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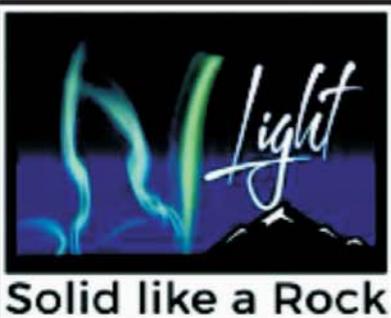
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Illegal Human Organ Trade

The ugly side of healthcare in India



Story on
Pages
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Amid Massive Student Rush, Air India To Double Flights To US

Move comes against the backdrop of several students flagging on social media rescheduling of their flights to the US, allegedly without prior notice.

New Delhi: In what will bring respite to a large number of Indian students headed abroad for higher studies, Air India has announced that it will increase its flight frequency to the US from the first week of August. The welcome move comes against the backdrop of several students flagging on social media the rescheduling of their Air India flights to the US, allegedly without prior notice. Responding to an NDTV query on the issue, Air India stated, "With the recent surge in COVID cases and the US Presidential Proclamation restricting flights from India, some of our flights to the USA, including those between Mumbai and Newark, had to be cancelled. These were effected well in advance and passengers were kept aware of these cancellations which were for reasons beyond our control."

Speaking about its plans to step up the flight frequency to the US, it said, "Vis-a-vis the approximate 40 flights we used to operate to the USA before the Presidential proclamation, we

Veena Reddy Sworn In As USAID's First Indian-American Mission Director

Washington: US Agency for International Development (USAID) on Monday named the first Indian-American - Veena Reddy - as its Mission Director.

"Today, Veena Reddy was sworn-in as our new Mission Director. She will be the first Indian-American to lead USAID-India, representing the best of both countries, and aims to bolster US-India's development partnership leveraging her unique experiences and leadership," tweeted USAID.

Today, Veena Reddy was sworn-in as our new Mission Director. She will be the first Indian-American to lead @usaid_india, representing the best of both countries, and aims to bolster #USIndia's development partnership leveraging her unique experiences and leadership. pic.twitter.com/RZqWQFGGji Best wishes, Veena USAID-India. India-



could operate 11 flights per week to USA in July, 2021. The frequency is being increased to 22 from 7th August, 2021. With the frequency being enhanced on the US sector, all-out efforts are being made to accommodate as many passengers as possible in our US-bound flights from August." Earlier, NDTV also spoke to students who were to leave for the US this August but were recently informed that their Air India flights have been rescheduled. Vishwas Bhargava said his flight to the US was rescheduled to after 25 days. "My call never went through to the ticketing team; I must have

called them at least 15 times, and each call was a wait of 40 to 50 minutes" he said.

Another student Anusha, scheduled to fly to the US in August, got an email from Air India, stating that her flight

was "impacted with no further details". "I was told to call up the airline for any further details, but my call was on hold for almost an hour. I found out that my flight has been cancelled due to operational reasons and my flight

was rescheduled to September 22, more than a month from when my course begins," she said. Meanwhile, Air India has also tweeted that it will operate additional flights between New Delhi & Newark on August 6, 13, 20 and 27. "These are in addition to the existing flights operating on this sector," it said. Owing to the pandemic, 2020 turned out to be a difficult year for students, especially those in Classes 10 and 12. Among them were many with plans to study abroad. In 2021, the government took note of the students headed abroad for studies and arranged for their vaccination on priority basis.

Josh India WebTV



Geeta Saxena

Show Host (Prime Time News)

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Foreign Secretary, British Counterpart Review India-UK 2030 Roadmap

The Roadmap 2030 was adopted at a virtual summit between PM Modi and Boris Johnson to elevate bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

London: Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla has met his British counterpart Lord Tariq Ahmad and held a comprehensive review of the UK-India cooperation in multilateral fora and on global issues and the implementation of Roadmap 2030, a 10-year plan that was unveiled in May for bilateral partnership on the road to a free trade agreement (FTA). Mr Shringla arrived in London on Friday on a two-day visit. He held meetings with his counterpart Ahmad, Minister of South Asia in the Foreign

Office, and Philip Barton, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on Friday.

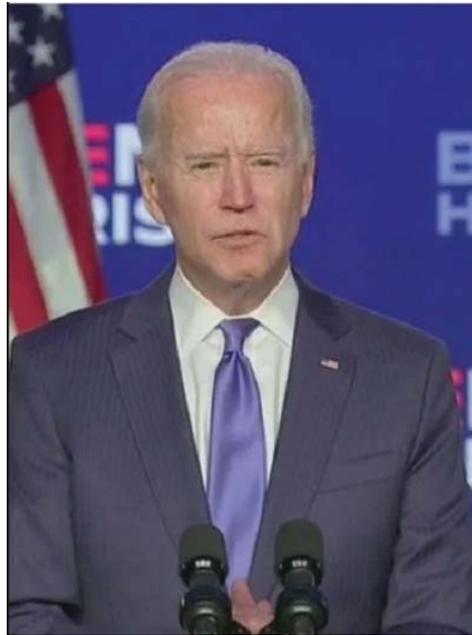
"Cordial meetings at FCDO of HE Foreign Secretary @HarshShringla with HE Minister of State Lord Tariq Ahmad & HE Permanent Under-Secretary @PhilipRBarton: a comprehensive review of India-UK agenda, co-op in multilateral fora & on global issues, implementation of RoadMap2030," the Indian High

Commission in the UK tweeted. The Roadmap 2030 was adopted at a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Boris Johnson to elevate bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and guide cooperation over the next decade in the key areas of trade and economy, defence and security and climate change, among others. Glad to meet @harshvshringla again today. We last met in Delhi - a pleasure to be able to

host this time in London. We discussed the continued growth of the - relationship and how, together, the UK and India can provide leadership on global issues and be a force for good," Mr Ahmad tweeted. "Today I welcomed @harshvshringla to London for talks on the delivery of the UK/India #2030Roadmap. The partnership is going from strength to strength as we work towards our shared ambitions," Mr Barton, who previously served as British High Commissioner to India, tweeted.

PM welcomes Biden's commitment to strengthen Indo-US strategic partnership

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi today welcomed President Joe Biden's strong commitment to strengthen the India-US strategic partnership during a meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "Good to meet US Secretary of State @SecBlinken today. I welcome President Biden's strong commitment to strengthen the India-US Strategic Partnership, which is anchored in our shared democratic values and is a force for global good," the Prime Minister tweeted. Blinken called on Modi after holding wide-ranging talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. The talks covered a range of issues including the situation in Afghanistan, Indo-Pacific engagements and COVID-19 response mechanism among others. Blinken also held talks with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval with a focus on taking the relationship to the "next level". The US Secretary of State arrived here on Tuesday evening on a two-day visit with



an extensive agenda for talks. This is Blinken's first visit to India after assuming charge as the US Secretary of State and the third by a high-ranking Biden administration official after it came to power in January. US Defence



Secretary Lloyd Austin visited India in March while US Special Envoy on Climate Change John Kerry travelled to New Delhi in April. Earlier, Blinken met civil society leaders after which he said the US and India share a commitment

to democratic values and it is part of the bedrock of the relationship. "I was pleased to meet civil society leaders today. The US and India share a commitment to democratic values; this is part of the bedrock of our relationship and reflective of India's pluralistic society and history of harmony. Civil society helps advance these values," he tweeted. It is Blinken's first visit to India after assuming charge as the US Secretary of State and the third by a high-ranking Biden administration official after it came to power in January. As Blinken arrived in New Delhi on Tuesday evening, the US State Department said the US supports India's emergence as a leading global power and vital partner in efforts to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is a region of peace, stability, and growing prosperity and economic inclusion. "India is a leading global power and a key US Partner in the Indo-Pacific and beyond," it said in a fact sheet on ties between the two countries. (PTI)

New Yorkers to enjoy India Day Parade in Long Island

Contd from page 52

A massive crowd is expected to march in the parade, which will start from Patel Brothers tentatively at 1 PM and conclude near Asa Mai Hindu temple on East Barclay Street where an entertainment stage will be erected. No entry fees are applicable, help everyone to enter and enjoy live DJ and stalls displaying ethnic goodies and food for sale.

According to Deepak Bansal, President of IDP USA, there will be the opportune presence of well-known film star, Kajal Aggarwal and Philanthropist, Entrepreneur and Life Consultant, Dr Jay Sarkar to lead the parade as Grand Marshalls. Consul General Randhir Jaiswal, who had graced the parade curtain raiser at the Indian Consulate on June 24 is Grand

Marshall. Bansal expressed deep down appreciation and gratitude towards the sincerity of IDP USA office bearers and committee chairs for their tireless job of preparing the colossal parade.

An internationally renowned oncologist and Padma Shri, Dr Dattatreya Nori, Diwali Foundation USA Chair, Ranju Batra, Navika Group CEO and President, Naveen Shah and young guru and motivational speaker, Ishan Shivanand are the Guests of Honor to grace the parade.

Besides, there will be various attractive and exiting prizes in a raffle draw including car, jewellery, smartphone and cash. Before pandemic, in 2019, under the presidency of Jasbir Jay Singh, the India Day Parade was highly

prosperous. Jay Singh encouraged all to make this year's parade, another successful event. Around 30 booths and 9 floats have already been booked, but more slots are open, including souvenir advertisement placements to be released at the gala celebration honouring the success of the parade. The sponsors list are endless. It includes Phalguni Chintu Patel, Shiv Yog, Navika Group, Bolla Market, CheapOair, Patel Brothers, Vass Pipe, The Portables Choice Corp, PICC, Flushing Bank, Maharaja, Badshah, Commercial Capital



Funding Group, Elevator the movie, Indian Visa Center, Omni Mortgage, HAB Bank and The South Asian Times. Several media organizations have taken responsibility for its promotion.

The non-partisan and secular IDP USA brings together more than 100 religious, cultural, regional and charity organizations to serve the community.

Don't travel unnecessarily, Covid pandemic far from over: Government

The government on Tuesday asked people not to travel unnecessarily as the Covid-19 pandemic is far from over. The rate of decline of average daily Covid cases is reducing, which is a cause for concern, it added.

(News Agencies)-The government asked people on Tuesday not to travel unnecessarily, as the Covid-19 pandemic is far from over and the virus behaviour cannot be taken for granted.

During a health ministry press briefing, Niti Aayog's Dr VK Paul said, "Though more people are receiving vaccines now, there is still a cause for concern since people are vulnerable to the virus. This is not the time for large-scale festivities. Don't travel unnecessarily."

Health ministry joint secretary Lav Agarwal said the Covid-19 pandemic is far from over, if we look from a global perspective.

"There's a noticeable increase in cases across the world, which remains an area of concern. We've to work on containing the spread of the virus with strictness," he said.

A slowdown in the rate of decline of average daily Covid cases

The rate of decline of average daily Covid cases is reducing, which is a cause for concern, the Union health ministry said.

The government said 22 districts in seven states have reported an increasing trend in daily Covid cases for the last four weeks.

"There are 22 districts- 7 from Kerala, 5 from Manipur, 3 in

Meghalaya among others - where an increasing trend in cases has been reported in the last 4 weeks," said Lav Agarwal. He added that there are still 62 districts in the country where over 100 cases are reported every day. These cases are found in a localised and limited set of areas of these districts, the government added. There are also eight districts witnessing a decline in the positivity rate, but are now seeing a rise in Covid cases, the government said, adding that "we cannot take the situation for granted". "The average daily new cases declined from 3,87,029 during May 5-11 to



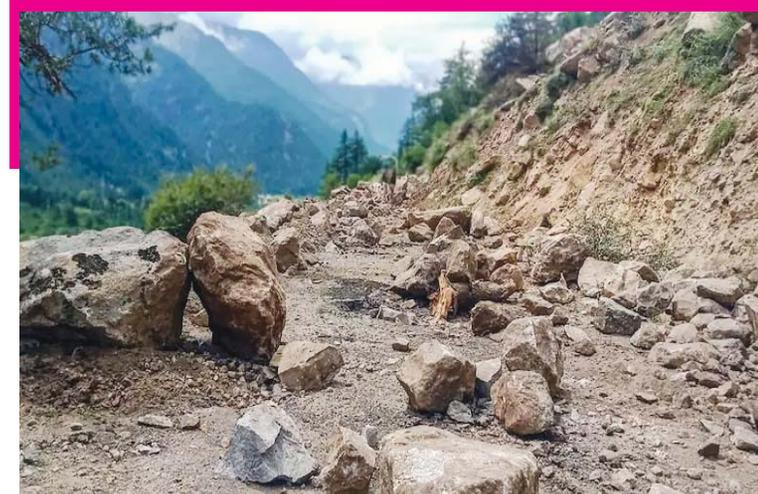
38,090 cases during July 21-27. In the past few weeks, there has been a slowdown in the rate of decline, which remains an area of concern," said Lav Agarwal. Covishield reduced Covid infection by 93% during 2nd wave, mortality by 98%

A study by the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC) conducted on 15 lakh doctors and frontline workers found that Covishield gives 93%

protection, while there was a 98% mortality reduction, the government said on Tuesday.

"The study was conducted on 15 lakh doctors and frontline workers in AFMC who were administered with Covishield. It revealed that there was a 93% reduction in infection during the second wave which was driven by the Delta variant and 98% mortality reduction," said Dr VK Paul.

Landslide cuts off Sangla-Chitkul road, nearly 80 tourists stranded in Himachal's Kinnaur



(News Agencies)-Life came to a grinding halt in Sangla valley in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur district after a landslide-related incident

killed nine tourists at Batseri gate on Sunday afternoon. Multiple landslides caused by heavy rain also damaged the Baspa valley river bridge.

Nearly 80 tourists are stranded in the Sangla valley in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur after multiple landslides triggered by heavy rain damaged the Sangla-Chitkul link road on Sunday.

Boulders descending down the Sangla valley even snapped power lines, in addition to causing heavy loss to private property and the Baspa valley river bridge. The landslides also damaged a 300 metre stretch of the Sangla-Chitkul road at Gunsu. Nearly 80 tourists were stranded at various places between Rakcham and Chitkul after the bridge was damaged and Batseri was disconnected from the rest of the world, officials told India Today on

Tuesday. The administration maintains that the stranded tourists were looked after. "Local administration has said that the stranded tourists were safe and were being taken care of. Most of the stranded people were staying in local guest houses and hotels," said Kinnaur Deputy Commissioner Abid Hussain Sadiq. He added, "Efforts are on to restore the road network which was damaged by the landslide. We have invited a team of the scientists of the

Geological Survey of India to find out the cause of the landslides." Movement for tourists has been suspended following the tragic incident on Sunday. Officials said the Chitkul-Sangla link road has been shut until it is cleared of debris by the public works department. Meanwhile, the local administration has issued an advisory for tourists asking them to avoid visiting spots towards Chitkul, beyond Sangla.

Andhra BJP workers oppose setting up of Tipu Sultan's statue in Proddatur

Several workers of the BJP were detained on Tuesday ahead of a protest against the setting up of Tipu Sultan's statue in Proddatur.

(News Agencies)-Proddatur was converted into a garrison on Tuesday ahead of a march of BJP workers from Andhra Pradesh against the setting up of a statue of Tipu Sultan in the town.

The BJP chief of Andhra unit, Somu Veeraj, who is on a 'Devalaya Darshanam' campaign, was scheduled to visit the junction where a Tipu Sultan statue has been proposed by the ruling party.



Ahead of his arrival, there was a heavy deployment of police in the town. The police later detained the protesters along with Somu Veeraj.

Somu Veeraj alleged 'institutional conversion' in the state and claimed, "The Andhra government is more concerned about the installation of a statue of Tipu Sultan at Proddatur while Hindu temples are facing threats."

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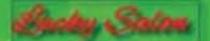
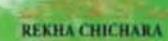
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AND MUCH MORE EXCITED PRIZES

Harappan-era city of Dholavira gets Unesco's World Heritage Site tag

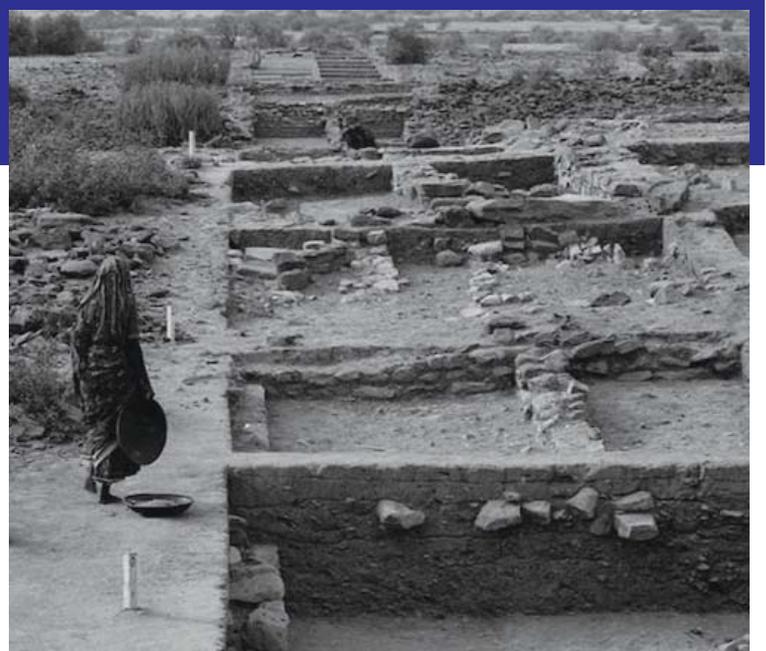
The Harappan-era city of Dholavira in Gujarat has been added on Unesco's World Heritage List. Earlier, Rudreswara Temple in Telangana was added to the World Heritage List.

(News Agencies)- Dholavira, a Harappan-era city in Gujarat, has been inscribed as a World Heritage Site (WHS) by the UNESCO heritage committee.

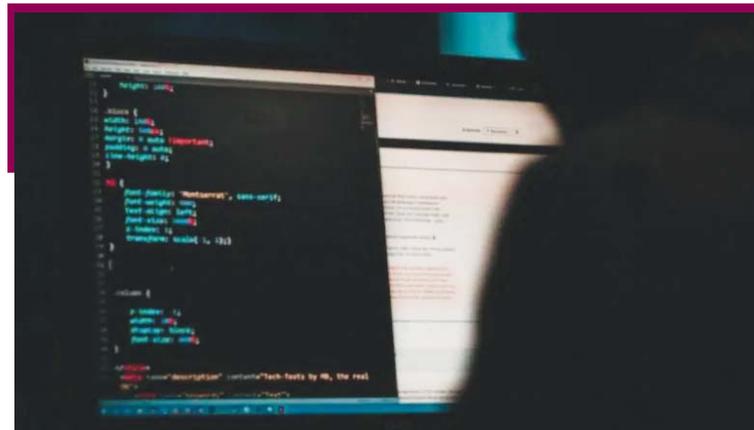
The decision was taken at the ongoing 44th session of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO held online and chaired from China on Tuesday. The session had earlier named Rudreswara temple in

Telangana, also known as Ramappa temple, as a World Heritage Site. "Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple received its inscription as a World Heritage Site on 25 July and Dholavira: A Harappan City was inscribed on the World Heritage List today, bringing India's number of World Heritage sites to 40," a statement read. A World Heritage Site is a location with

an "outstanding universal value", which signifies cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. Gujarat has a total of four World Heritage Sites now. The other three are Champaner near Pavagadh, Rani ki Vav in Patan and Ahmedabad.



Fake police notice for watching porn: High-tech extortion racket busted



The Delhi police have busted a high-tech extortion racket that used to extort money from people watching pornographic content on the Internet by sending out fake police notices.

(News Agencies)-The Delhi police have busted a high-tech extortion racket that used to extort money from people watching pornographic content on the Internet. The racket was being run from Cambodia with a network in Tamil Nadu. The police have arrested three

people including the Indian mastermind of the extortion gang. The police crackdown followed complaints lodged by several social media users. The gang used adware and browser pop-up windows to display fake police notice to extract money from Indian citizens

for watching pornography. They used UPI payment and QR codes for receiving extorted money from victims and then send it to Cambodia using over 20 bank accounts, police said. From February to June this year, the gang extorted about Rs 30 lakh using UPI IDs and QR codes, police said. Police said the technical mastermind of this fraud is based in Cambodia. HOW THEY OPERATED- Several social media users informed the police about the notices that they received from

'police'. These notices turned out to be fake ones. The fake police notices told the users that all the files on their computers had been blocked and they had to pay a fine of Rs 3,000 for involving in the "illegal activity" of watching pornographic content. The victims also reported that these messages popped up even though they were only doing routine searches on their web browser and no pornographic content was being searched. During the probe, police found that the bogus pop up

notices were coming from abroad. Following the extorted money trail, the police found that multiple accounts were operating from Tamil Nadu. RACKET BUSTED A police team reached Tamil Nadu and found that the accounts were opened on fake addresses. The team camped in the area for over a week and travelled about 2,000 km between Chennai, Trichi, Coimbatore, Udthagamandalam and several other places in Tamil Nadu to track down the accused.

Assam declares 3-day state mourning over 6 deaths during clashes at Mizoram border

The Assam government declared a three-day state mourning from Tuesday to condole the death of five policemen and one civilian in a border clash with Mizoram on the previous day.

(News Agencies)-The Assam government declared a three-day state mourning from Tuesday to condole the death of five policemen and one civilian in a border clash with Mizoram on the previous day, a notification said. During this period, the national flag will fly at half-mast and there will be no public entertainment, the order issued by the General Administration Department said. At least six persons were killed and 60 others,

including an SP, injured in a bloody clash along the Assam-Mizoram border on Monday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has spoken to the chief ministers of Assam and Mizoram, Himanta Biswa Sarma and Zoramthanga respectively, and urged them to ensure peace along the disputed border and find an amicable settlement. Sarma paid floral tributes to the five slain policemen at Silchar on Tuesday.

"We are deeply anguished by the loss of lives of our brave @assam police personnel. I visited Silchar SP office and paid floral tributes to the five martyrs and salute their sacrifice," he tweeted. Earlier in the day, the chief minister visited the Silchar Medical College and Hospital and met the police personnel injured in the attack. "Visited SMCH to meet injured officials and directed doctors to ensure best treatment to them. Asked to send seriously injured



personnel for higher level is also likely to visit the inter-treatment by air ambulance on state border where the situation priority," Sarma said in another Twitter post. The chief minister under control", officials said.

Farmers' union challenges sedition law in Punjab and Haryana High Court

A farmers' union has moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court challenging constitutional validity of the sedition law mentioned in the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

(News Agencies)- A farmers' union has moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court challenging constitutional validity of the sedition law mentioned in the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The petition was filed after a case of sedition was registered against 100 farmers for protesting against the Speaker of the Haryana Legislative Assembly. Hundreds of farmers organised under different banners have been protesting against the three central farm laws enacted last year. The petition against sedition was filed after the Haryana Police booked 100 farmers, protesting against the three agricultural laws, on July 11 in Sirsa. The Haryana Progressive Farmers Union (HPFU) on Monday challenged Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code. The union challenged the law on the ground that it



did not have constitutional validity. The petition complained that the "abuse of the law of sedition continues unchecked with cases being filed to silence critics". "The petition takes the plea that the abuse of the law of sedition continues unchecked with cases being filed to silence critics thereby creating a chilling effect on the right to protest," Pardeep Rapria, the counsel for the HPFU said after moving the ordinary writ petition. Over hundred farmers were facing

sedition charges for allegedly attacking the vehicle of Haryana Deputy Speaker Ranbir Gangwa in Sirsa on July 11. The protesters had allegedly smashed the windscreen of Gangwa's vehicle by pelting stones. On July 15, police in Sirsa arrested five farmers including the farmer leader Harcharan Singh and Prahlad Singh. They were all charged under the sedition law. The arrested farmers were later released on bail on July 22.

Besides the sedition charges, the protesting farmers were also booked for other serious offences under IPC Sections 147, 148 (both related to rioting), 341 (wrongful restraint), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 332 (voluntarily causing hurt to public servant), 353 (assaulting a public servant), 307 (attempt to murder), 427 (mischief to cause loss or damage), 186 (obstructing public servant on duty), and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) at Civil Lines Police

Station in Sirsa. Referring to this, the petition asked, "How can sedition and attempt to murder charges be justified if slogans are raised and windscreen of a vehicle of speaker is broken?" "It appears that the government is using terrorising tactics against farmers, merely because the farmers have shown black flags to BJP leaders," the petition said. The petition also stated that the sessions judge in Sirsa had termed the sedition charges against farmers "doubtful" while granting bail to the five protesters who were arrested for the alleged attack on the vehicle of Haryana Deputy Speaker Ranbir Singh Gangwa. The petition also stated that the Chief Justice of India on July 15 had remarked in open court that sedition law was being misused by the authorities to trample upon citizens' fundamental rights of free speech and liberty.

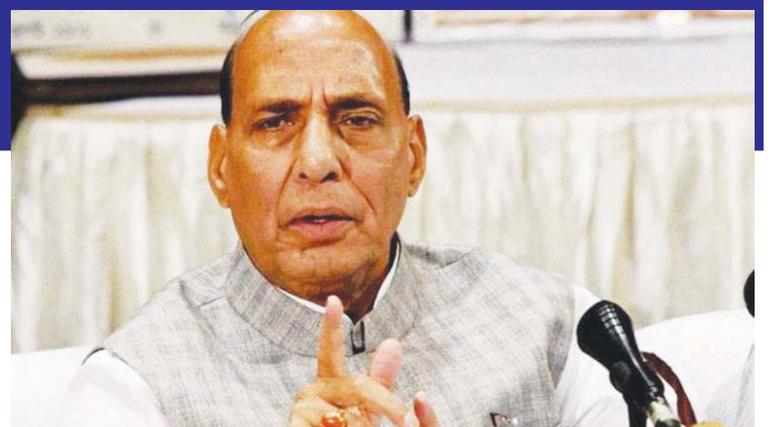
Defence Minister Rajnath Singh begins 3-day visit to Dushanbe to attend SCO meet

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh begins his three-day trip to Dushanbe where he will attend the annual meeting of the Defence Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states.

(News Agencies)- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh begins a three-day visit to the capital city of Tajikistan on Tuesday to attend the meeting of the defence ministers of the member states of the SCO, an eight-nation influential grouping. He is visiting Dushanbe from July 27 to July 29 to attend the annual meeting of the defence ministers of the SCO member states, Singh's office said in a tweet. "In the annual meeting, defence cooperation issues among SCO member states are discussed and a communique is expected to be issued after the deliberations," it said. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is expected to pitch for concerted efforts to deal with terrorism and other security challenges facing the region at

a conclave of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Dushanbe on Wednesday. During his visit to Dushanbe, Rajnath Singh is also expected to meet his Tajik counterpart Col General Sherali Mirzo to discuss bilateral issues and other issues of mutual interest. It may be recalled that Tajikistan is chairing the SCO this year and hosting series of Ministerial and official-level meetings. In his address, officials said, Singh is expected to delve into regional security challenges, including terrorism, and the ways to deal with them. The defence minister is also expected to meet his Tajik counterpart, Col Gen. Sherali Mirzo, to discuss bilateral as well as other issues of mutual interest. Chinese Defence Minister Wei Fenghe is also

likely to attend the SCO meeting. However, it is not immediately known whether there is a possibility of a bilateral discussion between him and Singh. Singh and Wei had held bilateral talks in Moscow on September 4 last year on the sidelines of the annual meeting of the defence ministers of the SCO states. It was the first highest-level face-to-face meeting between the two sides after the border row in eastern Ladakh erupted in early May. Tajikistan is chairing the SCO this year and hosting a series of ministerial and official-level meetings. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Dushanbe to attend a conclave of foreign ministers of the SCO states on July 14.



He held an hour-long bilateral meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the conclave. The SCO, seen as a counterweight to NATO, is an eight-member economic and security bloc and has emerged as one of the largest transregional international organisations. India and Pakistan became its permanent members in 2017. The SCO was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the presidents of Russia, China, the Kyrgyz Republic,

Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India has shown keen interest in deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), which specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence. India was made an observer at the SCO in 2005 and has generally participated in the ministerial-level meetings of the grouping, which focus mainly on security and economic cooperation in the Eurasian region.

Lok Sabha adjourned for fourth time in the day amid Opposition uproar

The Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned till 2:30 pm for the fourth time on Tuesday amid Opposition uproar over the Pegasus snooping row.

(News Agencies)-The Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned till 2 pm on Tuesday, for the fourth time since the House convened for the day, amid continuous protests by Opposition members over the Pegasus snooping row and farm laws.

As the House reassembled at 12:30 pm, Rajendra Agrawal, who was in the Chair, asked the protesting members to let the House take up the Zero Hour. Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal said many members of the treasury benches want to raise their issues during the Zero Hour and the House should function.

Amid the unrelenting protests, Agrawal adjourned the House for the fourth time in the day till

2 pm. When the House met in the morning, Speaker Om Birla led the members to pay tributes to Anerood Jugnauth, former president of Mauritius, and Kenneth David Buchizya Kaunda, the first president of Zambia.

As the proceedings began at 11 am, the Opposition members trooped into the Well shouting slogans and raising banners. The Congress, CPI, CPI(M), TMC members were protesting over the Pegasus snooping issue, while the BSP, SP and Shiromani Akali Dal were protesting against three farm laws of the Centre.

Meghwal said by disrupting the proceedings, the Opposition is not allowing the ministers to do their duty of replying to questions. The speaker

repeatedly urged the protesting members to go back to their seats.

"Do not compete with each other in sloganeering. Compete with each other to raise people's issues," he said.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar took a swipe at the protesting Opposition members and said if they are concerned about farmers, they should allow the proceedings of the House to continue.

He made the remarks while replying to a supplementary query related to an insurance scheme for farmers during the Question Hour as the Opposition members continued with their sloganeering on various issues, including the Pegasus spying row and the agriculture laws.



There are around 15 questions related to farmers. If the

Opposition members are really concerned about farmers, they should listen to what the government has to say," Tomar said.

"Disruptions are lowering the decorum of the House," he said. As the protests continued, the House was first adjourned till 11.45 am.

When the House met for the second time in the day, the protests continued, leading to

another adjournment till 12 noon.

As the Lok Sabha reassembled at 12 noon, Agrawal, who was chairing the proceedings, asked the protesting members to discuss their issues and said the government is ready to answer their questions.

"Please go back to your seats. Please cooperate," he said.

As the protests continued, Agrawal adjourned the House till 12.30 pm.

Home Ministry seeks another 6 months to frame rules for citizenship law



(News Agencies)-The Union Home Ministry has sought another six months' extension to frame the rules under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The citizenship law was notified on December 12, 2019.

MHA has informed the Parliament that it has sought another extension till January 9, 2022 for framing rules under CAA and sent a request to the Committees on Subordinate Legislation, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

While no reason has been given for the delay in framing the CAA rules, however, it is understood that the Covid crisis in two

successive waves may have led to the significant delay.

Home Minister Amit Shah, during the West Bengal elections, had said that CAA will be implemented after the vaccination drive is completed in the country. The latest MHA reply by MoS Nityanand Rai came after a question was asked by Assam Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi who asked an unstarred question. The CAA law seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis entering India on or before December 31, 2014 from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after five years of residence in India.

Josh

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The South Asian
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News Analysis & Commentary



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Why we need to mask up again

Faced with a pandemic that has killed more Americans than all those who perished during World War II, America is a nation divided, split by both politics and the health crisis at hand. We've become two countries, one vaccinated and largely safe, the other unvaccinated and still at great risk.

Over the last month, the US vaccination effort has largely stalled, now just short of President Joe Biden's July 4 goal of at least 1 shot for 70% of American adults. During the same period, coronavirus infections have surged. Since reaching a nadir of a little over an average of 11,000 new cases a day last month, the number of daily infections has now risen to an average of just under 62,000.

This week, in what many consider a dramatic reversal of its May 2021 easing of indoor mask requirements, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a recommendation that vaccinated individuals wear masks indoors in areas of high SARS-CoV-2 transmission. An internal CDC slide presentation obtained by the Washington Post suggests that the change in mask guidance was motivated by unpublished data showing that the Delta variant is remarkably contagious, about as transmissible as chicken pox, and also that vaccinated people with breakthrough infections may be as contagious as unvaccinated cases. The CDC is scheduled to release data on Friday that will support its mask reversal. In addition, the Biden administration announced on Thursday a new requirement for federal workers to be vaccinated or regularly comply with testing and mitigation measures. This is an important step in upping the US's vaccine rate, but until those Americans who do not fall into this required category choose to vaccinate themselves, the CDC's new mask guidance will be a critical step in keeping the public as healthy as possible.

The explosive resurgence of the virus is a consequence of the rise of the very transmissible Delta variant. Recently, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky announced that the SARS-CoV2 Delta variant is now found in 83% of cases sequenced in the United States. "It is one of the most infectious respiratory viruses we know of, and that I have seen in my 20-year career," she said.

While every state in the country now reports rising caseloads, the surge has been fueled by the South.

For example, in the last two weeks one state that has witnessed a more rapid growth in new coronavirus cases is Louisiana, which has seen a 223% increase in average daily infections.

Not surprisingly, Louisiana also has the fourth lowest rate of Covid-19 vaccinations in the country, with only 37% of its population fully vaccinated.

Meanwhile, places with high vaccination rates, like Maine, Vermont and New

Hampshire, have demonstrated some of the lowest rates of Covid-19 infection in the country.

A KFF vaccine monitor poll found that vaccine acceptance varies by our political party, by where we live, how old we are, and how much education we've received.

In June, 88% of respondents who identified themselves as Democrat said they had been vaccinated or would get vaccinated as soon as possible, compared to only 54% of those identifying as Republican. The poll found that 76% of city dwellers fell into this category, compared with 57% of rural residents. Eighty six percent of people over the age of 65 reported that they had been vaccinated or would be as soon as possible, compared with only 58% for people aged 18 to 29. Prior vaccination or vaccination ASAP was reported by 80% of college graduates but only 63% of those without a college education.

Although breakthrough infections in vaccinated people can happen, the vast majority of Covid-19 infections occur in unvaccinated people, and nearly all current cases of severe illness are found in the unvaccinated. In a statement on July 16, Walensky reported that 97% of current COVID hospitalizations are of unvaccinated people, and Dr. Anthony Fauci stated earlier in the month that more than 99% of Covid-19-related deaths in June were of unvaccinated individuals. Last month, there were 130 Covid-19 deaths in Maryland, every death occurring in an unvaccinated person. In Texas, according to preliminary data from the Department of State Health Services, 99.5% of all Covid deaths since February have afflicted the unvaccinated. While daily cases in the United States are up 146% over the last 2 weeks and hospitalizations have increased 73%, deaths have increased by a more modest 11%. But deaths are a lagging indicator, typically following a rise in new cases by 2 to 3 weeks -- and they are likely soon to rise. The CDC released a national ensemble forecast of Covid deaths projected over the next month. The model predicts a significant increase in Covid-19 mortality, with 1,800 to 6,900 new deaths projected for the week ending August 21, 2021.

To suppress the surge of the Delta variant, the US must convince a large block of the remaining tens of millions reluctant and recalcitrant unvaccinated adults to get a shot. Statements last week from some Republican governors including Kay Ivey of Alabama urging constituents to get vaccinated are a late, but welcome change. Other prospective events such as the anticipated full FDA approval of the Pfizer and Moderna Covid-19 vaccines may also persuade some of the undecided, but the most recent KFF poll found that 20% of the US population says they will either definitely not get vaccinated or will do so only if mandated.

Concerns over Delta Variant: Capable of Infecting Fully-vaccinated Individuals

By Susmita Ghosh

A blanket vaccination drive across the globe, the biggest of its kind ever, is considered the only way to prevent the Covid-19 pandemic that is torturing the world. However, even that does not seem enough now. The virus undergoes rapid mutation. Hence, there are reports of changes in its protein structure and function. Consequently, the initial vaccines that came out are reported to be less effective than primarily predicted. There have been reports of several variants of the Covid-19 virus since its global outbreak. The virus underwent local mutations in countries and then spread across the world, affecting more people. The most virulent among them is B.1.1.7 (Alpha), B.1.351 (Beta), P.1 (Gamma), and B.1.617.2 (Delta). Most of the problems lie with the latest i.e. the Delta variant, as it has the capacity to evade even the vaccination effects. Initially, this variant was reported in India, around November-December 2020. The official presence of this variant was confirmed when it was found in the USA in March 2021. The problem with this variant is its high infection rate. The Delta variant is one of the most dangerous versions, spreading alarmingly fast. Even though India is one of the countries that lead the global vaccine production, the overall vaccination rate in this country is relatively lower. The Indian government is trying its best though, the high population does not make the

task easy. Accordingly, the virus spread across the huge population to undergo mutation and come with this fast-flourishing variant. The countries had to reduce the restriction in search of normalcy, this variant escaped India and spread across the USA.

The Delta variant does not discriminate - this is what the immunologists and virologists are claiming now. The commercially available vaccines offer a protective layer, but that is only to a little extent. The unvaccinated are at a higher risk, but even the vaccinated are not free from infection possibilities, the record indicates. In the USA, more than 95 percent of new cases are from the Delta variant, among which there are a major number of vaccinated patients. The same incident is repeated in the whole world. In the UK, a survey with around 5000 people shows around 23% of patients with the Delta variant, had both their dosages. For Israel, the rate is as high as 60% for the hospitalized people. In Singapore too, there is a high rate of vaccinated people, who have come down with this variant. The only consolation is, the symptoms are milder in the vaccinated people, compared to the unvaccinated. The major vaccines show a relatively lower efficacy against the Delta version, as reported. In case of Pfizer, the efficacy is 88% only. In case of AstraZeneca, it is as low as 67% in the Delta variant, compared to 74.5% against the Alpha variant. (Contd on page 32)



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A Ray Of Hope In The Darkness

The CJI's recent remark that the Supreme Court would stand by the people to protect their rights, has provided a ray of hope and has renewed faith in this institution as the protector of the secular, democratic way of life that our forefathers had dreamt of, at the dawn of independence.

On July 15, 2021, CJI N. V. Ramana, asked Attorney-General K. K. Venugopal and Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta as to why the Union Government needs the 'colonial law' of sedition in free India even after 75 years of independence. This question has been asked many a time to the successive governments and also to the Constitutional courts, by all those Indians who believe in the right to question the government and the right to dissent, which are the essence of democracy. However, no satisfactory answer has been given by either of them. In the meantime, people are thrown into jail, put into preventive custody, confined to house-arrest and harassed no ends on dubious charges of sedition in which, so far, the prosecutors have been able to obtain only one conviction since 2007 against hundreds who have been incarcerated for long months and years all over the country. Is this not a breach of people's right to life and liberty under the convenient cloak of law that, in the very first instance, should not have found a place in the constitution of a democratic republic like independent India? A constitution bench of the Supreme Court, in the 1962 Kedarnath case which challenged this very law as unconstitutional, upheld the essence of the word sedition mainly by reading down the import of the terms "bring into hatred or contempt" or "to create disaffection towards the government established by law." Of course, the bench set limits to its scope to those speeches or writings that show a pernicious tendency to create public disorder. By taking advantage of this interpretation, governments over the past 60 years, have put people behind bars by invoking the section even in cases where the accused persons have only written or spoken or expressed their view against a particular



law on merit and based on legally recognised basic features of the Constitution itself. And the fallout is the systematic erosion of democratic principles in governance that should have been the inviolable principles of our polity. The protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 and the large number of protesters arrested on sedition charges and then thrown into jail for prolonged periods, is a case in point.

Justice Ramana's remark, "the use of sedition is like giving a saw to a carpenter to cut a piece of wood and he uses it to cut the entire forest," clearly points towards the view that the law of sedition, in its present form, has passed its time. The apex court is now faced with the uphill task of dealing with hordes of petitions challenging this law highlighting its "chilling effect" on the fundamental rights of people to life, liberty, human dignity, and free speech which are the pillars of our constitutional democracy. It is anticipated that for a change, this time, the concern of all right-thinking Indians will find an echo in the hallowed seats of justice and peace as well as the true guardians of our democracy, the Supreme Court, and the High

Courts.

Besides this section of the Indian Penal Code, there are other laws from the colonial era that have the same chilling effect on people's rights and liberties. The Telegraph Act empowers the state to eavesdrop on a person's private communications besides the post-independence IT Act that requires the service providers to give details of the origin of a flagged tweet or post, the proposed amendment of the Cinematograph Act dealing with film certification, the linking of PAN Card and Aadhar Card with individuals bank accounts, all these have direct or indirect effects on people's freedom of choice and action, having precious little to do with any threat to national security or terror activities. With every other new law, people's right to privacy and the freedom of expressing one's opinion on issues affecting one's personal or community life has been curtailed in the name of national security and territorial integrity. The shrill voice of communal and religious intolerance has prompted proposing and making laws that directly affect people's choice of food, family size, and even reproductive liberty. Therefore, it is high time

that the Supreme Court takes a good look not only at the sedition law but also reviews all the laws - colonial or recent, that tend to chip away people's rights and liberties.

Another issue that needs some thought is the various Constitutional amendments that have been passed by the Parliament over the last 75 years. Some amendments have already been declared ultra-virus of the Constitution and have been struck down. But the Executive, by taking advantage of the brute majority that it enjoys in the Parliament, has re-framed some of them by paraphrasing the text or by taking recourse to the Directive Principles of State Policy by placing them over the Fundamental Rights and other basic features of the Constitution. A case in point is - many laws that have been passed by the Parliament that some of the state legislatures prohibiting cow slaughter, conversion to another region of choice, inter-religion marriages, etc. Secularism is one of the basic features of the Constitution and the right to practice one's faith without interference from the State being featured in fundamental rights. Should such laws have

been made at all? In a state like ours, where Muslims comprise 35 percent of the population, a draft bill is circulated that prohibits cow slaughter within a 5-kilometer radius of any Hindu temple or religious institution. This is indeed strange because no similar law is being contemplated to prohibit pig slaughter within a similar area of a Mosque. Is this not discriminatory? It is time that the Court takes a call on this matter. The Constitution makers wanted to keep religion out of state affairs. Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the first Prime Minister from the BJP, had categorically said that State has no religion. Hence, there should not have been any state grants or state-sponsored schemes for construction, maintenance of religious buildings, except those declared as national heritage or buildings of archaeological importance, or holding of religious conference, pilgrimage to religious sites, Haj, etc., except facilitation activities like maintenance of roads, rest houses on the way, and transportation facilities against due payments. On the contrary, it has been witnessed that the states spend millions on pilgrimage, Haj, etc., and granting lands for the construction of religious buildings and institutions. These aberrations too, need close attention of the Constitutional courts to see if they are not violative of the basic structure. These issues cannot be kept in suspended animation anymore. The political-religious climate of the country is vitiated by many such acts of omission and commission on the part of those who are entrusted with the responsibility to run the affairs of the country by fully adhering to the letter and spirit of our secular democracy as enshrined in our Constitution. The higher judiciary is the ultimate arbiter of all our laws and rules and guardians of people's rights. They must rise to shoulder that responsibility.

World Tiger Day: Protecting Wild Tigers In Big Cat Countries

World Tiger Day 2021: The wild tiger status is suboptimal and almost nearing extinction in the South Asian Region including areas like the South Mekong basin countries like Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam.



We are in the "Anthropocene" epoch, marked by ongoing human induced transformations in wilderness globally. No country is an exception to this phenomena, which unfortunately treats the green capital as a "commodity". Why such transformations matter to us? Well, this should concern us because it affects our life support system. Species like the tiger are indicators of the well being of an ecosystem. If things are in order and the forest habitat supports a good tiger population with a great turnover, we can be rest assured that the plethora of ecosystem services would continue to be available, apart from gains of adaptation to climate change through locked up carbon and natural water provisioning in tiger bearing forests.

The ground situation is not all that tranquil. In the context of tiger, the global status continues to be alarming. Tiger Range Countries in the South

Asian Region have fared well. India deserves all credit for improving tiger governance and housing more than 70% of the global tiger population. The country has already declared 52 tiger reserves spread over 2.3% of its geographical area. Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal have also put in concerted efforts, with their wild tiger status at optimal levels.

However, the South-East Asian Region is a cause for concern. Wild tiger status is suboptimal and almost nearing extinction in South Mekong basin countries like Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam. Malaysia has managerial issues in several areas. The overall contours of forests have changed with large scale palm oil plantations. There is an urgent need for more boots on the ground, with frequent seizures of snares from several protected areas. But the passion and sincerity of Malaysia to do for the tiger is adorable. The Department of Wildlife and National Parks has

taken several good actions, which includes the vision for a task force to coordinate the tiger agenda, apart from the ongoing country level tiger estimation. With GTF facilitation, Malaysia and Thailand have also interacted at the official level to explore formal collaboration on the tiger front. Malaysia is all poised for hosting the 4th Asia Ministerial Conference on the Tiger by the end of this year.

Indonesia and Thailand remain as strongholds in the region for the wild tiger. Thailand is keen to embark on active management to build up the natural prey. The country has several SMART protocols, including the day to day tiger monitoring by professionally equipped frontline teams.

Both Malaysia and Thailand have evinced great interest in doing more, and officials from both countries visited Kanha in the not so distant past for on-ground experience in tiger rewilding and prey augmentation.

Myanmar has immense potential. The GTF team was lucky to see a pugmark on the very first day of their visit to the Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary. The tiger planning exercise undertaken by the Forum was a great collaborative effort, supported by the USAID.

China and Russia share a border, where both countries zealously monitor the moving Amur tigers. This is interesting. Russia has strengthened its tiger governance, with the population showing an upward trend. The country is also hosting the second tiger summit in 2022. China is keen too on this front, with a pilot effort for declaration of a large north-east Amur leopard and Tiger National Park.

Barring tiger range countries of South Asia, Russia, Indonesia

and Thailand, others have suboptimal levels of wild tiger populations with local extinctions in Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Though countries like Cambodia are keen to translocate wild tigers, threat assessment, mitigations, need to be carried out based on normative standards of performance with adequate deployment. At places, co-opting other enforcement agencies, including police, and army on deputation to the wildlife department may also be necessary. The Global Tiger Forum is mandated to implement the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP), a commitment of all tiger range countries towards doubling their tiger numbers.

Envisioning A Post-Covid Pandemic Public Health Workforce In India



India needs between 10,000-20,000 well trained public health officers to manage the primary healthcare system.

may be immune to the virus. Recent sero-surveillance study from Ahmedabad reports that 81 per cent of sampled individuals have antibodies against Covid. While Ahmedabad cannot be an outlier - other big cities are likely to have similar levels of immunity. Unless we are very unlucky and a new immunity evasive strain develops the chances of a third wave seem to be low. But, we, as a nation should not be complacent. We must follow Covid appropriate behavior till the pandemic is past us. Further, in the future to be able to deal with such a catastrophe, we must build an

army of public health personnel. This pandemic has shown many weaknesses in our public health system. Public health work includes surveillance, control of epidemics, tracing, testing, isolating cases, keeping health statistics and mortality statistics, undertaking prevention of disease by vaccination, social distancing, lockdowns etc. This is really the job of the government and its agencies. Private sector will have no role to play here as there is no private market for these kinds of jobs. While, Covid-19 killed 400,000 people, TB kills about the same number of persons in India every year. But we as a

nation are not paying much attention. Simple diarrhea and childhood pneumonia kills millions of children in the country. Hence to prevent all such infectious diseases we need a solid public health human resource infrastructure on the lines of IAS or IFS type centralized cadres. Unless we develop such a public health workforce and administrative cadre we will be lagging in future pandemic response. The way people had to struggle during the first and second Covid wave can only be prevented in case of a future pandemic with very strong public health measures.

The second Covid wave is ebbing in India. From a peak of 4,14,433 cases and 4,487 deaths on May 6, 2021, the country reported only 40,000 cases and about 500 fatalities on July 18. Further, India has substantially "unlocked" for work and education. Data suggest that there has been a tragic loss of lives, with about 4,00,000

people succumbing to the virus and over three crore people suffering in various ways due to the disease. The economic, social and medical cost of this pandemic is incalculable. But the silver lining is that the vaccine is now available and a substantial population of the country might have already been infected without reporting any symptoms and thus they



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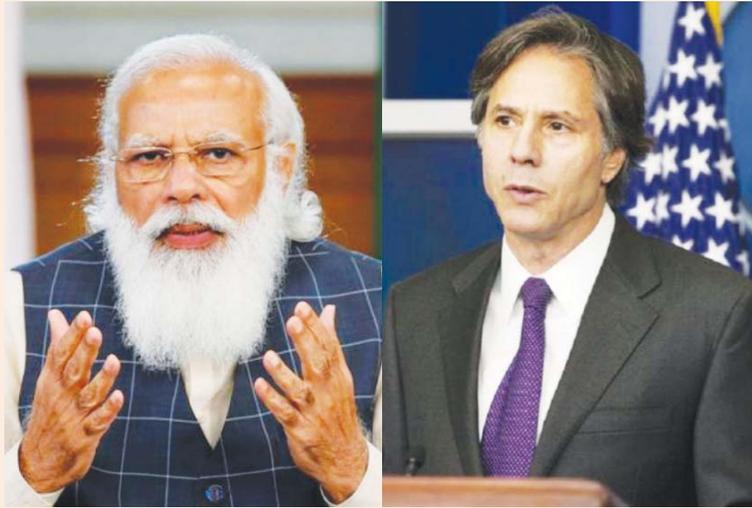
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Blinken Tour: Should US Lecture India On Human Rights, Democracy?

For all its grandstanding and attempt to occupy a high moral ground, the US as we all know is not exactly a paragon of virtue. But is there a need for India to do some soul-searching?

India and America will have a lot to look forward to for strengthening bilateral ties during US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken's maiden tour of our nation for two days (July 27 and 28). A range of issues having overlapping mutual interests are up for discussion, including Afghanistan, Indo-Pacific and Covid-related cooperation. But one discordant note in the talks between the two democracies could be the prickly issues of human rights and democracy which, according to a senior official in President Joe Biden's administration, Blinken will flag during his meetings with Indian officials. In the world of democracy, barring a few notable exceptions such as the fallen Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi-who was an incurable motormouth-or the incurably uncouth former US president Donald Trump, words spoken are mostly nuanced, and a lot is usually left unsaid. Judging by that yardstick, the US official



deliberately chose not to stress, while disclosing what Blinken will discuss, in great detail what he meant by human rights and democracy. The larger message, however, is not lost and those in the know will tell you that the US-the modern world's oldest democracy-is out to lecture India, the largest democracy, on the virtues of the two most eclectic principles that define a free-and-fair society: human rights and democracy. That it has come to this is strange. Not entirely surprising, though. But for all its grandstanding and

attempt to occupy a high moral ground, the US as we all know is not exactly a paragon of virtue. History tells us that it has been a past master at skulduggery and often excelled in what could at best be described as undoing democracies. It has brought down democratic governments and also invaded independent countries such as Iraq on specious grounds such as retrieving weapons of mass destruction that no one finally found. Its recent past under Trump has also been shameful, during which it forcibly

separated children from immigrant parents and patronised some of the most ruthless rulers: from Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman to Egypt's Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

But under new President Biden, the US has turned a new leaf. It wants the world to believe in its new avatar and Blinken's desire to raise human rights and democracy for the purpose of reminding us of their importance is expressly for embellishing its own credentials. One may have a problem in listening to the US lecture and many may actually dismiss it as something akin to the pot calling the kettle black.

Yet, what should worry us more is that the US, despite its own chequered track record, has found India to be an ideal candidate for a lesson on something that normally should define a democracy as ours. How did it come to this, or where did we go wrong? - Of course, India isn't the one to be talked down quietly. Our officials have

responded and reiterated that India is "open to engaging those who now recognise the value of diversity". They further seized upon the opportunity to stress that human rights and democracy are universal and extend beyond a particular nation or cultural perspective and that "India is proud of its achievements in both domains and is always glad to share experiences". The well-crafted and hard-hitting response does not answer the moot question, though: why did the US choose India in the first place for the lecture? And does the blame for it in any way lie with us?

Being hugely polarised, with political opinions and loyalties sharply divided now, there will be a sizeable section who would primarily fault us for our misfortune. This vociferous section would like us to believe that India has under Prime Minister Narendra Modi turned into an autocracy where both human rights and democratic values have ceased to have any meaning.

World Hepatitis Day: All You Need To Know About Hepatitis And Liver Cancer

In India, an estimated 45 million people suffer from hepatitis B and 15 million from hepatitis C3

We have all heard about hepatitis immunization schedule from our friends or family physician. But ever wondered why is it so important? Hepatitis is one of the leading causes of liver inflammation globally and liver cancer - one of the top causes of cancer mortality. World Hepatitis Day is marked every year on July 28 to raise awareness of the global burden of viral hepatitis. Every 30 seconds a person is dying from a hepatitis-related illness, with over 1.1 million global mortalities caused by both hepatitis B and C infections. In India, it is estimated that approx. 45 million people suffer from hepatitis B and 15 million from hepatitis C. If left untreated, the infection develops into serious

illnesses like cancer and liver failure requiring surgery and liver transplants. Timely diagnosis of liver cirrhosis/cancer can lead to better management of the condition and survival rate for the patient. Therefore, it is crucial to create awareness around viral hepatitis, its impact on the liver, symptoms and treatment options.

Dr. Abhideep Chaudhary, Senior Director & HOD - HPB Surgery & Liver Transplantation, BLK-MAX Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi, elaborates on the various facets of the disease and its management.

What is hepatitis?

A viral infection that causes inflammation of the liver - a vital organ that filters toxins from our

body, breaks down nutrients, produces bile which aids in digestion, among other critical functions. Although there are 5 types of hepatitis namely A, B, C, D and E; Hepatitis B and C are the most common causes of chronic hepatitis, both globally and in India.

Link between hepatitis and liver cancer

Hepatitis infection is known to damage liver cells and impairs its functioning. It can lead to liver cirrhosis, a condition where liver tissue is replaced by scar tissue, which in the long term can progress to primary liver cancer or hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). Much more common amongst men than women, HCC has a high mortality rate. Globally, about 7 lakh deaths are reported due to HCC



annually.

A study published in the Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hepatology found that chronic Hepatitis B virus infection, with tumours developing more often in a cirrhotic (76%) than in a non-cirrhotic liver, is a major factor for HCC development in north Indian population³.

Risk factors for liver cancer:
Excessive alcohol consumption
Obesity
Diabetes

Genetic metabolic syndrome
Smoking
Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease
Treating liver cancer
Accurate diagnosis is critical for the right treatment and management of any disease. An ultrasound, MRI or CT scan is utilized to diagnose liver cancer and detect tumours. The therapies with a potential for cure of HCC are surgical resection, percutaneous ablation and liver transplantation.



A Wrong Grammar Of Politics:

How Congress Has Forgotten The Art Of Waging A Political Fight

While the Congress has adopted a pattern of promoting leaders who conform to certain new-age mantras, a tactic which might work well in the corporate world, it's most likely to fail in politics.

The word 'grammar' usually evokes an idea of a logical structure. Politics or ideology is not just a lexicon-not a mere set of words. The only way those words make sense is if they are arranged according to the rules and ordering principles of that grammar. But of late, we have been witness to multiple events relating to the Congress that seem to bear no relation to such a logical ordering. Political watchers, for instance, are surprised at the indulgent treatment given to Navjot Singh Sidhu by the Gandhi family. The cricketer-turned-TV personality-turned-politician was a multiple-time BJP MP and even a member of the party's national executive, before switching to the INC in the lead-up to the 2017 Punjab Vidhan Sabha elections. Sidhu has made no secret of his ambitions, and this has put him on a collision course with Captain Amarinder Singh, who has long been the face of Punjab Congress. Why, people are asking, would the Congress leadership anger a tall leader like Amarinder Singh, in favour of a relatively recent BJP import whose actions seem guided more by naked personal ambition rather than any great concern for the Congress or its

ideology? This, however, is the wrong question according to the new generation of the Congress leadership. Not just Sidhu: there is a clear pattern of promoting or relying on leaders who conform to certain new-age mantras, captured by words such as 'dynamic', 'go-getter', and 'changemaker'. These qualities, which might work well in the corporate and business world, have a record of translating rather poorly into politics. Take, for instance, 'Team Rahul': it was and is populated by leaders who embody this management-inspired style. Hence you see Jyotiraditya Scindia, who had unparalleled access to the Gandhi family and enjoyed great success in the Congress, jump ship to the BJP when his dream of being chief minister, or at least being nominated to the Rajya Sabha, was thwarted. Or take the case of Sachin Pilot, who regularly threatens to split the party and bring down yet another Congress government. Admittedly, he was in the doghouse in terms of finding his ambitions thwarted in a way that he feels aggrieved. But seen on a larger scale, he was deputy chief minister of a major state at a young age, enviable by any

standard in politics. But perhaps that falls short of corporate-style personal roadmaps, where he ought to have become CEO (!) of Rajasthan by this time. Or consider Jitin Prasada, recently seen as Congress's poll in-charge in Bengal, who has had no compunction in switching to the BJP, even in the aftermath of its disastrously inept handling of the pandemic, in a bid to jumpstart his stalled political career.

Where, one might ask, is ideology in all this? How can these leading lights of the Congress, who the party projected for years as new faces in Indian politics, and who were furnished with ministerships and other lucrative positions, and enjoyed great access to the Gandhi family, jump ship to a party as ideologically opposed as the BJP? While the change in their political colours appears unfathomable to those who still see politics as an arena of ideas and values, for these new-age leaders, trained in a modern corporate style which focuses on 'results', 'solutions' and 'personal growth', ideology is, at best, a pragmatic PR toolkit to win public support. Or more accurately, they are ideological, in the sense of having fully

adopted the reigning neoliberal value system, which stresses 'governance' over deeply-felt politics and 'competence' over commitment, and places personal achievement at the apex.

According to this value system, politics would be much improved if only 'good people' from other walks of life enter politics to 'cleanse' it. More so, if these good people are highly credentialed (preferably from top foreign institutions) and successful at business or in corporate life. Not only does this way of thinking blur the difference between politicians and technocrats, it also lazily reduces complex problems like corruption to a lack of 'individual ethics', instead of the institutional, historical and social problem it is.

Interestingly, the Congress's adoption of this new value system has coincided with the most spectacular electoral downturn in its history. It is uncanny that as the newer generation of leaders progressively took over the party, after the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the party lost its ability to connect with the masses (including the middle class). On the other hand, the BJP, for all

its adoption of high-tech campaign strategies, at its core projects an essentially political, not corporate, image. Ascension to the higher rungs of party and government is virtually reserved for the ideologically committed and proven, rather than seasonal technocrats. And while the BJP has acquired many Congress turncoats in recent years, they haven't come to dominate its homegrown leadership-barring stray cases like Himanta Biswa Sarma in Assam, who can be explained in terms of cold pragmatics. More pertinently, the turncoats who have done best in the BJP, like Sarma, are highly political operatives, who do not see politics in terms of standards of excellence more suited to the corporate domain. There is undoubtedly an important role for domain experts in politics, in that effective leaders rely upon their advice in taking decisions. Today's BJP clearly lacks this quality, which reflects in its poor governance record and abysmal economic management. This, however, does not mean that ideologically committed and proven leaders be treated as "old-fashioned" liabilities.

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7 bodies recovered, 26 missing due to J&K cloudburst, all the latest news

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At least seven people were killed and 17 others were injured, five of them critically while 26 remained missing after flash floods hit Honjar village in Jammu & Kashmir's Kishtwar district following a cloud burst early Wednesday.

Upset China gives lecture on democracy to India, US

A seemingly upset spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry on Wednesday gave a lesson on democracy to India and the US, the largest and oldest democracies no less, after it appeared that the two

had ganged up against authoritarian China.

CBI can probe ex-TMC leader Vinay Mishra in smuggling cases, says Calcutta HC

The Calcutta high court on Wednesday rejected former Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Vinay Mishra's request to stop the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe against him in the coal and cattle smuggling cases.

'He might be the Player of the Series at T20 World Cup': Brad Hogg makes massive prediction regarding India batsman

The T20 World Cup is three months away but all eyes are already on the ICC global event, which takes place in Oman and the UAE, starting October 17.

It's official! RedmiBook India launch date revealed; here's what we know about the laptop RedmiBook, Xiaomi's first Redmi-branded laptop now has an official launch date. The company on Tuesday confirmed that it will launch its first laptop on August 3, and the announcement comes a few days after it teased the new device, which has previously



been launched in three different variants in China.

Anushka Sharma can't get the viral Bachpan Ka Pyar boy out of her head. See her post Anushka Sharma has got an ear worm. Sahdev Dirdo, the young boy who has gone viral for his

song Bachpan Ka Pyar, is giving her sleepless nights as well.

From booking Lalu to feud with CBI chief: Meet Rakesh Asthana, new Delhi top cop Rakesh Asthana took charge as the Commissioner of Delhi Police on Wednesday.

Xi Jinping's Tibet visit should worry India

The importance of the visit was highlighted by the inclusion of three politburo members and General Zhang Youxia, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission in Xi's entourage

China's President Xi Jinping arrived at Nyingchi's Mainling Airport in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) on July 21 at the start of a two-day visit, without prior public notice and amid stringent security. He was escorted throughout the tour by TAR party secretary, Wu Yingjie, and chairman of the TAR government, Che Dalha. The importance of the visit was highlighted by the inclusion of three politburo members and



General Zhang Youxia, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission in Xi's entourage. Its main focus was on implementation of the 14th Five Year Plan, the party's policy initiatives in TAR, and the military.

The visit, which took place in the midst of high military tensions between India and China, has implications for New Delhi. Xi's decision to start his tour from Nyingchi Prefecture, opposite India's Arunachal Pradesh, is significant. Official Chinese maps include most of Arunachal within the administrative boundaries of Nyingchi Prefecture. Relevant in this context are Xi's insistent calls for the "rejuvenation" of the Chinese nation and recovery of territories claimed to have been lost by the imposition of unequal treaties by

hostile foreign powers.

Nyingchi is also important for the presence of People's Liberation Army (PLA) units, border defence regiments and missile bases. It is the gateway for the railway linking Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, with Lhasa, the capital of TAR. Once completed, this will be the second railway connecting Lhasa and Shigatse to other provinces in the mainland. It will reduce travel time between Chengdu and Lhasa to 10 hours from the current 30-odd hours. The world's largest dam being built at the Great Bend on the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo) is also in Nyingchi.

China's leadership has paid special attention to the strategically important Chengdu-Lhasa railway. During this visit, Xi went to Linzhi railway station, an important hub station of the

Sichuan-Tibet railway, on July 22, for a briefing on the overall plan of the Sichuan-Tibet railway and of the Lhasa-Nyingchi section. He was briefed on the ongoing construction of the crucial Ya'an-Nyingchi section. Xi pointed out that the planning and construction of the Sichuan-Tibet railway is a major measure to promote the development of Tibet and improve people's livelihoods. He later travelled by the Fuxing (bullet) train to Lhasa. Economic issues and the implementation of proposed reforms ranked high on Xi's agenda. Liu He, politburo member, vice-premier and director of the office serving the Chinese Communist party (CCP)'s Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission, and He Lifeng, minister of the important National Development and Reform Commission, would

have reviewed the projects earmarked for TAR in China's 14th Five Year Plan and Long Range Objectives. These include defence infrastructure-related projects such as the 20 "general purpose" border airports and upgradation and extension of two additional highways along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

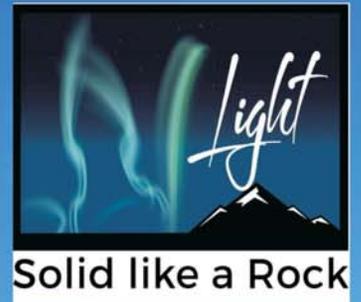
Other major projects are the construction of numerous smaller dams along the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra), and the massive dam at the Great Bend on the river. The likely impact of the influx of large numbers of workers and technicians from the mainland for these projects into sparsely populated Tibet would have been on the agenda. General Zhang Youxia's presence confirmed the visit's military content. After greeting military personnel and veterans at Lhasa, Xi addressed a separate meeting attended by nearly a thousand PLA and PLA Air Force officers. Among those identified as attending were the Western Theatre Command commander, its political commissar, the commander of the Tibet Military Region and its political commissar.

Xi thanked them for their "large contribution to the nation in terms of security and

unification along with ensuring peace and stability in Tibet". He urged "the army to be committed to the Party and its ideology" and focus on becoming "a formidable force". Declaring that they have already passed the difficult challenge of Tibet's harsh climate and environment and done a good job of protecting the country, Xi asserted "they need to continue training hard and prepare for future wars". The prevailing situation along the LAC in Ladakh and future operations would almost certainly have been discussed.

Keeping Tibetan sentiments in mind, Xi visited the Potala Palace, Barkhor and Drepung monastery in Lhasa. He also called on veteran 81-year-old Tibetan Party cadre, Phakpa Lha Gelek Namgyal. Xi Jinping's visit has given a definite impetus to the policies being implemented in TAR. In the course of the visit, he spoke of environmental and ecological protection. Xi reinforced the CCP's directives and stressed the necessity of "blending ethnic groups", "adapting Tibetan Buddhism to socialism with Chinese characteristics" and ensuring the loyalty of party members.

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Cognitive bias explains the inconsistent citizen response to Covid-19

As images of those gasping for air fade from people's memories, how has citizen behaviour flip-flopped to disregarding Covid-19-appropriate behaviour such as ensuring physical distancing and wearing masks? Why is the fear of the virus ebbing?

In India, the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic was devastating. People were hospitalised with severe illness, and many lost loved ones. It was distressing to watch, in disbelief and agony, patients being denied their right to breathe, with the constant fear that any one of us could be next. People expressed their concerns about how the State and the health system failed us, all while wondering what could have been done to save more lives. With the second wave receding and the number of daily cases on the decline, lockdowns and curbs have been lifted in many states. This, naturally, has led to an increase in social interactions and travel. Market places and hill tourist destinations are being thronged by people. Viral videos and photographs have emerged of people making merry, with no masks on.

As images of those gasping for air fade from people's

memories, how has citizen behaviour flip-flopped to disregarding Covid-19-appropriate behaviour such as ensuring physical distancing and wearing masks? Why is the fear of the virus ebbing?

The inconsistent response to the threat of Covid-19 may be related to a systematic error in thinking known as cognitive bias. Cognitive biases affect our everyday lives, choices and actions. They occur as a result of the brain prioritising simplified information processing. Because people's capacity for reasoning is limited, cognitive biases work as shortcuts - rule of thumb - that lead to relatively speedy decisions as the brain makes sense of what's happening. Many cognitive biases are likely at play here. Evidence of the confirmation bias, a type of cognitive bias, is people selectively favouring news stories that confirm a drop in new infections and lifting of curbs, as a sign of a reduced

threat of Covid-19.

Similarly, the optimistic bias, another type of cognitive bias, may lead people to believe that they are less likely to suffer from the misfortune of falling sick like others. These biases are likely to distract people from taking precautions, and, thereby, influence recklessness.

This is also the second year of the pandemic. People are tired. Fear, an adaptive emotional response to a threat or danger, can feel burdensome when it is tentative and continuous, because of which it is insufficient to motivate wise choices. The constant stress of illness, financial losses, layoffs, the disruption caused to children's education, and crucially, deaths, along with the forced physical separation from friends and family have led to widespread emotional exhaustion, which is being called Covid-fatigue.

Covid fatigue, also called behavioural fatigue, pandemic

fatigue, or adherence fatigue has gained currency as an explanatory framework. It explains the tendency of people to become naturally tired of preventive rules and guidance. This fatigue may make people less motivated to adhere to these rules over time.

The World Health Organization acknowledges the complex nature of pandemic fatigue and recommends four key strategies to maintain and reinvigorate public support for protective behaviours. First, design effective policies and interventions based on evidence tailored for people. Second, allow people to live their lives, while reducing risk. Third, acknowledge and address the hardships faced by people. Last, and most

importantly, engage citizens as part of the solution. Community role models can be engaged to help encourage preventive behaviours. Until a significant percentage of people is double-vaccinated, non-pharmaceutical interventions such as avoiding crowded places and rigorous mask etiquette are of utmost importance. While individual responsibility to mitigate the risk of infection is high, people's fluctuating fear of the virus, pandemic fatigue, and a lackadaisical approach in following preventive behaviour must be understood, acknowledged, and addressed. Rules related to Covid-19-preventive behaviour cannot be broken. A reinvigorated effort is needed to remind the public of the enormity of this disease.



The parable of two Mohammeds and what it means for India



India has growing bilateral ties with both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, our third- and fourth-largest trading partners and among our top five oil suppliers

The blink-and-you-missed-it meeting on July 19 in Riyadh between crown prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) of Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) of Abu Dhabi was an event as banal as it was profound, depending upon where one looked. At a superficial level, it was de facto leaders of two neighbouring states meeting to exchange Eid al-Adha greetings. However, as the two have not been seen together in public

since November 2019, this was more than a festive gesture. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have plenty of duality in their ties. While they have a lot in common, there are also significant differences. They are largely absolute Sunni monarchies with a low threshold for political discourse, be it Arab nationalism, the Arab Spring, the Muslim Brotherhood or the export of Iran's Islamic revolution. They are both pro-West, oil-based economies,

professing free market, with a strong role for the public sector. Although sharing the long-term goal of economic diversification from oil, they also realise that global oil consumption may peak soon and are busy ramping up production before the value of the commodity erodes. Ironically, several of these commonalities have, in turn, triggered their geo-political and geo-economic competition. Till 2019, MbS and MbZ pursued a common agenda of curbing the al-Houthis of Yemen and isolating Qatar. However, lately, mutual differences have stymied both these campaigns: The UAE withdrew its forces from Yemen in 2019 and armed a separatist militia in the south, complicating Saudi's exit strategy from an unwinnable

conflict now in its sixth year. While the campaign to isolate Qatar was led by the UAE in 2018, the Saudis called it off at the al-Ula Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit earlier this year - an event MbZ pointedly did not attend.

Meanwhile, the UAE has also pursued an aggressive foreign policy marked by normalising ties with Israel, warming up towards Iran and supporting rebels in Libya. This unilateralism has upended the Kingdom's relatively staid foreign policy.

Lately, their economic competition has also been driven by mutual antipathy. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter and the Arab world's largest economy, decided that from 2024 it would

award government contracts, under MbS's \$2 trillion Vision 2030 only to those multinationals with regional headquarters in the Kingdom, cajoling them to relocate mostly from Dubai. Riyadh has also recently imposed several restrictions on the movement of goods and persons from the UAE. On other hand, the UAE demanded a higher oil production quota earlier this month, disrupting the Saudi-Russia OPEC+ consensus. This led to a rare bilateral row in public. The revised production-sharing agreement was reached only on the eve of MbZ's visit to Riyadh. Against this backdrop, MbZ's dramatic journey to Riyadh last week acquires significance.

China is focusing on 'discourse power'. Shore up defences

In China's strategic lexicon, might is right but might is essential to earn the "right to speak". President Xi Jinping's messaging both to Chinese citizens and the world, as the CCP celebrated its march to the next century, seemed to stress on this theme repeatedly



In China's strategic lexicon, might is right but might is essential to earn the "right to speak". President Xi Jinping's messaging both to Chinese citizens and the world, as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) celebrated its march to the next century, seemed to stress on this theme repeatedly. Aside from the obvious deification of the Xi era and CCP, if one breaks down the centenary's themes to, say, bumper stickers, the following would sum it up - we have arrived; we will not be bullied; the party is always right/the party is forever. In Chinese frameworks, a country's huayuquan or right to speak or the power/authority to speak is essentially a form of power equivalent to military and economic power, "with discourse as its carrier". Yet, for all of China's gains in hard power and material strength, it has always felt lacking in "discourse power" relative to the West.

So, China has invested heavily in telling "an overwhelmingly positive" story of its history.

Purged of failures, this history credits the party for China's strides and leading the Chinese people "from one victory to another on an unstoppable march towards national rejuvenation". This narrative is essential to maintaining the infallibility of the party-State and is seen as central to its domestic legitimacy.

But Xi has also wanted China's discourse power to resonate externally - China's story, on China's terms, and Chinese ideas setting the global agenda. From the 19th party congress in 2017 onwards, Xi has consistently demanded that Chinese discourse power underwrite the promotion of the "China model", and project its ability to "influence global values, governance, and even day-to-day discussions on the world stage".

Within China's borders, discourse power is a potent tool of the State, but when expanded to the international system, there are serious long-term repercussions. The emphasis here is not on

dialogue, but on the "contestation of ideas" which have underwritten widely accepted universal values and norms, institutions and governance models. There is no space for reform or consensus in this narrative. It is about proving that all prior methods for solving the world's problems have failed while China offers one with better solutions which it has applied successfully domestically.

China's discourse power represents the party-State as the righteous leader in the international space. Concepts such as a "community of shared future", Made in China 2025's goal of dominating global science and tech, and the creation of international financial institutions aim to project the ability to deliver an alternative solution to global needs. With a military budget of \$209 billion, and massive investments in the grand Belt and Road Initiative as well the Health Silk Route, China's national rejuvenation is showcased as adding value to global governance.

However, beyond persuasion, Chinese discourse power is all about the power to prevail across the diplomatic, economic, military, cyber and technological domains. It has manifested itself in the People's Liberation Army tactics of information warfare across the spectrum, including on the China-United States (US) split, Taiwan, aggression in the South China Sea, technology wars and deflection on the Covid-19 crisis.

For India, this has been especially visible vis-a-vis the contentious border dispute. New Delhi has understood that China will leave no stone unturned to show that it was on the right side of history, given the emphasis the CCP's centenary celebrations have placed on "correct" versions of its deemed successes.

Yet, looking at China's efforts from a narrow propaganda lens

would be a folly - for the stakes for India are much higher, more nuanced and across multiple domains.

First, India is an open society where Chinese officials have always had the opportunity to push their narrative in a vibrant and noisy media environment. Often, there is no reciprocity given the absence of a level-playing field on the Chinese side as they wield an iron fist with their State-controlled information flow. This awareness is yet to be internalised in India and requires constant calling out.

Two, unlike earlier perceptions that India does not occupy mindspace in China, Galwan proved Beijing's India policy is not monolithic. Scholarship has highlighted a trend of growing antagonism and a pessimistic outlook regarding the future of India-China relations.

The vaccination drive is entering a challenging phase. Change



First, there is a sharp rural-urban disparity (which, to be sure, is narrowing) in per capita vaccination numbers, and second, there are intermittent "dry" days in some parts of the country when lack of supplies brings the vaccination process to a halt

increase in supplies, the relative returns in the form of increasing vaccination numbers may diminish. This is due to the interplay of multiple factors. In mass public health campaigns, initial returns are often high on account of governments reaching the easily accessible sections quickly, and rapid coverage of the affluent and the non-hesitant population. The rate of gains diminishes as the challenge of reaching the inaccessible and hesitant sections increasingly looms large. For India, this is

particularly crucial to avoid this since such a decrease could be coterminous with the emergence of newer variants and fresh waves of Covid-19. In such circumstances, incentives to promote vaccination (in addition to free or subsidised vaccines) could become crucial to speed up the vaccination drive. In 1971, Julian Tudor Hart wrote in *The Lancet* about the "Inverse Care Law", which describes an inverse relationship between the need for health care and its actual availability. In other words, those

who most need medical care are least likely to receive it. Conversely, those with least need of health care tend to use health services more (and more effectively). A similar analogy can be drawn to the Covid-19 vaccination. It is well-known that the private market allocates vaccines inequitably, with the rich getting vaccines more easily than the poor. However, the private market also inequitably allocates incentives for vaccination. This is visible today: Gyms, pizza outlets, and big

Despite improvements in daily vaccination numbers and the promise of increased supply, challenges persist in India's vaccination drive. First, there is a sharp rural-urban disparity (which, to be sure, is narrowing) in per capita vaccination numbers, and second, there are intermittent

"dry" days in some parts of the country when lack of supplies brings the vaccination process to a halt. But India may be headed for a more serious problem. Vaccination is indeed a function of vaccine supplies. However, there is no reason to assume that the relationship is linear. With time, despite the



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Pakistan PM Imran Khan's PTI likely to win majority in violence marred PoK

Pakistan PM Imran Khan-led Tehreek-e-Insaf party is set to form the next government in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) as it won a majority in the legislative assembly elections, PTI reported. The election was marred by allegations of irregularities and violence.

(News Agencies)-Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party is set to form the next government in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) as it emerged as the largest political party in the legislative assembly elections in the region which was marred by allegations of irregularities and violence, local media reported, citing unofficial results. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-

Insaf party (PTI) has won 23 seats while Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was second with eight seats and the incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) secured just six seats, the state-run Radio Pakistan reported. Muslim Conference (MC) and Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Party (JKPP) were successful in one seat each.



Escalating Afghanistan violence sparks Pakistan's fears of refugee influx War-torn nation on the brink of a major humanitarian crisis, UNHCR warns

[Islamabad] - Intensified violence as foreign troops exit Afghanistan is displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians, worsening an ever-evolving humanitarian crisis. Afghanistan's deadliest battle has raised fears in Pakistan that thousands of families fleeing the turmoil will try to enter the neighboring country. Pakistan already hosts around 2.8 million registered and unregistered Afghan refugees, and efforts have been made to get some to return to their home country.



Afghanistan is the second-largest source of refugees in the world after Syria, and Pakistan hosts the second-largest number of registered refugees "approximately 1.5 million" after Turkey. Afghanistan and Pakistan share a vast border stretching 1,510 miles along the southern and eastern edges of Afghanistan. As many as half a million Afghans could flee the country in the weeks leading up to the August 31 deadline for US troop withdrawal, Pakistani officials warn. As the US-led foreign troops leave, violence has increased across several provinces including in Kandahar, where Taliban fighters are carrying out widespread attacks. "The fighting has displaced 22,000 families in the past month in Kandahar," Dost Mohammad Daryab, head of the provincial refugee department, told The Media Line. "They have all moved from the volatile districts of the city to the safer areas." Kandahar city, the capital of the province of the same name, is the second-largest city in Afghanistan after Kabul. It has 650,000 inhabitants and was a stronghold of the Taliban when they ruled Afghanistan.

Last week, the Taliban claimed to gain control of Spin Boldak, a strategic border crossing to Pakistan located in Kandahar Province.

Afghan security forces continue to battle the Taliban for the control of the Spin Boldak border area, a crossing that provides direct access to Pakistan's restive Balochistan Province.

Pakistan border management closed the Chaman-Spin Boldak crossing during the recent fierce battle between the Taliban and Afghan security forces.

However, Pakistan reopened the crossing on Monday, which is under Taliban control on the other side.

Earlier, Pakistani National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf said, "Pakistan is not in a position to let in more refugees from Afghanistan."

Yusuf, in his interview with the Voice of America, said his "country is willing but is not in a position to accept more asylum seekers from Afghanistan."

He recommended that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) set up camps for refugees on the Afghan side of the border.

"There are fears that members of

the banned terror outfits like the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan [aka the Pakistani Taliban] might enter Pakistan from Afghanistan in the guise of refugees and create unrest in the country," Yusuf said. Muhammad Iqbal Khan, a member of the National Assembly from the Tribal Areas and the parliamentary secretary for the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions, told The Media Line that "Pakistan is already going through a difficult situation. There

are still about 2 million Afghans in Pakistan."

"Pakistan has been big-heartedly hosting Afghan refugees. Pakistan has shown great flexibility in handling the Afghan refugee issue and has allowed them a great deal of freedom while living inside Pakistan," Khan said. "Pakistan may face a renewed inflow of refugees if Afghanistan is plunged further into civil war, but we have a concern that terrorists may enter under the pretext of seeking refuge, so keeping in mind the strategic situation, we will do what is best for Pakistan," he added. "If the state decides to host additional Afghan refugees, we will utilize all our resources to help them as we did in the past and we are doing now," Khan said. The UNHCR has been active in Pakistan since the first Afghan refugees arrived more than 40 years ago after the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Qaisar Khan Afridi, a UNHCR

spokesperson in Pakistan, told The Media Line the agency "is concerned about the current violence in Afghanistan." "UNHCR is constantly in consultation with the government of Pakistan and will formulate its policy according to its [UNHCR] strategy," he added. "Once again, Afghanistan is on the brink of a major humanitarian and displacement crisis," Afridi warned. "Increasing violence and insecurity have prompted the displacement of some 270,000 people within Afghanistan this year, making the total reach 3.5 million IDPs [internally displaced persons] in Afghanistan." "While no large-scale international displacement from Afghanistan has been observed yet, any major influx would clearly require the international community to step up immediate and sustained support to both Afghanistan and its neighbors, in a spirit of responsibility and burden-sharing," Afridi said.

'Absolute nonsense': Khan rejects claim Pakistan helping Taliban

PM Imran Khan denies report that Pakistani fighters crossed border into Afghanistan to aid Taliban in its fight against Afghan government

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has denied a report that Pakistani fighters have crossed the border into Afghanistan to aid the Taliban in its fight against the Afghan government. "This is absolute nonsense", Khan said in an interview with PBS NewsHour anchor Judy Woodruff. Prime Minister Khan also said that Pakistan has suffered tremendously during the long US war in Afghanistan. He said his government would not allow the United States to set up any bases inside Pakistan to do intelligence work or carry out counterinsurgency operations. "We do not have the capacity to have any more fighting within

our borders, any terrorism within our country," Khan said. "When we were in the height of that war on terror, which Pakistan joined, there were suicide bombs taking place all over the country. The businesses collapsed, tourism collapsed. So what we do not want to be as part of any conflict," he said. Khan said Pakistan pushed the Taliban to negotiate with the US over ending the conflict in Afghanistan and added the best political outcome in Afghanistan is an "inclusive government". "This is the best outcome. There is no other outcome because the military solution has failed", he said.

US sends strong message to China on Tibet from Indian soil

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on a visit to New Delhi, met a key representative of The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile, Ngodup Dongchung.



(News Agencies)-The United States seized the opportunity of sending out a strong signal to China on Tibet from the country that hosts Tibetan religious leaders the Dalai Lama, India.

On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on an official visit to New Delhi, started his day by holding a 'Civil Society Roundtable' with the theme of discussion being 'Advancing equitable, inclusive, and sustainable growth and development'.

The roundtable saw representation from all major faiths of India, including Tibetan Buddhist monk Geshe Dorji Damdul, current Director of Tibet House in Delhi and former interpreter of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

INTERACTION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

Speaking to the group of civil society leaders at a New Delhi hotel, Antony Blinken said the relationship between the United States and India was "one of the most important in the world".

"At a time of rising global threats to democracy and international freedoms -- we talk about a democratic recession -- it's vital that we two world leading democracies continue to stand together in support of these ideals," he said.

The others who attended the event were Swami Shantatmananda from Ramakrishna Mission, Jatinder Pal Singh from United Sikhs Forum, Dr AK Merchant from Lotus Temple and Bahai Community of India, Anuvinda Varkey from Christian Coalition for Health, Menaka Guruswamy, a renowned lawyer and LGBTQ activist, and Dr Khwaja Iftikhar Ahmed from

Inter Faith Foundation. Foreign policy expert, Sreeram Sundar Chaulia said, "The Biden administration has been firing on all cylinders at China over human rights violations-- from Xinjiang and Hong Kong to Tibet. This has irked China a lot and has led to a tit-for-tat sanctions war between Washington and Beijing. The meeting between Secretary Blinken and a representative of the Dalai Lama on Indian soil raises the stakes further, because the Central Tibetan Administration (government-in-exile) is based in India." Secretary Blinken's engagements with the Tibetan community did not stop there. He held a separate meeting with the representative of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile, Ngodup Dongchung. A US State Department spokesperson said,

"Secretary Blinken had an opportunity to meet briefly this morning in New Delhi with a representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Central Tibetan Administration Representative Ngodup Dongchung."

Meanwhile, Chaulia added, "The move was definitely coordinated by the US with the Indian government, which is likely willing to subtly reopen the question of Tibet's status in China as retaliation for China's

refusal to disengage its troops from all friction points at the Line of Actual Control. Since China says it does not accept India's sovereignty over much of Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, conveying that India will not meekly recognise Tibet's current status as an inalienable part of China, and also enhancing informal ties with Taiwan, will send strong countervailing signals to Beijing."

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The first signs of global warming are now clearly visible. We urgently need to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Nothing and no-one will be spared from climate change. This warning is therefore to all people, all countries and, in particular, to the Belgian Council of Ministers who, on the weekend of March 20 and 21, will have to decide what action to take regarding essential measures linked to the Kyoto Protocol.



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After meeting, China expects Taliban to play 'important role' in Afghan peace process

China said the Taliban is expected to play an important role in the process of peaceful reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan.



China told a visiting Taliban delegation on Wednesday it expected the insurgent group to play an important role in ending Afghanistan's war and rebuilding the country, the Chinese foreign ministry said. Nine Taliban representatives met Foreign Minister Wang Yi in the northern Chinese city of Tianjin on a two-day visit during which

the peace process and security issues were discussed, a Taliban spokesperson said. Wang said the Taliban is expected to "play an important role in the process of peaceful reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan", according to a readout of the meeting from the foreign ministry. He also said that he hoped the Taliban would crackdown on the East Turkestan Islamic Movement as it was a "direct threat to China's national security," according to the readout, referring to a group China says is active in the Xinjiang region in China's far west. The visit was likely to further cement the insurgent group's recognition on the international stage at a sensitive time even as violence increases

in Afghanistan. The militants have a political office in Qatar where peace talks are taking place and this month sent representatives to Iran where they had meetings with an Afghan government delegation. Politics, economy and issues related to the security of both countries and the current situation of Afghanistan and the peace process were discussed in the meetings," Taliban spokesperson Mohammed Naeem tweeted about the China visit. Naeem added that the group, led by Taliban negotiator and deputy leader Mullah Baradar Akhund, was also meeting China's special envoy for Afghanistan and that the trip took place after an invitation from Chinese authorities. Security in

Afghanistan, with which China shares a border, has been deteriorating fast as the United States withdraws its troops by September. The Taliban has launched a flurry of offensives, taking districts and border crossings around the country while peace talks in Qatar's capital have not made substantive progress. "(The) delegation assured China that they will not allow anyone to use Afghan soil against China," Naeem said. "China also reiterated its commitment of continuation of their assistance with Afghans and said they will not interfere in Afghanistan's issues but will help to solve the problems and restoration of peace in the country."

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Second Chinese nuclear missile silo field found in Xinjiang

China could be building its second-largest nuclear missile silo field near Hami in eastern Xinjiang, a new report by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) suggests.

(News Agencies)- A new report by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) shows that China could be building its second-largest nuclear missile silo field near Hami in eastern Xinjiang. Although the work on this site began recently, based on commercial satellite imagery, FAS estimates that the facility could “eventually include approximately 110 silos”. This comes in the backdrop of a June 30 report from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies which showed the first new Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) silo field at Yumen in Gansu province could have 120 under-construction silos.

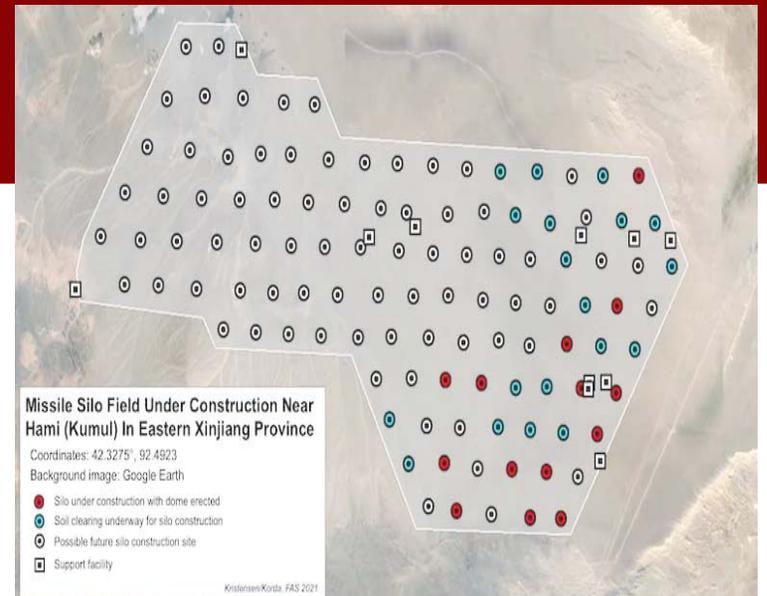
Hami is 380km northwest of the Yumen missile silo field.

The report estimates that construction at the Hami site began around early March 2021 and “continues at a rapid pace”. Annotated satellite imagery published on the FAS website shows a few erected shelters

and cleared soil for another 19 silos. However, the grid-like outline visibly seen in the high-resolution imagery provided by Planet Labs indicates that the final number of finished silos could go up to 110. Hans Kristensen, director of Nuclear Information Project, FAS, and author of the report noted that both the Hami and Yumen missile silo fields were located deeper inside the Chinese land than previously known ICBM base that would make those sites out of reach of the US conventional cruise missiles. “This will make them targets exclusively for nuclear missiles, mainly Trident,” Kristensen posted on Twitter. With the discovery of two new silo fields, the number of estimated under-construction silos in China has moved to approximately 250 which according to the FAS report are “more than 10 times the number of ICBM silos in operation today”. The People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force

(PLARF) has additional smaller silos at Jilantai. Matt Korda, a research associate for the Nuclear Information Project at FAS, who first identified the silo field, noted, “the number of new Chinese silos under construction exceeds the number of silo-based ICBMs operated by Russia, and constitutes more than half of the size of the entire US ICBM force. That being said, Russian + US nuclear arsenals still dwarf China’s by a significant margin.”

The FAS report emphasised that there was still no clarity over the intended operation of the new silos and the likely number of warheads each missile would carry. “Regardless, the silo construction represents a significant increase of the Chinese arsenal, which the Federation of American Scientists currently estimates includes approximately 350 nuclear warheads,” read the



FAS report. Chinese nuclear doctrine advocates a minimum nuclear deterrence and FAS experts believe that it is unlikely to change anytime soon. Matt Korda, a research associate for the Nuclear Information Project at FAS, who first identified the silo field, noted, “the number of new Chinese silos under construction exceeds the number of silo-based ICBMs operated by Russia, and constitutes more than half of the size of the entire US ICBM force. That being said, Russian + US nuclear arsenals still dwarf China’s by a significant margin.”

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Thousands of foreigners leave Indonesia amid Covid crisis; country's daily toll surpasses 2,000 for first time

Airport records revealed that thousands of foreigners have left Indonesia in recent weeks, reportedly due to the pandemic and shortage of Covid-19 vaccines.

Thousands of foreigners have left Indonesia in recent weeks, airport records released Tuesday showed, apparently spurred by a brutal pandemic wave and a general shortage of vaccines, which have gone to high-priority groups first.

Indonesia now has the most confirmed daily cases in Asia, as infections and deaths have surged over the past month and India’s massive outbreak has waned. Infections peaked in mid-July, with the highest daily average reported at more than 50,000 new cases each day. Until mid-June, daily cases had been running at about 8,000. Since early this month, nearly 19,000 foreign nationals have

left through Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in the capital, Jakarta.

The exodus increased significantly in the past three days alone, accounting for nearly half of all individual departures this month, said Sam Fernando, who heads the immigration authority at the airport. Japan’s ambassador to Indonesia, Kenji Kanasugi, said the difficulty of getting vaccines for foreign nationals has prompted some Japanese citizens to get vaccinated in their home country.

“Amid a pandemic situation that is very difficult for all of us, some Japanese citizens in Indonesia will temporarily return to Japan,”

Kanasugi said on Instagram earlier this month.

Japanese and Chinese nationals made up the largest share of departures, with 2,962 and 2,219 individuals respectively, followed by 1,616 South Korean citizens. Airport figures also showed departures by 1,425 Americans, as well as 842 French, 705 Russian, 700 British, 615 German and 546 Saudi Arabian citizens. Initially, only representatives of foreign countries and international nonprofit organizations were eligible for the government’s free vaccine program. The program was expanded last month to include those aged 60 and older, as well as teachers and education staff.



Still, television reports showed foreigners complaining about the difficulties they’ve faced getting vaccinated. Wiku Adisasmito, a spokesman for the National COVID-19 Task Force, said Tuesday that limited vaccine supply remains a challenge. He expressed hope that 45 million more doses set to arrive in August would improve the situation. Indonesia, home to 270 million people, had secured at least

151.8 million vaccine doses by late July. The vast majority of doses - 126.5 million - are from the Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinovac. Indonesia’s confirmed daily death toll surpassed 2,000 for the first time on Tuesday, hitting 2,069. The Health Ministry reported 45,203 new confirmed cases as the health system struggles to cope, and even patients fortunate enough to get a hospital bed are not guaranteed oxygen.

Nepal faces competing territorial claims from both India, China

Assuring to solve the border dispute with both India and China in a diplomatic manner, Nepali Congress leader Minendra Rijal and a former Minister of Information and Communication said the evidences stand strong and Nepal has rightfully claimed over the territories.

Speaking to WION on the long-standing border dispute between Nepal and India, Rijal said, "Limpiyadura-Kalapani-Lipulek is a major issue between both the countries. We have strong evidence that that's our land. This issue needs to be resolved."

This is very important issue for us but at the same time this is not only the issue between the bilateral relationship of the two countries. There are so many good things about the relationship and that has to be

paramount importance and probably that should enable to resolve the border issue to satisfaction of both Nepal and India," Rijal added.

When asked on steps that the newly-formed government will take after map was released under former PM Oli, Rijal said, "We were all together on that. This is a bilateral issue because India has its claim and we have ours. Interest of both countries can be protected but at the same time, land should be part of the nation that legitimately has authority and jurisdiction over it and that's us.

Further, the leader strongly asserted that there are border issues between Nepal and China too.

"Neighbours are very likely to have border issues. I very strongly say and assert that we have border issues with China

too. We also know how rightful our claim is with China. We will do what should be done but in a diplomatic fashion," Rijal said. "With India, yes, we have competing claim, with China competing claim and border issues. But with both neighbours, these issues need to be solved with satisfaction from both sides," Rijal told WION on Chinese control over Mustang area in Nepal's northern territory.

Outlining the importance of vaccines to curb the spread of COVID-19, leader Rijal said Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's top priority is to vaccinate the people of the country.

"Our foreign policy will be largely directed by the consideration of the fact that we need more vaccines. Vaccines coming from anywhere is



important and are welcome," he said. Fewer than four per cent of the country's 30 million people have been fully vaccinated. More than 1.3 million people, who have had a first dose of a vaccine, are waiting for the second dose. The country however, still does not have a Health Minister.

A week after winning the vote of confidence, Deuba-led government on Sunday appointed Umesh Shrestha, a

member of Parliament as State Minister for Health and Population. Commenting on the political developments, Rijal said, "We started out as a small opposition and then Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli fumbled it, badly. He had a very solid support base but could not manage his party affairs and other party that was united with him. Later, Prachanda left and he (Oli) could not manage Madhav Nepal also."

Indian-American Manisha Juthani nominated as Public Health Commissioner of Connecticut

(News Agencies)- Indian-American Dr Manisha Juthani has been nominated as commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Public Health in the US.

Dr Manisha Juthani, who is an infectious diseases physician at Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, was nominated to the post by Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont on July 26, according to a press statement. She will succeed Dr Deidre Gifford as head of the state's public health agency on

September 20, 2021. "I am grateful to the civil servants at the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Dr Gifford, and Governor Lamont for leading us through this pandemic to date," Manisha Juthani said.

"Under Dr Gifford's leadership, I look forward to continuing their efforts related to Covid-19, mental health, health equity, health disparities, and access to healthcare going forward," she added. Manisha Juthani specialises in the diagnosis, management, and prevention of

infections in older adults. Her most recent area of interest is at the interface of infectious diseases and palliative care, including the role of antibiotics at the end of life. "Dr Juthani's background in infectious diseases will be a tremendous benefit to the people of Connecticut as we continue to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and strengthen our vaccination efforts," Governor Lamont said. "When seeking candidates to serve in this role, Dr Juthani came recommended



by many top experts in this field, and I am thrilled to have her join our administration. I'm incredibly proud that Connecticut is among the leading states in vaccinating

our residents, but as this pandemic continues, we need to implement sound policies that will keep the rates of transmission as low as possible," he said.

Amid fighting between Taliban and Afghan troops, Russia to bolster Tajikistan's military



(News Agencies)- Afghanistan's delegation assured Chinese President Xi's regime on Wednesday that it will not use its soil as a base against another country. The Taliban has

been sweeping rural areas and provinces for the past two months as the US troops pull out from the region. President Biden had set August 31 deadline for the final troop withdrawal from

Afghanistan. The Chinese foreign ministry slammed the US saying, "The hasty withdrawal of the United States and NATO troops from Afghanistan actually marks the failure of the US policy."

Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi told the Taliban that it is a "pivotal military and political force" in Afghanistan and was expected to play an important role in peaceful reconciliation in Afghanistan. The talks come as the Taliban captured key districts in Badakhshan and Kandahar provinces amid heavy fighting with Afghan troops. Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Antony

Blinken who is on a visit to India said that, "An Afghanistan that commits atrocities against its own people would become a pariah state," referring to the Taliban. Blinken added that the Biden administration remains engaged in Afghanistan in providing various forms of assistance including security forces. "There's only one path. And that's at the negotiating table to resolve the conflicts peacefully, and to have an Afghanistan emerge that is governed in a genuinely inclusive way, and that is representative of all its people," Blinken asserted.

Meanwhile, Russia said it will reinforce Tajikistan with military equipment as the Taliban surge continues in the border areas. The Russian defence forces will be conducting joint military exercises with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan along the border with Afghanistan next week.

Russia already has a military base in Tajikistan. Several Afghan soldiers had poured into Tajikistan after losing military posts along the border to the Taliban. Reports say Tajikistan is ready to accept 100,000 refugees from Afghanistan who are feeling from areas annexed by the militant group.

America may end up fighting real war in response to cyber attack, says President Biden

Biden mentioned Russia and China as growing threats to American national security and said that the growing wave of cyberattacks, including ransomware attacks, against government agencies and private industry.



increasing exponentially, the capabilities," Biden said during a half-hour speech while visiting the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI).

Cybersecurity has become a top agenda for the Biden administration after a series of high profile attacks on entities such as network management company SolarWinds, the Colonial Pipeline company, meat processing company JBS and software firm Kaseya hurt the US far beyond just the companies hacked. Some of the attacks affected fuel and food supplies in parts of the US. Biden and Russian

President Vladimir Putin and Biden shared a list of critical infrastructure the US considers off-limits to nation-state actors during a June 16 summit in Geneva. Since then senior members of the Biden administration's national security team have been in constant contact with senior members of the Kremlin over cyber attacks on the United States, agencies quoted the White House. Biden highlighted the threats posed by China, referring to President Xi Jinping as "deadly earnest about becoming the most powerful military force in the world, as well as the largest and most

prominent economy in the world by the mid-40s, the 2040s."

Biden in his remarks to 120 ODNI employees and senior leadership officials asserted that he understood the complexity and critical nature of their work. The agency oversees the 17 other US intelligence organisations. "You have my full confidence. I know there's no such thing as 100 per cent certainty in the intelligence world. Occasionally that happens. Rarely, rarely, rarely," he said. He noted that he would never politicise the intelligence's work.

(News Agencies)- United States President Joe Biden on Tuesday said that if the country ends up being in a real shooting war with a major power it could be because of a significant cyberattack. Biden mentioned Russia and China as growing threats to American national security and said that the growing wave of cyberattacks, including

ransomware attacks, against government agencies and private industry that US officials have linked to agents in both countries.

"I think it's more than likely we're going to end up, if we end up in a war - a real shooting war with a major power - it's going to be as a consequence of a cyber breach of great consequence and it's

US urges vaccinated Americans to wear masks indoors in many places

US health authorities recommended that Americans fully vaccinated against Covid-19 should wear masks in indoor public places in regions where the coronavirus is spreading rapidly.

(News Agencies)- Americans fully vaccinated against Covid-19 should go back to wearing masks in indoor public places in regions where the coronavirus is spreading rapidly, US health authorities said on Tuesday.

In a toughening of guidance issued earlier this month, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommended all students, teachers and staff at schools for kindergarten through 12th grade

wear masks regardless of whether they were vaccinated. US coronavirus cases have been rising due to the highly contagious Delta variant, which emerged in India but has quickly spread and now accounts for more than 80per cent of US coronavirus cases.

US President Joe Biden said that increased vaccination and mask wearing would help the United States avoid the pandemic lockdowns, shutdowns and school closures that the country

faced in 2020. "We are not going back to that," Biden said.

The CDC said that 63.4per cent of US counties had transmission rates high enough to warrant indoor masking and should immediately resume the policy. Manhattan, Los Angeles and San Francisco meet the transmission criteria, as does the entire state of Florida, but Chicago and Detroit do not.

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten praised the new CDC mask guidance in a

statement, calling it "a necessary precaution until children under 12 can receive a C o v i d vaccine and m o r e Americans over 12 get vaccinated." The CDC's previous guidance for schools only called for



unvaccinated students to wear masks.

However, the new CDC recommendations are not binding and many Americans, especially in Republican-leaning states, may choose not to follow them. At least eight states bar schools from requiring masks.

Arizona Governor Doug Ducey, a Republican, rejected the CDC guidance. "Arizona does not allow mask mandates ...," he said in a statement. "We've passed all of this into law, and it will not change." The United States leads the world in the daily average number of new infections, accounting for one in every nine cases reported worldwide each day. The seven-day average for new cases has been rising sharply and stands at 57,126, still about a quarter of the pandemic peak. Two months ago, when the CDC announced that fully vaccinated people could shed their face coverings, COVID-19 was on the decline. Vaccinations have since

slowed dramatically and only 58per cent of people eligible are fully vaccinated. New studies show that fully vaccinated people who become infected carry as much virus as unvaccinated people do, suggesting they may be able to transmit the infection to others, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky told reporters on a telephone briefing. "We felt it was important for people to understand that they could pass the disease onto someone else," she said. On Monday, the Biden administration confirmed it will not lift any existing international travel restrictions, citing the rising number of Covid-19 cases and the expectation that they will continue to rise in the weeks ahead. Ford Motor Co said it would reinstate mask requirements for all employees and visitors at its Missouri and Florida facilities. The 1.3-million member United Food and Commercial Workers Union said the new mask guidance was a "critical step" but did not go far enough.



Biden promotes 'Buy American' programme to help locals in post-Covid recovery



(News Agencies)-US President Joe Biden announced plans to amplify his "Buy American" programme by proposing to increase US-made stuff in hundreds of billions of dollars of government purchases.

The White House is aiming to update the 1993 'Buy American Act' in a way that puts pressure on suppliers to bring more locally produced goods rather than using loopholes and supplying non-US products to the government. This proposal "would increase US content in the products the federal government buys and support the domestic production of products critical to our national and economic security," the White House

said in a statement. The decision has been taken as the coronavirus pandemic which has weakened the global supply chain and has left the US markets grappling to gain access to important products, such as semiconductors, building materials, and toilet paper. Biden's administration has proposed an increase in the 55 per cent US-content requirement for supplies in the federal government. The new amount proposed is 60

per cent as a start, which can be eventually increased to 75 per cent. The authorities are hoping that this increase will help medium and small scale manufacturers in the US, especially in the post Covid recovery period.

"As the pandemic made clear, supply chain disruptions can impact the health, safety and livelihoods of Americans -- leaving us without access to critical goods during a crisis," the White House said in a statement.

US man gets life term in jail for killing college student who mistook his car for Uber

A South Carolina man was sentenced to a life term in jail on Tuesday for killing a 21-year-old college student who mistook his car for her Uber ride in 2019.

A South Carolina man was sentenced to life in prison on Tuesday for the 2019 abduction and murder of a 21-year-old college student who mistook his car for her Uber ride. The jury took a little more than an hour to find Nathaniel Rowland guilty of killing Samantha Josephson, a University of South Carolina student who disappeared from Columbia's Five Points entertainment district in March 2019.

"Her dreams were my dreams, and her death was my death. I close my eyes, and I feel what she endured at his hands," the victim's mother, Marci Josephson, said during the sentencing phase of Rowland's trial on Tuesday.

READ: Indian-origin Uber driver sentenced to three years on kidnapping charges

The student from Robbinsville, New Jersey, got into Rowland's

car thinking it was an Uber ride that would take her back to her apartment, prosecutors said. Instead, she found herself trapped because Rowland had the childproof locks on, investigators said. She was never seen alive again.

Covered in roughly 120 stab wounds, her body was later found in remote woods about 65 miles (105 kilometers) from Columbia. The death cast a national spotlight on ride-hailing safety and led to some changes, including more prominent displays of driver's license plates.

Rowland maintained his innocence before being sentenced, but Circuit Judge Clifton Newman noted that all the evidence pointed to Rowland. She obviously put up an amazing fight against you and left a sufficient trail for the jury to see what you did," Newman said after sentencing

Rowland to life in prison. A person convicted of murder is not eligible for parole in South Carolina.

Wearing a mask, Rowland showed little emotion as Josephson's relatives reflected on the pain of their loss and how Josephson's future the college senior who was slated to attend law school on a full scholarship was cut short.

The prosecution spent about a week presenting voluminous evidence and called nearly three dozen witnesses. Experts linked Josephson's blood to the interior of Rowland's Chevrolet Impala and to the suspected murder weapon, a knife with two blades. Her blood was also found on cleaning supplies in the trash behind the home of the man's girlfriend at the time - and on a sock and bandana owned by Rowland, the experts testified. Other evidence included



cellphone tracking data pinpointing Rowland's location the night of the crime. One forensic scientist testified that DNA collected from Rowland's fingernails matched the victim's genetic material, and DNA belonging to both suspect and victim were found on gloves also located in the trash.

Rowland's defense attorneys pointed out that scientists weren't absolutely certain Rowland's DNA was on the knife. His attorneys also argued that although Josephson appeared to fight her attacker, none of Rowland's DNA

was found on her body and he had no visible marks of such a fight after his arrest. The defense called no witnesses, and Rowland did not testify. Before resting the defense's case, Rowland's lawyer asked the charges be thrown out because prosecutors had a circumstantial case - never showing that Rowland actually killed Josephson nor that he was driving the vehicle when she disappeared.

Newman rejected the request, saying there was an avalanche of direct and circumstantial evidence that a jury should consider.

New York, other states to fight dismissal of antitrust lawsuit against Facebook

(News Agencies)-New York and other US states filed a notice on Wednesday saying they will fight the dismissal of an antitrust lawsuit that they launched against Facebook Inc in an appeals court.

In June, a US judge dismissed federal and state antitrust complaints against the social media company that had sought to force it to sell Instagram and WhatsApp. Judge James Boasberg of the US District

Court for the District of Columbia dismissed the states' lawsuit but said the Federal Trade Commission could refile its complaint.

New York Attorney General Letitia James said the states would press on. "We filed this notice of appeal because we disagree with the court's decision and must hold Facebook accountable for stifling competition, reducing innovation and cutting privacy

protections," she said. In dismissing the states' lawsuit, Boasberg said they had waited too long to challenge the acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp, in 2012 and 2014 respectively. "We believe the District Court's decision dismissing the states' complaint is correct and look forward to defending the District Court's decision before the Court of Appeals, a Facebook spokesperson said.



Tokyo 2020:

Have to protect my mental health, says USA gymnast Simone Biles after skipping women's team final



mental health issues and not due to injury.

Four-time Olympic gold medallist Biles shocked everyone at Tokyo 2020 by deciding to skip the women's team final event and saw Russia clinch the gold medal by beating team USA by 3.5 points.

Biles, the world and Olympic all-around champion, and USA women's team were expected to dominate the event once again and clinch their fourth straight gold medal but their chances were hampered after the pullout.

"After the performance I did I just didn't want to go on. Injury? No," she said. "Just a little injury to my pride." Biles is likely to compete next in the women's all-around final on Thursday but

she didn't confirm her participating just yet. The 24-year-old instead, stressed on the importance of keeping her mental health stable amid the weight of expectations. "We're going to see about Thursday (the women's all-around final). We're going to take it a day at a time and see what happens.

"I have to focus on my mental health. I just think mental health is more prevalent in sports right now ... we have to protect our minds and our bodies and not just go out and do what the world wants us to do.

"I don't trust myself as much anymore ... maybe it's getting older. There were a couple of days when everybody tweets you and you feel the weight of the world. We're not just

athletes, we're people at the end of the day and sometimes you just have to step back. I didn't want to go out and do something stupid and get hurt. It's so big, it's the Olympic Games, at the end of the day we don't want to be carried out of there on a stretcher," Biles told the reporters. It was a stunning and disappointing start to the Olympics for the U.S. women, who had expected to dominate the final as they had not been beaten in a major team competition since 2011. America's silver team medal means Biles can no longer win six golds in Tokyo which, added to her haul of four from Rio, would have confirmed her status as the greatest gymnast of all time.

Tokyo Olympics: women's team final for USA on Tuesday. Superstar American gymnast Simone Biles revealed on Tuesday that she pulled out of the women's team final at the Tokyo Olympics because of

Senate Reaches Bipartisan Deal on Infrastructure, Could Vote Wednesday Night

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said the Senate could vote as early as Wednesday evening on the motion to proceed, which would open debate on the legislation.

(News Agencies)-A bipartisan Senate group and the White House have again reached a deal on an infrastructure package, a major breakthrough after a week of intense negotiations with plans to hold a second procedural vote as early as Wednesday evening. Republican senators in the negotiating group announced Wednesday afternoon they reached an agreement and are working on finalizing the text of the more than \$1 trillion package to rebuild roads, bridges, airports and ports and increase investments in broadband and transit.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said the upper chamber could vote on the deal by the evening, which marks the second time in a week that the Senate held a procedural vote to try to advance the bill and open debate. Last Wednesday,

Democrats fell short of the 60 votes needed to avoid a filibuster, but this time it looks increasingly likely they'll get the 10 required Republicans - and possibly more - in support of the motion to proceed.

"We now have an agreement on the major issues. We are prepared to move forward," GOP Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio told reporters. "I don't know exactly what time a cloture vote might occur, but I would guess it'll be tonight some time from what I'm hearing from Sen. Schumer."

The group's announcement comes after Republicans met with Senate GOP Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky about the forthcoming legislation. McConnell hasn't said whether or not he'll support the motion to proceed or the overall bill but Portman said he remains "open-minded" and has encouraged GOP negotiators to keep working throughout the

process.

While a sizable number of Republicans ultimately support an infrastructure deal, all 50 GOP senators blocked last week's motion to proceed because they were still engaged in negotiations and they didn't want to vote on an unfinished bill.

But negotiators said they were willing to keep working through the final sticking points - including how to pay for more than half a billion dollars in new spending - and hold a repeat vote to move the package forward. On Wednesday, Portman said that the bill is "more than paid for."

As the bipartisan package picks up significant steam, Democrats are still working on their approach to infrastructure. They are working to build consensus around a \$3.5 trillion budget proposal focused on education, families and health care that would only need support from



Democrats because they'd pass it through the budget reconciliation process. All Republicans are opposed to it and GOP senators who announced the bipartisan deal once again slammed the Democrat-only bill. Instead of the typical 60-vote threshold, the party would only need a simple majority to overcome the threat of a filibuster. But Democrats will need all 50 senators on board with zero defections - and they are currently scrambling to get

every member in line. Schumer said Wednesday that they are making progress toward achieving both bills.

"With respect to infrastructure, senators continue to make good progress on both tracks of legislation," Schumer said minutes before the GOP formally announced they reached a deal. "Members should be prepared to vote again on cloture on the motion to proceed to the bipartisan infrastructure bill as early as tonight."

BioNTech to develop first mRNA-based vaccine for malaria by 2022

Organization (WHO) and the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

"The response to the pandemic has shown that science and innovation can transform people's lives when all key stakeholders work together towards a common goal," said Prof Dr Ugur Sahin, CEO and co-founder of BioNTech.

HOW THE MALARIA VACCINE WILL BE DEVELOPED

Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines, like the Covid-19 shots manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, prompt the human body to make a protein that is part of the pathogen, triggering an immune response. They are also quicker to develop than traditional vaccines and can be adapted relatively easily.

Germany-based BioNTech's objective is to develop a safe and highly effective mRNA vaccine with durable protective



immunity to prevent malaria and disease-associated mortality. It will assess multiple vaccine candidates featuring known malaria targets such as the circumsporozoite protein (CSP), as well as new antigens discovered in the pre-clinical research phase. The most promising mRNA vaccine candidates will be selected for

clinical development. "Together with our partners, we will do whatever it takes to develop a safe and effective mRNA-based malaria vaccine that will prevent the disease, reduce mortality and ensure a sustainable solution for the African continent and other regions affected by this disease," added Prof Dr Ugur

Sahin.

Scientists around the world have been working for decades to develop a vaccine to prevent malaria that infects millions of people every year and kills more than 400,000 - most of them babies and young children in the poorest parts of Africa.

EXPLORING VACCINE PRODUCTION IN AFRICA

BioNTech is also exploring vaccine production in Africa in an effort to implement sustainable vaccine supply solutions on the continent.

The pharmaceutical giant is exploring possibilities to set up state-of-the-art mRNA manufacturing facilities, either with partners or on its own. The facilities are expected to manufacture various mRNA-based vaccines upon approval to ensure sustainable supply operations.

This would involve co-locating its African manufacturing capabilities with the technology transfer hubs under development by the WHO, in alignment with the African manufacturing strategy created by the Africa CDC. This strategy aims to expand the capacity of low- and middle-income countries to manufacture contemporary vaccines end-to-end, and scale up production to increase global access.

Bezos' big gamble: Offers NASA \$2 billion in exchange for moon mission contract



due to perceived near-term budgetary issues, and this offer removes that obstacle," Bezos wrote.

"Without competition, NASA's short-term and long-term lunar ambitions will be delayed, will ultimately cost more, and won't serve the national interest," Bezos added. A NASA spokesperson said the agency was aware of Bezos' letter but declined to comment further, citing the protest Blue Origin filed with the U.S. Government Accountability Office accusing the agency of giving SpaceX

an unfair advantage by allowing it to revise its pricing. The GAO's decision is expected by early August, though industry sources said Blue Origin views the possibility of a reversal as unlikely.

A SpaceX spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

Before choosing SpaceX, NASA had asked for proposals for a spacecraft that would carry astronauts to the lunar surface under its Artemis program to return humans to

the moon for the first time since 1972. Blue Origin's lunar lander is called "Blue Moon." Bezos and Musk are the world's richest and third-richest people respectively, according to Forbes.

Bezos' offer came six days after he flew alongside three crewmates to the edge of space aboard Blue Origin's rocket-and-capsule New Shepard, a milestone for the company's bid to become a major player in an emerging space tourism market.

'Rs 3,000 fine for watching porn': How gang duped hundreds of people



Police said the fake notices would say their computer will be "blocked" as they have been caught watching pornographic content which is sexually violent or involves paedophilia. So, they would immediately pay up. During investigation, police found that the notices were routed from foreign locations. Police checked the bank accounts and transactions of the victims and followed the money trail. "We found that the accused received the money in accounts set up in Tamil Nadu. Our team went there but faced many challenges as the accused used bogus addresses. However, they stayed there for a week and

raided places in different cities and towns. They managed to apprehend three persons, including local mastermind B Dhinushanth," said DCP Roy. Dhinushanth told police that his brother, who lives in Veal Pon in Cambodia, is the brains behind the scam. He is yet to be arrested.

The other accused, Gabriel James and Ram Kumar, are residents of Chennai and allegedly helped the main accused by providing account details and transferring money. Police have seized 20 bank accounts that were allegedly used to receive money and form a trail to hide transactions. Police suspect more accounts are being used in the scam.

Raj Kundra's arrest: What laws say about making porn movies in India

other sections of the IT Act and the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act. Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code: According to this section, something shall be deemed as obscene if it is lascivious or appeals to the prurient interest. Under its many provisions which bar selling, renting, distributing any such content, the section says whoever "takes part in or receives profits from any business in the course of which he knows or has reason to believe that any such obscene objects are for any of the purposes aforesaid, made, produced, purchased, kept, imported, exported, conveyed, publicly exhibited or in any manner put into circulation shall be punished. Section 293 of the Indian Penal Code: This section deals with the age of the



customers/audience as it says "Whoever sells, lets to hire, distributes, exhibits or circulates to any person under the age of twenty years any such obscene object as is referred to in the last preceding section, or offers or

attempts so to do, shall be punished". There are several sections of the Information Technology Act, 2020 which pertain to pornography.

Section 67 in the IT Act: This provision says whoever

"publishes or transmits or causes to be published or transmitted in the electronic form, any material which is lascivious or appeals to the prurient interest or if its effect is such as to tend to deprave and

corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it, shall be punished".

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986 says no person shall publish, or cause to be published, or arrange or take part in the publication or exhibition of, any advertisement which contains indecent representation of women in any form. There are detailed provisions in Indian laws banning child pornography. While shooting for adult content is banned in India, viewing porn got periodically blocked as the government blocked many sites in the recent past. However, watching adult content is not officially banned in India.

ED arrests Ambience group promoter Raj Singh Gehlot in Rs 800 crore bank loan fraud case



company Aman Hospitality Private Limited (AHPL), some other firms of the Ambience group, director in the company Dayanand Singh, Mohan Singh Gehlot and their associates in July last year. The ED case against Gehlot, who is also a promoter of the Ambience Mall in Gurugram, is based on a 2019 FIR of the Anti-

Corruption Bureau of Jammu against AHPL and its directors for alleged money laundering in the construction and development of the five-star Leela Ambience Convention Hotel located at 1, CBD, Maharaj Surajmal Road, near the Yamuna Sports Complex in Delhi.

The ED probe found that "a

huge part of the loan amount of more than Rs 800 crore, which was sanctioned by a consortium of banks for the hotel project, was siphoned off by AHPL, Raj Singh Gehlot and his associates through a web of companies owned and controlled by them". "A substantial part of the loan money was transferred by AHPL to several companies and

individuals on the pretext of payment of running bills and advance for supply of material and work executed," the agency had alleged.

The employees of the Ambience group and Gehlot's associates were made directors and proprietors in these companies and Gehlot was the "authorised signatory" in many of these entities, it had said.

"No material was supplied and no work was executed and almost the entire amount was immediately routed back to the entities owned by Raj Singh and Sons HUF (Hindu undivided family) and his brother's son.

"Money was further siphoned off through multiple layers in a complex web of group entities," the ED had said.

Concerns over Delta Variant: Capable of Infecting Fully-vaccinated Individuals

The Delta variant is a major threat that significantly increases the Covid-19 pandemic impact across the world. It is the most dominant strain on a global scale now. The strain is not fatal on itself. The main danger lies in its ability to spread itself faster than the vaccination rate.

It can put pressure on an already fragile healthcare system when the vaccinated people come down with Covid, thanks to this strain. The world

has to move onward and the economic barriers cannot stay in place forever.

Hence, to counter the strain, global collaboration for vaccination is a must. As soon as the majority are vaccinated, it will put a stop to the major mutations. To prevent infection, even vaccinated people need to follow social distance norms along with the masks and other protective gear, when in public. The Delta variant is a warning to us, the worst is yet to pass.



Illegal kidney racket, the ugly side of healthcare in India

New Organ transplant trafficking is one of the fastest, but least reported crimes in India as well as in other countries around the world. It has often been described as a deep-rooted menace affecting the medical profession, both domestically and globally. Backed by unscrupulous personnel linked to the medical profession, including touts and doctors, it is estimated that across the globe, roughly 100,000 illegal kidney transplants alone take place. So entrenched is the organ transplantation process, that at times well known hospitals and doctors don't even know that the critical replacement organ they are inserting in a patient is illegal. Take for instance the kidney racket in India, which records show has raised its ugly head from time to time. There are past examples of this racket being run by a nexus of middlemen (touts), doctors and lawyers etc, who harvest kidneys from poor people in dire need of money for paltry sums and then sell them to recipients at substantially higher prices. The genesis of the kidney racket stems from a huge mismatch between the demand and supply for kidneys in the country and a loophole in the law, which is often misused by these scamsters. They seem to have

mastered the art of using loopholes in the system to smoothly push through necessary documentation and clearances, that at times, even doctors and hospitals don't suspect anything and become victims of the racket. It is a finely tuned modus operandi, where middle men arrange kidneys from the poor; get false affidavits made and provide the required organ to the recipient. Sometimes, the donor may even be positioned as a relative as per documentation. Doctors, hospitals and even screening committees are beguiled by such foolproof paperwork, that clearances are often obtained in a jiffy and the scamsters make off with a neat sum of money. Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), Tamil Nadu capital Chennai and the Union Territory of Chandigarh have emerged as prime centres for transit and organ transplant trafficking. In the year 2003, a kidney racket was busted in Amritsar, where they were sold anywhere between Rs.5 to Rs.8 lakhs. In 2004, a Bombay Hospital-based kidney racket was busted and the kingpin along with his accomplices was arrested. After the arrests, it was learnt that the kingpin had deceived the hospital authorities by producing forged documents for conducting the transplants.

In the past one decade, Chennai, has emerged as the breeding ground for a thriving organ racket whose primary targets have always been the poor. The arrest of a Chennaibased medical representative in 2007 by Mumbai police for allegedly running an inter-state kidney racket revealed the enormous size of the illegal organ market that had grown into a syndicate with international links. In 2008, a Gurgaon-based kidney racket was busted by the U.P. police and the subsequent arrest of Dr. Amit Kumar, the suspected kingpin of the racket, revealed that he had links with an international racket that was operating in Nepal, Sri Lank and Indonesia. Asia's biggest kidney harvester T. Rajkumar Rao, conned over 15,000 debt-ridden farmers, Tsunami sufferers and impoverished tea garden workers to build a Rs.75 crore organ transplant empire before he fell into a cleverly-laid police trap along with his partner in crime Dipak Kar late last month. According to Delhi Police, the duo had a 250- 7/30/2021 Illegal kidney racket, the ugly side of healthcare in India (Update) <https://www.aninews.in/news/health/illegal-kidney-racket-the-ugly-side-of-healthcare-in-india-update/> 2/2 strong staff spread across South Asia to help them

zero in on potential victims. Delhi Police said that Rao had confessed to supplying kidneys to more than 15 top hospitals across India and nowhere was asked about who were the donors. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates around 2,000 Indians sell a kidney every year. The WHO says South Asia is now the world's leading transplant tourism centre, with India among the top kidney exporters. Kidneys taken from Indians are delivered to Americans, Israelis, Canadians, Britishers, Saudi Arabians and residents of the Gulf region. In the last two years, cases of illegal organ transplants have surfaced in Maharashtra, Hyderabad and Gujarat. As per police investigations, four Colombo-based hospitals have been identified for performing about 60 illegal transplantations for Indian recipients. In most of these cases, reputed hospitals and doctors have suffered irreparable damage to their reputation and credibility on account of these rackets. The government has mandated that under the Transplant of Human Organ Rules 2014, only organs of immediate blood relatives, including parents, siblings, children, grandparents and grandchildren can be accepted for transplant. The Indian Transplant Registry shows that

roughly 100,000 to 200,000 people require a replaced kidney every year, but only about 5,000 manage to get a transplant. For following the process legally, a comprehensive set of documentation is required, including affidavits with photographs of both the donor and the recipient certified by a first class magistrate. There are incamera interviews too. Two separate committees for related and unrelated donors evaluate and clear cases. The committee that looks at procedures involving related donors comprises hospital staff, but people who are not part of the treating team. For unrelated donors, there are two nominees of the government who evaluate the cases. Last December, Health and Family Welfare J P Nadda, highlighting the problem in parliament, admitted that there is a huge gap between the demand and supply of human organs for transplantation, and added that the government is giving priority to increasing donation of cadaver organs to bridge the gap and save lives. That does not take away from the fact that middlemen appear to have placed themselves in key positions at some hospitals and nursing homes to meet the demand of this ugly side of healthcare in India.

Duped into selling his kidney, this 23-year-old exposed an illegal organ racket in India

Seven years after leaving his village in northern India to find work in the bursting metropolis of Mumbai, Sundar Singh Jatav was struggling in a menial job at a video game shop. The \$2.50 daily wage was hardly enough with his family back home deep in debt.

So in late 2015, when his boss introduced him to a man who promised to solve his financial problems, Jatav listened - and was shocked.

"He suggested I sell my kidney," said Jatav, now 23.

What happened over the next several months would upend his life - and reveal a high-level kidney trafficking network inside one of the most reputed hospitals in India's financial capital.

At least 14 people, including four doctors and the hospital's chief executive, have been arrested since July when police, acting on information provided by Jatav, stopped a kidney transplant involving a 48-year-old patient who had presented forged documents purporting that the organ donor was his wife. The ring is part of what one news outlet dubbed the "Great Indian Kidney Racket." Because the

country harvests relatively few organs from people who die in accidents - the most common source of kidneys in the U.S. - the vast majority of transplants here involve living donors who give up one of their two kidneys. To reduce the chances that money is changing hands, which is illegal in India and almost everywhere else, the law allows, with rare exceptions, only a spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent or grandchild to act as a donor. For patients who don't have a relative with a suitable kidney or don't want to put a loved one through the small risk that donation entails, there is another option: a shadowy marketplace in which well-off patients can buy organs from strangers. The sellers are often impoverished, recruited from small towns by middlemen and made to present falsified papers - sometimes in collusion with doctors. "This is part of our VIP culture," said Dr. Sanjay Nagral, a surgeon and publisher of the Indian Journal of Medical Ethics. "It comes from our larger understanding and our acceptance that if you have

money in India, you can buy so many things, so what is so different about buying organs?" No one knows how many of the roughly 8,000 kidney transplants performed in India last year were illegal, but organ scams periodically surface. A month before the Mumbai arrests, a leading hospital in New Delhi was found to have performed at least three kidney transplants based on sham documents.

The case that Jatav exposed involved L.H. Hiranandani Hospital, a private facility in Powai, a prosperous suburb of wide boulevards and expansive apartments. Authorities are



investigating at least four transplants at the hospital and have ordered it to temporarily stop carrying out the surgeries. "Obviously, this case is just an indicator of what's going on beneath the surface," Nagral said. "We don't know the extent of it, but it's very difficult for these kidney sales to be completely stopped." The trade exists in part because of the large pool of Indians desperate enough to give up a vital organ. Just as surrogacy grew into a booming industry over the last decade, with thousands of childless Indian and foreign couples hiring Indian women to carry their babies, laborers surviving on a few dollars a day are ripe targets for agents who offer thousands for a kidney. Jatav, the youngest of four siblings from Uttar Pradesh, is a prime example. Slender and shy, with barely a fourth-grade education, Jatav had been forced to become the breadwinner: His parents were weakened from old age, his sister had died from an illness, and his two brothers were unable to work because of mental disabilities. The family

was more than \$10,000 in debt, and Jatav was the only hope. In an interview in a cramped Mumbai cafe, he described his role. At first, he declined to sell a kidney. But then the agent, Iqbal Siddiqui, put him in touch with a friendly, sweet-talking man who called himself Sandeep. Sandeep arranged for him to visit Hiranandani, a sprawling medical complex overlooking a lake. There, the small-town young man sat in a room with three doctors who told him that donating a kidney was no different than giving blood, he recalled. "I trusted them," Jatav said. "I thought they were good

people wanting to help me with my financial condition." Sandeep did not offer Jatav a specific price for his kidney, saying only that it would be enough to pay off his family's debt and promising to help him get a better job. To sweeten the deal, Sandeep moved Jatav, who had been sleeping on a mattress in a corner of the video game store, into a small apartment rent-free. Jatav never saw the donor forms that were submitted on his behalf, which claimed he and the recipient - later revealed to be a 30-year-old woman from New Delhi - were siblings from suburban Mumbai. He was admitted to the hospital March 15 after undergoing blood tests. Two days later, his kidney was removed. Within a week, he was discharged. But he had not been paid, and Sandeep was dodging his calls. When they finally spoke, Sandeep was evasive about the money but offered to bring Jatav on as a sort of assistant, tasking him with carrying bags and files. Jatav can barely read English. But he observed Sandeep meeting with other donors and realized that

their documents also were being forged to show a blood relationship with a kidney patient. Through a friend, Jatav contacted Suresh Gupta, an activist with the Indian National Congress political party, and slipped him two pages of a transplant application. On July 12, two days before Brijkishore Jaiswal, a 48-year-old sari merchant, was to undergo surgery, Jatav called Gupta, who tipped off police. Jaiswal and the seller, a 42-year-old housekeeper, were arrested just before the operation was to start.

The three doctors who allegedly persuaded Jatav to give up a kidney were arrested and freed on bail. A preliminary inquiry conducted by state health officials and leaked to Indian news media suggests they were complicit in the scam, although a lawyer for the doctors called the allegations "nonsense." Police also arrested the hospital's transplant coordinator, who allegedly arranged phony documents, as well as Siddiqui and Sandeep, whose real name is Bhijendra Bisen.

Bisen, 42, is one of Mumbai's most notorious organ traffickers. He was jailed a decade ago for a similar scam and has confessed to involvement in more than 30 kidney transplants over the last four years, the Hindustan Times newspaper reported. Jaiswal had paid him more than \$30,000 for the transplant, his lawyer, Shabnam Khadri, said in an interview. The hospital said it received \$7,000. The seller was promised about \$3,000. When police raided the transplant coordinator's home, they reportedly found \$12,000 in cash. It was unclear how the rest was to be distributed. Gupta, the activist, said agents like Bisen exploit ignorance and vulnerability. "They basically use the poor man as a sacrificial lamb to prolong the life of the rich," he said. India was once a top destination for transplant tourists - patients from the United States and other wealthy countries who traveled here to receive kidneys because of shortages in their countries. Facing criticism that the system exploited the poor and that the procedures were secretive and often unsafe, India passed a law

in 1994 that banned organ sales and allowed only close relatives to serve as donors.

Researchers believe that 220,000 Indians need kidneys, but the nonprofit Indian Transplant Registry estimates that only 8,000 people got one last year. One reason is that most transplants are performed in private hospitals at a cost of \$10,000 or more, and few people have health insurance or the money to pay for it. Those who can afford a transplant face another obstacle: The lack of a national system to collect organs from cadavers -

such as the more than 100,000 Indians who die each year in car accidents - means that kidneys are in short supply. Only about 15% of India's transplanted kidneys come from deceased donors, although that figure has been rising steadily. Some eligible living donors are simply afraid to part with an organ, even for a relative, doctors say.

That has helped give rise to the black market for living donors posing as relatives. "It's a supply-and-demand problem," said Sunil Shroff, a urologist who runs the transplant registry. "Families are sometimes pushed against the wall when they're not able to find a solution. In desperation, they can do all kinds of stupid things." It is unclear why Jatav was never paid. Had he been, it is likely the kidney ring would have remained hidden. After going public, he said, he received threatening phone calls that prompted him to take his wife back to his village for her safety. Although he agreed to have his story told in an American newspaper, he has not revealed his role in the case to her or other family members.

He remains in Mumbai, where he has asked for police protection and is looking for a job, having quit the video store before the operation. A friend is paying his rent. He lifted up his white button-down shirt to reveal a foot-long scar across the right side of his torso. His appetite has diminished, he has bouts of dizziness, and he cannot walk for more than a few minutes without fatigue - symptoms he blames on the kidney procedure, even though such complications are rare. He does not have money to see a doctor.

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Kidney Rackets in India: where Does the Buck Stops?

In India, doctors are placed at par or next to God as it is their profession to treat people in pain, end their sufferings and also many save lives. On the other hand, doctors are often accused of callousness and self-infatuation for taking undue advantage of people's sufferings. In this process, the doctor oscillates like a pendulum at his work and becomes a tool in the hands of his patients and their families and others in society.

Stupefying Anomalies India is a developing economy. The nation's assets are shared unequally by 1.4 billion people. According to the latest government data: India's gross domestic product is estimated to have slowed to a five-year low of 5.8 per cent in the last quarter of fiscal ended March 2018-2019.

At the same time, the country's per capita income is estimated to have risen by 10 per cent to ₹10,534 a month during the financial year ended March 2019, government data on national income showed in June. In 2017-2018, the monthly per-capita income had stood at ₹9,580. This does not mean every adult Indian has ₹10,000 to spend every month. Since the 1970s, India has progressed rapidly in

healthcare indices, yet the anomalies are stupefying. The Maternal Mortality Rate has declined from 167 in 2011-2013 to 130 in 2014-2016 per 100,000 live births, according to a special health bulletin from the government in 2018. Still, about 44 children out of 1,000 live births die even today. Advertisement Yet, India has emerged as one of the top 10 medical tourism destinations in the world with more than four lakh people visiting India annually for low-cost healthcare that ranges from heart-transplant to knee surgery and Ayurveda, amounting to about 5 per cent of the total yearly tourism revenue - about ₹200,000 crore. And India is also where kidneys can be bought for a few lakh of rupees. The poor in India, however, have no access to even basic healthcare, and certainly no access to dialysis or kidney transplants even in major government-run hospitals. What is low-cost for the world is unaffordable to the poor Indian. The poor in India is deprived, uneducated and always in need of funds. They remain at the end of the economic supply chain, which includes basic housing, schooling and medicare and often gets nothing in her/his life. Doctors fall in the high-income bracket, at the high end of the

economic supply chain by virtue of being educated. This, however, does not decrease their 'irresistible desire' for more, nor does their swearing by the Hippocratic Oath make them any more ethical than the average medically untrained human being. The healer and the poor are all caught in the web of a nation-wide trade in kidneys perpetuated by rich recipients, their families and middlemen - all five categories of people making up the innards of a runaway scam that no government in India can reign in. The authorities, as well as civil society, acknowledge that the 'kidney rackets' need a final solution. But who is responsible for such ongoing rackets all over India? Believe it or not, the situation affects everyone, from the poor to the acclaimed and senior kidney physicians. A solution is needed and the doctors can neither wash off their hands by blaming bad hospital management nor can be meagre spectators without contributing to stemming the rot in the system. As a specialist nephrologist, I have participated in the emergence of the much-needed kidney transplantation service in major hospitals in the country from its beginning in the early seventies to the present time and I have witnessed the various forces at work in this

field of healthcare. In the '80s and '90s, our country was labelled as the 'Kidney Bazaar' of the world. But subsequently, with the enactment of The Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994 (THOA), this image and the practice of ethical kidney transplantation did improve immensely. This is, however, a case of too little, too late. Doctors Are

Inadvertently Pushed Into Rackets

Even today, two decades into the 21st century, the fact remains that we keep hearing of such painful incidents from time to time. With technological advances, kidney scandals, scams and the trade of kidneys has gone out of the hand of governments, hospitals and civil society. Are the various doctors engaged in transplantation squarely responsible for these malpractices? No! The treatment and activity of kidney transplantation are done by well-trained, fairly well-to-do and senior persons in their profession. I cannot accept that one of us would participate in a racket, put his/ her life's reputation in the hands of others and then languish in jail. The fact is that a kidney physician/ surgeon remains vulnerable to the suffering, hardship and pressures of his patient who wishes to survive at any cost.

That is where the whole story begins. The catchword is: Survive at any cost. Irrespective of what happens to anyone else. Irrespective of the right and wrong of it. High-profile patients like 'NRIs, businessmen, politicians and bureaucrats' pressure the treating doctor, the specialist. India's laws don't help much either. The doctor/ surgeon is an expert in performing the kidney replacement operation. But they are not an expert in documentation and verification. This operating specialist is most often made to speak to unknown donors and their agents - presented to him as 'friends or relatives (cousins)' by the family of the prospective recipient. The doctors cannot distinguish/ detect the impersonation, fictitious albeit genuine-looking relatives, and the relevant documents presented to the hospital or the State Authorisation Committees for approval. One specialist has many patients in any hospital or private clinic settings. Fabricating fake documents is a huge industry in itself; this is a malady of high magnitude and nearly insurmountable at this stage. Hospitals do not have lie detectors or security-police scanners that can detect fake documents and

lies. Nor do average authorisation committees have psychiatrists on panels, though this is legally mandatory. In an attempt to plug the loopholes, the Transplantation Act has been modified twice - in 2011 and 2014. However, ambiguities in the law continue to remain. The present law permits transplantation from totally 'unrelated donor' source - after it is verified and authenticated by the duly-appointed 'hospital-based Authorisation Committee', of which the treating doctor is not a member. Any committee member can be open to 'pressure' from political quarters, the rich and the famous, a peer group or hospital bosses. Any member of such an 'authorisation committee' can just as well knowingly connive to okay fake documents and transplants based on these. They can be duped by the assisting staff, hospital facilitators, and managers whom they trust blindly. The blame rarely reaches the 'authorisation committee'

members and hospital managers and auxiliary staff. Mostly, it is the care-taking doctor and operating surgeon who is named, hauled up, humiliated and his/her character assassinated. For the doctor/surgeon, often there is a 'donor' on one table and a 'recipient' on the another. Both would have arrived at the operation theatre through the hospital system. He is not likely to guess that the donor-recipient are not related. Or that the documentation of the donor is false. Even if they are not related, the matching of blood and tissue and the compatibility test is verified by the 'authorisation committee', supposed to be designated by the hospital and experts in their field. Look at the catch in the situation. The recipient is real. The donor is real. Only the papers of the donor are fudged. Thus, the doctors who are supposed to be next to God in one moment have their 'face blackened' without any means of protesting or proving themselves innocent. He/She has committed the crime of

harvesting a kidney from a donor who has 'sold' it to the recipient. Quite often, these days, the doctor does everything in good faith but becomes a victim of his own doings. He remains under police surveillance as a 'criminal' and is bundled into a lockup without being allowed a whimper! What an irony! **Real Culprits** The real culprits - the middlemen, touts, hospital staff involved and various others who have participated knowingly - put the medical profession in the dark. In India, not only kidneys but heart, liver and skin are sold as well. A patient with low blood platelet count has accused a doctor at a speciality hospital of advising her to get her spleen removed! Whenever a case or scam comes under media glare, the police in various medical centres reap a rich harvest too. They get paid by the recipient family not to pursue the investigation and not to file charges; they make money from the arrested to 'complicate' the case, to

mishandle 'evidence'; they make money to let arrested culprits escape; they get publicity, promotions and ensure that the case proceeds in the court/s for an unlimited period, without any conviction and punishment. The humiliated doctor, his family and the cheated slum dwellers continue to suffer throughout their lives. One is often forced to wonder why does the press wake up only when something sensational happens? Why cannot the media keep a continuous eye on the kidney/organ commerce in the country? The solution to this problem is identifying the middleman who is the 'actual kingpin' warranting severe punishment. The relatives of kidney patients and the conniving hospital staff should also be punished. The so-called 'cousins' of a patient - the kidney-selling donor - and the kidney-buying recipient should also be brought under the purview of law with equal punishment. And these punishments should include a huge economic component

because it is money that is driving the kidney trade today. **Shortage Of Kidneys For Transplantation** Our country tops in the world in road traffic accidents and in Delhi and the National Capital Region alone, about 6 to 7 people meet fatal accidents daily. Harvesting of kidneys from unfortunate accident victims is the only solution to the shortage of kidneys for transplantation in India. We all need to urgently respond to this task both at the government level and with the amendment of available laws to remove organs from brain-dead victims, with the consent of the families. It is a gigantic task. The awareness of organ donation from cadaveric source is of paramount importance in this country. My slogan has been and continues to be **ONE LIFE SAVES FOUR LIVES**. Two available kidneys save two persons' lives and in turn, they also vacate life-saving dialysis machines for two other patients. I do not want to see this final solution remain just a dream in my lifetime!

Top Indian hospitals, foreign clients, donors from UP caught in 'kidney transplant racket'

An official from Fortis, a doctor from a prominent Delhi hospital, clientele from as far as Turkey, and poor 'donors' from Uttar Pradesh - it's suspected to be a massive kidney trade racket that spans not just several Indian states but also a number of countries. It's allegedly worth several crores and investigators believe what they have unearthed so far is "just the tip of the iceberg".

The net of the alleged racket widened this week when UP police arrested Sonika Dabas, a kidney transplant coordinator at Faridabad's super speciality Fortis Hospital, in connection with the crime Tuesday.

Dabas's arrest came close on the heels of another detention by the UP police last week when it nabbed Dipak Shukla, a high-profile surgeon and chief executive officer at Delhi-based Pushpawati Singhania Research Institute (PSRI) Hospital.

Rajesh Yadav, superintendent of police (crime), Kanpur, called Shukla's arrest "just the tip of the iceberg". The arrested men have been accused of

luring poor donors to donate their kidney in exchange for a few lakh rupees or a job in a town. And they allegedly did it through a professional network of touts and hospital staff.

Kanpur Police says it got whiff of the alleged crime in February after "getting a tip-off on a gang



casually discussing its plot at a local restaurant".

'Gullible people'

"They looked for gullible people. For instance, we found a case where a man needed money to get his daughter married. He was offered Rs 5 lakh," Yadav said.

Donors were generally offered Rs 2.5-5 lakh. On the other side were relatives of seriously ill

people, desperate for a donor and willing to pay even up to Rs 80 lakh, police said.

"They charged these families a phenomenal amount of money ranging from Rs 22.5 lakh to Rs 80 lakh," said Yadav, who is leading the investigation. "The remaining money, which is a profit of up to 70 per cent on the

sale of a kidney, was then distributed among doctors, touts and hospitals at pre-decided ratios."

Both Dabas and Shukla were detained in Delhi and have been sent to judicial custody in Kanpur district prison.

In a statement to ThePrint, PSRI Hospital said, "We are extending our full cooperation to the ongoing investigation and

will continue to do so going forward."

Fortis Hospital said it "has a zero tolerance policy against all malpractices. In connection with this case, further details are awaited."

"We will cooperate fully with the authorities and the police in their probe. As a responsible organisation, we comply with all aspects of the Transplantation of Human Organs Act and Rules and adhere to all instructions issued by NOTTO (National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization, working under the aegis of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare)," Fortis added. Racket and extent

Kidney transplant rackets are detected every few years and doctors and police said such networks thrive because of the huge demand for the organ. Tough laws governing kidney donation have led to a scarcity of donors in the country, they said.

According to estimates of the Lucknow-based premier nephrology hospital, Sanjay Gandhi Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, around 31,000 people in Uttar Pradesh

needed kidney transplants last year.

However, only 150 transplants could be completed due to unavailability of donors.

The latest alleged racket, which police say has existed for over six years and across three states - Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana - exploited these shortages.

Shukla's name, suspect for long, emerged during the interrogation of several donors over the last few months. He has been booked for cheating, wrongful confinement, trafficking, criminal conspiracy and under sections of the Transplantation of the Human Organs Act, 1994. Kolkata businessman T. Rajkumar Rao is alleged to be the mastermind and was arrested in New Delhi in February. How it worked -The allegedly well-oiled network of doctors, middlemen and hospitals was operating at multiple levels. The DNA labs of these hospitals also allegedly played a key role in supporting the illegal harvesting of kidneys.

The unravelling of a kidney racket

Months after the monsoon hit the small town of Saket Nagar in Kanpur last year, Sangeeta Kashyap*, 33, packed her bags for Delhi where she had been promised a good job. She was excited; she had never stepped out of Kanpur before.

"My husband's friend had promised us ₹40 lakh. We dreamt of a 'pakka' house, a good education for our children, and even some savings to help us through illnesses. We also planned for old age," says Sangeeta. On reaching the city that promised to fulfil her dreams, Sangeeta was given accommodation in a guest house in Ghaziabad. "The next day I was taken to a small clinic," she says, unable to recall the location. "There, the doctors ran a series of tests on me. My husband's friend told me that this was important because my employer wanted me to submit a medical clearance certificate before employing me as a maid and a cook. But then he took my Aadhaar card and told me that I have to assume a Muslim name and identity. I refused. I realised that something was amiss. Later during the week, when I was taken to a hospital, I overheard people describe me as a kidney donor. I panicked and raised a hue and cry at the hospital. I insisted that I be sent back home immediately. They packed me off to Kanpur and I thought the worst was over," she recalls. But the nightmare had only begun.

"My husband's friend came home and tried to convince me to sell my kidney," says Sangeeta. "He told me that he has been living a good life after selling his. When I refused, he along with some other men threatened and assaulted me. They demanded that I pay them ₹50,000 as part of my travel and medical expenses. Frightened and broke, I approached the police. A senior officer asked me to file a complaint. An FIR was registered on February 1 against six persons in the Barra Police Station in Kanpur under Section 420 [cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property] of the Indian Penal Code and sections of the Human Organ Transplant Act." Sangeeta was unaware that her

complaint would blow the lid off a massive organ racket.

High demand, low supply

The epicentre of this massive illegal organ trade is the National Capital Region. The

which some people peg at over a ₹100 crore.

So far, 15 people, including the CEO of Pushpawati Singhania Research Institute (PSRI), Deepak Shukla, have been



web of criminals includes police personnel, doctors, hospital administration staff, medical support staff, and kidney and liver donors - all catering to patients with end-stage kidney and liver failure. These patients can't be treated with medicines or dialysis and therefore require a transplant. A dozen leading private surgeons are under the scanner now. These include top urologists in Delhi who allegedly worked in nexus with some police personnel from the Uttar Pradesh Police as well as brokers (some of whom were previous donors themselves) to ensure a smoothly running profitable trade, the value of

arrested, and notices have been served to two leading doctors at Fortis Hospital in Delhi for violation of the Transplantation of Human Organs (and Tissue) Act, 1994. This legislation was brought in with the objective of "regulating the removal, storage and transplantation of human organs for therapeutic purposes and for the prevention of commercial dealings in human organs."

These arrests and notices could prove to be only the tip of the iceberg. "Investigations against another leading hospital in central Delhi are currently under way and more arrests are likely," says a senior Delhi police officer who is investigating the case.

"The industry is thriving despite several raids and laws against it because those who sell their organs are desperate for money. It is a trade that guarantees high profit. Plus, it's easy to do business in India," says a senior Health Ministry official who did not wish to come on record.

Impoverished donors are pushed into the trade as organ donations from cadavers and brain-dead patients in India are not enough to meet the requirement of over a lakh citizens annually who require a kidney transplant.

In 2016, in its reply to a Lok Sabha question, the Union Health Ministry noted that there is a huge gap between the demand and supply of human organs for transplant even though the precise numbers of premature deaths due to heart, liver, lung and pancreas failures have not been compiled. The Ministry noted that against the demand of 2 lakh kidneys, only 6,000 were available. Similarly, against the demand of 30,000 livers only 1,500 were available, and against the demand of 50,000 hearts merely 15 were available across the country. According to the Multi Organ Harvesting Aid Network Foundation (Mohan Foundation), a Chennai-based NGO working on organ donation, only about 3% of the demand is met.

The Indian Transplant Registry notes that live transplants account for the majority of kidney transplants in India; cadaver transplants account for a very small number. "In India, [the] deceased organ donation programme is largely restricted to big institutions and the private sector which makes it less accessible for all. The deceased donation rate in 2013 was 0.26/million population and this went up to 0.36/million population in 2014," it says.

Modus operandi

In the case that the police is investigating at the moment, patients who needed transplants were admitted in large and well-known private hospitals that are protected by a battery of lawyers and administrators, says a senior Delhi police official.

"Donors, all of whom are from very poor families, are brought to these hospitals for initial testing and matching with patients," explains Lucknow-based Vardhan, a prime witness in the case. "We are then trained to face the interview board of the competent authority [which evaluates transplant of organs between near relatives related genetically] or the Authorisation Committee [which evaluates transplant of organs between those related emotionally and where the donor's intentions are altruistic] of the hospital for clearance for donation. Then we are housed in guest houses in Delhi. There we are tutored to tell the hospital board that we are relatives of the patients we are donating organs to. At this point, the payment too is partially made."

Like Sangeeta, Vardhan's story began around August last year. He desperately needed money to pay for the operation of his two-and-a-half-year-old child who was born with a hole in the heart. He decided to sell one of his kidneys.

"An old friend told me about this offer. He made it out to be a noble deed. He said I would get ₹2 lakh - enough to pay for my child's surgery and for setting up a small shop for myself. It seemed like a good option. I thought God has given the poor two organs as personal insurance against bad times," he says. He breaks down while showing large surgery scars on his abdomen.

Following the surgery, Vardhan has one kidney and no child. He is without a job. And to make matters worse, he has been receiving death threats from those in the illegal organ trade. "Life has become unbearable. The hospital administration's goons took back the money I got from my kidney sale after I refused to work with the gang. My child died without treatment.

And my wife, who I married against the wishes of our parents, left me as she was frightened by the death threats. No one is willing to employ me in Lucknow because they think I am involved in something illegal. I used to repair watches. I have become a nervous wreck

following the investigation," he says.

His only mistake, he says, was his refusal to become a headhunter himself. "They call me daily to tell me that I will be 'accidentally' killed in an accident soon. They stole my money after I refused to work with them," he says.

Attractive to the poor

"While there are many layers of control to prevent exploitation, the fact that there are a negligible number of organ donations makes finding a matching donor for the patients a tough task," notes the Mohan Foundation. Under the law, only those related to the patient are allowed to donate organs. This further reduces the number of prospective organ donors.

In 2013, the medical journal, Indian Journal of Anesthesia, stated that of the 205 patients declared brain-dead at AIIMS in Delhi in the trauma centre over the last five years, only 10 were potential organ donors. The reasons were varied. There was lack of awareness about organ donation among family members. Many believed that donating a person's organs after death would affect the person in his or her 'next life'. And processes were simply not in place to help such donations.

"Indian organs are being sold thanks to advertising by word of mouth. We are dealing with an underground mafia of organ traders. In this case, the gang managed to create fake identities. And with the help of medical persons, they managed

to manipulate medical tests and documents," says a senior official from the Uttar Pradesh police who is involved in inter-State investigation.

"Those in the business had created a large database of those who were ready to donate their kidneys and livers. These people were then recruited into the business to find more sellers. And with every new racket being busted, we also find that the age of the donors/sellers is rapidly falling. Younger men are being recruited or are coming forward to donate their kidney or liver. This is really worrying," says a Delhi police officer.

A witness in the case, Sonu*, admits that he is only 18-20 years old. "According to my official papers, I am much older though," he says. "I decided to sell my organ to help my family which was on the verge of starving to death. But today, even after selling my kidney, my life is no better. Policemen and laws don't understand that we sell our organs just to ensure that we are able to stay alive."

Sonu and Vardhan were admitted in the same hospital at the same time for kidney removal. Like Vardhan, Sonu too was cheated by middlemen, who only gave him a portion of the promised sum of ₹2 lakh.

"When I close my eyes, I dream of blotches of blood. The cops tell us that they will catch those who exploited us. But will we get our entire promised money or the organs we sold? No one is ready to answer these questions," he says.

The investigating agencies claim that they are fully aware of the reasons that compel people to sell or donate organs. "A kidney is sold for anything between ₹70 lakh and ₹1 crore depending on how urgent the need is. The donor/seller never gets over ₹3 lakh. The rest of the amount is distributed among those who run the business," says a senior official officer from the Uttar Pradesh Police.

Expanding the web

It was when a police team from Kanpur approached the Delhi police regarding a kidney racket that they stumbled on T. Rajkumar Rao, 40, alleged to be the kingpin of an international kidney racket.

Rao himself was a donor. But unlike other donors, Rao was ambitious and built his own empire. He had been arrested before and sent to prison. But after being released, he resumed his activities and changed his base from West Bengal and its neighbouring States to central India. He got donors and sellers from Unnao, Kanpur, Lucknow and Fatehpur.

A police officer who once interrogated him recalls Rao as being very sharp and knowing how to influence donors and later make them part of his racket.

"There were around 12 permanent members in the gang. They would prepare fake documents, coordinate with hospitals and donors, transfer money and prepare donors for interviews," he says.

Rao used to keep a large portion of the money for himself

in every deal. The rest was shared among the others, including the donor. "He never paid the promised amount to the donor. And when the donor asked for it, Rao would urge him/her to bring more donors with the promise of more money. Regardless of the deal, the donors get only between ₹2 lakh and ₹4 lakh of the promised ₹5 lakh," says the officer. Donors who refused to cooperate were threatened with legal cases of cheating.

Suresh Singh* got a kidney transplant in 2016, and was chargesheeted for demanding money for it. "After a prolonged kidney treatment my doctor recommended a kidney transplant. He told me that my kidney would stop functioning soon," he says. "I discussed it

with the personal staff of the doctor and offered to pay for a kidney if I could get a donor. I got a call from the doctor's secretary, who gave my family members the contact of a man who could arrange a donor for me. After several rounds of negotiations, the deal was fixed at ₹20 lakh."

Suresh was asked to pay immediately, he says, while the paperwork was taken care of by the 'staff member'. "I paid the amount before the operation and it went off smoothly. I met the donor only once during the interview. I was introduced as his elder brother to the hospital," he says. He explains that a major part of the payment was made through cash and rest was transferred to a bank account.

Organ racket gang busted in Assam, three arrested

Police on Monday busted an inter-state gang involved in illegal trade of human organs in central Assam's Morigaon district. Police also arrested one Ramen Medhi - believed to be kingpin of the gang - from Dakshin Dharamtul village in the district.

Prior to Medhi's arrest, police had nabbed two agents - a woman identified as Nilima Boro and her son Mukul Boro - who were involved in the racket.

The accused were allegedly running an illegal kidney trade at Dakshin Dharamtul village for the past few years.

Medhi told the media about one Plabon Borthakur of Dhubri and another Rajesh Poddar of Morigaon who are also involved in the racket.

A case has been registered at Jagiroad police station in Morigaon district against the accused under relevant Sections of the India Penal Code.

Reacting to Medhi's arrest, Dakshin Dharamtul's Village Defence Party president Hitya Doloi, said: "The accused used to take the villagers to Kolkata by luring them with payments of huge amount of money to sell their kidneys."

Busted! Two Held For Running Illegal Kidney Transplantation Racket in Noida

Noida Police arrested two persons, including a Bangladeshi citizen, for allegedly being involved in illegal kidney transplantation racket

An illegal kidney transplantation racket has been busted in Noida which involved foreigners and Indian citizens along with the arrest of two persons, including a Bangladeshi citizen. The Noida Police added that while the Bangladeshi citizen was allegedly forced to donate his kidney, the Indian person had facilitated his travel and stay in the country. Following a complaint by the Gautam Buddh Nagar district health

department, an FIR was lodged against five persons at the Phase 3 police station, shared Harish Chander, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Central.

"Some people were brought in from Bangladesh in exchange for financial benefits but were involved in kidney transplants. Two people have been arrested in connection with the racket," Chander said.

"We are investigating in detail how these foreigners were

brought into the country and who else is involved in this racket. We are also verifying in detail the documents provided by these people," the officer said.

Those held have been identified as Bangladeshi citizen Ahmed Sharif and Bazulhaq, a native of Siwan district in Bihar and currently living in Delhi's Shaheen Bagh, police said.

The others booked in the case included a man who was



supposed to be getting the kidney harvested illegally from Sharif, a Bangladeshi travel agent Abdul Mannan, and one more person, they said. The FIR has been lodged under Indian Penal Code sections 420

(cheating), 468 and 471 (all related to forgery of documents) besides the Foreigners Act, 1984, and the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994, police added.

SEBI imposes Rs 3 lakh-fine on Shilpa Shetty, Raj Kundra for flouting insider trading norms

SEBI has found Shilpa Shetty, her husband Raj Kundra and his company Viaan Industries guilty of not complying with its regulations on insider trading. They have been fined Rs 3 lakh.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has imposed a fine of Rs 3 lakh on actor Shilpa Shetty, her husband and businessman Raj Kundra and his firm Viaan Industries for flouting SEBI's regulations on insider trading. Shilpa Shetty was one of the directors of this company and resigned last year.

SEBI had conducted an investigation into the dealings of Viaan Industries Limited (formerly known as Hindustan Safety Glass Industries Limited) for the period between September 01, 2013 and December 23, 2015.

The shares of this company are listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and Ripu Sudan (alias Raj Kundra) and Shilpa Kundra (alias Shilpa Shetty) were its promoters

during the period under investigation.

RULES THEY VIOLATED

As per the order issued by SEBI, on October 29, 2015, Viaan Industries Limited made a "preferential allotment of 5,00,000 equity shares to four persons". "In this preferential allotment, 1,28,800 shares each were allotted to Ripu Sudan and Shilpa Kundra," the order states.

Following the allotment of the shares through the preferential allotment, Shilpa Shetty and Raj Kundra were required to make the necessary disclosure to the company.

This disclosure was required because value of these transactions exceeded Rs 10 lakh.

"In terms of Regulation 7 (2) (b) of the PIT Regulations, the

company was required to make the necessary disclosures to the stock exchange within two trading days of the receipt of the disclosures from (Shilpa Shetty and Raj Kundra) or from becoming aware of such information pertaining to the transactions," the SEBI order said.

WHAT THE PROBE FOUND

During the investigation, SEBI found that Shilpa Shetty and Raj Kundra failed to make relevant disclosures required under Regulations 7 (2) (a) and 7 (2) (b) of the PIT Regulations within the stipulated time period.

They thus violated the PIT Regulations and SEBI initiated adjudication proceedings against them under Section 15 A (b) of the SEBI Act, 1992.

After the probe found the duo guilty of violating the SEBI



(Prohibition of Insider Trading) Regulations, 2015, SEBI imposed a penalty of Rs 3 lakh on Shilpa Shetty, Raj Kundra and Viaan Industries Limited. **RAJ KUNDRAS AND PORN FILMS CASE**

Raj Kundra is currently facing investigations for allegedly producing and distributing porn films through a subscriber driver mobile application called HotShots. He was arrested by the Mumbai Police on July 19 and is currently under judicial custody.

The police have alleged that these porn films were made by

luring aspiring actors and models in exchange for giving them a break in the film industry. Last week, Mumbai Police's crime branch reached Shilpa Shetty's residence in Juhu and questioned her for over six hours in connection with this case. The crime branch has claimed to have seized nearly 20 terabytes (TB) data of porn films and seven servers that were used to save them from Viaan Industries' office in Andheri West. Police sources said some data was deleted, and they have roped in forensic experts to retrieve it.

Billionaire Rakesh Jhunjhunwala to start new airline. He wants you to fly cheap

Billionaire Rakesh Jhunjhunwala is planning to set up a new low-cost airline as the ace investor remains optimistic about the future of the country's aviation sector.

Ace investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala is betting big on the country's aviation sector and is planning to start a new low-cost airline.

The 61-year-old billionaire plans to start the airline within the next four years, with a fleet of 70 aircraft, reported Bloomberg.com. Rakesh Jhunjhunwala is optimistic that more people will travel by air in future.

Rakesh Jhunjhunwala is considering investing \$35

million for the venture and would own 40 per cent stake in the airline. Jhunjhunwala told Bloomberg Television in an interview that he expects to get a no-objection certificate from the country's aviation ministry in the next 15 days.

JHUNJHUNWALA'S BOLD BET ON LOW-COST AIR TRAVEL-

Rakesh Jhunjhunwala said the ultra-low-cost airline will be called Akasa Air and the team, comprising a former senior

executive of Delta Air Lines Inc., is searching for planes that can carry at least 180 passengers. It is a bold move by Jhunjhunwala, popularly known as India's Warren Buffett, as the aviation industry has been going through a period of distress due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, Rakesh Jhunjhunwala seems confident about the venture and is looking at opportunities to woo flyers with a brand-new carrier offering



low fares. "For the culture of a company to be frugal you've to start off fresh," Rakesh Jhunjhunwala told Bloomberg Television. "I'm very, very bullish on India's aviation sector in terms of demand," he added.

Although Rakesh Jhunjhunwala remains bullish about the aviation sector, all airlines were impacted by the pandemic and faced severe financial distress when restrictions were imposed to reduce Covid infections.

Rupee Gains 9 Paise To Close At 74.29 Against US Dollar

The Indian rupee gained 9 paise and settled for the day at 74.29 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, supported by a firm trend in domestic equities and weak American currency. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 74.32 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.22 and a

low of 74.34.

It finally ended at 74.29 against the American currency, registering a rise of 9 paise over its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 74.38 against the US dollar.

"Indian rupee appreciated as global risk sentiments rebounded, while safe haven

dollar declined reacting to the dovish Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC)," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities said, adding that FOMC outcomes favoured the risk sentiments as they are not in rush to scale back asset purchases at-least for next two meetings.

"Spot USDINR is expected to

trade with negative bias following weaker dollar index, risk sentiment and strong dollar inflows from initial public offering. The pair is expected to hold support at 74.15 and get resisted around 74.60," he noted.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six

currencies, dipped 0.30 per cent to 92.04. On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 209.36 points or 0.40 per cent higher at 52,653.07, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 69.05 points or 0.44 per cent to 15,778.45. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.39 per cent to USD 75.03 per barrel.

Delayed due to Covid-19, Isro to launch Chandrayaan-3 in third quarter of 2022

The Chandrayaan-3 mission has been delayed due to Covid-19 and Isro is now planning to launch the lunar mission in the third quarter of 2022.

Hit by the Coronavirus pandemic, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will likely launch the much-awaited Chandrayaan-3 mission to the Moon in the third quarter of 2022. The new timeline was revealed by Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology Dr Jitendra Singh, who said, "work of Chandrayaan-3 is in progress." The minister in a written reply to Lok Sabha said that "Work on Chandrayaan-3 involves various processes including finalisation of configuration, subsystems realisation, integration, spacecraft level detailed testing and a number of special tests to

evaluate the system performance on earth." The work on Chandrayaan-2's successor was affected due to the coronavirus pandemic and the impending lockdown. "However, all work that were possible in the work from home mode were taken up even during lockdown periods. Chandrayaan-3 realisation resumed after commencement of the unlock period and is in the matured stage of realization," the Department of Space said in a statement. Chandrayaan-3 was earlier slated to be launched this year, 2021. However, the Covid-19 lockdown affected several

projects of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) including the lunar mission. "We are working on it. It is the same configuration like Chandrayaan-2 but it will not have an orbiter. The orbiter launched during Chandrayaan-2 will be used for Chandrayaan-3. With that, we are working on a system and mostly the launch will be next year in 2022," Isro Chief K Sivan had said earlier in February. However, the space agency had yet to decide a timeline for the launch. The latest announcement comes on the heels of the second anniversary of the unsuccessful Chandrayaan-2 mission that



crash-landed on the far side of the Moon. However, the orbiter is still working and conducting critical observations of not only the lunar surface but also the solar system. Chandrayaan-3 is critical for ISRO as it will demonstrate India's capabilities to make

landings for further interplanetary missions. The Chandrayaan-3 takes cues from the first Chandrayaan mission launched in October 2008 that made major discoveries including finding evidence of water on the lunar surface.

Indian astronomers part of Nasa team detect radiation from death of a star over 5 billion years ago

The radiation was emitted by a massive burst of energy when a star collapsed. High-energy radiation has been travelling for billions of years across the Universe.



Part of an astronomy team, Indian astronomers have detected a very short, powerful burst of high-energy radiation that lasted for about a second. The event had been travelling for nearly half the present age of the universe before it hit Earth. The universe is nearly 14 billion years old.

The burst was first detected by Nasa's Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope last year. Analysis of the data showed that the shortest Gamma-Ray Burst (GRB) was caused by the death of a massive star. These bursts are considered one of the most powerful events in the universe and can travel across billions of

light-years. Named GRB 200826A, after the date it occurred, researchers released the details of the event in two papers published in Nature Astronomy. While the first paper led by Bin-bin Zhang at Nanjing University in China explores the gamma-ray data. The second, led by Tomás Ahumada, a doctoral student at the University of Maryland, describes the GRB's fading multiwavelength afterglow and the emerging light of the supernova explosion that followed. Dr Shashi Bhushan Pandey from Aryabhata Research Institute of

Observational Sciences (ARIES) was part of the study, apart from scientists from other Indian institutions. They showed for the first time that a dying star can produce short bursts too. "Such a discovery has helped to resolve the long-standing issues related to gamma-ray bursts. Also, this study triggers to re-analyse all such known events to constrain number densities better," Dr Pandey said. The Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune (IUCAA), National Centre for Radio Astrophysics - Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Pune

(NCRA) and IIT Mumbai also participated in the study, the Ministry of Science & Technology said in a statement. While the burst was detected for barely a second, astronomers estimate that it emitted 14 million times the energy released by the entire Milky Way galaxy over the same amount of time, making it one of the most energetic short-duration GRBs ever seen. What are GRBs? When a star much more massive than the Sun runs out of fuel, its core suddenly collapses and forms a black hole.

Indonesia's Sinabung volcano spews ash, hot clouds 14,000 feet into the atmosphere

Arumbling volcano on Indonesia's Sumatra island on Wednesday shot billowing columns of ash and hot clouds down its slopes. The ash released by Mount Sinabung in North Sumatra province reached more than 4,500 meters (14,760 feet) into the atmosphere, and an avalanche of searing gas clouds blew 1 kilometers (0.62 mile) to the east and southeast, Indonesia's

Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation Center said. There were no casualties from the afternoon eruption, said Armen Putra, an official at the Sinabung monitoring post, and an alert has been maintained at the second-highest level. The 2,600-meter (8,530-foot) mountain has been rumbling since last year and villagers were advised to stay 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) from the

crater's mouth. They've been warned about lava while up increasing activity in recent weeks. The last such eruption was in early May, when ash fell on nearby villages. The volcano, one of two currently erupting in Indonesia, was dormant for four centuries before exploding in 2010, killing two people. Another eruption in 2014 killed 17 people, while seven died in



Another eruption in 2014 killed 17 people, while seven died in

a 2016 eruption. It has sporadically come to life since then. About 30,000 people have been forced to leave their homes around Sinabung in the past few years. Sinabung is among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, which is prone to seismic upheaval due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin.

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APOLLO
FARMS & RESORTS

Global rainforests responding differently to climate, human impacts: Scientists design index to monitor changes

New research now shows that the world's three major rainforest areas have different degrees of susceptibility.

As climate change worsens and global warming heats up the planet, one of the first to be affected are forests and the impact is being seen clearly across the world. Rainforests, known for their ability to absorb carbon and keep the planet cool are becoming more and more vulnerable due to human-made changes and the warming of the planet.

New research now shows that the world's three major rainforest areas have different degrees of susceptibility.

While the Amazon Basin in South America is extremely vulnerable to both climate change and changes in human land use, the forests in Congo Basin in Africa are going through drying trends. Meanwhile, Asian forests appear to be suffering more from changes in land use than from the changing climate. The new study was published in the

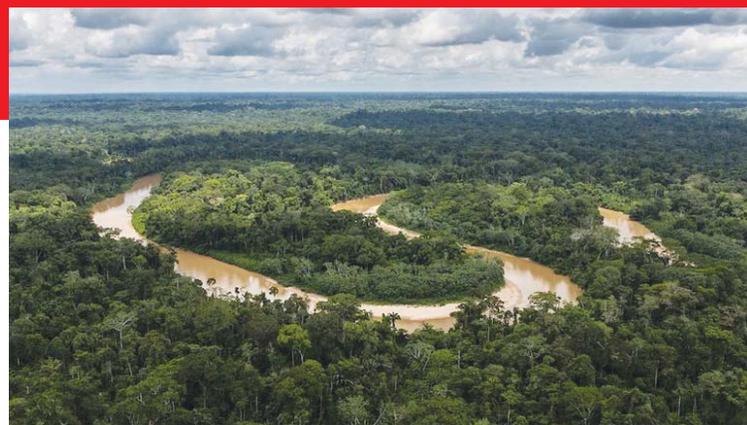
journal OneEarth indicates that rainforests are perhaps the most endangered habitat on Earth, threatened by large-scale land-use activities to clear land for farming or to harvest trees for timber. Scientists have now released a unique Tropical Rainforest Vulnerability Index (TFVI) to detect the susceptibility of these forests. The new index has been developed by a team put together by the National Geographic Society that was first convened in 2019. It takes input from satellite observations and ground-based data from 1982 through 2018, using the Landsat and the Global Precipitation Measurement mission, to observe the changes in the vegetation, land use pattern and climate.

Why are rainforests critical?

Rainforests make up a diverse ecosystem and are home to more than half of the planet's life forms, while also holding more

than half of all the carbon in land vegetation. These rainforests act as a brake on the rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from fossil fuel burning as they absorb the carbon from the atmosphere.

According to the National Geographic Society, the rainforests are a powerful natural climate solution. Conserving and restoring rainforests not only improves water filtration, biodiversity habitats, and enhances climate resilience but can also contribute to stabilizing global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius. These natural buffer zones are the greatest repository of biological diversity, a major aggregation of freshwater rivers, influential on climate. "At some point in early 2000s threats from climate change started to rival land-use as the most important impact on habitat degradation and biodiversity," said Sassan



Saatchi, Principal Scientist Carbon Cycle and Ecosystems Jet Propulsion Laboratory. What did scientists find?

During their analysis, scientists found that different regions of tropics and rainforests have different responses to climate threats and that there are strong interactions between climate, land use, and biodiversity. The Amazon Basin shows large-scale vulnerability to drying conditions of the atmosphere, frequent droughts and large-scale land-use changes. The Congo Basin, on the other hand, seems to be more resilient because of historical impacts of droughts, the overall

dryer condition, and smaller-scale land-use change and fragmentation. Rainforests in Southeast Asia appear to be suffering more from land use and fragmentation than climate except for areas of peatlands that have become more vulnerable to fire during El Niño years. JPL said that the data from the tropical rainforest vulnerability index provides scientists with an opportunity to perform more in-depth examinations of natural rainforest processes, such as carbon storage and productivity, changes in energy and water cycles, and changes in biodiversity.

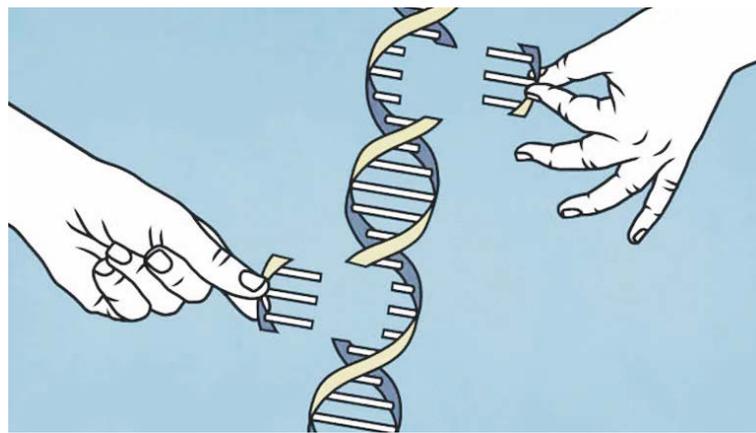
Scientists complete decoding human genome, uncover over 100 new genes, variations

Scientists deciphered the complete human genome twenty years after the first draft was released in 2001. Now they have uncovered over 100 new genes.

In February 2001, when researchers released the first set of the human genome sequence, it was a seismic event in the history of life sciences. However, it was not truly complete and 15 per cent of the genome was still to be deciphered. The most complicated chunk of DNA called for further research and technological advancement.

Twenty years later, researchers have finally deciphered it all filling the gaps in the long list of errors in previous versions and changing our view of human DNA. A team of 99 researchers led the groundbreaking discovery by identifying about 115 new genes that code for proteins.

The Telomere-to-Telomere (T2T) Consortium, an international collaboration that comprises around 30



institutions, has released data that gives new insights into the workings of the DNA and how it influences risks of disease and how cells keep it in neatly organised. Experts say that the new details will open our eyes to critical information stored within DNA that had remained elusive forever.

What is the human genome?

A genome is an organism's complete set of Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA),

the chemical compound that contains the instructions needed to develop and direct the activities of nearly all living organisms. They are made of two twisting, paired strands often referred to as a double helix. According to the National Human Genome Research Institute, each DNA strand is made of four chemical units, called nucleotide bases, which comprise the genetic "alphabet." Virtually every single

cell in the body contains a complete copy of the approximately 3 billion DNA base pairs, or letters, that make up the human genome. With its four-letter language, DNA contains the information needed to build the entire human body. Why it took so long to decipher human genome?

Scientists identified 3.055 billion base pairs ("letters") of our DNA code as they made the data public. However, the wait has been over two decades since the first draft was released in 2001. Scientists have known for decades that genes were spread across 23 pairs of chromosomes. However, their structures have been a mystery. The work on unravelling these mysterious structures began by the end of the 20th century. Researchers found that genes make a very small percentage of the genome, much of which

is made up of virus-like stretches of DNA that make new copies of themselves. They broke the genome into very small fragments of about 200 base pairs, deciphering their sequences, and then piecing them back together. However, when researchers began working on solving these structures, they found that the twin strands of DNA in our cells contained roughly three billion pairs of letters. Assembling the puzzle of DNA bits was more complex than they had expected, and it took years to assemble. As long stretches of the genome remained unknown, scientists struggled to understand where millions of bases fit. While they released the first draft in 2001, the reference genome draft was released in 2013 where they had read these fragments more accurately.

Fact Check: No, Meenakashi Lekhi's father-in-law didn't defend Nathuram Godse in court

A false claim is doing the rounds on social media that MoS for External Affairs and Culture Meenakashi Lekhi's father-in-law PN Lekhi had defended Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi.

Many netizens are claiming that MoS for External Affairs and Culture Meenakashi Lekhi's father-in-law PN Lekhi was a traitor who had defended Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi.

This comes in the backdrop of Lekhi's recent statement where she had called the protesting farmers 'mawali'. The statement had stirred a controversy following which Lekhi had apologised.

Criticising Meenakashi for her statement, a Facebook user wrote, "Meenakashi Lekhi is the daughter-in-law of traitor Pran Nath Lekhi who had left no stone unturned to save Nathuram Godse from getting convicted in the court. And now, Meenakashi Lekhi has called the farmers 'mawali'!"

This claim is quite viral on Facebook.

India Today Anti Fake News War Room (AFWA) has found that Meenakashi Lekhi's father-in-law Pran Nath Lekhi had not defended Nathuram Godse in the court. It is noteworthy that Nathuram had refused to be represented by a lawyer and had represented himself in the court.

AFWA probe Mahatma Gandhi was shot dead by Nathuram Godse when he was going for his regular prayers in Delhi on January 30, 1948. Nine accused were tried for the conspiracy and his murder. The trial of Mahatma Gandhi's murder case began in May 1948.

We looked into some history books to find out whether there was any connection between Nathuram Godse's trial and lawyer PN Lekhi. With the help of keyword search, we found an

archived version of the book 'May it please your honour Nathuram Godse' written by Gopal Godse, Nathuram's brother.

An excerpt from page number 20 of this book says, "Nathuram preferred to argue his own case. He argued for two days without challenging his conviction under the murder charge."

This makes it clear that no lawyer had defended Nathuram Godse in the trial case of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination.

Another book 'The murder of the Mahatma' written by GD Khosla, former Chief Justice of Punjab who had heard the appeals of Nathuram Godse and others and had given the verdict in the assassination also establishes the same thing.

On page number 19 of this book GD Khosla says, "Nathuram



Godse had declined to be represented by a lawyer and had made a prayer that he should be permitted to appear in person and argue his appeal himself. This prayer had been granted, and so he stood in a specially constructed dock. His small defiant figure with flashing eyes and close-cropped hair offered a remarkable and immediately noticeable contrast to the long row of placid and prosperous-looking lawyers who represented his accomplices."

Godse was sentenced to death on November 8, 1949, and was hanged on November 15, 1949.

PN Lekhi was a well-known lawyer who participated in the Quit India Movement and was imprisoned in 1945 and 1946 for his role in the 'Free INA Prisoners' movement. During the Emergency, he was detained under Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) and had to spend more than half of the imprisonment in solitary confinement.

He had defended Satwant Singh one of the accused in the Indira Gandhi murder case. He had also represented Zaheera Sheikh, a key witness in the Best Bakery case of the Gujarat riots, in the Supreme Court.

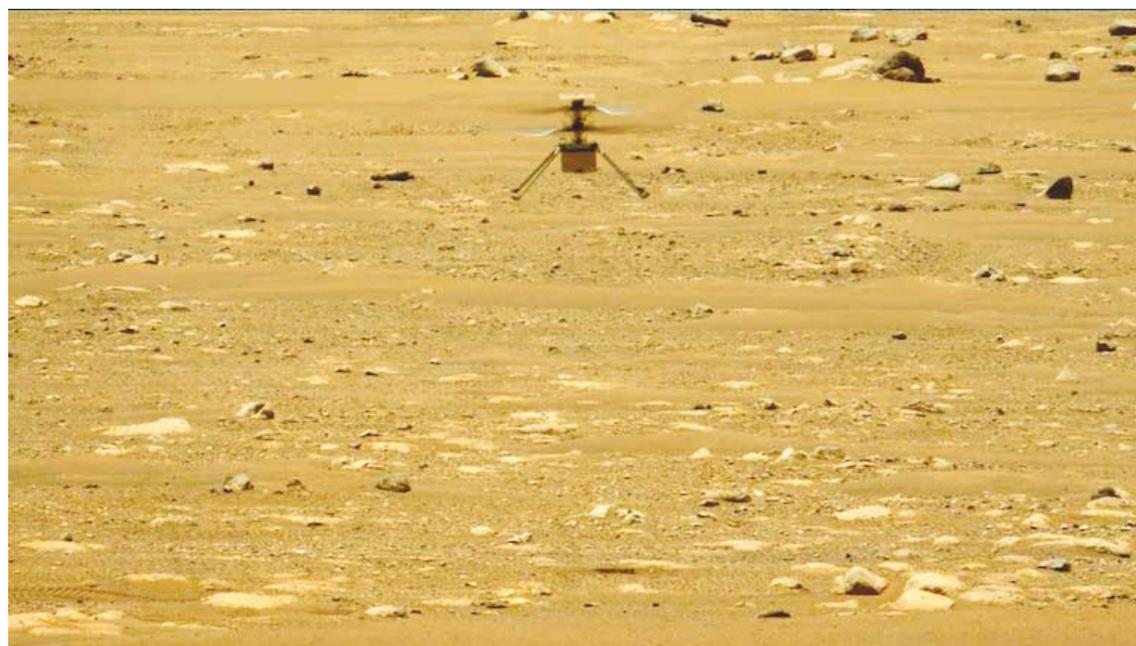
In its most complex flight on Mars, Earth's small aircraft crosses a kilometre mark in air

The Ingenuity helicopter reached the milestone on its 10th flight as it flew in the Jazero crater.

Three months after it first spread its rotors on Mars, the Ingenuity Helicopter has crossed a major milestone of flying for over a kilometre on an alien world. The small rotorcraft, which has exceeded engineering expectations, achieved the feat during its latest hop in the Jazero crater as it continues its operational demonstrations.

The helicopter took to Martian skies on its 10th flight to fly to an area known as "Raised Ridges" (RR), named for the geographic features. The area was about 164 feet away from its current location and is strategically important for scientists.

The helicopter imaged the area during the sortie as the Perseverance rover scientists find it intriguing and are considering visiting it sometime in the future. The Joint Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) that flies the small helicopter on



Mars had said that Flight 10 will be the most complex flight to date, with 10 distinct waypoints and a nominal altitude of 40 feet above the surface.

The 10th flight The flight began with Ingenuity taking off from its sixth airfield and climbing to the new record height as it headed south-by-

southwest about 165 feet and captured the Raised Ridges taking first Return to Earth (RTE) images. The flight took two such images.

"Imagery experts at JPL hope to combine the overlapping data from these two images to generate one stereo image," JPL said in a

statement. During the hop, JPL snapped two more images at waypoints 4 and 5 before heading northwest for two more sets of stereo pairs at waypoints 6 and 7. The rotorcraft landed 95 meters west of airfield 6 after spending about 165 seconds in the air. Surviving Mars

JPL said that Ingenuity has survived 107 sols (Martian days) since deployment from Perseverance, 76 sols beyond the original technology demonstration mission it was designed for. "It has also successfully executed two separate flight-software updates, improving the aircraft's ability to execute flights and capture colour imagery," JPL said.

During its ninth flight, the helicopter, which will serve as an aerial scout for the rover, captured images from a height of around 33 feet, offering the Perseverance team greater detail than they get from the orbiter images hovering above the planet. The helicopter spotted sand dunes that are knee or waist-high in-depth and could cause the two-ton rover to be stuck. The dunes have accumulated over millions of years.

History will remember how this government didn't allow Opposition to raise voice in Parliament

History will remember how the Opposition wasn't allowed by the current government to raise their voices and concerns of millions who suffer at the hand of the power-hungry and brazen ministers.



On Wednesday (July 28), the Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha without hearing the views of the members of the Opposition and without making an attempt to put the House in order. A day prior to this even Marine Aids to Navigation Bill was cleared without the Opposition getting a chance to speak up on the issue. The way the bills are being passed in the ongoing session shows the arrogance of the government and its inability to hear or implement changes in bills that could make it stronger.

These amendments that have been made are anti-justice and work against the children who most need government support to keep themselves safe. The Amendment bill seems oblivious to the challenges that exist for juveniles in shelter homes and their pending adoptions. The bill which is now an act has empowered

District Magistrates (DMs) to decide a child's fate rather than a civil court. In addition to that, the district magistrates along with additional district magistrates (ADMs) will be responsible authorities to monitor the functioning of various agencies under the JJ Act in every district. This includes the Child Welfare Committees, the Juvenile Justice Boards, the

District Child Protection Units and the Special Protection Units.

The Act makes them an overarching authority to take a call on shelter homes, compliance, adoptions without any need for judicial intervention. The government says it will ease the process of adoption and ensure their safety however this is far from the truth.

Those in governance know that the control of District Magistrate's service conditions are with the political system, given that they are functionaries of government bodies it will create a scope for political power to influence adoption-related decisions. The Muzaffarpur Shelter Home case in Bihar is a grim reminder of how such collusion can be fatal for the lives and safety of those staying in these shelter homes. During investigations in the case, in 2018, it was discovered that at least 34 girls were drugged and raped at the shelter home. A Delhi court had convicted 19 people, including former MLA, in connection with the sexual and physical assault of girls. It also led Bihar's Minister of Welfare to resign, after allegations surfaced that her husband had links to the main accused in the case. The court also ordered an inquiry against Muzaffarpur District Magistrate and Principal

Secretary of Social Welfare for turning a blind eye to the ongoing at the shelter home. Till now there has been no closure for those affected. What stops such collusion in the future and guarantees that there will be no trafficking or selling of girls for prostitution when you empower one sole person to decide their fate?

The question is whether it is appropriate for an administrative authority to issue adoption orders instead of a judicial body? This issue needs to be considered as the question arises of whether the level of pendency justifies shifting the load to the district magistrate. DMs are already overburdened with various responsibilities of administration by adding this responsibility how would the government ensure that it will reduce the pendency of adoption cases. The Act also provides that any person aggrieved by an adoption order, may file an appeal before the divisional commissioner. Thus, it does not provide for judicial oversight at the appeal stage as well. District magistrates and divisional commissioners are trained to be administrators and perform the functions of the government. They may not have the competence to issue adoption orders or hear appeals related to them. Vesting such core judicial

functions with them may also raise concerns of separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary. According to an RTI reply by CARA, the total number of applications for adoption in the last 5 years was 48,842. This signifies a high pendency rate however, this transfer of power doesn't resolve the issue, as the reason for delay and pendency needs to be analysed at the level of the law enforcement agency to submit a report, second at the level of the CWC to declare the child legally free for adoption and third at the level of the family court to finally give the child in adoption. The 2019 NALSA report shows there were only 13 states and UTs that had Child Welfare Committees as per law. The Standing Committee on Human Resource Development had noted that statutory bodies under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 including JJBs and CWCs were not present in many states. Several bodies existed only on paper and were not functioning. The Standing Committee also noted that CWCs and JJBs lack authority to manage their financial and Human Resources due to this action taken by them is limited and delayed. As an Amendment of section 86 of the JJ Act 2015, serious offences (offences with minimum punishment of 3 years but not more than 7

years) shall now be made non-cognizable instead of cognizable.

This affects issues such as child labour, wherein the police will not be able to rescue the child until a warrant has been issued. This provision goes against several articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which India is a signatory to, as well as against Article 14 of the Constitution, and shall delay the rescue of children in need of care and protection.

Despite these serious concerns for the government to not pay heed shows a lack of intent on its part to be able to take all stakeholders along. Some valid concerns have also been raised by DCPCR with the authorities but the government and the responsible minister's absolute contempt for a valid debate on the issue will continue to deny India's children a truly safe and secure environment. Our children need protection, but the government continues to give justification in its defense. History will remember how the Opposition wasn't allowed by the current government to raise their voices and concerns of millions who suffer at the hand of the power-hungry and brazen ministers.

AstraZeneca to apply for Covid-19 vaccine approval in US later in 2021

British-Swedish biopharma giant AstraZeneca on Thursday announced that it would seek approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for its vaccines in the second half of this year.



19 Vaccine AstraZeneca SARS-CoV-2 (US)" later in the year. The timeline for the USFDA application has been in the works since the end-March when AstraZeneca released the data from its clinical trials of the Covid-19 vaccine in the US. AstraZeneca has pledged to deliver the vaccine on a non-profit basis as long as the pandemic lasts. Its supplies include 80 million doses that went to the Covax initiative for low and middle-income countries. Overall, AstraZeneca reported first-half revenue of USD 15.5 billion, up 23 per cent, with around USD 1.17 billion accruing from the delivery of the Covid-19 vaccines. "Excluding the contribution from the

pandemic COVID-19 vaccine, revenue increased by 14 per cent (9 per cent at CER) in the half to USD 14,371 million and by 17 per cent [12 per cent at CER] in the quarter to USD 7,326 million," the results show. "AstraZeneca has delivered another period of strong growth thanks to robust performances across all regions and disease areas, particularly Oncology, New CVRM and Fasentra in Respiratory. As a result, we have delivered further earnings progression, supported ongoing launches, and continued our investment in R&D," said Pascal Soriot, Chief Executive Officer of AstraZeneca.

medicines with further significant progress across disease areas," he said. The CEO highlighted that in the field of BioPharmaceuticals, the US approved Farxiga for chronic kidney disease and granted tezepelumab "Priority Review" to treat patients with asthma. Following the recent acquisition of rare disease therapy company Alexion, the company said it was updating its full-year 2021 guidance and long-term goals to accelerate scientific discovery. "Alexion will enable us to enhance our pipeline, extending the company's presence in rare diseases and immunology with its complement biology," added Soriot.

British-Swedish UK and European medicines biopharma giant AstraZeneca, regulators, is pending a US which manufactures the Covid-19 vaccine developed by scientists at the University of Oxford, on Thursday indicated that they would seek approval from the US medicines regulator for its jabs in the second half of this year. The AZD1222 vaccine, also being produced under licence by the Serum Institute of India (SII) as Covishield and approved for human use by the

Vyapam scam case: CBI files supplementary chargesheet against 73 accused

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed supplementary chargesheet against 73 accused in a case related to alleged cheating in MPPMT-2012 examination, held through Vyapam.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed supplementary chargesheet against 73 accused, including 13 new accused, for allegedly cheating in the Madhya Pradesh Pre-Medical Test (MPPMT), 2012 that was held through Madhya Pradesh Professional Examination Board, known as Vyapam.

It was alleged in the case that the accused persons had adopted a unique engine-bogie system or method of cheating in MPPMT-2012 by engaging intelligent students from out of Madhya Pradesh as solver candidates for allowing copying of their answers by the beneficiaries or bogie candidates and also manipulation of digital data and OMR answer sheets of accused candidates by the said persons for passing these candidates in MPPMT-2012.

The case was earlier registered at STF police station in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal. The Supreme Court had ordered the investigation of Vyapam scam case to be transferred to the CBI on July 9, 2015.

The CBI had booked 587 persons on July 31, 2015 in connection with the case.

The CBI had filed chargesheet against 592 accused, including 245 new accused, on November 23, 2017, before a special CBI court in Bhopal.

Further investigation was kept open under section 173(8) of the Code Of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). CBI'S INVESTIGATION During further investigation, the CBI reportedly found real identities of impersonators and traced absconders. In the said supplementary chargesheet, 54 accused persons related to manipulation of digital data and OMR answer sheets and 19 accused related to impersonation were chargesheeted.

It was alleged that 19 accused candidates had deliberately left ovals of 120 to 130 questions blank on their respective OMR answer sheets during the examination and the accused Vyapam officials manipulated the digital data of OMR answer sheets (computer data) and subsequently blackened the corresponding answer circles in

the OMR answer sheets to illegally pass these candidates. Untampered data of accused candidates was also recovered and it showed that these candidates had filled up less answer circles. In conspiracy with these candidates, their guardians and middlemen, the said Vyapam officials manipulated digital data and OMR answer sheets of these candidates to enhance their marks and to illegally pass them in MPPMT-2012.

It was also alleged that the then principal system analyst of Vyapam, Bhopal had prepared an excel sheet containing the names of the accused candidates, their sponsors, the roll numbers, amounts paid or to be paid, marks and category etc, and the said excel sheet was also recovered by the agency.

It was further alleged that impersonation was found out during investigation and 16 accused candidates were named in chargesheet as the impersonators who belonged to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan.



The real identities of these impersonators were ascertained by making use of innovative techniques, including obtaining and scrutinizing data of the candidates of PMT examinations from 2010-2014 of some states and AIPMT. The agency also cross-checked the details of bank account, credit cards and debit cards used for making payment of the examination fees.

Apart from this, the CBI also identified social media profiles created using the mobile phone

numbers and email IDs which were filled in the application or counseling forms of impersonators.

Database of photos of more than 18 lakh aspirant PMT students, MBBS students as well as registered doctors collected from medical colleges, coaching centres, MCI, Medical Education Directorates of some states etc, and database along with photos of untraceable unidentified candidates were also scrutinised through experts and photo matching exercise.

Millet-based diet can lower risk of type 2 diabetes and help manage blood glucose level: Study



A new study shows that a millet-based diet can lower the risk of type 2 diabetes and help to manage blood glucose levels in people who have diabetes. A new study led by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) has found that having a millet-based diet can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes as well as help to manage blood glucose levels in people who have diabetes. The study notes the potential to design appropriate meals with

millet-based diet can lower the risk of type 2 diabetes and help to manage blood glucose levels in people who have diabetes. This study is the first in a series that researchers have been working on for the last four years as part of the Smart Food initiative led by ICRISAT. The studies will be released one by one in 2021.

EATING MILLETS LEADS TO DROP IN BLOOD GLUCOSE LEVELS

Published in 'Frontiers in Nutrition', the study says that

diabetic people who consumed millets as part of their daily diet saw their blood glucose levels drop 12-15 per cent (fasting and post-meal). Their blood glucose levels went from diabetic to pre-diabetic levels.

The HbA1c (blood glucose bound to hemoglobin) levels lowered by 17 per cent on average for pre-diabetic individuals, taking the levels from pre-diabetic to normal status.

MILLETS HAVE LOW GLYCEMIC INDEX

The study found that millets have a low average glycemic index (GI) of 52.7, which is about 30 per cent lower than what it is for milled rice and refined wheat. The glycemic index of millets is about 14-37 points lower than what it is for maize.

All 11 types of millets studied either had low (less than 55) or medium GIs (55-69). Glycemic index is an indicator of how much and how soon a food item increases the blood sugar level. "The review concluded that even after boiling, baking and steaming (most common ways of cooking grains), millets had lower GI than rice, wheat and maize," said Dr Raj Bhandari, one of the study's authors and a representative on the Indian National Technical Board of Nutrition. He stressed that diet plays a critical role in controlling diabetes.

Dr S Anitha, the study's lead author and a senior nutrition scientist at ICRISAT, said, "A review of the studies published in scientific journals proves that millets keep blood glucose levels in check, thereby reducing the risk of diabetes." **DIABETES IN INDIA AND THE**

WORLD

In India, diabetes seems to have assumed epidemic proportions. The condition has contributed to a high disease burden in the country between 1990 and 2016.

"There is no easy solution. It requires a lifestyle change and diet is a very important part of this. This study provides one part of the solution which can be useful for individuals and governments. How we use this finding and implement it into programmes needs careful planning," said Dr Hemalatha, director at the National Institute of Nutrition in Hyderabad.

According to the International Diabetes Association, the rate of diabetes is increasing in all regions of the world. India, China and the USA have the highest number of people with diabetes.

However, the African continent has the largest predicted increase in diabetes patients of 143 per cent from 2019 to 2045. The authors of the current study have urged people to diversify their staples with millets in order to keep diabetes in check, especially across Asia and Africa.

International Space Station thrown out of control by misfire of Russian module, says Nasa

The International Space Station (ISS) was thrown briefly out of control on Thursday when jet thrusters of a newly arrived Russian research module inadvertently fired a few hours after it was docked to the orbiting outpost, NASA officials said.

The seven crew members aboard - two Russian cosmonauts, three NASA astronauts, a Japanese astronaut and a European space agency astronaut from France - were never in any immediate danger, according to NASA and Russian state-owned news agency RIA.

But the malfunction prompted NASA to postpone until at least Aug. 3 its planned launch of Boeing's new CST-100 Starliner capsule on a highly anticipated uncrewed test flight to the space station. The Starliner had been set to blast off atop an

Atlas V rocket on Friday from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Thursday's mishap began



about three hours after the multipurpose Nauka module had latched onto the space station, as mission controllers in Moscow were performing some post-docking "reconfiguration" procedures, according to NASA.

The module's jets inexplicably restarted, causing the entire

station to pitch out of its normal flight position some 250 miles above the Earth, leading the mission's flight director to

declare a "spacecraft emergency," U.S. space agency officials said. An unexpected drift in the station's orientation was first detected by automated ground sensors, followed 15 minutes later by a "loss of attitude control" that lasted a little over 45 minutes, according to Joel

Montalbano, manager of NASA's space station program.

'TUG-OF-WAR' Flight teams on the ground managed to restore the space station's orientation by activating thrusters on another module of the orbiting platform, NASA officials said.

In its broadcast coverage of the incident, RIA cited NASA specialists at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, as describing the struggle to regain control of the space station as a "tug of war" between the two modules.

At the height of the incident, the station was pitching out of alignment at the rate of about a half a degree per second, Montalbano said during a NASA conference call with reporters. The Nauka engines were ultimately switched off, the space station was stabilized and its orientation was restored

to where it had begun, NASA said.

Communication with the crew was lost for several minutes twice during the disruption, but "there was no immediate danger at any time to the crew," Montalbano said. He said "the crew really didn't feel any movement." Had the situation become so dangerous as to require evacuation of personnel, the crew could have escaped in a SpaceX crew capsule still parked at the outpost and designed to serve as a "lifeboat" if necessary, said Steve Stich, manager of NASA's commercial crew program.

What caused the malfunction of the thrusters on the Nauka module, delivered by the Russian space agency Roscosmos, has yet to be determined, NASA officials said.

Isro launches merchandiser programme, theme-based T-shirts, toys available

Launching the program in a virtual event, ISRO Chairman, K Sivan, said it makes him happy to see the immense interest the program has generated in such a short time.

The Indian Space Research Organisation on Thursday formally launched its theme-based merchandise program with the selection of the first batch of nine registered ISRO merchandisers.

Customized ISRO-theme-based products can play a 'game-changing' role in creating awareness and kindling interest of the students, children, and public, in the domain of space science & technology, propagating the achievements and laurels that ISRO brings to the nation, an ISRO statement said.

An 'Announcement of Opportunity' had been floated in this regard, where interested agencies were invited to apply to become registered ISRO merchandisers, the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency said.

Launching the program in a



virtual event, Secretary in the Department of Space and ISRO Chairman, K Sivan, said it makes him happy to see the immense interest the program has generated in such a short time.

"I am certain that the products created from your efforts shall

reach nook and corner of the country including northeast States & Jammu & Kashmir and take the ISRO story among the youth and kids", he said.

Sivan also emphasized that the merchandise program has not been rolled out with a commercial interest; rather, the

intent is outreach and creating awareness through common products such as toys, Do-it-Yourself kits, and T-shirts, among others, which kindle curiosity and serve as "reminiscence" of ISRO

He expressed hope that many

more creative enterprises would come forward to make use of this opportunity and create diverse products, highlighting ISRO's previous and upcoming efforts, in a manner appealing to the younger generation, as we take the space program "onwards and upwards". The registered ISRO merchandisers as of date are Ankur Hobby Centre (Gujarat), Black White Orange Brands Private Ltd (Maharashtra), Indic Inspirations India Private Ltd (Maharashtra), Dhruva Space Private Limited (Telangana), EENGN Private Ltd (Tamil Nadu), Imagic Creatives Private Ltd (Karnataka), Touchstone Enterprises Private Ltd (Karnataka) and Mankutimma Studios Private Ltd (Karnataka) and Specific Impulse Technologies Private Ltd (Punjab).

Indian astronomers peek into the Sun using sound, find intriguing internal layer

The layer exists very close to the solar surface and its understanding is critical to know more about sunspot formation and solar cycle.

The Sun has always been the centre of attention for astronomers looking to explore the coronal developments and to prep the world for its dangerous effects. Now, two Indian astronomers have peeked into the internal rotation of the Sun using sound waves revealing the existence of an intriguing layer.

The layer marks the position where the rotation profile of the Sun changes sharply adding to the already known phenomenon that the Sun's equator spins faster than the poles. The layer is called Near-Surface Shear Layer (NSSL) existing very close to the solar surface.

Indian astronomers have found a theoretical explanation for its

existence for the first time. In a study published in the journal Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, researchers used helioseismology, a technique of using sound waves to peek inside the Sun.

They provide an explanation of this layer based on the thermal wind balance equation that explains how the slight difference in temperature between solar poles and equator, called thermal wind term, is balanced by the centrifugal force appearing due to solar differential rotation.

While most scientists believe that the condition is true only in the interior of the Sun, and it does not hold near the solar surface, the two researchers

have shown otherwise, explaining that it holds near the surface as well. Led by Bibhuti Kumar Jha, a researcher with the Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES) and Professor Arnab Rai Choudhuri, from the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, the study forwards the first indication of the existence of such a layer that came more than half a century ago. Understanding NSSL is crucial for the study of several solar phenomena like sunspot formation, solar cycles, and it will also help in understanding such phenomena in other stars, the researchers argue. With the solar minimum, a period marked by the least amount of solar



activity, ending, the Sun is 'waking up' again. The Sun had recently erupted the biggest flare in over four years that led to blackout over the Atlantic. The sunspot AR2838 burst through the surface of the sun unleashing the strongest solar flare in four years, an X1.5-class

explosion. The sunspot, which is now gone, occurred over the star's northwestern limb. The latest eruption marked the beginning of a new solar cycle, ionizing the top of Earth's atmosphere, causing a shortwave radio blackout over the Atlantic Ocean.

South Korea, North Korea resume communication amid diplomatic stalemate with US

The leaders of North and South Korea restored suspended communication channels between them and agreed to improve ties, both governments said Tuesday.

The leaders of North and South Korea restored suspended communication channels between them and agreed to improve ties, both governments said Tuesday, amid a 2.5-year-stalemate in US-led diplomacy aimed at stripping North Korea of its nuclear weapons.

While the move could certainly help ease animosities on the Korean Peninsula, it's unclear whether Pyongyang would go as far as to revive previous vigorous cooperation programs with Seoul and get back to the nuclear talks with Washington. Some experts say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un merely intends to burnish his international image or use South Korea as leverage ahead of a potential resumption of talks with the U.S.

Since April, Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in exchanged personal letters several times and decided to normalize the cross-border communication channels as a first step toward improving relations, Moon's office said. The two leaders agreed to "restore mutual confidence and

develop their relationships again as soon as possible," senior Blue House official Park Soo Hyun said in a televised briefing. Park said the two Koreas subsequently reopened communication channels on Tuesday morning.

North Korea's state media quickly confirmed the South Korean announcement.

"Now, the whole Korean nation desires to see the North-South relations recovered from setback and stagnation as early as possible," the official Korean Central News Agency said. "In this regard, the top leaders of the North and the South agreed to make a big stride in recovering the mutual trust and promoting reconciliation by restoring the cutoff inter-Korean communication liaison lines through the recent several exchanges of personal letters."

Last year, North Korea cut off all communication channels with South Korea in protest of what it called South Korea's failure to stop activists from floating anti-Pyongyang leaflets across their border. An angry North Korea later blew up an empty, South Korean-built

liaison office just north of the countries' border.

Many experts said the provocative North Korean action signaled the North had grown frustrated that Seoul has failed to revive lucrative inter-Korean economic projects and persuade the U.S. to ease international sanctions on the North.

Moon, who espouses greater reconciliation with North Korea, earlier shuttled between Pyongyang and Washington to facilitate a first summit between Kim and then-President Donald Trump. But North Korea abruptly turned the cold shoulder to Moon after a second Kim-Trump summit fell apart in early 2019 due to disputes over U.S.-led sanctions.

Since taking office in January, the administration of President Joe Biden has called on North Korea to return to the talks. But North Korea has insisted it won't rejoin the talks unless the U.S. withdraws its hostile policy against the North, an apparent reference to the sanctions.

Some experts earlier said North Korea may be compelled to reach out to the U.S. or South



Korea if its economic difficulties worsen. Mismanagement, storm damage and border shutdowns during the coronavirus pandemic have further depleted North Korea's broken economy and Kim in recent speeches called for his people to brace for prolonged COVID-19 restrictions. While his remarks may indicate the potential for a worsening economic situation, outside monitoring groups haven't seen signs of mass starvation or social chaos in the country of 26 million people. Nam Sung-wook, a professor at Korea University, said the restoration of the communication channels won't likely lead to dramatic improvement in ties, such as another Moon-Kim summit.

"North Korea knows it has to sit down for talks with the Biden administration one day. It thinks South Korea still has an effective value ... to make Biden move" in a direction that it

favors, Nam said. "North Korea can also build up an (international image) that it's willing to continue dialogue" with the outside world. According to Moon's office, the recent letters exchanged between Moon and Kim didn't discuss holding a summit or phone talks between them. Park Won Gon, a professor of North Korea studies at Seoul's Ewha Womans University, said North Korea may intend for steps to help South Korean liberals supporting greater North Korea ties win next March's presidential elections. He said it's unlikely North Korea's agreement to restore the communication lines meant its pandemic-related difficulties worsened to a level that forced it to reach out to get urgent assistance. He cited reports that North Korea is still refusing to receive aid even from China, its major ally, due to worries that aid deliveries could spread the virus.

Mysteriously large meteor lights up Norway; may have hit Earth near Oslo

Preliminary data suggested a meteorite may have hit Earth in a large wooded area, called Finnemarka, just 60 km west of the capital, Oslo.

An "unusually large meteor" briefly lit up southern Norway on Sunday, creating a spectacular sound and light display as it rumbled across the sky, and a bit of it may have hit Earth, possibly not far from the capital, Oslo, experts said. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage. Reports of sightings started arriving around 1 a.m. with the phenomena being seen as far north as Trondheim.

A web camera in Holmestrand, south of Oslo, captured a fireball falling from the sky and erupting into a bright flash lighting up a marina. The Norwegian Meteor network was analysing video

footage and other data on Sunday to try to pinpoint the meteor's origin and destination. Preliminary data suggested a meteorite may have hit Earth in a large wooded area, called Finnemarka, just 60 km (40 miles) west of the capital, Oslo, the network said. "This was crazy," the network's Morten Bilet, who saw and heard the meteor, told Reuters.

By Sunday afternoon no debris had been found and given the "demanding" location, one could take "some 10 years" searching for possible meteorites, Bilet said. The meteor travelled at 15-20 km per second and lit up the night

sky for about five to six seconds, Bilet said. The summer sky was dark, with the days starting to get shorter from the end of June. Some eyewitnesses also said they felt a stronger wind blow with the event also causing a pressure wave, Bilet said. "What we had last night was a large rock travelling likely from between Mars and Jupiter, which is our asteroid belt. And when that whizzes in, it creates a rumble, light and great excitement among us (experts) and maybe some fear among others," Bilet said.

There were no reports of damage or people being



particularly frightened, Bilet said, adding that for those nearest it was likely more of a "spooky" event.

A meteor that exploded over the central Russia near the city of

Chelyabinsk in 2013 rained caused a shock wave that smashed windows, damaged buildings and injured 1,200 people.

More Evidence That Limiting Red and Processed Meat May Be Good for Your Heart

In a new review, researchers found that eating more red and processed meat - but not poultry - was associated with a higher risk of developing ischemic heart disease.

Cutting back on red meat in your diet may maintain healthy blood flow to your heart. A review published in July 2021 in *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition* found that the risk of developing ischemic heart disease rises 9 percent with every additional 50 grams (g), or 1.8 ounces (oz), of red meat people eat each day, and the risk climbs 18 percent with each extra 50 g of processed meat.

Researchers examined data pooled from 13 previously published studies that had a total of more than 1.4 million participants without heart disease, including more than

32,000 people who later went on to develop ischemic heart disease. Compared with people with the lowest daily red meat consumption - up to 25 g (0.9 oz) - people with the highest daily red meat intake - 25 to 141 g (5 oz) - were 12 percent more likely to develop ischemic heart disease.

Similarly, people with the highest daily processed meat consumption - up to 10 g (0.4 oz) - were 11 percent more likely to develop ischemic heart disease than people with the lowest daily processed meat consumption - 9 to 78 g (2.8 oz). However, there wasn't a significant difference in the risk of ischemic heart disease based on how much poultry people ate each day. There also wasn't a meaningful increase in the risk of ischemic heart disease with each additional 50 g a day of poultry intake. "Reducing red

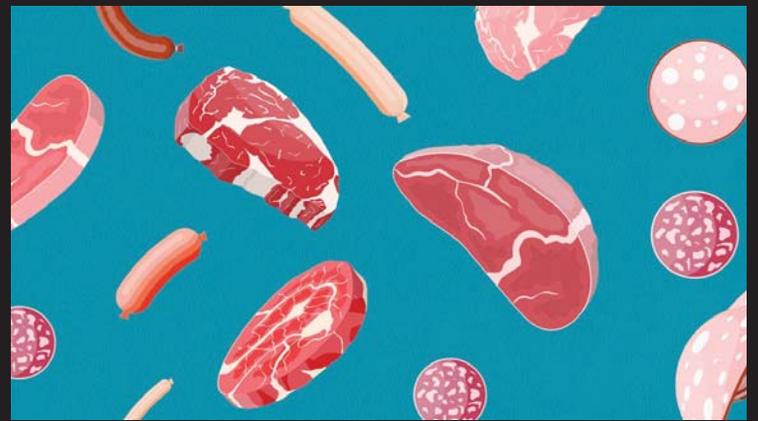
and processed meats will lower the risk of ischemic heart disease," says Rod Jackson, MBChB, PhD, a professor of epidemiology at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, who wasn't involved in the study. Poultry doesn't have the same risk because it doesn't have the same amount of saturated fat that is typically found in red and processed meat, Dr. Jackson says.

"Saturated fat is the major dietary cause of ischemic heart disease," Jackson adds.

Limitations of the Study

There are several caveats to the study findings. For starters, most of the smaller studies included in the analysis used food frequency questionnaires to assess meat intake, which don't always provide a reliable picture of how people eat.

Another limitation of the analysis is that many of the smaller



studies only assessed dietary habits at a single point in time, and it's possible that people's eating habits changed in ways that might have influenced their risk of developing heart disease. In addition, it's not clear from the study how people prepared their food or what cuts of meat they ate, both of which might influence their risk of developing ischemic heart disease, Jackson says. For example, choosing lean cuts of red meat

and trimming any visible fat may help reduce the risk of ischemic heart disease associated with this food, Jackson says. It can be more difficult to remove fat from certain processed meats, but with products like bacon where fat is visible it can be trimmed, Jackson adds. "You don't need to eliminate red and processed meat from your diet, particularly if you remove the visible fat," Jackson says.

Sugary Drinks Are Linked to Greater Risk of Early-Onset Colorectal Cancer



Colorectal cancer has been rising rapidly among young adults. Since the 1990s, the rate of this disease (which includes cancers of the colon and rectum) has more than doubled among adults younger than 50, according to the National Cancer Institute (NCI). The NCI suggests an unhealthy diet may be a contributing factor. A meta-analysis of more than 100 studies, published April 2018 in the journal *Obesity*, found that half of younger adults with colorectal cancer were overweight and 17 percent were obese. A study published in May 2021 in the journal *Gut* lends more support to this notion. The investigation revealed that the risk of developing colorectal cancer doubled in women who each week drank two or more sugary drinks (such as soda,

sweetened teas, or sports and energy drinks) compared with those who on average consumed less than one of these products per week. For the research, Yin Cao, ScD, MPH, associate professor of surgery at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, and collaborators reviewed health data on more than 94,000 female registered nurses between the ages of 25 and 42. Every four years, participants completed a questionnaire, which included details on their beverage consumption.

During an average follow-up of 24 years, the scientists observed 109 cases of colorectal cancer among the women. Based on this information, Dr. Cao and her coauthors calculated that each additional serving of sugary drinks raised the risk of

developing colorectal cancer by 16 percent. In examining a subset of 41,272 nurses who had recorded their sugary drink consumption from ages 13 to 18, researchers found that a serving a day was linked to 32 percent greater likelihood in developing cancer. They noted that fruit juice

or artificially sweetened drinks did not appear to heighten cancer risk. Alfred Neugut, MD, a professor of cancer research at Columbia University in New York City, who was not involved in the research, notes that the study provides further evidence of the ill health effects of sugar

and sweetened beverages. Not only do they contribute to obesity, but they have been linked to other types of cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. "The results here join a whole mosaic of negative outcomes for sweetened beverages," he said.

Addressing adolescent mental health need of the hour: Experts

There was an urgent need to focus on mental health in discussions and policy making, with particular attention to address the problems of adolescents, said experts at a webinar, 'Breaking the barriers: Addressing adolescent mental health', recently organised by ETI (Empower, Transform and Inspire). ETI along with George Institute of Global Health has commenced a series of focused discussions on the subject and the status of mental health in India. Dr Virander Singh Chauhan, founder, ETI, said the Covid-19 pandemic had had a debilitating impact not only on physical health but also on mental. Adolescents form one-fifth of the Indian population, but were still left out of conversations around access to safe spaces, he added. He said the shift to online schooling, distancing from peers, and lack of a regular schedule had made an impact on the social and emotional development of young minds. This was also compounded by the fear of

losing loved ones and anxieties about their future, and this had a potential of long-term impact on adolescent mental health, he added. Experts further said online schooling had exacerbated the digital divide, which already existed in the country. According to National Sample Survey (NSS) 2017-2018, only 4.4 per cent rural households have access to computers. Further, only 14.9 per cent rural households have access to the internet. This led to many not having access to online education, which contributed to stress over keeping up with school work and apprehensions about the future, experts added. Dr Sukriti Chauhan, CEO of ETI, who moderated the panel discussion, said students able to attend online classes also reported issues of fatigue, inadequate attention and loneliness due to lack of social interaction. She said the impact on the mental health of girls was more severe, as the burden of additional domestic work also fell upon them.

Anushka Sharma can't get the viral Bachpan Ka Pyar boy out of her head.



Anushka Sharma has got an ear worm. Sahdev Dirdo, the young boy who has gone viral for his song Bachpan Ka Pyar, is giving her sleepless nights as well.

On Wednesday, Anushka took to

Instagram Stories to share a meme about the boy. In it, a person is seen lying awake in the night because they can't get Sahdev's song out of their head. Anushka simply shared some laughter emojis with her post. Anushka reposted the meme from basketball player and cricketer Ishant Sharma's wife Pratima Singh's page. Sahdev's school teacher recorded a video of him singing the song Bachpan Ka Pyaar in their classroom in 2019. Wearing a blue shirt, Sahdev looks straight into the



Anushka has not announced her next project since 2018's Zero. The film, which was directed by Aanand L Rai and co-starred Shah Rukh Khan and Katrina Kaif, did not perform well at the

box office. However, Anushka has been keeping busy with production ventures such as Paatal Lok, Bulbbul and Qala. Anushka and her husband Virat Kohli also welcomed their daughter Vamika earlier this year. Announcing her name, Anushka wrote, "We have lived together with love, presence and gratitude as a way of life but this little one, Vamika, has taken it to a whole new level! Tears, laughter, worry, bliss - emotions that have been experienced in a span of minutes sometimes! Sleep is elusive. but our hearts are SO full. Thanking you all for your wishes, prayers and good energy."

camera as he sings the song in a uniform tone, cracking up those around him. The video went viral recently and even singer Badshah has shared a remix version of it. On Wednesday, Chattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel also felicitated the boy with a garland and got him to sing for him on video. Comedians Bharti Singh, Krushna Abhishek and Sudesh Lahiri also performed to the songs on the sets of The Kapil Sharma Show promo shoot. The Mumbai Police also caught on the trend tweeting, "Was your bachpan ka pyaar a secret? Then your password might still be safe. Just add a few special characters to it!"

Entertainment Industry and even her good friends distance themselves from Shilpa Shetty

As her husband Raj Kundra's troubles are seen to mount, the Indian entertainment industry notorious for its self-centred attitude, has kept away from the controversy. Not one individual from Bollywood has come forward to express even a semblance of solidarity for Shilpa Shetty who has been part of the film industry for almost 30 years, and has always been known to be a good friend to many Bollywood denizens. A source close to Shilpa says no one from among her good friends in the industry-and we don't need to name them, just check her party photos and social media images to know who she hung around with-has bothered to even make an obligatory call, let alone extend a hand in

support. Or ask about her children

An actor from a film family tells me, "This (the adult-content scandal) is too sleazy. It's not like a routine controversy. No



one wants to be seen anywhere near to this."

Where exactly does this place Shilpa? Not in a very enviable position. As rumours of her arrest gather momentum I recall a conversation with her where she told me, "You can't have friends in this film industry. Over here you are

friends only as long as you are working together. Once the working relationship ends, all other considerations automatically expire. Your family and a few trusted friends from outside the film industry are all one has."

In this hour of abject darkness Shilpa whom I know to be an extremely emotional person, must be counting her friends, as they evaporate one by one. Guru Dutt experienced the solitude of showbiz long ago when he sang 'Dekhi Zamanein Ki Yaari Bichde Sabhi Baari Baari'. Not that there is any comparison between the two. But Kaagaz Ke Phool and these paper fools who spend fortunes in keeping up an appearance often at the cost of their integrity and reputation, are distant cousins.



Ayushmann Khurrana Reveals 'Nothing Was Working'; Wanted To Quit Acting After Flop Films

Known for his unconventional roles and movies, Ayushmann Khurrana's journey in Bollywood is dubbed as one of the most inspiring stories. Starting off as a video jockey, the actor grabbed the opportunity of debuting on the big screen with Vicky Donor and steadily climbed the ladder of becoming one of the most sought-after actors in Bollywood in recent times. However, in his low moments, Khurrana revealed that he had decided to quit acting and pack up to his hometown.

Ayushmann Khurrana wanted to quit acting

In his recent appearance on a talk show hosted by a popular Bollywood actor, the 36-year-old divulged the ups and downs in his Bollywood journey. The actor revealed that after delivering three consecutive flops, he decided to pack up his career and move back to his home town in Chandigarh. Adding further, he revealed that 'nothing was working for him' at that point in time.

However, not giving up on his passion, the actor sternly admitted that he would work on his music band 'Ayushmann

Bhava' if not for the films. Khurrana stated that he would continue entertaining people at birthday parties or writing a book but, would not stop being an artist. His passion for art is evidently reflected on his social media platform as the actor constantly shares videos of him experimenting with music and musical instruments. Recently, he admitted being obsessed with playing 'Tank'. More on Ayushmann Khurrana's journey

The debuted in Bollywood in 2012 in the comedy-drama Vicky Donor and went on to appear in several successful movies. Ayushmann Khurrana's movies like Bareilly Ki Barfi, Badhaai Ho, Andhadhun, and Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan are some of his biggest hits. His latest movie Gaurav Solanki's Article 15 was a huge critically acclaimed movie and also received positive feedback at the box office.

READ | Ayushmann Khurrana gives befitting reply to troll who says he doesn't have the looks. Along with movies, the talented artist has also lent his voice to

songs like Paani Da Rang, Saadi Galli Mitti Di Khushbhoo and Yahin Hoon Main. In 2008, he married filmmaker Tahira Kashyap and shares two kids with her.



Ayushmann Khurrana

Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings: Marvel release new TV spot, fans are impressed by seamless CGI

Marvel has released a new TV spot for their upcoming superhero movie, Shang-Chi. It stars Simu Liu in the lead with Awkwafina and Michelle Yeoh as well.

Marvel has released a new TV spot for their upcoming superhero movie, Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings. The video shares a special insight into the powerful 10 rings and how our protagonist, Shang-Chi played by Simu Liu, learns to harness their power. The new spot begins with Shang-Chi descending into a fighting ring with his shirt off. Awkwafina, who plays his friend Katy, cracks a joke about it, perhaps to calm his nerves. The action then goes to the same tram fight

we have seen in almost all trailers and trailers for the movie so far. Shang-Chi's father tells him how the 10 rings have given 'legendary power' to their family and asks him to prove that he is worthy of it. However, he doesn't seem to be in a mood to prove anything. "I am nothing like you," he says. There is some underwater CGI action, a ninja army, a helicopter flight, some drifting cars and a few levitating rings added to the mix. Fans, overall, seemed excited for the movie, which releases in September. "The CGI in this

trailer is better than some other Marvel films! Super excited," read a comment on the video. "When Marvel finally remembered they had other films other than Black Widow," read another. Shang-Chi is directed by Destin Daniel Cretton and is the first Marvel film with an Asian character as lead. Cretton said in a statement, "Shang-Chi's main problem in his life is rooted in not knowing who he really is. He has to learn how to own every part of himself. If he doesn't allow himself to look at



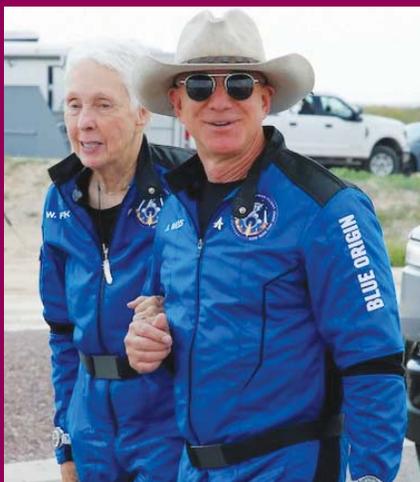
all of it—the good, the bad, the light and the dark—and to own it all, he won't be able to reach his full potential." Shang-Chi also stars Michelle Yeoh as Jiang Nan, as well as Fala Chen, Meng'er Zhang, Florian Munteanu, and Ronny Chieng.



Bezos' big gamble: Offers NASA \$2 billion in exchange for moon mission contract

(SAI Bureau)- Jeff Bezos is trying to outpace Elon Musk's SpaceX as the billionaire offers Nasa to cover \$2 billion in costs for its Moon lander.

Fresh off his trip to space, billionaire businessman Jeff Bezos on Monday offered to cover up to \$2 billion in NASA costs if the U.S. space agency awards his company Blue Origin a contract to make a spacecraft designed to land astronauts back on the moon. NASA in April awarded rival billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk's SpaceX a \$2.9 billion contract to build a spacecraft to bring astronauts to the lunar surface as early as 2024, rejecting bids from Blue Origin and defense



contractor Dynetics. Blue Origin had partnered with Lockheed Martin Corp (LMT.N), Northrop Grumman Corp (NOC.N) and Draper in the bid. The space agency cited its own funding shortfalls, SpaceX's proven

record of orbital missions and other factors in a contract decision that senior NASA official Kathy Lueders called "what's the best value to the government."

In a letter to NASA Administrator Bill Nelson, Bezos said Blue Origin would waive payments in the government's current fiscal year and the next ones after that up to \$2 billion, and pay for an orbital mission to vet its technology. In exchange, Blue Origin would accept a firm, fixed-priced contract, and cover any system development cost overruns, Bezos said.

"NASA veered from its original dual-source acquisition strategy

(Contd on page 31)

BioNTech to develop first mRNA-based vaccine for malaria by 2022



(SAI Bureau)- After tackling the Covid-19 pandemic with its mRNA vaccine, BioNTech is planning to use the same technology to develop a first of its kind vaccine for malaria, with an end of 2022 target to begin clinical testing. BioNTech's malaria project is part of the 'eradicateMalaria' initiative, led by the kENUP Foundation, to accelerate the eradication of the mosquito-borne disease. The efforts are supported by the World Health

(Contd on page 31)

Raj Kundra's arrest: What laws say about making porn movies in India

(SAI Bureau)- Businessman and Bollywood actor Shilpa Shetty's husband Raj Kundra has been arrested on several charges including cheating, making pornography etc. The Mumbai Police received complaints from more than one woman of being lured into starring in adult content for Raj Kundra's app Hotshots, which is presently owned by a UK firm, which allegedly belongs to Kundra's brother-in-law. After a few arrests and raids, the police finally reached Raj Kundra. The charges under which Raj Kundra has been booked include Section 420 (cheating), Section 34 (common intention), 292 and 293 and

(Contd on page 32)

New Yorkers to enjoy India Day Parade in Long Island

(Our Staff Reporter) Its celebration time for the entire Indian Community residing in Long Island. On August 8, 2021 the community will enjoy the 10th India Day Parade to rejoice India's 75th Independence Day in Hicksville, NY. Most importantly this will be the one and only parade occurring in whole of New York, announced by the officials of IDP USA, the organizer, at a press conference on July 28.

(Contd on page 3)

'Rs 3,000 fine for watching porn': How gang duped hundreds of people



(SAI Bureau)- The Delhi Police Cyber Cell arrested three men who allegedly extorted money from people by telling them they had been found watching porn online and that it's illegal. The accused allegedly sent fake police notices to their targets, asking them to pay a fine of Rs 3,000 or face legal action.

Police said the gang, whose mastermind operates from Cambodia, managed to extort more than Rs 30 lakh from thousands across the country in the last six months. Police claim they travelled more than 2,000 km in Tamil Nadu for a

week to nab the accused. DCP (Cyber Cell) Anyesh Roy said, "There were a few complaints online about fake ads and pop-ups warning internet users that they were caught watching pornography and it's illegal. These notices also had UPI payment and QR code payment options to pay the 'fines'."

(Contd on page 31)

ED arrests Ambience group promoter Raj Singh Gehlot in Rs 800 crore bank loan fraud case

(SAI Bureau)-The ED has arrested Raj Singh Gehlot, promoter of the Ambience group, in a money-laundering case linked to an alleged bank loan fraud of Rs 800 crore, officials said on Thursday. They said Gehlot is expected to be produced before a court here after he was arrested under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The central probe agency had raided Gehlot, his

(Contd on page 32)

