together -- across political and cultural lines -- as families, communities, nations and a global humanity. Which means doing so in acceptance of our shared vulnerability, rather than suffering each on our own.



## The UN must reform to stay relevant

***It must become much more active in issues such as health, the climate crisis, terrorism***

The United Nations (UN) has always struggled when its most powerful members are disunited. On the 75th anniversary of the UN's foundation, not only is great power rivalry rising to Cold War levels, but the world is under enormous forces of change, whether technological or environmental. The organisation recognises it needs to make major adjustments, but it can only reform if there is a sufficient consensus among its members to that effect. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking at the supplementary high-level meeting, stressed the need for reformed multilateralism to ensure UN's

continued relevance. India has long called for the Security Council to be expanded to provide permanent seats for emerging powers like itself. That a draft text for such reforms has made it to the UN General Assembly is an accomplishment. While New Delhi must continue to iterate this requirement, it should be recognised this is an aspiration and comes with a long and unpredictable timeline. It is not merely China which will be a barrier, neither the United States or Russia is eager to see their positions diluted.

There are three obvious multilateral issues in which the

UN needs to become much more active. The most obvious is the pandemics. No government can claim there is not a case for much more transparent and intrusive global preventive health system. Then there is climate. The UN hosts the world's primary climate change conference, but this role needs to be institutionalised. In addition, climate policy now affects other areas such as trade and immigration and urgent multi-disciplinary discussions are needed at the highest level. Finally, terrorism remains a global threat. The collapse of the Islamic State has taken the wind out of the terrorists' sail, but no



one believes this is not a temporary situation. Cynics will say the UN will be hampered by a de-globalising world, superpowers at daggers drawn and rising protectionism. The debate over a reformed multilateralism and more relevant UN needs to begin sooner rather than later. The speeches have

now been made, but India and other governments now need to find ways to convert these into action on the ground. The UN is imperfect because the cohesion of its member-states is imperfect. But no one can deny, as Mr Modi said, "Our world today is a better place because of the United Nations."



# BJP's one market for farmers is a myth

**Only multiple markets and competitive ecosystems will fetch them best prices for their produce**

**P Chidambaram and Praveen Chakravarty**

Should India's farmers have the economic freedom to market their produce to whoever and wherever they want at an agreed price? Unequivocally yes. Will the government's recently-legislated farm bills grant this freedom to farmers? The answer is an unequivocal no. Let us understand this through the example of Prashant Gawande, a small farmer in Akola, Maharashtra, with a three-acre farm. He has just harvested soyabean and needs to sell his produce quickly so as to repay the debt taken to produce the crop. The nearest Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) market yard for Gawande is 25 km away where licenced traders will bid for his produce, starting with the Minimum Support Price (MSP) declared by the government. He can sell his produce to the highest bidder - whether a government procurement agency or a private trader - and collect his money.

Ninety-four per cent of India's farmers sell their produce for non-MSP prices. Official data disclosed in Parliament showed that, in the last season, only 1.24 crore paddy farmers and 44 lakh wheat farmers got the MSP. The reason is that farmers do not have an ecosystem with multiple, easily accessible and competitive markets. The painful conclusion is that, notwithstanding the operation of APMC Acts for a few decades, only a fraction of the farmers get MSP.

The Bharatiya Janata Party government has passed new farm sector laws which it claims will establish a "One Nation, One Market" for agriculture produce and liberate farmers. "One Market" is a myth.

Can you imagine Gawande in Maharashtra loading his soyabean crop onto a tractor and driving to Madhya Pradesh because he has learned that he can get a better price there! Or imagine Gawande pulling out his computer, log into the e-commerce market place, and complete a digital sale and purchase!! Neither the current APMC system nor the "One

Nation, One Market" dream will serve the small farmer.

Eighty-five per cent of farmers are small farmers, holding one hectare or less and with little surplus to sell in the market. He/she can be lured to a market only if there are, multiple, easily accessible and competitive

eventually lead to the shutdown of APMCs which means that the bidding process to establish the highest price for the produce will also vanish. Independent traders will collude to set up many fragmented thin markets for procurement which will lead to price gouging of farmers,



markets in the area where the farmer produces his/her crop. Under the new laws, anyone can now operate outside the auspices of APMC and procure from farmers without the need for a licence or payment of a fee. Most traders will then abandon APMC and set up their own informal markets outside to avoid APMC transaction costs and regulations. Lack of activity will

most of whom are small and do not have collective bargaining powers. This is how the APMC and MSP systems will be slowly dismantled. When the MSP system is dismantled, farmers lose a very important price signal that can help them get better prices. The experience of Bihar after the Nitish Kumar government repealed the state's APMC Act bears out this

apprehension. Bihar farmers get a whopping 30% less as the price for their produce than the notified MSPs. If the government was indeed keen on retaining the MSP system, as it claims, then why is it not so stated explicitly in the new laws? Nothing would have been easier than to add a clause that a private transaction would be valid only if the price paid "is not less than the MSP".

MSPs play a vital role as an emitter of a price signal. The farmers face a real risk of exploitative prices without a proper price signal and an assured market place to sell their produce. Today, farmers neither have access to multiple markets nor the bargaining power to negotiate fair-price contracts. Farmers have seen through the falsity of the government's propaganda and that is why farmers across the country are on the streets protesting against these laws. The objective to provide economic freedom to farmers through more choices of buyers is a laudable pursuit that the Congress supports fully. Farmers such as Gawande can be liberated only when they have access to multiple markets where different buyers compete for their produce and offer the

highest price. Renowned agriculture expert Dr MS Swaminathan and scholars such as Sudha Narayanan and Mekhala Krishnamurthy have argued that the number of APMC market yards per square km is inadequate and severely inhibits market access for India's farmers. Recognising the severe limitations of the APMC system, the Congress party's manifesto for the 2019 elections clearly laid out the need to establish thousands of markets "in large villages and small towns with adequate infrastructure and support" as a pre-condition to free trade in agriculture procurement. The key word is markets, not One Market.

Six years of the Narendra Modi government has revealed one clear pattern of governance - to confuse and conflate lofty goals and objectives with ill-thought-out policy execution. Eliminating black money was a lofty objective; but demonetisation as a policy to achieve that was disastrous. Ease of inter-state trade was a laudable goal; a plethora of Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates was not the way to achieve it. Flattening the Covid-19 curve was a worthy pursuit, but a draconian lockdown was imprudent. Similarly, giving economic freedom to our farmers is a desirable goal, but the hastily-passed farm laws will not help achieve this.

## Dealing with Covid-19 in rural areas

**To win the war against the pandemic, battles have to be fought and won on every front.**

On Tuesday, the tally of Covid-19 cases in India crossed 5.6 million. Maharashtra's tally rose to 1.24 million with a third of the infections reported among rural populations. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have also reported an uptick in cases in rural areas. The states represent a nationwide trend of the pandemic shifting to the rural areas where health systems are weak and human resources are stretched or missing altogether. This leaves the sick with no option but to seek treatment in cities, where the strain on the health care system is beginning to show. Testing is still concentrated in urban and peri-urban areas. Testing in rural areas remains below the national



average of 46,440 tests per million, which may lead to undetected and asymptomatic spread in the young, mobile rural demographic, and, in turn, bring the infection back to cities. Meeting the challenge of containing the spread in rural

areas is a monumental task. Of the little over 1.2 million allopathic doctors registered with the Medical Council of India (June 30), around a million are available for active service. This puts the doctor-population ratio at 1:1,343 for a population of 1.35

billion, against the World Health Organization-recommended 1:1,000. With most tertiary care hospitals situated in cities, at least 90% doctors live and work urban areas, home to 40% of the population.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's review of the Covid-19 situation with the chief ministers of seven states that account for 63% of the country's cases focused on scaling up testing and containment in rural India ahead of the last phase of unlocking on September 30. To win the war against the pandemic, battles have to be fought and won on every front.



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# Farm bills, sifting the grain from the chaff

**TRUTH VS HYPE** Though the government maintains that the MSP regime would remain intact, it's clear that on account of the tax differential between the mandis and new agri-trade areas, mandis will wither away in a short period.

**Kiran Choudhry**

After two of the three contentious agriculture bills were passed in the Rajya Sabha on Sunday by voice vote amid protests from the Opposition, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, calling it a "watershed moment in the history of Indian agriculture". Similar media and government hype followed the three ordinances in June, branding them transformational for the uplift of agriculture.

This rhetoric notwithstanding, most farmer organisations, barring a handful owing allegiance to the RSS and BJP, hit the streets in protest against the ordinances. Lathicharge and use of force on a peaceful assembly of farmers at Pipli near Kurukshetra recently was saddening and depressing in equal parts, exposing the repulsive face of the regime in Haryana. Farmers' anger is on the boil, forcing the BJP's docile and loyal ally, the Shiromani Akali Dal, to exit the Union cabinet, exposing the limits to which the attractive package of government propaganda and media hype can conceal hideous reality.

**DISSENT UNDER LOCKDOWN**  
If eyebrows are being raised at the haste with which the Centre issued these ordinances in June

during the lockdown without waiting for detailed deliberations or approval for these ordinances from Parliament, the worst was yet to come.

Unsure of its numbers, the ruling party was rescued by the fiat of the deputy chairman getting the



farm bills rushed through the Rajya Sabha via a voice vote, short-circuiting the Opposition protests or pleas for a division of vote. On a black Sunday, it appeared free discussion and dissent was under lockdown in our polity. By getting these farm bills passed by Parliament, the Centre has transgressed into the states' domain of managing agriculture, which is on the concurrent list under the Constitution.

**GOVERNMENT INTENT SUSPECT**

The two controversial farm bills deregulate the stipulation of

farmers having to sell their crops in mandis designated under the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act, giving them liberty to sell their crops in agricultural trade areas. Corporate players can now buy farmers' produce in these agri-trade areas,

obviating the intermediary layer of arhtiyas/commission agents and APMC mandis. While mandis would continue to levy market fee, cess and other charges, all agricultural transactions in the agri-trade areas are exempt from such charges. Vesting of powers to resolve payment and other disputes with the local SDMs and revisionary/appellate jurisdiction with senior government officers under the new legislation, bypassing the judicial hierarchy, makes the government intent to ensure fairness of procedure suspect, as government officers

have less autonomy as compared to judicial officers.

**SPOOKED BY BIHAR EXPERIMENT**

An arhtiya acts as a non-formal bank, financing the farmer for family emergencies besides fending for sundry arrangements for crop such as weighing, cleaning, transporting and coordinating with procuring agencies. Instead of addressing the infirmities of the arhtiya system, dismantling the same without an alternative would be painful to all stakeholders.

Though the government maintains that the MSP regime would remain intact in mandis, it's clear that on account of the huge tax differential between the mandis and new agri-trade areas, mandis will wither away in a short period. The farmers are spooked by a similar Bihar experiment in 2006, where farmers are exploited and fleeced by private businessmen with mandis out of the procurement equation.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, is an enabling legislation for facilitating contract farming. Past experience shows that in a surplus year when there is glut in supply of agricultural produce in markets, rates tend

to nosedive below rates contracted between farmers and companies. Instead of honouring the contract and incurring loss, companies adopt the stratagem of nitpicking in quality such as moisture, lustre, and shrivelled grain, harassing farmers.

**IN INTEREST OF CORPORATE SHARKS**

Section 4 of the Essential Commodities Act has already been amended, deregulating stock limits on cereals, pulses, onions, potatoes, edible oil and oilseeds, except for dire situations of war, natural calamity or inordinate price rise. It is feared that big corporate sharks will hoard these essential commodities on the arrival of crops, create artificial scarcity and sell at exorbitant rates later, hitting the average consumer the hardest. Through the new agriculture legislation, the government has furthered the interests of corporate sharks at the cost of farmers, denying them statutorily guaranteed procurement of crops at the MSP. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has given an apt description of these black laws, calling them "death warrants against farmers".

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

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

## Stay home except to get medical care

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



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

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



## Call ahead before visiting your doctor

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



## Wear a facemask if you are sick

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



## Cover your coughs and sneezes

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



## Clean your hands often

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



## Avoid sharing personal household items

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





# India Should Choose: Toyota or Pakora?

**Andy Mukherjee**

Narendra Modi says, "Make in India." Toyota Motor Corp. says, stop treating cars as though they were drugs or alcohol.

The Japanese carmaker has a point about the tax structure being unviable for the industry, and Shekar Viswanathan, vice chairman of the India unit, made it forcefully in an interview to Anurag Kotoky of Bloomberg News. However, instead of trying to address the specific concern about the high sin levies on cars, the government turned it into a public relations issue. The minister for heavy industries, who also looks after information and broadcasting, took to Twitter to announce that "the news that Toyota... will stop investing in India is incorrect."

The additional luxury-tax burden - 1% to 22% depending on the size of the vehicle and engine capacity - is what jacks up the overall levy in the world's fourth-biggest car market to as much as 50% on some sports utility vehicles.

Six years of headline management should have been enough for Prime Minister Modi's government. From justifying its



bizarre overnight ban on most banknotes in 2016 to defending suspiciously cheerful gross domestic product data and suppressing a not-so-rosy household consumption survey, Team Modi has left no stone unturned when it comes to spinning a narrative in which it's doing everything right. The longer this pretense continues, the higher the risk of India getting stuck in a post-pandemic sub-5% growth rut. It's time to start

an honest dialogue with unhappy stakeholders - labor, capital, and subnational governments. Lockdowns are easing even though the coronavirus continues to spread. Workers desperately want jobs to return because there isn't much of a safety net beyond the family or village. Businesses weren't investing even before Covid. It's impossible to cut consumption taxes to stoke demand. India's fund-starved 29 state governments

badly need the sin levies that are earmarked for their exclusive use. Businesses were hoping that these, which are in addition to the regular goods and services tax, would expire as planned in 2022. However, because of the hit to collections this year, they may continue well into the future. That isn't the whole story. Import duties on steel and electronic components may go up, ostensibly to promote PM Modi's Make in India campaign, pushing

prices for cars still higher. The market will then be even smaller. So what can be done?

Auto analyst Govind Chellappa has practical suggestions. Even if taxes remain high for now, end the constant tinkering with the rates, regulation and the fuel policy - diesel, petrol or hybrid - and commit to stability for 15 years. "It takes 24 to 36 months to develop a new product and another 12 months to set up the physical infrastructure. If taxes and regulation change every 24 months, how does one decide what to invest in?" Chellappa asks. Similarly, the badly designed goods and services levy needs a one-time overhaul, followed by long-term certainty. India must break out of this vicious cycle in which taxes are high, consumer demand is low, investment and job creation are constrained, and wage incomes are insufficient to boost purchasing power at the bottom of the pyramid. Taxes are hence exorbitant and have to be collected from a small consuming class that can afford a \$23,000 Toyota sedan - and fill it up with highly taxed gasoline that costs three-quarters more than what Americans pay.

Modi said in an early 2018 television interview that those earning \$3 a day by selling "pakoras" - Indian fritters - should also be counted as employed. That would leave the government off the hook for the absence of new jobs in the formal economy. This false pakora/Toyota equivalence must end. India should enable large companies to grow and create good jobs with social security. When they're more productive and paid a little better, low-wage workers will be able to afford Made in India shirts and trousers, which, as economist Rathin Roy has noted, are more expensive than imported clothing from Bangladesh and Vietnam.

Ultimately, the Modi government needs to focus on one simple statistic highlighted by Ambit Capital Pvt. and Singapore-based investor Akash Prakash. As much as 40% of the country's listed nonfinancial firms have revenue of less than \$15 million. They're tiny even by emerging-market standards, and the ratio hasn't increased at all over the past decade.

## The vaccine protocol

***Insulate it from political ambition, nationalist bravado and geopolitics. Let scientists decide***

The developers of the most promising coronavirus vaccines are making a concerted effort to convince people they will uphold scientific standards in their clinical trials. First, they signed what was described as a historic safety pledge. They declared they will seek emergency approval for their candidates only after a phase 3 trial is complete, and the priority would be to ensure the safety and well-being of vaccinated individuals. Last week, some of them went a step further, disclosing granular protocols and yardsticks for these trials. The information is typically considered a trade secret. History is littered with examples of what happens when scientific process is victim to public anticipation and political pressure. The earliest of this was the Cutter Incident of the mid-1950s, when tens of thousands of children in the United States



were accidentally injected with a live polio virus. It was the culmination of ignored warnings, skipped safeguards and impatience. A similar tale (although here, the errors lay more in development than manufacturing) played out in 1976 when a small but statistically significant proportion of people who got a swine flu vaccine developed an autoimmune condition. The incidents are now

among several cautionary tales that have fed into how vaccines, drugs and therapies are developed today.

For the leaders of some of the world's leading powers, these tales seem to have faded from memory. Russia last month approved for public use a vaccine that is yet to complete phase 2 trials. China has begun inoculating thousands of people with its experimental jabs. The

president of the United States said that a vaccine could be approved as early as October, less than a month before he faces an election. How any of this is possible till short- and medium-term safety implications of these experimental shots are determined is a question beyond the scope of scientific reasoning. It is important to insulate the worst health crisis in generations from political ambition and nationalistic bravado. The political rhetoric in India, in this regard, has been measured. It is encouraging that the health ministry has indicated that it will wait for adequate data before gambling on any vaccine, even if it is one touted by an all-weather ally. The country's leaders must now make sure they don't give in to the wrong examples. The best way for it is to let the scientists take the wheel.





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# Agri-reforms will empower farmers. The Opposition is wrong

**The legislations will give options of new markets, attract private investments to build infrastructure, help in better price discovery, enable information dissemination mechanism, and provide future price assurance to the farmers**

Gopal Krishna Agarwal

The unprecedented 23.9% decline in the gross domestic product (GDP) in the first quarter of 2020-21 is serious. But gross value-added numbers show that agriculture grew by a respectable 3.4%, suggesting the rural economy will drive recovery.

The Centre promulgated three agriculture-related ordinances in June, which were a break from the past when pernicious interventions by governments were justified in the name of farmers' welfare. The supply chain in requires massive investment from warehousing, cold storage, transportation to infrastructure in retail distribution. This mega push can come from private sector alone. Agriculture has also been moving from shortages to surplus and the policy on essential commodities from 1955 is bound to be reworked and limitations removed for benefits of scale of operation and value addition. These reforms were similar to the

1991 moment for the economy and were hailed by experts. The Committee of State Ministers, in-charge of Agriculture Marketing to Promote Reforms emphasised the need to promote competition in the interest of the farmers and so had the of the Standing Committee on Agriculture in its 62nd report. This had the support of almost all parties.

With the government replacing the ordinances by Acts of Parliament, the Congress, some other political parties, farmer unions affiliated to them, and representing the interests of the middlemen are raising a hue and cry. A misinformation campaign has been let loose. The most sinister of them is that the government will do away with the minimum support price (MSP), even though the Centre said that there is no question of dismantling the MSP mechanism. The Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) and Mandi Act are in the domain of states, and, therefore, there is no question of the Centre amending it unilaterally. Only

inter-state commodity trade is in the Centre's domain. The existing APMC infrastructure is not being dismantled; MSP as an administration mechanism implemented through the local mandis and procurements done by state governments will continue as usual. The Narendra Modi government, on Monday itself, announced the increase in MSP of many commodities.

Though the purpose of MSP was to provide an assured floor price to the farmers, over time, it became the ceiling price. With the new Act on facilitating trade and commerce of produce, the government is making it legally and institutionally possible for farmers to explore the possibility of selling at an even higher price, while retaining the safety net of MSP. With competition from private markets, APMC markets will no longer enjoy the monopoly and the farmer will benefit from better services.

As far as the argument of farmers losing their land to corporates is concerned, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection)



Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020 Act, talks about an agreement on the farm produce only, and not about the land. The Act has further safeguards for farmers on land; in case of loss of produce, farmers alone will get the benefit of insurance compensation and the infrastructure and equipment used at the farm land has been protected as belonging to the land owners. Even the dispute resolution within the Act has been delegated at the district level, with the formation of district boards, and farmers will not have to run from one court to the other to get justice.

The lack of a responsible Opposition has been the bane of

Indian politics since 2014. Anything that the Modi Government does must be opposed by the Congress. The Congress, in its recent election manifestoes, had asked for dismantling APMC, but we have abstained from doing so.

The legislations will give options of new markets, attract private investments to build infrastructure, help in better price discovery, enabling information dissemination mechanism, and provide price assurance to the farmers. With the prime minister himself at the forefront and the Bharatiya Janata Party amplifying his messages, there should be no doubt about the future of farmers welfare.

## The govt's rush to pass key farm bills and the Opposition's conduct were wrong

On Sunday, the Rajya Sabha passed The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020. This newspaper has supported the government's efforts to bring about a new legislative and policy architecture for agriculture as a method to empower farmers. But as far as legislation is concerned, there is both content and process. And on Sunday, there is little doubt that the process was undermined, reflecting poorly on India's parliamentary democracy.

The reforms are significant, affecting a range of stakeholders, particularly farmers. They have also generated a political backlash, with even partners in the ruling coalition such as the Shiromani Akali Dal resigning from the Cabinet on the issue. The Opposition was keen on

**The Opposition was wrong too - in being disruptive, creating a din, tearing documents, and creating a difficult situation for the presiding officer, perhaps indicating that it too was not confident of the numbers.**



sending the bills to a select committee. Ideally, this should be done - for the committee process provides an opportunity to examine legislation, refine it, and allows parliamentarians to speak up without being confined to party positions. But if the

government was not willing to embark on that process, there should have been a discussion in the House where members got a chance to offer their perspectives and the government listened to feedback and made modifications accordingly. And

along with this, there should have been a clear voting process - a division as it is called in parliamentary parlance - to get an accurate sense of the mood of the House.

Unfortunately, none of this was done. The discussion in the

House was rushed - since the government wants to push through other legislations quickly, before the session is brought to an early end. And there was no division, but a voice vote - prompting genuine questions about whether the government had the numbers at all. So it was with one eye on the clock and another eye on the numbers that the government rushed through the process on Sunday - but this was wrong.

The Opposition was wrong too - in being disruptive, creating a din, tearing documents, and creating a difficult situation for the presiding officer, perhaps indicating that it too was not confident of the numbers. The responsibility for what happened on Sunday rests with both sides. The government's victory in getting the bills passed will be tainted by the way it was done, and the Opposition's response will dilute its legitimate right to protest.





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# Why Yogi is wrong about the Mughals, writes Karan Thapar

**The greatest of our rulers is the Mughal emperor Akbar. His ecumenism was unique for his time. As Ira Mukhoty has written, He believed 'all religions are either equally true or equally illusory'**

Karan Thapar

"How can our heroes be Mughals?", asked chief minister Yogi Adityanath last week. To make his meaning clear, he added, "anything which smacks of subservient mentality" is not acceptable to his government. Today, I'd like to answer him. First, however, I want to ask him a few questions myself. What gives a chief minister the right to question who our heroes are? He may have the authority to govern us but not to determine our values and shape our ideals. It's arrogance on his part to presume to tell us who to look up to and which rulers of our past to consider great. Although I don't know Yogi, I'll go one step further. I suspect his question reveals either prejudice or ignorance, possibly both. If I'm right, this not only is unfortunate and unbecoming in a chief minister, but compounds his arrogance. And so to my answer. The greatest of our rulers is the

Mughal emperor Akbar or, to use his full name, Abu'l Fath Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar. I know many consider the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, who ruled 18 centuries earlier, Akbar's equal or, possibly, heroically superior but I disagree. Akbar was not responsible for 100,000 deaths at Kalinga.

Now, let me tell Yogi a little about Akbar. As Ira Mukhoty, his latest and, arguably, best biographer has written, in the 16th century, his was "the greatest empire on earth". With an annual income estimated at 100 million pounds, he was "by far the richest ruler in the world". But it's not his wealth or the size of his kingdom which makes him great. It's his amazing personality.

For a start, Akbar's ecumenism was unique for his time. He believed "all religions are either equally true or equally illusory". Mukhoty says he prayed to the sun, whispered mantras, worshipped fire and kept fasts.

His young son Murad was "entrusted to the Jesuits for an education", taught the sign of the cross and to take the names of Jesus and Mary at the beginning of lessons. Akbar's Hindu wives were not required to convert. They enjoyed "complete freedom to exercise their own religion". He abolished the jiziya, "prohibited the slaughter of cows and the eating of their flesh" and was a vegetarian on weekends. Mukhoty's account reveals an incredible individual, far greater than the pomp and circumstance that inevitably surrounded him. He "often wore a dhoti" and appeared in the "diwan-e-aam with a tilak on the forehead and a rakhi on the wrist, tied by a Brahmin, as a blessing". The décor of the palace he built in Fatehpur Sikri reflects the same open-hearted liberalism.

There were "frescoes painted of Christ, Mary and the Christian



saints in the private chambers". In 1582, he had the Mahabharata translated from Sanskrit to Persian. In later years, he commissioned translations of the Ramayana, Rajatarangini and the story of Nala and Damayanti.

This becomes even more remarkable when you discover Akbar was "effectively unschooled and practically illiterate". In fact, Mukhoty believes he may have "suffered from attention-deficit disorder". Some historians have even claimed he was dyslexic.

Let me now ask Yogi another question: How can such a man not be one of our heroes? Is it because he was a Muslim that

we cavil? Or because his grandfather conquered India? Is this what you were implying when you said regarding Mughals as heroes reflects "the mentality of slavery"?

I wonder if he realises such logic could encourage the people of Odisha to curse Ashoka. Or India's Buddhists to consider Pushyamitra Shunga villainous for persecuting their ancestors?

I know Yogi spoke as a politician, not a man of the cloth. Yet, he's a revered priest of the faith we share.

Do these views represent Hindu thinking? Do they add lustre to our faith? Do they make Indians feel taller? Or more patriotic?

## What Bihar will tell us about national politics

**Given the pandemic, the nature of the election, of political competition, and of issues has changed. The outcome will reveal the mood**

Bihar's assembly elections often give a glimpse into larger national political trends. In the 1990s, the dominance of Lalu Prasad was representative of the larger assertion of Other Backward Classes, the ascendance of the politics of "social justice" which essentially meant an electoral coalition of religious minorities and marginalised castes, and the deeper democratisation of the polity. At the same time, his consecutive electoral victories also showed that in Indian politics, the question of political representation and electoral arithmetic was, in many ways, more crucial than the provision of public goods and service delivery. In 2005, the defeat of the Lalu Prasad-Rabri Devi combine, and the emergence of Nitish Kumar, signalled the limits of a certain kind of identity-based politics and the yearning for

citizens to have a more effective state which could deliver law and order and development. Make no mistake, caste was still crucial in determining political choices. But broad identity-based social umbrellas, which functioned almost as political units, such as Other Backward Classes or Dalits or even Muslims, now fragmented. So extreme backward classes, Mahadalits or Pasmanda Muslims - who were more marginalised within their larger groups - began splitting away and making their own choices. The combination of a different form of identity politics with a dash of governance - exemplified by the emphasis on road construction and law and order - and a formidable chief minister (CM)?face helped the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) win the 2010 elections and became a template for other politicians

too. The 2015 election gave a different political architecture. At a time of Narendra Modi's overwhelming popularity, the surprise alliance of Lalu Prasad and Nitish Kumar showed that voters could exercise different choices in national and state elections (a trend that has become much stronger in the past three years), an effective state leader could neutralise the popularity of the prime minister, smart political alliances could build wide electoral social coalitions and stop the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and that the politics of caste could still be a strong political antidote to the politics of religion. It is 2020, and the political landscape is radically different from what it was five years ago. Nitish Kumar is back in NDA. Lalu Prasad is serving a sentence after being convicted of corruption. The 2019 Lok Sabha



election - where NDA (which has a third partner in Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party) got a staggering 39 of the 40 seats - has shaped the immediate context. And yes, there is the pandemic which will transform politics in ways which are still not clear.

The Bihar elections will give a glimpse into larger national trends in four significant ways. One, it is the first state-wide election in the wake of the pandemic, and there are new Election Commission guidelines to govern the nature of campaigning, polling, and counting. Elections demand

direct interface with citizens, while the pandemic demands the least contact with citizens. Will the new system work? Will it come at the cost of equity and access? Will it cause a rupture in the ties between party leaders and party workers, and between parties and candidates and the voters? Will it accelerate the transition to digital-based politics and what form will this take? These questions are crucial because other state elections, in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry, are scheduled for next year - and they will probably have to adopt the same model.





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# 2 Sentenced to Hang for Deadly Garment Factory Fire in Pakistan

**The country's worst industrial fire killed more than 260 people in 2012. Victims' relatives said the real culprits had escaped justice.**

(News Agencies)- Eight years after Pakistan's worst industrial fire killed 264 people and injured 60 others at a garment factory in the country's largest city, a court has sentenced two men to hang for arson.

But for distraught families of the victims, justice was long delayed, and the verdict on Tuesday fell short.

It came after years of hearings and testimony from at least 400 witnesses. The slow pace of the trial frustrated victims' families, who accused the police of failing to properly investigate and charge the real culprits.

Saeeda Khatoon, 50, whose 18-year-old son was killed in the 2012 fire at the complex owned by Ali Enterprises, said that the factory's owners were equally responsible for the blaze because of lax safety standards. "They have been provided a systematic escape," she said of the owners, adding, "Only the lower tier of perpetrators were

granted punishment."

The fire raised questions about poor regulations in the country's industrial and manufacturing sectors. Activists and victims' families say factory owners have been mostly lax or negligent in setting up proper security protocols, leaving workers vulnerable to accidents. Corruption has also contributed to the poor enforcement of safety regulations.

The 2012 fire also shed light on the underbelly of Karachi's politics, in which political parties have been accused of running armed rackets and extortion rings.

The two men sentenced this week, Abdul Rehman and Muhammad Zubair, formerly worked for the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, or MQM, a political party that has a history of political violence and once controlled the port city with an iron fist. It lost much of its clout in recent years after the

country's powerful military launched operations against armed members of the party.

The court found that Mr. Rehman and Mr. Zubair had set the factory ablaze in retribution because the owners had refused to pay extortion money.

In his 146-page verdict, Judge Abdul Qadoos Memon of the antiterrorism court in Karachi stressed that the fire had occurred because of "arson and sabotage," not because of "gas leakage or electric short circuit." When the fire erupted on the evening of Sept. 11, 2012, in a commercial hub in Karachi, it quickly engulfed the building. The multistory complex - which manufactured ready-made garments, mainly for the German textile discount chain KiK - had no fire escape.

The windows of the building had iron grills. Workers desperately tried to escape, but most were trapped inside and consumed by fire. Many tried to save



themselves by jumping from the top floors. Firefighters extinguished the blaze a day later. The factory's owners, Arshad Bhaila and Shahid Bhaila, were initially arrested but were released on bail. They later moved abroad and were questioned by investigators via video link from Dubai. Raja Pervez Ashraf, then Pakistan's prime minister, had urged that murder charges be dropped against the factory owners, local news outlets reported, setting off a public furor. Investigators named an MQM official, Hammad

Siddiqui, as the mastermind behind the extortion plot. Mr. Siddiqui demanded \$1.2 million as protection money from the factory's owners and plotted the fire after failing to get it, they said. But he has absconded.

The judge handed life sentences to four guards at the factory for contributing to the disaster by locking the exit doors. Four other people were acquitted for lack of evidence, including Rauf Siddiqui, a senior leader of MQM, and former provincial minister. No execution date has been set for Mr. Rehman and Mr. Zubair.

## Pakistan's 39-yr-old NSA a key player in army's Gilgit move that suits China



**The change of Gilgit-Baltistan's status fits in well with Pakistan NSA Moeed Yusuf's long-standing project to turn the Line of Control with India into an International Border**

over the years to secure the CPEC that has faced some opposition from locals over concerns that it destroys the environment, culture and social fabric without much benefit to the people. The effort to change Gilgit-Baltistan's disputed status also fits in well with Moeed Yusuf's long-standing project to turn the Line of Control with India into an International Border. Back in 2009 when he was still an academic and building his ties to the establishment in Pakistan and the United States, Moeed Yusuf had advocated converting the LoC into the IB, with both sides maintaining sovereign control over the respective parts of Jammu and Kashmir.

A Pakistan watcher said Moeed Yusuf explored the possibility of formalising the LoC as the border between the two countries nearly a decade later when he visited New Delhi in 2018. "By then, he had entrenched himself in the establishment in Washington via

the US Institute of Peace and worked closely with the Pakistan Army and the Inter-Services Intelligence," he said. Yusuf had cultivated an image of being an advocate of Indo-Pak peace and resolution of the Kashmir issue at USIP. He did run into a bit of a controversy at USIP months before Imran Khan picked him as his special adviser in December 2019 when objections were raised about the public-funded institution becoming a venue of choice for hosting Pakistani officials at events reserved for select invitees. One South Asia expert Dr Christine Fair also alleged that Yusuf had been sharing sensitive information with Pakistani agencies using his position and access within the USIP. Moeed Yusuf is said to have continued to speak about his ideas on Indo-Pak relations after he joined Imran Khan's team as well and plugged the agenda with General Bajwa and other top military officers. In his new role in

Imran Khan's team, his understanding and familiarity with the American system helped to position him as the main strategic thinker for the Pakistani leadership, particularly on dealing with the US Administration, Congress, bureaucracy and the think-tanks. Not much is known about his views on Pakistan's support of terrorism to achieve political and diplomatic ends, particularly in Kashmir. Indian counter-terror officials said they had not heard of any instance where Moeed Yusuf had spoken of ending the establishment's support to terrorists operating in India. "What we do know is that he did come up with the idea that Pakistan should not seek mediation on Kashmir over concerns that Islamabad could be placed in an awkward position if the US came up with a unilateral proposal, akin to Donald Trump's Middle East Plan," a senior Indian official said.

(News Agencies)-Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa has fronted Pakistan's exercise to create a province in disputed Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) in the occupied Northern Areas, holding a quiet meeting with the country's politicians on the topic before a minister went public with Islamabad's plans last week. But the army, people familiar with the matter said, isn't driving the creation of the fifth province alone. A 39-year-old has also been hard at work. Moeed W Yusuf. Yusuf, Special Assistant to Prime Minister Imran Khan on National Security Division and Strategic Planning, has been a principal player in Islamabad's decision to revoke the notional

autonomy granted to Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and incorporate the disputed region as one of Pakistan's five provinces, Pakistan watchers in New Delhi said, describing Pakistan's young National Security Adviser as one of the project's key driving forces. Gilgit-Baltistan's assimilation into the Islamic Republic works well with China that has poured billions of dollars - even if much of it is a loan - into the China Pakistan Economic Corridor to build an alternative supply route to the choked, and vulnerable Malacca Strait, the main shipping channel between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The army has scaled up its presence in the GB region



## Pakistani Christian, jailed for seven years, sentenced to death for refusing to convert to Islam

(News Agencies)-In the depths of a squalid Pakistani jail cell - kept far from the rest of the inmate population at Lahore's District Prison - a poor Christian factory worker is awaiting execution.

A judge convicted Asif Pervaiz, 37, of blasphemy and he was sentenced to death earlier this month. Those advocating for Pervaiz's innocence claim it was not blasphemy and that he merely refused to buckle to pressure and convert to Islam. "This is a tragic situation; the first case in Pakistan's recent history where a Christian has been accused of blasphemy for refusing to embrace Islam," Pervaiz's attorney, Saif Malook, told Fox News. "This man,

Asif's boss, wanted him to leave Christianity, and Asif knew he would suffer a lot by saying no. But he kept his faith."

Pervaiz's nightmare began in 2013 after his supervisor, Muhammad Saeed Khokher, at the garment factory where he worked allegedly pressured him to become a Muslim on multiple occasions, according to Malook. When he refused, Khokher went to police with allegations that the devoted Christian had sent him "blasphemous" text messages defaming the Muslim Prophet Muhammed. Khokher has since denied that he had attempted to compel his work subordinate to convert. In Pakistan, insulting the Prophet carries a mandatory sentence of capital punishment,

and the court has vowed that Pervaiz will be "hanged by his neck until death."

However, the defendant has firmly dismissed the claims, and his attorney further contended that at the time, some seven years ago, anybody could purchase a phone SIM card without showing identification. While legislation has since become tougher and chips now require registration in Pakistan, anybody could simply claim a text message came from a person without verifiable proof. Malook is preparing to appeal the death sentence, yet he has cautioned his client that the process will mean many more years ailing behind bars. "As a person, Asif has always been a



special young man - very strong, and he never wept until this month when they sentenced him to death. Mentally, he is feeling broken," his lawyer continued. "I've told him that he must find his strength - it is a long journey ahead, that he will not survive unless he can stay strong. I wanted to lie and tell him it would be over soon, but it will be many

more years of fighting." Malook also boldly took on the Asia Bibi case in Pakistan, the impoverished Christian woman who was also convicted of blasphemy. Her case languished on death row for almost 10 years through a long series of appeals and threats before finally being freed in October 2018.

## India, Sri Lanka to hold virtual bilateral summit on September 26



(News Agencies)-Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa will hold a virtual bilateral summit on

September 26, their first official engagement after parliamentary elections in the island nation last month. The implementation of developmental projects by

**President Rajapaksa also made it clear recently that Sri Lanka's strategic security policy will have an "India first" approach though Colombo remains open to dealing with other key players for economic development.**

India, cooperation on counter-terrorism and defence matters, trade, and the devolution of powers to Sri Lanka's Tamil minority are expected to figure in the talks, people familiar with developments said on condition of anonymity on Wednesday.

"The virtual bilateral summit will give an opportunity to the two leaders to comprehensively review the broad framework of the bilateral relationship soon after the parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka and in

the context of the time-tested friendly ties between the two countries," the external affairs ministry said in a statement. Rajapaksa began a fresh term as prime minister after his Sri Lanka People's Front party secured a two-thirds majority in parliamentary polls in August.

In July, India announced a \$400-million currency swap facility for Sri Lanka under the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), though

New Delhi is yet to take a call on Colombo's request for a bilateral swap facility for \$1.1 billion. Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had sought the special swap facility of \$1.1 billion during a phone conversation with Modi in May. President Rajapaksa also made it clear recently that Sri Lanka's strategic security policy will have an "India first" approach though Colombo remains open to dealing with other key players for economic development.

## US uses defense diplomacy to woo Bangladesh away from China

The U.S. has stepped up efforts to entice Bangladesh into buying more of its military hardware in recent weeks, as it hopes to win over an "emerging" ally in South Asia, where China has been expanding its economic influence.

In a rare outreach, U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper earlier this month phoned Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who also oversees the Ministry of Defense, proposing to help the South Asian country modernize its military by 2030. The two countries opened talks on the sale of advanced military gear such as Apache

helicopters and missiles last year. A deal is believed to be in the cards, although no details have been revealed, with Laura Stone, a deputy assistant secretary with the U.S. Department of State, saying that Congress had not yet been "formally notified." Any deal will frustrate China, which is now the biggest supplier of cheaper defense equipment.

"We're looking to deepen our security cooperation with Bangladesh, which is very much of mutual interest, with full respect for Bangladesh's sovereignty and independence of action," Stone wrote in an email response to questions posed by the Nikkei Asian Review recently. "We stand ready to serve as the partner of

choice for Bangladesh regarding the sale of defense articles," said Stone, who oversees India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives at the State Department's South and Central Asian affairs desk.

Bangladesh has been buying more arms from the U.S. since the 1990s, with purchases reaching \$110 million in the 10 years through 2019. But that is dwarfed by the \$2.59 billion it spent on military equipment from China since 2010, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Ali Riaz, distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University, said that the timing of the phone call between the U.S.

defense secretary and Bangladesh's prime minister was "very important" because of Dhaka's warming relations with Beijing.

China's influence in Bangladesh goes beyond trade and infrastructure investment. After the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, China sent supplies, such as masks and gowns, and a medical team to Bangladesh to advise on the pandemic response. In addition, a Phase 3 trial of a vaccine developed by the privately owned Chinese company Sinovac Biotech is in progress.

Beijing recently lifted tariffs on 97% of Bangladesh imports after it secured a \$250 million airport terminal construction contract in

the northeastern city of Sylhet, which borders India.

Bangladesh is now trying to corral a \$1 billion Chinese credit line to manage the Teesta River after a deal to share its water with India languished for years, mainly due to opposition from the state of West Bengal on the Indian side.

Bangladesh has been treading a fine line between India and China, but now Washington has taken a proactive approach.

"The Bangladesh government will have to balance conflicting expectations. Bangladesh can do it if the national interests remain the primary consideration," Riaz wrote in an email to Nikkei.



# What pandemic Trump tries rapid shift to Supreme Court



"He didn't wish her dead and he didn't kill her. But her death and the opening it created is clearly going to benefit the president," said a Republican who is friends with the president. "Any conversation about coronavirus leads to discussion of his handling of it. The most generous person in the world would say it has been mixed."

The Supreme Court fight is the latest look-over-here subject for Trump during the pandemic. He previously has, at various points, trained his non-coronavirus messaging firepower on everything from the economy, to China, to "law and order," to Confederate states and mail-in voter fraud. Yet each time, the coronavirus has ultimately resurged as the predominant 2020 story - a fact Joe Biden's campaign has been trying to present as America's leading problem. "I don't think Covid can truly be displaced," a former White House staffer agreed.

Still, the White House and Trump

campaign are now concentrating their messaging infrastructure on the Supreme Court confirmation battle, blanketing surrogates with talking points, dedicating social media feeds to the issue, scheduling interviews about the president's "moral" and "constitutional" duty to fill the vacancy and swiftly manufacturing "Fill That Seat" t-shirts that are now for sale on the Trump campaign website. On Facebook, the message was blasted out in ads. "FILL THAT SEAT!" blared one that began running Monday. "The President is right, we have an obligation to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court, without delay!"

Trump's campaign even turned the issue on Biden, Trump's Democratic rival, criticizing him for not releasing a list of his own potential Supreme Court nominees. They cited a pledge Biden made in June to release a list, though he didn't say when. Joe Biden is hiding his list of people he would consider if he were president," Trump

campaign communications director Tim Murtaugh said. "Biden knows that he is an empty vessel for the radical left and that's why he's refusing to be honest with the American people about who he would want on the court." Biden, who has been trying to turn the election into a referendum of Trump's handling of the coronavirus, has kept attention on the pandemic in speeches and events since Ginsburg's death. On Sunday, the Democratic National Committee erected light displays across the country that said, "Trump Lied, 200,000 Died." But by then much of the nation's attention had shifted to the nation's highest court.

"It helps Republicans for one reason - they were losing," said John Pudner, a Trump supporter who worked for Republican presidential nominees Mitt Romney in 2012 and George W. Bush in 2000 and now leads Take Back Our Republic, a group that aims to use conservative solutions for political reform.

(News Agencies)- For seven months, President Donald Trump's team has been searching for something - anything - to take the nation's attention away from the coronavirus outbreak.

His aides are hoping they finally have it.

With a Supreme Court nomination fight that will generate attention for much of the next six weeks, Trump - at least for now - has latched onto a topic his boosters believe will shift focus from the coronavirus, even as the

pandemic on Tuesday claimed its 200,000th death.

While Trump's allies and aides were careful in more than half a dozen interviews to avoid appearing as if they were celebrating the death of the Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, they all acknowledged the political windfall of the unanticipated event for a president who has seen his approval rating dip during the pandemic. One called it "super." Another said the coronavirus has now been relegated to "noise."

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- Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.



### STAY HOME IF SICK

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



### PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE

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



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## Companies shed workers, paid dividends after getting Fed aid, panel finds



(News Agencies)- The Federal Reserve has bought corporate bonds issued by companies that have laid off more than a million workers and doled out dividends to shareholders, the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis found in an analysis released Wednesday. "Fed Chair Jerome Powell testified in June that 'the intended beneficiaries of all of our programs are workers,'" the committee staff said in the analysis. "However, the Select Subcommittee's analysis indicates that many large layoffs have occurred among the companies whose bonds were

public support must always be undertaken to achieve maximum public benefit," subcommittee Chairman Jim Clyburn said in his opening statement. "I believe the terms of the Fed's purchases of corporate bonds could have been improved so that benefits were more equitably shared by workers as well as investors."

Powell in response said the central bank intended to make sure companies were able to borrow money, adding that the Fed helped encourage roughly \$1 trillion in lending in corporate and municipal bond markets just by establishing emergency programs to help both those segments of the economy.

The Fed is buying the bonds of roughly 800 companies, and there's no estimate of how many jobs have been saved by the central bank's efforts. The Fed announced in March that it would buy corporate debt in a bid to calm the bond markets, which had begun freezing up at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

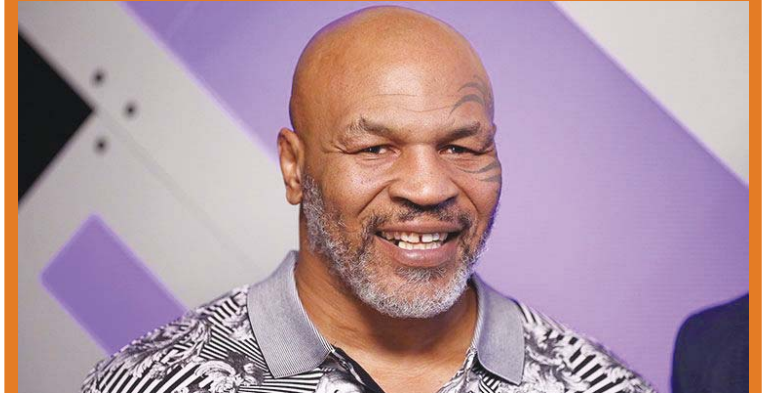
purchased by the Fed, suggesting that the primary beneficiaries of the program have been corporate executives and investors, not workers." The report found that 383 companies whose bonds were bought by the Fed paid dividends to their shareholders, including 95 that also conducted layoffs, and 227 companies had been accused of illegal conduct sometime in the past three years. "While I recognize that during severe economic crises, federal government assistance for large corporations can be necessary to support the wider economy,

## Why this year will be the first time Mike Tyson will vote

(News Agencies)- Mike Tyson, 54, has never voted before. He's changing that this election year. "This will be my 1st time voting," Tyson said in a tweet Tuesday. "I never thought I could because of my felony record. I'm proud

of his right to vote.

Many state laws throughout the US rule felons ineligible to vote. More than 6 million Americans -- about 2.5% of the nation's voting-age population -- could not vote in the 2016 election due



to finally vote."

He shared the news with his followers along with a link to register to vote and the hashtag #NationalVoterRegistrationDay. The legendary boxer was convicted and sentenced to six years in prison on one count of rape and two counts of deviant sexual conduct in 1992. He was released from prison after serving three years. The conviction stripped Tyson

of felony records, according to an estimate by The Sentencing Project, a research group that advocates for improvements to the criminal justice system. There has been a growing movement toward restoring convicted felons the right to vote on a state-by-state basis in the last few decades, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

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# Harry and Meghan urge action against hate speech ahead of US election

(News Agencies)- The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have weighed in on the upcoming US presidential vote, urging people to reject online negativity and hate speech as what Meghan described as "the most important election of our lifetime" approaches.

The couple, who now live in California, shared the remarks in a brief video message congratulating those who were named in this year's TIME 100 list of most influential people, aired in a virtual broadcast on ABC on Tuesday evening. They also honored the medical community and countless voices who are working to end injustice, according to representatives for the couple. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are alumni of TIME magazine's Time 100 list, having been named in 2018.

Harry and Meghan called on viewers around the world to act with compassion in both the physical and digital worlds, use their voices, be engaged within their communities and the civic process, and care for one another, according to their representatives.

"When one person buys into negativity online, the effects are felt exponentially. It's time to not only reflect, but act," said Harry in his video remarks.

"As we approach this November, it's vital that we reject hate speech, misinformation, and online negativity.



What we consume, what we are exposed to, and what we engage with online, has a real effect on all of us," he said.

"Every four years, we're told, 'This is the most important election of our lifetime.' But this one is," said Meghan. "When we vote our values are put into action,

and our voices are heard."

"Seeing our world through the lens of community is so important. Because we need to redraw the lines of how we engage with each other -- both online and off," she added. Tonight reminds us of how important it is to watch out for

each other, to care for each other, and to inspire each other," said Harry.

The prince noted that he would not himself be able to vote in November, since he is

not a US citizen, adding that he had also never voted in a UK election. Britain's royals customarily do not discuss political issues.

Since the couple decided to step back from their senior roles in the royal family, the Duchess of Sussex -- who retained

her US citizenship after her marriage to Harry in 2018 -- has become more outspoken on issues touching on politics.

She has already been involved in efforts this year to encourage people to turn out and vote, teaming up with figures including political activist Gloria Steinem and former First Lady Michelle Obama. The TIME 100 list of the most influential people, released each year, includes artists, scientists, activists, leaders and individuals who have had significant impact in the global community. This year's list includes: US infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci, US President Donald Trump, former Vice President and Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, Democratic vice-presidential nominee Kamala Harris, US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and World Health Organization Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

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# Trump falls into the trap he set for Biden

It's this type of expectation-setting that some of the president's allies believe he and his campaign should have engaged in all along, an approach they're now frustrated to see deployed so close to the Sept. 29 debate in Cleveland. The Trump campaign spent the bulk of this summer questioning whether "Sleepy Joe" is fit for office and accusing the Biden campaign of trying to circumvent the traditional debates to avoid a potentially embarrassing situation for their candidate.

"This idea of Biden not knowing how to debate is ridiculous. The more that expectations are lowered for him the worse," said former White House press secretary Sean Spicer.

"A lot of folks are looking for a reason to declare him the victor and now they'll be able to use Trump's words as a way to justify their verdict that Biden won," added Spicer, who believes Biden "will land a punch or two" against Trump but doubts either candidate's performance will affect the race all that much.

Ed Rollins, a veteran GOP strategist who currently runs a pro-Trump super PAC, said the Trump campaign has "so diminished" Biden that he is virtually guaranteed to be perceived as the winner once

he and Trump emerge from their first debate.

"Biden has clearly shown he can function, the bar is low and the expectations are so low, all he has to do is exceed those expectations," Rollins said.

Several Trump allies pointed to Biden's sharp debate earlier this year against Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, his last remaining opponent in the Democratic primary and a skilled sparring partner, as the clearest indication that he is capable of going toe-to-toe against the president. Biden scored slightly higher than Sanders in a poll following their March debate, where the former vice president delivered a strong case against Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic and a practical rebuke of Sanders' so-called political revolution.

"We have problems we have to solve now. What's a revolution going to do? Disrupt everything in the meantime?" asked Biden in one memorable line. Trump has been studying his opponent's past debate performances and working with a small team of advisers for several weeks to prepare for the trio of fall debates.

The president's advisers expect Biden will use the current political landscape - as voters face a battered

economy, global pandemic, social upheaval and a Supreme Court battle that is likely to sow further division on Capitol Hill - to build a case during each of the debates that Trump has created problems he is incapable of solving. While they don't expect Biden, who is prone to verbal blunders and often stumbles over his words, to maintain a strong posture for the entire 90-minute televised debate, they acknowledge that it will take only a couple of stinging soundbites and memorable zingers to surpass the bar Trump has set for him. "The danger with [Trump's] sustained attack against Biden's cognitive abilities is that he's now created a situation for himself where he has no excuse to fall back on if Biden lands a few punches and he struggles to return blows," said a Republican close to the Trump campaign. "I get why the president has gone after Biden for his age and gaffes - no reasonable person can ignore those things - but at some point he should have flipped the script to increase expectations heading into the debates," this person added. To some degree, Trump allies and campaign officials have already previewed ways in which they plan to undercut Biden and defend the president

if his opponent delivers a passable performance. Beyond attacking the substance of Biden's anticipated answers to questions about China, climate change, taxes and law enforcement - issues that campaign officials said they will pay close attention to in the first debate - they are already laying the groundwork to attack the pundit class if Biden emerges from the first debate as the declared winner.

While most of the Trump aides who spoke with POLITICO for this story conceded that the president's insistence that Biden is mentally unfit has made it easier for his opponent to do well in the first debate, they have simultaneously accused the media of predetermining the winner in next Tuesday's debate.

"People understand that the media is dying to just declare Joe Biden the winner when instead he should be judged the same way that any presidential candidate should be judged on the debate stage," said one adviser to the Trump campaign.

"It's going to be a very low bar for the Washington elite to say Biden did well and because he didn't fall down, he won. That is partly because of Trump and partly because they want to prop Biden up," added Spicer.

Others have chalked up Biden's recent performances - including his closing speech at the Democratic National Convention and his participation in a CNN town hall last week - as non-challenging. They point to his use of a teleprompter during the convention (something Trump also used in his own acceptance speech for the Republican nomination) or, in the case of the televised town hall in Scranton, Pa., argue that he was handed softball questions.

"Virtually every question for Joe Biden was an invitation for him to attack President Trump, while moderator Anderson Cooper offered almost no pushback, giving Biden a total pass on his lies and misrepresentations," said the Trump campaign in a statement after Biden's appearance on the network.

Another Trump supporter accused Biden of receiving advance notice of the questions in a bid to rationalize his performance last week. "Looks to me that Biden had an idea of what the questions would be, at least areas of questioning," tweeted former Fox News host Bill O'Reilly during the town hall. In a subsequent tweet, O'Reilly said he had "simply tweeted an observation."

## A wake-up call: There is a crisis in India's schools

***Covid has hit incomes. Parents are unable to pay fees. Schools, in turn, are blocking children from classes and exams. The government must step in***

There is a crisis unfolding in India's education sector that has barely got the attention of either the media or the government. Children, some younger than 10 years, are being thrown out of online classes at some of our poshest, most prestigious schools, as many parents struggle to pay the fees.

For the last two weeks, I have been tracking and chronicling the stories of these parents. In the Capital's Delhi Public School (DPS)?at Mathura Road, a group of parents have spent the last several days camping and protesting at the gates; they have been prevented from even entering. A couple who requested

anonymity ("we fear our child will be embarrassed or punished by the school") has been struggling with the coronavirus pandemic; the father tested positive. The last few months have been a period of enormous hardship. Both their daughters are students at DPS in Delhi. According to the parents, both children have been blocked from online classes and were thrown out summarily in front of the other students. They also say that at least 250 students were locked out of online classes and school WhatsApp forums over the issue of non-payment of fees.

Finally, the school proposed that a minimum of two months

fees must be paid. Some managed, some dipped into their savings and others who still could not pay up had to face the trauma of their children not just being locked out online classes, but key internal exams as well. I have personally corroborated this by speaking to at least half a dozen parents.

DPS is not the only school where a serious battle is simmering between the parents and the school management. Vaibhav Garg in Uttar Pradesh lost his job in May and received his last salary up until the end of March. His wife is self-employed in a small business that barely has any earnings.



He has been requesting his children's private school to charge only the tuition fees and not the full package, but to no avail. He told me that they are able to manage at the moment because of the moratorium on EMI payments. Once that lifts, there is no way he can pay full school fees and repay his loans. With no jobs in the market, he considers himself blessed that the household already owned two laptops for

his children's online classes. "If I needed to purchase a laptop, I don't have the money today."

His story is a grim reminder that only 11% of homes in India have any computing devices. The digital divide is only being compounded by the contracting economy. For many parents, coming out and speaking about the struggle to pay their children's fees is difficult.



# Punjab sows but will not reap

The soul of India lives in her villages, as was declared by the Mahatma. So, when laws are passed affecting the underlying substratum of agrarian life, there is bound to be turmoil. While legally permissible, the fact that the government first tried to sneak in these laws through ordinances as opposed to a properly debated legislation weakened confidence in them. There was after all no emergency need for such legislation through an ordinance. The ordinance had stated that "the President is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action". One wonders what these urgent circumstances might have been. The fact that these ordinances have then been subsequently legitimised through legislation has not cured the trust deficit into which they were born. **AGRICULTURE A STATE SUBJECT**

Apart from being labelled anti-farmer, pro-big conglomerate, questionable price protection mechanisms, these laws throw up a gamut of issues from the legal perspective. Agriculture is purely a state subject; so says entry 14 of List II of the seventh schedule to the Constitution. As is fisheries at entry 21, trade and commerce within the state at entry 26 and

markets at entry 28. Even the non-existent taxes on farm income's at entry 46. Hence, Parliament possesses no legal competence to enact such law and this is strictly within the legislative dominion of the state governments.

Ironically, the legislation states that it is to provide the freedom of choice relating to sale and purchase of farm produce and inter-state and intra-state trade.



This no doubt drags it under entry 42 of the Union List of matters in the Constitution for which Parliament can legislate. But this choice was always there. We did not need a new law to affirm this.

A farmer in Punjab was free to sell his produce in Haryana; as was a farmer from Himachal Pradesh free to trade in Punjab.

And, they did so. The legislation first sets up a superfluous objective to justify itself, and then pretends to achieve it.

Even the body of the legislation betrays signs of having been stretched to, on the one hand, retrofit itself into legal parameters of Parliament's legislative competence and on the other hand achieve the intended aim of substituting the

state's power of regulation of agro markets and produce.

Since Parliament's limited concurrent power to legislate under entry 33 of List III is confined to inter-state trade of "foodstuffs", the law through the definition of "farmers produce" includes "foodstuffs such as wheat, rice, or other coarse grains, pulses".

**FINANCIALLY CRIPPLING EFFECT** By creating the definition of "scheduled farmed produce" which covers produce which is otherwise regulated by the state Acts, it directly impinges on the state's power to regulate such produce. The convoluted definition of "trade area" when distilled means that but for mandis and other private markets under the existing state Act, virtually any and every part of the state of Punjab is a trade area and governed by this Central legislation.

The financially crippling effect of this is achieved through Section 6 which prohibits the states from imposing any market fee on such a "trade area", effectively saying that the state can no longer impose a market fee on trade conducted in the physical space of its own state. This is nothing short of a territorial invasion through legislative action. A veritable Trojan Act.

**APMC HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME**

Nor was any of this necessary. Punjab already has the Agricultural Produce Markets Act, 1961, (APMC), which has stood the test of time. Despite its rustic origins, the mandis governed by the Mandi Board have grown organically to take care of the needs of all concerned; a perfect marriage of free trade and regulation. The

necessity of being licensed to trade (just as in any other regulated activity) creates an umbrella of oversight and accountability. This is gravely missing in the new law.

Dispute resolution being conducted by/through the market committees has the local persuasive value that may not be completely substitutable by another system. For a farmer who may not have the confidence of a city education or a distribution network, a familiar face is often the impetus for ease of trade. There are numerous safety checks in the state Act missing in the Central law.

The true mission of this legislation is to what any state would loath, the decimation of the local market system and the abolition of the state/district mandi boards. The true purpose of legislation should be either to protect its citizen's rights or to govern more effectively. It should never be used as a medium of subterfuge much less as a political weapon. It is unfortunate that this weapon is being fired off the shoulders of those who are perhaps the most fragile class of all: Farmers. They deserve a better harvest than this. [an@atulnanda.com](mailto:an@atulnanda.com)

## The Nehruvian imprint on Indus Waters Treaty

The three eastern rivers (Beas, Ravi and Sutlej) with a mean annual flow of 33 million-acre feet (maf) went to India while the control of over 80 maf of waters of the western rivers (Indus, Chenab and Jhelum) was granted to Pakistan. In terms of volume, however, 80.52% of water went to Pakistan and only 19.48% came to India. The ratio of 4:1 favoured Pakistan and India's initial demand for 25% was raised in the Lok Sabha as a failure of its negotiations.

Many newspapers in India castigated the government for giving in to Pakistan and making "concessions after concessions". Some parliamentarians felt that had India conceded to Pakistan's water requirements in 1948, as a "human consideration", the Treaty would possibly not have been required. As things developed, Pakistan's demand became bigger and bolder. "I wish," said Harish Mathur, a Congressman from Rajasthan, in the Lok Sabha, "our government takes note of the

feeling in this country. It is not that our over-generousness should be at the cost of the development of this country."

As the debate grew, Nehru was presented with some uncomfortable facts. First, the unfairness of the terms; second, the cost of the replacement of canal works; and, third, the overall context of India-Pakistan relations. Of the cultivable land in India, only 19% had irrigation facilities while in Pakistan it was 54%. Fundamentally, therefore, India was left with less-irrigated land and even fewer irrigation facilities. This could hardly be justified as fair to India. "It is a kind of second partition which we are experiencing...this is being done again with the signature of our honourable prime minister," argued Ashok Mehta of the Praja Socialist Party.

The money allocated was equally disadvantageous. Pakistan was to get grants and

not loans of about ₹400 crore of the ₹450 crore required to build its link canals; India would get ₹27 crore of the overall requirement of ₹100 crore to build infrastructure. The money was to be given as loans and not grants - ₹15 crore from the United States (US) and ₹12 crore from WB. But this was not all. India's commitment to pay ₹83 crore to Pakistan in pound sterling, without settling earlier financial dues with that country was incomprehensible to the Lok Sabha. Considering the desperate foreign exchange position in India, it was foolhardy to agree to this. In terms of adjustment of debts that Pakistan owed India, only ₹6 crore as dues for the waters that India spared over the years was adjusted. Despite all this, Nehru had a different take. He felt he was looking at the larger foreign policy picture. He emphasised, "It is the context

that we have to consider, not a particular bit." In the political environment of the 1950s, Nehru was not averse to reaching out for peace and tranquillity. These were requisites, he strongly felt, for the stability and development that India desired. It was not that he was blinded by reconciliation with Pakistan. After all, in 1959, when Ayub Khan advocated a "common defence" in which both India and Pakistan would come together to guard the subcontinent, Indian leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan and C Rajagopalachari welcomed the idea. Even General KM Cariappa was not entirely opposed to this. It was Nehru who cold-shouldered it by famously retorting "defence against whom?". In the case of the Treaty, however, he felt it was a price worth paying and expressed his disappointment that the House treated it with such "a narrow-minded spirit" and tactfully praised the engineers "who fought for India's interest strenuously" to take the heat off the debate. However much Nehru tried

to separate himself as the proponent of a broad perspective from the nitty-gritty of negotiations, there was an undeniable Nehruvian internationalist mindset to the whole water issue with Pakistan. His ideals of oneness though clashed with the realities of power politics and interest-oriented relations which he understood, but adamantly refused to accept. The goodwill and friendship that India hoped to gain from the generosity and sacrifice it had shown to Pakistan were belied by Khan's statements. Soon after signing the Treaty, he talked about the physical possession of the upper reaches of the Indus basin rivers. The Indus Waters Treaty may have prevented "another Korea", as WB had anxiously observed, but it did not fundamentally change Pakistan's lower riparian angst nor in its perception of the upper riparian dominance of India.



# Global banks defy U.S. crackdowns by serving oligarchs, criminals and terrorists

(SAI Bureau) Secret U.S. government documents reveal that JPMorgan Chase, HSBC and other big banks have defied money laundering crackdowns by moving staggering sums of illicit cash for shadowy characters and criminal networks that have spread chaos and undermined democracy around the world.

The records show that five global banks - JPMorgan, HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, Deutsche Bank and Bank of New York Mellon - kept profiting from powerful and dangerous players even after U.S. authorities fined these financial institutions for earlier failures to stem flows of dirty money.

U.S. agencies responsible for enforcing money laundering laws rarely prosecute megabanks that break the law, and the actions authorities do take barely ripple the flood of plundered money that washes through the international financial system.

In some cases the banks kept moving illicit funds even after U.S. officials warned them they'd face criminal prosecutions if they didn't stop doing business with mobsters, fraudsters or corrupt regimes.

JPMorgan, the largest bank based in the United States, moved money for people and companies tied to the massive looting of public funds in Malaysia, Venezuela and Ukraine, the leaked documents reveal.

The bank moved more than \$1 billion for the fugitive financier behind Malaysia's 1MDB scandal, the records show, and more than \$2 million for a young energy mogul's company that has been accused of cheating Venezuela's government and helping cause electrical blackouts that crippled large parts of the country.

JPMorgan also processed more than \$50 million in payments over a decade, the records show, for Paul Manafort, the former campaign manager for President Donald Trump. The bank shuttled at least \$6.9 million in Manafort transactions in the 14 months after he resigned from the campaign amid a swirl of money laundering and corruption allegations spawning from his work with a pro-Russian political party in Ukraine.

Tainted transactions continued to surge through accounts at JPMorgan despite the bank's promises to improve its money

laundering controls as part of settlements it reached with U.S. authorities in 2011, 2013 and 2014.

In response to questions for this story, JPMorgan said it was legally prohibited from discussing clients or transactions. It said it has taken a "leadership role" in pursuing "proactive" and "innovative technology" to combat financial crime. HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, Deutsche Bank, Bank of New York Mellon and JPMorgan continued to violate U.S. law, suspect payments and similar promises to U.S. authorities, documents show. The leaked documents as the FinCEN

more than 2,100 suspicious activity reports filed by banks and other financial firms with the U.S. Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. The agency, known in shorthand as FinCEN, is an intelligence unit at the heart of the global system to fight money laundering.

BuzzFeed News obtained the records and shared them with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. ICIJ organized a team of more than 400 journalists from 110 news organizations in 88 countries to investigate the world of banks and money laundering.

In all, an ICIJ analysis found, the documents identify more than \$2 trillion in transactions between 1999 and 2017 that were flagged by financial institutions' internal compliance officers as possible money laundering or other criminal activity - including \$514 billion at JPMorgan and \$1.3 trillion at Deutsche Bank.

Suspicious activity reports reflect the concerns of watchdogs within banks and are not necessarily evidence of criminal conduct or other wrongdoing.

**Financial institutions have abandoned their roles as front-line defenses against money laundering. - Paul Pelletier**

Though a vast amount, the \$2 trillion in suspicious transactions identified within this set of documents is just a drop in a far larger flood of dirty money gushing through banks around the world. The FinCEN Files represent less than 0.02% of the more than 12 million suspicious activity reports that financial institutions filed with FinCEN

between 2011 and 2017.

FinCEN and its parent, the Treasury Department, did not answer a series of questions sent last month by ICIJ and its partners. FinCEN told BuzzFeed News that it does not comment on the "existence or non-existence" of specific suspicious



being involved in potentially illicit transactions.

Along with sifting through the FinCEN Files, ICIJ and its media partners obtained more than 17,600 other records from insiders and whistleblowers, court files, freedom-of-information requests and other sources. The team interviewed hundreds of people, including financial crime experts, law enforcement officials and crime victims.

According to BuzzFeed News, some of the secret records were requested as part of U.S. congressional investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Others were gathered by FinCEN following requests from law enforcement agencies, BuzzFeed said.

The FinCEN Files offer unprecedented insight into a secret world of international banking, anonymous clients and, in many cases, financial crime. They show banks blindly moving cash through their accounts for people they can't identify, failing to report transactions with all the hallmarks of money laundering until years after the fact, even doing business with clients enmeshed in financial frauds and public corruption scandals.

Authorities in the U.S., who play a leading role in the global battle against money laundering, have ordered big banks to reform their practices, fined them hundreds of millions and even billions of dollars, and held threats of criminal charges over them as part of so-called deferred prosecution agreements.

A 16-month investigation by ICIJ and its reporting partners shows

that these headline-making tactics haven't worked. Big banks continue to play a central role in moving money tied to corruption, fraud, organized crime and terrorism.

"By utterly failing to prevent large-scale corrupt transactions, financial institutions have abandoned their roles as front-line defenses against money laundering," Paul Pelletier, a former senior U.S. Justice Department official and financial crimes prosecutor, told ICIJ. He said banks know that "they operate in a system that is largely toothless."

Five of the banks that appear most often in the FinCEN Files - Deutsche Bank, Bank of New York Mellon, Standard Chartered, JPMorgan and HSBC - repeatedly violated their official promises of good behavior, the secret records show.

In 2012, London-based HSBC, the largest bank in Europe, signed a deferred prosecution deal and admitted it had laundered at least \$881 million for Latin American drug cartels. Narcotraffickers used specially shaped boxes that fit HSBC's teller windows to drop off the huge amounts of drug money they were pushing through the financial system.

Under the deal with prosecutors, HSBC paid \$1.9 billion and the government agreed to put criminal charges against the bank on hold and dismiss them after five years if HSBC kept its pledge to aggressively fight the flow of dirty money.

During that five-year probationary period, the FinCEN Files show, HSBC continued to move money for questionable characters, including suspected Russian money launderers and a Ponzi scheme under investigation in multiple countries.

Yet the government allowed HSBC to announce in December 2017 that it had "lived up to all of its commitments" under its deferred prosecution pact - and that prosecutors were dismissing the criminal charges for good.

In a statement to ICIJ, HSBC declined to answer questions about specific customers or transactions. HSBC said ICIJ's information is "historic and predates" the end of its five-year deferred prosecution deal. During that time, the bank said, it "embarked on a multi-year journey to overhaul its ability to combat financial crime. . . . HSBC is a much safer institution

than it was in 2012."

HSBC noted that in deciding to release the bank from the threat of criminal charges, the government had access to reports from a monitor who reviewed the bank's reforms and practices.

The Department of Justice declined to answer specific questions. In a statement, a spokesperson for the department's criminal division said:

"The Department of Justice stands by its work, and remains committed to aggressively investigating and prosecuting financial crime - including money laundering - wherever we find it." **'Everyone is doing badly': Dirty money swamps bureaucrats**

Money laundering isn't a victimless crime.

The free flow of dirty cash helps sustain criminal gangs and destabilize nations. And it is a driver of global economic inequality. Laundered funds are often shunted between accounts owned by obscure shell companies registered in secretive offshore tax havens, allowing elites to hide massive sums from law enforcement and tax authorities.

An ICIJ analysis found that banks in the FinCEN files regularly processed transactions to companies registered in so-called secrecy jurisdictions and did so without knowing the ultimate owner of the account. At least 20% of the reports contained a client with an address in one of the world's top offshore financial havens, the British Virgin Islands, while many others provided addresses in the U.K., the U.S., Cyprus, Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates, Russia and Switzerland.

ICIJ's analysis found that in half of the reports banks didn't have information about one or more entities behind the transactions. In 160 reports, banks sought more information about corporate vehicles, only to be met with no response.

Estimates by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime indicate that \$2.4 trillion in illicit funds are laundered each year - the equivalent of nearly 2.7% of all goods and services produced annually in the world. But the agency estimates that authorities detect less than 1% of the world's dirty money.

"Everyone is doing badly," David Lewis, executive secretary of the



Paris-based Financial Action Task Force, a partnership of governments around the world that sets anti-money laundering standards, acknowledged in an interview with ICIJ.

His organization's country-evaluation reports - which dig into how well banks and government agencies meet anti-money-laundering laws and regulations - show lots of box-checking but little practical progress. Many countries seem more concerned with looking good on paper than actually cracking down on money laundering, he said. Even an association of the world's biggest banks complained last year that regulators focus on "technical compliance" rather than whether systems "are really making a difference in the fight against financial crime."

#### A Bombing in Jerusalem

For some financial institutions, the problem client is another bank.

One early morning in 2003 Steven Averbach was on the No. 6 bus in Jerusalem, when a man rushed to board as the bus pulled away.

"There were too many things out of place" with the man, recalled Averbach, who grew up in New Jersey but immigrated to Israel as a teenager. The man wore long black pants, a white shirt and a black jacket, the typical garb of an Orthodox Jew. But he wore "tipped shoes" that didn't fit with the Orthodox sect dress, and his jacket was bulging.

In his right hand was a device that looked like a doorbell.

Averbach, who had previously served as chief weapons instructor for the Jerusalem police force, drew his sidearm. But as the ex-cop turned to face the man, "he detonated himself," Averbach later testified in a video deposition.

The blast killed seven and wounded 20 others, leaving Averbach paralyzed from the neck down. He died in 2010 of complications from the long-term effects of his injuries.

By then, he and his family had become plaintiffs in a lawsuit in the U.S. accusing a Jordanian financial institution, Arab Bank, of moving funds that helped bankroll terrorists involved in the bus bombing and other attacks. The FinCEN Files show that as the litigation was casting a shadow over Arab Bank, it was benefiting from a working relationship with a much bigger, more influential bank: Standard Chartered.

The U.K.-headquartered bank helped Arab Bank clients access the U.S. financial system after regulators found deficiencies in Arab Bank's money laundering

controls in 2005 and forced it to curtail its money-transfer activities in the U.S.

Standard Chartered continued its relationship with Arab Bank as the lawsuit against the Jordanian bank worked its way through U.S. courts - and even after American authorities put Standard Chartered on notice that it must stop processing transactions for suspect clients.

acknowledging the bank's dealings with Arab Bank up to a few days after the verdict in Brooklyn and expressing concerns about "potential terrorist financing."

But that wasn't the end of it.

Standard Chartered shifted nearly \$12 million more in transactions for Arab Bank customers from just after the verdict until February 2016, according to a follow-up

bank continues to fulfil its regulatory obligations" while exiting accounts.

Arab Bank noted it "enjoys a longstanding relationship with Standard Chartered" that "continues today."

Standard Chartered no longer processes U.S. dollar transactions for Arab Bank, but it still provides other banking services for the Jordanian

enforcement actions, to move money for people involved in alleged financial crimes, the FinCEN Files show.

Among them: Jho Low, a financier accused by authorities in multiple countries of being the mastermind behind the embezzlement of more than \$4.5 billion from a Malaysian economic development fund, called 1Malaysia Development Berhad, or 1MDB. He moved just over \$1.2 billion through JPMorgan from 2013 to 2016, the records show.

Low first gained notoriety for partying with Paris Hilton, Leonardo DiCaprio and other celebrities. One night at a club on the French Riviera, he got into a bidding war over a cache of Cristal champagne - winning the contest with a final bid of 2 million euros, according to "Billion Dollar Whale," a bestselling book about the 1MDB swindle.

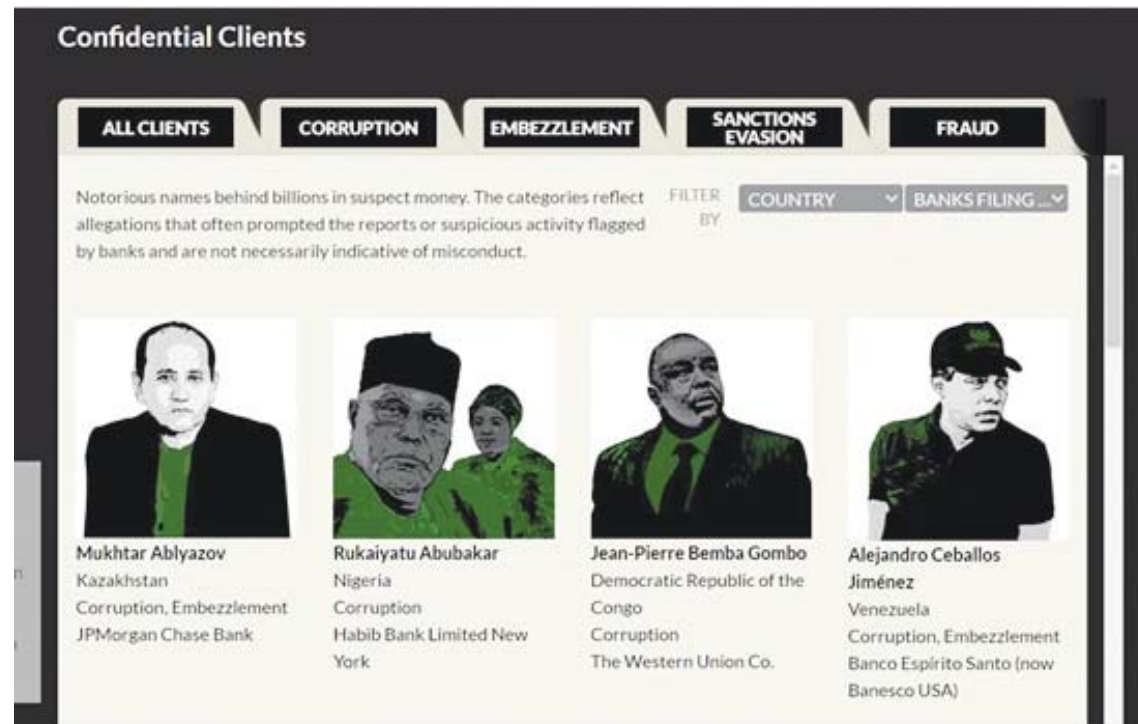
He was first outed by media reports in early 2015 as a key figure in the 1MDB scandal, the so-called "heist of the century." Singapore issued a warrant for his arrest in April 2016. Authorities in the U.S., Malaysia and Singapore are seeking his capture.

JPMorgan also moved money for companies and people tied to corruption scandals in Venezuela that have helped create one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. One in three Venezuelans is not getting enough to eat, the UN reported this year, and millions have fled the country.

One of the Venezuelans who got help from JPMorgan was Alejandro "Piojo" Isturiz, a former government official who has been charged by U.S. authorities as a player in an international money laundering scheme. Prosecutors allege that between 2011 and 2013 Isturiz and others solicited bribes to rig government energy contracts. The bank moved more than \$63 million for companies linked to Isturiz and the money laundering scheme between 2012 and 2016, the FinCEN Files show.

Isturiz could not be reached for comment.

The secret records show that JPMorgan also provided banking services to Derwick Associates, an energy firm that won billions of dollars in no-bid contracts to repair Venezuela's failing electricity grid. A 2018 analysis by the Venezuelan chapter of the nonprofit group Transparency International concluded that Derwick Associates failed to deliver the power capacity expected - and overbilled the Venezuelan government by at least \$2.9 billion.



New York regulators concluded in 2012 that Standard Chartered had "schemed with the Government of Iran" for nearly a decade to push through \$250 billion in secret transactions, reaping "hundreds of millions of dollars in fees" and leaving "the U.S. financial system vulnerable to terrorists, weapons dealers, drug kingpins and corrupt regimes." This pattern of conduct cost Standard Chartered nearly \$670 million in penalties in the second half of 2012 as part of two deferred prosecution agreements and other deals with New York and U.S. authorities.

Despite its official pledges to stay away from suspect customers, Standard Chartered processed 2,055 transactions totaling more than \$24 million for Arab Bank customers between September 2013 and September 2014, the FinCEN Files show.

Then, in late September 2014, Standard Chartered got another reason to back away from Arab Bank. In the lawsuit stemming from the 2003 Jerusalem bus bombing and other attacks, a jury in Brooklyn found Arab Bank liable for knowingly supporting terrorism by transmitting money disguised as charitable donations for the benefit of Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that the U.S. classifies as a terrorist organization.

More than a year later, compliance staffers at Standard Chartered sent FinCEN a suspicious activity report

suspicious activity report included in the FinCEN Files. Many wires referred to "charities," "donations," "support" or "gifts," the bank said.

The follow-up report noted that the payment records raised concerns - as in the Brooklyn trial - that "illicit activities" were being potentially funded "under the guise of charity."

The civil verdict against Arab Bank was overturned when an appeals court found flaws in the trial judge's jury instructions. Arab Bank then settled with nearly 600 victims and victims' relatives for an undisclosed amount.

In a statement, Arab Bank told ICIJ it "abhors terrorism and does not support or encourage terrorist activities." The bank said that allegations against it date back nearly 20 years to a time when anti-money-laundering laws, tools and technologies were different than they are now.

"In every country where it operates, Arab Bank is in good standing with government regulators and complies with anti-terrorism and money laundering laws," the bank said. The 2005 U.S. regulatory limits against the bank were formally lifted in 2018. Standard Chartered told the BBC, a partner of ICIJ, that it "initiated account closure" in connection to Arab Bank shortly after the jury verdict. "This process can take time in some cases," the bank said, "but in all cases the

financial institution, Arab Bank told ICIJ.

#### Rewards and risks

Why do banks move suspect money? Because it's profitable. Banks can pad their bottom lines with the fees they collect as money spins through the webs of accounts often maintained by corrupt users of the financial system. JPMorgan, for example, scored an estimated half a billion dollars in revenues by serving as the chief banker to Bernie Madoff, according to filings in the bankruptcy case spawned by the collapse of his multi-billion-dollar Ponzi scheme. Dealing with shady customers does carry risks.

JPMorgan paid \$88.3 million in 2011 to settle regulators' claims that it had violated economic sanctions against Iran and other countries under U.S. embargoes. Treasury officials hit the bank with a "cease and desist" order in 2013 that described "systemic deficiencies" in its anti-money-laundering efforts, noting the bank had "failed to identify significant volumes of suspicious activity."

Then, in January 2014, the bank paid \$2.6 billion to U.S. agencies to settle investigations over its role in Madoff's scheme. JPMorgan posted profits of more than double that amount in just that quarter on its way to nearly \$22 billion in profits for the year. Madoff pleaded guilty and is serving a 150-year sentence in federal prison.

JPMorgan continued, after those



Alejandro Betancourt was in his 20s when he co-founded Derwick with a younger cousin.

News articles and Internet postings from 2011 raised allegations about Derwick. The company later filed a lawsuit that claimed it was the victim of a smear campaign that falsely accused it of being part of a "criminal group." The suit was settled on undisclosed terms.

The FinCEN Files show that Derwick used accounts at JPMorgan to move at least \$2.1 million in 2011 and 2012 and that the bank processed other transactions of undisclosed amounts for Derwick and its managers at least into 2013.

In 2018, the U.S. Justice Department charged a senior Derwick executive, Francisco Convit Guruceaga, in an alleged \$1.2 billion bribery and money-laundering scheme. Betancourt was cited in the criminal complaint as an unnamed co-conspirator, the Miami Herald, an ICIJ partner, later reported.

A lawyer for Betancourt said: "My client denies any wrongdoing." Convit's attorney declined to comment.

In a general statement, JPMorgan noted that it had acknowledged in 2014 that it needed to improve its anti-money-laundering controls and that since then it has invested heavily toward this effort.

"Today, thousands of employees and hundreds of millions of dollars are devoted to helping support law enforcement and national security efforts," the bank said.

#### 'Boss of bosses'

Often, the secret files show, banks handling cross-border transactions have little idea who they're dealing with - even when they're shifting hundreds of millions of dollars.

Take the case of a mysterious shell company called ABSI Enterprises. ABSI sent and received more than \$1 billion in transactions through JPMorgan between January 2010 and July 2015, the FinCEN Files show.

This amount included transactions through a direct bank account with JPMorgan, which ABSI closed in 2013, and through so-called correspondent banking arrangements, in which a bank with significant U.S. operations, such as JPMorgan, allows foreign banks to process U.S. dollar transactions through its own accounts.

Compliance watchdogs based at the bank's Columbus, Ohio, operations hub decided to try to figure out ABSI's actual owner in 2015 after a Russian news site reported that a similarly-named shell company - which JPMorgan's records indicated

was the parent of ABSI - was linked to an underworld figure named Semion Mogilevich.

Mogilevich has been described as the "Boss of Bosses" of Russia mafia groups. When the FBI put him on its Top Ten Most Wanted list in 2009, it said his criminal network was involved in weapons and drug trafficking,



extortion and contract murders. The chain-smoking, beefy Ukrainian's signature method of neutralizing an enemy, The Guardian once reported, is the car bomb.

The records show the compliance officers searched in vain through their files on the shell company, unable to determine who was behind the firm or what its true purpose was. While those details still remain unclear, JPMorgan had plenty of reasons to examine ABSI years earlier: it operated as a shell company in Cyprus, considered a major money laundering center at the time, and it was directing hundreds of millions of dollars through JPMorgan.

Mogilevich is featured in "World's Most Wanted," a Netflix documentary series released in August.

Through a spokesperson, Mogilevich said he had no knowledge of ABSI.

He has previously said: "I am not a leader or an active participant of any criminal group."

#### The mighty dollar

BuzzFeed News used the cache of suspicious activity reports in 2018 to publish stories revealing secret payments to shell companies controlled by Manafort, who is now serving a federal prison sentence in home confinement in a case based largely on these transactions.

A former U.S. Treasury Department official, Natalie Mayflower Sours Edwards, pleaded guilty in January to conspiring to unlawfully disclose FinCEN documents to BuzzFeed News.

BuzzFeed News has not commented on its source.

FinCEN and other U.S. agencies play an outsized role in anti-money-laundering efforts around the world, largely because money launderers and other criminals share the same goal as many bank customers who operate across borders: moving U.S.



dollars, the de facto global currency, between account holders in different countries.

An elite group of mostly U.S. and European banks with large operations in New York pocket fees for performing this trick, drawing on their privileged access to the U.S. Federal Reserve. These banks' U.S. operations can also help turn local money into U.S. dollars, another key money laundering goal.

American law entrusts banks with frontline responsibility to prevent money laundering, even though their financial incentives run entirely in the direction of keeping money - dirty or clean - moving. While banks are empowered to stop a transaction if it appears to be shady, they're not necessarily required to do so. They simply have to file a suspicious activity report with FinCEN.

FinCEN, which has roughly 270 employees, collects and sifts through more than two million new suspicious activity reports each year from banks and other financial firms. It shares information with U.S. law enforcement agencies and with financial intelligence units in other countries.

#### Long gone

Inside big banks, systems for sniffing out illicit cash flows rely on overworked, under-resourced staffers, who typically work in back offices far from headquarters and have little clout within their organizations. Documents in the FinCEN Files show compliance workers at major banks often resort to basic

Google searches to try to learn who's behind transfers involving hundreds of millions of dollars.

As a result, the secret documents show, banks frequently file suspicious activity reports only after a transaction or customer becomes the subject of a negative news article or a government inquiry - usually



after the money is long gone.

In interviews with ICIJ and BuzzFeed, more than a dozen former compliance officers at HSBC called into question the effectiveness of the bank's anti-money-laundering programs. Some said the bank didn't give them enough time to do much beyond cursory looks at large flows of cash - and that when they requested information about who was behind big transactions, HSBC branches outside the U.S. often ignored them.

"They would say: 'Sure, we'll get back to you.' But they'd never get back," recalls Alexis Grullon, who monitored international suspicious activity for HSBC in New York from 2012 to 2014.

At Standard Chartered Bank, a lawsuit filed in December 2019 in federal court in New York claims, employees who objected to illegal transactions weren't ignored - they were threatened, harassed and fired.

Julian Knight and Anshuman Chandra claim in the suit that they were forced out of management jobs at the bank after it learned they had cooperated with an FBI probe into transfers of money that Standard Chartered had pushed through for U.S.-sanctioned entities from Iran, Libya, Sudan and Myanmar. Standard Chartered, the suit claims, engaged in a "highly sophisticated money laundering scheme," altering the names of parties subject to U.S. sanctions on transaction documents and creating a technological workaround that allowed illegal transactions to slip through the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank

undetected.

Chandra, who worked in the bank's Dubai branch from 2011 to 2016, concluded that the sanctions busting helped bankroll terror attacks "that killed and wounded soldiers serving in the U.S.-led coalition, as well as many innocent civilians."

The suit says the scheme allowed the bank to profit from the "high premium" that Iran and its operatives were willing to pay to convert Iranian rials - the country's sanctions-depressed currency - into dollars.

"You can run a show like this probably for a few months without being caught if it's a small group running it within the bank," Chandra said in an interview with ICIJ partner BuzzFeed News. "But something like this happening over a period of years and coming into billions of dollars - someone at the top should have asked the question: How are we making this money?"

Chandra and Knight claim that the bank acknowledged only a fraction of its violations and lied about when illegal transactions had stopped when it came forward and admitted sanctions violations as part of its 2012 deferred prosecution deal with U.S. authorities.

The agency extended the bank's probationary period again and again over several years. Then, in 2019, the bank paid \$1.1 billion more for continuing violations of sanctions against Iran and other countries and agreed to extend its deferred prosecution pact for two more years.

In court papers, Standard Chartered says the ex-employees' allegations are implausible and meritless. In a statement to ICIJ, the bank said: "These false allegations have been thoroughly discredited by the U.S. authorities who undertook a comprehensive investigation into the claims."

The bank noted that a U.S. judge had dismissed a related lawsuit in July. In that case, U.S. prosecutors said in a legal filing that federal agencies couldn't find evidence to support Knight's claim that Standard Chartered had continued violating sanctions on behalf Iranian clients after 2007.

#### 'I am dying': Ukraine, JPMorgan and the kleptocrats

Twenty-one-year-old Olesia Zhukovska took a bullet in the fight against corruption in Ukraine.

She'd been working as a nurse in western Ukraine in late 2013 when protests broke out in the heart of Kyiv, the capital. During the regime of President Viktor Yanukovich, billions of dollars were being smuggled out of the



country - channeled through far-off accounts at some of the world's biggest banks.

Demonstrators protested their leaders' tilt toward Russia and the high-level corruption that was wrecking the country's economy, its schools, its health system. Ukrainians were dying, patient advocates said, because money intended for life-saving medicines and equipment was being stolen by insiders.

Zhukovska says she couldn't afford the \$3,000 bribe it would take to get a job in an urban hospital. She worked instead at a rural health center with no heat, no medicines. "Nothing," she says. The structure "looked like an old ruin."

In December 2013, she joined growing anti-government rallies in Kyiv, volunteering to treat demonstrators beaten by baton-swinging government forces.

She was sorting bandages on Feb. 20, 2014, when a sniper's bullet tore into her neck. It hit less than an inch, she says, from her carotid artery.

As an ambulance rushed her to the hospital, she tweeted: "I am dying."

It was the day of what became known as the "Snipers' Massacre." When the day ended, Zhukovska had survived, but dozens of others had been killed by rooftop police snipers who rained fire on protesters.

Zhukovska's tale of struggle and pain is similar to the stories of average people around the world who suffer as corrupt politicians and their cronies - in Ukraine and beyond - enrich themselves with the help of name-brand banks with global footprints.

As the young nurse was still healing in a hospital in early 2014, Yanukovych fled the country. So did his closest adviser, Chief of Staff Andriy Klyuyev, who had emerged as a despised face of the crackdown. Both ended up in exile in Russia. Both are wanted by Ukrainian authorities and under U.S. sanctions that accuse them of embezzling public funds and subverting Ukrainian democracy. An investigation later found that a solar energy group run by Klyuyev's family, Activ Solar, made off with hundreds of millions of dollars in what were purportedly loans from government-owned banks. Its assets were funneled into a network of offshore companies controlled by Klyuyev family members, according to a report by Ukraine's Financial Intelligence Unit as part of a multinational investigation into the Yanukovych regime.

The Activ Solar affair was part of an orgy of corruption under Yanukovych that included a network of companies linked to Klyuyev's brother, Serhiy, buying

Ukraine's presidential palace, the Mezhyhirya estate, where Yanukovych lived, for a rock-bottom price. The palace - with a zoo complete with ostriches and a replica of a Spanish galleon for cruises on the Dnieper River - became a symbol of the regime's decadence.

As always, corrupt proceeds need a place to hide. On the way, most pass through Lower Manhattan.

#### Lingerie and knee Boots

In January 2010, the same time Yanukovych was winning the first round of Ukraine's presidential election, someone incorporated a new company at the U.K.'s

\$200,000 for "lingerie" from a British Virgin Islands company ... \$34,000 for "keyboard stickers" from a Hong Kong firm ... almost \$400,000 on "knee-boots" from another Hong Kong company.

Yet as NoviRex moved millions of dollars through the global banking system, its financial statements - available online from Companies House - indicated it was basically moribund, spending less than \$2,500 a year.

NoviRex sent all its payments from banks in notorious money-laundering centers, including Latvia's ABLV Bank.



corporate registry, Companies House, a government office long criticized for granting legitimacy to companies with secret owners.

The new company, NoviRex Sales LLP, claimed to be in the "domestic appliances" business, but its paperwork suggested something else was going on.

It listed its official address as a small shop in Cardiff, Wales. Recently occupied by a nail salon, the same address was used by hundreds of other companies registered at Companies House.

NoviRex's listed owners were two other companies, both incorporated in the British Virgin Islands and also without visible owners. The same two BVI companies were listed as "owners" of thousands more companies at Companies House - many registered to the same shop in Cardiff.

Records show that the two companies that owned NoviRex also owned companies linked in news reports to suspected bid-rigging and other corrupt acts, much of it centering on Ukraine. The FinCEN Files show NoviRex soon began firing off payments of astonishing size and frequency. For a domestic appliances business, some of the reasons NoviRex gave for the payments were strange:

But to move dollars internationally, NoviRex needed more than dodgy Latvian banks. It needed a global institution with access to accounts with the New York branch of the U.S. Federal Reserve System.

NoviRex needed JPMorgan Chase.

#### The Middleman

With roots dating to American Revolutionary era figures Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, the global banking behemoth provided ABLV with a U.S. dollar account in New York, allowing the Latvian bank to, in turn, offer dollar accounts to its own customers, including NoviRex. In the early 2000s, even as banks faced new obligations under the 2001 USA Patriot Act to carefully check out their foreign banking partners, JPMorgan ramped up business supplying U.S. dollar accounts to foreign banks. By 2003, it had become the global leader in "correspondent banking," processing payments for the clients of 3,500 other banks around the world, helping bring JPMorgan's overall daily dollar transaction volume to more than \$2 trillion for clients in 46 countries.

In 2004, FinCEN issued a warning to global banks about Eastern European banks and their shell company customers,

reporting that \$4 billion in suspicious transactions had been reported since 1996.

In 2005, the year Jamie Dimon was named JPMorgan's chief executive, FinCEN warned that Latvian banks and their "sizable" non-Latvian customer base "continue to pose significant money laundering risks." FinCEN said: "Many of Latvia's institutions do not appear to serve the Latvian community, but instead serve suspect foreign private shell companies." FinCEN said Latvia's 23 banks then held about \$5 billion in "nonresident" deposits, mainly from Russia and other parts of

quality" to support these schemes - all the while bribing Latvian officials to protect the bank from any threats to its business model.

Two financial crime experts who reviewed NoviRex's transactions at ICIJ's request said the signs of money laundering were clear. NoviRex had behaved like no legitimate business ever would. "If I was at JPMorgan and I saw this, I'd be thinking: 'This is horrendous,'" one of the experts, former U.K. police detective Martin Woods, said. "What normal company buys computers, lingerie and buckets?"

By early 2014, as citizens were filling the streets to protest Yanukovych, Klyuyev and other government leaders, NoviRex had moved more than \$188 million in transactions via JPMorgan.

#### Pulling out

JPMorgan, meanwhile, was moving on.

By the end of 2014 it had terminated correspondent accounts of about 500 foreign banks, including, according to a Latvian banking trade group official, banks in Latvia.

In a December 2014 report to shareholders, the bank acknowledged "mistakes made and lessons learned from our experiences in foreign correspondent banking."

"Every company makes mistakes (and we've made a number of them), but the hallmark of a great company is what it does in response," Dimon, the CEO, wrote in a cover letter. He didn't mention Ukraine or Latvia, or ABLV or NoviRex. Nor did he mention that, shortly before the pullout, U.S. regulators had issued a scathing appraisal of JPMorgan's money laundering safeguards and ordered the bank to review its correspondent banking practices.

By then, Ukraine's treasury had been looted, JPMorgan's fees pocketed. JPMorgan's treasury-services group, the parent of its correspondent-banking business, reported \$4.13 billion in revenue in 2013. Dimon's total compensation in 2014 was \$20 million.

The NoviRex story might have ended there.

But then, in November 2016, Donald Trump was elected America's 45th president. Soon after, the U.S. Justice Department appointed Robert Mueller as special counsel to investigate Russia's election interference and other issues relating to Trump and his associates.

One of those associates was Paul Manafort, onetime

the former Soviet Union.

This was JPMorgan's market.

In allowing a transfer, a correspondent bank (in a simple case) deducts the amount from the account of the sending bank and credits the account of the receiving bank, taking a fee.

By granting foreign banks access to U.S. dollars, JPMorgan was opening the system's doors to their customers, including anonymous shell companies like NoviRex.

In return for this gatekeeping power, and the fees it brings, U.S. law requires JPMorgan and other banks like it to monitor each transaction cleared on foreign banks' instructions - and to vet the foreign banks it does business with.

A later probe would find that 90% of ABLV customers were deemed "high risk" by ABLV itself, primarily because they were shell companies registered in secrecy jurisdictions.

Some of these shells were moving billions of dollars later traced to corruption in Ukraine. U.S. regulators concluded ABLV had institutionalized money laundering as "a pillar of the bank's business practices," aggressively peddled money laundering schemes to clients, and produced fraudulent documentation of "the highest



chairman of Trump's presidential campaign.

#### Death Penalty

Manafort had also served as a consultant and lobbyist for Ukraine's former president, Yanukovych. The FinCEN Files show staff at JPMorgan's Columbus, Ohio, compliance office became concerned about press reports from Ukraine of secret payments to Manafort-controlled shell companies disguised as payments for computer equipment.

The bank noted that NoviRex had made such payments.

As scrutiny of Manafort's foreign dealings intensified, the FinCEN Files show, JPMorgan filed more suspicious activity reports detailing - years after the fact - millions of dollars in payments to the consultant, his associates and their businesses.

At Manafort's 2018 trial, NoviRex's name surfaced as one of a handful of shell companies used by Ukrainian oligarchs to channel payments for political lobbying work to Manafort's own shell companies.

In all, NoviRex secretly paid \$4,190,111 to Manafort's consulting operation on behalf of Yanukovych's Party of the Regions, according to government exhibits in his trial. Manafort was ultimately convicted of bank fraud, failure to report a foreign bank account and other crimes.

At one of Manafort's trials, his former business partner, Rick Gates, finally revealed the person behind NoviRex: Klyuyev, Yanukovych's right-hand man.

The help that JPMorgan provided Klyuyev's company never came up during the trial.

In all, the FinCEN Files show, JPMorgan transmitted 706 transactions totaling at least \$230 million for NoviRex from 2010 to 2015. Much of that amount went to companies incorporated in secretive tax havens.

In 2018, FinCEN declared JPMorgan's former customer, ABLV, a "primary money laundering concern" that had moved "billions of dollars" for Ukrainian tycoons accused of looting state assets. FinCEN barred U.S. banks from providing ABLV access to U.S. correspondent accounts - a step known in financial circles as the "death penalty." It is now in liquidation, and some of its bankers have been arrested by Latvian authorities.

In response to questions from ICIJ, an ABLV spokesperson said that during the liquidation, an auditor is carrying out a review of the bank's ex-clients

and their transactions.

She added: "We cannot publicly comment regarding any specific legal or natural persons."

'Tricks and cunning': Big penalties don't stop banks from moving dirty cash

Money streamed in from California, Peru, Bolivia, China and other places where low-income families were willing to sink their modest savings - \$2,000, \$5,000, \$10,000 - into an investment they hoped would change their lives.

With the click of a keyboard, investors' money funneled through the New York operations of global banking giant HSBC. Then it zipped across the world into accounts at HSBC's sprawling Hong Kong offices.

Like others taken in by what became known as the World Capital Market Ponzi scheme, Reynaldo Pacheco, a 44-year-old father in Santa Rosa, California, promoted the deal to family and acquaintances. When the WCM scheme began to unravel, one of the unlucky investors he'd encouraged to put money into the deal decided to have him killed. Three men kidnapped him and beat his head with rocks, leaving him dead in a creekbed, his hands tied behind his back with tape and one of his shoelaces.

Thousands of victims lost an estimated \$80 million in the scheme.

The FinCEN Files show that HSBC continued shifting money for the WCM investment fund at a time when authorities in three countries were investigating the company and the bank's internal watchdogs knew it was an alleged Ponzi scheme. More than \$30 million tied to WCM flowed through the bank in 2013 and 2014 - at a time when HSBC was under probation as part of its deferred prosecution deal with American authorities.

Even after U.S. securities regulators won a restraining order freezing the company's assets, WCM's account at HSBC Hong Kong stayed active. According to court documents later filed by attorneys seeking money for the scheme's victims, WCM drained more than \$7 million from the account during the following week, drawing its balance to zero.

WCM wasn't the only company tied to criminal activities that moved money through HSBC during the five-year probation that came with the bank's \$1.9 billion deferred prosecution deal. The bank's Hong Kong office, for example, processed more than \$900 million in transactions involving shell companies linked in court records and media reports to alleged criminal networks, an ICIJ analysis found.

American prosecutors and other

officials have praised deferred prosecution deals and other types of money laundering settlements as effective tools for making sure big banks follow the law and stop serving criminals. When authorities announced Standard Chartered's deferred-prosecution deal in 2012, an FBI official declared: "New York is a world financial capital and an international banking hub, and you have to play by the rules to conduct business here."

ICIJ's investigation shows that five of the banks that appear most often in the FinCEN Files - HSBC, JPMorgan, Deutsche Bank, Standard Chartered and Bank of New York Mellon - continued moving cash for suspect people and companies in the wake of deferred prosecution agreements and other big money laundering enforcement actions.

Four of those banks signed non-prosecution or deferred prosecution deals in the past 15 years relating to money laundering. The only bank of the five that hasn't been the subject of a non- or deferred prosecution agreement is Deutsche Bank. Instead, it reached a \$258 million civil settlement in 2015 in response to a probe by U.S. and New York banking regulators that found that the bank had moved billions of dollars on behalf of Iranian, Libyan, Syrian, Burmese and Sudanese financial institutions and other entities sanctioned by the U.S.

Bank of New York Mellon was among the first big banks to pay a large penalty to U.S. authorities for anti-money-laundering failures. In 2005, two years before its merger with Mellon Financial, Bank of New York paid \$38 million dollars and signed a non-prosecution agreement after a federal probe concluded that it had allowed \$7 billion in illicit Russian money to flow through its accounts.

Media reports said investigators believed that Mogilevich, the alleged Russian mafia "Boss of Bosses," was behind some of the transactions.

Even as it's avoided big money laundering enforcement actions in recent years, Bank of New York Mellon has continued doing business with suspect figures, the FinCEN Files show.

The leaked records show, for example, that Bank of New York Mellon moved more than \$1.3 billion in transactions between 1997 and 2016 tied to Oleg Deripaska, a Russia billionaire and a longtime ally

of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Since 2008, Deripaska has been the subject of allegations in media reports tying him to organized crime. When U.S. authorities announced sanctions against him in 2018, they said he had been previously been accused of threatening the lives of corporate rivals, bribing a Russian government official and ordering the murder of a businessman.

Deripaska denies laundering funds or committing financial crimes. In 2019 the Trump administration lifted sanctions on three companies linked to him. U.S. sanctions on Deripaska himself remain and he's suing in an effort to upend them.

"BNY Mellon takes its role in protecting the integrity of the global financial system seriously, including filing Suspicious Activity Reports," the bank said in a statement. "As a trusted member of the international banking community, we fully comply with all applicable laws and regulations, and assist authorities in the important work they do."

#### Red flags

One striking pattern revealed by ICIJ's analysis of the leaked records is the willingness of multiple banks to process transactions for the same risky clients.

Deripaska, the Russian oligarch, didn't just have Bank of New York Mellon helping him out. The secret records reveal Deutsche Bank shuffled more than \$11 billion in transactions between 2003 and 2017 for companies he controlled.

The records also indicate that Deutsche Bank and Standard Chartered helped Odebrecht SA - a Latin American construction firm behind what U.S. prosecutors called the largest foreign bribery case in history - move \$677 million from 2010 from 2016. Deutsche Bank played a role in transactions involving more than \$560 million of that amount, the records show.

Then there's Dmytro Firtash, a Ukrainian oligarch who is wanted on criminal charges in the U.S.

In 2014, American prosecutors unsealed an indictment accusing him of bribing officials in India in an effort to secure a mining deal. Since late 2019, U.S. news outlets have reported on claims that Firtash played a role in President Trump's effort to dig up dirt in Ukraine on his 2020

reelection opponent, Joe Biden.

Firtash, who says he began his climb in business trading Ukrainian powdered milk for Uzbek cotton after the fall of the Soviet Union, lives in exile in a mansion in Vienna, protected so far from efforts to extradite him. His Art Nouveau villa has a home cinema and an infinity pool - a 2017 profile by Bloomberg Businessweek dubbed him "the Oligarch in the Gilded Cage."

When it comes to banking, he and companies tied to him found open doors among many of the industry's big institutions.

All five big banks in ICIJ's analysis - JPMorgan, Deutsche Bank, Standard Chartered, HSBC and Bank of New York Mellon - handled transactions for companies controlled by Firtash, the FinCEN Files show. And the records indicate that all five approved transactions tied to Firtash in the time periods after U.S. authorities had forced the banks to pay fines and pledge to work harder to vet suspect clients.

The files show that among these banks, JPMorgan moved the most money for companies controlled by Firtash by far - shuffling hundreds of transactions totaling nearly \$2 billion between 2003 and 2014.

JPMorgan and the other banks should have been aware of Firtash's questionable history as far back as 2010, when a leaked U.S. diplomatic cable linked Firtash to Mogilevich.

Then in 2011, a lawsuit filed in Manhattan by former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko provided the banks even more of a heads up, even naming specific accounts at four of the banks that the suit alleged were being used by Firtash for money laundering.

The suit accused Firtash, Mogilevich and future Trump campaign manager Manafort of laundering illicit funds from Ukraine through banks and investment deals in the U.S.

The suit claimed accounts at the New York offices of JPMorgan, Deutsche Bank, Standard Chartered and Bank of New York Mellon were being used in money laundering operations shifting money stolen in Ukraine to the U.S. and then - after it had been cleaned - round-tripping it back to Ukraine.

Despite the allegations, these five banks continued to handle transactions involving companies controlled by Firtash, the FinCEN Files show.

The lawsuit was dismissed in



2013, in part because Tymoshenko and her lawyers weren't able to provide enough specifics of the transactions involved in the alleged scheme. Firtash has denied wrongdoing, telling Bloomberg Businessweek that he's the victim of "a special machine of propaganda organized against me." He told the magazine that Tymoshenko was "wrong in everything. She lies all the time. In order to money launder, you need to have dirty money to start with. I always had clean money."

In a statement, an attorney for Firtash told ICIJ that Firtash "has never had any partnership or other commercial association with Semion Mogilevich." The attorney said Firtash would not answer questions from ICIJ because its queries are "reliant on the unlawful and criminal disclosure" of suspicious activity reports.

**Holding bankers accountable**  
Why haven't seemingly big financial penalties done more to change banks' behavior?

John Cassara, a financial crime expert who worked as a special agent assigned to FinCEN from 1996 to 2002, said that the size of the penalties paid by HSBC and other big banks may sound large but that they're a tiny fraction of the banks' profits. And the money isn't paid by the bankers who should be held accountable, he said - it's paid by shareholders.

BNP Paribas, France's largest bank, received the biggest fine of all in 2014, when it was forced to pay \$8.9 billion in the face of evidence that it helped shift

billions of dollars through the U.S. financial system on behalf of Sudanese, Iranian and Cuban entities subject to American sanctions.

Unlike settlements with HSBC and others, this wasn't a deferred prosecution. The bank agreed to accept a criminal conviction, and to force out 13 staffers.

But for the French bank, the priority in settlement negotiations was ensuring that its license to process dollar transactions in the U.S. wasn't permanently taken away. Instead, U.S. regulators barred BNP Paribas from such activities for one year. After the deal was announced, the bank's share price rose 4%.

James S. Henry, a New York-based economist, attorney and author who has been investigating the world of dirty money since the 1970s, says American enforcement actions over the past two decades have had some impact on large banks' behavior - at least compared to an earlier era when they operated with almost no restraints.

But he said it's going to take "more prosecutorial will and international collaboration" to truly change the relationship between banks and illicit cash flows. That includes holding banks as institutions - as well as top bankers themselves - accountable.

"We have to put some senior executives who are in charge of this stuff at risk," Henry said. "And that means fines and/or jail."

**Shark tank**

It sounded like something out of a spy novel.

Deutsche Bank employees instructed clients from Iran and other hot spots to lace their payment messages with code words that would trigger special handling. One executive urged workers to employ "tricks and cunning" to avoid detection by American authorities.

These tricks of the trade were exposed in a November 2015 announcement by New York banking regulators. Deutsche Bank, state officials said, had been caught shifting nearly \$11 billion between 1999 and 2006 on behalf of Iran, Syria and other countries under U.S. sanctions.

Under the \$258 million settlement with the state and the Federal Reserve, Deutsche Bank agreed to reform its practices and fire employees involved in the sanctions-evasion operation.

In a statement, Deutsche Bank framed the deal as old news: "The conduct ceased several years ago, and since then we have terminated all business with parties from the countries involved."

A month after the settlement was announced, the FinCEN Files show, Deutsche Bank was working behind the scenes to move money for a company linked to Ihor Kolomoisky - a Ukrainian billionaire who, U.S. prosecutors later alleged, was engaged in a massive laundering scheme that funnelled cash into the American heartland.

Kolomoisky has his own spy thriller mystique. U.S. prosecutors say he's long been

known for "ruthlessness and even violence" in business dealings, once hiring "armed goons" to take over the offices of a government-owned oil company. In an article in the Wall Street Journal, one associate recalled meeting with Kolomoisky and watching as the oligarch pressed a remote-control switch that dropped crayfish meat to the hungry sharks occupying his office aquarium. The leaked records show Deutsche Bank moved \$240 million from December 2015 to May 2016 for a shell company registered in the British Virgin Islands that, U.S. court filings claim, was controlled by Kolomoisky and a business partner.

A lawsuit filed last year in state court in Delaware alleges Kolomoisky used the shell company, Claresholm Marketing Ltd., to help pull off a "series of brazen fraudulent schemes" via PrivatBank, a Ukrainian institution that Kolomoisky and a partner controlled until the end of 2016. The new owners of the bank claim in the suit that Kolomoisky and his associates siphoned away billions of dollars from the bank through sham loans and then laundered the money through investments in the U.S.

This past July, New York regulators reached another money laundering settlement with Deutsche Bank. This time, the bank agreed to pay \$150 million in penalties related to its dealings with convicted sexual predator Jeffrey Epstein as well as with two non-

U.S. banks involved in money laundering scandals.

A month later, U.S. prosecutors filed civil forfeiture complaints in federal court in Florida that included allegations of thievery and money laundering against Kolomoisky similar to the claims in the Delaware lawsuit.

Prosecutors say much of the money allegedly stolen from PrivatBank between 2008 to 2016 ended up in investments in the U.S. - including commercial real estate in Texas and Ohio, steel plants in Kentucky, West Virginia and Michigan and a cellphone factory in Illinois.

Kolomoisky did not respond to questions from ICIJ. A lawyer for him said in August: "Mr. Kolomoisky emphatically denies the allegations in the complaints filed by the Department of Justice."

In the state court case in Delaware, lawyers for Kolomoisky's businesses said the suit fails to show violations of racketeering statutes or other laws. Kolomoisky has also filed a defamation action against PrivatBank in Ukraine, claiming the bank has falsely accused him of fraud and other wrongdoing.

Deutsche Bank declined to answer questions about its dealings with Kolomoisky, saying it was legally restricted from commenting on clients or transactions. The bank told ICIJ that it has acknowledged "past weaknesses" and "learned from our mistakes."

It said it has "systematically tackled" these issues.

"We are a different bank now," it said.

## Deutsche Bank, JPMorgan lead drop in financial shares amid report the banks moved suspicious funds



Financial stocks came under pressure on Monday amid a report that global banks moved allegedly illicit funds over the past two decades despite warnings from U.S. officials.

Shares of Deutsche Bank dropped more than 8%, while JPMorgan fell 3.1%. Goldman

Sachs fell 0.4%, Citigroup lost 2% and Bank of New York Mellon traded 4.1% lower. The sell-off was triggered by a new investigation by BuzzFeed and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists that said the banks' internal compliance officers flagged a total of more

than \$2 trillion in transactions between 1999 and 2017 as possible money laundering or other criminal activity. The report cited confidential documents submitted by banks to the U.S. government.

These leaked suspicious activity reports do not necessarily indicate wrongdoing, and they were just a tiny fraction of the reports filed with U.S. Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, the report said. Deutsche Bank appears to have facilitated \$1.3 trillion of suspicious money in the files, while JPMorgan disclosed \$514 billion, the report found. Other banks mentioned in the investigation include HSBC Holdings, Standard Chartered and Bank of New York Mellon. HSBC

fell 5.5%, touching a 25-year low. The broad market sell-off on Monday may also be contributing to the losses in JPMorgan and other banks. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 800 points in morning trading.

In a statement to CNBC, HSBC said "all of the information provided by the ICIJ is historical and predates the conclusion of our Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) in 2017."

"Starting in 2012, HSBC embarked on a multi-year journey to overhaul its ability to combat financial crime across more than 60 jurisdictions," an HSBC spokesperson said. "At the end of 2017, the Justice Department, having received all of the Monitor's reports, determined that HSBC met all of its

obligations under the DPA. HSBC is a much safer institution than it was in 2012."

Deutsche Bank told CNBC that "this is not new information to us or our regulators."

JPMorgan said it reports suspicious activity to the government "so that law enforcement can combat financial crime, and have thousands of people and hundreds of millions of dollars dedicated to this important work."

"We have played a leadership role in anti-money laundering reform that will modernize how the government and law enforcement combat money laundering, terrorism financing and other financial crimes," the bank told CNBC.



# Weed Or Weedout

**India has a Rs 10 lakh crore drug problem. So why aren't agencies going after the cartels feeding a growing demand for banned substances?**

Purple strobe lights, psychedelic floral patterns unfolding behind a reeling hero, curry western rock 'n roll...and yes, the vamp, always the vamp. There's something about the 70s Bollywood potboiler that has defined the frame through which a lot of Indians interpret the complex, peril-filled world of drugs. That Indian cinema is never the best factual guide to reality is secondary.

What it really does is to channel all energies into fearful stereotypes about 'modernity', especially resentful attitudes tinged with envy about 'the elite' and their 'sinful' living. And what that in turn breeds is the ideology of the witch-hunt. The real problems—international trafficking, hard drugs and the market for -ever-new synthetic forms, under-age addiction—all these get sublimated in the

temporary high brought on by someone rich and famous being nailed to the cross.

The contrast in the degree of urgency shown is quite stark—and is actually quite symptomatic of how the whole system works. There were no prime-time tipoffs, no heroic camera posses outside a Jaipur hotel: real crime-busting can't happen like that. But let alone any behind-the-scenes sleuthwork, "there was no effort to find out if there was a hidden purpose to the Sinaloa family visit, or who they met," claims a senior official in the country's security establishment. Similarly, the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) gave the NCB information about an Afghan drug lord called Haji Saleem. Operating in the Af-Pak region, Saleem is believed to be the man -responsible for smuggling huge

-quantities of heroin into India. The biggest heroin seizures in the last four years—amounts ranging from 1,500 kg to 100 kg—are known to be from Saleem's shipments. Sources say he smuggles heroin into India via the Arabian Sea route. "There seems to have been no attempt to follow up in a serious manner. There isn't even a red corner notice," sources tell Outlook. This overall laxity is a serious structural deficit; all data about the trafficking of hard drugs shows the market has an innate resilience that all-observers say points to connivance at several levels. While that stays unaddressed, we see the focus of the NCB squarely on high-profile users. It's not common for the agency to get involved in individual drug possession cases. In India, cannabis in the form of bhang, ganja and charas



are seeped into culture—so is opium to a lesser extent—and authorities have generally preferred to overlook cases of individual consumption. A 2019 survey carried out by the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) of AIIMS estimates there are as many as 31 million marijuana users in the country. "If we start booking people for consumption, the sadhus smoking marijuana in their chillums in Haridwar and Puri; tourists consuming charas at Pushkar mela; revellers using bhang during Holi or the Rajasthanis partaking -opium-made 'amal' during weddings and funerals...they will all be

arrested," says an official from the narcotics cell of Mumbai police. "And if the NCB goes after Bollywood for use of drugs, one of the biggest economic activities in Mumbai will be finished," he adds, only half-jokingly.

The legendary former top cop Julio Ribeiro believes it's simply not the NCB's job to go after users. "According to me, users should be counselled and encouraged to give up drugs rather than be arrested. Rhea is merely a pawn in a larger game that appears more political than anything. There are several big fish as far as the drug scenario is concerned. The NCB should go after them," says Ribeiro.



## Nitish Banks Lalu's Votes

**Bihar CM woos Yadavs as he sets out to dismantle friend-turned-foe's long dominance over community**

In 2018, Tej Pratap, Lalu's eldest son, married MBA graduate Aishwarya Rai—the granddaughter of former chief minister, the late Daroga Prasad Rai—with much fanfare, but it turned into a bitter court battle for divorce within months. Nitish now thinks that Lalu's family treated an educated girl like Aishwarya rather shabbily. "It is a family matter and I do not want to say anything," the CM said at a virtual rally to formally kick-start the JD(U)'s poll campaign recently in Patna. "Aishwarya is the granddaughter of Daroga Babu. What kind of treatment was meted out to her?"

Rai, who headed a Congress government in 1970, was a widely-respected Yadav leader. His son Chandrika Rai (Aishwarya's father) is an ex-minister who won the 2015 assembly polls on an RJD ticket but recently moved to JD(U).

Apart from Rai's family, Nitish also mentions the treatment meted out by RJD to its legislator Jai Vardhan Yadav

before he switched over to JD(U) recently. Jai Vardhan is the grandson of late Ram Lakhan Prasad Singh Yadav, a former Union minister known popularly as Sher-e-Bihar. A formidable leader from the Yadav community, he had set up many educational institutions in his lifetime. Jai Vardhan's father, Prakash Chandra Yadav, too, was a Congress MP.

Nitish says that both these Yadav icons had helped Lalu but their family members have been given a raw deal by him. "Look at the way the grandchildren of Daroga Prasad Rai and Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav have been treated. They are just running a family dynasty. This family has forgotten how they had helped it in the past," Nitish said, in a not-so-veiled attack on Lalu. "When the families of such renowned persons have been subjected to such treatment, one can think of others," he said, sounding a word of caution to the Yadav voters.

Under his well thought-out

strategy, Nitish stresses the need for making the new generation of voters aware of what pati-patni (Lalu Yadav-Rabri Devi) did for Bihar during their reign. "The new generation of voters should be apprised about the differences between our respective 15-year-long tenures. They may have been three or four-year-old kids when we formed the government (in 2005) but they have since grown up to be the new voters."

Nitish's remarks evoked a sharp response from Tejashwi Prasad Yadav, who is leading RJD's poll battle from the front in the absence of his jailed father. "Let him (Nitish) abuse us, but will it be of any good for the people of Bihar?" he asks. "He should highlight his achievements but then, what are his achievements in the first place?" The leader of opposition says that the chief minister is "smelling the 30-year-old stale papers". "In rakshaksh raj (demon's reign) of today, he is talking about jungle raj (lawless regime)," Tejashwi quips. "Half of his party leaders are from the same jungle raj."

The Yadav vote bank has been an impregnable fortress held valiantly by Lalu Prasad Yadav over the past three decades in Bihar. But it appears to be under siege now, with chief minister Nitish Kumar out to breach what is considered to be the last frontier of the embattled RJD president ahead of the assembly elections.

A dominant OBC group comprising about 11-12 per cent of the total population, the Yadavs have played an assertive role in state politics, invariably reposing unflinching faith in the leadership of RJD president, regardless of whether he is in or out of power. Now, Nitish has set out on a mission to wean the all-important Yadav voters away from their maverick caste icon,

currently serving a prison term in Jharkhand.

It is something Nitish is not known to have ever attempted, overtly or covertly, ever since he came to power 15 years ago. And he appears to have hit upon a two-pronged strategy to accomplish his goal. First, he is telling the Yadav voters how Lalu has served only his family at the cost of the entire community, and second, how he has mistreated the formidable caste icons for his vested interests. Also, in a clear departure from his avowed stand of not making personal attacks on his political rivals, Nitish even cites the troubled marriage of Tej Pratap to underscore an indifferent attitude of Lalu's family towards fellow leaders.



# How Portland Became a Nightmare for Democrats

For Donald Trump, cities are crime-ridden, infested with rioters and looters, and overseen by liberal mayors who are either absent or complicit—or often both. But among the cities about which the president has railed though this summer of unprecedented protests, Portland has stood out as his personal punching bag. He has called it a “mess” (and “has been for many years,” apparently) and dispatched unmarked federal agents to the city. Just this week, Trump’s Justice Department singled out Portland as an “anarchist jurisdiction,” one in which city leaders have “permitted violence and destruction of property” and from

which the White House is now threatening to withhold federal funding if the city doesn’t change course.

Trump has misleadingly blamed the city’s agitation solely on the far left, conveniently ignoring the role armed, far-right groups play in fomenting the violence. But when Trump says that Portland has “been burning for many years,” as he recently told Fox News’s Laura Ingraham, he’s not necessarily wrong.

The fact that Portland has presented the kinds of domestic unrest America hasn’t seen in decades—downtown protests surrounding the federal courthouse recently passed the

hundred-day mark, and the city just saw its deadliest month since the 1980s—is not surprising to those who know its history. Just three years ago, during Trump’s first summer in office, POLITICO dubbed Portland “America’s most politically violent city” after left-wing anarchists rioted in the months after Trump’s election and a right-wing white supremacist verbally abused two minority women on a train and stabbed to death two men who intervened.

But with only six weeks remaining until the election, the current conflict has reached new levels of violence, and anyone paying attention can see that



things are getting worse. That roiling unrest is presenting an unprecedented challenge for local officials who are struggling to contain the violence—as well as for national Democratic

leadership that is struggling to figure out an effective response to an intensely local crisis that has broader political implications, all while the president hectors them as weak and incapable.

## ‘The Most Important Woman Lawyer in the History of the Republic’

It’s hard to think of three letters that have more resonance in modern-day American political life than RBG. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died Friday at age 87, was a pop culture icon — the subject of movies and children’s books, the face of posters and T-shirts, the rare political figure with a universally recognized epithet, “notorious.” She was also, of course, a towering legal mind who shaped American jurisprudence over decades on the court, and before that as a professor and a lawyer, most notably in the realm of gender equality. What legacy does she leave for the country? Politico Magazine asked more than 20 legal thinkers — law professors, litigators and

constitutional scholars — to tell us how RBG’s life and work reshaped America. Many pointed to her work as a champion of women and voting rights. “Her deep and abiding commitment to justice and equality drove her analytic rigor, not the other way round,” Columbia University’s Gillian Metzger wrote. Others argued that she embodied a “sense of moderation and strategy,” as the Cato Institute’s Ilya Shapiro put it, that perhaps went overlooked.

Still others pointed to the hole that her death leaves on the court — how it could shape abortion rights or even the tenure of Supreme Court justices. And more than a few pointed to her friendship with the late conservative Justice Antonin



Scalia, with a sense of hope that their friendship, unlikely as it seems in this fractious moment for the country, was not the last of its kind. ‘She pivoted the entire structure of the 14th Amendment’ Linda Hirshman is a lawyer, writer and author of Sisters in Law: How Sandra Day

O’Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg Went to the Supreme Court and Changed the World.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg served on the Supreme Court for almost 30 years. She was, in the words of one of her adoring young followers, so old and still so radical. She was famous for her fiery dissents. But that’s not what she’ll be remembered for; dissents mean you were outvoted. And, sure, she delivered the landmark opinion in the 1996 Virginia Military Institute sex discrimination case, United States v. Virginia, but the conservative justices, slowly at first and then faster after Sandra Day O’Connor left, cut back on the impact of her formal sex discrimination doctrine. Her legacy is older. It goes back to

the years as head of the ACLU Women’s Rights Project, when, starting in 1971, she pivoted the entire structure of the 14th Amendment to cover equal rights for women. Her first case, Reed v. Reed, came a mere 10 years after the Supreme Court had ruled explicitly that equality was, essentially, “No Girls Allowed.” Working in the footsteps of Thurgood Marshall, she slowly and methodically pulled the Constitution toward a larger circle of equality. She was not the most important justice, even if she was the most famous one. She was, as one of my sources told me, quite simply the most important woman lawyer in the history of the Republic.

## The dangers of genetic engineering

United States (US) President Donald Trump has said that Covid-19 either was intentionally engineered or resulted from a lab accident at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China. He may be right about it having been a lab accident, and China bears responsibility for the carnage occurring worldwide. But the virus likely wasn’t deliberately engineered — despite recent reports.

A research report in Nature Medicine contradicts the likelihood of intentional engineering of a pathogen for military use, on the basis that Sars-CoV-2 isn’t a mishmash of known viruses as the authors

would expect of an engineered virus. “If someone were seeking to engineer a new coronavirus as a pathogen, they would have constructed it from the backbone of a virus known to cause illness,” the researchers said.

But genetic engineering could well be the cause of the next pandemic — and India needs to be as prepared for this. Covid-19 has brought India’s economy to its knees even as it left China practically unscathed. This has undoubtedly brought home to the Communist Party of China (CPC) that biological pathogens can be as destructive as nuclear missiles — and have almost no geopolitical repercussions.

What is worse, it isn’t just China. The technologies have democratised to such a degree that any country can engineer viruses. To start with, a lab would need to obtain the genetic information of viruses. The first genetic sequencing of the bacterium Escherichia coli was in the 1990s, when sequencing the bacterium’s four-and-a-half million base pairs took weeks of effort and tens of millions of dollars. Today, to spell out the three billion base pairs that dictate the construction and maintenance of a human being costs about \$1,000 in the US and can be done in hours.

The next step in engineering



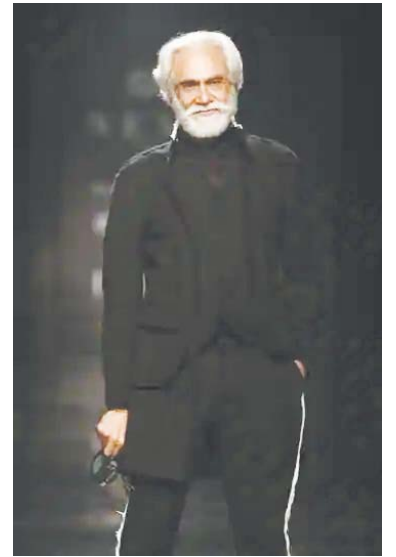
a virus is to modify the genome of the existing pathogen to change its effects. One technology in particular makes it almost as easy to engineer life forms as it is to edit Microsoft Word documents. Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) gene editing, developed only a few years ago, deploys the same

natural mechanism that bacteria use to trim pieces of genetic information from one genome and insert it into another. This mechanism, which bacteria developed over millennia to defend themselves from viruses, has been turned into a cheap, simple, quick way to edit the DNA of any organism in the lab.



## Guest column: Couture's digital trajectory

*Couture weeks  
around the world  
establish the  
supremacy of the  
digital format as  
extraordinary  
presentations enliven  
the screen.*



The need of the hour is to applaud intrepid concepts which are paving the way for fresh ideas. Gaurav Gupta's "Name is Love" is one such film which voices the need for inclusivity in all areas— sex, colour, weight and mitigates these binding boundaries.

The Fashion Design Council of India has been a front runner in every sphere of fashion, and one of the few organisations in the world, which has readily adopted the need-of-the-hour digital couture week template, in keeping with changing design space and technological advancements.

What propelled us in this direction was the pressing need for our talented designers to showcase their creativity, after facing the worst crisis of the

decade. It was also in tandem with the wedding season, which I believe is now extended till January. Giving designers ample time to monetise their collections.

The world by large, including the Paris Haute Couture Week, shifted to a digital medium, as it gives you the freedom to get innovative. Frankly, the digital world has made us reach out to millions of people and shown us the enlightened way.

Interestingly, the detailing of

a beautiful garment, the artisanal prowess, succinct craftsmanship, robust hues, can be closely observed, watching it on your screen. Making this an experiential medium with all the technological trappings of decadence.

If you observe the shows at India Couture Week 2020, the themes and their actualisation have been out of the ordinary. Amit Aggarwal's film shot underwater to capture the essence of how "light" and "fluid"

is the new language of fashion. I don't think such concepts could be brought alive in a live runway format.

The Fashion Design Council of India, has been organising haute couture shows since 2008. We have given designers a platform to showcase the magic of artistry through the highest level of fashion. It remains a treat for not just the media to view the spectacle, but also guests as well as, the design fraternity.

The digital format allows designers to explore cultures and reference these stunning facades. Forts and their picturesque offering straight out of a story book. Rahul Mishra captures the pleasures of both slow life and design processes in his impressive film shot at Tijara fort. This is the new path we have embarked upon and it will lead us to a nuanced exploration as fashion films have proved.

# Changing moods of couture

***Processes and techniques mirrored human life, they became slower with focus on a language dripping with restrained luxury, albeit with a conscience.***

The greatest lesson adversity teaches us, is to reflect and look back upon life with equanimity. And this is exactly what happened with couture. Processes and techniques mirrored human life, they became slower with focus on a language dripping with restrained luxury, albeit with a conscience. Brides in India, will not swerve tradition, but find a commonality in their love for both modernity and tradition.

Undoubtedly, the India Couture Week 2020, proved digital has the prowess to communicate with a vast audience, minus hierarchy. The overwhelming response witnessed lakhs of views for most shows. It is established, stores and businesses, are gradually picking up and couture is really

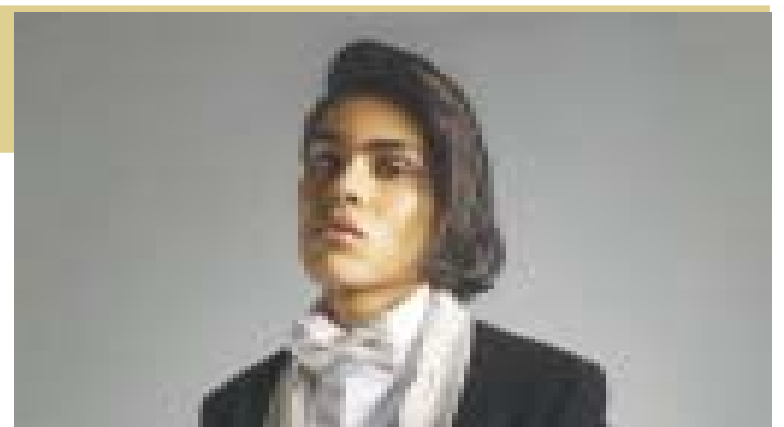
hoisting the flag up, offering employment to artisans and craftsmen. The ICW 2020, ensembles had flourish, richness, were ornate, with intimate weddings, making way for the new aesthetics of "less is right".

The overall tone of ICW has been one of optimism, the themes endearing for an audience which till now has been used to the catwalk and its theatrics. The house of Valaya, swiftly took us back in time with his superbly tailored line brimming with royal trimmings. And Gaurav Gupta pursued inclusivity through a poetic prism. Rahul Mishra's metaphor for life, the lotus pond, made us believe in self-sustaining eco-systems and Suneet Varma channelled unapologetic glamour.

Shantanu and Nikhil

reinterpreted classics, through their metallic embroideries. Falguni and Shane Peacock decided to do what they do best — add drama to bridal conventions with a touch of asymmetrical layers and feathers. Forts and palaces served as a metaphor for Reynu Taandon and Dolly J, while as light as air was conveyed through Amit Aggarwal's underwater rendition which showcased how couture can be weight-less.

Menswear is a market, which has seen a Renaissance, with an infusion of not just colour, but also interesting textures and patterns. That's why Kunal Rawal's show displayed the need for versatility for a prudent consumer. Moreover, later this evening, Anju Modi will pay homage to a bride's love for red



and its auspicious, as well as ceremonial significance. Bringing a befitting end to six days of virtual presentations will be designer and stylist to the stars, Manish Malhotra's passionate appeal to think beyond the ephemeral with a timeless line, promises to be peppered with Persian and Mughal influences.

The beauty of ICW is that we are a part of the Indian bridal universe, but our interpretations are as diverse as the hues of a rainbow, making it an effusive ode to

diversity. Is the modern bride going to change to a YSL jacket, like Bianca Jagger? "No", but what she is ready to do is opt for a bridge between baroque swirls, jewel tones, vast expanses of fabric and 3D embroidery, artful embroideries, traditional motifs and symbolic surface ornamentation. Post-pandemic couture will be a fine mix of dreams and reality, where a bride's fortitude is celebrated through the language of clothing. You can all now take off your glares!



# To sell Air India, reframe the terms

**Offer it as a zero-debt company, ensure an open process, and free the new management**

Air India's (AI) third attempt to secure a buyer is likely to draw a blank. The bid, which closes on October 30, is expected to be postponed again. The restrictive terms have scared away buyers each time.

The government believed buyers would line up despite the huge liabilities. Every year of delay will only make AI less attractive to any potential buyer. Civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri was candid enough to admit in Parliament: "With Rs 60,000 crores debt, the choice is not between privatisation and non-privatisation...but between privatisation and closing down."

In the new terms proposed, the government wants to offer 100% equity for sale of the airline and has wisely bundled Air India Express (the low-cost carrier unit) along with engineering and other subsidiaries — including its stake in joint ventures in catering, cargo, ground handling and other operations. It has excluded all real estate assets across the country, including the AI building in Mumbai.

But there's still an

astronomical debt of around Rs 23,000 crore that is part of the bid. The ostensible logic here is that the assets are also of an equal amount. And therein lies the rub. While the debts are determinate, the assets are not. Most aircraft are on lease. Other high-value assets, including planes, which have been purchased over the years, and contracts will be of questionable value. There are allegations of corruption, and investigations by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and other agencies are in full swing.

It is impossible for bidders to complete due diligence in such a short time-frame to get a realistic asset value to be able to make a bid. The lease rentals earlier negotiated may also have to be renegotiated. The government cannot deny these apprehensions as it has itself initiated enquiries and is keen to press charges.

Closing the airline cannot be an option. That will mean wilfully absorbing all the liabilities while losing the best value that could be realised via a thought-through transparent bidding process in

a timely manner. That is feasible only if AI is sold as a going concern. Though it has lost its sheen, it is still a much-loved brand, and has huge potential that can be unlocked by the right strategic investor, provided the government makes comprehensive changes in the terms.

AI has a vast domestic and global network to key destinations, assured time slots and space in prized airports with airside access, hangars, engineering backbone, infrastructure, trained engineers and flight crew, bilateral rights, assurance of continued protection of those rights, huge aircraft orders with delivery timelines, and revenue of around Rs 25,000 crore, which can be doubled with better management in a short period. All these can ratchet up its valuation to about Rs 50,000 crore, comparable to rival carrier Indigo, by listing it after three to four years with the right restructuring, management and leadership.

Offering AI as a zero-debt company will enable quicker



and easier due diligence by bidders. In turn, they will gain confidence in what they are buying because it's not easy to assess the huge inventory of aviation assets and numerous complex contracts. The failed bid of Jet Airways should be an eye-opener.

Here are a few more suggestions that may attract more bidders. First, the bidding process must be a global, open, transparent electronic tender. The shortlisted bidders must first deposit the reserve price in an escrow and the bidding must commence and end within six to eight hours. It must not be a closed "sealed envelope" bid, as is often the practice which, apart from being vulnerable to malpractice, won't get the best price. It should be an open

and easier due diligence by bidders. In turn, they will gain confidence in what they are buying because it's not easy to assess the huge inventory of aviation assets and numerous complex contracts. The failed bid of Jet Airways should be an eye-opener.

But to get the highest valuation possible, the government must hold pre-tender meetings and understand bidder apprehensions before tender documents are finalised. This is key to attracting the highest number of bidders.

The employees' question may be the biggest deal-breaker. AI is overstaffed — its staff strength is over 30,000 if all contracted employees are included. The new owner must be allowed to retain only the minimum number of employees per aircraft. The staff strength per aircraft in Indigo is around 70 compared with about 470 in AI, and to be fair, the government must settle laid-off employees through an attractive voluntary retirement scheme by selling some of the airline's real estate assets.

AI's trained and skilled manpower of pilots, engineers and cabin crew will definitely be needed by the new management. But the latter must have total freedom on this decision.

This will facilitate a competitive playing field so that the company that wins can focus on the airline.

The successful bidder should mandatorily be made to list AI on the stock exchange within 36 months of the takeover, prescribing minimum levels of Indian public holding of the stock so that it continues being looked up to as a national carrier. If the auction is marketed and managed well, AI will entice many buyers. Those managing the bid must do things differently. It may be pertinent to recall what Albert Einstein said: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results".

## It's Time To Separate From Tata Group, Says Mistry Family

**Tata Sons Pvt. informed the Supreme Court it's open to buying out the 18% stake owned by the Mistry family's cash-strapped Shapoorji Pallonji Group if the latter needed to raise money for paying debt.**



The billionaire Mistry family, the largest minority shareholder of the Tata Group, said it needs to separate its interests after India's biggest conglomerate took steps to block the family's attempt to

borrow money against Tata shares.

Tata Sons Pvt. informed the Supreme Court Tuesday that it's open to buying out the 18% stake owned by the Mistry family's cash-strapped

Shapoorji Pallonji Group if the latter needed to raise money for paying maturing debt. The SP Group instead wanted to borrow funds using the shares as collateral, a move Tata considers as potentially risky

because the securities may end up falling in the hands of unfriendly investors.

"The action by Tata Sons to block this crucial fund raise, without any heed for the collateral consequences, is the latest demonstration of their vindictive mind-set," the SP Group said in a statement late Tuesday.

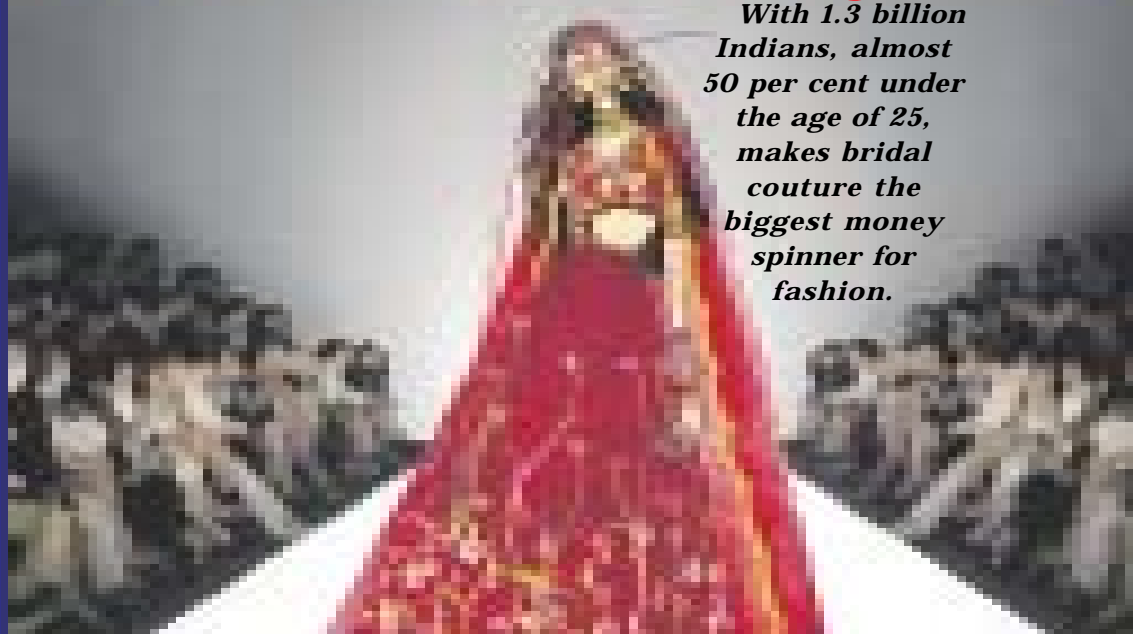
"The SP-Tata relationship spanning over 70 years, was forged on mutual trust, good faith, and friendship. Today, it is with a heavy heart that the Mistry family believes that a separation of interests would best serve all stakeholder groups."

It didn't specify what any separation would entail. A representative for Tata Sons declined to comment.



## Guest column: Wedding Wows

**With 1.3 billion Indians, almost 50 per cent under the age of 25, makes bridal couture the biggest money spinner for fashion.**



There has been a rampant churning in the fashion business due to the pandemic, and what has emerged out of this “Samudra manthan” is a chrysalis of sorts.

A realisation that we could do things differently and most definitely it could be as effective as the brick and mortar retail template, we had

been accustomed to. Thus, the rise of e-commerce websites, which are becoming, the new business model for designers. Global data has predicted that by 2022, the e-commerce business will grow leap and bounds to almost \$713 billion and everyone wants a piece of this succulent pie.

FDCI chairman Sunil Sethi.

Couture which was once the Holy Grail has now emerged as the survival mantra for an industry, which has faced back breaking turmoil, rather assiduously. Bridal trousseau is the biggest money spinner and honestly, I believe it is recession-proof, despite naysayers announcing its premature death. After all, it's

estimated at \$50 billion even by conservative estimates.

What's interesting is the need to reach out to a wider audience, breaking barriers of geographical constraints and opening the vistas to incorporate, not just small towns desires which often fade due to lesser accessibility, but also global clients, who want a piece of succinct tradition for their D Day. With a click of a button you can now see, almost “visually feel” the ensemble before buying creating discerning choices despite a depressed economy.

Luxury which was a reserve of “by appointment only” is now conducted using various

features, 3 D models, augmented reality, video conferencing and even social media. But the moolah will flow in through fully loaded websites with an encouraging user interface.

I have observed, in my many years in the business of fashion, this is the way forward and Indian designers are sharpening their tools to find an international foothold with their unmitigated prowess with crafts. We at FDCI strongly believe that e-commerce is that Brahma Astra that will help them glide through a time when human touch is a rarity and social distancing a norm.



## A Calmer You, by Sonal Kalra: Throw away these 5 things. Right now!



*Hoarding every darn thing in the name of nostalgia is not silly. It's downright foolish*

Haylo, good people. If you detected a hint of threat in the headline, let me explain that it is not. Just a hint, I mean. It is a full blown warning because I've had enough of you not realising that it is high time you chucked some stuff out of your life. Hey, those of you who immediately thought of spouses and/or in-laws, give me a high-five. Now, give your right cheek one, because we are not talking humans, yet.

More than four years ago, I wrote in this column about people who just wouldn't discard things and how a lot of homes look like museums — of trash — but then nothing seems to have changed. Meri sunte kahan ho aap log? Maybe if I change my name to something like Sushri Sushri Sonal and start charging you by

thousands to tell you how to inhale-exhale air, will you take me seriously.

Yeh three rupees waali advice ki koi value nahi hai, by God. Anyway, our homes, workspaces, sometimes even vehicles, are full of clutter that's not only taking away a lot of space but also keeping us from, well, inhaling-exhaling fresh air. Just take a good look around you. Is there anything you spot that's been there forever without being of any use, but only because you were too lazy or stingy to throw it out. I'll smack you if you'll let your clever brain cook up a 'nostalgia' and 'emotional attachment' argument to cover up your inherent inertia. Because my mind tries to do the same, all the time. Why is my physics text book of ninth standard still

lying somewhere on the shelf? Because, you see, my bestest friend and I played tic-tac-toe on the back cover and got our first punishment together. Ugh. That best friend, who's now friend number 3,654 on Facebook doesn't even know if I still exist in this physical world. But the physics text book stays. THAT, is our problem. Mind hi blocked hai ji, kya karein. Anyway, I tried to apply mine and here are five categories of things I think should be discarded right now, in the larger interest of humanity, to reduce poverty, to cut corruption in the country, and make India a safe place for women to live in.

1. Black Spaghetti: No matter how much you deny, each one of us has a janjaal of unused cables and chords lying around in the house. An old charger of the 20 kg heavy Motorola phone that was the pride of your life in 1992, maybe the phone/pager itself that never got an antim sanskar, 265 pairs of earphones that you flicked each time you boarded a Kingfisher flight — when they were still Kings of good times, that is. Some cables

that came with your TV video game on your 5th birthday, and are still around in the hope of seeing your 50th. C'mon yaar. THROW. And puhleez, read up on e-waste and dispose them off properly.

2. Clothes that don't fit: Our favourite hoarding candidate, this one. The wardrobe is screaming that it can't take it anymore, but we'll keep stuffing it with more clothes everytime the wretched '50% off' beckons. But we still won't give away the dress we bought at 50% discount 10 years ago and which didn't fit us even at that time. 'Someday I'll lose weight and fit into this,' Yeah? Aao thappad khao. Saale Sale junkies, all of us. (That's a typo in the first word... I didn't mean the extra 'a' but the back button on the keyboard isn't working!). Golden rule: Deny yourself a new dress till you take out an old one.

3. Show-pieces: In the last century when I was a kid, every house used to have a 'showcase', in which people placed all kinds of weird, I mean cute, things. Terracotta swans with necks entwined, photo frames of all sizes, shapes, material with pictures of relatives in all shapes,

sizes and material. Plastic flowers in plastic vases. Now, I have nothing against these, seriously. Because the whole point of being the Lord of your house is to be able to do it up the way you like. But the problem is that we keep adding 'show-pieces' without knowing what to do with the old. Even when the showcases have all but gone in last decade's renovation. The same goes for old toys, especially stuffed teddy bears that may be full of mere desh ki mitti from 1979, but we won't let them go because well, there are emotions involved. Do the same emotions not tell you then to donate clothes, toys or books in good condition to some kid who may value them more? Think.

4. Cassettes/CDs that don't run: Another big nostalgia candidate. Okay fine, kuchh toh rakh lo... because even I have a big emotional attachment with my old music cassettes, CDs and MP3 players/iPods. But when that attachment translates to shelves full of old CDs which have died of scratches, or cassettes which didn't run even when we had the player



# Fashion films- the formidable accessory

*With the world facing an impasse, couture offers a relief through fashion films.*

The catwalk is now passé, what's cool is the emergence of an intensely expressive, almost immersive experience-- the fashion film. The perfect way to have a virtual tête-à-tête to establish a disrupted reconnection with the audience.

It is the most fashionable accessory, many designers have adopted internationally as well as domestically, to serenade an audience that seems jaded with a girl walking straight to the bursting of a thousand light bulbs.

This year at ICW 2020, we have a melange of films they have pushed the proverbial envelope. From majestic forts juxtaposing the vivaciousness of couture to underwater renditions creating a light as air mood, as well as historical locations soaked in cultural magnificence, of the past, each designer has succeeded in capturing the true essence of couture, through the



lens of a camera.

With our life now in the palm of our hands almost literally and metaphorically, this medium of communication, is going to shape the tone-on-tone future of fashion. The beauty of films is, it allows an unfettered approach to

themes that earlier had the limitations of a ramp. You can actually shoot at a palace, or a hotel which reeks of decadence as well as mirror the myriad emotions of a bride through a spectacular minarets which have withstood the test of time and

tide. The biggest advantage is employment generation from choreographers, stylists, models to makeup artists, videographers and lensmen, everyone has found work which had depleted in the last few months.

Internationally, this format has

gained steam with engaging concepts. Ralph and Russo created their own version of a muse with strength, hoping to provide refuge in fantasy, while Dior offered the most beautiful version of "escapism" complete with mermaids and nymphs.

As the world becomes increasingly silent, designers like Elie Saab have shown the desire to go back to nature, with reverence paving the way for quieter couture. Paris Couture Week which went digital, in keeping with a largely monochromatic existence, is reflective of the flavours of a post-pandemic existence.

We hope to set a new world order with engrossing technologies, that have removed the velvet ropes democratising couture, creating a larger audience than just a 100 privileged participants dressed to the nines!

## Shape of fashion



I think fashion will undergo a sea change in the coming months which will define its future trajectory. It's a departure from bare shoulders, ruffles, belted waists, tiers, embroidered sweet whispers in organza, what's new is an eco-vision as the pandemic has removed the rose tinted glasses. The whole idea of reuse, recycle and buy

back has now found a renewed interest.

"Revolutionary" is the buzzword and with this comes the wings of freedom, where you can wear your mother's trousseau by refashioning it. What I have observed is the growth in the handloom sector and a willingness to adopt textiles which are an

embodiment of timelessness within the framework of couture.

Unlike the need to create endlessly, now you make on-demand smaller capsule collections, which are pointed. With seasons and trends fading away, the pressure has eased on the style hemisphere, where you are launching more solution-based ensembles with

*Designers have opened the green door, launched smaller, meaningful collections, which reverberate with responsibility as AR, virtuality and AI is set to rule the aesthetic laboratory of the future.*

versatility. One outfit, can be worn in three different ways or revisiting vintage techniques, which are labour intensive but possess powerful imagery are now gaining steam.

Slow fashion:

The philosophy of ownership is also transforming, as you are repurposing with purpose, and getting innovative with existing materials. Valaya has brides who come to him with their mother's trousseau asking for a modern twist, in keeping, with his "royal" ideology. While Shantanu and Nikhil have started a buy back scheme for their old garments where you can win credit notes under --Re-love, Re-own & Re-use.

Amit Aggarwal has been a champion of sorts working extensively with metallic accents that sometimes come from used pipes, polymers intermingling it with textiles and sparking a conversation on how important it is to pursue less is more.

Code Red:

If you study the India Couture Week 2020 collections, they have been injected with vibrant hues to probably add a bit of sunshine

to a gloomy last 6 months. From sindoori red to vivacious fuchsias, there has been a new palate for palettes.

Live action shopping is outdated, one-on-one styling appointments, real time and the digital closet is the next wave. The good part this year, is the see now, buy now model, will allow consumers to get their hands on what they have just finished viewing.

There is a rise of e fitting, phygital experiences, Artificial intelligence and virtual models. I foresee a time when technology will enable you to select your own fabric and print making it custom-built adapting to altering social behaviour.

I think couture will also leave its formality and modern separates will be a norm.

Intimate weddings have brought out the best in designers with experimentation becoming the flag bearer as tradition meets technology with a "feel great" factor.

As long as brides need one-of-a-kind clothing, that is individual and suited to their fantasies, couture will reach the pinnacle of prosperity. It is here to stay and rule the world.



## Enola Holmes movie review:

# Forget Superman, Henry Cavill is Sher-locked into a new Netflix franchise now

**Enola Holmes movie review: Millie Bobby Brown's first film as producer, also starring Henry Cavill, is an energetic and empowering update of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories.**

Enola Holmes

Director: Harry Bradbeer

Cast: Millie Bobby Brown, Henry Cavill, Sam Claflin, Helena Bonham Carter, Adeel Akhtar

Providing children with a heroine that they can look up to, and their parents with enough thematic meat to chew on, Netflix's Enola Holmes is an energetic and empowering update of Arthur Conan Doyle's iconic stories, for Gen Z.

While millennials made do with Benedict Cumberbatch's considerably more conspiratorial Sherlock — a brilliant series that captured an entire generation's fears and anxieties and projected them onto one of the most celebrated fictional characters of all time — Enola Holmes, like the teenagers towards whom it is targeted, is more hopeful for the future.

Set in a smoggy, muddy

Victorian London, the film has the spirit of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, as if it were written by Phoebe Waller-Bridge. Enola Holmes begins with the titular heroine, played by the very endearing Millie Bobby Brown, breaking the fourth wall, à la *Fleabag*. She does this on numerous occasions in the film, most memorably when she disguises herself as a widow (because people are uncomfortable around death, and therefore less likely to be suspicious of her) and declares, proud of her own ingenuity, "Tis I!"

Enola is intelligent, but never insufferable; she's confident, but not completely immune to self-doubt. She's a fully realised person. And that's all down to the writing, and Millie Bobby Brown's performance.

The young actor seems to have

secured a franchise for herself, which will serve her well when *Stranger Things* ends. And much like Enola, it's an opportunity that she created for herself. Brown is making her debut as a producer on the project, which is just wonderful.

As the sister of Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes, described in one scene as 'an uneducated, underdressed, poorly mannered wildling', Enola was raised by her mother, Eudoria, while her more illustrious brothers abandoned the family and went to make their marks in London. But when Eudoria mysteriously goes missing one morning, Enola must rely on her own abilities, and not her pompous brothers (neither of whom have seen Enola in years), to locate her.

Mycroft, who assumes the responsibility of her guardianship after Eudoria's disappearance,



scoffs at the feminist values that she has instilled in Enola. "Where is your hat?" he asks her, "And your gloves?" He decides to immediately send her off to a finishing school, while him and Sherlock take over the adult responsibilities. Enola isn't having any of it.

So she gives them the slip one day, and hops aboard the first train to London, leaving Sherlock to wryly admire her spunk, and Mycroft to menacingly twirl his moustache. On her journey, she runs into another runaway, and

together, the two bond over their abandonment issues and uncover a political conspiracy that could change the course of England's history.

On occasions, Enola Holmes certainly has a tendency to come across as a piece of fan fiction, which is technically what the source novels by Nancy Springer were. And if you consider the fact that the film has been written by Jack Thorne, the man behind glorified Harry Potter fan-fic the *Cursed Child*, you begin to notice parallels.

## CU Soon movie review:

# Fahadh Faasil's experimental thriller is taut, genre-breaking

**CU Soon movie review: The Fahadh Faasil and Roshan Mathew starrer stands out because of its experimental tone and how it uses a set of digital screens to deliver a taut and genre-breaking viewing experience.**



CU Soon

Director: Mahesh Narayanan

Cast: Fahadh Faasil, Roshan Mathew and Darshana Rajendran

The film *CU Soon*, from writer-director Mahesh Narayanan, is one of the best Indian films to have released in this lockdown. Apart from the fact that it's a film completely shot during the lockdown and on an iPhone, what really sets apart is its experimental tone and how it uses a set of digital screens to

deliver a taut and genre-breaking viewing experience. Even though cut from the same cloth as Aneesh Chaganty's *Searching* (which released in 2018), Mahesh's film is far more effective because of the emotional depth it adds to the characters, allowing the viewer to virtually feel what it's like to see a mystery thriller completely unfold on a few screens.

The film opens on the screen of Jimmy Kurian's (Roshan

Mathew) phone as he casually swipes through profiles of women on Tinder. He quickly matches with Anu (Darshana Rajendran), and before we know it, they're doing video calls on Google Duo. Everything happens so quickly and it makes one wonder how can these things happen so fast. But it later makes sense why they matched and fell in love so quickly. Jimmy proposes to Anu on a video call in the presence of his mother, who ropes in Jimmy's cousin Kevin Thomas (Fahadh Faasil), a cyber security expert, to dig deep and find out more about Anu. Although uncomfortable with the idea of invading someone's data privacy, Kevin eventually gives in for the sake of his aunt. In no time, he manages to find all the necessary information and declare Anu as "very authentic". However, trouble brews after Anu

disappears mysteriously after spending a week with Jimmy, and the alarming video note she leaves behind makes things worse. Kevin has to find out what happened to Anu, and in the process, he unravels several dark secrets.

Even though *CU Soon* is a thriller at heart, it's also a film that throws the spotlight on the idea of relationships in the age of social media and dating apps. The film successfully manages to help us differentiate between what we see and hear in a world where the role of technology is yet to be completely justified. *CU Soon* shows that technology can be both a boon and bane. It beautifully establishes the fact how technology has consumed our lives and some of us are already paying the price.

As the search for Anu begins, as a viewer, you're hooked right till

the end. There's a sense of urgency to find out what happened to Anu and it feels like a race against time. The tension gets stronger with every running minute and with every window or screen Kevin opens as he investigates the disappearance of Anu. Fahadh makes the character of Kevin even more interesting than it already is with his terrific performance. Known to deliver so much of a character through just his eyes, Fahadh makes Kevin so interesting to watch. In one scene, he's called a misogynist by his female colleague but it doesn't take much time to realize that circumstances can change a person. Roshan Mathew is equally good and he's fast becoming one of the most exciting actors to watch out for in Malayalam cinema.



## Sushant case: NCB visits Shraddha Kapoor's home to serve summons, Deepika to appear on Friday

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Wednesday issued summons to actors Deepika Padukone, Sara Ali Khan, Shraddha Kapoor and Rakul Preet Singh in a drug case related to the death of Sushant Singh Rajput.

While Padukone has been summoned on September 25, Shraddha Kapoor and Sara Ali Khan have been asked to appear before the NCB on September 26, news agency ANI reported. NCB officials visited Shraddha Kapoor's house on Wednesday evening to serve the summons.

Earlier on Wednesday, the agency recorded the statement of film producer Madhu Mantena in connection with the case.

Mantena was the co-producer of 2016 Bollywood film 'Udta Punjab' which dealt with the issue of drug menace.

His name allegedly cropped up during the questioning of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's talent manager Jaya Saha, who was quizzed by the probe agency for last two days, NCB officials said.

The NCB had on Tuesday summoned

Padukone's manager Karishma Prakash and KWAN talent management agency's CEO Dhurv Chitgopekar, but the former could not appear before the agency due to



ill-health.

The NCB is probing the drug link in Rajput's death. Padukone and the three other actors were named by Rhea Chakraborty while she was being interrogated between September 6 and September 8 before being

arrested, according to NCB.

Earlier this month, the NCB had arrested six people from Mumbai and Goa in connection with the case. The NCB first

arrested 23-year-old Bandra resident identified as Karam Jeet Singh Anand alias KJ and recovered marijuana and hashish from him.

According to NCB officials, Karam Jeet was part of the drug syndicate which it had busted as part of the ongoing investigations.

The NCB has so far arrested a total 16 accused in the case including Bollywood actor Rhea Chakraborty and her brother Showik Chakraborty, Sushant Singh Rajput's

house manager Samuel Miranda, domestic help Dipesh Sawant, drug peddlers Zaid Vilatra and Abdel Basit Parihar; Kaizan Ebrahim, Karna Arora, Abbas Lakhani and Anuj Keshwani.



## Am I some minister or a great opposition leader? Kangana's latest salvo

Firing a fresh salvo at Congress on Wednesday, Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut questioned the ongoing protests against her in the country and said it must have been a case of "mistaken identity". "Am I some minister or a great opposition leader? Who they think I am? this is rather flattering," the embattled actor wrote on Twitter after Punjab Congress burnt the effigies of Kangana for "disrespecting farmers by labelling them terrorists". "First congress in Maharashtra threatened me and beat my posters with chappals now congress in Punjab burning my effigies, seems like a clear case of mistaken identity," the actor wrote.

The protests came after the actor allegedly equated the protesting farmers with "terrorists". "People who spread misinformation and



for threatening her with 'Ukhaad diya' – the title of an article in Sena mouthpiece Saamana.

rumours about CAA that caused riots are the same people who are now spreading misinformations about Farmers bill and causing terror in the nation, they are terrorists. You very well know what I said but simply like to spread misinformation," the actor had tweeted earlier.

Alongside, Kangana is engaged in a tussle with the Shiv Sena government in Maharashtra after an allegedly "illegal" portion of her Mumbai office was razed on September 9.

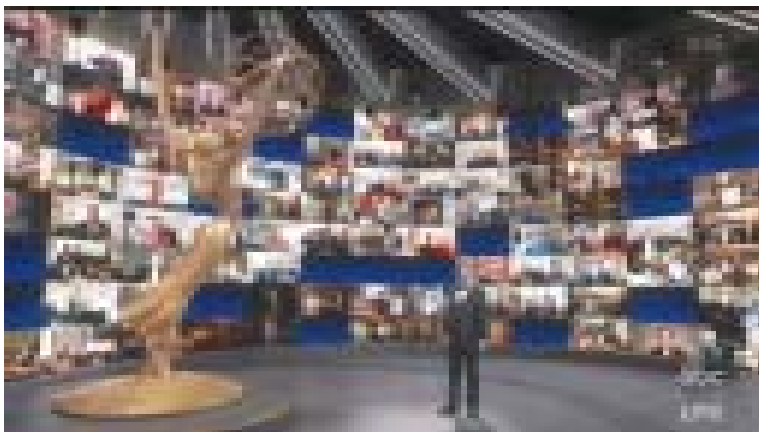
The Bombay high court on Tuesday asked actor Kangana Ranaut to implead Shiv Sena chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut in her petition

**Ginny Weds Sunny trailer: Vikrant Massey and Yami Gautam engage in some Indian Matchmaking**



Netflix India has released the first trailer for Ginny Weds Sunny, a new wedding-themed comedy acquired by the streaming service for release on October 9. The film stars Yami Gautam and Vikrant Massey as a couple looking for suitable life partners. The two-and-a-half minute trailer introduces Ginny and Sunny, who meet for a potential arranged marriage, but when Ginny turns him down, Sunny embarks on a journey to win her affections by teaming up with her mother. The trailer features several song-and-dance numbers, slice-of-life comedy, and the easy chemistry of its leads. There are also cameos by Mika Singh and Badshah, perhaps, playing themselves in a music sequence. "It was a blast playing Ginny as she is a headstrong girl, not letting anyone or anything ever let her down," Yami said in a statement.

## How politics eclipsed the Emmy Awards



Actress Uzo Aduba wore a tee-shirt with the name "Breonna Taylor" imprinted on it, when she accepted an Emmy for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Limited Series or a Movie for

Mrs America, and said, "Let's change the world!". Breonna Taylor was a Black woman who was fatally shot in her own home in Kentucky by the police during a drugs' investigation. Through

the night on Sunday, in almost every acceptance speech, A-list TV stars sat in their homes and spoke of hope, for a better America, and, in turn, a better world.

In many ways, the 72nd Annual Primetime Emmy Awards was nothing like ever before. Held in the middle of a global pandemic, host Jimmy Kimmel spoke to an empty auditorium. This while stars of the night sat in their homes with their families, friends and co-stars, and while fans across the world watched what became a night of passion, power and politics.

Recognising that Covid-19 is

changing the world as we know it, the winners did their best to make the most of the night, not just to triumph in their own glory, but to speak of and condemn the injustices exacerbated under the leadership of United States (US) President Donald Trump.

From slamming Trump's move to downplay Covid-19, to highlighting police brutality and racial inequality (which reignited the Black Lives Matter movement), the winners emphasised the need for TV fans everywhere to register to vote in the upcoming presidential elections, trust the US





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## Trump falls into the trap he set for Biden

*Some on Trump's team are bracing for a humiliating loss at next week's debate - after Trump lowered expectations for Biden by mocking his acumen for months.*

(SAI Bureau) - Donald Trump will face Joe Biden within days for the first of three presidential debates, and some of the president's supporters are already bracing for a humiliating loss.

White House allies, Republican donors and some of Trump's closest advisers worry that a recent, frenzied push by his top lieutenants to portray Biden as a seasoned debater - with the goal of raising expectations for the Democratic presidential nominee - is too late and too disingenuous to have an impact when the two meet on the debate stage next Tuesday. They worry Trump has set a trap for himself by incessantly attacking Biden's age and mental acumen. It's a tactic the president has maintained



even as his campaign publicly insists the former vice president is fully capable of a satisfactory performance. Unlike the president, who has spuriously claimed Biden is "probably" on performance-enhancing drugs, Trump campaign communications director Tim Murtaugh attributed Biden's "quite good" performance in past debates to the Democrat's ability "to turn it on when the

cameras come" after years of experience in politics. "Eight years as vice president, three decades in the Senate, two debates as vice president and he just came through about a dozen debates in the Democratic primaries where he vanquished two dozen opponents - that's the Joe Biden we're expecting," Murtaugh said.

(Contd on page 28)

## Punjab sows but will not reap



(SAI Bureau) The last few weeks have seen the farmers of Punjab take up arms against three laws being passed by Parliament.

Originally styled as ordinances, these were the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020; the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020. The distress is largely about the first piece of legislation.

(Contd on page 29)

## The Nehruvian imprint on Indus Waters Treaty



(SAI Bureau) - Exactly 60 years ago, on September 19, 1960, the Indus Waters Treaty between Pakistan and India was signed. Despite the energy and voluminous paperwork that marked eight long years of negotiations, under the aegis of the World Bank (WB), the Treaty was largely viewed by both parties as one which gave away their respective water interests. The two leaders - Jawaharlal Nehru and Ayub Khan - for different reasons felt otherwise and soaked in the historic moment of the signing ceremony in Karachi on September 19, 1960. As a military dictator, Khan's diktat overrode public opinion, while the democratic Nehru had to contend with domestic opposition. The Treaty partitioned the Indus system of rivers.

(Contd on page 29)

## Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran Start One Of World's Most Fiercest Military Drills

(SAI Bureau) - Russia launched a major military drill on Monday, involving almost 80,000 servicemen. Kavkaz-2020 (Caucasus-2020) is the final stage of annual combat training this year, the Defense Ministry said in a statement.

The main operations during the drill will take place in the North Caucasus, as well as in the Black and Caspian seas, all of which are part of the country's Southern Military District. Up to 1,000 servicemen from Armenia, Belarus, China, Myanmar and Pakistan were invited to practice joint actions, while the Iranian military vessels are expected to join naval exercises. Representatives from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Indonesia, Iran and Sri Lanka plan to



participate as observers.

The exercise will engage up to 250 tanks, 450 infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers, 200 artillery systems and multiple launch rocket systems.

Earlier, a EurAsian Times reported, India had decided to pull-out from multilateral war drills in Russia. In an official statement, New Delhi cited the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason

however, local media reports stated that China and Pakistan's participation in the exercise was a major factor behind the withdrawal. According to defense experts talking to the EurAsian Times who did not wish to be named, said that Russia is India's strongest and most dependable ally for decades and three of India's foes - China, Pakistan, and Turkey are expected to participate in the military drills. By pulling out, India has conveyed to Russia its disinterest to associate with regional foes while at the same time, New Delhi has given strategic space to them, especially to Pakistan who is desperate to befriend Moscow which opinion-makers in New Delhi should have blocked.

