



**We can starve, but the kids cry for food**  
**Afghans struggle after a 100 days of Taliban rule**



(SAI Bureau) "Me and my husband can go hungry but we are worried about our children they cry because they are hungry and that is so difficult," a 35-year-old Zarghuna, mother of two, said while narrating her struggle ever since the Taliban took over Afghanistan on August 15.

(Contd on page 23)

## "Colonial Mindset"

### PM Slams Pressures On India Over Climate Pledges



(SAI Bureau)-Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Constitution Day speech on Friday called for erasing a "colonial mindset" that only exists to "thwart India's growth". This was PM Modi's second speech on Friday - the first at the

central hall of parliament where he criticised as the biggest threat to democracy a party run by the same family generation after generation. He spoke for a second time in Delhi's Vigyan Bhawan in the presence of Chief Justice of India NV Ramana. In the second speech, PM Modi took a swipe at developed nations that have been trying to persuade India to cut down carbon emissions, when these nations have themselves been the biggest emitters of carbon and have benefitted from fossil fuel-powered industrial growth, long before emerging economies could see proper growth. "The colonial mindset hasn't gone. We are seeing from developed nations that the path that made them developed is being closed for developing nations... If we talk about absolute cumulative

(Contd on page 36)

## A Wake-up Call

From mob looting in San Francisco to deaths in Waukesha



(SAI Bureau)-The deadly actions of the last few days should serve as a wake-up call to most Americans. Being pro-criminal and anti-police is beginning to undermine the fabric of our civilization. We have already seen a dramatic rise in murders and other crimes.

(Contd on page 36)

## What's changed, Joe?

**Biden is accused of hypocrisy after halting flights from eight African nations to halt Omicron variant despite calling Trump 'xenophobic' for his Chinese and European travel bans in 2020**



(SAI Bureau)- Joe Biden is being accused of being a hypocrite after he announced a ban on travel from eight southern African countries in response to a new COVID variant despite previously claiming Trump's travel ban in 2020 was 'xenophobic.' On Friday Biden, who is in Nantucket for a Thanksgiving break with his family, said travel will be banned from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique, and Malawi.

## Putin to visit India on Dec 6

**Both countries aim to make up for lost time**



(SAI Bureau)- Russian President Vladimir Putin will come to New Delhi on a hurricane tour for the 21st annual summit between India and Russia on 6 December. The summit comes after a one-year gap that has

seen many developments, from the onset of Covid-19 to the inauguration of a new administration in the US to the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. On the same day, India and Russia will also hold their first ever 2+2 format talks on the sidelines of the summit. These talks will be held between the two

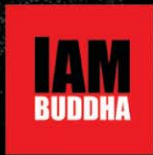
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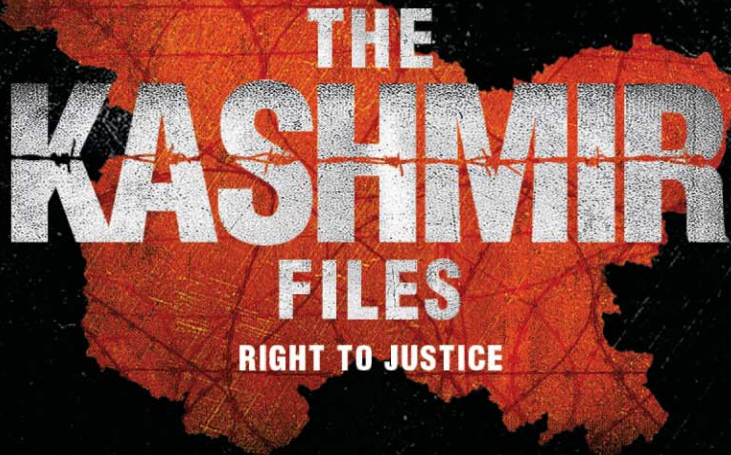




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**EXCLUSIVE PRE-RELEASE SCREENING OF 'THE KASHMIR FILES IN USA'**  
**FROM NOV 27, 2021 TO JAN 6, 2022**

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# "Ekal Foundation" Raises over \$4 Million in Star-studded 'Future of India' Gala



- **Prakash Waghmare**

On Saturday, November 13, "Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation (EVF)" raised over \$4 million in star-studded virtual Gala, called "Future of India" that highlighted pre-eminent speakers, Ekal's eclectic accomplishments and youth's contributions to its mission. As per Indian demography, two third of its population resides in villages. Ekal, as it is popularly known, currently has presence in over 102,000 rural-tribal areas all across India with a reach to over 300,000 such clusters of habitants. Although rooted in education, Ekal has blossomed into providing healthcare, integrated village development, empowering functionality and new-age technology to these rural folks.

This two-hour event, co-chaired by Mohan Wanchoo and Kamlesh Shah, both successful entrepreneurs and philanthropist, saw consistent overwhelming response from the donors, from



the moment it opened up till it was capped by youthful entertainment by "Penn-Masala", a youthful group of famous singers from "University of Pennsylvania". The funds raised at the Gala were for specific projects, such as tailoring training centers, E-shiksha, Ekal-on-Wheels, Telemedicine, Gramotthan Research Centers, and Integrated Village Development. Mohan Wanchoo, who pioneered Gala events at Ekal, regaled viewers with a personal story of how hospitable tribal villagers were in the midst of a horrific tragedy that they had endured earlier. As a professional singer he mesmerized the viewers with an inspiring song in his melodious voice. Kamlesh Shah elaborated on Ekal's aggressive fight with Covid-19 pandemic and the steps, that were taken to fight misinformation about the virus and the treatment. From the interspersed interviews of rural children, it was quite evident that Ekal has fired up



their imagination to aspire for becoming Doctors, Soldiers, Teachers etc. Ekal's women-centric empowerment activities and education as a tool for progress touched a nerve with all three chief guest speakers who whole heartedly supported Ekal's selfless mission for the future of India. Kiran Mozumdar-Shaw, founder of Biocon and recipient of 'Padma Bhushan' honor, emphasized the need for digital tracking of patients by the tech-savvy nursing caretakers, as the core point for managing the pandemic. Coming from a humble family, Renu Khator, President of University of Houston system chancellor, stressed on the important role the education has played throughout her Steller career. She lauded EVF's efforts for women empowerment. Naren Chaudhary, CEO of highly successful 'Panera Bread' brand, explained how his daughter - 'Aisha' - was the central motivating factor in



whatever he did in his life. He expressed unequivocal passion for his country - India - where he had witnessed 'spirit of humanity' in his own time of acute need to save Aisha. Ranjani Saigal, the Executive Director of Ekal-USA assured him that his daughter's legacy lives through what Ekal does best. For every \$1 a donor invests in Ekal activities, Ekal volunteers provides \$8 worth of selfless volunteer efforts. Ekal's youth-wing had raised substantial amount of funding to arrest the spread of Covid pandemic. During the Gala, they freely talked about what attracted them most to this largest social endeavor, supported by the Indians and NRIs, in dozen countries. Ekal supports all its activities without any regards to a particular region, religion or gender. A galaxy of Bollywood stars - from Hema Malini, Boney Kapoor, Subhash Ghai to Varun Dhavan, Udit



Narayan, Alia Bhatt - provided glitz with their enthusiastic support for Ekal. AZEE-TV '2019 Cine Awards' clip, showed three Ekal alumni students honored, for exceptional achievements. This public honor was bestowed on 'Pinky Karmakar' of Assam who was the torch-bearer at 2012 London Olympics, 'Divya Malgave' of Maharashtra who won a Gold Medal at 'International Intermediate Karat Championship' and 'Ramchandra Verma' of U.P. who has made his birthplace - 'Aligunj' - an ideal 'Gaav' (village). While unveiling the roadmap for the future, Suresh Iyer, the President of Ekal-USA, confirmed that the essential objectives of all the projects are two-fold - first, to prevent migration of rural folks to urban areas for lack of opportunities and second, to increase the economic and social impact on their lives. He appealed viewers to join hands with Ekal for the better 'Future of India'.

## Indian-Origin Man Gets 8 Years Corrective Training, Caning In Singapore

(News Agencies) - A 26-year-old Indian-origin man was on Monday sentenced by a Singapore court to eight years of corrective training and 24 strokes of the cane for supplying weapons, including a baton and a samurai sword, that were used in a serious slashing incident in 2018. Arjun Retnavelu was also sentenced to an extra 360 days in jail for reoffending while on remission, TODAY newspaper reported. The court sentenced Arjun to eight years of corrective



training. He was also sentenced to 24 strokes of the cane, the paper said. Corrective training is a more

serious form of imprisonment imposed when a court finds that an offender needs training of a corrective character for a substantial period. It usually lasts between five and 14 years, and the offender is unlikely to be given early release for factors such as good behaviour.

Arjun pleaded guilty to several serious charges, including rioting with a deadly weapon, being a member of an unlawful assembly, carrying offensive weapons in public places,

voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous means and using criminal force on a public servant.

Deputy Public Prosecutor (DPP) Timotheus Koh told the court that Arjun had a "history of conflict" with the victim, Dhines Selvarajah, another Indian-origin man who is now 30.

Aside from Arjun, four other people were involved in the slashing that happened in broad daylight along Serangoon Road on July 25, 2018.





Long Island ladies circle of new york recently held their 1st Diwali celebration and oath Taking ceremony for officials at Levittown Hall in Hicksville.  
( some exclusive pictures from the event)

South Asian advisory board and New York South Asian Chamber of commerce recently organized a Thanksgiving Turkey giveaway drive in Hicksville. Harry Malhotra, Chairman of advisory board coordinated the successful drive that was supported by several local Businesses, including Bethpage burger bar.







## Rebel Congress MLA Aditi Singh, BSP's Bandana Singh join BJP

**Aditi Singh, rebel Congress MLA from Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, has joined the BJP along with former BSP MLA Bandana Singh.**

(News Agencies) -Aditi Singh, rebel Congress MLA from Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, has joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Singh (34), along with former BSP MLA Bandana Singh (35) were inducted into the party by UP BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh on Wednesday.

The daughter of veteran Congress leader late Akhilesh Singh, Aditi Singh was first elected to the Uttar Pradesh

Assembly in 2017 from Rae Bareilly on a Congress ticket. She has been a vocal critic of her own party colleagues and has voiced support for the BJP government in UP on more than one occasion.

Bandana Singh is a former MLA elected to the UP Assembly from Sigri in Azamgarh district on a Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) ticket. The two were welcomed by the BJP in a ceremony in Lucknow on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, UP BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh said, "One of the leaders joining the BJP [Bandana Singh] today will give a fight to Akhilesh-Dimple [Akhilesh Yadav, Dimple Yadav] in Azamgarh and the other [Aditi Singh] will challenge Sonia-Priyanka [Sonia Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra]."

The legislator from Rae Bareilly, Aditi Singh, recently criticised Priyanka Gandhi Vadra over the latter's reaction to the central

government's decision to repeal the three farm laws.

With the induction of Aditi Singh, the BJP hopes to make inroads in Rae Bareilly, a traditional bastion of the Congress party.

Bandana Singh, on the other hand, won from the Sagri Assembly constituency in the 2017 UP Assembly polls. She was expelled from the BSP in June of this year along with 10 other legislators.

**'Nehru dynasty hated Sardar Patel': BJP after video of Karnataka Congress event goes viral**



The Congress in Karnataka has courted controversy with a video of an interaction between state party chief DK Shivakumar and former chief minister Siddaramaiah going viral on social media.

The video, first shared on Twitter by BJP MLA Renukacharya on October 31, shows Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah talking before a press conference at the Congress office to mark the anniversary of the death of former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Siddaramaiah can be heard asking Shivakumar about whether they need to put up a picture of Sardar Patel on the stage during the press conference. Responding to Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar says, "We never keep Patel's picture on the day [Indira Gandhi's death anniversary]."

Siddaramaiah then points out that the BJP could criticise the Congress over the absence of Patel's picture in the background.

Shivakumar then instructs a party worker to bring the photograph of Sardar Patel to be kept in the background during the press conference.

Reacting to the video, BJP national general secretary CT Ravi said in a tweet, "If anyone had doubt how much the Nehru Dynasty hated Sardar Patel, this video clears it."

"CONgress leaders @siddaramaiah & @DKShivakumar agree to place photo of Sardar Patel along with that of Indira Gandhi fearing BJP. It is a shame that Slaves are so much scared of an Italian," adds Ravi, who is the party's in charge of Goa, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Asked to comment on the controversy over the viral video, Siddaramaiah told reporters on Wednesday, "We are not afraid of the BJP."

## Centre to list Farm Laws Repeal Bill on first day of Parliament's Winter Session

(News Agencies) -The Central government plans to list the Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021 for introduction and passage on the first day of Winter Session on November 29. The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021, will be listed for introduction and passage on the first day of the Winter Session on November 29. In a signal to farmers that PM Narendra Modi is out to quickly deliver on his promise to repeal the three contentious farm laws, the Union Cabinet will on November 24 (Wednesday) take



up the 'The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021' for approval. The Union Cabinet, led by PM Modi, is scheduled to meet on Wednesday at the Prime

Minister's Lok Kalyan Marg residence in New Delhi. Sources told India Today that only one comprehensive "repeal bill" may be brought in to roll back the three

contentious farm laws. The Union Ministry of Agriculture is said to have finalised this Bill after holding consultations with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).





## Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee talks on Tripura violence, BSF jurisdiction in meet with PM Narendra Modi

(News Agencies) - In a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee discussed the violence in Tripura and the issue of BSF jurisdiction in Bengal. "I have spoken about Tripura violence, informed the Prime Minister about what's happening there and how Saayoni was targeted," said

Mamata Banerjee. Mamata Banerjee also mentioned that the state is yet to get Rs 96,605 crore from Centre for natural calamities that massacred the state. Talking about Bengal's

BSF jurisdiction, the chief minister also mentioned: "If BSF gets more power, it disturbs the law and order situation and one must know that law is a state subject." The

A part from speaking about the violence in Tripura and the issue of BSF jurisdiction in Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the state is yet to get Rs 96,605 crore for calamities in the state.

CM said this in reference to the Cooch Behar case where BSF had indiscriminately fired. "This is why, I requested the PM to discuss the issue and to make sure the federal structure isn't unnecessarily disturbed." Speaking about Trinamool fighting from other states, Mamata said: "TMC will fight from where it is needed. If Akhilesh Yadav wants us to support them in Uttar Pradesh, we will." West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had on Monday said she will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi during her visit to Delhi, and raise issues concerning the enhancement of BSF jurisdiction as well as the ongoing "atrocities" in Tripura.







## I-T Dept raids two Delhi-NCR real estate groups, detects Rs 400 crore black income

***The Income Tax Department has detected an estimated undisclosed income of Rs 400 crore after it carried out a search and seizure operation on two real estate groups based in Delhi-NCR.***

(News Agencies) -The Income Tax Department has detected an undisclosed income to the tune of about Rs 400 crore after it carried out a search and seizure operation on two real estate groups based in Delhi-NCR.

The raids, conducted on November 17, were carried out on groups are engaged in the construction of commercial and residential projects. During the search operations, unaccounted cash of Rs 10 crore was also seized.

The Income Tax Department said that during the search, various incriminating evidences in the form of digital and physical data have been found and seized. On preliminary analysis, it was found that these groups

were receiving part of the sale consideration in cash against the sale of flats and such cash was not recorded in the books of accounts.

Thus, there was a large scale tax evasion, and due tax on such income was been offered, the department said.

The search team gathered evidence indicating that this unaccounted income was routed into the business through non-descript and non-functional shell entities run by professional entry providers or employees/associates of the group working as directors. One of the groups was also found to be using a network of charitable organisations engaged in educational activities, purportedly for the purpose of tax

evasion and financing its real estate business, the department said.

Evidence was found showing that the books of accounts maintained and produced before tax authorities were doctored by 'reversal of payables', 'diminution of investment' and 'bad debts written-off'.

Instances of non-genuine claim of expenses by way of bogus purchases by connected parties from non-existent suppliers also came to notice, the department said.

Evidences of cash payments made to various parties towards securing land deals and other contracts, and making various unaccounted expenses in real estate activities were unearthed, the department said.

## Eggs hurled at Odisha CM Navin Patnaik's convoy in Puri



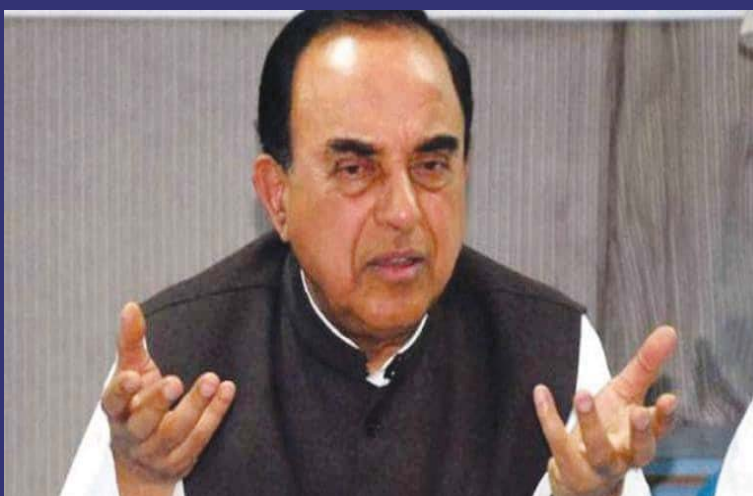
(News Agencies) -

Eggs were hurled at Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik's convoy in Puri when the chief minister was returning after laying the foundation for Srimandir Parikrama Project. Sources said BJP workers not only hurled eggs but also waved black flags at the chief minister's convoy near Hospital Chhak in Puri. The activists shouted "Naveen Patnaik Down Down" and opposed his visit. Sources said opposition leaders of BJP and Congress are on an egg-hurling spree over the alleged complicity of minister of state for Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra, in the murder of Mamita Meher. Earlier in the day, members of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) and National Students' Union of India (NSUI) activists, were taken into preventive custody for waving black flags at Patnaik on Bada Danda in Puri. Following the incident, BJYM, Odisha president Irais Acharya said: "If 'tainted' minister Dibya Shankar Mishra is not expelled or no action is taken against him, the protests will continue."

## Mamata in league of Jayaprakash, Morarji and Rajiv, says Subramanian Swamy after meeting Bengal CM

After meeting Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday, Rajya Sabha MP and BJP leader Subramanian Swamy said that of all the leaders he has met, Bengal Chief Minister ranks with JP, Morarji Desai, Rajiv Gandhi, Chandrashekhar and P V Narasimha Rao.

Subramanian Swamy's meeting with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has triggered



speculations of him joining the Trinamool Congress (TMC).

After meeting the Trinamool Congress chief, Swamy said they discussed the political scenario in West Bengal. The duo even posed for photographs after their meeting.

When asked if he would join the Trinamool Congress, the BJP leader said, "I was already with her. There is no need for me to join."

Mamata Banerjee also met

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi where she raised the Tripura violence and enhancement of BSF jurisdiction issues.

Banerjee had earlier said that she may not join the dharna being staged by TMC MPs in the national capital to protest against the "attack on party workers" in Tripura and arrest of youth leader Saayoni Ghosh, but will surely express solidarity with them.



# IMD predicts very heavy rain in parts of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry over next 5 days



**The IMD has predicted very heavy rainfall in parts of Tamil and Puducherry over the next five days and heavy rains in parts of Andhra Pradesh on November 27 and November 28.**

(News Agencies) - The IMD's regional meteorological centre in Chennai has predicted isolated very heavy rainfall in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry over the next five days. A low-pressure area is likely to form under the influence of a cyclonic circulation over the Bay of Bengal, the IMD said in its forecast on Wednesday.

In Tamil Nadu, heavy to very heavy rains are likely in some areas in Ramanathapuram and Nagapattinam districts over the next 24 hours. Heavy rains are also likely in Madurai, Theni, Sivaganga, Kanyakumari, Puthukottai, Tenkasi and Cauvery delta districts of Tamil Nadu, besides Karaikal in Puducherry on Wednesday and

Thursday.

The weather department has also predicted isolated very heavy rainfall on the southern coast of Andhra Pradesh, including the Rayalaseema region and Yanam in East Godavari district on November 27 and November 28. "Under its [low-pressure area] influence, a low-pressure area is likely to form over the southwest

Bay of Bengal during the next 24 hours. It is likely to move west northwestwards towards Sri Lanka and south Tamil Nadu coast," the IMD said in a statement. As per the IMD, districts in the southern interior of Karnataka, Kerala, Mahe in Tamil Nadu, and Karaikal in Puducherry are 'very likely' to receive light to moderate,

scattered/fairly widespread rainfall over the next five days. The weather department has advised fishermen not to venture into the southwest Bay of Bengal, Gulf of Mannar and off the southern coast of Tamil Nadu, citing the possibility of wind speeds reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph on November 24 and November 25.

## Appeal against HC's 'oral sex with minor not assault' order: Child right's body to UP govt

(News Agencies) - The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on Wednesday appealed to UP chief secretary to file an urgent appeal on behalf of the State against the Allahabad High Court judgement which had reduced the sentence of a convict from 10 years to 7 years in the case of a sexual assault of a minor. The high court in its ruling had observed that oral sex with a minor does not come under 'aggravated sexual assault' category under the PocsO Act. The convicted man had been found guilty of sexually assaulting a 10-year-old minor by a Sessions Court in Uttar Pradesh.



The NCPCR in its letter to the UP chief secretary said, "...the observations of the Hon'ble High Court in the present matter for commutation of sentence of the accused from 10 years to 7 years and the offence from Aggravated Penetrative Sexual Assault

(Section 5 and 6) to Penetrative Sexual Assault (Section 3 and 4) seems to be not asper the letter and spirit of the POCSO Act, 2012." Further, the child rights panel sought details of the surviving child in order to ensure that full legal aide can be provided to

the minor.

**ALLAHABAD HC RULES ORAL SEX WITH MINOR NOT 'AGGRAVATED SEXUAL ASSAULT'**

The Allahabad High Court in a ruling on Wednesday said that, "Putting a penis into the mouth does not fall in the category of aggravated sexual assault or sexual assault. It comes into the category of penetrative sexual assault, which is punishable under Section 4 of the POCSO Act." The court then went on to reduce the sentence of the guilty from 10 years to 7 years.

According to reports, the convicted man had sexually assaulted a 10-year-old boy. The act of crime came to light

when the minor child was questioned about Rs 20 found with the child. Upon being asked persistently, the boy narrated the ordeal, following which the family had approached the police. SC OBSERVED 'SKIN-TO-SKIN' CONTACT NOT NECESSARY FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT

Earlier, Justices UU Lalit, S Ravindra Bhat and Bela Trivedi had ruled that restricting the meaning of "touch" to "skin-to-skin" contact would lead to "narrow and absurd interpretation" and destroy the intent of the Act, which was enacted to protect children from sexual offences.





## TRF commander among three militants killed by security forces in Srinagar's Rambagh

**Security forces gunned down three militants in an encounter in the Rambagh area of Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar on Wednesday.**

Three militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in the Rambagh area of Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar on Wednesday.

The militants were killed in a brief shootout near the

Rambagh bridge on Lal Chowk-Airport road.

One of the three militants killed in the encounter has been identified as Mehran Shalla, a top commander of The

Resistance Front (TRF), DGP Dilbagh Singh said.

DGP Dilbagh Singh further said that Mehran was involved in the killing of two teachers -- Supinder Kaur and Deepak Chand -- and other civilians in Srinagar.

The second militant has been identified as Manzoor Ahmed

Mir. The identity of the third militant is being ascertained.

On November 17, five militants, including a commander of the TRF, were killed during an encounter with security forces in Pombay and Gopalpora villages of Kulgam district.

**Meghalaya: In massive jolt to Congress, former CM Mukul Sangma, 11 other MLAs join TMC**



(News Agencies) - In a massive jolt to Congress, former Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma and 11 others join Trinamool Congress in Meghalaya. With this move, 12 out of 17 Congress MLAs joined Trinamool. This comes a month after Rahul Gandhi met former Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma and the party's state president Vincent H Pala over their demands. The former Chief Minister and Congress Legislature Party leader Mukul M Sangma and Pradesh Congress Committee chief Vincent H Pala had not been getting along well ever since the latter was appointed the new Meghalaya unit chief. Sangma had also stated that the party leadership did not consult him on Pala's appointment. There was speculation that Sangma may defect to the Trinamool Congress. The two leaders, however, came together on Saturday and decided to work together for the upcoming bye-elections.

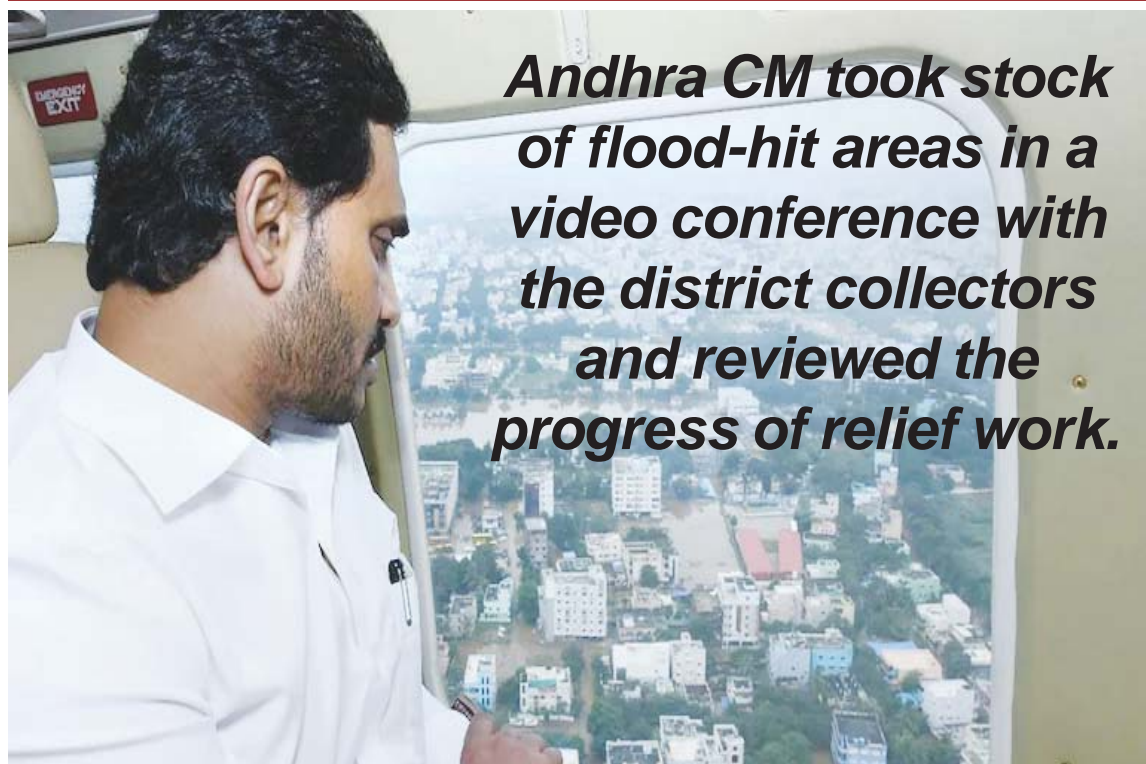
Sources had also said that members of Prashant Kishor's team were in talks with the Congress leader on behalf of the TMC. However, Sangma remained non-committal about the TMC offer.

Addressing the media in the capital Shillong in September, Sangma said he would press for "course correction" within the party.

"I will press for course correction at an appropriate level within the four walls of our party, that is what I will do," Sangma had said.

Former CM Sangma has now sought time to meet Sonia Gandhi. "I will travel to Delhi on Sunday to meet the Gandhis to resolve pending issues.

## Andhra CM Jagan Mohan Reddy asks officials to expedite relief work in flood-hit areas



**Andhra CM took stock of flood-hit areas in a video conference with the district collectors and reviewed the progress of relief work.**

(News Agencies) - Andhra Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday took stock of the flood affected areas in the state in a video conference

with the district collectors and reviewed the progress of relief work undertaken.

The Chief Minister said the floods have impacted nearly 95,000 families and they

should receive immediate assistance and instructed the district collectors to monitor the relief work. He instructed the officials to take measures to ensure there is drinking

water and electricity for the affected areas at the soonest. Reddy instructed the officials to expedite the compensation within the next 34 days for those whose houses were completely damaged and partially damaged and added that new houses should be sanctioned for completely damaged houses.

"Rs 95,000 should be paid as compensation for those who lost their house and directed the officials to sanction Rs 1.80 lakh for constructing new houses," the CM said. Further, he directed district collectors to submit reports on road restoration. The Chief Minister directed officials to focus on the safety of irrigation projects in 13 districts and asked officials to remain vigilant and make necessary preparations in the wake of heavy rains forecast in Nellore and Prakasam districts for four days beginning November 26.





## Anil Deshmukh's secretary never sought money from me: Sachin Vaze to Chandiwal panel

**Appearing before the Chandiwal Commission on Wednesday, Sachin Vaze said that Anil Deshmukh's personal secretary Sanjeev Palande never demanded any money from him.**

(News Agencies) -Anil Deshmukh's personal secretary Sanjeev Palande never demanded any money from me, Sachin Vaze has told the Chandiwal Commission. Vaze, an 'encounter specialist', was removed from his post as an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) with the Mumbai Police in March of this year.

On Wednesday, Vaze was presented before the single-member commission comprising Justice KU Chandiwal. The commission was set up at the direction of the Maharashtra government to probe allegations of corruption against Deshmukh.

Advocate Shekhar Jagtap, appearing for Sanjeev Palande asked Sachin Vaze, "Did Sanjeev Palande demand any money for any reason?"

"No," replied Sachin Vaze. In a statement to the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Vaze had claimed under oath that he had overheard the then Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh and his secretary Sanjeev Palande talking about demanding Rs 20 crore in exchange for clearing the transfer posting of senior police officials.

'Evidence to say Deshmukh

asked Vaze to rejoin police'

During the proceedings on Wednesday, Jagtap also asked Vaze about his deposition from the previous day.

Sachin Vaze had on Tuesday said that it was Anil Deshmukh who asked him to go for reinstatement in 2020. Vaze had been suspended in 2004 in connection with a custodial death case.

Advocate Shekhar Jagtap asked Vaze if "it was correct to say" that, except his own account, there is no evidence to suggest that Deshmukh asked him to go for reinstatement.

"There were a couple of witnesses when Deshmukh told me to meet the commissioner of police and seek reinstatement. But I have no other record," replied Sachin Vaze.

Didn't handle any cases related to bars, hotels: Vaze Vaze, who was heading the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) of the Mumbai Police, told the Chandiwal Commission on Wednesday that he had personally been assigned only two cases.

The dismissed Mumbai cop is alleged to have extorted crores from bars and restaurants at the behest of Anil Deshmukh.

When asked by advocate

Shekhar Jagtap if he had met any bar and restaurant owners in November or December 2020, Vaze said he 'did not remember'. The 'encounter specialist' said he would have to go through records to see if he had met Mahesh Shetty and Jaya Pujari in December 2020. Vaze denied having met the two to demand money from them in exchange for letting them run their establishments beyond normal hours.

Sachin Vaze also told the commission that as in charge of the CIU, he was supervising cases assigned to the unit but could not recall any cases related to Mumbai-based bars, restaurants or hotels. He further added that the CIU was assigned cases by his immediate superiors, including the then Mumbai Police Commissioner, through the proper channels. Met Palande in mid-Feb, says Vaze

Advocate Shekhar Jagtap also asked Sachin Vaze if he knew Sanjeev Palande personally. Vaze responded by saying that he knew Palande as Anil Deshmukh's secretary but did not have any personal acquaintance with him.

"Is it correct that only for the purposes of certain official meetings, you had the

opportunity to visit Palande at Dnyaneshwari, the official residence of the then Home Minister," asked Jagtap. Vaze replied: "I do not remember".

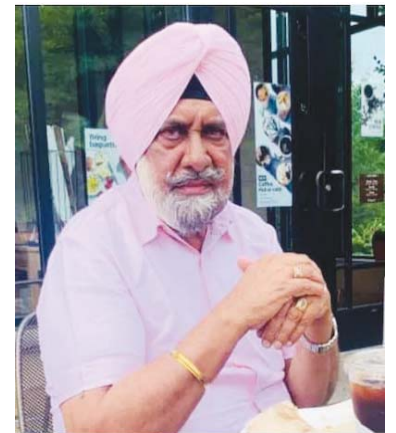
"It is correct that I had no interaction with Palande concerning an investigation carried out by me or by CIU in an official capacity," Sachin Vaze went further to add.

However, Vaze did tell the Chandiwal Commission that he met Palande at Deshmukh's official residence sometime in mid-February this year.

Asked if there is any proof other than his statement that he met Sanjeev Palande, Sachin Vaze told the Chandiwal Commission on Wednesday that "Palande has corroborated it in his own affidavit". What Vaze told ED about Sanjeev Palande

According to the ED's prosecution complaint, Sanjeev Palande was instrumental in passing on instructions from Anil Deshmukh to Sachin Vaze. The agency also suspects that Palande arranged meetings, oversaw the collection of alleged 'extortion' money from bars and restaurants and assessed the collection by involving police officials.

## Opposition attacks Punjab govt for appointing pro-Khalistan leader's brother to key post



The opposition parties in Punjab have hit out at the Congress-led government in the state for appointing the brother of a member of a banned pro-Khalistani outfit to a government post.

Balwinder Singh Pannu Kotlabama has been appointed by the Punjab government as the chairman of Punjab Genco Limited. Balwinder is the brother of Avtar Singh Pannu, the secretary general of the banned pro-Khalistan organisation Sikhs For Justice (SFJ).

Sources said that Punjab Cabinet Minister Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa played an important role in this appointment.

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal asked why a person belonging to the family of SFJ secretary general was given such an important appointment in the Punjab government.

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh called out the state government for appeasing "anti-national and disruptive forces". Tarun Chugh said the move looked perfectly in tune with Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu heaping praise on Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, who he claimed has been sending drones, drugs and ISI agents to India.

The Charanjit Singh Channi-led government has brought shame to Punjab by appointing a person who has links with the banned pro-Khalistan elements, Chugh said.

Demanding immediate removal of Kotlabama from the post, Chugh said the Congress's support to such anti-national forces would be opposed tooth and nail by the BJP.



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## Elbowed by TMC, wary Congress braces for multiple fronts in winter session

**TMC chief Mamata Banerjee's presence in Delhi is making Congress wary, the grand old party is in no mood to concede opposition space in the Parliament.**

(News Agencies) -With TMC chief Mamata Banerjee camping in Delhi and a meeting with Congress president Sonia Gandhi still not on the cards, a wary Congress is in no mood to concede opposition space in the upcoming Winter Session of Parliament.

### STRAINED RELATIONS

In the light of the strained equation between the TMC and the Congress, the crucial meeting of the Parliament strategy group of the Congress on Thursday will assume significance. Apart from thrashing out its stand on vital issues, it will also be looking at floor management and better coordination with other like-

minded parties.

The meeting follows the West Bengal Chief Minister's visit to Delhi and a string of former Congress leaders dumping the party and joining the TMC. Sonia Gandhi will be chairing the meeting that will be attended by Rahul Gandhi and other members of the strategy group at around 4.30 in the evening at 10 Janpath.

In an interesting development, Sonia Gandhi has had a one-on-one meeting with senior leaders Anand Sharma and Kamal Nath in the past two days. Both leaders share a very good equation with the TMC chief and call her by her first name.

FISSURES IN OPPOSITION

### UNITY

The Congress is facing a unique situation with an expansionist Trinamool Congress looking to flex its muscles within the opposition. In comparison to the Congress, the regional party has been far more aggressive and coordinated in its attack on the floor of the House.

Fissures had erupted in the opposition unity in the monsoon session as a belligerent TMC, back with a thumping victory in the assembly elections, was in its elements. However, the opposition still managed a washout over the farm laws, but the unity surely would be put to a greater test this time around. Constantly elbowed, the

Congress is in no mood to concede its ground as the lead opposition party and would be looking to sharpen its attack on the government over burning issues. The party is keen on cornering the government without disruptions and walkouts so that the focus is not lost in adjournments. Inflation would be one of the key issues even as the Congress has planned a mega rally on the topic while the winter session is on. The repeal of the farm laws and the demands relating to it would also be discussed in the meeting. On the national security front, the Indo-China border situation and Afghanistan would also be on the agenda.

## TDP worker thrashed on camera, party blames ruling YSRCP



(News Agencies) -The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) on Wednesday hit out at the Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), accusing the ruling party in Andhra Pradesh of attacking its workers.

The TDP's accusation came after a video of a man being beaten by a group went viral on social media. The TDP claimed that the man is a party worker and was beaten by the members of YSRCP.

The incident took place on Sunday at Tummalacheruvu under Piduguralla mandal of Guntur. The man was seen being beaten by sticks by a group of men in the viral video.

Condemning the incident, TDP MLC and party general secretary Nara Lokesh compared the situation in Andhra Pradesh to Afghanistan.

"The video was proof enough to say how the YSRCP goons have beaten up the TDP worker just for acting as an election agent," alleged Nara Lokesh. However, Guntur Rural SP Vishal Gunni said that the man was attacked over a land dispute. The police have registered a case and said they are trying to catch the accused who are absconding.

## 'Intended to kill you': Gambhir gets 2nd 'ISIS' mail, this time with video shot outside his home

(News Agencies) -BJP MP Gautam Gambhir has approached the Delhi Police over a second threatening email he received on Wednesday. The second email was sent from the email ID "isiskashmir@gmail.com". The second email, accessed by India Today, reads: "We intended to kill you, but you survived yesterday." "If you love the life of your

family, stay away from politics and the Kashmir issue," the email goes on to read.

In addition, the second email has an attachment of a video shot outside Gautam Gambhir's Delhi residence.

Earlier on Wednesday, Gambhir, the BJP MP from East Delhi, had approached the police over a threatening email from "ISIS Kashmir". The first email read, "We are going to

kill you and your family".

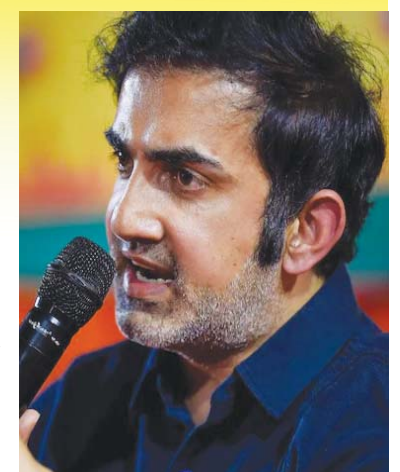
DCP (central) Shweta Chauhan told India Today that a case has been registered in this regard on the basis of a complaint by Gaurav Arora on behalf of BJP MP Gautam Gambhir.

In a written complaint to the Delhi Police dated November 23, the MP's personal secretary, Gaurav Arora, mentioned that the first email

was received at 9.32 pm on Tuesday.

A probe into the matter is underway and the cyber-cell of Central district police is verifying the email address from which the threatening emails were sent.

Security outside the MP's residence in Rajendra Nagar has been beefed up as a precaution, added the Deputy Commissioner of Police.





## Arbery and Rittenhouse trials show the transcendent strength of our jury system

**T**hree defendants have all been convicted in the killing of Ahmaud Arbery. Travis McMichael, Gregory McMichael and William "Roddie" Bryan Jr. are now looking at life in prison. Their trial in Brunswick, Georgia, was a testament to two key elements in the criminal justice system: the integrity of the American jury and the power of videotape evidence.

A jury of 11 White jurors and one African American ran the table on the defendants in convicting them all for their roles in chasing down 25-year-old Arbery, trapping him and then ultimately killing him.

It was the same racial makeup as the jury in the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse, where 11 White jurors and one Black juror acquitted the defendant on all counts.

The jurors in both cases exercised careful deliberation of the evidence and rendered verdicts based on that evidence. They transcended the passions and the demands of the public at large to do justice as required under our laws.

The Arbery case is also an example of the impact of videotape evidence. It is the latest such case where legal arguments could not overcome indelible video images. That was the case in the George Floyd trial. It was also the case in the Rittenhouse trial. The two cases, Floyd and Rittenhouse, resulted in different verdicts but both verdicts were propelled by videotapes at the scene. The jury could not see a legitimate police function in the actions taken by Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin. Conversely, they could see a legitimate claim of self-defense in the actions of Kyle Rittenhouse in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

All of the lawyering in the world could not get a jury to unsee what they saw in those videos. There is also notably a comparison to the trial in the death of Trayvon Martin, where there was no such videotaped evidence. The underlying defense claims were strikingly

similar. Both George Zimmerman, who was acquitted in Martin's shooting death, and the Georgia defendants charged with killing Arbery claimed that they pursued a suspected felon and that the shooting occurred only after the deceased grabbed the weapons. In the Martin case, there were only two witnesses to the shooting and only one could testify: Zimmerman. Whether a videotape would have supported either Zimmerman or Martin will remain a matter of intense debate. However, a videotape has the ability to cut through legal arguments to bring clarity as to the question of intent. Judge Timothy Walmsley will now decide whether the convicted defendants in Georgia will serve life with or without parole. However, under state law, such a parole is only attainable after 30 years in prison. That will likely not be material to Greg McMichaels who is 65.

The defendants also face a federal trial in February for federal hate crime charges. Their only hopes of getting out of prison will come with appeals over the legal interpretations of Walmsley that were the foundation of key jury instructions.

In the end, the Rittenhouse and Arbery trials show the transcendent strength of our jury systems.

Many in the media denounced the Rittenhouse jury as racist for its acquittal verdict. President Joe Biden declared that he was "angry" with the jury decision. Yet, in both cases, 11 White jurors and one Black juror came to unanimous decisions on multiple counts. While we speak often of our divided nation in this age of rage, these juries found unanimity based on the rule of law and the weight of evidence. They did justice despite angry demands and demonstrations raging around their courthouses. They represented precisely what John Adams foresaw when he declared, "Representative government and trial by jury are the heart and lungs of liberty."

## Biden-Harris dream team suddenly Dems' worst nightmare after just 10 months

If the question is being asked, the answer is almost assuredly "no."

That is a reference to an embattled officeholder facing inquiries about standing for reelection. Of course, the public company line must be "yes." Otherwise, the candidate in question becomes the lamest of lame ducks instantaneously. The business of governing grinds to a halt as underlings turn into rivals jockeying for position in the succession line. Ten months in, such is the sorry state of affairs of the Biden presidency. Even the U.S. House of Representatives passing the administration's signature legislative priority could not snap the spell of a dreadful November swoon.

The month began with Democratic setbacks in the off year elections, and concludes with renewed concern about inflation and higher costs of well, everything, from gasoline (62% higher) to home heating (54% higher) to Thanksgiving meals (14% higher). After a weekend of swirling speculation about the feasibility of a Joe Biden-led Democratic ticket in 2024, White House press secretary Jen Psaki did her best to tamp down the palace intrigue, calling it "his intention" to run for reelection. The statement mirrors Biden's own from March 2021 (merely two months after his inauguration, which says something) when he stated, "My plan is to run for reelection."

Hardly Sherman-esque declarations. Both leave plenty of wiggle room. And for good reason. Even if Biden's most ardent supporters were not expecting the second coming of JFK, few probably

envisioned things going off the rails so badly, so fast. While every presidency endures its ups and downs, Biden always faced the intractable and unstoppable opponent of Father Time. He just turned 79 years old. To put it charitably, he has lost a few miles an hour off his fastball. For a guy who spent the better part of his adult life delivering long-winded and verbose speeches on the floor of the U.S. Senate, his public speaking events these days are brief, unsteady and far from inspiring.

Reversing his administration's current tailspin starts with the man at the top. In this environment, it would be a tall task for a talented politician in their prime. Whether Biden is up for the task remains an open question, to put it mildly. Should he seek and win a second term in office, Biden would be 86 years old by its conclusion. By contrast, the second-oldest commander in chief in our history, Ronald Reagan, was dismissed by his critics as being too long in the tooth when he first ran for president in 1980 at the age of 69. If Biden has underwhelmed as president, his second-in-command has managed to fall even shorter of expectations. The latest polls show the American people viewing Vice President Kamala Harris less favorably than Biden, which is no small feat. Outside of family and paid advisers, even Democrats have a hard time envisioning Harris getting closer to the presidency than the 85 minutes she spent in charge when Biden was undergoing a medical procedure.



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## US tech giants aren't monopolies, they are engaged in fiercely competitive markets

Few issues have generated more misguided legislation in this Congress than antitrust reform. The latest addition to this regrettable canon shows exactly what's at stake.

This month, Senators Amy Klobuchar (of Minnesota) and Tom Cotton (of Arkansas) introduced the Platform Competition and Opportunity Act of 2021. It's a companion bill to one that was introduced in the House - along with four likeminded proposals - in June, and its goal is relatively simple: It would effectively ban big tech companies from making acquisitions, on the theory that this would stimulate competition and better serve consumers.

That theory, offered as though it were self-evident, is in fact dubious. Mergers and acquisitions are typically a spur to efficiency, not a barrier, because they allow companies to create synergies, boost productivity, diversify risk, and gain economies of scale or scope. In the American tech business, these benefits are especially pronounced. Acquisitions allow platforms to instantly bring new products to a huge market. They reward investors for taking a chance on promising startups. They encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and the tolerance for failure that has made the U.S. venture-capital market so strikingly successful. By banning mergers, the bill could destroy this ecosystem.

Perversely, it would actually make it harder for new entrants to disrupt existing markets. By placing the burden of proof in merger reviews on companies rather than the government, it would shift the balance of power away from the courts and toward politically appointed bureaucrats. Its very purpose is to dethrone the consumer-welfare standard that has guided U.S. antitrust policy for decades - and has helped make America's tech sector the envy of the world.

The digital economy now makes up 9.6% of U.S. gross domestic product, almost as much as manufacturing. It employs nearly 8 million Americans, produces an enormous variety of desirable products, and often gives them away for free. If this is an industry in need of a radical intervention, what do these lawmakers imagine would constitute success?

The senators say they're addressing "our nation's monopoly problem," but they offer no evidence that the targeted businesses are in fact monopolies. There's a good reason for that. The companies in the crosshairs - Amazon.com, Apple, Google and Facebook - might be big, but by any traditional metric they're engaged in fiercely competitive markets.

Notice that the bill's new strictures would apply only to companies with net annual sales or market capitalizations exceeding \$600

billion - "as of the date of enactment." That would ensnare the likes of Amazon and Facebook, but any incumbent currently below that threshold would be free to strive for greater market power. Coincidentally, two of those would-be rivals are Target (of Minnesota) and Walmart (of Arkansas).

Setting aside the suspicion of home-state cronyism, this design is revealing. It effectively concedes that Amazon is not an unassailable monopoly and that the e-commerce market is in fact intensely competitive. Reality concurs: Both retailers are growing faster than Amazon in e-commerce, all three are engaged in a fierce pricing war, and the benefits - cheaper goods, faster delivery, greater variety - accrue to everyone. Amazon has a market share of about 40% in e-commerce and less than 7% in overall retail, not close to a monopoly by any standard.

If legislators feel that tech mergers demand added scrutiny, they should provide more resources to the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission for that purpose. If they object to specific business practices among tech firms, they should outlaw them. What they should not do is harness antitrust enforcement to vague and unrelated objectives, while recklessly destabilizing one of the country's most successful industries.

## Farm laws episode lays bare India's internal disunity. It's time to fix it



To some Indians, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surprise announcement about repealing the three farm laws may be viewed as a victory for democracy. The forces at play in the political economy may have demonstrated their democratic strength. But India might have lost. For, there is no dispute that India's economically and strategically important agriculture sector is in dire need of reform. Another thing that India needs to watch out for is that a weakened government, civil unrest, and inability to carry forward important economic reforms can all be exploited by foes.

For a few decades, farmers have been unwittingly imprisoned by the government, ostensibly to protect them. The argument for protection was based on the need to progress. However, India's farmers must be set free to decide what they want to grow and whom to sell. Lack of reform has resulted in the overall awful state of the farmers. It is a long overdue and key public policy reform amongst several others for the agricultural sector. Barring some big farmers, the perpetual hardships and negative state of affairs of the majority of India's farmers should be a cause of concern for the country's political class.

Discontented farmers, their dependents, and others who are part of the support systems for the agriculture industry across the country can become a flame that fans India's disunity. In particular, any path giving a religious colour to the farmers' protests must be eschewed. No doubt, this is easier said than done. The external threat is real.

There should be no doubt among Indian planners that both China and Pakistan are seeking to keep India weak. China's intention is derived from the larger, global-level competition with the US. Pakistan's is derived from its belief that a strong India can pose an existential threat. Both countries expect to check India's developmental progress. Thus, creating territorial and terrorism-based insecurity is only a means to achieve such ends. But going by various decisions of the governments and political parties, it seems that in general, India's political class is insufficiently sensitive to the growing challenges that are animating its external security landscape.

It is high time that Prime Minister Modi held a closed-door session with parliamentarians of all parties with a briefing on India's strategic landscape. India's perception of internal and external threats must be explained. It will establish the urgency for fostering internal unity. India's political class must seek to sink their differences to unite against growing external threats.





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# Chinese navy is planning ahead. India's approach doesn't match up, above sea or below

***While China has been focusing on its naval build-up, from carriers to destroyers, Indian Navy's budget keeps decreasing.***



Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh commissioned the fourth of the Scorpene-class submarines - INS Vela - Thursday. A few days back, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned the first of the Visakhapatnam class of destroyers. There is no denying that the commissioning of both these vessels into the Indian Navy is a boost to the maritime force as it gives a fillip to India's capacity and firepower to counter threats, both above water and below.

The fact of the matter is that the one area where China can feel Indian military pressure is on the maritime front. At least for the time being. The best that India can manage to draw out with China on the land is a stalemate. And a stalemate is not in India's advantage, but China's.

As I had earlier reported, Vice Admiral Satish Namdeo Ghormade, the Vice Chief of Naval Staff, had last week said that 39 submarines and surface ships are under construction at various Indian shipyards, besides the two frigates being built for the Indian Navy in Russia. He also said that the Navy, which currently has about 139 ships, is aiming to reach its target of 170 ships over the next few years.

While this is good news, one needs to go beyond what is

being spoken and look at where India stands when it comes to military modernisation, especially in comparison to China, which is aiming to dominate not just the region but also the world.

Chinese navy is planning much ahead

One of the primary focuses of the Chinese military build-up is its navy. The second, of course, is its missile technology. The maritime front is what holds the key to the future, and China is well aware of that. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is the fastest-expanding maritime force in the world.

Former Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba (Retd) had in 2019 said that no navy has grown so rapidly in the last 200 years as the Chinese Navy. He also said that China has added 80 new ships in the last five years, a startling pace of military build-up, which the US has termed as a "threat".

As an editorial in Business Standard noted, India has commissioned just 1-2 capital warships in each of the last five years - not enough to even replace warships that are retiring.

It will be prudent to note that China's shipbuilding is focused on bigger fleet of large destroyers, amphibious warships and aircraft carriers. The recently released report of

the US Defense Department on China's military capabilities notes that PLAN has numerically the largest navy in the world with an overall battle force of approximately 355 ships and submarines, including approximately more than 145 major surface combatants.

As of 2020, the PLAN is largely composed of modern multi-role platforms and in the near-term, the PLAN will have the capability to conduct long-range precision strikes against land targets from its submarine and surface combatants using land-attack cruise missiles, notably enhancing China's global power projection capabilities. "The PRC is enhancing its anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities and competencies to protect the PLAN's aircraft carriers and ballistic missile submarines," the US report added.

It is important to understand the scale of Chinese shipbuilding tactics and prowess.

While India's latest four Visakhapatnam class of ships measures 163 metres in length, 17 metres in breadth, with a displacement of 7,400 tonnes, China has already moved away from its 7,500-tonne vessels to the massive 13,000-tonne, Type 055

Renhai-class destroyers.

Also, the scale of China's military production and approach is completely opposite to India's.

While India goes in for a limited number of vessels of the same class (Project 15B caters to only four Visakhapatnam-class destroyers), China goes in for larger number of vessels (at least a dozen) before moving on to the next upgraded and bulkier versions. This allows not just the production to stabilise and bring the cost down but also increases the scale and shipbuilding capacity.

As I write this, China is all set to launch its third aircraft carrier, which will have the catapult technology for take-off rather than the traditional ski jump-style, even as India debates whether to have a third aircraft carrier or not. It is estimated that China may end up operating six aircraft carriers by 2030.

Target of 170 ships by India is actually a scale-down

While one of the headlines from the press conference of India's Navy Vice Chief was "The Indian Navy's plan to become a 170-ship force on track", it will again be prudent to remember that this is actually a scale-down. In 2019, the Navy reworked its aim of having a 200-ship strong fleet by 2027

because of acute financial crunch over several years and brought down its figure to 170. While China has been focusing on its naval build-up, in India's case, the Navy's share of defence budget had decreased from 18 per cent in 2012-13 to 13 per cent in 2019-20, as was highlighted by current Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh in 2019.

The 2021-22 budget is no different as the Navy continues to reel under the pressure of financial constraints.

I am not getting into an actual comparison of numbers between India and China when it comes to destroyers, corvettes, submarines. It is too depressing as PLAN outnumbers Indian Navy by a huge margin and a simple Google search will give you the results.

Yes, there is an argument that while PLAN may have the numbers, it is not yet completely experienced to operate such large fleets or fight an actual war in the sea, but then it is a matter of time before it does.

What is needed is a focused approach to ramp up India's naval prowess to at least offer minimum credible deterrence to China, which is looking to counter the US and does not see India as an equal, economically and militarily.





# Indira Gandhi Learnt The Hard Way. Modi, Too

The Prime Minister has stuck to his reputation of springing surprises. The announcement of the decision to repeal the three farm laws came as a huge surprise last morning, which, apart from being the pious day of Guru Parab, was also the birthday of Indira Gandhi. The comparison with Indira Gandhi is apt because she also withdrew the Emergency when she realised it had become untenable. Despite all his bravado, the Prime Minister came to the same conclusion, and because he is an 'election-jivi', and elections to five states including the all-important state of UP, are around the corner, and because defeat was staring him in the face, he was left with no option but to withdraw these black laws. In my tweet after the announcement I said, "While I congratulate the Kisans on their victory over the government for the repeal of the farm laws, I attach no noble sentiment to the government for this move. It is a calculated step for the UP elections. For this government, democracy begins and ends with elections." So this is it: nothing more than an election gimmick. The passage of these laws in parliament, specially the Rajya Sabha, had raised many issues of constitutional and parliamentary morality and the conduct of the government. Should the centre legislate on a subject which falls within the legislative domain of the states? Should the laws have been promulgated first as ordinances, violating all the norms for promulgating ordinances? After all, the problems of agriculture in India are as old as agriculture itself, so what was the hurry to promulgate ordinances on these subjects? Next, should they have been ramrodded through parliament in such a shoddy fashion without reference to the Standing Committee of parliament? Scrutiny by the Standing Committee would have enabled consultations with all stakeholders, something that has become standard parliamentary practice now. Will someone in the government stand up even now and explain what was the tearing hurry to enact these laws first as ordinances and then rush them through parliament? Does the act of repeal absolve the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha of indulging in unparliamentary conduct and favouring the government out and out? The humility the Prime Minister exhibited when he addressed the nation - and even his apology - failed to impress because the intent was not pure but tainted. Why did it take him so long to understand that the farmers of India were opposed to these laws? Why did it take the deaths of hundreds of farmers to convince him that they did not welcome these laws? Why was the Prime Minister not moved by thousands of farmers sitting in the open and suffering under a cruel sun or braving the bitter cold? Why was he so impervious to all that was happening in such close proximity of the national capital? Why did he not send a ministerial colleague to commiserate with the farmers at the site of their sit-in? The people of India are not responsible for the image the Prime Minister has projected through a pliant media and the ubiquitous social media. It is his bhakts who said he was the greatest Prime Minister India has ever had. They were trying to convince us all along that he was infallible, strong and courageous. Their claim now that he is a statesman will only fall on deaf ears. This one episode of the repeal of the farm laws in which he invested so much of his personal reputation has proved that he is both weak and fallible, that he also makes mistakes like all of us, and lives to regret them. His image has taken a serious dent. Perhaps he has realised that a couple of his corporate friends may be his ATMs, but they will not get him votes in a popular election. Now the comparison with Indira Gandhi. She had a reputation which was far more formidable than Modi's. After all, there are few personalities in history who can be credited with creation of a new nation. Yet, within four years of her stunning electoral victory following the creation of Bangladesh, she became so unpopular that she lost her nerve and decided to impose the Emergency. She lost when she decided to go to the people who taught her a lesson nobody should forget in a hurry. My faith in the Indian people was strengthened then; it stands revived today. Democracy in India is alive and kicking. It was JP and the students' movement then which defeated Indira Gandhi. There is no JP today. Perhaps we do not need one, because the farmers of India have shown that if any group of people has the will and the determination, it can make a difference. The people have tamed autocrats in the past, they have been tamed once more and will continue to be tamed in future. Long live Indian democracy.





## Kejriwal In Punjab After Farm Laws - What His Visit Helps Establish

The three farm laws have finally been withdrawn. The Prime Minister himself announced this in his address to the nation on Friday on the occasion of Gurmehra. But instead of welcoming the initiative, farmers are still on the warpath. They have categorically stated six more demands and had a mammoth Kisan Mahapanchayat in Lucknow. It was expected that with the announcement, farmers would go back to their homes, satisfied and victorious. Instead, a new debate has started - has the PM made a mistake by conceding their demands?

A bigger debate perhaps is whether the announcement has changed things on the ground. Will it help the BJP neutralise the anger of farmers, especially in UP? Or will it help other parties who can claim Modi has conceded a big mistake? In Punjab, will ex-Congress Chief Minister Amarinder Singh gain from the early stand he took in favour of the farmers' movement, or will it be Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party or AAP which will

leverage this better? Remember that Kejriwal had visited the protesting farmers and told them his government would extend all kinds of support.

It is in this context that Kejriwal's trip to Punjab just three days after Modi's announcement should be viewed. But instead of going big on the farm laws being repealed, he tried to capture the imagination of the women of the state like Nitish Kumar did in Bihar and similar to what Priyanka Gandhi is attempting in UP. He announced what he termed as the world's biggest 'women allowance' scheme: each woman above the age of 18 years in each household will be given a thousand rupees every month, and this will be directly deposited in their account if his party forms the government in Punjab. If his announcement is any indicator, then it can safely be said that he is skeptical of his support to farmers guaranteeing him enough votes to win Punjab.

Kejriwal's strategy could be based on the fact that all

political parties except the BJP supported the farmers' agitation, so it may not be AAP alone that benefits from the cancellation of the farm laws. Amarinder Singh not only supported the movement but met Home Minister Amit Shah to convince him that farmer demands should be met as the unrest was also important from the national security point of view. Amarinder Singh has left the Congress but the top leadership of the party including Rahul Gandhi were always sympathetic to the farmers' cause. The new Chief Minister, Charanjit Singh Channi, had even demanded a memorial for the farmers who died during the agitation. He had also promised to pay compensation to the next of kin of the farmers who died. So Amarinder Singh's exit will not impact the voting behaviour of the agitating farmers towards the Congress. The Akali Dal, which initially supported the farm laws, exited from the Modi government in September, 2020 and ended its

alliance with the BJP. But the party is not going to benefit from the breakup although it very smartly tied up with Mayawati's BSP which has a good presence among the Dalit voters.

With Amarinder Singh setting up his own party, the Congress vote is likely to be split. The Congress also has to contend with the revolt of Navjot Singh Sindhu, its state president. AAP should have been able therefore to take a clear lead. But that does not seem to be the case - at least not yet. AAP was forecast to easily win the 2017 Punjab election, but the Congress took the state. AAP, as the main Opposition party, should have spent the last five years expanding its visibility and building on its foundation, but AAP's Punjab leaders spent the time fighting with each other. Their big leaders in Punjab either left the party or were forced to exit. This finally resulted in AAP winning only one of Punjab's 13 Lok Sabha seats in 2019. And it was decimated in the local body elections 19 months later.

There is no denying that after AAP has established a huge footprint in Punjab after Delhi. But the party in my opinion has to overcome the after-effects of the following mistakes it made:

1. Did not build an organisation
2. Did not let a leader emerge from the Punjab unit
3. Did not apologise for the mistakes it made in 2017
4. Did not present an alternate blueprint for the development of the state

A section of AAP's Punjab leaders were seen as flirting with undesirable extremist elements of Punjab politics. And Kejriwal seems to have reverted to traditional politics rather than the alternative model that makes his party so appealing. So, the freebies. Kejriwal's free electricity and water gimmicks worked in Delhi because they were wrapped in the moral principles of alternate politics. These gimmicks lose their sharpness when offered through traditional politics. This is what AAP may really be up against in Punjab.





# In Farmers vs Modi, A Big Lesson For Congress

once was by the Congress. But when it is a case of BJP versus Congress, there is invariably one winner. The two parties are so mismatched in terms of organisation, cohesion, drive and ambition - in their basic seriousness about acquiring political power - that genuine electoral competition between them is a chimera. Modi's most viable route to re-election in 2024 remains a contest that he is able to define as a choice between himself and the Gandhis.

Paradoxically, however, the easy access to victory that today's Congress has provided the BJP may have actually weakened the latter. This is not the first instance in which the BJP has underestimated an opponent at great cost. There are signs, too, of the PM and Home Minister - in a manner well-known to observers of the Congress - increasingly being surrounded by subordinates unwilling or unable to share bad news or constructive criticism. Regional parties have exploded the excuses favoured by apologists for the Congress' present leadership - that it is unfair to expect the party to compete given the BJP's financial advantage and influence over the media. The contrast goes beyond electoral performance. Compare the cases of Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa and Madhya Pradesh, where the BJP was able to form or topple governments by luring away large numbers of Congress legislators, with West Bengal, where it is the BJP that is now suffering defections at scale.

The farmers' political success has been built on the virtues of unity, belief, and almost otherworldly persistence. Unlike with, say, India Against Corruption, it was never allowed to become a vehicle for opportunistic individuals.

These are the virtues that Opposition parties, individually and collectively, will need to display if they are to build on the successes of the past year. With one exception, they already understand one other truth the farmers have so vividly illustrated: political contests, electoral or otherwise, are not won on Twitter. This may sound obvious, but it remains lost on the leadership of the Congress, and, as the past 24 hours have shown, on many of their supporters.

A victory for democracy, or a testament to democratic failure? Surprising proof that India remains politically plural, or fresh evidence of its inability to reform its economy? The Prime Minister's withdrawal of the three 2020 farm laws is all of these things. Politically, it is the most significant defeat of Narendra Modi's seven years as Prime Minister. In historical terms, to find a comparable example of the central government reversing course in the face of citizens' protest, you may have to go all the way back to the anti-Hindi-imposition movement of 1965.

Was it as simple as a case of bad news from western Uttar Pradesh? The alternative theory put out by many of the government's supporters, that the rollback was motivated by national security rather than electoral concerns, doesn't stand up to scrutiny. If social harmony in Punjab was so prominent in the government's list of priorities, it wouldn't have spent the past year attempting to characterise a large section of the state's population as violent secessionists. The manner of the announcement, on Guru Purab, was in the Prime Minister's familiar electorally-minded style.

Whatever your views on the substance of the laws themselves, the farmers' movement deserves the highest respect. The attempts by the

Centre and its outriders in the media to brand the protestors as Khalistanis, foreign agents, rich middlemen or violent anarchists failed to register beyond the echo chamber of the government's core supporters. Public opinion at large was divided between those who backed the farmers and those who were neutral or apathetic. There was no deep constituency in favour of the laws; there will be no citizens' protests against their repeal.



Those who condemn the farmers' means - overwhelmingly non-violent and Gandhian - have to answer the question: what alternative exists to non-violent protest, when legitimate liberal-democratic forms of redress are denied? Those who now declare a "street veto" will be exercised over future government policy are amnesiac about the indispensable role of street agitation - not always non-

violent - in the BJP's own political and ideological rise, from the Ram Janmabhoomi movement of the 1980s and 1990s through India Against Corruption in 2011. Democracy cannot be limited to the exercise of the franchise and votes in parliament. And the essence of democratic politics is the capacity for change, which includes repeal.

Nor can the tragedy of the farm laws be used as evidence that India cannot reform its

norms. The building of consensus and trust are skills in short supply in this government - so too the capacity for compromise.

The farmers have illustrated that a maxim known to be true in electoral politics can also apply to the realm of social mobilisation: when the Modi-Shah BJP is confronted with a truly committed opponent, it is far from invincible. Both the BJP's private and public images of invincibility have been forged in its encounters (the words "battle" and "contest" are not appropriate here) with the present avatar of the Indian National Congress.

Consider the following. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won 303 of the 436 Lok Sabha seats it contested. In 191 seats where its main opponent was the Congress, it won 175 or 92%. Of the 245 where it faced a party other than the Congress, it won 128, that is 52%. Of the 12 current BJP Chief Ministers, 10 serve in states where the Congress is the main Opposition. In the remaining 18 states, the BJP has only two Chief Ministers, and is out of power entirely in 12. Last year's close election in Bihar turned on the 33 seats in which the BJP faced the Congress. The BJP won 27 or 82%. Its win rate against other parties was 61%. India as a whole is not nearly as dominated by the BJP as it

economy through constitutional-democratic means. In this case, the means were simply not applied. The apology actually proffered by the Prime Minister was not for the laws themselves, but for his failure at persuasion. That work of persuasion ought to have preceded, rather than followed, the laws' passage. And the manner of that passage in the Rajya Sabha was a shameful subversion of parliamentary





# Modi's reform momentum has finally hit a wall

*The reversal of farm laws and a possible stalling of the new labour codes could be the beginning of two years of inertia as India gets closer to the 2024 elections.*

Investors must be wondering what promise New Delhi will break next as the ruling party tries to win upcoming state elections. First, the government made a U-turn on the three laws that Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted to use to shake up the stagnant farm economy. Next, he may delay implementing the four codes that have been billed as the "biggest labor reforms in independent India," as Bloomberg News reported. Has the Modi momentum finally come up against a wall?

Take the labor laws passed by parliament in September last year. So far, only 10 out of India's 28 states have followed through by finalizing rules on industrial relations, wages, social security and workplace safety. Considering Modi's party is in power in 17 states, politicians clearly fear resistance.

It's been a longtime demand by the business community that industrial units with fewer than 300 workers shouldn't require government permission to fire employees. (The federally mandated limit currently affects factories employing more than 100 workers, acting as a perverse incentive against growth, though some states have relaxed the rules.) Still, codifying this concession won't exactly win votes. Similarly, giving a legal boost to retirement nest-eggs - as the new rules demand - will ultimately benefit employees. Yet they won't be thrilled if it means lower take-home pay now.

Why is it so hard for a powerful - and, after more than seven years in the top job, still highly popular - leader to enforce his will? Modi promised sweeping, productivity-enhancing changes to factors of production - land, labor and capital. He also pledged a revamp of crucial commodity markets like food. In each instance, being perceived as pro-big business was the undoing of his policies.

The first setback was land. The previous government, battling popular anger for allowing land grabs in the name of special economic zones, had passed an acquisition law in 2013 that big business found too restrictive. Within a year of becoming prime minister, Modi tried to tilt the balance so that village plots could be acquired more easily for infrastructure or affordable housing. But opposition leader Rahul Gandhi mocked him in parliament for favoring crony capitalists dressed in "suits and boots." Modi gave up the idea.

Ditto the controversial agriculture laws. Modi backed them to the hilt against relentless protests by farmers. But since the overall package gave the impression that the state was going to retreat from grain procurement, leaving farmers at the mercy of large business groups, it became too hot a potato to hold through next year's state elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. So Modi dropped his ambitious plan, closing the door at least for some years on reforms of the subsidy-ridden farm and food economy. Now it looks like the new

labor codes are going into cold storage, too.

Meanwhile, reforms to improve capital allocation in the economy are a mixed bag. Despite opposition from bank employees' unions, a bill - to be introduced in the upcoming winter session of parliament - will pave the way for privatizing two state-run lenders. Investors will pay attention to the fate of this law.

They should also closely watch the government's Rs 6 trillion (\$80 billion) asset recycling plan. This, too, could potentially become a political minefield. For instance, while New Delhi has aggressive plans to privatize the management of train stations, the extra money people may have to shell out for improved railway services could become a sensitive issue, especially with less affluent voters who may soon also have to bear the burden of higher consumption taxes. If business groups that are seen to be close to the Modi government charge those additional user fees, opposition parties will get fresh ammunition to attack the prime minister. The closer India gets to the 2024 general elections, the more the government will want to step out of the shadow of big business, and the more his opponents will try to keep it there. In the process, significant chunks of Modi's economic agenda could get delayed or scrapped. The reversal of farm laws and a possible stalling of the new labor codes could be the beginning of two years of inertia.

**'Yes to Hinduism, no to Hindutva' is lazy liberal response, and 3 decades late**



The recent debate on Hindutva versus Hinduism is another reflection of what I call liberal intellectual laziness. It is too little, too late.

It is too late because Hindutva is an established idiom of Indian politics for over two decades. The non-BJP parties did virtually nothing to engage with Hinduism during this crucial period of time. They adhered to a highly vague and politically disastrous form of secularism. It is also too little because the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its associated organisations have spent considerable intellectual energies supported by conscious political moves to offer a completely different imagination of Hindutva. The liberals still rely on the old Savarkar-Golwalkar thesis as if nothing has changed in the last three decades. Author-politicians such as Shashi Tharoor, Pavan K. Varma and now Salman Khurshid are taking refuge in this Hinduism-Hindutva debate.

Two questions are important here. What is the immediate history of the term Hindutva, which has given it an unprecedented political acceptability? And what have been the reasons behind the liberal class' intellectual laziness to respond to it?

The present history of Hindutva In his presidential address of 2004, Lal Krishna Advani made a powerful claim. He said, "I am saddened that from being a description of the core of our nationhood, Hindutva has been misrepresented to denote a political approach. Hindutva is a sentiment; it is neither an electoral slogan nor should it be confused with religion."

Despite this desire to make Hindutva a legitimate expression for Indian nationalism, Advani and other BJP leaders continued to rely on the 1995 Supreme Court judgment that defined Hindutva as "a way of life".

The Narendra Modi-led BJP did not spoil its energies in defending Hindutva as its ideological commitment. Instead, it worked hard to expand the scope of this term - something which Advani once envisaged - to redefine Indianness in Hindu terms.

It is worth noting that Modi does not use the expression Hindutva to describe his





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## MSP won't bankrupt India. It's complex, but so is disinvestment



Aspectre is haunting India's ruling class - the spectre of MSP. Over the last few days, various sections of this ruling class - political allies of the Bharatiya Janata Party, economic ideologues of free-market and some ecological warriors - have entered into an unholy alliance to exorcise this spectre and stymie the possibility of India's farmers getting a fair price for their produce.

Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dramatic, though over-delayed, capitulation on the farm laws, the fear of the ascent of the rural has left the Indian bourgeoisie petrified. Minimum Support Price (MSP) is now the new battleground. End of "reform" - arguably the most abused word - is the latest war cry. Ever since the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) has reminded the PM of its pending demand of a legal guarantee of MSP, we have witnessed a flurry of articles, editorials and debates out to block the possibility that the PM may concede this one as well. MSP is the "bane of agriculture" and the demand for its legal status "totally unreasonable" says the 50-word editorial of The Print, which I often agree with.

As in much ideological propaganda, this tirade against MSP is full of ignorance, prejudice, and fabrications. I cannot imagine such ill-informed canard getting space on national media if it concerned share market, Provident Fund, debt restructuring or anything that touched upon the interest of the "middle class".

As this historic farmers' struggle enters end-game, it is vital to debunk some of the misinformation and disinformation that surrounds the current debate on MSP.

Farmers shifting goalpost?

The first lie is an accusation: Farmers are shifting the goalpost by inventing the demand for legal guarantee of MSP once the demand for repeal of three agricultural laws was conceded. This is nonsense, contrary to the well-known and widely publicised position of the SKM. Demand for MSP realisation has been prominent on the charter of demands, next only to the repeal of three laws, at every stage of this struggle, from the very first memorandum to the 11 rounds of negotiations and the Kisan Sansad. The government's power-point response to the SKM's demands acknowledged this issue. This has been one of the main demands in the public domain, reiterated in almost every public speech.



## Thank god for Netflix and Vir Das. India's craving comedy and satire, but TVs are a no-go

We are a funny people. We enjoy a good laugh at the expense of others but don't like it when the joke is on us. That is why when you watch television in India, you'll find precious little that's funny - unless it's how seriously we take ourselves, or the poor quality of our TV shows.

We all know what happened to comedian Vir Das when he dared to make fun of India and Indians in his six-minute satire, '2 Indias'. He was slapped with an FIR. Ironically, Das was nominated for an international Emmy Award - the United States TV awards - for another show in the comedy section on Netflix. Unfortunately, he didn't win, but in interviews with NDTV 24x7 and India Today, he said he would face whatever was thrown at him. He also appeared at the Emmys, nattily attired in an outfit by fledgling designer Pradeep Bhatt, after he crowd-sourced it on Instagram.

Along with Das, Nawazuddin Siddiqui (Serious Men) and Sushmita Sen (Aarya) were up for Emmys that they didn't get either. But at least the three were nominated for shows on streaming channels. When did you hear of any show/series on Indian cable or satellite TV being nominated for anything? Back when Indian shows stood out the lack of humour and poor content quality are the weakest links on entertainment and news television. It wasn't always so: In the '80s and '90s, the creative talents of Indian cinema tickled our funny bone and expanded our souls with excellent sitcoms and dramas - Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi (1984), Wagle ki Duniya (1988), Dekh Bhai Dekh (1993), Idhar Udhar (1985) - or even the silly-willy Shriman Shrimati (1994) - were hilarious

compared to the laughable shows we now have, including The Kapil Sharma Show or the sitcoms on Sony Sab. Have to give it to Sony though, at least it tries.

Video Player is loading.

If the leading entertainment channels don't believe in producing sitcoms, then news channels ignore political satire that flourishes on American TV news and even in Britain. Think Late Show with Stephen Colbert (CBS), The Mash Report (BBC 2). The closest we get to Colbert and co. is someone like Arnab Goswami who, unintentionally, makes viewers laugh with his histrionic outbursts at 'Vadra Congress' and other 'enemies' of the State.

Fact is, you can't laugh at politicians. For fear of sedition charges? Could be. Can you even think of cracking a joke about Prime Minister Narendra Modi or Amit Shah on air, the way people do on social media? Never. This says something about the fragility of the news media and democracy here - in robust democracies, the political class is always the butt of the best jokes.

The only show that defies self-censorship in comedy is The Week That Wasn't with Cyrus Broacha, weekends on CNN News18. May it be allowed to continue. Hindi news boasts of kavi sammelans with strong satire, but these are also the exceptions.

Decline of comedies and satire

The absence of sitcoms on entertainment channels suggests that we don't enjoy a good joke. And if you think about it, Bollywood has shied away from comedy, too - one of the reasons Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro (1983) remains such a celebrated and fondly remembered film is the lack of any worthy satirical successors.

Likewise, television has produced no

really good comedy, since, well... the nineties. Can you think of any? Has today's political and social correctness, hallmarks of liberal, egalitarian thinking, actually made us more intolerant?

As for drama, well, things have come to such a pass that the K-series from Ekta Kapoor's stable, once considered flagrantly melodramatic with absurd plots, would now draw exclamations of 'wah-wah'. Today's soaps and serials (some still from Kapoor) need Naagin (Colors) to rescue them for anonymity. Mythologicals rule television like they never have before - and obviously, they are no laughing matter. The only other form of entertainment is the reality contest shows - Sa Re Ga Ma Pa (Zee), Indian Idol (Sony), Dance India Dance (Zee TV), and of course there's Kaun Banega Crorepati (Sony) and Bigg Boss (Colors) - the latter's charm lies in that we don't know whether to laugh or cry while watching it.

Only TRP, no content

Indian entertainment channels don't seem interested in excellence at all, just viewership ratings. Hence, the ascendancy of the epic. There is also no attempt to gamble, to try out innovative formats, genres or break new ground. Hence, a perpetual cycle of the same tired-looking soaps and mythos throughout the week, and reality shows on the weekend. Clearly, producers and channels know something we don't - that Indians don't watch TV to be amused or elevated, and therefore, there is no money to be made in quality shows or comedies. They have left that market for the streaming channels.





# China downgrades diplomatic ties with Lithuania over Taiwan de facto embassy

**China on Sunday downgraded diplomatic ties with Lithuania for permitting Taiwan to open a representative office.**

Furious over Lithuania for permitting Taiwan to open a representative office, China on Sunday downgraded diplomatic ties with it to the level of charge d'affaires, a move that could further damage Beijing's relations with the European Union, as the tiny Baltic nation with less than three million population is an influential member of the bloc.

"There is only one China in the world and the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China," the foreign ministry said in a statement. The one-China principle is an overwhelming consensus of the international community, a widely-recognised norm governing international relations, and the political foundation for China and Lithuania to develop bilateral ties, it said.

"Regrettably, Lithuania has chosen to ignore China's solemn position and to disregard the broader interests of bilateral ties and the basic norms governing international relations. It has allowed the establishment in Lithuania of the 'Representative Office' bearing the name of Taiwan, thus creating an egregious precedent in the world," the statement said. "The Chinese government, out of the need to safeguard national sovereignty and basic norms governing international relations, has no choice but to downgrade its diplomatic relations with Lithuania to the charge d'affaires level. The Lithuanian government must bear all the ensuing consequences," it said.

Charge d'affaires in diplomatic parlance means the embassy will be headed by the chief of mission in the absence of the ambassador. China has already recalled its envoy from Lithuania's capital Vilnius.

"The downgrade means a serious setback in China-Lithuania diplomatic relations, as charge d'affaires does not have full authority compared with ambassadors. It indicates that the power of diplomats

in both countries will be greatly limited and affected," Cui Hongjian, director of the Department of European Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, told the the Global Times.

A similar decision could be traced back to as early as May 5, 1981, when China downgraded bilateral diplomatic ties to the charge d'affaires level with the Dutch government after the Netherlands approved the sale of a submarine to Taiwan.

Observers say China apprehends that Lithuania's move could prompt other EU and smaller countries to resort to similar action.

At the same time, Beijing also warned Taiwan.

"We also have this stern warning for the Taiwan authorities: Taiwan is never a country. No matter how 'Taiwan independence' forces try to misrepresent facts and confound black and white, the historical fact that the mainland and Taiwan belong to one and the same China cannot be changed. Attempts to seek foreign support for political manipulation will prove a dead end," the statement said.

China, which claims Taiwan as part of the mainland and ratcheted up tensions by sending over 200 military planes into Taiwan's Air Identification Defence Zone (ADIZ) in recent weeks, is at loggerheads with Lithuania since the last few months over its decision to permit Taiwan to open its Representative Office.

Beijing had recalled its ambassador from Vilnius in August and also asked Lithuania to recall its envoy from China.

However, undaunted, Lithuania went ahead and permitted the opening of the Taiwan Representative Office, regarded as a de facto embassy, prompting Beijing to warn Vilnius of serious consequences.

"The Lithuanian side shall be responsible for all the ensuing consequences" and it "shall reap what it sows", Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao

Lijian warned on Friday last.

It all began in May when Lithuania withdrew from the Beijing-led 17+1 cooperation platform with central and eastern European states, calling it "divisive".

As it geared up for a diplomatic showdown with China, it moved closer to the US, which for its part has increased support for Taiwan to stave off the threats from China to guard and protect its independent identity.

Lithuanian Economy Minister Ausrine Armonaite on Thursday said his country would sign a USD 600 million export credit agreement with the US Export-Import Bank as part of the "bilateral coordinated action" to counter Beijing's economic influence.

Beijing's conflict with Lithuania comes at a sensitive time when China's lucrative ties with the EU are under stress over Brussels' allegations of human rights violations by the communist giant in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet.

Earlier, the EU has backed off from approving the China-EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investments (CAI) as it supported US President Joe Biden's call for joint opposition to Beijing's policies on Xinjiang, Hong Kong and called for a probe into the origins of coronavirus, including its likely leak from a bio-lab in Wuhan.

Lithuania joined other EU members, Belgium and Poland, in opposing the China-EU trade agreement, which was regarded as a big setback for Beijing. Trade between China and the EU was worth USD 709 billion in 2020, overtaking USD 671 billion trade between China and the US.

Also, the 16-year long reign of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, regarded as a staunch supporter of the EU's close trade ties with China, has come to an end as she is stepping down from the leadership of the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU).



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# Sri Lanka ends farm chemical ban as organic drive fails

*Sri Lanka announced the lifting of an import ban on pesticides, effectively putting an end to the country's quest to become the world's first completely organic farming nation.*

Sri Lanka abandoned its quest to become the world's first completely organic farming nation on Sunday, November 21, 2021, announcing it would immediately lift an import ban on pesticides and other agricultural inputs. The island country has been in the grips of a severe economic crisis, with a lack of foreign exchange triggering shortages of food, crude oil and other essential

goods. Authorities had already walked back restrictions on fertiliser imports last month for tea, the country's main export earner. But ahead of planned farmer protests in the capital, Sri Lanka's agricultural ministry said it would end a broader ban on all agrochemicals including herbicides and pesticides. "We will now allow chemical

inputs that are urgently needed," ministry secretary Udith Jayasinghe told the private News First TV network.

"Considering the need to ensure food security, we have taken this decision."

Vast tracts of farmland were abandoned after the import ban, first introduced in May.

Shortages have worsened in the past week, with prices for rice, vegetables and other market staples having doubled across Sri Lanka.

Supermarkets have also rationed rice sales, allowing only five kilograms (11 pounds) per customer.

Farmers' organisations had planned to march on the national parliament in Colombo on Friday to demand the import of essential chemicals to protect their crops. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had justified the import ban by saying he wanted to make Sri Lankan farming 100 per cent organic.

The policy was introduced after a massive hit to the cash-strapped island's economy in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, with tourism earnings and foreign worker remittances drastically falling.

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## Taliban ban TV shows featuring women actors, ask female journalists to wear hijabs

*In the first such directive to Afghan media issued by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, the Taliban also called on women television journalists to wear Islamic hijabs while presenting their reports.*

Afghanistan's Taliban authorities on Sunday issued a new "religious guideline" that called on the country's television channels to stop showing dramas and soap operas featuring women actors. In the first such directive to Afghan media issued by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, the Taliban also called on women television journalists to wear Islamic hijabs while presenting their reports. And the ministry asked the channels not to air films or programmes in which the Prophet Mohammed or other revered figures are shown. It called for banning films or programmes that were against Islamic and Afghan values. "These are not rules but a religious guidelines," ministry spokesman

Hakif Mohajir told AFP. The new directive was widely circulated late Sunday on social media networks. Despite insisting they will rule more moderately this time around, the Taliban have already introduced rules for what women can wear at university, and beaten and harassed several Afghan journalists despite promising to uphold press freedoms. The Taliban's guideline for TV networks comes after two decades of explosive growth for independent Afghan media under the Western-backed governments that ruled the country until August 15, when the Islamists regained power. Dozens of television channels and radio stations were set up with Western assistance and private investment soon after

the Taliban were toppled in 2001.

During the past 20 years, Afghan television channels offered a wide range of programmes -- from an "American Idol" style singing competition to music videos, along with several Turkish and Indian soap operas. When the Islamists previously ruled from 1996 to 2001, there was no Afghan media to speak of -- they banned television, movies and most other forms of entertainment, deeming it immoral. People caught watching television faced punishment, including having their set smashed. Ownership of a video player could lead to a public lashing. There was only one radio station, Voice of Sharia, that broadcast propaganda and Islamic programming.

## China's hypersonic test also included launch of second missile: Reports



China's globe-circling hypersonic missile, whose launch created ripples across the globe, also included the launch of a separate missile from the ultra-high-speed vehicle, according to various reports. The test displayed China's development of its strategic, nuclear-capable weapons as more advanced than any had thought, surprising Pentagon officials, the Financial Times and Wall Street Journal reported. According to reports, the test is believed to have also included the release of a separate missile which rocketed away into the South China Sea.

The July test made global headlines when it emerged last month that the vehicle had flown into space and completed a partial orbit of the Earth.

Neither the United States nor Russia has demonstrated the same ability, which requires launching a missile from a parent vehicle traveling five times the speed of sound.

According to the Financial Times, US military experts are trying to understand how China mastered the technology, which puts it ahead in the hypersonic arms race. The Wall Street Journal confirmed the report on Monday. No other major countries like Russia and US have currently demonstrated the same ability.

## Ninety-four out of top 100 most polluted global cities are in India, Pakistan and China

In what can be a warning sign for Asia and the world, 94 out of 100 most polluted cities in the world were located in India, Pakistan and China with India making up for largest chunk of the total.

As per IQAir's 2020 air quality index, India had 46 of the world 100 most polluted cities. This was followed by China (42), Pakistan (6), Bangladesh (4). It's worth noting that almost all of these countries



are in South Asian region.

As per the rankings, Ghaziabad was the most polluted city in India. The Chinese city of Hotan was the most polluted city for China while in Pakistan, Lahore grabbed the top spot. Lahore often features in the list of most polluted cities in the world. China and India are some of the world's biggest carbon emitters but air pollution has worsened in Pakistan as well, in recent years. "Children are experiencing

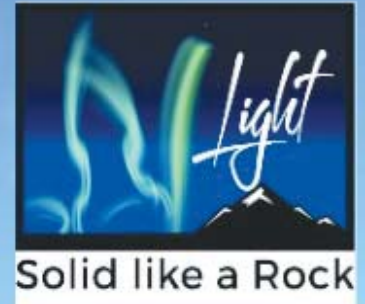
breathing diseases... for God's sake, find a solution," labourer Muhammad Saeed told AFP.

"We are poor people, can't even afford a doctor's charges," shopkeeper Ikram Ahmed told AFP.

"We can only plead with them to control the pollution. I am not a literate person, but I have read that Lahore has the worst air quality and then comes India's Delhi. If it continues like this, we will die."



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# Rise of the wild turkeys: US residents 'terrorised' as birds run riot across towns



A conservation success story is now turning into a wildlife management disaster for several residents in United States as growing incident of wild turkeys attacking humans is being reported across the country. Branded as the "bird of courage" by America's founding father Benjamin Franklin in 1784, wild

turkeys are vandalising homes, attacking people and causing havoc, earning their reputation as one of the most bad-tempered neighbours on the block.

In New Hampshire, a motorcyclist crashed after being assaulted. In New Jersey, a terrified postman rang 911 after a dozen birds attacked him at

once. And in Michigan, one town armed public workers with pepper spray to scare off the birds, according to the Guardian.

In 2020, one of the most notorious offenders, a turkey called Gerald in Oakland, California, was relocated after he attacked more than 100 people in 12 months. In Somerville, Massachusetts, last

year, a large male nicknamed "Pat Cluck" or "Mayor Turkatone", with a history of aggression, was euthanised by the state. Frustrated with the rising menace, a local newspaper in New York, the Daily Messenger, published a sardonic report, calling it the "greatest threat to humans."

"We need to call out the militia, folks. This could be the greatest threat against humans and their civilization since Krakatau erupted. Wild turkey all over America are rioting, rising up in rebellion against the influx of people into their habitat."

There are hundreds of urban conflicts reported each year, with some towns banning residents from feeding them, citing feeding as a catalyst.

The wild turkeys were once extinct in North America. In the 1930s, their numbers plummeted to 30,000 from 200,000 due to unregulated hunting and the clearing of forests for farmland by European settlers.

But thanks to unregulated hunting and the clearing of forests for farmland by European settlers, numbers plummeted to just 30,000 to 200,000 by the 1930s. However, after massive campaigning in the 19th century by the conservationists, their population began to grow steadily. By the early 2000s, numbers reached 7 million, with the US government estimating about 25,000 in Massachusetts, 20,000 in New Jersey, 40,000 in New Hampshire and 60,000 in Maine.

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# Once bitten, Apple sues NSO group for breaking into their products

**Apple has announced that it is suing Israeli hacker-for-hire NSO Group for breaking into Apple's products.**

Tech giant Apple announced Tuesday it is suing Israel's NSO Group, seeking to block the world's most infamous hacker-for-hire company from breaking into Apple's products, like the iPhone.

Apple said in a complaint filed in federal court in California that NSO Group employees are "amoral 21st-century mercenaries who have created highly sophisticated cyber-surveillance machinery that invites routine and flagrant abuse." Apple said NSO Group's spyware, called Pegasus, had been used to attack a small number of Apple customers worldwide.

"State-sponsored actors like the NSO Group spend millions of dollars on sophisticated surveillance technologies

without effective accountability. That needs to change," said Craig Federighi, Apple's senior vice president of software engineering.

NSO Group has broadly denied wrongdoing and said its products have been used by governments to save lives. "Pedophiles and terrorists can freely operate in technological safe-havens, and we provide governments the lawful tools to fight it. NSO group will continue to advocate for the truth," the company said in a statement. It's the latest blow to the hacking firm, which was recently blacklisted by the U.S. Commerce Department and is currently being sued by social media giant Facebook.

Security researchers have found Pegasus being used around the world to break into the phones

of human rights activists, journalists and even members of the Catholic clergy. Pegasus infiltrates phones to vacuum up personal and location data and surreptitiously controls the smartphone's microphones and cameras. Researchers have found several examples of NSO Group tools using so-called "zero click" exploits that infect targeted mobile phones without any user interaction.

The Biden administration announced this month that NSO Group and another Israeli cybersecurity firm called Candiru were being added to the "entity list," which limits their access to U.S. components and technology by requiring government permission for exports. Also this month, security researchers disclosed that Pegasus spyware was

detected on the cellphones of six Palestinian human rights activists. And Mexican prosecutors recently announced they have arrested a businessman on charges he used the Pegasus spyware to spy on a journalist.

Facebook has sued NSO Group over the use of a somewhat similar exploit that allegedly intruded via its globally popular encrypted WhatsApp messaging app. A U.S. federal appeals court issued a ruling this month rejecting an effort by NSO Group to have the lawsuit thrown out. Apple also announced Tuesday that it was donating \$10 million, as well as any damages won in the NSO Group lawsuit, to cyber-surveillance researchers and advocates.

## US Navy warship passes through tense Taiwan Strait



In a development which can hike the tensions in already sensitive Taiwan Strait, a US warship again sailed through the area on Tuesday.

The movement was part of what the US military calls a routine activity, which always attracts sharp reaction from China, who believes Washington is trying to stir tensions in the region.

In accordance with international law, the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer Milius conducted a "routine Taiwan Strait transit" through international waters, the US Navy said.

"The ship's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the US commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. The United States military flies, sails, and operates anywhere international law allows," it added.

There was no immediate response from China.

Earlier, after US destroyer USS Dewey along with the Canadian frigate HMCS Winnipeg sailed through the Taiwan Strait, the Chinese military condemned the move.

"Dewey's and Winnipeg's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the commitment of the United States and our allies and partners to a free and open Indo-Pacific," the US military had declared.

However, the Chinese military asserted that "Taiwan is part of Chinese territory" while adding that it maintained a "high level" of alert against "threats and provocations".

The Chinese military said, "The United States and Canada colluded to provoke and stir up trouble... seriously jeopardising peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait."

## Top 10 world news: China slams US for inviting Taiwan to summit and more

China has asked the United States to stop "platform or shelter for Taiwan independence forces." Sweden on Wednesday appointed Magdalena Andersson as its first female prime minister. Firmly opposing the invite by the US

to Taiwan for the "Summit for Democracy," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the country should "abide by the one-China principle." Andersson was able to clinch a last-minute deal that gave her victory by the slimmest of possible

margins. Finance Minister Olaf Scholz was on the verge of succeeding Angela Merkel as German Chancellor on Wednesday after three parties announced they were ready to present a coalition deal to govern Europe's largest economy. Australia on

Wednesday classified all of Hezbollah- a Lebanese Shia Islamist political party, which also has a militia wing- as a terrorist group. A committee of the members of parliament has been formed to review the policy by Speaker Lindsay Hoyle.





## PM Modi likely to join Biden's Summit for Democracy; Taiwan invited, China and Russia off list

**India is among over 100 nations that have been invited by the US for the 'Summit for Democracy' scheduled for December 9-10. Russia and China are not on the list of invitees.**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to join the 'Summit for Democracy' on US President Joe Biden's invitation. India is among over 100 nations that have been invited for the virtual summit scheduled for December 9-10. The summit will primarily focus on the issues of erosion of democracy. Leaders are also expected to discuss how to protect freedom and rights. "The virtual Summit, to take place on December 9 and 10, will galvanise commitments and initiatives across three principal themes: defending against authoritarianism, fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human

rights," said a White House statement.

The meeting will come up days after PM Modi hosts Russia's President Vladimir Putin at his Lok Kalyan Marg (LKM) in New Delhi on December 6.

**TAIWAN IN, CHINA AND RUSSIA OUT**

The US has invited Taiwan for the 'Summit for Democracy'. However, Russia and China are not on the list of invitees.

Afghanistan and Myanmar, which recently witnessed the toppling of democratic regimes, are also not on the list. Situation in these countries is likely to be discussed by the leaders.

Among the South Asian nations, India, Pakistan, Nepal and the

Maldives have been invited, according to a report by Politico. **HOW COUNTRIES HAVE REACTED**

Russian ambassador to China Andrey Denisov told the Global Times on Friday the "democracy summit" is another misguided attempt to divide the world into categories of "superior and inferior."

Andrey Denisov said, "Some diplomats from western countries also disagreed with the US's way of categorising democracy when they spoke with me in private. But they are just too embarrassed to say it out loud."

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin will be in New

Delhi for a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying, while responding to a question of the US's democracy summit, had said in August, "Democracy should be tangible rather than empty slogans. It should not become spiritual opium that fools or numbs the people, still less an excuse for attacking and smearing other countries and maintaining one's own hegemony."

Hua Chunying said, "Ganging up in the name of democracy, wantonly interfering in other country's internal affairs and even arbitrarily suppressing normal development of other

countries and people's legitimate right to better lives is more undemocratic than anything else. It is autocracy, hegemony and totalitarianism." Meanwhile, Taiwanese media quoted its foreign ministry spokesperson Joanne Ou as saying that they had received the invitation and that Taipei was "looking forward to sharing its democratic experience."

**BIDEN ADMINISTRATION FACES FLAK**

The Biden administration is facing flak over the list of countries chosen for the summit. Although the list has not been officially released, Politico was the first to have accessed the list of countries.

## Investigation on after white student hits black teacher in Texas school

A viral video doing rounds on social media has captured a shocking incident in which a white student can be seen hitting a Black teacher. The incident took place in a school named Castleberry High School in Texas, USA.

In the video, the student can be seen walking towards the teacher who appears to be

making a call. The female student comes and takes the receiver from teacher's hands and hits her on her left arm.

The two of them appear to be in altercation in which the teacher keeps her calm while the student can be heard hurling abuses like 'b\*\*\*\*'

The student then can be heard talking to her mom and asks her



to speak with the teacher

'because she is black'.

Castleberry Independent School District officials have put out a statement and praised the teacher who kept her calm even in the face of literal assault. The statement said that teacher's handling of the incident was exemplary 'throughout the entirety of the incident even when the situation

turned violent and offensive.'

"Harassment, racism and violence against our teachers will not be tolerated at Castleberry ISD, and we will take swift and effective action to protect our teachers so that they can perform their duties and educate students in a safe environment," the statement said.



# We can starve, but the kids cry for food: Afghans struggle after a 100 days of Taliban rule

"We just have dinner in the evening. Sometimes we don't even have that and we go to sleep without eating anything. In the morning, we just have tea," she told the Independent UK. Afghanistan has been braving a grave humanitarian crisis since the US pulled out its troops, ending a war that lasted two decades.

Zarghuna's eight-year-old son has also started feeling the impact of the crisis. He said, "We have bread and sometimes rice, but never meat and fruit. We have so much less food than before and it makes me worried. Sometimes, when we don't have food, I go to sleep without eating anything."

The family has started eating raw flour now. Zarghuna said, "Our situation is not good. A few days ago, we received a sack of flour and we started to eat that. Everything has become expensive. We cannot buy flour and oil

**Afghans are battling the worst winters under Taliban rule. With food scarcity and collapsed healthcare, several are struggling. And, this is only expected to worsen.**



any more because the price is too high." With children aged between one and 15, Zarghuna said the crisis is so grave that the family has been only been able to afford one meal per day

as food prices shot up. Earlier, the United Nations had warned that millions of Afghans, including children, could die of starvation unless urgent action is taken to pull Afghanistan

back from the brink of collapse. World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director David Beasley said 22.8 million people - more than half of Afghanistan's 39

million population - were facing acute food insecurity and "marching to starvation" compared to 14 million just two months ago.

The food crisis, exacerbated by climate change, was dire in Afghanistan even before the takeover by the Taliban, whose new administration has been blocked from accessing assets held overseas as nations grapple with how to deal with the hardline Islamists. Many Afghans are selling possessions to buy food, with the Taliban unable to pay wages to civil servants, and urban communities are facing food insecurity at levels similar to rural areas for the first time.

Aid groups are urging countries, concerned about human rights under the Taliban, to engage with the new rulers to prevent a collapse they say could trigger a migration crisis similar to the 2015 exodus from Syria that shook Europe.

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# Putin to finally visit on 6 Dec as India, Russia aim to make up for lost time amid new alignments

countries' foreign and defence ministers. President Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also have a bilateral meeting during the course of the day.

At the end of that week, on 9 and 10 December, PM Modi will also participate virtually in US President Joe Biden's inaugural 'Summit for Democracy', to which Moscow and Beijing have not been invited.

Arindam Bagchi, spokesperson, Ministry of External Affairs, announced Friday that the annual summit between President Putin and PM Modi would be held on 6 December. The summit was last held in 2019.

While highlighting that defence cooperation continues to be one of the key components of the bilateral relationship between India and Russia, Bagchi said talks on procuring the S-400 missiles from Moscow would gain prominence. India and Russia signed the \$5.43 billion deal to procure the S-400 'Triumph' missile systems in 2018.

The US, under President Biden, has indicated many times that procuring the S-400 missiles from Russia could result in India being subject to sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), a piece of legislation introduced by the previous Donald Trump administration. New Delhi is hoping that, due to the growing strategic partnership between India and the US, it will be able to obtain a waiver under CAATSA. When Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman visited India in October, she said that the S-400 is dangerous for the security interests of countries that procure it.

"Regarding the CAATSA waiver, let me say that India and the US have a comprehensive global strategic partnership, and India has a special and privileged partnership with Russia ... We also pursue an independent foreign policy. This also applies to our defence acquisition and supplies, which are guided by our national security interest," Bagchi said.



Meanwhile, the Russian Foreign Ministry also issued a statement on the upcoming visit.

"During the negotiations with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, it is planned to discuss further development of relations of the special and privileged strategic partnership between the two countries. The leaders will exchange views on topical issues on the international agenda, including joint work within the G20, BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation," the ministry said. It added that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Defence Minister Sergey Shoygu will hold talks in New Delhi with their Indian counterparts, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Russia, India still friends?

While India and Russia have a historical relationship, bilateral ties between the two have undergone a paradigm shift in the context of New Delhi's clear tilt towards the US with its participation in the Quad, or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and the Indo-Pacific strategic construct.

Russia has been vehemently opposed to the concept of the Indo-Pacific, even though India is keen that Moscow also become a part of it.

Russia has grown much closer to China, but despite Beijing's opposition to the S-400 deal, Moscow has gone ahead with the deal for India.

Bala Venkatesh Varma, former

Indian Ambassador to Russia, said in an interview with Newsweek that the "traditional

strengths of India-Russia relations which are defence, nuclear, space, and energy, have been further strengthened, while new drivers of growth have also been added, so there has been a distinct diversification of relations".

At the height of the India-China border standoff in Ladakh, Indian and Chinese defence and foreign ministers held a series of in-person meetings in Russia to mitigate the issue even as New Delhi and Beijing came up with a 'Moscow Agreement'.

On Afghanistan too, after the Taliban takeover in August, India found a friend in Russia to reach out to the Islamist group in order to send humanitarian aid and assistance to the Afghan people.

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# Farm laws repeal wasn't about UP, Punjab elections. The answer lies in what Savarkar wrote

(SAI Bureau)- The symbolism was too profound to be missed. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement to repeal the three contentious farm laws came on the occasion of Guru Nanak Jayanti on 19 November. He especially mentioned that he chose the auspicious occasion for the announcement. It may be a coincidence, but on the same day, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat went to a gurdwara in Chhattisgarh's Raipur and paid obeisance.

The Prime Minister's announcement has been generally seen and analysed in the context of impending assembly elections in the states of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in 2022. The popular theory is that the farmers' movement was causing damage to the electoral prospects of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the PM was forced to take a U-turn on the farm laws. Even farmer leaders have been saying that. Such analyses were made despite the fact that Punjab has never been an electorally important territory for the BJP, and in UP, the movement was limited to half-a-dozen districts in the western and terai regions, where Sikh farmers were allotted land after Partition in 1947.

It's true that assembly elections are just around the corner, and the PM's decision can impact the electoral arithmetic, but I would like to argue that the government's move is more social, cultural, and ideological than electoral. It has been done to safeguard something that is most important for the Hindutva brigade-the 'idea of Hindutva' itself as envisioned by V.D. Savarkar. In effect, the BJP (and the RSS) took the decision to repeal the farm laws to tell the Sikhs that they are not 'another Muslim' for them.

Sikhs, Hindutva and Savarkar Sikhs are very important within Hindutva narratives, and the RSS and the BJP cannot afford to treat them like they treat Muslims. The latter's othering is not just acceptable, but also essential to the idea of Hindutva.

In his book Essentials of Hindutva, V.D. Savarkar constantly argued that "If any community in India is Hindu beyond cavil or criticism, it is our

Sikh brotherhood in the Punjab, being almost the autochthonous dwellers of the Sapta Sindhu land and the direct descendants of the Sindhu or Hindu people. The Sikh of today is the Hindu of yesterday, and the Hindu of today may be the Sikh of tomorrow. The change of a dress, or a custom, or detail of daily life cannot change

the blood or the seed, nor can efface and blot out history itself." This shows the importance that Savarkar ascribed to the idea that Sikhs should remain within the Hindu fold. At the time of writing this book, his project was to create a grand Hindutva narrative, and he wanted to club the Sanatanists, Satnamis, Sikhs, Aryas, Anaryas, Marathas and Madrasis, Brahmins and Panchamas ('untouchables') under the Hindutva fold.

So, Savarkar sounded more progressive than Gandhi, who held puritanical views on caste and varna. Savarkar said, "The system of four varnas may disappear when it has served its end or ceases to serve it, but will that make our land a Mlechchadesha-a land of foreigners? The Sanyasis, the Arya Samajis, the Sikhs and many others do not recognise the system of the four castes, and yet are they foreigners? God forbid! They are ours by blood, by race, by country, by God. We, Hindus, are all one and a nation, because chiefly of our common blood: Bharati Santati."

In Essentials of Hindutva, Savarkar used the word 'Sikh' more than 60 times. This number is another way to understand the importance of Sikhs in his Hindutva project. He further said that Sikhs should continue to profess their religion and continue to fight for minority rights. He added, "The Sikhs are free to reject any or all superstitions they dislike in sanatana dharma," even the binding authority of the Vedas as a revelation. They, thereby, may cease to be Sanatanis, but cannot cease to be Hindus. "Sikhs are Hindus in the sense of our definition of Hindutva and not in any religious sense whatever," said Savarkar.

Sikhs sustained the farmers' protests



On the face of it, one may postulate that the farmers' movement was a non-religious social movement, as many of its leaders were Hindus and even Muslims such as Hannan Mollah, the general secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha. Farmers from all religious groups took part in the movement and their demands were all economic and related to government policies. The organisers took extra effort to ensure that the movement doesn't look like a religious programme by making Hindu and Muslim leaders a part of all the delegations and press conferences.

But the fact remains that the Sikhs were at the core of the movement, and the religious overtones were never missed. The protests started in Punjab just after the three Bills were passed in Parliament in mid-September 2020. The state government, led by the Congress, supported the farmers' agitation and the Punjab assembly even passed a resolution that the Acts would not be implemented in the state. The principal opposition party in Punjab, the Akali Dal, also took the same position. For two months, the farmers' unions protested, blocking roads and rail networks. All this while the movement remained largely confined to the Sikh farmers. Later on, Hindu Jats also joined the agitation. Other communities soon became a part of the protests, but these two were at the core. A vast majority of the farmers who died during the protests were Sikhs.

In November 2020, the farmers gave a call to march to Delhi, and farmers from Haryana and western UP became a part of the agitation as well. Despite the movement broad-basing its social structure, the Sikhs exerted the

strongest influence on it. The Sikh religious and philanthropic organisations provided it with the necessary infrastructure. The gurdwaras and the prabandhak (managing) committees organised the community kitchens, medical facilities and also functioned as transit points for farmers travelling to and fro.

Makeshift gurdwaras were made and Nihang Sikhs provided security to the agitators. Sikh organisations and leaders in the West made it global-Sikh Members of Parliament (MPs) in the UK and Canada raised their issues in their respective parliaments. The community's diaspora received such massive support that the Modi government was compelled to intervene, and therefore, it started investigating the so-called 'toolkit'. Interestingly, despite all the efforts of Indian Muslims abroad, the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) never got such international support. An impression was created-part of it may be by design-that the government is suppressing the Sikhs. This, the BJP never wanted. Alienating Sikhs beyond a point is antithetical to the idea of Hindutva

and the RSS, so the BJP finally decided to go for reconciliation.

## A tense reconciliation

One may ask why it took so much time for the BJP to reach this conclusion because the religious character of the farmers' movement was quite visible from the very beginning. My explanation is that it was a miscalculation. There was a conflict between the economic agenda and the ideological core, so the BJP took some time to make a decision. We don't know for sure, but a minor incident in Gurugram might have triggered it. There was a dispute over Friday Namaz at a public ground, and it was reported that the Sadar Bazar Gurdwara Association in Gurugram opened up their premises to Muslims to offer Namaz. Though the Namaz inside the gurdwara compound didn't happen, but just the idea of Sikhs and Muslims coming together might have shaken up the BJP and the RSS. In early 2020, such solidarity was clearly expressed during the CAA-NRC protests at Shaheen Bagh in Delhi, where Sikh farmers set up langar to provide freshly cooked food to the protesters. The Sikh core of the farmers' movement and their alienation rattled the BJP and the RSS, whom we might see reaching out to Sikhs in more ways in the coming days.

## Foreign Currency Worth 3.7 Crores Hidden In Trolley Bag Seized At Mumbai Airport

(SAI Bureau)- Foreign currency worth ? 3.7 crore was seized from two passengers at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport on Friday

morning. The currency was found hidden inside a cavity in their trolley bag. It was hidden in way to make its detection difficult in ordinary baggage scans, official said. They were arrested after getting intercepted by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). The men, who were about to leave for Sharjah, did not have any documents for the



export of the seized items. Foreign currency in the form of US dollars and Saudi Dirham was seized from their possession. The currency was seized by the DRI officials under Operation Cheque Shirts, using data analytics. Foreign currency was recovered from these passengers under Section 110 of the Customs Act, 1962. Further investigation is underway.



# What's changed, Joe?

U.S. citizens and green card holders will still be able to travel into the U.S. from the banned countries, but no one else will be allowed. The move has prompted critics to dig up the president's tweets from February 2020 where the then-presidential candidate accused former president Trump of 'xenophobia' for imposing a travel restriction from China to the U.S in response to the spread of COVID-19.

We are in the midst of a crisis with the coronavirus,' Biden tweeted. 'We need to lead the way with science — not Donald Trump's record of hysteria, xenophobia, and fear-mongering. He is the worst possible person to lead our country through a global health emergency.'

Critics also took aim at another tweet from the same day where Biden slammed Trump's 'African Ban' when he restricted travel to six additional African countries, including Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan, and Tanzania, Fox News reported. 'Trump further diminished the U.S. in the eyes of the world by expanding his travel ban. This new 'African Ban,' is designed to make it harder for black and brown people to immigrate to the United States. It's a disgrace, and we cannot let him succeed,' Biden tweeted. Now GOP critics are pointing out Biden's hypocrisy.

'Today the Biden Administration announced a Travel Ban on South Africa and 7 other African nations over the 'New COVID Variant' Here was Joe Biden and Kamala Harris when Trump banned Travel,' someone tweeted with a link to Biden's 2020 tweets. 'JOE BIDEN JUST IMPOSED AN AFRICAN TRAVEL BAN,' one person tweeted. 'RACIST! RACIST! RACIST!' Another person tweeted 'This was Biden on what he called the 'African Ban' last year. Now he's imposed one himself.' Biden's decision came after the UK and Israel on Thursday halted travel, and the EU followed suit.

The moves have been made in response to a new COVID variant, known as Omicron, which was first identified in Botswana and is now spreading rapidly through

South Africa. It has also been found in Israel, Hong Kong and Belgium, and is worrying scientists because it appears to be able to easily reinfect those who have already been infected, or who have had the vaccine. Yet only a few hours before Biden announced his decision, his chief scientist, Dr Anthony Fauci, said he thought a ban was unlikely. Fauci appeared to have changed his mind after speaking to South African scientists. He then relayed the information to Biden, with Biden

saying the decision was ultimately made on Friday after speaking to Fauci. 'This is really something that's in motion,' he said in an interview with CNN, broadcast shortly before 8am ET.

'And we just arranged right now a discussion between our scientists and the South African scientists a little bit later in the morning, to really get the facts. Because you're hearing a lot of things back and forth. 'We want to find out, scientist to scientists, what is going on.' He

said they were 'in very active communication' with their South African colleagues.

Asked whether he thought there should be a travel ban, like the British one, he replied: 'Obviously as soon as we find out more information we'll make a decision as quickly as we possibly can.'

He added: 'You always put these things on the table, but you don't want to say you're going to do it until you have some scientific reason to do it. 'That's the reason why we're rushing now to get that scientific data to try and make an informed decision about something like that.' Pressed on what measures the US would take, if Omicron was

found in the country, he said the priority would be finding out if it did evade vaccines. He added: 'There is always the possibility of doing what the UK has done, namely block travel from South Africa and related countries,' Fauci 'That's certainly something you think about and get prepared to do. You're prepared to do everything you need to do to protect the American public. 'But you want to make sure there's a basis for doing that, and that's what we're doing right now.' It was unclear who then spoke to the South African experts. But, six hours later, at 2:38pm ET, Biden tweeted that he had decided to implement a travel ban.

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## From mob looting in San Francisco to deaths in Waukesha these shocking crimes should be a wake-up call

Now, we have a massacre by a convicted criminal who drove a vehicle into a Christmas parade, killing six people and wounding 40 who had gathered to celebrate the birth of Christ and the beginning of the Christmas season. The attack in Waukesha, Wisconsin dazed the country because it was so stunning to see such senseless killing and maiming. It was a frightening reminder that we now live in a country where we can all be at risk at any time and place. At nearly the same time, 2,159 miles to the west, a mob was breaking into stores and looting them. The open vandalism, theft, and destruction resembled a scene from the movie "Clockwork Orange."

It is a pattern of criminal aggression which has been building in San Francisco since the city's communist, pro-criminal, anti-law enforcement district attorney took office.

As of last reports, there have been three days of looting in San Francisco, and it has now spread to San Jose. As the looting is more widely reported, there is a real likelihood it will spread to other cities. There has been continuous rioting and violence in Portland, Oregon for almost two years, with Antifa as the primary activist agent.

In New York, there is a no bail rule which allows criminals to walk out of jail faster than the police can fill

out arrest reports. The result has been that the police have simply stopped arresting people for many small crimes. The mayor of a town in New Jersey, across the river from New York City, told me of similar incidents in his community. There, the police kick would-be thieves out of town rather than arrest them, because they know the local prosecutor will simply release the crooks.

The patterns of destruction resemble scenes from Ayn Rand's 1957 novel "Atlas Shrugged." Rand believed the inevitable pattern of civilization was for the weak and predatory to make life impossible for the productive and entrepreneurial.

She imagined the most competent, energetic, and productive people would withdraw from society, and civilization would subsequently collapse. Many of our recent developments resemble Rand's nightmare. Consider the collapse of the rule of law, chaos at the border, and the proposal in New York City to let 800,000 non-citizens vote in local elections. The list goes on. The tragedy of the breakdown of civilization is: We know how to have law abiding, safe communities - and have had historic experience in our lifetime.

As I wrote in my new book, "Beyond Biden," when George Kelling and James Q. Wilson wrote their

ground-breaking "Broken Windows" theory in 1982, they found that if you stop small crimes and disorders, and repair damaged property, you create a positive environment which makes crime decline dramatically. Police Commissioner Bill Bratton applied this theory with the New York City Transit Police, the Boston Police, as Mayor Rudy Giuliani's partner in New York City, and finally in Los Angeles.

We know empirically that a sound program of crime prevention, which applies principles that work, leads to safety and prosperity. In 1991, New York City was disastrous, crime-ridden, and dangerous.

## "Colonial Mindset": PM Slams Pressures On India Over Climate Pledges

(carbon) emissions, rich nations have emitted 15 times more from 1850 till now," PM Modi said. "The per capita emission is also 11 times more in the US and the EU."

In the COP26 climate talks held in Scotland earlier this month, India had asked developed nations that have "enjoyed the fruits of energy" to reach net zero faster so that emerging economies use some "carbon space" to drive growth. 'Net zero emissions'



refers to achieving an overall balance between greenhouse gas emissions produced and

greenhouse gas emissions taken out of the atmosphere. PM Modi also criticised

people who he said "stall development" unnecessarily. "Sadly, we also have such people in our country who stall the development of the nation in the name of freedom of expression without understanding the aspirations of the nation. Such people don't bear the brunt, but those mothers who get no electricity for their children bear it," the Prime Minister said. Constitution Day, also known as National Law Day, is observed on November 26

to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution of India. It is in this context PM Modi addressed the judiciary today.

"Judiciary and executive were birthed from the Constitution, so we are twins and even though we look different, we are from the same source. There may be a concept of separation of powers, but we have a collective responsibility and only that can take the country forward," PM Modi said.





# No pension. No savings. No future.

## No wonder we're betting the house on crypto

I must begin this article by stating that the information I'm providing is not financial advice. I think I legally have to say that because I heard it on a podcast or whatever, I really don't know. But, if you're taking crypto advice from me, that might be your first problem.

It all started with a missed shot. Let's go back to 2004, when I invested my \$5,000 life savings into Apple, a company I truly believed in. It was my first stock purchase, and the first grown-up thing I did for my future immediately after graduating college. Unfortunately, life quickly became expensive. Within three years of my initial purchase, I was forced to sell all of my Apple shares because bills, housing and beginning a new life in NYC on a \$29,000 salary didn't come cheap. Cold sweats.

I've been waking up to them for almost 15 years now, near-panic attacks about the biggest mistake I've ever made. That \$5,000 investment from 2004 would be about \$1.8m sitting in my account today. Instead, I'm about to turn 40, my partner and I are still renters, and both she and I are paying off loans.

Compared with most of my peers, we're somehow among the lucky ones.

The point of this editorial isn't to mope about my lost gains. It's about our collective hopelessness. The dollar is becoming worthless and the class struggle is intensifying. The typical homebuyer is nearly twice as old now as they were in 1981. When adjusted for inflation, our parents would have paid 1/10th of what we would now to buy a home. Rental prices are rising at four times the speed of inflation. The cost of a higher education required for most high-paying jobs is 17 times that of what our parents paid. When we retire our social security checks will be a fraction of the minimum wage. The snowball rolling down the mountain to flatten us continues to grow wider and faster.

We need a way out. We need a way up.

Many of you have lived through your very own version of my Apple nightmare, watching the waters of prosperity trickle through cupped hands. I never want to let that happen again. And unless we can get in early on the next Amazon, Tesla or Google stock,

it looks like we'll never be able to afford our future. This is why I ventured into cryptocurrency. If you couldn't tell by now, I'm somewhat ignorant of the financial world. Sure I've got a 401k through work and assembled a tiny online portfolio of companies I personally believe in, but I don't really know how it all works. I just put money in and pray that it becomes more money in the future.

I'm almost as ignorant about crypto.

My first jump into the cryptocurrency world came with bitcoin in early 2018, after my now technically wealthy friends had been going on about it for years. I decided to take the plunge by opening a Coinbase account and buying a fraction of one bitcoin when it cost about \$11,000-12,000 a coin. I let it sit and, two years later, the price of a bitcoin hit \$40,000. A year after that, \$60,000.

I could feel it happening again ...

Was this my shot at redemption? A chance to secure my bag? Even though I got in late to bitcoin, I was early

enough to see my investment go up six times. It wasn't the 3,600 times that Apple would have been, but it was a start.

At that point I decided: I'm all in. Crypto will save us. I asked those same crypto-rich friends about what would be the next big coin, and blindly bought a little of every single one they recommended.

I soon got into dogecoin at \$0.03 a coin. Within a month, the coins hit about \$0.60, settling in the \$0.25 range today. Another win.

My retirement scheme was actually coming to fruition. Could I continue this hot streak?

Next, I sought to get in even earlier with more up-and-coming crypto, because that's apparently how you see parabolic growth. I succumbed to buying more meme tokens, aka "shitcoin". This required learning a very "simple" 13-step process between my bank, crypto trading platform, digital wallet and some shady-looking websites that swap real crypto like bitcoin and ethereum for your desired crap crypto.

I've lost nearly everything I put into those speculative meme coins. Meme coin scams exist

purely because people like me exist.

Let me plainly state: cryptocurrency isn't intended to be stocks bought and sold for retirement planning. The true promise of secure, decentralized currencies is that they're free from the grasp of government and those they collude with to ensure the house always comes out on top: Wall Street, hedge funds and trading platforms like Robinhood. As long as we the people continue losing, our elected criminals have convenient problems they can promise to solve during their campaigns.

Cryptocurrency is our chance to rage against that machine.

This promise of decentralization can feel like an unobtainable utopia. When discussing with a friend, she noted that most of what we've seen thus far has been less decentralization, and more a shift of power from one group of elites to another: the executive class to the technology class. Those people with the insane rigs mining blockchain transactions since the early days are sitting on their piles of digital gold.



# Regulatory riddle:

## An investigation into the SEC v. Ripple case and its consequences for crypto

It seemed like a no-brainer inside the Securities and Exchange Commission last December when the agency filed a lawsuit charging that one of the biggest players in crypto technology, Ripple Labs, violated securities laws. Then-Chairman Jay Clayton signed off on the case just hours before resigning from the SEC following the defeat of Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election. That made the timing a bit odd, since big decisions in government are usually left to the incoming administration to sort out. But the SEC's enforcement division has a reputation for being independent, with staff attorneys remaining in their roles no matter who is in power. And the enforcement staff was united in their decision to file, while the five-member commission voted 3-2, FOX Business has learned. Ripple executives had, according to the SEC's lawsuit, brazenly ignored warnings from the commission that when they sold \$1.3 billion worth of XRP, the digital coin used on the Ripple platform, they were violating securities laws because the sales weren't registered with the commission and disclosures to investors weren't provided - contrary to mandatory prerequisites for whenever a company sells a security.

XRP was definitely a security, in the SEC's view, just like a

stock or a bond, because it was being used to finance the buildout of Ripple's platform and enrich its top executives. The company could settle with the commission, as most do even if the price is steep: It would have to repurchase \$1.3 billion in XRP that the SEC believes was illegal. Or Ripple could fight it out in federal court, a battle SEC staff attorneys were confident they would win. It didn't seem to matter that SEC action would hammer not just Ripple, but average people who purchased the now suspect XRP digital coin.

Well, not so fast. Yes, most SEC targets choose to, in fact, settle rather than spend money fighting in the courts, but not Ripple. Its CEO Brad Garlinghouse and general counsel Stuart Alderoty chose to fight both in the courtroom and in the court of public opinion. They hired a dream team of legal talent and top lobbyists, and crafted a compelling public relations campaign that the SEC's lawsuit is nothing more than prosecutorial overreach, wrong on the law, and so riddled with conflicts of interest that, if successful, it will benefit its competitors and stifle crypto innovation.

Things are now getting nasty as both sides head to court. The SEC is taking issue with Ripple's voluminous document requests from the commission,

comparing them to harassment. Ripple says the SEC has abandoned its role as an independent regulator and has overstepped its authority. Legal experts question whether the SEC's time could have been better spent on other issues. With neither side looking to back down, the case is likely headed for trial possibly early next year.

The U.S. financial industry is one of the most regulated businesses in existence so it only makes sense that the rapidly expanding crypto business is attracting regulatory scrutiny from other layers of government and the SEC, also known as Wall Street's top cop. The bedrock of the SEC's enforcement agenda is disclosure - mandating that sales of investment contracts that are legally deemed "securities" be registered with the commission, and the company make public necessary financial information. Crypto is, of course, an industry that was created as an alternative to heavily regulated centralized finance such as banks, but its growth couldn't be ignored by regulators, current and former SEC officials tell FOX Business. In 2018, for instance, the industry barely cracked a valuation of \$400 billion; today it exceeds \$3 trillion. For context on its size: There are currently more cryptos in

circulation than U.S. dollars.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen says crypto is being used for illegal purposes since digital coins are used to price transactions secretly through decentralized blockchain technology that skips over costly middlemen - but also many government checks. SEC officials believe investors in crypto need more disclosure, not less, about the industry's various blockchain technologies and the digital coins themselves.

But, and there's always a "but," regulations have been known to slow innovation in emerging technologies. Industry proponents say for all the talk about bad stuff, the crypto business holds out the potential to be the next internet. Illegal activity occurred on the web but the government allowed its development to flourish. If cryptos and blockchain can survive meddling from regulators it will create a whole new ecosystem for transacting everything from buying a pizza to buying a house through the decentralized blockchain technology.

In what shape crypto and blockchain survives could well come down to the SEC's case against Ripple, legal experts and industry insiders tell FOX Business. The case launched by Clayton, former President Trump's SEC chair, is now one of the top priorities of the current

SEC Chairman Gary Gensler, a Biden appointee.

If the SEC can prevail in federal court before Judge Analisa Torres in the Southern District of New York, it will go a long way in establishing the agency as crypto's primary regulator, imposing what industry executives believe is the SEC's traditionally heavy-handed oversight approach, possibly demanding massive amounts of disclosure in a business that prides itself on being an alternative to government control.

It could, for example, go back in time and determine whether other crypto companies that conducted their operations and sales of digital coins in much the same way Ripple did, similarly violated the law, and now must pay up as well. Regulators, not the markets, will be choosing winners and losers, based on arbitrary interpretations of law, and based on relationships with powerful players in the crypto business (more on this later), critics of the SEC say.

Even worse, crypto innovation could be stifled here in the U.S., and move offshore to places where the government isn't demanding financial disclosures. China, fighting for dominance of the world economy, could gain a key advantage in developing a game-changing technology.

If Ripple wins, the stakes are just as high but in different ways. Yes, innovation could flourish as the SEC cedes control to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the regulatory body that regulates commodities with a much lighter regulatory touch. Blockchain might just become the new internet, a technology so transformative that it can replace traditional banking, and other ways people buy and sell stuff.

Yet, so too will be the myriad ways that criminals use crypto given the largely anonymous nature of blockchain technology. And does the U.S. government want to allow a new form of money to be created that directly competes with the U.S. dollar?

FOX Business investigation With so much riding on the case, FOX Business has conducted a wide-ranging investigation into the regulatory approach taken against Ripple.





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# Crypto Cons

## Investment Scams Skyrocket as Trading Explodes

Crypto trading has exploded in the last year and a half, and crooks have taken notice. They're finding new ways to pounce and pilfer, and these crimes have recently skyrocketed.

Hatim Mursi says he had an entire life's savings stolen in a cryptocurrency investment scam, more than a half-million dollars.

"I felt very vulnerable and I felt violated," said Mursi. He says the funds are "completely, completely, completely gone."

The Fort Lauderdale resident says it all started when he received what he thought at the time was a wrong message on WhatsApp. It was a message he thought was meant for a friend.

"It's from somebody's who's confused, supposedly," Mursi said. "The person apologized and then followed back by saying, 'oh you seem nice.'"

That's when he says the online relationship began.

"They give you the feel that they're very intelligent, very caring," he said.

They chatted about everything from music to politics to business, but only via text.

"They asked me if I have interest in cryptocurrency," Mursi said. "I've never actually invested in crypto."

He said the person followed up. "It was, 'oh, by the way, here are the trading sites.'"

At first, the person referred him to legitimate trading platforms where Mursi said he decided to open an account.

"She started sharing with me links to this new company," Mursi said. "Then said that they're about to start having their crypto be traded."

He said the woman claimed to have insider information. "Then she

introduced me to this website. Where that's the only website where you can actually purchase that coin," Mursi said.

He did some research on the company and thought the site seemed legitimate, so he decided to open an account on "Owllex.com."

In order to buy this supposed new coin, Mursi said he needed to fund the website's virtual wallet with other cryptocurrencies. So he purchased Tether, a well-known crypto coin, from Binance.US, a well-known legitimate trading platform, and transferred the funds to the new site.

"I was like, well, Binance has been around forever," Mursi said. "If they allowed me to do that, that's one thing that made me feel a little bit comfortable."

He even tried transferring funds back to Binance and said it worked.

"Binance now accepts the transaction back, I'm thinking, okay this is a valid site," said Mursi.

Mursi then started moving over thousands of dollars worth of cryptocurrency after that.

"Every time I add you see the cryptocurrency going up. Up. Up," Mursi said. "I had seen about 35k in a period of a week grow into over \$400,000" It seemed too good to be true - because it was. Mursi started getting suspicious. He said the company kept pushing deadlines, like for the initial coin offering. He found similar scam stories to his online and discovered the website had several aliases.

But it was too late. In early October, the Owllex.com website became unavailable, and it still is.

Mursi lost any possible way to access

his money.

"For a whole week, I just couldn't sleep," he said.

The Florida Attorney General's Office has received nearly 100 complaints regarding these types of scams with a major uptick in October.

Even more shocking, the Federal Trade Commission says from October 2020 to March of this year, there were 12 times the number of crypto investment scams reported compared to the same period the year before.

"We've seen a lot of these types of cryptocurrency scams start on social media," explained Christopher Leach, a staff attorney for the FTC. "Somebody approaching you in that form, who you don't know saying come and invest with me, that's a red flag right there."

He says to be aware of broad claims about specific or high returns. "Claims that you can double, triple, 10x your money. That is a very clear red flag," Leach said.

He says it's important to do your research, check reviews and be wary of someone pressuring you to invest immediately.

A Binance.US spokesperson sent NBC 6 a statement saying, "There are bad actors in every industry. It is the responsibility of all legitimate industry professionals to help educate our users on common scams and do extensive research before using or performing any transaction with unregulated platforms. At Binance.US, the security of our customers and their assets is our top priority. As a result, we have content available to our users such as safety and security tips and education points on common cryptocurrency scams."

Cryptocurrency has captured America's attention this year - and "Olympic-level scammers" have taken notice too.



With the rise in popularity of crypto and blockchain technology, there will be an influx of unprecedented cryptocurrency scams, according to William E. Quigley, a prominent investor and co-founder of the WAX blockchain. The high-tech nature of crypto will attract sophisticated scammers capable of pulling off "Olympic-level" hacks and schemes, Quigley said during a panel discussion hosted by blockchain firm Light Node Media last month. Consider a recent "Squid Game" scam in which investors allege a new SQUID cryptocurrency token and related immersive online game were actually just an elaborate scam. Investors claim the developers disappeared after the currency skyrocketed in price and seemingly cashed out with more than \$3 million.

Like it or not, crypto investors are opening themselves up to this new and evolving risk of fraud and scams. If you've incorporated crypto into your investment portfolio or are interested in investing in Bitcoin or Ethereum in the future, here are some common scams and red flags to look out for.

**What Are Some Common Cryptocurrency Scams?**

Almost 7,000 people lost upwards of \$80 million in crypto scams from October 2020 through March 2021, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). That's a huge jump over the 570 cryptocurrency investment scams and \$7.5 million in losses during the same months just the year before. With cryptocurrency scams on the rise, here are some patterns to look out for:

**Demanding Crypto-Only Payments**  
If a seemingly credible person or retail establishment claims they cannot accept any form of currency other than Bitcoin, it's likely a scam. Bitcoin and other altcoins are a burgeoning asset class, so experts say credible institutions aren't going to accept crypto and not also accept U.S. dollars through normal means like wire transfers, checks, credit and debit card payments, and cash. In general, anyone demanding you pay them in Bitcoin might be trying to hoard it and capitalize on its skyrocketing value. And unlike banks, blockchain lacks common know-your-customer (KYC) protocols. That means people can open wallets without having to present valid identification, a Social Security number, or an address and contact information. Though blockchain is public and creates permanent, open-access records, people can transact on blockchain more or less anonymously - making it easy to trick you, take your money, and run.





# Crypto Scams an annoying stumbling block

## Crypto Scams an annoying stumbling block



With a high demand for cryptocurrencies and an evolving space, there has been an increase in related scams. It is important, therefore, for investors to save themselves from fraudulent crypto exchanges and tokens.

Crypto scams continue to be a big problem in the industry today. As cryptocurrencies are unregulated, crypto scammers are making huge profits, by luring victims into investing their funds and making the most out of it. In fact, increasing crypto scams are part of the reason why some governments have limited or banned crypto trading. Some countries are now looking to implement more regulations on crypto trading to not only protect users but also reduce crypto scams.

The Federal Trade Commission in the US reported that since October 2020, crypto scam reports have skyrocketed, with nearly 7,000 people reporting losses of more than US\$ 80 million on these scams. ActionFraud UK reported some £146,222,332 has been lost to cryptocurrency fraud since the start of this year, with the average loss per victim just over £20,500. More than half (52%) of victims were aged between 18 and 45. In Asia, both China and India have been making headlines for crypto scams, with China officially announcing a ban on crypto trading last month. Meanwhile, India has become a hotbed for crypto frauds, with more users showing interest in crypto trading. The subcontinent is currently investigating its largest crypto scam involving bitcoins. Over in Southeast Asia, Singapore police received 533 reports of crypto-related cheating, fraud, or other crimes between 2018 and 2020, with investors losing around S\$29 million. The Monetary Authority of Singapore continues to warn people that cryptocurrencies are volatile and highly risky

investment products unsuitable for retail investors. Interestingly, Singapore also sees itself as a crypto hub in Asia some day.

So why crypto scams are increasing and dangerous?

Just as any investment scam, a cryptocurrency scam involves criminals stealing money from people who think they are

to-earn cryptocurrency, had its price soaring by thousands of percent. But, users were criticizing it as they were not allowed to resell their tokens. The scam called a "rug pull" is when the promoter of a digital token draws in buyers, stops the trading activity, and makes off with the money raised from sales, which

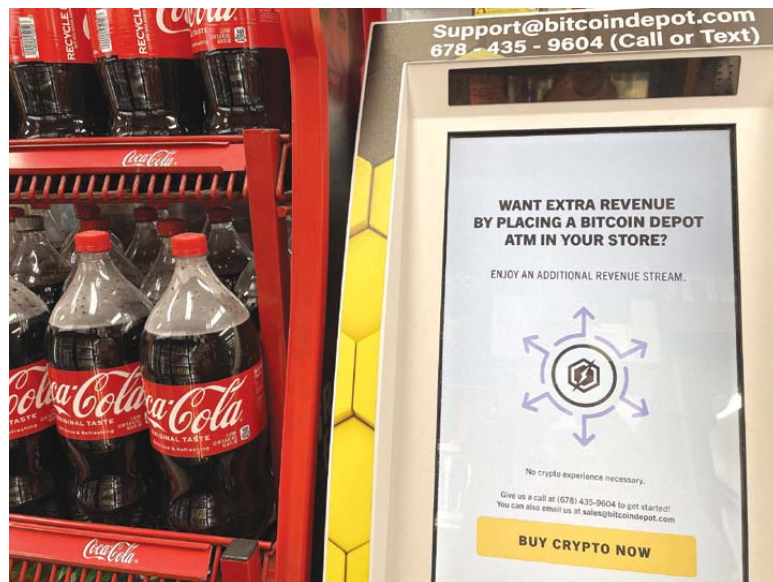
How to avoid crypto scams?

Well, fortunately, there are ways to detect and avoid crypto scams. However, at most times, users tend to ignore the facts and just go for the investment. In any case, here are three ways to avoid crypto scams.

" Research - The best way to avoid any form of scam is to always do some background research on a particular cryptocurrency. Many websites provide information on fishy crypto tokens and potential scams. Users just need to take the initiative to research them a bit more before making any investment.

" Review websites and social media pages - This one is when it can be a bit tricky. Social media today has a lot of pages and advertisements promoting crypto assets and crypto trading. The trick is, to always check the history of these accounts and pages. Before investing any funds, be sure to also do more research outside of social media to check the trading platform's status and genuineness.

" Maintain privacy - Never share passwords or authentication codes for a crypto wallet with anyone. Users should also enable multi-factor authentication wherever available. The reality is though, cryptocurrencies are becoming mainstream in society. Not only are more companies enabling crypto payments, but the adoption of crypto in society is also increasing. The only question now is, will society be vigilant enough when trading and investing in cryptocurrencies.



investing in digital currency. As most crypto assets and services are not regulated by financial regulators, the funds are not protected, compared to other regulated investments.

This means, if a crypto scammer cons a user into investing their funds, there is no possibility of the funds being able to be recovered at all. And because genuine cryptocurrency trading can offer high value in returns for some users, there has been a mad rush into the industry in recent times. A recent example of a major crypto scam is the Squid Game token. The Netflix show has already been making headlines around the world and scammers also thought this would make a good scam. And they were right. The BBC reported that Squid, which marketed itself as a play-

in this case was an estimated US\$3.38 million.

Today, crypto scams are pretty much like social engineering attacks, whereby the scammer targets gaining personal information, especially security authentication codes for transactions. What's scarier is the way scammers are targeting victims, with many using social media ads and dating apps.

According to a report by Sophos, scammers are now combining romantic lures with crypto scams. For example, a fake IOS cryptocurrency app in the US and Europe managed to con victims of at least US\$1.4 million. Another example is in Malaysia whereby a businessman lost RM186,923 after being duped in a crypto scam introduced by a friend he met on social media.





# When People Thought the First Thanksgiving Was Too Woke

In late 1863, President Abraham Lincoln unwittingly launched what would soon become a cherished American tradition.

A well-wisher had sent a turkey to the White House for the first family's holiday meal. When Lincoln's son, Tad, begged his father to spare the bird's life, the president - ever an indulgent parent - pulled out a piece of paper and wrote out a presidential pardon. Thus was a venerable presidential practice born.

But the mood was not light that fall. The Civil War, now in its third year, had torn at the nation's fabric, creating bitter divisions not just between North and South, but also within the Union itself. In October, in an effort to inspire greater unity, Lincoln had declared the first-ever national Thanksgiving celebration, fixing the last Thursday of November for a day of reflection and prayer.

As non-controversial as Thanksgiving is today, you might imagine the proclamation met with universal acceptance. It did not.

Reflecting the sharp polarization in national politics, many Democrats and peace proponents refused to acknowledge the president's proclamation of the new holiday, and some even denounced it as an attempt to impose a particular brand of New England fanaticism on the whole country. Lincoln's proclamation unleashed the social resentments of many voters who resisted the growing influence of evangelical churches and the concurrent growth of social reform movements - from abolitionism and temperance to

Sabbatarianism and women's rights. To borrow from today's political lexicon, Lincoln's opponents nursed an intense dislike of that era's "wokeness." Back then, they called it "ism" - referring to the set of religious social reform movements of the day that sought to refashion the nation's social and political systems in line with evangelical Protestant sensibilities. These critics recoiled at the pace of social change that these movements represented and resented the suggestion that they think or pray a certain way. Conversely, many Republicans greeted the president's proclamation as a sign that the government in Washington embraced their worldview. The controversy over the first annual national Thanksgiving is a useful reminder that Americans have long argued over religion and culture, and that topics seemingly disconnected from politics can take on unexpected meaning in moments of rancor and disunity.

We tend to misremember Thanksgiving as a holiday born in Plymouth Colony and celebrated faithfully every November hence. In fact, early colonists frequently declared fast and thanksgiving days, partly in keeping with Puritan practice and partly in appreciation of bountiful harvests or victories in war with local Native American tribes. Presidents George Washington, John Adams and James Madison all proclaimed days of thanksgiving - sometimes, but not always, in November (Adams and Madison issued such proclamations in March) - and by the late 1840s, some form of harvest thanksgiving celebration was

observed in 21 states, though on different days in November. The holiday was generally meant to inspire prayerful reflection and gratitude for "God's beneficence toward us" (Washington's words), reflecting its origins in Puritan New England as a harvest season observance. But as late as 1863, there was no fixed national holiday.

Throughout the Civil War, both Lincoln and Confederate President Jefferson Davis issued multiple calls for national days of thanksgiving and prayerful reflection. Lincoln's first such proclamation, in August 1861, came on the heels of the Union's defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run and was intended to calm the people's nerves and steel their resolve. It was hardly a moment that inspired celebration. The president called on citizens to "bow in humble submission to [God's] chastisements; to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It was, for Lincoln, an uncharacteristic display of public religiosity. Referring to the battlefield defeat, he recognized "the hand of God in this terrible visitation" and pointed to "our own faults and crimes as a nation and as individuals" as a sure cause of the Union's loss. Even before the war, Lincoln told an audience in Wisconsin that holiday celebrations had the potential to "bring us together, and thereby make us better acquainted, and better friends than we otherwise would be."

## Who plans Indian cities? Development Authorities who still follow colonial masterplans



The "haphazard" nature of urban planning in India habitually becomes a topic of public debate whenever our cities encounter a major crisis, like the urban flooding that Chennai witnessed recently. Since urban planning and its enforcement are routinely declared the culprit of India's "dysfunctional" cities, it is important to examine the roots underpinning India's current urban planning regime. We need to ask some key questions regarding the institutional framework of urban planning in India: Who has the authority to plan the city? Why are India's urban planning laws and processes framed the way they are?

Though in India's constitutional scheme, urban planning is a function of elected local governments, planning exercises in Indian cities is primarily carried out by non-representative bureaucratic agencies under the state government. Here, I seek to unpack the reasons and basis for this anomaly. I trace the historic roots of India's urban planning institutions to highlight how the colonial logic of keeping urban planning and "improvement" detached from city politics continues to influence the planning processes in India today. I further examine the implications of following such an outmoded planning regime for Indian cities.

### The Authority to Plan

India's local governance system underwent a significant transformation in 1992 with constitutional reforms (in the form of 73rd and 74th Amendments) empowering rural and urban local governments to work as "institutions of self-government." The 74th Amendment grants elected municipalities powers to prepare and implement plans and schemes for economic development and social justice and subjects listed under the 12th Schedule. Urban planning, regulation of land use, and planning for economic and social development are the first three subjects listed in the 12th schedule. Further, for metropolitan cities with a population of over 1 million, the 74th Amendment mandates the creation of a Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC), with at least two-thirds of its members to be elected local representatives, to prepare a development plan for the metropolitan area, incorporating the plans prepared by local bodies. Hence, constitutional reforms have vested elected municipalities with the task of urban planning, along with the MPC which is responsible for preparing the plan for the larger region.

However, instead of the municipal government or the MPC, it is state government-controlled Development Authorities that primarily undertake the task of urban planning in most of India's major cities.





## Herbs used in Patanjali's Coronil tablet fit for use, 52 constituents identified: Study

**A team of researchers have identified 52 phytoconstituents (chemicals derived from plants) that have been used in Coronil.**

Months after the State Licensing Authority of Uttarakhand granted a license for Coronil tablets to be used as a supporting measure against Covid-19, research published in an international science journal indicates that the herbs used in making the tablets are fit for use.

A team of researchers conducted a chemical analysis of herbs used in making the tablets. They identified 52 phytoconstituents (chemicals derived from plants) that have been used in Coronil. "Ayurveda, one of the world-renowned forms of Indian traditional medicine, showcases a great deal of immunity-boosting therapies. Coronil is one such formulation, which is based on the trusted classical principles of Ayurveda," the paper said.

The study has been published in the Journal of Separation Science.

Researchers used chromatography and mass spectrometry to identify the constituents of the tablet. While chromatography enables the separation, identification, and purification of the components of a mixture, mass spectrometry was used to calculate the molecular weight of the constituents and determine unknown compounds, if any.

The journal used the research on its cover page for the November edition.

The approval for Coronil was granted following the advice of a review committee set up by the AYUSH ministry. The committee suggested that the tablet may be used as a supporting measure in Covid

management.

The drug landed in a controversy after members of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) snubbed Ramdev over his distasteful remarks on allopathy and healthcare workers who succumbed to Covid-19, and questioned the claims made by him over the credibility of Coronil in fighting Covid-19.

Ramdev had released a research paper on "first evidence-based medicine for Covid-19" by his organisation in February this year after launching the drug nearly a year earlier, in June 2020. Coronil was first advertised as a cure for coronavirus infection but later licensed as an "immunity booster" after controversy about its trial data and composition.

Coronil is not WHO certified.

## China can't use sports as soft power for long. 2022 Winter Olympics looks set to fail

China has used sports for soft power purposes but it might be coming to an end. US President Joe Biden is considering boycotting the Winter Olympics.

Experts often question if China even exercises soft power like some countries in the English-speaking world do. China's presence in sports, video games, and big-ticket movies is the hallmark of a different type of soft

power. China believes in mixing its soft power with a hard economic power, which often subtly becomes coercion. Through the coercion tactics, Beijing has ensured Taiwan remains sidelined in international sporting events.

The 2008 Summer Olympics established China's international legitimacy with very minimal opposition. Tibetan activists protested then, but the world

turned a blind eye to the uprising in Lhasa. There has been a significant shift since 2008. 'No Beijing 2022' is a campaign led by Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, Taiwanese, Southern Mongolians, and Chinese rights activists.

The #BoycottBeijing2022 has become a prominent social media trend on Twitter.

The 2008 Olympics was a personal statement for Xi Jinping,

who was in-charge of organising it. The successful conclusion of the Olympics that year further elevated Xi's status as a young and promising member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The Chinese government and people feel confident about the upcoming Olympics. A narrative arc between 2008 and 2022 has been built by the state media. The hashtag 'The same Chinese

romance in 2008 and 2022' was widely used on Weibo.

But we are now at another inflection point. Biden has indicated that the US may boycott the Winter Olympics, while the UK government too said they are mulling a boycott.

If Biden and other leaders decide to boycott the upcoming Olympics, it will mark a shift in relations with China.



## New research offers glimpse into early human development



(News Agencies) -Scientists have been able to get a rare glimpse into a crucial, early stage of human development by analyzing an embryo in its third week after fertilization - a moment in time that has been difficult to study because of both practical and ethical considerations. European researchers looked at a single embryo that was 16 to 19 days old, donated by a woman who ended her pregnancy. Until now, experts said, researchers have lacked a full understanding of this stage of development because human embryos at this stage are difficult to obtain. Most women don't yet know they're pregnant by this point and decades-old global guidelines have until recently prohibited growing human embryos in a lab beyond 14 days. The study, published online Wednesday in the journal *Nature*, looked at "gastrulation," which begins about 14 days after fertilization, when the embryo is still about the size of a poppy seed, and lasts a little more than a week.

It's "a process by which you have this kind of explosion of cell diversity," said lead investigator Shankar Srinivas, an expert in developmental biology at the University of Oxford, who worked with colleagues in the United Kingdom and Germany on the research. "It's during gastrulation that the different cells emerge, but they also start to be positioned in different places in forming the body so that they can carry out their functions and form the correct organs."

For decades, the so-called "14-day rule" on growing embryos in the lab has guided researchers, with some places, including the United Kingdom, writing it into law. Others, including the United States, have accepted it as a standard guiding scientists and regulators.

Earlier this year, the International Society for Stem Cell Research recommended relaxing the rule and allowing researchers to grow embryos past two weeks under limited circumstances and after a tough review process. But the rule remains law in the UK.

This research was not subject to the law because the embryo wasn't grown in a lab. But it is an example of the types of things scientists expect to learn more about if rules are relaxed. Researchers found various types of cells, including red blood cells and "primordial germ cells" that give rise to egg or sperm cells. But they didn't see neurons, Srinivas said, meaning embryos aren't equipped at this stage to sense their environment. Oxford University officials said this stage of development has never been fully mapped out in humans before.

The authors said they hope their work not only sheds light on this stage of development but also helps scientists learn from nature about how to make stem cells into particular types of cells that can be used to help heal damage or disease.



## Climate change, tectonic movement changing course of Himalayan glaciers: Study

**Researchers were studying an unnamed glacier in the upper Kali Ganga valley of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district when they noticed that the glacier had abruptly changed its usual course.**

With climate change aggravating the melting of glaciers across the world, scientists have for the first time spotted a rare event in the Himalayan glaciers. It has abruptly changed its main course and scientists are attributing it to climate change and tectonic movements.

Indian researchers were studying an unnamed glacier in the upper Kali Ganga valley of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district when they noticed that the glacier had abruptly changed its usual course due to an accumulated influence of both climate and tectonics. Researchers believe that the abnormal behaviour of the glacier suggests that not only is climate a controlling factor, but tectonics also plays an important role in glacial catchments.

The change in the glacier's movement further confirms the findings behind the February 7 disaster in the hilly terrain of Chamoli in which over 200 people were killed. Scientists have said that the tragedy began on top of the six km-high Ronti peak, where a large mass of ice and rock dislodged from the slopes, triggering a massive

landslide that transformed into mud and debris flow, causing destruction along its path.

The debris flow generated a powerful air blast that flattened nearly 20 hectares of forests.

The incident showed how rock mass on which the glacier was sitting gradually became fragile due to weathering, percolation of meltwater in joints, crevasses, freezing and thawing, snowfall, overloading, and gradually operating tectonic forces leading rocks to mechanical disintegration with due course of time and detached from the source rock. The new findings suggest that the Himalayas is an active mountain range and highly fragile where tectonics and climate play a critical role. The new study conducted by a team of scientists from Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG), Dehradun has been published in 'Geoscience Journal'. Scientists reported that the five-kilometre-long unnamed glacier, which covered four square kilometre area in Kuthi Yankti valley (a tributary of Kali river) had abruptly changed its

main course. The northeast moving glacier has been truncated and forced to move towards the southeast and ultimately merge with the adjacent glacier named Sumzurkchanki as a result of tectonic forcing.

"The study will help in understanding the glacial-tectonic interaction and provides key information for future studies," the paper said.

Researchers used satellite images, toposheet and Google Earth images to assess that the glacier had been affected by active fault and climate change as an active fault produced a fault scarp that measures about 250 m in height with a northerly dip is 6.2 kilometres in length and trends towards NW-SE.

"It is one of the unique behaviours of the glacier, and no such observation has so far been reported on this type of glacier kinematics. The study indicates that climate is not the only factor that triggers disasters in the Himalaya, which is an active mountain range, but tectonics also plays an important role in glacial catchments," Ministry of Science & Technology said in a release.





## Will India really ban cryptocurrencies? Here's what experts say

**Cryptocurrency investors in India are worried that the government's proposed cryptocurrency bill aims to prohibit popular virtual coins like Bitcoin, Ethereum and others. But will the government really go for an outright ban? Here's all you need to know.**

Indian cryptocurrency investors went into a state of panic on Tuesday after the government officially announced that it would table the much-awaited cryptocurrency bill during the Winter Session of Parliament. What followed was a wave of panic selling that led to a massive crash on Indian crypto exchanges.

The government's proposed Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021 is aimed at prohibiting all private cryptocurrencies with a few exceptions. The official description of the bill states that it intends to create a "facilitative framework for creation of the

official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India".

### INDIAN CRYPTO INVESTORS PANIC

Soon after the announcement about the bill, a wave of panic selling was observed across Indian cryptocurrency exchanges, even as global valuations remained rangebound.

Investors panicked and started selling their holdings as the bill's description hardly provided any clarity. It does not define how the government plans to prohibit "private cryptocurrencies", and more importantly, what it means by private cryptocurrencies.

Read | What is cryptocurrency row all about as India heads to have a law?

### WILL INDIA REALLY BAN CRYPTOCURRENCIES?

It is still not clear whether the government's proposed cryptocurrency bill aims to ban all popular cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, Ethereum and others. This is because the initial description appears unclear, and top government sources have been indicating that India may not go for a complete ban on virtual coins.

Also, another point that remains unclear is what the government means by private cryptocurrencies. It may be

noted that Bitcoin, Ethereum and other popular cryptocurrencies are technically defined as public cryptos as the transactions involving them are traceable, unlike private cryptocurrencies that cannot be traced. You can find out more about public and private cryptos in this article. Simply put, it all comes down to how the government defines a private cryptocurrency. If it thinks of private cryptocurrencies as something unregulated by the central bank, then all cryptocurrencies face the risk of a ban.

### WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Experts told IndiaToday.in that cryptocurrency investors in the

country should not panic as crucial details about the cryptocurrency bill are not yet clear.

Commenting on the matter, Edul Patel, CEO and Co-founder of Mudrex, a global algorithm-based crypto investment platform, said, "The speculation around the banning of private cryptocurrencies in India caused a massive panic selling across Indian crypto exchanges. Investors should note that the news about the ban is mere speculation, and the contents of the bill are not yet clear."

Hitesh Malviya, founder, itsblockchain.com, blamed different interpretations about the "definition of private cryptocurrencies by media and influencers" for the panic witnessed yesterday on Indian crypto exchanges.

"The different interpretations about the definition of private cryptocurrencies by media, and influencers have orchestrated this environment of fear among retail crypto investors," he said. "The ruling government should have acted more responsibly to define the definition of private cryptocurrency since they mentioned the term first time back in February," he added.

He went on to say that Bitcoin, Ethereum and other popular cryptocurrencies are not controlled or managed by private entities and the transactions are recorded on a public ledger, and are public cryptocurrencies.

"But on the other hand, there are a good number of cryptocurrencies being promoted by MLM companies, private companies in the country right now. These kinds of cryptocurrencies have been subjected to a couple of huge scams in the past. So if the government is looking to ban such privately owned cryptocurrencies, then it's a good move," he added.

## Pope to young people: We need you to protect environment

(News Agencies) -Pope Francis on Sunday praised young people for their efforts to protect the Earth's environment and told them to "be the critical conscience of society." Francis celebrated Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, filled with hundreds of young faithful, to mark a church day focused on youth in dioceses worldwide. "You have been entrusted with an exciting but also challenging



task, the pontiff said, "to stand tall while everything around us seems to be collapsing." Francis expressed thanks "for all

those times when you cultivate the dream of fraternity, work to heal the wounds of God's creation, fight to ensure respect for the dignity of the vulnerable and spread the spirit of solidarity and sharing."

He noted that many young people have criticized environmental contamination.

The pontiff said that in a world that "thinks only of present gain, that tends to stifle grand ideals,

you have not lost the ability to dream."

"Be free and authentic, be the critical conscience of society," Francis exhorted young people. Social justice and care of the environment have been key messages of his papacy.

The pope is expected to meet with young people from all over the world at the Catholic church's jamboree in Lisbon, Portugal, in August 2023.



# Govt to introduce bill to amend banking law, privatise 2 public sector banks

**The government is planning to introduce a bill to amend banking laws, aimed at privatising two public sector banks. Here is all you need to know.**

The government has listed the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021, which will be taken up during the Winter Session of Parliament to privatise two public sector banks as part of the Rs 1.75 lakh crore disinvestment target in the current fiscal year.

The legislation is one of the 26 bills that are scheduled to be introduced during the session.

The bill intends "to effect amendments in Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Acts, 1970 and 1980 and incidental amendments to Banking Regulation Act, 1949 in the context of the Union Budget announcement 2021 regarding privatisation of two Public Sector Banks."

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Union Budget 2021-22 announced that two public sector banks would be privatised as part of the government's disinvestment target.

Sources say that the bill is not likely to mention the names of the two banks that are going to be privatised. Instead, the government would create enabling legislation for privatisation of public sector banks.

## LOGIC FOR AMENDMENT TO BANKING LAW

There is a compelling logic for creating an enabling legislation instead of a specific target law. In India, there have been two strong moves

to nationalise banks. The first was in 1969 and the second in 1980. In total, 34 banks were nationalised.

For the bank nationalisation process, an act of Parliament was created. This was apart from the specific law that created the State Bank of India (SBI), which is the country's largest public sector bank. Over the years, the shape and contours of public sector banks changed via amalgamations which did not require changes to the existing banking laws. However, the government has to introduce laws in Parliament to 'denationalise' or privatise banks.

## PENSION BILL LIKELY IN WINTER SESSION

Another significant bill likely to be introduced in the upcoming Parliament session is the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2021. Its purpose is to amend the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) Act. The amendment will facilitate the separation of the National Pension System Trust from PFRDA as announced by the finance minister in the last budget to promote wider pension coverage.

The amendment is likely to be expected to define the powers, functions and duties of the National Pension Scheme Trust, defined in the PFRDA (National Pension System Trust) Regulations 2015, and the trust may get shifted under the companies act as a charitable trust.

**Explained: Why shares of Indian Overseas Bank, Central Bank of India surged sharply today**



Shares of two state-owned banks, Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) and Central Bank of India (CBI), jumped sharply during Wednesday's intra-day trading session.

Shares of both banks had rallied up to nearly 20 per cent in early trade. At 11:50 am, shares of IOB were trading 11.34 per cent higher on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), while the CBI stock was up nearly 11 per cent.

## WHY CBI, IOB SHARES ROSE TODAY?

Shares of both state-owned banks surged sharply today after it was reported that the government is planning to introduce a bill to amend banking laws, aimed at privatising two public sector banks.

The government has listed the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021 as one of the legislation that will be taken up during the Winter Session of Parliament. The bill is aimed at privatising two public sector banks as part of the government's Rs 1.75 lakh crore disinvestment target in the current fiscal year. While the government is unlikely to mention names of the state-owned banks that will be privatised, there is a huge buzz that the banks are IOB and CBI.

# Paytm shares recover for 2 straight sessions, rise over 16%

Shares of One97 Communications Limited, Paytm's parent firm, rallied nearly 16 per cent during Wednesday's intra-day trading session. Here is all you need to know.

Shares of One97 Communications, Paytm's parent firm, recovered sharply for the second straight session after falling sharply for the first two days. Paytm shares were trading nearly 16 per cent higher on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) at above Rs 1,700 apiece at 12:50 pm. On the NSE, too, the shares of the leading digital payments firm



rose nearly 16 per cent.

Following the sharp rise, Paytm's market capitalisation has crossed Rs 1 lakh crore. The rise in Paytm's share price has also reduced losses that

investors faced after the stock fell for the first two sessions.

While the sharp rally will provide comfort to shareholders, shares of Paytm are still down substantially from its IPO offer

price of Rs 2,080-2,150.

Analysts believe that the rebound in Paytm's stock is due to lower levels of buying among investors as the stock fell sharply on Monday. Paytm's shares could also be rising as the company will hold its first board meeting after the stock market listing on November 27. However, analysts are still not sure if the stock will be able to sustain the momentum.

**SHARP REBOUND AFTER FLOP LISTING-** Paytm's shares have sharply rebounded after falling nearly 28 per cent on Thursday when it made a disastrous stock market debut.

The shock opening wiped off Rs 38,000 crore worth of investors' wealth on the first day. The stock again slumped on Monday, resulting in Paytm's market capitalisation falling below Rs 1 lakh crore. The company's poor opening on the stock market did not come as a surprise to analysts who had raised concern about Paytm's expensive valuation and profitability. Whether the stock rises further will depend on what the company announces in its upcoming board meeting and whether it will be able to execute plans to boost revenue and profitability.





## James Webb Telescope launch postponed to December 22 due to rare incident

**Nasa has moved the launch of the James Webb Telescope from December 18 to December 22 as engineers test and investigate damages.**

The launch of the James Webb Space Telescope, which is poised to become the biggest observatory beyond Earth, is delayed again, this time due to an incident that occurred during operations at the satellite preparation facility in Kourou, French Guiana. Nasa has moved the launch from December 18 to December 22 as engineers test and investigate the damages.

The telescope is at the Arianespace facility to be launched into space. However, the incident happened when technicians were preparing to attach Webb to the launch vehicle adapter, which is used to integrate the observatory with the upper stage of the Ariane 5 rocket. According to Nasa, a sudden, unplanned release of a clamp band which secures Webb to the launch vehicle adapter caused a vibration throughout the observatory.

"A Nasa-led anomaly review board was immediately convened to investigate and instituted additional testing to determine with certainty the incident did not damage any

components," the American space agency said in a blog post. It added that will provide an update when the testing is completed at the end of this week.

With the investigation underway, the launch has been postponed by four days. The telescope team had been reviewing the instruments onboard the massive observatory ahead of its launch. The telescope was earlier scheduled to launch on October 31. However, a delay in the process of final testing and shipment led to Nasa and ESA agreeing on a December 18 launch. The spacecraft was scheduled to be shipped to the launch site in August, where the final preparations were to take about two months to complete before it blasted off into space aboard the Ariane 5 rocket.

Once launched from French Guiana, the Ariane 5 rocket will deliver the telescope directly into a precision transfer orbit towards its destination, the second Lagrange point (L2). This point is four times farther away than the Moon, 1.5 million kilometres from Earth in the

direction away from the Sun.

It will take about two weeks for the telescope to reach its designated orbit from where it will observe the Universe at wavelengths longer than visible light, namely in the near-infrared and mid-infrared. Nasa said the telescope will be in a six-month commissioning period after being deployed following a 26-minute ride aboard the Ariane 5 launch vehicle.

"Webb will solve mysteries in our solar system, look beyond to distant worlds around other stars, and probe the mysterious structures and origins of our universe and our place in it," Nasa has said.

The key goals of the telescope include looking back over 13.5 billion years to see the first stars and galaxies forming out of the darkness of the early universe, helping astronomers compare the faintest, earliest galaxies to today's grand spirals and ellipticals and see right through and into massive clouds of dust where stars and planetary systems are being born.

## Global licence deal to provide Covid antibody test tech free to poorer countries: WHO



A global licence for serological technology that detects Covid-19 antibodies will be provided royalty-free to poor and middle-income countries under a first of its kind agreement to boost production, the World Health Organisation said on Tuesday.

The existing four tests, which check for the presence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies developed after either an infection or a vaccine dose, could also inform decisions on the need for boosters to protect against the disease, it said in a statement.

The non-exclusive licensing agreement reached with the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), a public research institute offering the technology as a global public good, is the first test licence signed by the WHO's Medicines Patent Pool (MPP).

"The aim of the licence is to facilitate the rapid manufacture and commercialisation of CSIC's Covid-19 serological test worldwide," the WHO said.

"The licence will be royalty-free for low- and middle-income countries and will remain valid until the date the last patent expires," it said.

The tests are simple to use and suitable for even rural settings with a basic laboratory infrastructure, it added. WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus welcomed the deal which he hoped would inspire other developers to share tools against Covid-19 which has killed 5.4 million people since the virus emerged in central China in December 2019. "This is the kind of open and transparent licence we need to move the needle on access during and after the pandemic," Tedros said.

"I urge developers of COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and diagnostics to follow this example and turn the tide on the pandemic and on the devastating global inequity this pandemic has spotlighted."

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) welcomed the deal, noting that currently WHO only had one antibody test using quantitative immunoassays (ELISA) made by Roche Holding AG (ROG.S) which can only be used with the Swiss-based drugmaker's own device.

"In order to overcome the monopoly of large diagnostics companies such as Roche, and to facilitate production and supply of reliable ELISA antibody tests in all countries, the open licence from CSIC to WHO C-TAP (COVID-19 Technology Access Pool) is an important step forward," the activist group said.

"However, one licence from one technology owner is not enough to open up the full platform so that developers in countries can improve their tests for COVID-19 antibodies. Removing intellectual property barriers on all key technology components, and facilitating open sharing, pooling and transferring of technologies, data and know-how, are important to guarantee and improve access to COVID-19 diagnostics for all."





The LCRD mission will showcase the unique capabilities of optical communications to increase bandwidth for communicating in space.

## Nasa to zap laser beams to communicate faster with spacecraft beyond Earth

With global missions to the Moon taking shape and private players planning to venture beyond to Mars, constant communication will be the key to survival for interplanetary missions. A new technology demonstration could ramp up communications as Nasa launches the Laser Communications Relay Demonstration (LCRD) mission on December 4. The mission will showcase the unique capabilities of optical communications, that could be faster than radio waves. Space agencies currently use radio frequency communications to communicate with spacecraft travelling towards the planets, the Sun or even trundling on the surface of Mars. However, with

more and more data generations happening with new missions, a more effective communication medium needs to be raised.

The LCRD mission will showcase the unique capabilities of optical communications to increase bandwidth for communicating in space while reducing size, weight, and power requirements. The mission will be launched on the Space Test Program Satellite-6 (STPSat-6), the primary spacecraft of the Space Test Program 3 (STP-3) mission for the Department of Defense.

**WHAT IS LCRD MISSION?**

The laser communication demonstration will be a first of its kind end-to-end laser relay system, sending and receiving data over invisible infrared lasers at a rate of approximately 1.2

gigabits per second from geosynchronous orbit to Earth. Nasa said that with the new system, bandwidth will increase between 10 to 100 times more than radio frequency systems.

The LCRD instrument has been installed onboard the US Department of Defense's Space Test Program Satellite 6 (STPSat-6). Once in orbit, engineers will activate it and transmit data over infrared lasers. However, before the instrument fires actual lasers, engineers will practice sending test data to and from its ground stations. This test data will be sent up through radio frequency signals from the mission operations center and then the LCRD spacecraft will reply over optical signals. "Missions in space will send their

data to LCRD, which will then relay the data down to designated ground stations on Earth. We have been leveraging communications relay satellites since 1983 when the first Tracking and Data Relay Satellite launched," Nasa said. However, with the laser system, missions are not required to have direct line-of-sight to antennas on Earth instead LCRD creates a continuous path for data flowing from missions in space to ground stations on Earth, making a complete end-to-end system. **KEY FEATURES OF LCRD MISSION**

The LCRD mission will be able to downlink data over optical signals at a rate of 1.2 gigabits per second. This is almost double the rates of the 2013 Lunar Laser Communications Demonstration,

which downlinked data from the Moon over an optical signal of 622 megabits per second.

A major advantage will be the easy handoff of the signals from one station to another across the world as spacecraft moves around the planet, closer to it or pulls far away. Engineers had in 2013 conducted 30-day Lunar Laser Communication Demonstration, which revealed that the possibility of expanding broadband capabilities in space using laser communications is possible. For the demonstration this time, engineers will beam data between LCRD and optical ground stations located in Table Mountain, California, and Haleakal, Hawaii, once it is positioned more than 22,000 miles above Earth.

## A mega heist: Deep network detects whopping 301 new planets beyond our solar system

Scientists have for the first time discovered a whopping 301 planets orbiting their stars outside of our solar system. The new discovery marks a major era in deep space exploration as scientists use a new tool that can significantly enhance our capability to locate new worlds as we search for life beyond Earth.

The massive catalogue of planets adds to the already discovered 4,569 exoplanets orbiting a

multitude of distant stars, some Earth-like, some hot Jupiters, others Neptunian in size, mass and characteristics. But how did scientists come across this whopping figure of 301 new worlds all at once?

The discovery was made possible by a new deep neural network called ExoMiner, a machine learning system that uses Nasa's Pleiades supercomputer, and can distinguish real exoplanets from

different types of imposters, or "false positives." This makes the work of scientists relatively easier compared to years of studies, observations and wait.

**WHAT IS DEEP NEURAL NETWORK EXOMINER?**

Inspired by the similar technology used by humans to confirm the presence of a planet around a star, ExoMiner learns by using past confirmed exoplanets and false positive cases. According to Nasa,

it supplements people who are pros at combing through data and deciphering what is and isn't a planet. It derives its knowledge from the vast catalogue of data gathered by the Kepler spacecraft and K2.

"Unlike other exoplanet-detecting machine learning programs, ExoMiner isn't a black box. There is no mystery as to why it decides something is a planet or not. We can easily explain which features in the

data lead ExoMiner to reject or confirm a planet," said Jon Jenkins, an exoplanet scientist at Nasa.

The discovery has been detailed in a paper accepted for publication in The Astrophysical Journal, which confirms 301 new worlds discovered by ExoMiner using data from the remaining set of possible planets or candidates in the Kepler Archive.



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

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

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

On Tuesday, the agency confirmed its vaccine advisers, the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, will not be convened to consider the booster EUA decision -- which means the FDA's authorization decision could come any time.

"While the FDA cannot predict how long its evaluation of the data and information will take, the agency will review the request as

expeditiously as possible," FDA spokesperson Alison Hunt told CNN.

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

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

If the FDA authorizes the boosters for all adults and CDC's vaccine advisers support recommending them, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle

Walensky must sign off on the recommendation before they can be officially administered.

However, the majority of adults are

strong protection against severe disease and death months later, immunity may begin to wane and protection against milder and

asymptomatic disease may drop. Studies also show that booster doses restore that immunity.

And with Covid-19 cases on the rise, some states and cities are choosing not to wait for official signoff from FDA or CDC, and have already opened up boosters to all adults.

Need for transparency

FDA's vaccine advisers typically meet to discuss a requested EUA amendment and make a recommendation on how the agency should proceed. This time, the FDA has concluded that Pfizer/BioNTech's request does not raise questions that would

require additional discussion by the advisory committee, which is made up of experts who do not work for the agency.

Dr. Arnold Monto, the acting chairman of FDA's advisory committee, told CNN last week there is a precedent for FDA opting not to consult its vaccine advisory committee on certain decisions, noting that members of the committee meet "at the discretion of the FDA," and that it can be "cumbersome" to convene members, which makes it difficult to respond quickly to changing circumstances.

But Dr. Paul Offit, a member of the FDA vaccine advisory committee, told CNN last week that he thought meetings of both FDA's and CDC's vaccine advisers were "the best way for us to be transparent" about Covid-19 vaccine boosters.



## ADVERTISEMENT

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# Celebrities Came out to Support "The Elevator" Film Premiere Released by Amazon Prime Starring

Eric Roberts and Eugenia Kuzmina Directed & Produced by Award Winning Mukesh Modi. Stars lined up to show their support for "The Elevator" Film Premiere starring Eric Roberts, Eugenia Kuzmina, Matt Rife, Avery Ilardi Avery Morris and others in New York New York on November 17th. The Film "The Elevator" received three awards: Best Film, Best Actor & Best Director, this dramatic family film is gaining major acclaim and is available to view on Amazon. Photo (cast with Mukesh Modi ) Celebrities In Attendance are as Follow: Oscar Nominee Eric Roberts, Eugenia



Kuzmina, Avery Ilardi Avery Morris, Mukesh Modi, Amanda Orso, John OPasquale, Wnsy Kaplan, April Rose, Howard Bloom, Anthony Liotta, Mickey Burns, Lisa Rapp, Olivia Boucher, and More! The Elevator, An Acclaimed Family Drama Based

on True Events: Directors Jack Cook and Mukesh Modi bring to life a dramatic true story about one family's search for answers when their beloved husband/father doesn't return from work on his daughter's birthday. The dramatic twist of

events will captivate audiences in a nail-biting mystery that unfolds in a race to uncover the truth. Thrilling Plot, Inspired by True Events In the movie Produced by Modi, Roman Juniper, a husband and father of three is forced to go

work on the Saturday of his daughter's birthday. He plans to return home in time for his daughter's birthday party before things take a sharp turn of events. His wife and kids are setting up the decorations and food at the house and start to wonder where Roman is since it's well past his clock out time. A man matching Roman's description has been reported as a victim in a life-threatening accident and the Juniper family is extremely distraught and thinks that it could very well be him. They all quickly drive off to the hospital to find out where and what has happened to their loving Roman.

## Abhishek Banerjee and Barkha Singh Come Together For Raaj Shaandilyaa's OTT debut The Great Weddings of Munnes!



A Jio Studios Original which will premiere exclusively on Voot Select in 2022! Created and produced by Raaj Shaandilyaa, The Great Wedding of Munnes is a Jio Studios Original web series that will premiere exclusively on Voot Select. The show stars Abhishek Banerjee and Barkha Singh in the main lead. Directed by Sunil Subramani, the story is about a middle-class man's desperate attempts to marry the woman of his dreams leading to a series of hilarious misadventures. Principal photography will take place in Mathura, Agra, Hyderabad and Jaipur.

Talking about his venture into the OTT space, Raaj Shaandilyaa said, "This is my first collaboration with Jio Studios and also my debut in the OTT world. With so many crime and thriller shows being made, I really felt that there should be a comedy show mounted as big as a Bollywood movie. The team at Jio Studios backed my vision and the collaboration has been great so far. Our aim is to change the trend and give the audience an entertaining ride." The man who is ruling the space of OTT, Abhishek Banerjee said, "I always look for roles that challenge me as an actor and I was really looking for a good comedy script and this is a really

funny story. When the makers approached me to play Munnes and narrated it to me, I was completely mind blown. We have begun shooting for the show in Rohtak and I am really looking forward to it." Barkha Singh who is known for winning hearts in the OTT space added saying, "I am thrilled to be a part of this laugh riot. My character is so interesting and something I can't wait to play. I'm also looking forward to sharing screen space with Abhishek for the first time. It promises to be a lot of fun." The shooting has commenced and the show will be released in 2022!

## Terrifying Paranormal Figure Stalks the Streets of Mumbai in Prime Video Promo ahead of Chhorii Premiere



Things got seriously spooky as 'Choti Maayi', the paranormal character from the hotly anticipated original horror, Chhorii, lurked in the shadows of the busy Mumbai night in a promo video released by Prime Video. Sneaking up on unaware members of the public, the spooky women dressed in a burnt red dress popped up across the city, walking along the road, entering a department store, sneaking across a jogging track and even sitting in an auto-rickshaw. The hilarious video saw people screaming in shock and was released by Prime Video on their YouTube channel and social media platforms ahead of the global premiere of their original paranormal thriller, Chhorii, which follows the story of a young couple forced to flee their city home and seek shelter in a house within a haunted sugarcane field. Soon, the couple realise that the shelter they once sought for refuge from danger is in fact the very location for a seriously sinister

paranormal threat, known as 'Choti Maayi'. The housewife, eight months pregnant, must now fight to save her unborn baby from the spirits out to snatch her away. Excitement is now at boiling point with just a few days left until the premiere, with this video adding to the anticipation caused by the teaser and official trailer, which you can watch here. Chhorii is directed by the very talented Vishal Furia and marks first production collaboration between LA based Crypt TV, founded by Jack Davis and Eli Roth and backed by horror genre heavyweights Blumhouse Productions, with Abundantia Entertainment. Crypt TV are known for showcasing a new calibre of scary with shows like The Look-See, The Birch, Sunny Family Cult, and The Thing in the Apartment. It is a remake of the Marathi film Lapachhapi, and features Nushratt Bharuccha in the lead role, alongside Mita Vashisht, Rajesh Jais, Saurabh Goyal, and Yaanea Bharadwaj.



# Priyanka Chopra drops Jonas from name, not life



Priyanka Chopra Jonas just dropped 'Chopra Jonas' from her name on Twitter and Instagram, and left the Internet in a tizzy. Social media users soon started speculating that Priyanka and Nick Jonas are headed for a divorce, three years after their wedding. However, a friend of Priyanka's confirmed to IndiaToday.in that such reports are bogus. **PRIYANKA-NICK NOT HEADED FOR A DIVORCE** Priyanka Chopra Jonas, on November 22, dropped 'Chopra Jonas' from her Instagram and Twitter profiles. Her profile on the photo-sharing

platform now reads just Priyanka. When IndiaToday.in contacted a friend of



Priyanka's, they, on condition of anonymity, revealed that rumours of the Citadel actress and Nick Jonas heading for divorce is false.

"These divorce rumours are all amusing. Priyanka is using her first name because she wants to use that in her future projects. There is no truth to any other speculation. Also, she's not only dropped 'Jonas' but 'Chopra' as well on social media," said the friend.

Laughing the matter off, the friend said that Priyanka always breaks the Internet. Well, indeed she's done it again.

**PRIYANKA FANS BAFFLED AFTER SHE DROPS HER SURNAME**

Several social media users were left shocked and confused after Bollywood's Desi Girl decided to drop her last name. Soon, many of them took to Twitter and started speculating about a rift between Priyanka and her husband Nick.

## Atrangi Re: Fall Madly in Love with Megastar Akshay Kumar this Christmas

International Megastar Akshay Kumar today unveiled the trailer of his upcoming movie Atrangi Re, featuring Dhanush and Sara Ali Khan in lead roles. Directed by Aanand L Rai, Atrangi Re will release on Disney+Hotstar on 24 December. Fresh on the heels of his recent box office blockbusters Sooryavanshi and Bell Bottom, Akshay Kumar is set to cap the year with another mass entertainer. Taking to twitter, he



promised a fun filled film to keep us entertained for the holiday season, tweeting: Atrangi Re has been written by Himanshu Sharma and is

produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series, Colour Yellow Productions, and Cape of Good Films. The music and background score has been composed by AR Rahman.

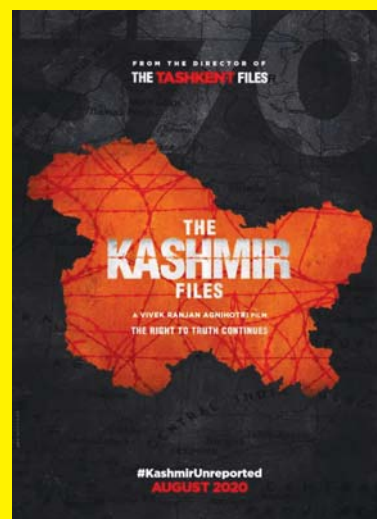
Akshay Kumar has been unstoppable at the box office and screens throughout 2021, and is all set to once again enthrall fans next year with a slate of releases including Prithiviraj, Bachchan Pandey, Raksha Bandhan, Ram Setu and Oh My God! 2.

## "THE KASHMIR FILES" A film by NATIONAL AWARD WINNING VIVEK AGNIHOTRI

(By our staff reporter) "Heaven on earth". New York-A 1st time road show of a feature film on a historic subject in fourteen cities across USA, leading universities and Impact events for leading policy makers is all set to take the country by storm. "The Kashmir Files" made by Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri is a landmark film on Kashmiri Hindu Genocide that took place in 1990 when hundreds of thousands of native Hindu Kashmiri were asked to leave Kashmir overnight or face the consequences, "death". Kashmir has never been the same since then. Pain, suffering and torture define the life of the community which was uprooted from their homeland which was always called a

"This story has to be shared, so the world knows the pain of uprooting. Its a story of genocide that inflicts unlimited pain on millions and on several generations", said Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri. He is traveling with National award winning superstar Mithun Chakraborty who with co-star Pallavi Joshi, a national award winning actor will be present during screening in Long Island and New Jersey on 27th and 28th November respectively. Superstar Mithun Chakraborty joins again in screening in Hollywood in end December and National award winning super actor and star, Anupam Kher will join in January 6th screening in Manhattan, NY. The film will be privately screened

in fourteen cities in cinema theatres for community leaders, policy makers and the American



community. The project initiated by Dr Surinder Kaul of Global Kashmiri Pandit diaspora was expanded with extensive support

from Sunil Hali, a Kashmiri himself. Dr Kaul has been spearheading many Kashmir initiatives and is known to be the voice of the Kashmiri community. "This project is very close to my heart which hurts when I think of my motherland. I have worked closely with Vivek during its making and am excited to see it to fruition", said Dr Surinder Kaul. Sunil Hali brings the expertise in media and entertainment and marketing in the USA, and with able help from Ken Naz, former CEO of EROS, have created this exclusive pre-release preview which launches on November 27 from Long Island in New York. Said Sunil Hali, "We have been working on this road show for two months. Dr Kaul took charge of building the national network of

volunteers while I joined hands with Ken to build the theatrical network for screening, PR and marketing. The film is screened in Cinemas such as Regal, AMC, BIG Cinema(Edison), and Bombay Theatre(New York). Ken has done a stupendous job to get us the best with limited financial resources during the busiest period for films in the USA".

A core team that includes Mukesh Modi, a celebrated filmmaker and patriot from New York, an advisory team with Rakesh Kaul, Mohan Wanchoo to guide the vision, and a team of volunteers in each of these cities has helped to take the project to next level.





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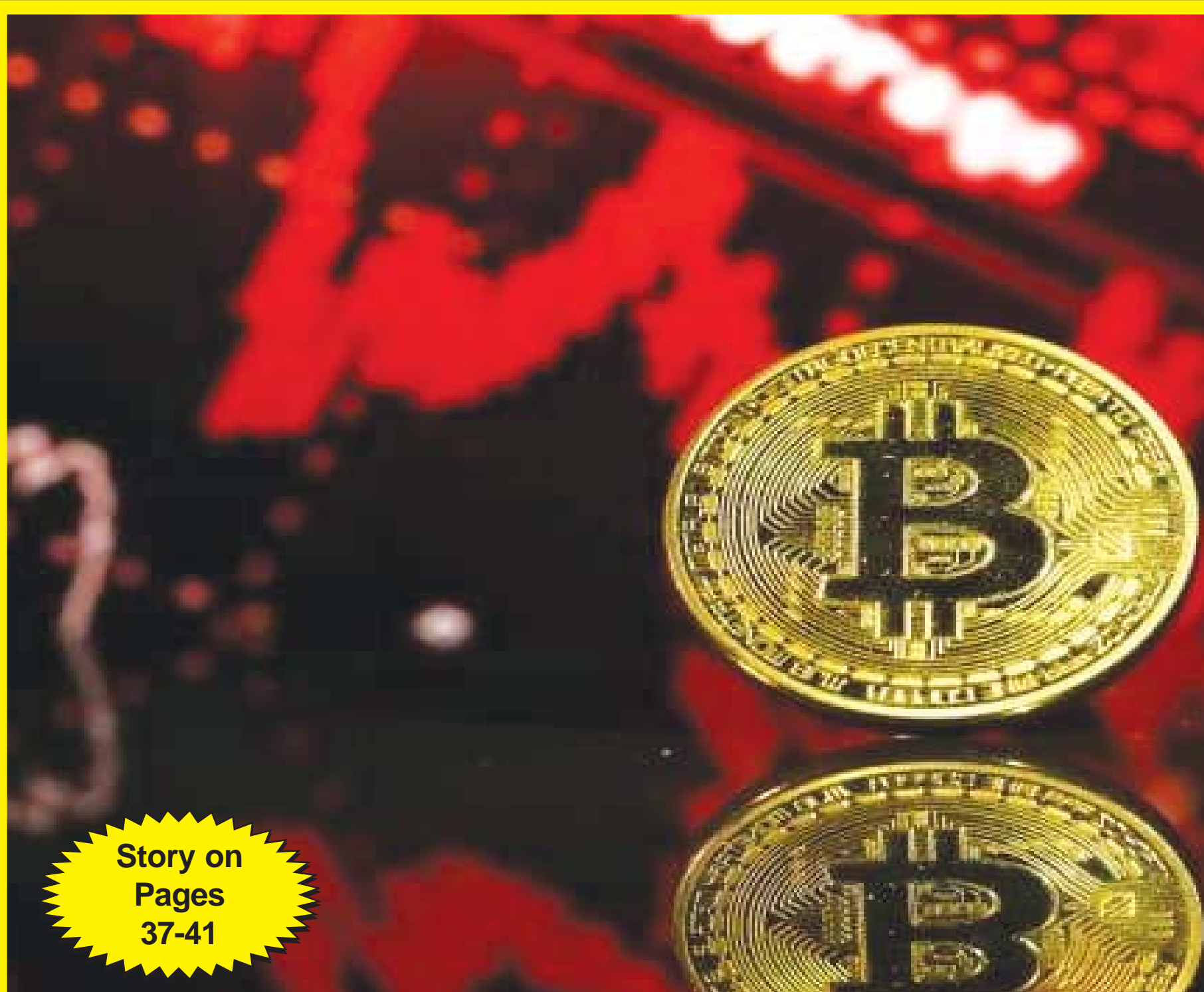
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