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US considers warning Ukraine of a Russian invasion in real-time



portrayed any U.S. military aid to Ukraine as provocative. But as more than 100,000 Russian troops mass at the Ukrainian border, the Biden administration is seeking to project support for the former Soviet republic's independence from Moscow and its territorial integrity. The United States and its allies have warned President Vladimir Putin of Russia that an invasion would bring both economic pain for his country, in the form of sanctions, and military losses. Officials in the Biden administration have moved cautiously to avoid escalating the situation, even as they consider ways to better assist Ukraine and deter Russia.

(SAI Bureau)- The possible Russian invasion, senior Pentagon is working on a plan to provide Ukraine with battlefield intelligence that could help the country more quickly respond to a administration officials said. The assistance, if approved by President Joe Biden, is sure to raise the ire of Russia, which has

(Contd on page 39)

Britain's crossbow rules in the crosshairs after Windsor Castle breach



(SAI Bureau)-Regulations governing crossbows in Britain are receiving renewed attention after a man was apprehended with one on the grounds of Windsor Castle, where members of the royal family had gathered for the Christmas holiday. "We are considering options to strengthen controls on crossbows," a spokesman for Britain's Home Office said in a statement Tuesday, as part of a continuing review of rules on lethal weapons ordered this year by Priti Patel, the home secretary.

(Contd on page 38)

The uproar of corruption: Piyush Jain arrested over tax evasion charges



By **Susmita Ghosh** - In one of the biggest seizures in history, the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) seized unaccounted cash of over Rs 195 crore, 23 kilograms of gold and 600 kilograms of sandalwood oil worth Rs 6 crore during raids at several premises linked to Piyush Jain in Kanpur and Kannauj so far. Investigation is still unfolding, more of his assets yet to be recovered. (Contd on page 36 & 37)

Nostradamus predictions for year 2022: Asteroid strike, Global warming and more



(SAI Bureau)-As the year 2021 draws to a close, another year has passed. And with that, we all know what's in store: a chance to reflect on what we've done, what we've accomplished, and what's ahead. With the current state of the world,

however, uncertainty is unavoidably a component of our mental state. A global pandemic has brought the world to a standstill in the twenty-first century, and the virus does not appear to be slowing down as new strains arise.

(Contd on page 38)

Income Tax dept raids premises owned by 2 business groups in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand

(SAI Bureau)- The Income Tax Department last week carried out search and seizure operations on two groups and their business entities in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand. One group is engaged in the business of manufacturing electrical switches, wires, LEDs, real estate and hotel businesses in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand. The other group is engaged in a money lending business in Jaipur and nearby cities.

(Contd on page 38)



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Indian-origin father of intruder at Windsor Castle speaks of 'horribly wrong' incident



58-year-old Jasbir Chail, the boy's father, said that his family is going through a tough time. He says something has gone horribly wrong with their son and they are trying to get him the help he needs

(Insider Bureau)-The Indian-origin father of a 19-year-old boy, being held under the UK's Mental Health Act after being arrested for intruding the grounds of Queen Elizabeth II's Windsor Castle with a crossbow, has spoken of the family's anguish over the incident. Jasbir Chail, 58, said that his son Jaswant needed help after he scaled the walls of the castle in Berkshire, south-east England, on Christmas Day while the 95-year-old monarch was in residence. A social media video, being reviewed by Scotland Yard, later emerged in which a masked man identifying himself as Indian Sikh Jaswant Singh Chail says he wanted to "assassinate" the Queen as revenge for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar in 1919. "Something's gone horribly wrong with our son and we are trying to figure out what. We've not had a chance to speak to him but are trying to get him the help he needs," Jasbir was quoted as saying in 'The Times'. "From our perspective, we are going through a difficult time. We

are trying to resolve this issue and it's not easy," he said. SUSPECT'S SNAPCHAT VIDEO

According to the newspaper, the suspect's parents are the registered directors of an IT firm and live with the teenager and his twin sister in a house on an estate in the village of North Baddesley in Hampshire, south-east England. Scotland Yard officers have been seen at the property since Sunday.

"I will attempt to assassinate Elizabeth, Queen of the royal family. This is revenge for those who have died in the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre," the masked suspect is heard saying in a distorted voice in the Snapchat video. "It is also revenge for those who have been killed, humiliated and discriminated on because of their race. I'm an Indian Sikh, a Sith. My name was Jaswant Singh Chail, my name is Darth Jones," he adds. Sith refers to villains in 'Star Wars' films who take on "Darth" as a title. A former schoolmate of the suspect from Toynbee School in Hampshire said that Chail had done well at secondary school. The 19-year-

old girl, who asked not to be named, told the newspaper: "He was nerdy, but not in a way like, 'I'm so clever'... he was pretty normal." She said that during his time in school "he never had many views on anything to do with racism", adding: "I don't know if lockdowns are getting to him or something." A message sent alongside the suspect's Snapchat video read: "I'm sorry to all of those who I have wronged or lied to." If you have received this then my death is near. Please share this with whoever and if possible get it to the news if they're interested."

FIFTH INCIDENT IN NINE MONTHS

The incident marked the fifth person to have caused a security scare at Windsor Castle in the past nine months and was caught on CCTV by security officers on the grounds within seconds. Meanwhile, UK Home Secretary Priti Patel is said to have instructed department officials to "consider options to strengthen controls" on weapons such as a crossbow, which was recovered in the latest security breach.

Indian-origin judge appointed to South Africa's highest judicial bench

(News Agencies)-Narandran 'Jody' Kollapen, who is of Indian origin, has been appointed to South Africa's highest judicial bench, the Constitutional Court. President Cyril Ramaphosa on Friday announced the appointment of 64-year-old Kollapen and Rammaka Steven Mathopo as the latest additions to the Constitutional Court after a lengthy process of public interviews. Kollapen and Mathopo were

among the five candidates recommended to Ramaphosa in October this year for the two vacancies. Both will take office from January 1, 2022. Kollapen was interviewed twice before for appointment to the Constitutional Court but was unsuccessful then despite having served two terms as an acting judge of the same institution. The Presidency said Kollapen and Mathopo have illustrious careers in the legal profession and the judiciary.

Kollapen, who has now been elevated from his position as a judge of the high court, started legal practice in 1982, focussing largely on public interest work. He joined Lawyers for Human Rights in 1993 and went on to become its national director in 1995, serving in that position until the end of 1996. In 1997, he took up a post as commissioner of the South African Human Rights Commission and went on to serve as chair of the commission for

seven years from 2002 until 2009. He was appointed as chair of the South African Law Reform Commission in April, 2016. Kollapen serves on the structures of numerous NGOs and community-based organisations, including the Legal Resources Centre, the Foundation for Human Rights and Laudium Care Services for the Aged. He has also been invited to speak on human rights issues across the world, including at the United

Nations and Harvard University. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Durban University of Technology; the Turquoise Harmony Institute's award for his contribution to society in the area of law and human rights; and a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Congress of Business and Economics, which was born out of the erstwhile Transvaal Indian Congress from the days when Mahatma Gandhi was in South Africa.



There should be no rhetoric on Jitan Ram Manjhi, says Sushil Kumar Modi



(News Agencies)-BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi came to the defense of former Bihar Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi and said that there should be no rhetoric about the senior NDA leader from the constituent parties. The BJP MP's statement comes amid a growing rift between the saffron party and its ally Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) after Manjhi made a controversial remark against Brahmins. Manjhi, who was speaking at an event organised by the Bhuiyan-Musahar community in Patna, raised the issue of politics being done in the name of religion and used derogatory terms against pandits (Brahmin by caste).

Following the HAM(S) leader's controversial remark, BJP leader Neeraj Kumar Bablu launched an attack against Jitan Ram Manjhi and advised him to retire from politics.

"Nitish Kumar made Jitan Ram Manjhi the chief minister but it seems Manjhi is now having an adverse effect on him. Manjhi should understand that his son is also a minister in the Nitish Kumar government and that is why he should refrain from making such nonsense statements," Neeraj Singh Bablu said

He added, "Manjhi should retire from politics and chant the name of Ram."

SEC cancels panchayat polls in Madhya Pradesh

The State Election Commission cancelled the ongoing process for gram panchayat elections in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday

The Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) on Tuesday cancelled the ongoing process for gram panchayat elections, a move which comes after a Supreme Court ruling and the state government's stand that these polls should not be held without OBC reservation. Voting was scheduled in January-February for the multi-phase elections to gram panchayats and the process of filing nominations for the first and second phases had started from December 13.

A notification for the cancellation of the gram panchayat elections was issued by the SEC after discussing all pros and cons in the matter, official sources said. Earlier, the state assembly had passed a resolution stating that panchayat polls should not be held without reservation for OBC candidates.

Over a week ago, the Supreme Court had stayed the OBC reservation and ordered

the SEC to convert these seats into general category constituencies before holding polls. The Madhya Pradesh cabinet on Sunday decided to withdraw an ordinance related to panchayat polls. The state government had brought the ordinance last month to annul the process of delimitation and reservation of seats by rotation set in motion by the previous Congress dispensation in 2019.

On the basis of this ordinance, the panchayat election process was started as per the delimitation and reservation rotation of 2014.

"After the Supreme Court's decision, the state cabinet decided to request the Governor to withdraw this ordinance (promulgated in November this year)," Minister for Panchayat Mahendra Singh Sisodia told reporters on Tuesday.

He accused the opposition Congress of scuttling the poll process by repeatedly going to the Madhya Pradesh High Court

and the Supreme Court over the issue of gram panchayat elections.

"Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is committed to provide reservation to the OBCs (in panchayats)," Sisodia said.

Both Congress and the BJP have accused each other of obstructing the panchayat poll process.

While the BJP alleged the Congress approached the Supreme Court on the issue with an aim to deprive OBCs of quota benefits, the Congress claimed the ruling party was not following mandatory rotation and delimitation process related to panchayat elections.

On December 4, the SEC had announced that polling to elect representatives on 859 posts of district panchayats across 52 districts, 6,727 posts of 313 Janpad Panchayats, sarpanches of 22,581 village panchayats and 3,62,754 posts of panch members will be held in three phases - on January 6, January 28 and February 16.

Parents on the run after burying newborn girl in Tamil Nadu's Madurai

(News Agencies)- A couple went missing along with their two daughters after allegedly burying their newborn girl in Tamil Nadu's Madurai district.

The local health officials alerted the police about the death of a six-day-old infant in mysterious circumstances. A case of female infanticide is suspected after the infant was reported dead and was buried without informing the health officials.

According to a report published in The New Indian Express, the couple O Muthupandi and Kowsalya had a healthy child at Sedapatti Primary Health Centre

on December 21. After a village nurse went on to check the mother and child on December 26, the baby was missing. The couple then informed the nurse that baby had died and was buried in front of the house. The nurse then alerted the police.

According to police, authorities may exhume the body and conduct a postmortem to ascertain the cause of death. A case has been registered under Section 318 of the IPC on charges of secretly burying the body of a child and further investigation is on.



Child rights body writes to West Bengal govt to follow Juvenile Justice Act

The all-party meeting was held under the leadership of Fisheries and Cultural Minister Saji Cherian and Agricultural Minister P Prasad

(News Agencies)-The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has issued a notice asking the West Bengal government to follow the Juvenile Justice Act 2015 for the functioning of child care institutions.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on Tuesday issued a notice to the chief secretary of West Bengal for not following the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, with respect to child care institutions in the state. The commission in its notice mentioned how despite the country having implemented the JJ Act 2015, West Bengal continues to follow provisions of the archaic Women's and Children's Institutions (Licensing) Act, of 1956, for



functioning of the child care institutions in the state. In its strongly worded notice to the West Bengal chief secretary, the NCPCR has noted that the state government by still following the provisions of the Women's and Children's Institutions (Licensing) Act,

1956, rather than the special enactment for care and protection of children- Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, is in contravention of the policy and principles of child rights.

"The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, which is in consonance with UNCRC and the Constitution of

India, lays down strict and stringent norms and standards to be followed by CCIs and keeping child care institutions out of the purview of this Act is a gross violation of rights of children," the notice states. The child rights panel in its notice has further gone on to cite the

order of the Supreme Court, in which the court had emphasised on the registration and regulation of child care institutions under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. The Supreme Court order had directed all states and UTs that irrespective of the management status of any child care institution, all institutions housing children shall be registered under Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.

Meanwhile, the commission has recommended that all child care institutions in West Bengal to be registered under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and to follow the provisions and procedures laid down under the Act. Furthermore, an action taken report has been sought in the matter within 10 days.





CM Channi says Punjab considering MSP on crops not covered by govt, extends relief for Basmati farmers

Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi assured the farmers that the state government would soon come out with a policy to cover MSP on crops that are currently not being covered by the Centre

(News Agencies)-Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi on Tuesday assured the state's farmers that the government was contemplating a scheme to provide a Minimum Support Price (MSP) on crops which are not covered by the central government.

"The state government would soon come out with a policy for covering all those crops under

State MSP, which are currently not covered under the MSP regime by the Centre," CM Channi said while meeting a delegation of farmers led by Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee.

The state government also welcomed the idea of a delegation to create a Basmati Trading Corporation to ensure export of Basmati across the

globe with the twin objective of providing remunerative prices for their crops and to give a major push towards crop diversification. The state government also decided to extend relief of Rs. 17000 per acre to the Basmati growers, whose crops have been substantially damaged due to hail storms during the past Kharif season.

Following this assurance by the Chief Minister, the Sangharsh committee immediately announced postponement of its 'rail roko' agitation.

Several issues including the cases registered against farmers at Delhi and by RPF during the farmers' agitation, debt waiver, providing jobs and compensation to the families of the farmers who died during the farmers' agitation

were deliberated at length.

Summing up the discussion, the chief minister assured the delegation that he would soon take up the matter with Union Home Minister Amit Shah for prompt withdrawal of cases registered against farmers by the Delhi Police as well as RPF during the year-long agitation against the government's farm laws.

ED seizes assets worth Rs 293 crore of former chairman of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank

The Enforcement Directorate has seized assets worth Rs 293.91 crore of Nesanimaran Muthu alias MGM Maran, a former chairman of the Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited. The assets were seized under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), officials said.

The seized assets are in the form of shareholdings in four Indian Companies - Southern Agrifurane Industries Private Limited, Anand Transport Private Limited, MGM Entertainment Private Limited and MGM Diamond Beach Resorts Private Limited.

Muthu, according to officials, incorporated two companies in

Singapore during the financial year 2005-06 and 2006-07 and invested SGD 5,29,86,250 equivalent to Rs 293.91 crore.

"This investment was made without taking approval from Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Further, the source of such a huge investment abroad was not disclosed to the Indian Regulators," said the ED.

The provisions of section 37A(1) empowers the Enforcement Directorate to seize Indian asset of a person who has acquired properties in foreign Country or made investment outside India without the approval of RBI while he was an Indian resident.



Dara Shikoh was 'deliberately' not given due importance by certain govts: Naqvi

Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi alleged that many governments deliberately did not give due importance to the works of Dara Shikoh, Shah Jahan's eldest son, who was a poet and a scholar

(News Agencies)-Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Tuesday said "prejudiced politics" created a misconception about the legacy of Dara Shikoh.

He also said that governments of so-called "champions of secularism" deliberately did not give due importance, recognition to works done by Dara Shikoh like many other great people.

Dara Shikoh was the eldest son of Shah Jahan, and a thinker, a poet and a scholar, who was killed by his younger brother Aurangzeb in a war of succession.

According to a statement issued by his office, Naqvi made these remarks at an international conference on Dara Shikoh held here.

The conference on 'Why Dara Shikoh Matters Today:



Remembering His Works and Personality' was organised by Aligarh Muslim University.

Naqvi said that harmony, tolerance, "sarva dharma sambhav" is the soul of India and "unity in diversity" is the strength of the country.

Dara Shikoh remained the torch bearer of social harmony and religious unity his entire life, he said, according to the statement.

Naqvi, who is also Deputy Leader of Rajya Sabha, said while on one hand, the believers of almost

all religions of the world live in India, on the other, a large number of atheists also exist in the country with equal constitutional and social rights.

"This strength of unity in diversity makes India 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'," he said.

Naqvi said India is the only country in the world where festivals and other joyous occasions of all the religions are celebrated together.

"We need to keep this shared cultural heritage and legacy of co-existence strengthened. Any attempt to disturb this fabric of unity and harmony will hurt the soul of India," he felt.

The minister noted that India is the world's largest centre of spiritual-religious knowledge and also the source of inspiration for "sarva dharma sambhav" and "vasudhaiva kutumbakam".

"It is our collective national responsibility to ensure that India's culture of tolerance and commitment of co-existence is not allowed to get weakened under any circumstances," he said.

Many obstacles came in the way of inclusive development, but our strength of unity in diversity has ensured the country moves forward on the path of prosperity, he said.

The governments of so-called "Champions of Secularism" deliberately did not give due importance, recognition to works done by Dara Shikoh like many other great people. Dara Shikoh was a very versatile personality. He was a very lively person, a thinker, a great poet, scholar, Sufi and a man with deep knowledge of arts and culture, the Union Minority Affairs Minister said.

Geeta Sexena
Bureau Chief (Punjab))

Gagandeep Singh
Deputy News Editor

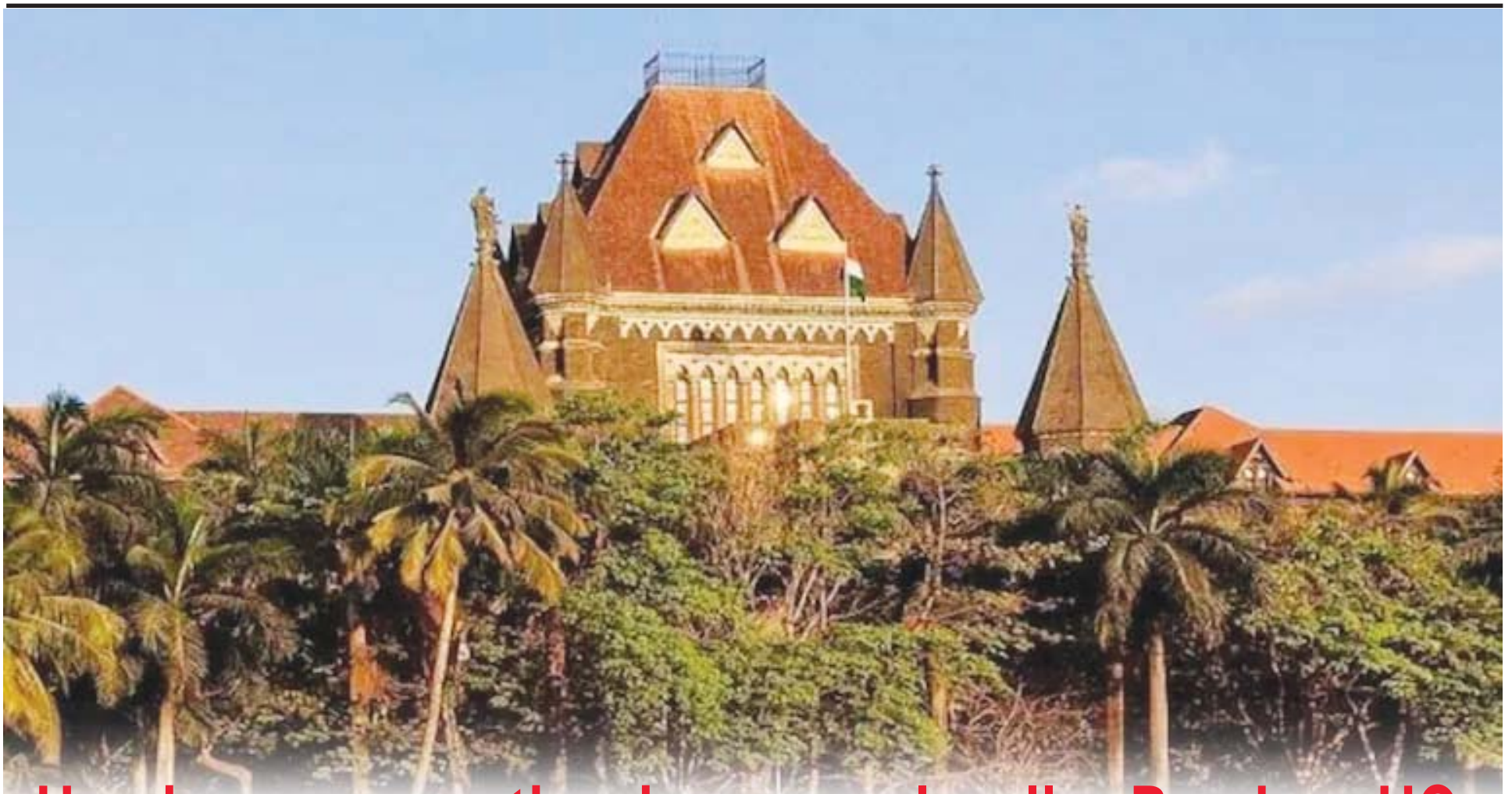
Sharanjit Singh Thind
Editor in Chief

Susmita Ghosh
Deputy Managing Editor

Josh India WebTV

The South Asian
INSIDER
Published Weekly from New York

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Hearing cross-voting in mayoral polls, Bombay HC coaches neutrality to minister in appellate role

Bombay High Court was hearing a petition filed Hasmukh Gehlot, group leader of the BJP in Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation

(News Agencies)-The Bombay High Court had a word of coaching to ministers presiding an appellate authority to decide matters of law. The Bombay High Court's advice came on hearing a plea in connection with cross-voting during mayoral polls in Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC) in 2020. The high court said when a minister presided over an appellate authority, then he should keep his political affiliation aside.

The court was hearing a petition filed Hasmukh Gehlot, group leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the MBMC.

Gehlot had approached the divisional commissioner of the Konkan division under the Maharashtra Local Authority Members' Disqualification Act, 1986 seeking disqualification of four BJP corporators. They had indulged in cross-voting during the election for mayor in 2020 there.

Gehlot had issued a whip which was violated by the

corporators. The divisional commissioner rejected his plea after which Gehlot moved the Bombay High Court instead of an appellate authority under the Shiv Sena-headed government. Gehlot cited 'bias' in a minister appointed by the government to head the appellate authority.

Justice GS Kulkarni said, "When the minister presides as an appellate authority, he wears two hats. The first hat would be the adjudicatory hat conferring power, authority and jurisdiction to discharge functions as an appellate authority."

"The second hat, to be kept dormant, would be as a member of a particular political affiliation. The minister would necessarily be required to remove the second hat when he wears the official hat of an appellate authority."

Gehlot told the court that it was impossible to conceive that the "minister who would now be the appellate authority, can decide the petitioner's appeal without

a political bias as he belongs to the Shiv Sena".

The petition said, "There is a strong likelihood and apprehension of bias which would dissuade the petitioner to avail of the alternate remedy, and it is for such reason the petitioner has invoked the jurisdiction of this court under Article 226 of the Constitution."

Justice Kulkarni asked Gehlot to approach the government saying, "In my opinion, it would be premature for the petitioner to presume any bias of the appellate authority, even before taking recourse to the appellate remedy."

Justice Kulkarni said, "Once the legislature by law has provided of an appellate remedy such provision cannot be rendered nugatory on the ground of an apprehension of bias, even if the presiding officer who would decide the appeal belongs to a particular political affiliation and hence, he would not pass any order which would be prejudicial to the political interest of his party."

The bench said, "The responsibility and rigour of wearing the first hat are quite onerous. In wearing the first hat, the minister is acting as the state government and not a person belonging to a particular political affiliation."

"When the minister wields the power of an appellate authority so as to discharge the functions of the state government as the provisions under sub-section (3) of Section 7 of the Act would provide, the law mandates that the minister shuns all biases which may be either personal or official and that he assumes a neutral position so as to discharge his authority and functions with objectivity in deciding the appeal before him in accordance with law."

Evasive tiger captured after six-day chase in Bengal's South 24 Parganas

The West Bengal Forest Department has finally managed to catch the Royal Bengal Tiger that had terrorised villagers in Kultali in the state's South 24 Parganas district. This was the result of a six-day-long chase that ended with the tiger's capture.

Officials say the tiger evaded traps set up by the forest department and was elusive till Monday. The tiger strayed into a human habitat on the banks of the Piyali River at

Kultali when it was spotted.

The forest department even used a fire brigade in an attempt to capture the big cat. On Tuesday, firefighters used jets to spray cold water in the dense forest on Tuesday with the hope that this would force the tiger to abandon its hideout.

Success came on Monday when the forest department officials deployed drone cameras to spot the tiger and even used crackers and drums to persuade the animal to

show itself.

However, they could only hear the tiger roaring.

Villagers claim that they had been hearing the tiger roar for the last three days and even found pugmarks not far from the village.

On Sunday, the same tiger had attacked a group of locals who, along with forest department officials, was searching for the animal amid thick bushes.



Haryana Cabinet Expansion

BJP's Kamal Gupta, Devender Singh Babli of JJP sworn in as ministers

BJP MLA Kamal Gupta and JJP MLA Devender Singh Babli were inducted into the government as ministers

(News Agencies)-Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Tuesday expanded his cabinet with the induction of one MLA each from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its coalition partner Jannayak Janta Party (JJP).

In the second expansion of the Haryana cabinet in two years,

BJP MLA Kamal Gupta and JJP MLA Devender Singh Babli were inducted into the government as ministers.

They were administered oath by Governor Bandaru Dattatreya at a ceremony held at the Haryana Raj Bhavan in Chandigarh.

Gupta took oath in Sanskrit while Babli took oath in

Hindi. WHO IS KAMAL GUPTA?

Kamal Gupta is BJP's MLA from Hisar. Interacting with reporters after the swearing-in ceremony, Dr Kamal Gupta, a two-time MLA, said his priority will be to ensure the development of Hisar and the state.

Haryana BJP chief OP Dhankar said Kamal Gupta works

dedicatedly on any task he takes up.

Gupta has an RSS background and is considered close to CM Manohar Lal.

WHO IS DEVENDER SINGH BABLI?

Devender Singh Babli is a first-time MLA from Tohana in Fatehabad, which emerged as

a hotbed of protests by farmers against the three central farm laws earlier this year.

The JJP legislator had also faced a strong protest by farmers in his constituency in June during which his SUV's windscreen was damaged and his personal assistant injured, according to a PTI report.

Babli, a prominent Jat face, had in the 2019 assembly polls defeated BJP's then state unit chief Subhash Barala by a heavy margin of votes.

Haryana BJP chief OP Dhankar said Babli is energetic and works with passion and dedication on the task assigned to him.

BOOST FOR BJP

With the induction of the two MLAs, the strength of the Haryana council of ministers has gone up to 14, including the chief minister, which is the upper limit.

Earlier, 10 MLAs were inducted into the cabinet in November 2019, days after the chief minister and his deputy were sworn in on October 27 that year. After Tuesday's cabinet expansion, the BJP has 10 ministers, including the chief minister, and the JJP has three ministers, including the deputy chief minister, while Ranjit Singh Chautala is the lone Independent MLA inducted as a minister. The BJP fell short of a simple majority in the October 2019 Haryana assembly polls, winning 40 of the 90 seats, and subsequently, it forged an alliance with the JJP, which has 10 MLAs. The BJP formed the government in the state with the support of JJP lawmakers and Independent MLAs.

Kerala: SDPI activist arrested in connection with RSS worker's killing in Palakkad

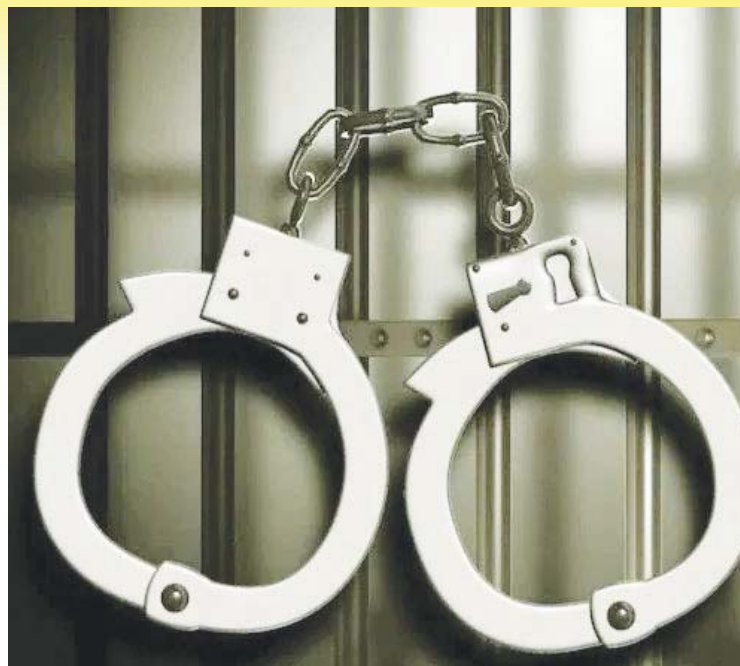
(News Agencies)-Police probing the killing of a RSS worker in Kerala's Palakkad district on Tuesday arrested an SDPI activist allegedly involved in the crime.

He was nabbed from the Cherpulassery area in the district, police said.

"The arrested person is directly involved in the killing. He hacked the victim using a sword. He is an activist of the SDPI", District Police Chief R Viswanadh told reporters here.

With this the number of persons arrested in connection with the case has reached six. This includes two Popular Front of India (PFI) office bearers who are also allegedly involved in the killing.

The police have also issued lookout notice for four persons in connection with the killing of the RSS worker A Sanjith.



The identity of the man arrested today has not been disclosed as the investigation team wanted to carry out an identification parade.

The victim's wife, who was witness to the murderous attack on her husband, had said she could identify the people who came in a car and killed her husband.

The 27-year-old man was hacked to death on November 15 while he was taking his wife to her workplace.

His wife had recently moved to the Kerala High Court seeking a CBI probe into the killing.

The High Court has directed the state to file a report on the status of investigation. The BJP and Sangh Parivar organisations have alleged that the activists of Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), the political offshoot of Islamist outfit PFI, were behind the broad daylight murder.



My book is about challenges India is facing and how we can overcome them: Manish Tewari

Lok Sabha MP and Congress leader Manish Tewari said his book was about the national security challenges being posed by Pakistan and China

(News Agencies)-Lok Sabha MP and Congress leader Manish Tewari said his book '10 Flashpoints: 20 Years National Security Situation that Impacted India' was about the national security challenges being posed by the two hostile neighbours, Pakistan and China.

"Pakistan is posing a threat to national security from 1971 onwards. China is also hostile. We are required to be very vigilant about these challenges," he said.

The former Union Information and Broadcasting Minister said whether it was a Pakistani intrusion in 1999 or China's interference in 2020. The

challenges remain the same. "We are only awakened after something happens," Tewari said, adding that the country should be open for a discussion on national challenges like security.

Manish Tewari also said that by writing a book his intention was not to criticise any government but to tell the nation that the challenges which we faced in 1999 during the Kargil war have the same intensity after two decades.

The senior Congress leader also said that his book talks about the fallout of the strategic call taken by the then government and there was a need to

strengthen our intelligence network.

"In my estimation, there should have been a kinetic action but the fact is that the government then decided to take a particular call", Manish Tewari said.

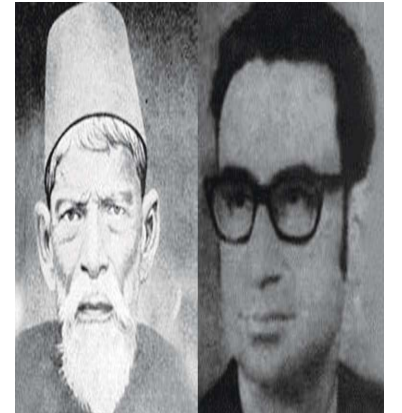
The Anandpur Sahib MP said that there was a need to focus more and more on national security. "We should rise above the political lines whenever the challenge of national security comes for a discussion," he said.

Commenting on the role of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), the Congress leader said that the Kargil review committee had recommended the appointment

of CDS but the then Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led government decided not to act on it for three long years. It was only during the second tenure of the NDA that CDS was appointed.

"Unfortunately, we lost the first CDS in an air crash. The institution of the CDS and the impact that it will have both in terms of the military hierarchy and the relationship with the civilian dispensation is the evolving situation which will ultimately lead to the stability of this institution," Manish Tewari said. He also said that the attempts to polarise the communities could adversely affect national security.

After city, poets' names changed from 'Allahabadi' to 'Prayagraj' on UP edu panel's website



(News Agencies)-On the website of the Uttar Pradesh Higher Education Service Commission (UPHESC), the last names of some famous poets were changed from 'Allahabadi' to 'Prayagraj'. This comes three years after the city's name was changed from Allahabad to Prayagraj.

In the website's 'About Allahabad' section, the names of famous poets like Akbar Allahabadi, Teg Allahabadi and Rashid Allahabadi have been written as Akbar Prayagraj, Tej Prayagraj and Rashid Prayagraj.

The tampering with the names sparked criticism from poets like Shlesh Gautam and Shailendra Mathur, Congress leader Irshad Ullah and AIMIM chief Asaddudin Owaisi.

On Twitter, Owaisi wrote, "Baba is changing everyone's name in Uttar Pradesh. Akbar Allahabadi has been renamed as Prayagraj."

UPHESC STATEMENT

Reacting to the developments, an official said that the UPHESC website had been hacked on Tuesday to change the poets' names. "It was evidently a handiwork of some miscreants expressing their apparent resentment over the change of name of Allahabad," chairman of the Prayagraj-based commission Ishwar Charan Vishvakarma said. He added that the commission had played no role in corrupting the website. The Hindi website of the commission has been restored and work is on to restore the English portal, as per a PTI report. A complaint over the incident has been lodged with the police's cyber cell to nab the culprits.

CBI takes over probe into alleged Assam Rifles recruitment scam

(News Agencies)-The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case in connection with an alleged recruitment scam in Assam Rifles in Jorhat district of Assam.

The Assam Police had originally registered the case in 2019 at Jorhat Police station. The case has been taken over by the CBI upon request from the state government.

The CBI registered the case on Tuesday under the relevant sections of the Prevention of

Corruption Act, Indian Penal Code, and Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018, at its ACB office in



Guwahati.

According to the FIR, a department inquiry by the vigilance branch of the Assam Rifles in Shillong had found that

one Yashwant Kumar, a teacher from Bihar's Vaishali district, was acting as a middleman. He worked in connivance with certain personnel, including some doctors, of Assam Rifles to get aspirants recruited into the force.

During the departmental vigilance inquiry, witnesses and voice call record revealed that the teacher has been working in coordination with some Assam Rifles personnel to cheat innocent youths by taking bribes for the

selection of shortlisted candidates. An audio clip revealing details of such money transactions and false promises has been found.

"Yashwant Kumar in connivance with some unknown Assam Rifles used to bring aspirants for recruitment at Jorhat during the recruitment rally and deliver bribe money to the officers of the unknown officials of Assam Rifles including doctors of Assam Rifles," the CBI's FIR copy stated.



Nagaland firing: Konyak CSOs allow India Army to conduct inquiry, but without arms, uniforms

The Konyak Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) said that they are allowing a team of Indian Army to visit Oting village to probe Nagaland firing incident. The CSOs, however, added that the visit must be without arms and uniforms

(News Agencies)-A day before the visit of the Indian Army Inquiry team to the incident site of Oting village in Nagaland's Mon district, the Konyak Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on Tuesday said that they are allowing Indian Army to conduct inquiry, but visit must be with no arms and uniforms.

The Indian Army team is scheduled to visit the incident site on December 29 in connection with inquiry into the Nagaland firing incident that claimed the lives of 14 civilians. The inquiry team has solicited

help from the public at large regarding any primary information pertaining to the incident. Any persons having information and desirous of deposing before the inquiry team has been requested to do so at the Tizit police station. Meanwhile, Konyak Civil Society Organizations comprising Konyak Union (KU), Konyak Nyupuh Seko Khong (KNSK) and Konyak Students' Union (KSO), said in a press statement that the Konyak Civil Society Organizations have allowed the Indian Army inquiry

team to visit the incident site, adding that any visit must be without any arms and uniforms. "The state security is requested to depute necessary arrangements and protocols for smooth conduct of the inquiry committee," said the press statement issued by Konyak CSOs.

KONYAK CSOs DEMAND FOR JUSTICE
Konyak Civil Society Organizations have demanded justice without delay.

In the statement, Konyak CSOs said that the Konyak Civil

Organizations appreciates the concern of Union Home Ministry to bring justice for Oting massacre incident that unfolded on December 4 and applauds the initiative made by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, Deputy Chief Minister Y. Patton and T. R Zeliang Leader of the NPFLP on December 23 in Delhi.

However, Konyak CSOs remains skeptical about the recent developments.

"There were no delegates from ground zero while meeting with the Union Home Minister Amit Shah to authenticate and portray the real incidents/stories about the Oting assacre incidents. Non inclusion of Ground Zero member in the Enquiry Committee constituted for repealing of AFSPA. The Konyak CSO hereby opines that only the citizen from Ground zero would be able to portray the untold sufferings of the civilian for so many decades under such Draconian Law (AFSPA)," read the statement. The Konyak CSOs also appealed to the members in the Committee to consider the value of humanity on utmost priority while framing its recommendation reports.

Raising questions over the press statement from the Indian Army, they said, "The Konyak CSOs are also happy to learn that 'Friends of the Hill People' is nothing but a 'wolf in lamb's skin'. Hence the Konyak CSOs appeals before the mighty Indian Army to clarify its actual stance on Oting massacre incidents."

The CSOs have declared that it requires no security that fails to provide security to its citizens. They further declared that mere replacement of the Indian armed forces from Mon district would be no different. "Considering justice delayed is justice denied, the Konyak CSOs will be compelled to convene all Konyak Summit on January 18, 2022 to discuss further course of action if justice is delayed," they added.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Home Affairs on December 2 formed a panel under the chairmanship of Dr Vivek Joshi, RG and CCI to review the AFSPA in Nagaland. The MHA panel will review the application of AFSPA in Nagaland and make suitable recommendations within a period of three months.





Boy from Bachpan ka Pyaar viral video meets with accident, under treatment in Chhattisgarh's Sukma



In Sukma district of Chhattisgarh, internet sensation Sahdev Dirdo was injured in a road accident on Tuesday. He has been admitted to a hospital and is currently undergoing treatment. A little boy from Chhattisgarh, Sahdev Dirdo became famous after a video of him singing the song 'Bachpan Ka Pyaar' went viral on the internet.

On Tuesday, he was on his way to his village on a motorcycle with his father when the accident occurred. The boy fell off the motorcycle and got injured. It is being said that he has suffered a serious head injury.

After receiving first aid, Sahdev Dirdo was shifted from Sukma District Hospital to Medical College in Jagdalpur. The district collector Vineet Bandanwar and Superintendent of Police Sunil Sharma also reached the hospital to check how he was doing. His condition is being continuously monitored by doctors.

Konta MLA Kawasi Lakhma has instructed the district authorities to ensure Sahdev Dirdo receives the best possible treatment.

BACHPAN KA PYAAR VIRAL VIDEO

Sahdev Dirdo went viral overnight after his version of the song Bachpan Ka Pyaar went viral on social media.

Two years ago, Sahdev's teacher asked him to sing the song at school and recorded his video. The clip was subsequently shared on the internet. However, the video only grabbed netizens' attention this year. Sahdev Dirdo was felicitated by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. He has also released the revamped version of Bachpan Ka Pyaar with Badshah.

Maharashtra: MVA, BJP lock horns over provision of university act amendment bill

The BJP and the MVA clashed over the provisions of the Maharashtra Public University Act, 2016 (Third Amendment) bill

The BJP locked horns with the leaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi over the provision of the Maharashtra Public University Act, 2016 (Third Amendment) bill to include LGBTQIA community members on University Boards.

The amended act has provision for Board of Equal opportunity. As per the bill, "There shall be a board of equal opportunity in each University which shall be responsible to plan, monitor, guide and coordinate various development and welfare programs, schemes, regulations and policies in regard to the welfare, development and social protection of teachers, non teaching employees and

students belonging to various categories of weaker section of the society, minorities, women, LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and others)." The bill further adds that the provision will be extended to "persons with disabilities to promote and establish values of freedom, secularism, equality, equal opportunity, dignity and social justice enshrined in the Constitution of India and also create policy, procedures, and practice for inclusive education in university."

BJP leader and former minister Sudhir Mungantiwar objected to provisions to include LGBTQIA community members.

"How will one ascertain that a person is (part of) LGBTQIA (community)? Who will certify this? Are you going to appoint a person who has homosexual relations? There are other points in the amendment bill that also need detailed discussion and hence this bill should be postponed till the next session," Mungantiwar said.

Replying to the objections, Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant said, "There are several judgements by the Supreme court about equal opportunities. By only pointing at this issue, the member (Mungantiwar) is trying to mislead... There is nothing new that we are doing, there are similar laws made in other part of the

country. We have brought the amendment bill only after discussing with experts."

Meanwhile, the Opposition called the bill to amend University Act an attempt to take control of Universities. The BJP has been vehemently opposing the Bill.

An amendment in the law on appointment of vice-chancellors was approved at a cabinet meeting last week. As per the amendment, vice-chancellors will not be appointed directly by the Governor, and he can only approve the names recommended by the state government.

The bill was passed amid a ruckus by the Opposition, who raised objections against it.

India-US healthcare collaboration in spotlight as India approves 2 more Covid vaccines



India-US collaboration in the health sector is in the spotlight as the Central Drug Authority this week approved two more Covid vaccines - Corbevax and Covovax - and antiviral drug Molnupiravir for use in India.

Taranjit Singh Sandhu, India's Ambassador to the US, in a tweet described it as a model of India-US healthcare collaboration.

"Models of what India-United States healthcare collaboration can achieve for global good!" Sandhu said.

Indian companies working with Texas Children's, Baylor College of Medicine's National School of Tropical Medicine; Dr. Peter Hotez, Prof and Dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor and Co-Director of the Texas Children's Hospital Center for Vaccine Development; NovaVax; Merck and Ridgeback Bio, tweeted the Indian diplomat.

During his visit to Houston in October, Sandhu had met Professor Hotez and held discussions on this issue. In June this year, the ambassador visited the Novavax facility in Maryland. He also spoke to the CEO of Sanisure Thomas Hook.

Sanisure supplies components for the SII - Novavax collaboration. These have been part of a continuous outreach that the ambassador had with vaccine manufacturers and pharma companies. Corbevax, a protein sub-unit Covid-19 vaccine, whose technology was created and engineered in collaboration with Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine has received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).

The vaccine is being launched in India with other underserved countries to follow, Texas Children's Hospital said in a statement.

"This announcement is an important first step in vaccinating the world and halting the pandemic. Our vaccine technology offers a path to address an unfolding humanitarian crisis, namely the vulnerability the low- and middle-income countries face against the delta variant," Hotez said.

"Widespread and global vaccination with our Texas Children's-Baylor-BE vaccine would also forestall the emergence of new variants. We have previously missed that opportunity for the alpha and delta variant. Now is our chance to prevent a new global wave from what might follow," he said.

Dubbed "the world's Covid-19 vaccine", it uses a traditional recombinant protein-based technology that will enable its production at large scales making it widely accessible to inoculate the global population, the statement said.

Corbevax after completing two Phase III clinical trials involving more than 3,000 subjects was found to be safe, well tolerated and immunogenic. It demonstrated superior immune response in comparison with Covishield vaccine when assessed for Neutralising Antibody (nAb) Geometric Mean Titers (GMT) against the Ancestral-Wuhan strain and the globally dominant Delta variant.

Corbevax vaccination also generated significant Th1 skewed cellular immune response.

Voter-Aadhaar unification: Value-added convenience to voting

By Susmita Ghosh

It's definitely a historic step taken by the Indian Government to connect the Voter and Aadhaar cards, the two major IDs. The unification will be a milestone for the Indian citizen registration system. At the same time, it potentially may result in a common national ID, similar to the social security number in the US. The Election Laws (Amendment Bill), 2021 was passed recently in the Rajya Sabha supported by the Lok Sabha. Presented by Indian Law minister, Kiren Rijju, the bill aims to link the electoral roll data with the Aadhaar cards. Aadhaar is a biometric id issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India or UIDAI for the uninitiated. The Indian government is pushing the bill to eliminate fake voters in the largest democracy in the world. It will also help to find out the authenticity of citizenship where migrating aliens is a major headache for the administrations. In India, there are several reported instances of fake vote casting, or even people coming to vote with Voter ID cards of the deceased. A grainy photo on the ID card is not enough to find out the authenticity of the voter, which is misused by these miscreants. When the Aadhaar linking is done, a two-step authentication will help curb the problem. Verifying the biometric parameters will ensure that no imposter have the right to franchise. It will result in a corruption-free election across the country. There are other optimistic aspects of the bill as well. The Indian citizen who migrate to other states of the country, will not lose the chance to vote, just because they are in another part of the country. With biometric linking, they can prove their citizenship and identity, help

vote at the place of residency.

According to the bill, the electoral officers may need the Aadhaar numbers from the people who are already on the electoral roll. However, providing the Aadhaar information to be included in the electoral roll is voluntary. The Indian Border States have been suffering from illegal migration for more than half a century. The external inbound population has been living here for years, with fake IDs. This move will help weed out the encroachment, relieving pressure on the national resources. Despite various positive impacts, there are potential downsides of the merger which cannot be ignored. Any possible practical linking should be done only after these are taken care of, else the fallout can be quite dangerous. Time and again, it is proved that the Aadhaar data is not unreachable. When it is linked with a major ID card like the electoral roll, a manifold increase in data security is warranted. Else, it may result in identity theft, which the innocent will suffer. The fallible fingerprint readers, error in reading due to blurred prints, faulty internet connectivity should not stop a true Indian citizen from casting their vote. The whistle blowers are also claiming that the Aadhaar-linked data can be misused in voter profiling based on religion or selective exclusion from the benefits. The Aadhaar-voter linking move is a powerful tool. If exercised with proper caution, it can effectively cure the illegal alien problem in India, else it will end up as a borderline anti-constitutional move. The world will watch closely how India goes ahead with the goal of a unified ID.



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Editor in Chief & Publisher :

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) :

Aruna Singh

Dy Managing Editor India :

Susmita Ghosh

(Legal Columnist) Anusha Syed

Special Correspondents:

Gagandeep Singh (India)

(Insider Show Host) Geeta Saxena

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

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Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

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Home Ministry woke up on Christmas and found issues in Missionaries of Charity's FCRA application: TMC

Rajdeep Sardesai brought TMC's Saket Gokhale, BJP's Priyanka Tibrewal and Christian theologian Valson Thampu together for a discussion on the Missionaries of Charity row that erupted on Monday

A controversy erupted on Monday after allegations were made that the bank accounts of Mother Teresa's organisation Missionaries of Charity had been frozen by the Centre. It later emerged that the organisation's application for renewal of its Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration had been refused by the government for not meeting eligibility conditions as some "adverse inputs" had been received. As a result, the organisation is not operating its foreign currency accounts.

The issue has become the centre of a political battle between the ruling BJP and the opposition TMC. While the TMC is alleging that the Centre is targeting Christian institutions, the BJP has claimed the Opposition is politicising the issue ahead of the Goa election to be held early next year.

India Today Consulting Editor Rajdeep Sardesai brought TMC spokesperson Saket Gokhale, BJP spokesperson Priyanka Tibrewal and Christian theologian Valson Thampu together for a discussion on the issue.

TMC QUESTIONS GOVT'S TIMING
When asked why the TMC's Mamata Banerjee had raked up the issue when Missionaries of Charity itself clarified that its accounts were not frozen, TMC's Saket Gokhale said, "This is an organisation not even remotely connected with politics. They work with the most underprivileged. Everyone knows what happens to those who say anything against the government. That's why they had to

issue that statement the way they did."

Further, he questioned the Centre's timing in rejecting the organisation's application for renewal of FCRA registration and suggested that Missionaries of Charity was being unfairly targeted.

"The deadline for renewal is December 31. The Ministry of Home Affairs woke up five days before the deadline, on Christmas, to reject their application? This leaves them no time before the deadline to file a review application. At least tell them what the 'adverse inputs' found are," he said.

Saket Gokhale also said that the government's PM Cares fund also has a FCRA registration but does not seem to be subject to the same stringent checks that organizations like Missionaries of Charity are facing.

BJP SUGGESTS GOA POLLS CONNECTION
Meanwhile, BJP spokesperson Priyanka Tibrewal insisted that the government was only ensuring financial transparency in the running of organizations like Missionaries of Charity and implementing the FCRA Act.

She claimed that the Opposition was engaging in "communal provocation" to gain voters in the upcoming election in Goa, where there is a large Catholic population.

"Why such timing for this discussion, right before the Goa polls? This is communal provocation to woo voters. If the organisation feels some injustice has been done, it should challenge

the same on the correct forum. Our system is transparent, they can go to court or file an RTI," she said.

TMC's Saket Gokhale rejected the Goa polls connection and said, "Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee spoke up on the issue because Mother Teresa was, in essence, from Bengal."

'MAKING CHRISTIANS INSECURE BECAUSE GOVT ELECTORALLY INSECURE'

Rajdeep Sardesai asked Valson Thampu, Christian theologian and former principal of St Stephen's College, if the Christian community is being targeted at the moment or if this is an exaggeration.

Valson Thampu said, "There certainly is disquiet on ground. I think there is more attention on Christian community because after the Ayodhya issue was settled, the usefulness of the Muslim community as a hate object has reduced for the government. So for vote bank consolidation, the ruling party has to aggravate the majority community's sense of insecurity. They are trying to treat their own electoral insecurity by generating insecurity among other religious communities."

He added, "They are peddling the narrative that missionaries with lots of foreign funding are here to wipe out the Hindus. The government's excuse to not renew the group's FCRA license is because of 'adverse reports' about its functioning."

To achieve \$5 trillion GDP goal, India needs to revamp its regulatory frameworks



This article is in continuation to last week's article in this column "It's time to regulate regulations in India to boost startups." I have been inundated by examples of regulations that were either changed or are needed to be changed to unlock very significant economic value. In fact, regulatory frameworks appear to be an independent source of generating value in the economy.

Let us take the example of bike-taxis. This is a concept that is already prevalent in many South-East Asian countries. In India, where we have overloaded three-wheelers of all sizes carrying commuters who would like to commute at the cheapest cost possible, it is but obvious that a bike-taxi would be of immense demand for commuters.

However, bike-taxis are actually not yet legal in most states of the country. Making bike-taxis legal would lead to millions getting a livelihood while providing a cheaper and more convenient mode of transportation to many millions in our crowded cities. Needless to say, it would also lead to more tax collection and an increase in the size of the economy.

While there is no central legislation regulating bike-taxis, the central government has recommended that bike-taxis be allowed for commercial use and had also directed the state governments to consider allowing private bikes to be converted into taxis so as to be used for commercial purposes and the regulations around the same.

The matter of whether or not bike-taxis are permissible, now lies in the hands of individual state governments. Let us look at the curious case of digital maps. Up until this year, digital maps in India were illegal. Indian laws required Indian firms to seek licenses and additional approvals to create and publish topographical data. Such a regulation not only deprived the nation of an extremely useful asset, but also led to handicapping local digital map players while providing foreign players an iron grip over the Indian market. Although this regulation was changed earlier this year and it has led to significant economic activities, it had already done the damage of blocking the growth of robust Indian digital mapping companies. In fact, no less than the prime minister of country noted that the "deregulation" step would help the country become more self-reliant and reach its \$5 trillion GDP goal. We also have unicorn startups running online gaming industries where the founders wake up every morning to check if they have been banned yet. State governments after state governments have been flirting with total bans and partial bans on online gaming. Even though the government understands that one cannot stop the march of technology, we still have a situation that entire industries and the millions of people working in it, are perpetually on tenterhooks if their industry will continue to operate the next day.



School reopening amid Covid-19:

Here's what teens think about going back to school

Students share mixed opinions on the reopening of schools amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic

Thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, schools have been closed for the past two years. The imposition of lockdown and the shift of academic life from offline to online has become the new norm. Now that everything is gradually opening, students have been in discussions about whether online classes are better than the traditional offline classes. We asked over 200 teens about their preferences and came across interesting perspectives. Over 70 percent prefer offline education and here is why:

1. Recess isn't the same
Teens remember recess as a time of sharing lunch, fighting over whose food is the best, and running around the school playing football and whatnot. Somehow, pranking peers by playing random songs during Zoom classes is not as fun as hanging out in person.

2. Assignments seem harder
Studying at home now means that assignment submission times can be unpredictable, some even involving sleepless nights or a last-minute rush. Offline classes come with the benefit of teachers sometimes forgetting about assignments - unless that one

annoying kid reminds the teacher about them.

3. "Raise your hand if you have a doubt."

Even though raising a hand in class seems awkward, it's still a far more immediate way to clear doubts or ask questions. Online classes don't always facilitate that sort of immediate response. In addition, students in a school environment have the option to walk up to a teacher in the staff room, access extra reading hours, or swipe through books from the library.

While some teens feel very strongly in favour of offline classes, a few have enjoyed their time learning online:

While 30 percent choose online learning because:

1. Comfort above everything
The idea of studying on the couch or bed, wrapped up in a fuzzy blanket, is too comforting for some teens to give up. Moreover, being online makes it easier for them to skip classes, play games during class hours or finish assignments at night.

2. Hacks and tricks
From remote software and

staying connected with peers through text platforms to dodging biometric validation, teens have found new ways to get through their exams in an easier way. These loopholes, along with new online exam formats, have considerably reduced pressure from parents and teachers, making students feel less stressed.

3. Personal growth

With less time spent in school and more flexibility in online classes, teens have had the time to delve into their various interests. In fact, many have started small businesses, turning their passions into career options, engaging with people beyond school, and learning new skills online. Internships have

skyrocketed during this time, helping teens become more independent and readying them for the current job market.

While each side provides great arguments, ultimately the benefits of one format over the other depend on teens themselves. Who knows, maybe we will see a version that could be a hybrid of both.





Yati and Owaisi do not matter But is democracy enough?

Hyderabad MP and AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi types are polarising figures. Ghaziabad's Dasna temple priest Yati Narsinghanand types are bigoted figures. The utility of these two for any community they claim to represent or think about does not exist beyond numerical representation or work legacy, respectively

Internationally accepted delineation between free speech and hate speech limits the reach and appeal of public speech if it threatens the existence of a community, ethnicity, gender or race and/or targets a group uncharitably. This delineation is more moral than legal, more felt than codified just as most experiences in human life are. The strategy of hate speech that invariably crops up prior to any elections globally or nationally exploits the base insecurities of community existence and grayness of interpreting individual freedom. The chronology of a well-tested strategy hate speeches being made, recorded, made viral, ensured that they reach the desired audiences with alacrity and being talked about is one that has been duly acknowledged.

It has been silently endorsed by some, loathed publicly by others and used as a dog whistle by some politicians at the top. But no one seems to be making up their mind on how to tackle it. And, it is this fact that fascinates me the most.

Hyderabad MP and AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi types are polarising figures. Ghaziabad's Dasna temple priest Yati Narsinghanand types are bigoted figures. The utility of these two

for any community they claim to represent or think about does not exist beyond numerical representation or work legacy, respectively.

Otherwise, there is no reason why Owaisi a parliamentarian for quite some time has never been in news beyond his vitriolic verbal pronouncements. No policy initiative can be attributed to Owaisi or no model from his constituency can be hailed as a roadmap for others to follow.

There is also no reason why Yati types have never done anything substantial like Ghanshyam

Shukla, a Gandhian figure in Bihar who passed away this week in absolute anonymity, but with a very rich oeuvre of community and cultural service. Despite being aware of this, why do we allow our finer capabilities of sight and auditory finesse to tolerate these hateful bigots?

This question teases our individual conscience more than our collective one. Individually, while all of us have some flaw and commit various kinds of follies, collectively, something inside us guides us to a sense of community wisdom.

Moral community codes and free mindsets are advocated by all who believe in the innate goodness of men and women. And hence, more often than not, collective conscience remains an ironic display of goodness despite our individual indiscretions. The question really is, how do we good men and women handle the moral and ethical questions 'hate speeches' open up?

While we may be individually soaking in the weirdly medieval utterances of Owaisi or Yati types and making them viral,

collectively we are yearning for a blanket ban on hate speech either making them or eulogising them.

Collectively, we long for the good old days of quality conversations with quality people but individually, we become an active part of making this venom traverse the nook and crannies of every voter's conversational idiom by willfully participating in the big tech's way of penetrating our mind-space.

Collectively, we all thirst for an intellectual stimulation that makes us reach a point in our democracy where only the best side with best arguments, best intentions and best actions win. But individually, we ensure that even the intellectually corrupt and debased (across party lines) win electoral battles exploiting the worst of our individual insecurities.

Ironically, as citizens of democracy, we expect our numerical victory to collectively attest a seemingly amoral or immoral trend. Quite interestingly, like human psychology, democracy is a complex conundrum. And beyond what the Owaisis and Yatis of the world say, beyond a collective assertion that hate speech must end, the real question is: is democracy enough?





Delhi High Court seeks AIIMS' opinion on medical termination of 28-week pregnancy

The Delhi High Court has sought an AIIMS expert body's opinion on medical termination of a 28-week pregnancy on account of certain abnormalities in the foetus

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought an AIIMS expert body's opinion on medical termination of a 28-week pregnancy on account of certain abnormalities in the foetus after the initial medical report indicated the foetus was alive and might need medical care after being removed from the uterus at this stage.

Justice Anu Malhotra, who was dealing with a petition by a 33-year old woman seeking permission to undergo medical termination of pregnancy, said that in view of the medical report, the question was not whether the pregnancy "can" be terminated but whether it "should" be.

The counsel for the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, said that the foetus has a heartbeat and in case the medical termination of pregnancy is proceeded with, there was a chance that the child would be born alive.

He nonetheless stated that the institute would comply with whatever orders are passed in the case.

The court said that it shared AIIMS' concern for the foetus being born with life.

"That's what I'm also saying that I will be entering into murder. That was my first sentence. I know that the child is alive. The

report is very clear and it says that if the child is born, it will need postnatal resuscitation," Justice Malhotra said. "It is very clear that the child is alive and if it is removed from the uterus also, it would continue to be there and it would need care and immediate attention and if it is not given, it may collapse but can a court order that? That's my concern," she said.

The petitioner had moved the court for permission to undergo medical termination of her pregnancy under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, claiming that the foetus suffered from abnormalities of the heart and chances of survival were remote.

On December 22, the court had asked AIIMS to set up a medical board at the earliest for the examination of the woman. The court noted that according to the report submitted by the AIIMS medical board, the foetus was viable and there was an 80 per cent chance of success if it receives due medical care and attention. "There have been cases where patients have survived and here they are showing a success rate of 80 per cent, and 80 per cent is not small. What can be done is that a further report can be called for," the court stated.

The court directed the board to give its opinion on the postnatal outcome in the case of a full-term delivery and the need for surgeries during childhood for the child's well-being as well as the follow-up care.

The court also asked the board to state if there was any danger, physical or mental, to the petitioner if the pregnancy is continued and the kind of postnatal resuscitation and management required in case of termination done at the present gestation.

The counsel for the petitioner said that it was the mother's right to decide if she wanted to continue with the pregnancy and argued that according to the law, pregnancies could be terminated even after 24 weeks.

"Nobody says it can't be performed. Whether it should be performed is the query. I'm not saying that it can't be," the judge said.

The petitioner also claimed that now permitting her to undergo medical termination of pregnancy would put her through financial, emotional as well as physical strain.

The matter would be heard next on December 29.

Private Crypto currencies Pose Risks To Customer Protection: RBI Report



Reserve Bank of India (RBI), a long standing critic of private cryptocurrencies, has said that these pose immediate risks to customer protection, anti-money laundering and combating terrorism financing.

The central bank's financial stability report, which released on Tuesday, noted that private cryptocurrencies are "prone to frauds and to extreme price volatility, given their highly speculative nature. Longer-term concerns relate to capital flow management, financial and macro-economic stability, monetary policy transmission and currency substitution".

The views expressed in the report assume significance in the context of the ongoing debates on whether India should ban private cryptocurrencies or not.

The RBI, time and again, has highlighted the deeper macroeconomic concerns posed by the unregulated private cryptocurrency market in India. However, the central bank is open to the idea of introducing a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). The government is in the process of framing a national law to regulate the cryptocurrency market.

Also, the proliferation of private cryptocurrencies across the globe has sensitised regulators and governments to the associated risks, the report said.

"New illicit financing typologies continue to emerge, including the increasing use of virtual-to-virtual layering schemes that attempt to further muddy transactions in a comparatively easy, cheap and anonymous manner," it observed.



Goa CM imposes new rules for restaurants, parties and all the latest news

Here are today's top news, analysis and opinion. Know all about the latest news and other news updates from Hindustan Times. Full vaccination or Covid-19 negative report: Goa's new rule for attending parties amid Omicron alarm Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant on Wednesday said that a person has to show either a negative Covid-19 report or a double vaccination certificate for attending parties or entering restaurants in the coastal state.

Mumbai may log over 2,000 Covid-19 cases today, warns Aaditya Thackeray Maharashtra tourism and environment minister Aaditya Thackeray on Wednesday said Mumbai may cross the 2,000-mark in Covid-19 cases during the day given the number of fresh infections being recorded over the past week.

Mamata mulls shutting schools, colleges as Covid-19 cases rise in

Bengal

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee held an administrative meeting wherein she asked officials to review the current pandemic situation in the state and also begin identifying containment zones in Kolkata given the high rate of infection in the city.

China recommit to Covid Zero amid surging Xi'an outbreak

Chinese experts warn that the new surge in Covid-19 infections won't be under control until mid to late January. Officials are committed to taking up a zero-tolerance approach towards the virus.

Doubt it: David Warner posts spicy tweet to take a sly dig at Tom Moody for IPL snub, Sunrisers Hyderabad respond

David Warner came up with a cheeky response to a fan's suggestion for Tom Moody regarding the IPL mega-auction. Rhea Kapoor tests Covid-19 positive, is

isolating with husband Karan Boolani: 'Everything tastes bad except chocolate'

Rhea Kapoor has tested positive for Covid-19. She took to her Instagram Stories on Wednesday to share her health update.

Bajaj to invest ₹300 cr for new electric vehicle manufacturing plant in Pune Bajaj's upcoming electric vehicle plant will have an annual production capacity of 5 lakh units.

Why you don't need to fear sugar, explains Taapsee Pannu's nutritionist Munmun Ganeriwal

Sugar is not necessarily evil, as popularly believed and should not be feared by people, says Taapsee Pannu's nutritionist Munmun Ganeriwal who designed a holistic diet plan for the Rashmi Rocket actor and helped her revive her gut health.

PM Modi to hold Council of Ministers meeting

Here are today's top news, analysis and opinion. Know all about the latest news and other news updates from Hindustan Times. PM Modi to hold Council of Ministers meet today; Omicron, assembly polls likely to be discussed

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Wednesday hold a Council of Ministers meeting amid rising cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus. The meeting is expected to take place at 4pm, according to Hindustan Times' sister publication Livehindustan.

Shashi Tharoor shares old post of Hinduism versus Hindutva, says still relevant

Amid controversy over Haridwar's Dharma Sansad, Congress MP Shashi

Tharoor on Wednesday shared an old post comparing Hinduism with Hindutva and said though he had shared it two years ago, the comparison is still relevant.



Amit Shah to lay foundation of projects worth ₹49.36 crores in Gandhinagar

Union home minister Amit Shah will on Wednesday virtually lay the foundation of various developmental projects worth ₹49.36 crores in Gandhinagar, his

parliamentary constituency, in Gujarat. 'We can then allow South Africa to bat': Mohammed Shami reveals target India aim to set in Centurion Test

Just when you thought that South Africa have produced a remarkable turnaround in the ongoing Test in Centurion, the Indian seam attack led by Mohammed Shami put the contest back into India's favour as the visitors finished Day 3 with a commanding lead of 146 runs.

Mrunal Thakur says she was 'treated in a certain way' as a newcomer, cried at home afterwards Actor Mrunal Thakur said that when she was starting out in the entertainment industry, there were times when the way she was treated left her in tears.

At 2,510, Mumbai records massive jump in fresh Covid cases and all the latest news



Here are today's top news, analysis and opinion. Know all about the latest news and other news updates from Hindustan Times. Here are today's top news, analysis and opinion. Know all about the latest news and other news updates from Hindustan Times. At 2,510, Mumbai records massive jump in fresh Covid cases in 24 hours

Mumbai on Wednesday recorded 2,510 new infections in the last 24 hours. The tally is more than 80 per cent of the daily cases recorded in the Maharashtra capital a day ago at 1,333

Madras HC bans liquor sales for 3 hours on New Year's night in Puducherry

The Madras high court on Wednesday ordered a ban on the sale of liquor for three hours on New Year's night in Puducherry Resident doctors of Sion, KEM Hospitals to withdraw services from today

After first-year resident doctors of Sion Hospital joined the nationwide protests by withdrawing from both elective and emergency services from 8 am on Wednesday, all resident doctors from KEM and Sion hospitals will go on an indefinite strike starting Thursday.

'Such a loose shot': Gavaskar upset with Virat Kohli after his dismissal in 2nd innings; 'He could've left it alone'

Test captain Virat Kohli's disappointing run continued in the Centurion Test, as he finished with scores of 35 and 18 in the two innings.

Nusrat Jahan, grilled by Yash Dasgupta about their love story, says 'I absconded with you'

Actor-politician Nusrat Jahan welcomed her spouse, actor-politician Yash Dasgupta, as a special guest on her radio show this week. New Year 2022: Best resolutions for your mental health, suggested by an expert Before welcoming a brand-new year, many of us like to work on a list of new year resolutions aiming to give the coming year some sort of purpose

Crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong: Anti-Beijing news outlet raided, shuts down Amid mounting concerns over the erosion of liberty in Hong Kong, a pro-democracy news outlet has shut down after a police raid.



J&K Hyderpora encounter

SIT rules out any foul play by security forces

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) team investigating the Hyderpora encounter gave a clean chit to the security forces ruling out any foul play

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police investigating the Hyderpora encounter on Tuesday gave a clean chit to the security forces.

The SIT said one civilian was killed by a foreign terrorist, the owner of the building and a local militant were killed in a "crossfire" after being used as a human shield by the hiding militants. On November 15, a Pakistani terrorist and three others were killed in Hyderpora and the police claimed that all the slain men

had links to militancy. The families of the three claimed that they were innocent and had alleged foul play. This prompted the police to order an inquiry. The SIT established a few things. Two pistols, four magazines, etc were seized from the initial site. During site inspection, two bodies of a local terrorist and a building owner were recovered at the building's entry, SIT in-charge DIG Sujit K Singh said.

All four deaths took place due to firearms, as per the post mortem reports. They found links to the encounter in Bandipora and Srinagar. The foreign terrorist killed in the Hyderpora encounter was the same terrorist who attacked a policeman in Jama Lata area of Srinagar on Nov 14, according to police. The local terrorist killed, who was identified as Aamir Magray, was in touch with someone in Bandipora area. Aamir frequented between Srinagar and Bandipora. He also went to Gurez, where most of the infiltration takes place. Both the

foreign terrorist and Aamir stayed in the same building in Hyderpora.

Aamir was let off as police was told that he was working with Dr Mudasir Gul.

While, Gul, one of the civilians killed in the Hyderpora encounter, was killed by the militants, the police said. Altaf Bhat was made a human shield by the terrorists and was killed in the crossfire. "Mohammad Altaf Bhat (building owner) and Aamir were killed in the crossfire with security forces as they were used as a human

shield by the foreign terrorist. It is substantiated by the fact Altaf fell (after being hit by bullets) outside the door, while Aamir had managed to run a few more steps and the foreign terrorist's body was found 83 feet away," he said.

The District Magistrate has already submitted the inquiry report to the government following which the details are being shared, the SIT said.

"We have around 25 witnesses so far in this case. Six of them have given statements in front of the magistrate," Singh said.

Wedding Insurance: Check out expenses covered, premium and coverage categories

To avoid financial losses in cases where marriage functions have to be cancelled or changes made at the last moment, people can opt for wedding insurance. Here is all you need to know

In view of the rising cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus, marriages may have to be cancelled in the coming months due to government-imposed restrictions. To avoid financial losses in cases where marriage functions have to be cancelled or changed at the last moment, people can opt for wedding insurance. It ensures that there will be no loss of money. What is wedding insurance?

Wedding insurance covers huge expenses due to the cancellation of a marriage or any other damage or loss.

It broadly covers different

situations in four categories - coverage of liabilities, cancellation coverage, damage to property and personal accidents.

- Coverage of liabilities: It covers damages or losses caused to third parties during weddings due to accidents or injuries.

- Cancellation coverage: Losses due to the sudden or unexpected cancellation of the marriage is covered in this category.

- Damage to property: It protects against loss or damage to property.
- Personal accident: This includes the cost of hospitalisation of the bride or groom in case of an accident.

Expenses covered under wedding

insurance:

Advance money given for catering, wedding venue, travel agencies, hotel room bookings, music and decoration. It also covers wedding invitation card printing costs and the cost of decorations and wedding sets.

The premium of the insurance:

The sum assured of wedding insurance is based on how much you have insured. The premium charged on insurance remains only between 0.7 per cent to 2 per cent of the sum assured. If you have got wedding insurance of Rs 10 lakh, then you have to pay a premium of Rs 7,500 to 15,000.



Omicron threat is still looming over the world but in what looks like a ray of hope, antibodies that neutralise Omicron Covid variant have been identified by the scientists. These antibodies target areas on the structure of the virus that remain unchanged even when the virus mutates.

Research on these antibodies has been published in the journal Nature. It may further help to design vaccines and antibody treatments. These may potentially be effective not only against Omicron but other variants that may emerge in the future.

This finding tells us that by focusing on antibodies that target these highly conserved sites on the spike protein, there



Scientists identify antibodies that block Omicron Covid variant

is a way to overcome the virus' continual evolution," said David Veessler, an associate professor at the University of Washington School of Medicine in the US. The Omicron variant has an unusually high number of 37 mutations in the spike protein, which the virus uses to enter and infect the human cells.

It is thought that these changes explain in part why the variant has been able to spread so rapidly, to infect people who have been vaccinated and to reinfect those who have previously been infected.

"The main questions we were trying to answer were: how has this constellation of

mutations in the spike protein of the Omicron variant affected its ability to bind to cells and to evade the immune system's antibody responses," Veessler said.

To assess the effect of these mutations, the researchers engineered a disabled, nonreplicating virus, called a pseudovirus, to produce spike proteins on its surface, as coronaviruses do.

They then created pseudoviruses that had spike proteins with the Omicron mutations and those found on the earliest variants identified in the pandemic.

The researchers first looked to see how well the different versions of the spike protein

were able to bind to protein on the surface of cells, that the virus uses to latch onto and enter the cell. This protein is called the angiotensin converting enzyme-2 (ACE2) receptor.

They found the Omicron variant spike protein was able to bind 2.4 times better than spike protein found in the virus isolated at the very beginning of the pandemic.

"That is not a huge increase but in the SARS outbreak in 2002-2003, mutations in the spike protein that increased affinity were associated with higher transmissibility and infectivity," Veessler noted.

They also found that the Omicron version was able to

bind to mouse ACE2 receptors efficiently, suggesting Omicron might be able to "ping-pong" between humans and other mammals.

The researchers then looked at how well antibodies against earlier isolates of the virus protected against the Omicron variant.

They did this by using antibodies from patients who had previously been infected with earlier versions of the virus, vaccinated against earlier strains of the virus, or had been infected and then vaccinated.

The team found that antibodies from people who had been infected by

earlier strains and from those who had received one of the six most-used vaccines currently available all had reduced ability to block infection. Antibodies from people who had been infected, recovered, and then had two doses of vaccine also had reduced activity, but the reduction was less, about fivefold, clearly demonstrating that vaccination after infection is useful. Antibodies from people, in this case a group of renal dialysis patients, who had received a booster with a third dose of the mRNA vaccines produced by Moderna and Pfizer showed only a 4-fold reduction in neutralising activity.

"This shows that a third dose is really, really helpful against Omicron," Veessler said.

Reintroduction of 'extinct' Tequila fish sparks hopes for conservation

A fish declared extinct in the wild is being successfully reintroduced to its habitat. The Tequila fish, was 'missing' from the wild since 2003. But now, more than 1500 Tequila fish have been released in the wild in Southwest Mexico and their numbers are increasing. The fish were grown in a joint effort between the UK and Michoacana University in Mexico. The decades-long effort has born fruit now.

The project started in 1998 when scientists at the university received five pairs of fish from Chester Zoo.

These fish were carefully kept in university's labs. Over the years, these fish founded a colony. The scientists carefully grew these fish by providing them required nutrition and conditions.

However, it is often seen that animals bred in captivity cannot survive in the wild as there are factors like predators, competition for food, adverse environmental conditions that limit their growth. Hence, 'training' is needed.

When the colony of Tequila fish grew to have 40 pairs in

lab, scientists introduced them to an artificial pond for their 'training'. Here, the fish were subjected naturally to factors they did not encounter in the lab. The fish flourished in the artificial pond and the numbers increased to 10,000. This indicated that they were coping well to conditions.

It was then the scientists decided to reintroduce the fish in the wild.

Reintroduction of the Tequila fish can become a model for freshwater species that are currently under threat.



China, Japan to establish hotline for disputes over Taiwan and South China Sea

China and Japan have reached an agreement to establish a hotline for their disputes over Taiwan and the South China Sea.

Japan's Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi held a two-hour video conference with his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe and expressed his grave concerns over Chinese coast guard ships activities in waters surrounding the Japanese administered Senkaku Islands.

The Diaoyu islands, also known as Senkaku islands have long been an object of a territorial dispute between Beijing and Tokyo.

Japan's Defence Ministry released after the ministers' meeting stating "Minister Kishi delivered that Japan opposes attempts of unilateral change to the status quo by coercion and



that Japan possesses grave concerns against such actions, while pointing out individual events such as activities by People's Liberation Army and China Coast Guard vessels." "China will firmly safeguard its

territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. The two sides should focus on the overall interests of bilateral relations and strive to maintain stability in the East China Sea," said a release from the

Defence Ministry.

"We confirmed that the early establishment of a hotline between Japanese and Chinese defense authorities is important," Kishi said.

"Since there are (unresolved)

issues with China, we need to try and keep having candid communication so we can promote exchanges and foster mutual understanding and confidence," Kishi added. China's increasing pressure on Taiwan is causing jitters in Japan because Beijing's control of the island would bring Chinese forces within around 100 kilometres (62 miles) of its territory and would threaten key maritime trade routes that supply Japan with oil and other goods.

It would also provide China with bases for unfettered access to the western Pacific.

Last month, two Chinese ships had intruded into Japanese coastal waters near the disputed islands as Japan lodged a protest with China over the issue.

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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.

WWF



Human rights group slams inhumane Chinese secret detention system

Although detaining a person without disclosing whereabouts or providing legal support should be illegal, it is approved by law in China.

Since 2012, police, after changes to Chinese criminal law, have the right to detain anyone, whether foreign or Chinese, for up to six months

at a designated location. It can be done without disclosing the person's whereabouts. The inhumane system, which is called 'Residential

Surveillance at a Designated Location' (RSDL), has been criticised by a human rights group. It has claimed immense torture in this secret detention

system.

Safeguard Defenders, a Spain-based rights group, has said that around 27,208 to 56,963 people have gone through RSDL system in China since its introduction in 2013. It has cited data provided by Supreme People's Court and the testimony of several survivors and lawyers.

Michael Caster, co-founder, rights watchdog Safeguard Defenders, said around 10,000 to 15,000 went through the system in 2020, which is up from just 500 in 2013.

There's no transparency in this system, rued Caster.

In a similar parallel system known as liuzhi, state employees, Communist Party members and others in "public affairs" can be held.

In both RSDL and liuzhi, inmates face torture and are arrested without a right to legal counsel.

The detainees are allegedly subjected to isolation, solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, beatings and forced stress positions in both systems.

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China sees highest surge in Covid cases in 21 months, Xian emerges as hotspot

With the northwestern city of Xian emerging as the latest Covid hotspot in the country, China on Sunday reported its highest daily rise in local COVID-19 cases in 21 months.

China reported its highest daily rise in local COVID-19 cases in 21 months as infections more than doubled in the northwestern city of Xian, China's latest COVID hot spot. The city of 13 million, which entered its fourth day of lockdown, detected 155

domestically transmitted cases with confirmed symptoms for Saturday, up from 75 a day earlier, official data showed on Sunday.

That drove the national daily count to 158, the highest since China managed to contain a nationwide outbreak in early 2020.

Xian, with 485 local symptomatic cases reported for the Dec. 9-25 period, has imposed heavy-handed measures to rein in the outbreak, in line with Beijing's

policy that any flare-up should be contained as soon as possible.

The city managed to quickly detect those cases through three rounds of mass testing, He Wenquan, a Xian official, told a press conference on Sunday, adding that high case numbers could persist into the next couple of days.

"In order to quickly screen out the infected groups of people, after an analysis by experts, we will step up control measures in key areas,

especially places with greater risk level," said He.

The local government also announced that it would launch a city-wide disinfection campaign from 18:00 local time, urging residents to shut the windows and bring clothes or other items inside from their balconies. Residents may not leave town without approval from employers or local authorities and multiple rounds of mass testing were conducted to identify cases.

The city has announced no

infections caused by the Omicron variant, although Chinese authorities have reported a handful of Omicron infections among international travellers and in southern China.

Including imported cases, mainland China confirmed 206 new cases on Dec. 25, up from 140 a day earlier.

No new deaths were reported, leaving the cumulative death toll at 4,636. Mainland China had 101,077 confirmed cases as of Dec. 25.

Taliban-run government dissolves Afghan election commissions

The Taliban dissolved Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission and Electoral Complaint Commission on Sunday.

The Taliban dissolved Afghanistan's two election commissions as well as the state ministries for peace and parliamentary affairs, an official said Sunday.

Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban-run government, said the country's Independent Election Commission and Electoral Complaint Commission have been dissolved.

He called them "unnecessary institutions for the current situation in Afghanistan." He



said if there is a need for the commissions in the future, the

Taliban government can revive them.

The international community is waiting before extending formal

recognition to Afghanistan's new rulers. They are wary the Taliban could impose a similarly harsh regime as when they were in power 20 years ago - despite their assurances to the contrary.

Both election commissions were mandated to administer and supervise all types of elections in the country, including presidential, parliamentary and provincial council elections.

Karimi said the Taliban also dissolved the Ministry for Peace and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. He said they were unnecessary ministries in the government's current structure.



Women, children among dozens killed in Myanmar

According to a report, Myanmar government troops fatally shot more than 30 and set the bodies on fire on Saturday

Myanmar government troops rounded up villagers, some believed to be women and children, fatally shot more than 30 and set the bodies on fire, a witness and other reports said Saturday.

The purported photos of the aftermath of the Christmas Eve massacre in eastern Mo So village, just outside Hpruso township in Kayah state where refugees were sheltering from an army offensive, spread on social media in the country, fueling outrage against the military that took power in February. The accounts could not be independently verified. The photos showed the charred bodies of over 30 people in three burned-out vehicles.

A villager who said he went to the scene told The Associated Press that the victims had fled the fighting between armed resistance groups and Myanmar's army near Koi Ngan village, which is just beside Mo So, on Friday. He said they were killed after they were arrested by troops while heading to refugee camps in the western part of the township.

The government has not commented on the allegations, but a report in the state-run Myanmar Alinn daily newspaper on Saturday

said that the fighting near Mo So broke out on Friday when members of ethnic guerrilla forces, known as the Karenni National Progressive Party, and those opposed to the military drove in "suspicious" vehicles and attacked security forces after refusing to stop.

The newspaper report said they included new members who were

going to attend training to fight the army, and that the seven vehicles they were traveling in were destroyed in a fire. It gave no further details about the killings.

The witness who spoke to the AP said the remains were burned beyond recognition, and children's and women's clothes were found together with medical supplies and food.

"The bodies were tied with ropes before being set on fire," said the witness, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared for his safety.

He did not see the moment they were killed, but said he believed some of them were Mo So villagers who reportedly got arrested by

troops on Friday. He denied that those captured were members of locally organized militia groups. Myanmar's independent media reported on Friday that 10 Mo So villagers including children were

'It's a heinous crime and the worst incident during Christmas. We strongly condemn that massacre as a crime against humanity,' said Banyar Khun Aung, director, Karenni Human Rights Group

arrested by the army and four members of the local paramilitary Border Guard Forces who went to negotiate for their release were reportedly tied up and shot in the head by the military.

The witness said the villagers and anti-government militia groups left the bodies as military troops arrived near Mo So while the bodies were being prepared for cremation. The fighting was still intense near the village.

"It's a heinous crime and the worst incident during Christmas. We strongly condemn that massacre as a crime against humanity," said Banyar Khun Aung, director of the Karenni Human Rights Group. Earlier this month, government troops were also

accused of rounding up villagers, some believed to be children, tying them up and slaughtering them. An opposition leader, Dr. Sasa, who uses only one name, said the civilians were burned

alive. A video of the aftermath of the Dec. 7 assault - apparently retaliation for an attack on a military convoy - showed the charred bodies of 11 people lying in a circle amid what appeared to be the remains of a hut. Fighting meanwhile resumed Saturday in a neighboring state on the border with Thailand, where thousands of people have fled to

seek shelter. Local officials said Myanmar's military unleashed airstrikes and heavy artillery on Lay Kay Kaw, a small town controlled by ethnic Karen guerrillas, since Friday.

The military's action prompted multiple Western governments, including the US Embassy, to issue a joint statement condemning "serious human rights violations committed by the military regime across the country." "We call on the regime to immediately cease its indiscriminate attacks in Karen state and throughout the country, and to ensure the safety of all civilians in line with international law," the joint statement said.



Myanmar nurses treat Covid patients in secret clinics away from junta eyes

With bags packed, a handful of healthcare workers are always ready to flee as they find themselves at the forefront of a civil disobedience movement against the February coup amid the Covid pandemic

A handful of Myanmar nurses hiding from the junta have been running makeshift clinics to treat Covid patients and resistance fighters with medicine smuggled past military checkpoints.

With bags packed, they are always ready to flee as healthcare workers find themselves at the forefront of a civil disobedience movement against the February coup and a crackdown on dissent that has killed more than 1,300, according to a local monitoring group.

A boycott of government institutions has left many hospitals without staff and the junta has arrested and killed scores of protesting health workers, rights groups say. Aye Naing -- not her real name -- left



her job in a public hospital soon after the coup and in June began volunteering in Kayah state in Myanmar's east, where the

military and anti-coup fighters have clashed repeatedly.

"When the fighting starts, we have to run and hide in the jungle," she

told AFP at a clinic housed at a school abandoned because of fighting near the town of Demoso.

After a devastating Covid wave in June and July -- where new daily cases peaked at 40,000 -- the junta has said new infections are down to around 150 per day, and that the Omicron variant is yet to appear in Myanmar. But with the struggling health system in shambles, limited testing is being done.

In Kayah around 85,000 people have been displaced by the violence, according to the UN's refugee agency, with many crowded into camps where infections spread easily.

Most of Aye Naing's patients are displaced families, she said, as well as fighters from local People's Defense Force (PDF) groups -- militias that have sprung up across the country to fight the junta.

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Archaeologist finds relics of lost World War-II US bomber, crew in Italy



The North American B-25 Mitchell heavy bomber with a crew of six was one of 52 air losses with missing personnel in the area during WWII

An archaeological dig in Sicily has uncovered traces of a lost World War II American heavy bomber shot down in 1943, and possible human remains that could lead to identification of five airmen whose bodies were never recovered.

The six-week dig that ended this week was carried out by a team from the Pentagon's Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, which locates and identifies missing U.S. military personnel

around the world.

The site near Sciacca was identified in 2017 by investigators using historical records and metal detectors.

This year's dig uncovered wreckage "consistent only to a B-25 aircraft," said archaeologist Clive Vella, the scientific director of the expedition, contributing to hopes that any confirmed remains would be linked to the missing crew.

"We owe (their) families accurate

answers," Vella told the Associated Press Thursday.

The North American B-25 Mitchell heavy bomber with a crew of six was one of 52 air losses with missing personnel in the area during WWII, mostly during 1943 as the Allies pushed into southeastern Sicily.

It was shot down as it targeted a camouflaged German airstrip amid olive groves and pastureland on July 10, 1943. A German military report documented the

crash of a U.S. aircraft about two kilometers (just over a mile) from the Sciacca airport, Vella said.

One crew member was located immediately and buried in the town's cemetery. The body was claimed in 1944 by U.S. military officials, but the other five airmen remained missing.

In the intervening decades, the crash site "like most others in the Mediterranean region, was scavenged for metal, the land restored to its original use," Vella

said. "The scars of a crash were mostly gone." The evidence, which includes possible human bones as well as potential remnants of the aircraft, has been transported to a laboratory in the U.S. for examination. Worldwide, there are more than 81,600 missing U.S. military personnel, including 72,350 from World War II, 7,550 from the Korean War and 1,584 from the Vietnam War. Over 41,000 of the total are presumed lost at sea.

Covid takes toll on Christmas as Santas go missing across America

Santas have gone missing across America this Christmas, owing to the Covid pandemic

Across America, Christmas wears a different look this year, with fewer Santas greeting people on the streets. While some Santas have died, mall closures due to the surge in cases is another reason.

The International Brotherhood of Real Bearded Santas (IBRBS), an association representing Santas in the US, said 55 of its Santas died this year, the Independent reported.

Other groups also reported deaths due to the pandemic and because of the old age of their Santas.

Carlo Klemm, a founder of Santa's Last Ride, said he knew of 330 Santa deaths this year and called it a "small tip of the iceberg".



IBRBS founder Stephen Arnold said roughly 1,900 Santas belonging to the organisation

were at high risk from Covid or were generally unhealthy.

"Santas and Mrs Clauses are

generally fat people. Most of us are obese. Many of us have diabetes, a lot of us have heart

conditions or bad kidneys or whatever it might be," Stephen Arnold said.

Carlo Klemm said the death rate among Santas was higher due to Covid-19.

IBRBS and other associations saw a 20 per cent increase in demand for 2021 despite several cancellations.

"None of our Santas were comfortable going back to the way it used to be," Lando Luther, owner of The "Santa Experience" at the Mall of America said.

"They don't mind getting spit up or peed on, Covid-19 is the concern," he said.

This year, Christmas celebrations took a backseat across the world amid the threat of the rapidly surging Omicron cases.

Harry Reid, the former Senate majority leader and Nevada's longest-serving member of Congress, has died. He was 82.

Reid died Tuesday, "peacefully" and surrounded by friends "following a courageous, four-year battle with pancreatic cancer," Landra Reid said of her husband in a statement.

"Harry was a devout family man and deeply loyal friend," she said. "We greatly appreciate the outpouring of support from so many over these past few years. We are especially grateful for the doctors and nurses that cared for him. Please know that meant the world to him."

Funeral arrangements would be announced in coming days, she said.

The combative former boxer-turned-lawyer was widely-acknowledged as one of toughest dealmakers in Congress, a conservative Democrat in an increasingly polarized chamber who vexed lawmakers of both parties with a brusque manner and this motto: "I would rather dance than fight, but I know how to fight."

Over a 34-year career in Washington, Reid thrived on behind-the-scenes wrangling and kept the Senate controlled by his party through two presidents - Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Barack Obama - a crippling recession and the Republican takeover of the House after the 2010 elections.

He retired in 2016 after an accident left him blind in one eye. Reid in May 2018 revealed he'd been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and was undergoing treatment.

Less than two weeks ago, officials and one of his sons, Rory Reid, marked the renaming of the busy Las Vegas airport as Harry Reid International Airport. Rory Reid is a former Clark County Commission chairman and Democratic Nevada gubernatorial candidate.

Neither Harry nor Landra Reid attended the Dec. 14 ceremony held at the facility that had been known since 1948 as McCarran International Airport, after a former U.S. senator from Nevada, Pat McCarran, and today ranks as one of the 10 busiest airports in the U.S.

He was known in Washington for his abrupt style, typified by his habit of unceremoniously hanging up the phone without saying goodbye.

"Even when I was president, he would hang up on me," Obama said in a 2019 tribute video to Reid.

He was frequently underestimated, most recently in

Former Senate majority leader in US Harry Reid dies at 82



Harry Reid died at 82 following a four-year battle with pancreatic cancer

the 2010 elections when he looked like the underdog to tea party favorite Sharron Angle. Ambitious Democrats, assuming his defeat, began angling for his leadership post. But Reid defeated Angle, 50 percent to 45 percent, and returned to the pinnacle of his power. For Reid, it was legacy time.

"I don't have people saying 'he's the greatest speaker,' 'he's handsome,' 'he's a man about town,'" Reid told The New York Times in December that year. "But I don't really care. I feel very comfortable with my place in history."

Born in Searchlight, Nevada, to an alcoholic father who killed himself at 58 and a mother who served as a laundress in a bordello, Reid grew up in a small cabin without indoor plumbing and swam with other children at a pool at a local brothel. He hitchhiked to Basic High School in Henderson, Nev., 40 miles from home, where he met the wife he would marry in 1959, Landra Gould. At Utah State University, the couple became members of The Church of Latter-Day Saints. The future senator put himself through George Washington University law school by working nights as a U.S. Capitol police officer.

At age 28, Reid was elected to the Nevada Assembly and at age 30 became the youngest lieutenant governor in Nevada history as Gov. Mike O'Callaghan's running mate in 1970.

Elected to the U.S. House in 1982, Reid served in Congress longer than anyone else in Nevada history. He narrowly avoided defeat in a 1998 Senate race when he held off Republican

John Ensign, then a House member, by 428 votes in a recount that stretched into January.

After his election as Senate majority leader in 2007, he was credited with putting Nevada on the political map by pushing to move the state's caucuses to February, at the start of presidential nominating season.

Born in Searchlight, Nevada, to an alcoholic father who killed himself at 58 and a mother who served as a laundress in a bordello, Reid grew up in a small cabin without indoor plumbing and swam with other children at a pool at a local brothel.

That forced each national party to pour resources into a state which, while home to the country's fastest growth over the past two decades, still only had six votes in the Electoral College. Reid's extensive network of campaign workers and volunteers twice helped deliver the state for Obama.

Obama in 2016 lauded Reid for his work in the Senate, declaring, "I could not have accomplished what I accomplished without him being at my side."

The most influential politician in Nevada for more than a decade, Reid steered hundreds of millions of dollars to the state and was credited with almost single-handedly blocking construction of a nuclear waste storage facility at Yucca Mountain outside Las Vegas. He often went out of his way to defend social programs that make easy political targets, calling Social Security "one of the

great government programs in history. Reid championed suicide prevention, often telling the story of his father, a hard-rock miner who took his own life. He stirred controversy in 2010 when he said in a speech on the floor of the Nevada legislature it was time to end legal prostitution in the state. Reid's political moderation meant he was never politically secure

reconciliation process floundered long enough for Republicans to turn it into an election-year weapon they used to demonize the California Democrat and cast the legislation as a big-government power grab. Obama signed the measure into law in March 2010. But angered by the recession and inspired by the small-government tea party, voters the next year swept Democrats from the House majority.

Reid hand-picked a Democratic candidate who won the election to replace him in 2016, former Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto, and built a political machine in the state that helped Democrats win a series of key elections in 2016 and 2018. On his way out of office, he repeatedly lambasted Donald Trump, calling him at one point "a sociopath" and "a sexual predator who lost the popular vote and fueled his campaign with bigotry and hate." Reid, after all, had faced one of those before he ever got to Washington. Then head of the Nevada Gaming Commission investigating organized crime, Reid became the target of a car bomb in 1980. Police called it an attempted homicide. Reid blamed Jack Gordon, who went to prison for trying to bribe him in a sting operation Reid participated in over illegal efforts to bring new games to casinos in 1978. Following Reid's lengthy farewell address on the Senate floor in 2016, his Nevada colleague Republican Dean Heller declared: "It's been said that it's better to be feared than loved, if you cannot be both."



US health officials recommend shorter Covid isolation, quarantine

The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention recommended cutting isolation restrictions and shortening quarantine

US health officials on Monday cut isolation restrictions for Americans who catch the coronavirus from 10 to five days, and similarly shortened the time that close contacts need to quarantine.

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention officials said the guidance is in keeping with growing evidence that people with the coronavirus are most infectious in the two days before and three days after symptoms develop.

The decision also was driven by a recent surge in COVID-19 cases, propelled by the omicron variant.

Early research suggests omicron may cause milder illnesses than earlier versions of the coronavirus. But the sheer number of people becoming infected - and therefore having to isolate or quarantine - threatens to crush the ability of hospitals, airlines and other businesses to stay open, experts say.

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said the country is about to see a lot of omicron cases.

"Not all of those cases are going to be severe. In fact many are going to be asymptomatic," she told The Associated Press on Monday. "We want to make sure there is a mechanism by which we can safely continue to keep society functioning while following the science."

Last week, the agency loosened rules that previously called on health care workers to stay out of work for 10 days if they test positive. The new recommendations said workers could go back to work after seven

days if they test negative and don't have symptoms. And the agency said isolation time could be cut to five days, or even fewer, if there are severe staffing shortages.

CDC's guidance for health-care workers to include employees who have other critical jobs that are facing a severe staffing shortage.

It's possible other states will

The quarantine rules are for people who were in close contact with an infected person but not infected themselves

Now, the CDC is changing the isolation and quarantine guidance for the general public to be even less stringent.

The guidance is not a mandate; it's a recommendation to employers and state and local officials. Last week, New York state said it would expand on the

seek to shorten their isolation and quarantine policies, and CDC is trying to get out ahead of the shift. "It would be helpful to have uniform CDC guidance" that others could draw from, rather than a mishmash of policies, Walensky said.

The CDC's guidance on isolation

and quarantine has seemed confusing to the public, and the new recommendations are "happening at a time when more people are testing positive for the first time and looking for guidance," said Lindsay Wiley, an American University public health law expert.

Nevertheless, the guidance continues to be complex.

ISOLATION

The isolation rules are for people who are infected. They are the same for people who are unvaccinated, partly vaccinated, fully vaccinated or boosted.

They say:

-The clock starts the day you test positive.

-An infected person should go into isolations for five days, instead of the previously recommended 10.

-At the end of five days, if you

have no symptoms, you can return to normal activities but must wear a mask everywhere - even at home around others - for at least five more days.

-If you still have symptoms after isolating for five days, stay home until you feel better and then start your five days of wearing a mask at all times.

QUARANTINE

The quarantine rules are for people who were in close contact with an infected person but not infected themselves.

For quarantine, the clock starts the day someone is alerted to they may have been exposed to the virus.

Previously, the CDC said people who were not fully vaccinated and who came in close contact with an infected person should stay home for at least 10 days.

Now the agency is saying only people who got booster shots can skip quarantine if they wear masks in all settings for at least 10 days.

That's a change. Previously, people who were fully vaccinated - which the CDC has defined as having two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine - could be exempt from quarantine. Now, people who got their initial shots but not boosters are in the same situation as those who are partly vaccinated or are not vaccinated at all: They can stop quarantine after five days if they wear masks in all settings for five days afterward.

Suspending both isolation and quarantine after five days is not without risk. A lot of people get tested when they first feel symptoms, but many Americans get tested for others reasons, like to see if they can visit family or for work. That means a positive test result may not reveal exactly when a person was infected or give a clear picture of when they are most contagious, experts say.

Mark Zuckerberg buys 110 more acres of land, including deadly reservoir, in Hawaii



With this latest purchase, Zuckerberg's estate, which he calls Ko'olau Ranch, has grown to nearly 1,500 acres, including a pristine forest, on Kauai's north shore. Billionaire and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has bought more property in Hawaii amid protests from locals, according to reports. The tech billionaire has bought 110 more acres of land, including a former sugar plantation reservoir on Kauai that unleashed a deadly flood 15 years ago, worth \$17 million, Honolulu newspaper Star-

Advertiser reported. With this latest purchase, Zuckerberg's estate, which he calls Ko'olau Ranch, has grown to nearly 1,500 acres, including a pristine forest, on Kauai's north shore. The reservoir, whose dam broke which led to a flood that killed seven people in 2006, remains unrepaired and on the state's list of high-risk dams. But, Ben LaBolt, spokesman for the couple, told news agency AP that Zuckerberg and wife Priscilla Chang are committed to doing their part of fulfilling legal requirements and promoting

safety of the reservoir. The couple plan to extend farming, ranching, conservation and wildlife protection work on the land, LaBolt said. They already had 1,300 acres (526 hectares) on the island. This is Zuckerberg's second purchase this year: In March, he paid \$53 million for nearly 600 acres of land on Kauai that includes a public beach and a working cattle ranch. That added to the 750 acres he purchased nearby in 2014. But Zuckerberg's presence on the island has remained controversial.

Ghislaine Maxwell convicted in Epstein sex abuse case

The British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell was convicted Wednesday of luring teenage girls to be sexually abused by the American millionaire Jeffrey Epstein.

The verdict capped a monthlong trial featuring sordid accounts of the sexual exploitation of girls as young as 14, told by four women who described being abused as teens in the 1990s and early 2000s at Epstein's palatial homes in Florida, New York and New Mexico.

Jurors deliberated for five full days before finding Maxwell guilty of five of six counts. As the verdict was read, Maxwell was largely stoic behind a black mask. She stood with her hands folded as the jury filed out, and glanced at her siblings - faithfully in attendance each day of the trial - as she herself was led from the courtroom. She did not hug her lawyers on the way out, a marked change from previous days during which Maxwell and her team were often physically affectionate with one another.

She faces the likelihood of years in prison - an outcome long sought by women who spent years fighting in civil courts to hold Maxwell accountable for her role in recruiting and grooming Epstein's teenage victims and sometimes joining in the sexual abuse.

The defense had insisted Maxwell was a victim of a vindictive prosecution devised to deliver justice to women deprived of their main villain when Epstein killed himself while awaiting trial in 2019.

During the trial, prosecutors called 24 witnesses to give jurors a picture of life inside Epstein's homes - a subject of public fascination and speculation ever since his 2006 arrest in Florida in a child sex case.

A housekeeper testified he was expected to be "blind, deaf and



dumb" about the private lives of Epstein, a financier who cultivated friendships with influential politicians and business tycoons, and Maxwell, who had led a jet-setting lifestyle as the favorite child of a media mogul.

Pilots took the witness stand and dropped the names of luminaries - Britain's Prince Andrew, Bill Clinton, Donald Trump - who flew on Epstein's private jets.

Jurors saw physical evidence like a folding massage table once used by Epstein and a "black book" that listed contact information for some of the victims under the heading "massages."

There were bank records showing he had transferred \$30.7 million to Maxwell, his longtime companion - onetime girlfriend, later employee.

But the core of the prosecution was the testimony of four women who said they were victimized by Maxwell and Epstein at tender ages.

Three testified using first names

or pseudonyms to protect their privacy: Jane, a television

turned sexual, encounters she played off as normal: After one

The defense had insisted Maxwell was a victim of a vindictive prosecution devised to deliver justice to women deprived of their main villain when Epstein killed himself while awaiting trial in 2019

actress; Kate, a former model from Great Britain; and Carolyn, now a mom recovering from drug addiction. The fourth was Annie Farmer, a psychologist who chose to use her real name after being vocal about her allegations in recent years.

They echoed one another in their descriptions of Maxwell's behavior: She used charm and gifts to gain their trust, taking an interest in their adolescent challenges and giving them assurances that Epstein could use his wealth and connections to fulfill their dreams.

They said the script would darken when Maxwell coaxed them into giving massages to Epstein that

sexual massage, Kate, then 17, said Maxwell asked her if she'd had fun and told her: "You are such a good girl." Carolyn testified that she was one of several underprivileged teens who lived near Epstein's Florida home in the early 2000s and took up an offer to give massages in exchange for \$100 bills, which prosecutors described as "a pyramid of abuse." Maxwell made all the arrangements, Carolyn told the jury, even though she knew the girl was only 14 at the time.

Jane said in 1994, when she was only 14, she was instructed to follow Epstein into a pool house at his Palm Beach estate, where

he masturbated on her.

Two charges, including the lone count on which Maxwell was acquitted, applied only to Jane. "I was frozen in fear," she told the jury, adding that assault was the first time she had ever seen a penis. She also directly accused Maxwell of participating in her abuse.

Maxwell's lawyer asked Jane why it had taken so long to come forward.

"I was scared," she said, choking back tears. "I was embarrassed, ashamed. I didn't want anybody to know any of this about me."

The last to testify, Farmer described how Maxwell touched her breasts while giving her a massage at Epstein's New Mexico ranch and how Epstein unexpectedly crawled into bed and pressed himself against her. Maxwell, 60, vehemently denied the charges through her lawyers. Still, she declined to take the risk of testifying, telling the judge: "The government has not proven its case beyond a reasonable doubt so there is no reason for me to testify." "The charges against Ghislaine Maxwell are for things that Jeffrey Epstein did," one of Maxwell's lawyers, Bobbi Sternheim, emphasized to the jury. "But she is not Jeffrey Epstein and she is not like Jeffrey Epstein." Maxwell's legal team questioned whether the accusers' memories were faulty, or had been influenced by lawyers seeking big payouts from Maxwell and from Epstein's estate in civil court.

During their two-day presentation, they called as a witness Elizabeth Loftus, a University of California Irvine professor who has testified as a memory expert for defense lawyers at about 300 trials, including the rape trial of movie mogul Harvey Weinstein.

Prince Andrew's attorneys claim court does not have jurisdiction over Virginia Giuffre lawsuit

Attorneys for Britain's Prince Andrew claimed Tuesday that the US court handling a civil lawsuit filed by Virginia Giuffre, in which she accuses the Duke of York of sexual assault, does not have jurisdiction over the case.

A motion filed in the US District Court in Manhattan states,

"Ms. Giuffre alleges she is a citizen of the State of Colorado, the evidence demonstrates that she is actually domiciled in Australia, where she has lived for all but two of the past nineteen years."

Giuffre alleges she was trafficked by Jeffrey Epstein and forced to have sex with his friends, including the prince. She says the

assaults happened in London, New York and the US Virgin Islands -- and that Andrew was aware that she was 17 years old when the alleged incidents began.

In an earlier motion to dismiss filed on October 29, an attorney for Andrew said he "unequivocally denies Giuffre's false allegations against him."

The motion filed Tuesday also asks the court to "order Ms. Giuffre to respond to targeted written discovery requests pertaining to her domicile and submit to a two-hour remote deposition limited to the issue of her domicile."

CNN has reached out to attorneys for Giuffre and Prince Andrew for comment.

In November, a Manhattan federal judge said Andrew may face a trial date between September and December of 2022 provided the matter is not settled or dismissed.

Oral arguments are set for January 4, when attorneys for Prince Andrew are expected to argue for a dismissal of Giuffre's civil lawsuit.

The charges against Ghislaine Maxwell in her federal sex trafficking trial, explained



Ghislaine Maxwell was found guilty on five of six counts in her federal trial in New York related to what prosecutors said were her efforts to groom and traffic underage girls to be sexually abused by her close companion Jeffrey Epstein. She had pleaded not guilty to six federal counts: sex trafficking of a minor, enticing a minor to travel to engage in criminal sexual activity, transporting a minor with the intent to engage in criminal sexual activity, and three counts of conspiracy. She was acquitted on the charge of enticing a minor to travel to engage in illegal sex acts.

The jury, made up of six men and six women, reached its verdict on Wednesday. Maxwell faces up to 65 years in prison.

The charges all relate to testimony from four women who say Maxwell facilitated their sexual abuse -- and sometimes participated in it as well -- more than a decade ago when they were under 18. Yet as the 83-page jury instructions explain, some of the women were more important to the charges than others because of their age at the time and their specific allegations.

Her defense sought to undermine the accusers' memories and motivations during cross-examination. It also argued prosecutors are trying to scapegoat Maxwell only because Epstein, the sex offender and elusive financier, died before he could stand trial.

Here's a look at the six charges in detail and which accusers are associated with which charges. Sex trafficking a minor

The most serious charge against Maxwell was sex trafficking a minor, a charge punishable by up to 40 years in prison.

Sex trafficking applies to anyone who "knowingly in or affecting interstate commerce, recruits, entices, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains, by any

estimated that she went over 100 times in all.

Sometimes, Maxwell or another Epstein associate would call her to set up an "appointment" time, Carolyn testified. She testified that Maxwell and the associate would call her on her mom or her boyfriend's phone numbers if they couldn't reach her.

On one visit, Carolyn was setting up a massage room for him when Maxwell came into the room.

Kate testified she was 17 when she first met Maxwell, who invited her to a townhome in London and instructed her on how to give Epstein a massage. These massages soon became sexual, Kate testified

means a person ... knowing that ... the person has not attained the age of eighteen years and will be caused to engage in a commercial sex act," according to the jury instructions. The jury can also find her guilty of aiding and abetting the crime. This charge solely relates to Carolyn between 2001 and 2004. Using only her first name, Carolyn testified that she was 14 years old when she began to go to Epstein's home in Palm Beach, Florida, two or three times per week in the early 2000s. There, she engaged in sexualized massages with Epstein that Maxwell helped facilitate, Carolyn said.

Each time she visited, \$300 in cash was left for her on the bathroom sink, she said. She

Maxwell touched Carolyn's breasts, hips and butt, and commented that she "had a great body for Epstein and his friends," according to her testimony.

Maxwell and Epstein also invited her to go to an island, but she told them she was too young, her mom wouldn't let her travel out of the country and she didn't have a passport, she testified.

On cross-examination, defense attorney Jeffrey Pagliuca highlighted notes from a 2007 FBI interview in which Carolyn did not mention Maxwell by name, as he sought to show that Maxwell was not a key player in the abuse. Carolyn did mention, however, a "woman with short black hair and an accent" in that FBI interview. "Miss Maxwell was not the topic of discussion at that time,"

Carolyn explained.

In deliberations, the jury asked the court to see those FBI interview notes, but the judge explained that the document is not in evidence and so cannot be produced. Still, some excerpts were read aloud during Carolyn's cross-examination, and those were given to jurors in a transcript of her testimony. Enticing a minor to travel and transporting a minorMaxwell faced two similar charges of enticing a minor to travel to engage in criminal sexual activity and transporting a minor with the intent to engage in criminal sexual activity.

She was acquitted of the enticing charge but convicted of transporting a minor.

Both of these charges relate solely to "Jane" between 1994 and 1997.

Jane, who testified under a pseudonym, said that she met Maxwell and Epstein in 1994 when she was 14 at a camp where he was a benefactor. They took an interest in her and Maxwell came to feel like an older sister, Jane said.

"It changed when the abuse started happening," Jane said. She described in graphic detail incidents of sexual abuse with Epstein that Maxwell would at times join in on, both in Palm Beach, Florida, and Manhattan when she was 14, 15 and 16 years old.

She testified that Epstein would masturbate on her and molest her, and Maxwell would

sometimes be involved, touching her and Epstein. At least once, Maxwell instructed her how Epstein liked to be massaged while the three were in his massage room, she testified.

On cross-examination, defense attorney Laura Menninger asked her a series of questions about statements in which Jane told law enforcement agents that she wasn't sure if Maxwell ever touched her and she didn't remember Maxwell ever being present for any sexual activity. Jane repeatedly said she didn't recall if she'd said that to investigators.

The transporting charge is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

Three counts of conspiracy

Finally, Maxwell faced three counts of conspiracy related to each of the three counts mentioned above: (1) conspiracy to commit sex trafficking a minor, (2) conspiracy to entice a minor to travel to engage in criminal sexual activity and (3) conspiracy to transport a minor with the intent to engage in criminal sexual activity.

A person can be guilty of a conspiracy if they agree with someone to do something illegal and take an overt act toward that goal. They do not have to actually commit the underlying offense to be found guilty.

Because of that, these allegations against Maxwell are more expansive and include multiple accusers and a larger time span.

The conspiracy to entice and conspiracy to transport charges stretch from 1994 to 2004 and relate to allegations by all four accusers: Jane, Carolyn, Kate and Annie Farmer.

Kate testified she was 17 when she first met Maxwell, who invited her to a townhome in London and instructed her on how to give Epstein a massage. These massages soon became sexual, Kate testified. Judge Alison Nathan instructed the jury that they can consider Kate's testimony but cannot convict solely based on her story because she was over the age of consent at the time.

Farmer, the only accuser who used her full name, testified that she was 16 when Maxwell gave her an unsolicited massage while she was topless at Epstein's New Mexico ranch in 1996. Farmer also said Maxwell directed her to massage Epstein's bare feet.

Who is Ghislaine Maxwell?

Socialite and ex-girlfriend of Jeffrey Epstein guilty of sex trafficking a minor

British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell, who gained global notoriety as the former girlfriend and social companion of convicted pedophile Jeffrey Epstein, was found guilty by a New York jury Wednesday on five counts relating to her role in his sexual abuse of minor girls.

Maxwell was found guilty of five federal charges: sex trafficking of a minor, transporting a minor with

Epstein abused them and that Maxwell facilitated the abuse and sometimes participated in it.

The defense argued she was a "scapegoat" for Epstein's actions and attacked the memories and motivations of the women who said they were sexually abused. Maxwell's lawyers are working on an appeal, attorney Bobbi C. Sternheim said.

Who is Ghislaine Maxwell?

any of them."

In his biography of the tycoon, "Maxwell: The Rise and Fall of Robert Maxwell and his Empire," Greenslade recalls one evening in particular when he was sitting in an office with Maxwell and the daredevil teenager wandered in. He says Maxwell gave his daughter a scolding for "always taking risks, doing stupid, dangerous things" after she had

brilliantly," Greenslade said. "Dry-eyed, dealing well with the press."

Following her father's death, Maxwell reportedly moved to the United States.

"She was probably left with no money," Greenslade says, despite many speculating she secured income from a secret trust.

In the US, Maxwell lived a public

trafficked by Epstein with the help of Maxwell and forced to have sex with his friends, including Prince Andrew, when she was a minor. The prince has emphatically denied having sex with Roberts, and says he has "no recollection of the photograph ever being taken."

In 2012, Maxwell founded a charity, the TerraMar Project, which sought to encourage ocean conservation. However, the nonprofit ceased operations in December 2019, according to records at the UK's Companies House.

The same year federal prosecutors in New York unsealed a criminal indictment charging Epstein with having operated a sex trafficking ring between 2002 and 2005 where he paid girls as young as 14 to have sex with him.

How is she connected to Jeffrey Epstein?

Maxwell was the ex-girlfriend turned social companion of Epstein, who died while awaiting trial on federal charges of sexually abusing underage girls and running a sex trafficking ring. He had pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The pair are reported to have split in the 1990s, although the socialite remained close to the pedophile. Her name was frequently mentioned in a cache of documents that were unsealed last year that allege she was a procurer for Epstein and other high-profile people.

Maxwell "had a personal and professional relationship with Jeffrey Epstein and was among his closest associates," says a US federal indictment also unsealed last year.

"In particular, between in or about 1994 and in or about 1997, Maxwell was in an intimate relationship with Epstein and also was paid by Epstein to manage his various properties." Epstein described Maxwell as his best friend in a 2003 profile with Vanity Fair.

According to multiple people in affluent Manhattan circles, including two of her friends, Maxwell introduced Epstein to many of the social figures in his life.



the intent to engage in criminal sexual activity and three related counts of conspiracy. She was acquitted on the charge of enticing a minor to travel to engage in illegal sex acts.

The 60-year-old had pleaded not guilty to all counts.

Epstein died by suicide in August 2019 while awaiting trial. In the wake of the financier's death, public pressure mounted to hold those who might have assisted him -- including Maxwell and a coterie of young women who allegedly worked under her -- accountable not only for his actions, but also for their own roles.

During Maxwell's trial, prosecutors argued Maxwell and Epstein conspired to set up a scheme to lure young girls into sexual relationships with Epstein in New York, Florida, New Mexico and the US Virgin Islands. Four women testified that

Born in 1961, the British socialite grew up in the idyllic Oxfordshire countryside and is the daughter of Robert Maxwell -- a Czech-born newspaper tycoon and former British lawmaker who died under mysterious circumstances. The media magnate fell off his luxury yacht -- called "Lady Ghislaine" -- near the Canary Islands in 1991. He was posthumously discovered to have committed massive pension fraud against his employees.

According to Roy Greenslade, who worked for the media mogul as editor of The Daily Mirror in the early 1990s, Maxwell "doted" on Ghislaine "in a way that he didn't on his sons."

"He was a monstrous father," Greenslade recalls. "He treated his whole family very badly." But when it came to the youngest of his nine children, Maxwell "treated her more leniently than

a near-fatal accident after diving off a boat.

"She was quite clever at dealing with him," Greenslade explains, adding that she always spoke sweetly to her father in ways that he found difficult to challenge.

After Ghislaine left, Greenslade says Maxwell turned to him with a sense of pride in his voice: "She's like me."

That, Greenslade says, indicates why he perhaps favored her the most.

A 1991 inquest ruled that Robert Maxwell's death was due to a heart attack combined with accidental drowning. However, some believe that Maxwell's death was suicide with his business empire teetering on the brink of ruin.

There were plaudits at the time for the way Ghislaine handled the family tragedy. "People who were there at the time (when Maxwell died), said she dealt with it

life and socialized in exclusive circles that included people connected to politics.

According to eyewitness accounts, Maxwell was invited to former first daughter Chelsea Clinton's wedding and was even brought backstage at the Clinton Global Initiative summit in 2009. However Bari Lurie -- a spokesperson for Chelsea Clinton, says the only reason Clinton was acquainted with Maxwell was because the socialite was dating a friend of hers.

Maxwell was also photographed in 2000 with Donald Trump and his future wife, Melania Trump, alongside Epstein.

Maxwell was also in the background of the infamous photograph of Prince Andrew, which shows him with his arms around the waist of a young woman named Virginia Roberts. Roberts alleges that she was

Maxwell was arrested in July 2020 in the northeastern US state of New Hampshire, having disappeared from view following Epstein's arrest the previous summer.

What happened at her trial?

The charges Maxwell faced all related to the four women who had personal stories of her alleged role facilitating Epstein's abuse. During the trial -- which took place in a New York federal court -- prosecutors sought to closely link Maxwell and Epstein and said her actions normalizing sexual massages were crucial to his international abuse scheme at his properties.

The charges against Maxwell, explained

Jane, who testified under a pseudonym, said Maxwell organized sexual massages with Epstein and sometimes joined in the abuse. The charges of enticing -- on which Maxwell was acquitted -- and transporting relate to testimony solely from her.

Carolyn, who testified using only her first name, said that when she was 14, Maxwell touched her breasts, hips and buttocks and told her she "had a great body

for Epstein and his friends." The child sex trafficking count -- the most serious of all the charges -- relates to her testimony. Also connected to her testimony was the sex trafficking conspiracy charge, which Maxwell was found guilty of.

"Kate" testified Maxwell invited her over and directed her how to give Epstein a sexual massage and said Maxwell spoke often of sexual topics with her and asked Kate to invite other young girls for Epstein's sexual desires.

The judge instructed that the jury could not convict Maxwell on any of the counts based solely on testimony from Kate, as she was over the age of consent at the time of the events. However, two of the conspiracy charges Maxwell was found guilty of -- conspiracy to entice a minor to travel to engage in criminal sexual activity and conspiracy to transport a minor with the intent to engage in criminal sexual activity -- related to allegations by all four accusers. Annie Farmer, the only accuser to testify by her full name, said that she was 16 when Maxwell massaged her naked chest at Epstein's New Mexico ranch in 1996.



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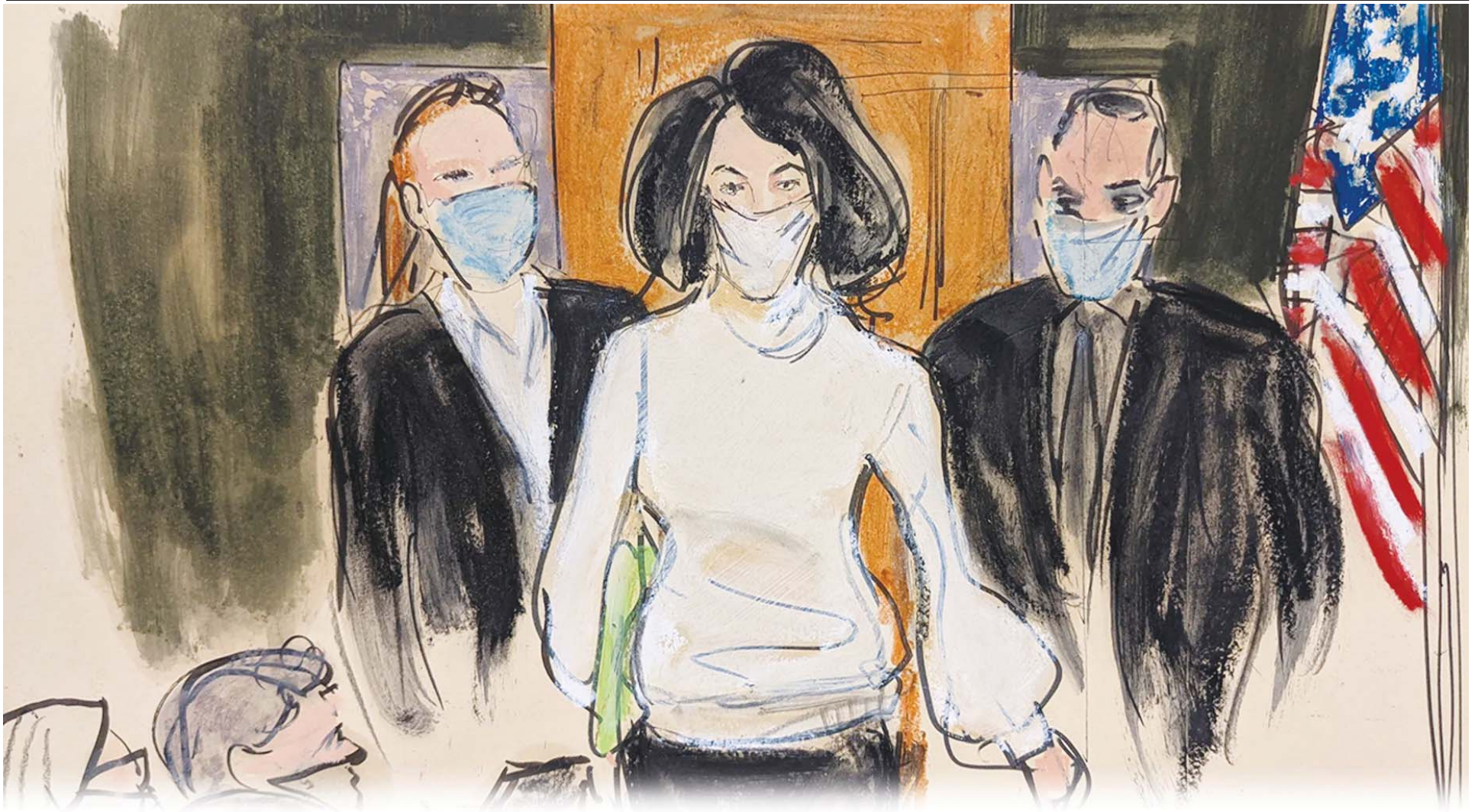
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Ghislaine Maxwell allegedly told teen she 'had a great body for Mr. Epstein and his friends'

A Ghislaine Maxwell accuser testified Tuesday in a New York City courthouse that she was 14 when Jeffrey Epstein's alleged madam told her she "had a great body for Mr.

her the ropes. Carolyn recalled that she stripped to her underwear, while Giuffre removed all her clothes before Epstein walked in, "brushed his teeth then laid down on a massage

I had a great body for Mr. Epstein and his friends," the tall woman, now in her 30s, recalled.

Carolyn had also traveled to Little Saint James, Epstein's private island in the Caribbean, where other women have said they were flown to sexually service the pedophile and his rich and powerful friends.

The abuse was so traumatizing that she tried to numb herself with alcohol, cocaine and marijuana, she told jurors, at times wiping away tears.

She treated Maxwell and Epstein as friends, confiding her deepest secrets - including that her mother was an alcoholic and that

her grandfather had repeatedly raped her beginning at the age of 4.

The alleged abuse at the hands of Epstein and Maxwell only stopped when Carolyn turned 18. "That's when I realized I was too old," she said.

Prosecutors have argued that Epstein and Maxwell allegedly preyed on beautiful young girls with troubled backgrounds.

In earlier testimony Tuesday, an FBI computer analyst read a document found on a hard drive seized from Epstein's multimillion dollar townhouse in 2019. The file, created in 2002, described Maxwell and Epstein as an

inseparable couple who were in a relationship for 11 years. It wasn't clear who wrote the document or why.

Epstein, 66, hanged himself in 2019 in his Manhattan jail cell while awaiting trial on federal sex-trafficking charges. Maxwell's lawyers have argued that she has become a scapegoat for Epstein's crimes and only became a target of Manhattan prosecutors after he died. She's accused of recruiting and grooming four girls for her and Epstein to sexually abuse from 1994 to 2004. She has denied the allegations, which could put her away for up to 35 years.



Epstein and his friends." Carolyn took the stand at the British socialite's sex-trafficking trial in Manhattan federal court, and said she was sexually abused beginning at the age of 14 by the perverted late financier and the British socialite.

Accuser Virginia Giuffre, who is not part of the criminal case, escorted Carolyn to the convicted pedophile's Palm Beach mansion in the early 2000s promising her she'd "make a lot of money real fast."

Maxwell, 59, allegedly greeted the teens at the door and told Giuffre to take Carolyn upstairs to Epstein's bedroom and show

table." The girls gave Epstein a 45-minute massage before he turned over, and Giuffre got on top of him to engage in sex, Carolyn, choking back tears, told the rapt jury. Carolyn got \$300 for that first visit and was asked to return hundreds of times - most frequently at the invitation of Maxwell. "Something sexual happened every single time," Carolyn said. She had sex with Epstein on multiple occasions, and other girls would sometimes participate in the sex acts, she told jurors. During one massage, Maxwell was present and allegedly fondled Carolyn's breasts and buttocks. "She said





4 women testified at Ghislaine Maxwell's trial that they were sexually abused. Here's what they said

The case against Ghislaine Maxwell primarily relied on the testimony of four women who said they were sexually abused by Jeffrey Epstein when they were under 18 -- and that Maxwell facilitated and sometimes participated in that abuse, too.

Maxwell, 60, had pleaded not guilty to six federal charges: sex trafficking of minors, enticing a minor to travel to engage in illegal sex acts, transporting a minor with the intent to engage in criminal sexual activity and three counts of conspiracy. She was found guilty by a New York jury on five of the six counts and acquitted on the charge of enticing a minor to travel to engage in illegal sex acts. Maxwell faces up to 65 years in prison.

Prosecutors had argued that Maxwell and Epstein created a system of sexual abuse in which they lured underage girls into sexual relationships with Epstein using the ruse of a massage and cash payments. Her defense, though, argued she is being scapegoated for Epstein's actions and has attacked the memories and motivations of the women who say they were abused.

Epstein, who pleaded guilty in 2008 to state prostitution charges, was indicted on federal sex trafficking charges in July 2019 but died by suicide in prison a month later. Maxwell was arrested a year afterward.

CNN legal analyst and former prosecutor Paul Callan said Epstein's death and the passage of so much time posed a huge challenge for prosecutors in this case. The government alleges the abuse occurred between 1994 and 2004. "Proving sex abuse and rape cases from decades ago is generally an extraordinarily difficult task," Callan says. "Proof in cases where children are involved are even more difficult. Memories of children are often unreliable and malleable."

Prosecutors called 24 witnesses across 10 days of testimony.

"Despite substantial obstacles, prosecutors finished strongly" with Annie Farmer, the fourth and final accuser to take the stand, providing "vivid testimony," Callan said.

Testimony from the victims began on November 30 with "Jane," who said that Maxwell sometimes joined in on the sexualized massages. "Kate" testified December 6 that

Maxwell set up those sexual meetings. Carolyn testified the next day that Maxwell once touched her breasts, hips and butt and told her she "had a great body for Epstein and his friends." She was 14 at the time, she said. Finally, Farmer testified that she was 16 years old when Maxwell massaged her naked chest at Epstein's New Mexico ranch in 1996.

Here's a closer look at what these women said under oath.

What Jane said

A woman identified in court by the pseudonym "Jane" testified she met Maxwell and Epstein in 1994 when she was 14 at a camp where he was a benefactor.

She and her mother met Epstein for tea in Florida and he said he could mentor her. She then started going to Epstein's home by herself. At first, Maxwell and Epstein made her feel special -- spending time with her, asking about her family and interests and taking her to do fun things, she said. For the first few

months, Maxwell felt like an older sister, she said.

"It changed when the abuse started happening," she said.

Jane described in graphic detail incidents of sexual abuse with Epstein that Maxwell would at times join in on, both in Palm Beach, Florida, and Manhattan when she was 14, 15 and 16 years old.

At times, Epstein would masturbate on her and molest her, she said. Maxwell would sometimes be involved, touching



her and Epstein, she testified. At least once, Maxwell "instructed" her how Epstein liked to be massaged while the three were in Epstein's massage room, she testified.

"It seemed very casual, like it was very normal, like it was not big deal," she said. "It made me feel confused because that did not feel normal to me."

She said it took her years before she was able to tell anyone about what happened, saying she felt "shame and disgust and confusion."

On cross-examination, defense attorneys combed through her statements to law enforcement since 2019 to try to show inconsistencies with her testimony in court.

In the statements, Jane told law enforcement agents that she wasn't sure if Maxwell ever touched her and she didn't remember Maxwell ever being present for any sexual activity between her and Epstein. Jane repeatedly testified she didn't recall if she'd said that to investigators.

At other times Jane testified that the law enforcement notes from those interviews were inaccurate, inconsistent with her timeline and not an accurate transcript of her statements, which were not recorded.

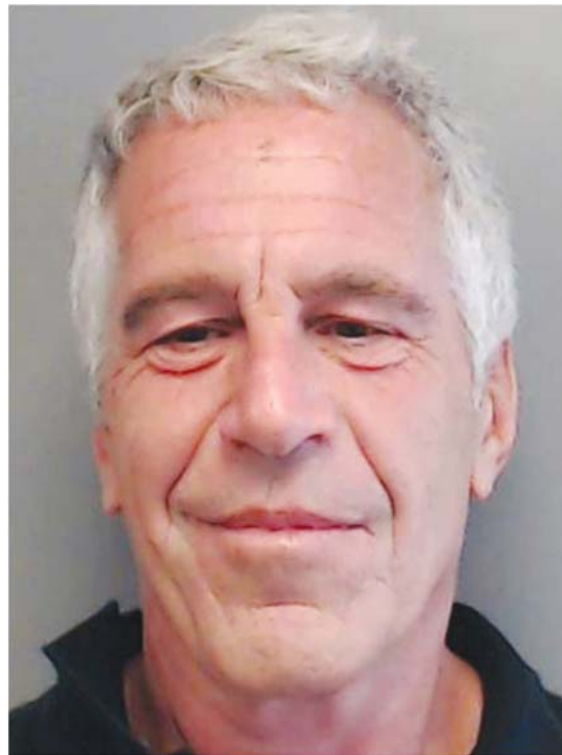
Maxwell was found not guilty of the charge of enticing a minor to travel to engage in illegal sex acts, a charge that was related to Jane. However, she was found guilty on the other charge relating to Jane: transporting a minor with the intent to engage in criminal sexual activity.

What Kate said "Kate" testified she first met Maxwell through an older boyfriend when she was 17. Maxwell invited her for tea at her London townhome and told Kate about Epstein and later invited her again to meet him, she testified. There, Maxwell told her to give Epstein's foot a little "squeeze" to show him how strong she was despite her small frame, Kate testified. Epstein approved of the foot massage and also had her massage his shoulders.

A couple of weeks later, Maxwell called Kate to ask whether she would do her "a favor" and come give Epstein a massage, even though she had no massage therapy experience. Maxwell led Kate upstairs in her townhome to a bedroom where Epstein stood in a robe, gave Kate massage oil, and closed the door behind her. Epstein disrobed and initiated a sex act with her, she said.

Maxwell called her back a second for another meeting with Epstein. "She said, 'I'm so glad you're here. You did such a good job last time (that) he wanted you to come back,'" Kate said.

This time, Epstein was standing



naked when Maxwell brought Kate to the same room and closed the door behind her. "Have a good time," Maxwell said as she left the room, according to the testimony.

In her testimony, Kate testified she traveled at Epstein's expense several times to New York; Palm Beach, Florida; and Little St. James in the US Virgin Islands, where Epstein had property. Maxwell invited her to Epstein's private island to give him massages and would inform Kate of the travel arrangements, she said.

During a visit to the Palm Beach residence when she was about 18, a "school girl" outfit -- a pleated skirt, white panties, white socks and a shirt -- was left on her bed, according to her testimony. When she asked Maxwell what it was for, Maxwell said, "I thought it would be fun for you to take Jeffrey his tea in this outfit," Kate testified.

Maxwell spoke of sexual topics often with Kate, asking her if she knew any other girls that could give Epstein oral sex. "She said that he needed to have sex about three times a day," Kate said.

"You know what he likes -- cute, young (and) pretty like you," Maxwell said, according to the testimony.

Kate said she kept in contact with Epstein until around 2012. She was about 24 when she last traveled with Maxwell and Epstein, but she continued

contact with Epstein through her early 30s, she testified.

She described staying in contact with him as a mix of denial and fear.

"I did not want to admit what had happened to me and I felt that

I would have to say something," she said. "I was also fearful of disengaging because I had witnessed how connected they both were and I was fearful."

Kate is not considered a minor victim in the charges because

consider her testimony, Judge Alison Nathan ruled.

The jury could not convict Maxwell on any of the counts based solely on testimony from Kate, as she was over the age of consent at the time of the events, the judge instructed.

However, two of the conspiracy charges Maxwell was found guilty of -- conspiracy to entice a minor to travel to engage in criminal sexual activity and conspiracy to transport a minor with the intent to engage in criminal sexual activity -- related to allegations by all four accusers.

What Carolyn said Carolyn, who testified using only her first name, said she was 14 years old when she began to go to Epstein's home in Palm Beach, two or three times per week in the early 2000s.

On one visit, Carolyn was setting up a massage room for him when Maxwell came into the room. Maxwell touched Carolyn's breasts, hips and buttocks, and commented that she "had a great body for Epstein and his friends," according to her testimony.



by ceasing communication I she was over the age of consent would have to acknowledge the at the time of the alleged abuse, events that had taken place and but jurors were still allowed to

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The uproar of corruption:



By Susmita Ghosh

Piyush Jain arrested over tax evasion charges

Primary investigation by the agencies has revealed that a firm considered as smuggling. "Recovery of approximately 23 generated through the dispatch of goods via fake invoices and

machines.

Sources said the Enforcement Directorate (ED) was looking into the case to find out if any predicate offence could be made out. If a predicate offence can be made out, then ED can file a case (ECIR) soon else it will have to wait till the DGCI files a charge sheet or state police or Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registers an FIR.

Added to this, the incident has kicked up a row between the Samajwadi Party and Bharatiya Janata Party with each trying to prove that the man was affiliated to the rival party.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav traded barbs

over Jain's arrest.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi targeted Samajwadi Party (SP) and its president Akhilesh Yadav after seizure of huge cash, gold and silver from Piyush Jain. Akhilesh Yadav snapped back at him saying Piyush Jain was a "BJP businessman".

At the inauguration of a metro rail project in Kanpur, PM Modi linked jailed perfume trader Piyush Jain to the Samajwadi Party and mocked Akhilesh Yadav's frequent complaints that the BJP takes credit for his work.

PM Modi said, "Boxes filled with notes have come out. I was thinking they [Samajwadi Party] will say that this was also done



linked to Kanpur businessman Piyush Jain was sending raw materials for perfumes to Dubai in exchange he was allegedly receiving gold bars which were seized by the officials of Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGCI). The investigators suspect that this was a way to avoid paying taxes and customs duties.

Sources also said that a similar modus operandi was allegedly used while sending raw materials for perfume to Singapore. If the customs duty and other taxes are not paid for the gold, then it will be

kgs of gold and unaccounted raw materials used in the manufacture of perfumery compounds, including over 600 kgs of sandalwood oil hidden in an underground storage, having a market value of about Rs 6 crores, have been made," a DGCI statement said.

The gold bars with the marking of 'International Metal Precious Metal Refineries' are suspected to have been bought from a foreign country. International Precious Metal Refineries is an Abu Dhabi-based company with branches in Dubai and Sharjah. The money was allegedly

without e-way bills by a goods transporter. Officials have seized more than 200 fake invoices from the premises they raided

"Since the recovered gold has foreign markings on it, DRI has been roped in for necessary investigation," said a DGCI official.

The current market value of the recovered gold is over Rs 10 crore in India.

To count such a huge amount of cash, the DGCI officials sought help from officials of State Bank of India (SBI) and their currency counting





by us."

"The people of Kanpur understand business and trade well. Before 2017, the perfume of corruption that they had sprinkled all over Uttar Pradesh is there for everyone to see,"

compounds.

From there, he advanced to making edible compounds for gutkha and tobacco products. Gradually, he started his perfume trade. Jain moved from Kannauj to Kanpur as his business

across 50 countries. "He has a lab at his premises where he used to 'invent' different compounds. Once the compound was ready he used to sell it to his clients across the world and in India. His clients are manufacturers of tobacco, soaps, perfumes and likewise products. He used to sell compounds at exorbitant rates." Financial intelligence teams probing the case said the chemicals recovered from his house were brought from Iran, France, Germany, Australia, Japan, Kuwait, Indonesia, Nepal, China, UAE and Tehran.

How he was found out?

According to a News18 report, the entire process begun when DGCI took action in a matter

related to non-payment of GST of tobacco and pan masala loaded in four trucks.

During the search, the makers of Shikhar Gutkha admitted that they owed tax and deposited Rs 3.09 crore. Meanwhile, the name of another partner of Shikhar Gutkha came to the fore - Odocam Industries - and here's when the story of Jain started. Jain is the owner of Odocam Industries and officials soon raided the company's registered address in Kanpur, which was Jain's house in Anandpuri, from where officials recovered the ill-gotten gains. What has been uncovered? Besides the cash, gold and silver, officials also

have recovered:

" Documents relating to 16 expensive properties, four of those are in Kanpur, seven in Kanauj, two in Mumbai and one in Delhi.

" Over 18 lockers in a cellar at Piyush Jain's ancestral house in Kanauj and over 300 keys which officials are trying to use to open the lockers.

" Jain has around 40 shell companies, including two in the West Asia.

" Besides houses, a factory, an office, a cold store, and a petrol pump have been linked to Jain. What happened next? Jain was sent to 14 days of judicial custody by a Kanpur court. The timing of this arrest is quite crucial too, as the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly election is waiting at the corner in Q1 2022. There has been close public association among the accused and the top brass of the Samajwadi Party, the top contender in the election. This whole fiasco, at this specific time, may prove costly for the Samajwadi party. Akhilesh Yadav, the SP supremo tried to put party at a distance from the financial allegation. In his statement, he refuted any link between the controversial Samajwadi perfumes to Piyush Jain and claimed it was launched by SP MLC Pushpraj Jain. Still, it will be hard to say the public opinion in such a short span before the election and the present ruling party BJP will try to reap full benefit out of the situation.

Kanpur-based businessman Piyush Jain was arrested on charges of tax evasion on 27 December more than 40 hours after Central agencies raided his premises in what turned out to be arguably the biggest cash seizure in recent times.

said PM Modi.

He said, "But now, they are sitting with their mouths shut. They are not coming forward to take credit for the mountain of currency notes seen by the entire country. This is their achievement and their reality."

"The people of Uttar Pradesh are watching and they understand everything. They are with those who are working to take the state forward," he said.

Let's take a look at who Jain is and what the controversy is all about:

Piyush Jain is a Kanpur-based perfume businessman. As per an India Today report, Jain used to conduct his business at Kanpur's Ittarwali Gali and had offices in Kannauj, Kanpur and Mumbai.

A neighbour said Jain used to work as a salesman in a company in Mumbai. Being well-versed in chemistry, he started making compounds for soap, detergents, and so on. As Piyush grew up, he took over the family business and also started making soap and detergent

expanded. He now has a booming business in Mumbai and Gujarat.

According to a Business Standard report, Jain has links



Britain's crossbow rules in the crosshairs after Windsor Castle breach

The renewed scrutiny comes days after an intruder breached the castle grounds on Christmas morning. A 19-year-old man was arrested "on suspicion of breach or trespass of a protected site and possession of an offensive weapon," according to police, while Queen Elizabeth II was on the premises with other members of the royal family. The British monarch had celebrated the holiday at Windsor Castle instead of at her estate in Sandringham, Norfolk, as is her usual practice. Buckingham Palace said the decision was a "precautionary approach" because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The man arrested, whom police declined to identify, did not enter any buildings or endanger the royal family. But police officers said they found a crossbow after

for mental health issues.

Under existing legislation, crossbows can be purchased over the counter or on the internet by those older than 18. Owners



searching him, adding that he was in the care of medical professionals receiving treatment

do not need a license or certificate to operate the weapons and, unlike shotguns

and firearms, police do not have an official record of who owns them and how many are in circulation. Detectives said they were reviewing a video as part of the investigation, the Metropolitan Police said in a statement Monday, but declined to give further details.

Controls on weapons such as crossbows drew particular concern in 2018 after a British man broke into a neighbor's home in East Yorkshire, shooting and killing him with a crossbow and injuring his pregnant partner. In a 2021 report investigating the death of the man, a coroner for the county asked top policing officials, including Patel, to review

legislation regulating the purchase and possession of crossbows.

"Evidence was heard about the power and lethal capabilities of these weapons, as well as the fact that they are essentially silent," the coroner, professor Paul Marks, said in the report. "In my opinion," he added, "there is a risk that future deaths will occur unless action is taken." The Home Office said work reviewing the legislation was continuing after the episode in East Yorkshire, adding that it was already an offense to possess arrows, or possess offensive weapons in public spaces "without good reason or lawful authority."

Income Tax dept raids premises owned by 2 business groups in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand

The search operation, conducted on December 22, covered more than 50 premises spread over various locations including Jaipur, Mumbai and Haridwar. The officials seized a large number of incriminating documents and digital data during the search.

A preliminary analysis of seized evidence revealed that several entities engaged in the business of manufacturing switches, wires, and LEDs were selling goods that were not recorded in the regular books of



accounts. During the

the

that they were claiming bogus expenses to reduce taxable

income. The trail of receipt of cash component for an

unaccounted sale of goods was also found. In the case of one group, the search team detected transactions evidencing undisclosed income of more than Rs 150 crore. The key person of the group admitted that he had Rs 55 crore as undisclosed income and offered to pay tax thereon. The analysis of seized and other related documents relating to the other group revealed that most of the loans are given in cash and a relatively high rate of interest was charged on these loans.

Nostradamus predictions for year 2022: Asteroid strike, Global warming and more

This has left us wondering what the year 2022, which is about to begin, has in store for us.

Astrologers, numerologists, and tarot readers begin to make forecasts, although the most famous among them did so about 500 years ago.

Of course, we're talking about Nostradamus.

In 1555, the famous and extensively mentioned book "Les Prophéties" was written by the French plague doctor, astrologer, and seer.

The book is packed of lyrical prophecies, including wars,

natural disasters, assassinations, nuclear assaults, and revolutions.

So let's have a look at what are Nostradamus' prophecies for 2022:

The death/disappearance of a political figure

"The sudden death of the first character, he will be changed and they will put another in his kingdom."

For some, this means that a significant member of the world political community has vanished physically. Some believe it refers to North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un, others to Queen Elizabeth



of the United Kingdom, and still others to US Vice President Joe Biden.

Global warming

"Like the sun, the head will seal the shining sea. The live fish of the Black Sea will almost boil."

Nostradamus foresaw a solar storm of unparalleled magnitude, the melting of the poles, and a rise in sea level in this way. He also forecasted earthquakes, floods, and severe droughts.

Inflation and famine are two of the world's most serious problems

"So high the price of wheat/That man is stirred/His fellow man to eat in his despair."

US considers warning Ukraine of a Russian invasion in real-time



A small Pentagon team recently visited Ukraine to evaluate the country's air defense needs, John Kirby, the chief Pentagon spokesperson, said Monday. On Tuesday, Karen Donfried, the State Department's top diplomat for Europe, told reporters that the United States would increase its military assistance to Ukraine if Russia invaded.

The United States has been supplying Ukraine with anti-tank guided missiles called Javelins since 2018; Biden authorized an additional Javelin delivery this fall as part of a \$60 million military aid package.

The list of ideas being drawn up at the Pentagon, the State Department and the White House include redirecting to Ukraine helicopters and other military equipment once allocated for the Afghan military, officials said. The administration is also considering sending additional cyberwarfare experts to Ukraine. The United States and Britain have sent some experts to shore up defenses in case Putin launches a cyberstrike on Ukraine either in advance or instead of a ground invasion. But the proposal at the Pentagon for "actionable" intelligence is potentially more significant, two U.S. officials said. The information would include images of whether Russian troops were moving to cross the border. Such information, if shared in time, could enable the Ukrainian military to head off an attack.

The Biden administration has recognized how important real-time awareness is for the survival of Ukraine's government. U.S. intelligence agencies are already giving Kyiv access to more material than they had before the

Russian military buildup, said a person briefed on the administration's actions. The person and U.S. officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the plans.

"The number one thing we can do is real-time actionable intelligence that says, 'The Russians are coming over the berm,'" said Evelyn Farkas, who served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia in the Obama administration. "We tell them, and they use that to target the Russians."

She said that "we've been nervous about that in the past."

One potential problem with providing actionable intelligence, U.S. officials acknowledge, is that it could lead Ukraine to strike first - the sort of scenario Western officials believe Putin has been trying to sell to the Russian public. This past summer, Putin argued in an article that Russians and Ukrainians were one people and said that the formation of a Ukrainian state hostile to Moscow was comparable "in its consequences to the use of weapons of mass destruction against us."

He has continuously painted the Ukrainian government as the aggressor, backed by the West. But if Russian tanks are moving over the border, and Ukraine targets them, it will be hard for Putin to make that argument. Russian disinformation campaigns have attacked the Ukrainian government and accused President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of creating a humanitarian crisis in the country's east, where Ukrainian government forces have been

battling Russian-led separatists for years, Western officials said. Last Friday, Putin codified what he has long been saying to American and European officials in meetings, demanding that the United States and its allies halt

all military activity in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in a Cold War-like security arrangement. That the demand came when Russian troops were at Ukraine's border explicitly linked the deployment to a possible invasion, U.S. officials said.

U.S. and NATO officials privately dismissed the main demands of the Russian proposal, which came in the form of a draft treaty suggesting that NATO should offer written guarantees that it would not expand farther east toward Russia and halt all military activities in the former Soviet republics.

But the United States also set up talks with Moscow, for January, during which officials said they would tackle the range of complaints detailed by Russia. On Wednesday, Gen. Mark Milley, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke with his Russian

counterpart, Gen. Valery Gerasimov. Ukraine has sought NATO membership for years - a move that would enrage Russia - but despite the delay, the United States has balked at taking Ukraine's accession off the table. For the Biden administration, the escalating situation on the border is demanding a balancing act. With Moscow spooked by the Ukrainian government's perceived anti-Russia policy shift, Putin wants to put pressure on the government, while also exposing the limits of what the United States and Europe are willing to do for Ukraine, officials said. The Biden administration, officials say, must strike the right note: by bolstering aid to the Ukrainian military to discourage an invasion but not to the point where Russia feels threatened and decides it must to act.

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Why Christians seem to be under attack in Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring states

The amendment to the MP Freedom of Religion Act in March 2021, plus the BJP's tribal outreach plan in MP, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, has complicated matters for the minority community

There has been a spate of attacks on Christian institutions and disruptions in prayer meetings by right wing Hindu groups in Madhya Pradesh over the past few weeks prompting members of the community leadership to raise the issue with the ruling BJP government in the state.

Geographically speaking, the attacks have been happening across Madhya Pradesh—from Jhabua in the West to Satna in the North eastern part of the state, Vidisha in central MP and Datia in the North. Christian organisations have complained of the administration being soft on the attackers. So what is prompting this sudden surge in attacks and is there a political motive behind them?

On December 6, Bajrang Dal workers pelted the St. Joseph School in Ganj Basoda in Vidisha district with stones while students were taking their class XII exams inside. The school was damaged in the attack that came after allegations that children were being forced into conversion at the school. The allegations have not yet been proven. The school principal had informed the police about the protest in advance but the Vidisha district

administration did not do anything to prevent it.

Earlier in October, nearly a dozen members of the Christian community were booked and arrested in Datia on charges of distributing Christian literature—an act seen as an instance of promotion of enmity between communities (Section 505 IPC). A school in Satna, in north west MP, was targeted by Bajrang Dal members on November 1, who barged into a prayer meeting claiming that conversions were taking place. In October again, some people barged into a school in Mandla, located in the tribal belt in eastern MP accusing the school of carrying out conversions.

The attacks are, of course, not just restricted to Madhya Pradesh. A.C. Michael, national coordinator of the United Christian Forum (UCF) wrote a letter to the National Commission for Minorities in November 2021 citing a total of 382 incidents of violence reported against Christians in 21 states of India between January and October on a toll-free number run by his organisation. As per the UCF, while there have been 34 FIRs filed in connection to incidents of Christians coming under

attack, there have been 73 FIRs against members for the Christian community in connection with the same attacks. The FIRs against Christians are on charges of forcible conversions. The number



of incidents by end of December, claimed Michael, have increased to nearly 450. Four north Indian states, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh account for 216 of these incidents. Among the South Indian states, Karnataka accounts for 45 cases, suggesting a political link to the attacks. In MP, an amendment to the freedom of religion act in March 2021, following similar amendments in UP and Uttarakhand. The amendment, pejoratively called

the 'anti love jihad' law as being aimed at curtailing religious conversion due to marriage, but attacks seem to have increased on Christians after the amendment. "However," says Michael, "incidents were being

reported even before the amendment. I feel the amendments were done to bring the issue of conversion centrestage." For the record, the calls reporting attacks at the UCF helpline have increased from 142 in 2015 to 279 in 2020 with the current year reporting 450 plus incidents.

Jhabua, a tribal district in western MP has become the epicenter of this trend. India Today spoke to Azad Prem Singh Damor, the head of the Adivasi Samaj Sudharak

Sangh, a body leading the campaign against the Christian institutions in Jhabua. "I am only asking for the implementation of the constitution, especially articles related to the scheduled areas which allow for protection of tribal culture. I have never been involved in violence of any kind," said Damor, who was formerly with a paramilitary force. Damor and his cadres, who deny any association with the BJP or RSS, have filed numerous complaints with the Jhabua district administration against Christian community-run schools and churches. The administration on December 8 stopped renovation work at the Jhabua cathedral, which Christian leaders claimed was 100 years old and made on land donated by the erstwhile royal family of Jhabua.

Rocky Shah, the media in charge of the catholic diocese in Jhabua said that the recognition of seven schools in Jhabua run by missionaries have been not been renewed on various grounds. He said that 16 members of the Christian community have been booked in two incidents in the district of which some are still in jail.



Lithium & Chinese control over oil of future

Here's all you need to know about Lithium and how China plans to dominate the oil of the future.

In November 2021, there were several media reports around the world about the presence of Chinese 'prospectors' in Afghanistan looking for Lithium.

It all possibly began on November 23, with the English-language Chinese newspaper Global Times running an exclusive under the title - "Chinese firms explore lithium projects in Afghanistan, but risks remain".

On November 24, Bloomberg ran an article under the headline - "Chinese Miners in Talks to Access Vast Afghan Lithium Reserves."

Turkey's state-run Anadolu News Agency, on November 25, quoted Chinese media as saying that 'Representatives of five Chinese companies have arrived in Afghanistan on a special visa to explore Lithium resources in the war-torn country, estimated to be worth \$1 trillion'.

So, what is this Lithium that China is so interested in? Lithium is the lightest known metal with an atomic number of 3. It can be cut with a kitchen knife and is so low in density that it can float on water. Lithium is used in medicine as a treatment for mental health, bipolar disorder in particular, but it is most widely and intensively used for storing energy.

The modern world, as everybody knows, runs on smart phones, tablets, laptops, and a whole plethora of electronic devices that are cordless, meaning they run on batteries and, nowadays, mostly on Lithium-ion batteries. Lithium-ion or Li-ion technology has certain advantages over other battery technologies like

nickel-cadmium- Ni-Cd or nickel-metal-hybrid- Ni-MH. The energy density of Ni-ion is much higher than others and a Ni-ion can deliver 3 times higher volts than the other technologies. Also, unlike the Ni-Cd batteries, there is no toxic content in Ni-ion, making disposing of used batteries much safer and easier. Lithium has become crucial to cleaning up the environment as a source of clean energy that is affordable.

Governments around the globe are pushing Lithium to achieve their promised clean energy targets. The demand for Li-ion batteries, first introduced in the 1990s, has been increasing because of its use in electric vehicles.

According to Bloomberg, demand is set to increase 17-fold by 2030. As the demand for Lithium increased over the years, so did its price, where in 2014 a metric tonne of Lithium cost about 6,500 USD. By 2016, it had gone up to 9,000 USD and by 2020, Lithium was costing upwards of 16,000 USD.

While 50 per cent of all known Lithium reserves are in the Lithium triangle of ABC - Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, estimates are that it is Afghanistan that is sitting on huge deposits of untapped Lithium that could rival the South American deposits. Lithium in Afghanistan, in the years to come, could revive its collapsed economy while providing a major boost to the world's green energy demand. According to the World Bank, Lithium production by 2050 has to increase 5-fold anyway to be able to meet global

climate targets.

Where Lithium is concerned, it is also central to China dominating the world's Lithium-ion battery production. China accounts for more than 60 per cent of global Lithium-ion battery production and the Chinese government follows a policy of subsidising its manufacturing. This has meant that China, which is already the largest global importer of raw Lithium, is constantly looking to augment its supply chain. There is always the threat of geo-politics interfering in the supply of Lithium that China needs to feed its exploding manufacturing and consumer needs for batteries. From electric vehicles or EVs to cell phones and computers, China needs to ensure its supply chain and one way of doing it is to aggressively acquire ownership of mines abroad. Chinese companies have bought international stakes, like 51 per cent in Australia's massive Greenbushes mine, 23.8 per cent in Chile's SQM, and 50 per cent in Cauchari-Olaroz in Argentina. It is no wonder then that China wants to be in control of Afghanistan's supposedly vast Lithium deposits that is in its own backyard. The Taliban have been making efforts to revive Afghanistan's economy that collapsed, along with the US-backed republic, when the Taliban took over in August 2021. Though China has not yet officially recognised the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it has been in talks with Taliban representatives since before the takeover.

Will continue agitation till demands are met, govt response unsatisfactory, say protesting resident doctors



On Tuesday, the Union health ministry met a delegation of resident doctors who have been protesting against the delay in NEET PG 2021 counselling. However, the doctors were not satisfied with the result of the meeting and have decided to continue their protest

Resident doctors of hospitals across India have been protesting under the Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA) banner against the delay in NEET PG 2021 counselling.

On Monday, the protest reached a fever pitch when resident doctors marched towards the residence of Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya and some of them were detained by the Delhi Police. FORDA claimed the doctors were subjected to 'police brutality' and announced that all healthcare institutions would be shut down Tuesday onwards.

On Tuesday, the Union health ministry called representatives of FORDA for an 'emergency meeting'. However, the protesting doctors were not satisfied with the result of the meeting and have decided to continue their protest till their demands are met.

"Today was the twelfth day of agitation called by FORDA to expedite NEET PG Counselling 2021. A meeting was called by Union Health Minister with FORDA representatives in the afternoon whereby all the concerned points were put forward. However, the response was not satisfactory," FORDA's official statement on Tuesday evening said.

The statement added, "Also, after yesterday's brutal incident of violence by Delhi Police on peacefully protesting resident doctors, there has been no apology

from the concerned. In fact, an FIR has been filed by police against protesting doctors. After meeting representatives of the resident doctors' associations, it has been decided to continue the agitation till our demands are met."

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE MEETING?

DOCTORS' DEMANDS

At the meeting, the protesting resident doctors presented two major demands:

1. A written apology for the alleged manhandling of protesters by the Delhi Police on Monday
2. Written assurance that NEET PG 2021 counselling and admission process will be expedited and the case related to NEET PG 2021 will be fast-tracked in the Supreme Court

"We will seek a written apology for Monday's incident and expediting of NEET PG 2021 counselling," FORDA president Dr Manish Kumar told India Today as he was leaving for the meeting with the health ministry.

WHAT GOVT SAID

At the meeting, Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya expressed regret over the confrontation between the doctors and the police on Monday, as per sources.

Additionally, he assured the resident doctors that the

report of the three-member committee formed by the health ministry to review EWS quota in the All India Quota for NEET PG 2021 counselling would be submitted before the January 6 hearing in the Supreme Court.

"We are not able to do the counselling because the matter is sub judice before the Supreme Court. The government of India will submit a reply to the apex court before the scheduled date of hearing on January 6. We request the court to expedite the issue so that the counselling can be started at the earliest," Mansukh Mandaviya was quoted as saying in a PTI report.

Several petitions challenging the EWS quota are pending with the Supreme Court at present.

DOCTORS UNHAPPY

The representatives of the protesting doctors were not satisfied with the result of the meeting with the Centre on Tuesday. They have decided to continue their agitation, even as the health minister urged them to call it off in the larger public interest. The protesting doctors said they are yet to receive a written apology from the Delhi Police over the alleged manhandling of protesters. Additionally, the registration of an FIR against the protesting doctors has further irked them.

Goa Assembly polls: AAP to make its candidates sign affidavits to avoid defections



The AAP said its candidates who will be contesting next year's Goa Assembly polls will have to sign legal affidavits mentioning that they will not quit the party to join another one

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which will be contesting next year's Goa Assembly elections, on Thursday said its candidates will have to sign legal affidavits mentioning that they will not quit the party to join another one. The Arvind Kejriwal-led

party has taken this decision to stem defections as it feels that the coastal state is "notorious" for politicians jumping to other parties, an AAP leader said. The AAP has decided to contest all 40 seats in Goa assembly polls, scheduled to be held in

February 2022. "Goa, despite being a tiny state is notorious for political defections," AAP leader Amit Palekar told reporters. "In order to resolve the problem, the AAP candidates will sign a legal affidavit, promising that they will not quit the party to join another one," he said. He asked the Congress whether it could provide any guarantee that its candidates would not defect. "There is not a single party in the state, which can assure that its candidate will

not join the BJP. In 2019, as many as 10 Congress MLAs had joined the BJP," he said.

Palekar said that Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco, who had figured in the first list of candidates of the Congress, has joined the Trinamool Congress (TMC), which is also contesting all the seats in Goa. "Another Congress candidate is also likely to join the BJP soon. Such poaching in the state indicates that the ruling BJP has learned that majority wins

cannot be achieved," he added. Palekar said that to resolve this problem, AAP candidates will sign affidavits, which will be distributed among their voters, assuring them they would not join any other party. "If they do so, voters can take a legal action against them," he added. As soon as the AAP announces its candidate, they will sign the affidavits, Palekar said. "If a candidate quits AAP and joins another party, they are immediately disqualified as MLAs," he said.

Niti Aayog report

Pinarayi Vijayan attributes Kerala's performance to 'selfless service' of health workers

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan said the dedication and selfless service of health workers enabled the state to emerge at the top spot in overall performance in the Niti Aayog fourth health Index

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday said the dedicated service of health workers and the government's policy that focuses on strengthening the public health system have helped the state emerge as the best performing large state in the NITI Aayog's Health Index for the fourth consecutive time.

"Kerala has emerged again as the best performing large

state in @NITIAayog's #HealthIndex. The core reasons of this achievement are the policy that focuses on strengthening the public health system & the dedication of our health workers to ensure its success," he tweeted. The southern state emerged top in the performance of the year 2019-20 by battling the adverse factors like floods and that increases the value of the achievement, he said.

In a Facebook post, Vijayan said the Left Front's policy of strengthening the public health sector has been resolutely implemented even during the times of crisis.

"The selfless service of the health workers has enabled Kerala to fulfil this great responsibility in the best possible way," he said, adding that the following outbreak of COVID-19 also could be



contained in an exemplary manner due to this cohesive approach. The Chief Minister also stressed the need for more vigilant intervention in the health sector in the wake of the Omicron variant of the pandemic.

Kerala has again emerged as the top ranking state in terms of overall health performance among larger states, while Uttar Pradesh is the worst, according to the fourth Health Index launched by Niti Aayog.

The period 2019-20 (reference

year) was taken into account in the fourth Health Index by the agency. The report pointed out that, for the fourth consecutive round, Kerala emerged as the best performer in terms of overall performance. According to the report, Kerala and Tamil Nadu were the top two performers in terms of overall performance with the highest reference year (2019-20) index scores, but ranked twelfth and eighth respectively in terms of incremental performance.

World economy to top \$100 trillion in 2022 for the first time

A report suggested that the world's economic output will exceed \$100 trillion for the first time next year.

The world's economic output will exceed \$100 trillion for the first time next year and it will take China a little longer than previously thought to overtake the United States as the No.1 economy, a report showed on Sunday.

British consultancy Cebr predicted China will become the



world's top economy in dollar terms in 2030, two years later than forecast in last year's World Economic League Table report. India looks set to overtake France next year and then Britain in 2023 to regain its place as the world's sixth biggest economy, Cebr said.

"The important issue for the 2020s is how the world economies cope with inflation, which has now reached 6.8% in the US," said Cebr deputy chairman Douglas

McWilliams.

"We hope that a relatively modest adjustment to the tiller will bring the non-transitory elements under control. If not, then the world will need to brace itself for a recession in 2023 or 2024."

The report showed Germany was on track to overtake Japan in terms of economic output in 2033. Russia could become a Top 10 economy by 2036 and Indonesia looks on track for ninth place in 2034.

What is long Covid?

Study says virus can spread to heart and brain within days, stays for months

Many COVID-19 patients have complained that the symptoms or the side effects of the virus sometimes persist for months - it can be a case of long Covid. Long Covid is described when signs and symptoms of the virus last for a few weeks or months after having a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Studies have found that the virus can damage the lungs, heart and brain and when it happens, the risk of long-term Covid-related health problems gets increased.

Brain fog, fatigue, chest pain, depression or anxiety are some of the side effects that many people, who were tested positive for Covid, claimed to have suffered for months.

A new study by the researchers from the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) claims that the virus can spread to the heart and brain within days. The study also revealed that the virus can survive in organs for months.

However, those who can relate to the mentioned problems, need to understand that the yet to be peer-reviewed research

relates to fatal Covid cases. It has not based on people with long Covid issues.

The findings of the report have been released online in a manuscript that is under review for publication in Nature. For the study, the researchers have analysed tissues taken during autopsies of 44 patients who had died after contracting coronavirus.

They have found that the virus can travel from one organ to another; one of the reasons why patients have complained of symptoms affecting organs

besides the respiratory system or those organs which are generally not affected by Covid. As per the study, researchers found that SARS-CoV-2 RNA was detected in multiple parts of the body, including the brain, even as many as 230 days after infection.

"Our results collectively show that while the highest burden of SARS-CoV-2 is in the airways and lung, the virus can disseminate early during infection and infect cells throughout the entire body, including widely throughout the

brain," the team, led by Daniel Chertow wrote.

"We show that SARS-CoV-2 is widely distributed, even among patients who died with asymptomatic to mild COVID-19, and that virus replication is present in multiple pulmonary and extrapulmonary tissues early in infection," the researchers wrote.

"Further, we detected persistent SARS-CoV-2 RNA in multiple anatomic sites, including regions throughout the brain, for up to 230 days following symptom onset," they added.

Astronomers capture an erupting black hole 12 million light-years from Earth

Volcanic eruptions are as beautiful to watch as they are destructive to people living around the volcano. If a natural phenomenon on Earth can be so remarkable, what about celestial eruptions? To be more precise, what about eruptions taking place from a black hole? Black holes are intriguing space objects. They have such powerful gravity that even light cannot escape from it. But eruptions do take place from black holes and scientists have been able to capture an image of one such eruption.

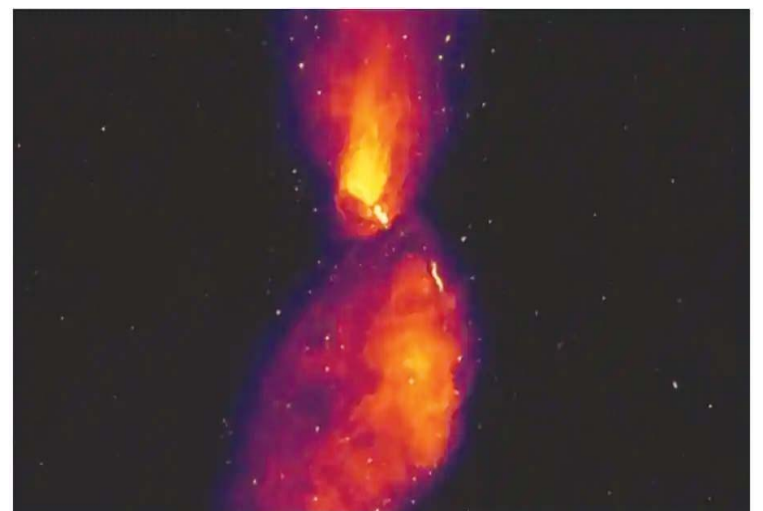
The black hole in question is at the centre of Centaurus A, the nearest radio galaxy closest to our own Milky Way. The galaxy is 12 million light years away from us.

The black hole is still feeding. This means that the surrounding gas is still falling inside it. As the black hole gobbles up gas, it ejects material that nearly travels at the speed of light. This causes 'radio bubbles' to form. This eruption and the radio waves have been caught by Murchison Widefield Array (MWA) telescope in Western

Australia.

"These radio waves come from material being sucked into the supermassive black hole in the middle of the galaxy," said Dr. Benjamin McKinley, lead author of the study. He was quoted by ScieTechDaily.

"It forms a disc around the black hole, and as the matter gets ripped apart going close to the black hole, powerful jets form on either side of the disc, ejecting most of the material back out into space, to distances of probably more than a million light years"



Research on this black hole eruption was published in journal Nature Astronomy on December 22, 2021.

Is there life on Venus? Scientists suggest it might be hiding in its clouds



Scientists have detected 'brain tsunamis' in human beings that cause irreversible damage to the organ. These neurological events occur several days after severe head trauma and may be responsible for inducing brain damage, according to a new study published in the 'Annals of Neurology.'

In the study, researchers provide insight into the neurobiology of dying. It sheds light on how these tsunamis or "killer waves" could help patients with severe head trauma avoid further brain damage and possibly retain most of their brain function.

The "brain tsunamis" are actually a large population of brain cells that undergo massive depolarisations. Much like the weather-related tsunamis, these large waves of depolarisations spread slowly but persistently throughout the brain, causing widespread brain dysfunction.

These wave-like depolarisations have been studied in brain trauma patients for decades. But the new research showed for the first time that brain tsunamis are responsible for causing further brain damage in afflicted patients.

For the study, investigators performed continuous patient monitoring following 'Do Not Resuscitate-Comfort Care' orders in patients with devastating brain injury to investigate the mechanisms and timing of events in the brain and the circulation during the dying process.

The findings may be helpful for developing treatment strategies of cardiac arrest and stroke that may complement efforts to re-establish circulation, and also inform the debate of organ donation after cardio-circulatory death, where death is declared between two and ten minutes following the cessation of circulatory function.

"After circulatory arrest, spreading depolarisation marks the loss of stored electrochemical energy in brain cells and the onset of toxic processes that eventually lead to death. Importantly, it is reversible, up to a point, when the circulation is restored," said lead author Dr. Jens Dreier, of Universitätsmedizin Berlin, in Germany.

"There are no direct implications for patient care today. Particular challenges include the slowness of this wave that hampers its visibility in normal EEG recordings; however, this discovery may lead to improved diagnostic and treatment procedures in the future, following Max Planck's motto that 'insight must precede application'."

The brain tsunamis drew the attention of the US military as head injuries became a very common injury among veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Scientists identify first 'quantum entangled' animal in history

Scientists identify first 'quantum entangled' animal in history

Scientists have identified the first "quantum entangled" animal in history in a recent study.

Called frozen tardigrade, they are microscopic multicellular organisms known to tolerate extreme physiochemical conditions through a latent state of life known as cryptobiosis.

"Their proportions are a little bit similar to a bear's, and they're kind of cute, at least some of



them are cute to some people," Roger Chang, a Harvard University molecular biologist who studies tardigrades, said. Quantum and biological systems are seldom discussed together as they seemingly

demand opposing conditions. Life is complex, "hot and wet" whereas quantum objects are small, cold and well controlled. In the study, researchers observed the coupling between the animal in

cryptobiosis and a like a dielectric, shifting the superconducting quantum bit and prepared a highly entangled state between this combined system and another qubit. The tardigrade itself is shown to be entangled with the remaining subsystems.

According to Douglas Natelson, Department Chair of physics and astronomy at Rice University in Texas, "What the authors did here was put a tardigrade on top of the capacitive parts of one of two coupled qubits." "The tardigrade is mostly (frozen) water, and here it acts

like a dielectric, shifting the resonance frequency of the one qubit that it sat on," he added. Meanwhile, former physicist Ben Brubaker said "The qubit is an electrical circuit, and putting the tardigrade next to it affects it through the laws of electromagnetism we've known about for more than 150 years." The researchers have claimed that the investigation is perhaps the closest realisation combining biological matter and quantum matter available with present-day technology.



Bhopal to get new sports science centre with world-class facilities

The Bhopal government has announced the plan to have a new sports and science centre in the city which will be equipped with world-class facilities. The sports department of the Bhopal government has decided to open a new sports science centre which will be equipped with all the modern and world-class facilities. The cabinet has allotted 50 acres of land for this

project at Nathu Barkheda.

"These games need intense focus. Several times, players, despite being talented, fail to hit the target for various reasons. After witnessing similar situations in other games, I felt that we should have a bigger sports science centre. The new centre will have all the facilities that one can think of,"

said Yashodhara Raje Scindia,

the sports minister, as quoted by TOI.

While elaborating on the importance of sports science, Dr Jince Thomas, in charge of the sports science centre, told TOI, "Sports in the contemporary era require various things that also include sports science. Only skill or good coaching is not everything in today's sports. In the age of tough competition, we

need to work on every area where an athlete is lacking. It could be psychology or even biomechanics. Sports science is a way to overcome such situations."

He further added that the centre would have special scientists in various fields to focus on each player, along with consultants who will suggest areas where a player can

improve.

The centre will be equipped with the latest technology machinery like Bertec instrumented treadmill, active real-time heart monitoring, 3D analysis, high-performance gym, etc.

For the first phase of the work, Rs 176.59 crore will be allotted and separate funds will be allocated for the second and third phases.

NASA is hiring priests to prepare humans for contact with aliens

The National Space and Aeronautics Administration (NASA) is enlisting help of 24 theologians as part of its efforts to determine how different religions around the world would react to contact with aliens, reported Technotrendz. A reverend is already working with NASA.

Rev Dr Andrew Davison, a British priest and theologian at Cambridge University has a degree in Biochemistry. Next year, he is releasing his book on the subject. In his book he is going to raise questions that ask how will discovery of life affect beliefs of religious people across the world.



Search for alien life has been a matter of fascination for humankind for centuries. As tools and more available, scientists of modern science became more have cast an informed gaze at

the universe in search of alien life. There are several candidates in our solar system itself. Scientists think that Europa, the icy moon of planet Jupiter has liquid oceans under its surface that may support life. Scientists also think that microbes exist in clouds of Venus. Humanity is soon to get fresh 'eyes' in the sky. James Webb space telescope was launched on December 26. This will be humanity's main space telescope over the ageing Hubble space telescope. We will soon be able to see corners of universe that were unobservable to us before this. Will we find an alien spaceship flying in deep space? Time will soon tell.

If your New Year resolution is fitness first, check these 5 affordable fitness bands and smartwatches



It is important to lead a healthy life and for that, you need a good fitness tracker to record your activities and more. Check out the list of affordable smartwatches available in the market

In order to lead a healthy life, it is very important to maintain a fitness regime. If you haven't thought about it, maybe you should take one step at a time and count it too. Yes, and for counting how many steps you have taken in a day, you would need a smartwatch. The smartwatch market in India is crowded with choices. Every smartphone company now has a smartwatch of their own and the best bit about them is that they do not come with a hefty price tag. Apart from the smartphone companies like Xiaomi, Realme, there are homegrown brands like Noise, Fire and others that are selling affordable smartwatches in the market. So if you have decided to finally focus on your

health, here are five smartwatches that you should consider.

Noise ColorFit Ultra 2

The Noise ColorFit Ultra 2 was launched in India at Rs 4499. The smartphone has been launched with the largest ever display on Noise smartwatch. The smartwatch features a 1.78-inch AMOLED, and it comes with an always-on feature. The Ultra 2 comes with trackers including SpO2, stress, 24/7 heart rate, sleep cycle and more. The watch has been offered in three interesting colours including black, gold and silver. The Noise ColorFit Ultra 2 also has features like weather forecast, reminders, calls & SMS quick replies, world clock, music, stocks, flashlight,

Smart DND, and calculator among others.

boAt Vertex

The boAt Vertex has been launched in India at Rs 2499. The smartwatch features a 1.69-inch capacitive square dial with a responsive touch interface. The Vertex smartwatch comes with various health tracking features including Heart Rate and SPO2 trackers. The heart rate tracker functions 24-hours and can alert users if the heartbeats are abnormal. The smartwatch can last for at least 10 days on a single charge. The Vertex is also sweat, splash and dust resistant with an IP67-certified enclosure, so you can wear it even during those sweaty workouts or long outdoor runs

Fire Bolt Invincible

The Fire Bolt Invincible is available on Amazon for Rs 6499. The Fire Bolt Invincible smartwatch comes with a 1.39-inch AMOLED display with a resolution of 454x454 pixels. The watch comes with an Always-on feature. The watch comes with 100 inbuilt sports modes. In the battery department, the company claims that the smartwatch offers a battery life of 7 days and is on standby mode, it can go on for 15 days.

Huawei Band 6

The Huawei Band 6 was launched in India at Rs 4499. The smart band was offered in Graphite Black, Sakura Pink, Amber Sunrise and Forest Green colours. The smart band comes with a vibrant screen. It features

a 1.47-inch AMOLED FullView display with a 64 per cent screen-to-body ratio and a resolution of 194x368 pixels. This is a touchscreen, so users will get enough real estate to swipe and scroll around on the screen. The band comes with SpO2 tracker, heart rate tracker and more. Huawei Band 6 comes with 96 workout modes and 11 professional modes, such as indoor cycling, outdoor cycling, and skipping, among others.

Mi Band 6- Xiaomi Mi Band 6 is priced at Rs 3499 in India. The band comes with a large 1.56-inch AMOLED display. The band comes with 24/7 heart-rate monitoring, SpO2 monitoring, sleep tracking and is swim-proof with 5 ATM water resistance.

Andhra's Anandaiah sells herbal 'Omicron drug', causes stir in village

Bonigi Anandaiah, a resident of Krishnapatnam in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, caused a stir in the village by distributing a herbal drug claimed to be preventive medicine for the Omicron variant of Covid-19. The villagers confronted Anandaiah after residents from neighbouring villages and towns arrived at Krishnapatnam to buy the 'magic drug'. A protest was held outside Anandaiah's home against the 'Omicron drug'

following which the police intervened.

The villagers questioned him regarding the distribution and asked whether he had received permission from the concerned health authorities. The villagers also claim the influx of people from other regions might spread the infection in Krishnapatnam. Earlier, Anandaiah had allegedly sold a similar herbal medicine during the second wave of Covid-19 infection with the help of local

MLA G Govardhan Reddy.

In June, a team from the AYUSH Ministry had briefed Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, who had called for analysing the medicine. The state government then allowed the use of herbal medicine being given to Covid-19 patients by Anandaiah. While the decision was taken following the findings of the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), the state government had kept on



hold the decision to prescribe the eyedrop variant of the Anandaiah concoction, which the practitioner claimed boosted oxygen levels in critical patients. Anandaiah has

code-named his medicines as P for clearing infection in the lungs, F for clearing poisonous substances from the body, L to activate the liver and K for critical cases.



Think your house is clean? The air quality in your home tells a different story

University of Utah engineers from both the School of Computing and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering built a series of portable air quality monitors with Wi-Fi and connected them to a university server

What if you could see the microscopic air pollutants in your home? In a new study, engineers have discovered that visualising how bad air quality is in your home can help mitigate pollution. They conducted a study to determine if homeowners change the way they live if they could visualise the air quality in their house. It turns out, their behaviour changes a lot. Lead author Jason Wiese said, "The idea behind this study was to help people understand

something about this invisible air quality in their home." During the day, the air pollution inside your home can be worse than outside due to activities such as vacuuming, cooking, dusting or running the clothes dryer. The results can cause health problems, especially for the young and elderly with asthma. University of Utah engineers from both the School of Computing and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering built a series of portable air quality

monitors with Wi-Fi and connected them to a university server.

To help identify when there might be spikes in the air pollution, homeowners were given a voice-activated Google Home speaker so they could tell the server to label a particular moment in time when the air quality was being measured, such as when a person was cooking or vacuuming. Participants also were sent an SMS text message warning

them whenever the indoor air quality changed rapidly. During the study, researchers discovered some interesting trends from their system of sensors, which they called MAAV (Measure Air quality, Annotate data streams, and Visualize real-time PM2.5 levels). Researchers also learned that circumstances that made the air pollution worse differed in each home. Vacuuming in the home, for example, would cause different reactions to the air

quality. They also learned that if homeowners could visualize the air quality in their home, they always stayed on top of labelling and looking at the data. The study involves engineering in collaboration with other University of Utah scientists, including biomedical informatics and clinical asthma researchers. The full findings are present in Proceedings of the ACM on Interactive, Mobile, Wearable and Ubiquitous Tech.

Pop an aspirin to lower risk of ovarian cancer

Taking a low-dose aspirin daily may help women lower their risk of developing ovarian cancer by 23%, suggests a new study



Taking a low-dose of aspirin daily may help women lower their risk of developing ovarian cancer by 23%, suggests a new study. Ovarian cancer is the most fatal gynaecological cancer, largely due to lack of early detection strategies and is believed that the inflammation that occurs during ovulation plays a role in the development of this cancer. Aspirin is thought to lower cancer risk by reducing inflammation. The findings, led by researchers from H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Centre and Research Institute in the US, showed that low-dose aspirin use was associated with a lower risk of ovarian cancer while standard-dose aspirin use increased the risk, their findings revealed. Conversely, women who took non-aspirin anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve)—

at least 10 tablets per week for many years, had an increased risk of developing the disease. "We're not quite at the stage where we could make the recommendation that daily aspirin use lowers ovarian cancer risk. We need to do more research. But it is definitely something women should discuss with their physician," said Shelley Tworoger, Associate

Centre Director from the varsity. For this study, published in the journal JAMA Oncology, the team analysed data on more than 2,00,000 women among which 1,054 developed ovarian cancer. In addition, researchers looked at the participants' use of aspirin (325 milligrams), low-dose aspirin (100 milligrams or less), non-aspirin NSAIDs and acetaminophen.

Sleep is good for brain health, helps your brain organise memories

Sleep is integral to good health. A new study shows that during your sleep, the brain reactivates memories



Sleep helps to consolidate memories, as per a new study. Researchers from Ruhr-Universität Bochum and the University of Bonn have investigated the activity patterns that occur in the brain when people remember or forget things. They were interested in how the brain replays and stores during sleep what it had learned

before. The team recorded the brain activity of epilepsy patients who had electrodes implanted into their brain for the purpose of surgical planning. One result: During sleep, the brain even reactivates memory traces that it can no longer remember later on. For the experiment, the test participants were given a

series of pictures to memorise. They then took an afternoon nap. When looking at a picture, the activity in the brain shows a pattern that differs somewhat from picture to picture. The researchers were able to measure these differences in high-frequency activity fluctuations — called gamma band activity. They analysed brain activity not only during the learning task but also during sleep. They then tested which images the participants could remember after sleep and which they could not. The gamma band activity that was typical of certain motifs occurred not only when looking at the images, but also during sleep.

World Smile Day: 5 mood-boosting foods to make you smile

You may think a slice of pizza or a bowl of chips will cheer you up. But the truth is that if you're looking for more sustainable boosts to your emotional well-being, there are better ways to eat yourself happy. There are food items that have been clinically proven to fight depression, lift energy, ease anxiety and generally make you feel good. On World Smile Day, October 5, here are five mood-boosting foods that

can influence your brain in a consistent, positive way and help cheer you up: **Chocolate** There's a very good reason we feel a bit happier after indulging in a piece or two. Chocolate releases mood-elevating chemicals, like theobromine, tyrosine, and tryptophan (serotonin), according to a study in National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI). **Banana** Aside from their many

health benefits, bananas can be eaten to treat PMS (premenstrual syndrome) symptoms or depression. The yellow fruit is high in tryptophan, which converts to serotonin — the mood lifting neurotransmitter — according to a study by the University of Maryland Medical Center. And, can also stabilise blood sugar and help you to relax. **Yoghurt** The probiotics found in yoghurt, aren't just great

for the stomach and immune health. They can also affect your brain functioning, increasing the mood-boosting neurotransmitters, says a study by NCBI **Green tea** Taking a sip of green tea will instantly give you that "ahh" feeling. Its L-theanine (amino acids) properties will help to calm and relax you. It can also help to improve mental fog. So if you're feeling a little low today, it's time to unwind.

Selfless acts of kindness makes you feel happier

Kindness is good for your brain, may activate reward areas of the brain and make you feel happier, says a new study

The glow of kindness is real — even if it has nothing in it for you. Psychologists at the University of Sussex have confirmed the same by undertaking a major analysis of existing research showing the brain scans relating to over 1,000 people making kind decisions.

For the first time, they split the analysis between what happens in the brain when people act out of genuine altruism — where there's nothing

in it for them — and when they act with strategic kindness — when there is something to be gained as a consequence.

Many individual studies have hinted that generosity activates the reward network of the brain but this new study from Sussex is the first that brought these studies together, and then split the results into two types of kindness — altruistic and strategic.

The Sussex scientists

found that reward areas of the brain are more active — i.e. use up more oxygen — when people act with strategic kindness when there is an opportunity for others to return the favour. But they also found that acts of altruism, with no hope of personal benefit, activate the reward areas of the brain too, and more than that, that some brain regions were more active during altruistic generosity, indicating that there is something unique about being



altruistic with no hope of gaining something in return.

Lead author Dr Daniel Campbell-Meiklejohn said, "We know that people can choose to be kind because they like feeling like they are a 'good person', but also that people can choose to be kind when they think there might be something 'in it' for them such as a returned favour or improved

reputation." "The finding of different motivations for giving raises all sorts of questions, including what charities and organisations can learn about what motivates their donors. Some museums, for example, choose to operate a membership scheme with real strategic benefits for their customers, such as discounts," said co-author Jo Cutler.

Single and ready to mingle? Here's how to find a date without dating apps

Online dating may seem like the norm with modern relationships, but that's not the case. Here's how some millennials find dates offline. You may be able to relate, or you may get ideas on new places to meet people



Like them or not, dating apps have become an acceptable way for younger generations to meet a potential love interest. As of 2016, Tinder, a popular location-based mobile dating app, had a staggering 9.6 million daily active users, accounting for some 1.4 billion swipes per day. Tinder has been operating in India since 2013. On Wednesday, US-based dating app Bumble, Tinder's fierce rival, said it will foray into the country by the end 2018. The company has roped in actor Priyanka Chopra as an investor, she will also act as an adviser to the app. Yet, no matter how common dating apps and sites have become, they're not necessarily for everyone. Though definitely convenient for busy people, who don't have the time to look for a significant other in real life (IRL), online dating can be tiring for some. 22-year-old Pritha Ghosh, an engineering student at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, finds the idea of internet dating a "tricky little business" and has no plans of being a part of it. Some of my friends have tried the infamous dating app, Tinder, and have gone on a few first and only

dates. They found people very flaky on the apps. I prefer meeting future dates in person, without the help of an app," Pritha says. After being addicted to them for almost a year, Sourav Chatterjee, 28, deleted all his dating apps and ended up loving it. As efficient as some dating apps are — you can message someone one minute and literally be out on a date with them the next — going to a friend's birthday party and hitting it off with somebody IRL is even more so, says the IT professional. The biggest advantage of meeting potential dates in real life, according to him, is getting to experience their vibe right away, which is something no online dating platform can deliver. "There's no better way to gauge attraction and chemistry than to be physically present with someone," Sourav says. Kolkata-based psychologist Aparna Sengupta agrees that while meeting people as potential partners is possible on digital applications or social media, meeting people in person tends to yield better results. That's because physicality can help you figure out whether or not there are sparks.



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Vamika sits on Anushka Sharma's lap as they cheer Virat Kohli on from the stands during India vs South Africa 1st Test



Anushka Sharma and daughter Vamika turned cheerleaders for Virat Kohli during the first India vs South Africa Test match. Unfortunately, he was not in great form on Wednesday and scored just 18 runs before Marco Jansen took his wicket in the first delivery after the lunch break. In pictures shared online, Anushka sat in the stands with Vamika on her lap. The 11-month-old wore a white frock and her hair was tied into two pigtails. Most fan clubs hid the baby's face with a heart emoji.

Gulshan Grover: If you don't evolve, reinvent, then you are in terrible times

Gulshan Grover has had a great 2021. Sooryavanshi, in which he plays one of the antagonists, finally released in theatres to a great response, amid so much uncertainty. He made his web debut with the second season of Your Honour, and his autobiography, Bad Man is being republished in Hindi and other languages after English. "I am feeling very happy. Sooryavanshi brought back audiences into the theatres. Rohit Shetty, my director, Akshay Kumar, Katrina Kaif, everyone's work was loved. Mine was too. I had a firsthand experience of landing at a cinema on a Friday afternoon to watch the film, and the crowd surrounding me was so much, it was impossible



for me and my car to move. The security had to put me in my car somehow, and get me out of there, saying 'you can't see the film here' I shared the video with Akshay and Rohit," says the 66-year-old. He goes on to add that it was 'God's plan' that things went off well for him. He says that among the 'clutter' today of films, the web show he made his

debut with was refreshingly different. Then he went on to do the web film Cash too.

It must have not been easy, we ask him, to stay relevant throughout these years. Grover quips that reinvention is what helped him. He says, "The thing, generally for any entertainer, artist, it extends to every craft. If you don't evolve, reinvent, then you are in terrible times. You can't stop progress and evolution. If you are stopped, then you are something that is not growing with time." And that is why he has been intelligent enough to take up things which will appeal to the younger generation as well. "I did this web film Cash, which had a young cast and crew, and I was

the only one younger than them (laughs) I played the main antagonist. Then one of the largest natural produce companies launched a men's grooming collection of which I am the face and partner.

A lot is happening for me on the work front, I am in a very exciting world, and I wouldn't change anything," he signs off.

Virat Kohli's wife Anushka Sharma and daughter Vamika came to watch him play during the first India vs South Africa Test match

Virat and Anushka have Instagram Stories later and taken measures to keep Vamika out of the public eye. Shortly after her birth, they sent the paparazzi hampers and requested them to refrain from taking unauthorised pictures of her.

Earlier this month, as Virat left for South Africa with Anushka and Vamika, he told the photographers, "Baby ka mat lena haan (Don't click the baby's pictures, okay)?" Anushka took to

thanked them for complying with the request.

"We are deeply thankful to the Indian paparazzi and most of the media fraternity for not publishing pictures/videos of Vamika. As parents, our request to the few who carried the images/video will be to support us going forward," the statement, which appeared to be on behalf of her and Virat read.

Karan Johar on actors who are yet to 'prove themselves' demanding ₹30-35 crore 'They are beyond deluded'



In a recent interaction, filmmaker Karan Johar opened up on how he was 'fed up' with actors increasing their fees despite failures and new, young actors demanding high amounts as their remuneration.

"I am so fed up. I have seen actors' price rise through the worst period of cinema for no reason," said Karan in a discussion. In the Producers Adda 2021 for Film Companion, Karan talked about how actors hiked their fees during the pandemic despite films not doing well. In a recent interaction, filmmaker Karan Johar opened up on how he was 'fed up' with actors increasing their fees despite failures and new, young actors demanding high amounts as their remuneration.

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"There was an X amount. Three months later, it is here (gestures at a higher level than before). But why? They had not had any release and their last release was a failure. Their films have not taken off and yet they are going up because they are riding on that digital money. Their managements or whoever they have is telling them, digital is giving this much, music is earning that much. But who is making these charts? They have gone beyond deluded, I have to tell you. We have to just suck it and work with them." He went on to say that the 'younger' actors demand high fees and he just wants to show them their box office 'report cards': "There are megastars with whom you cut these deals and that I understand. What I really don't understand is that there is a younger order, who have really yet to prove themselves at the box office. Immediately you hear 25-30-35 (crore rupees) and I'm like, 'What are these numbers?' Then you want to show that report card to them that hello, this is what you open to. This is what your film did." After his co-panellist Zoya Akhtar addressed the inequality in the salaries of actors and technicians, calling it 'offensive', Karan echoed her thoughts and said,

After break-up, Sushmita Sen pens note on 'ups and downs' of 2021 'I feel renewed'

Sushmita Sen reflected on the year gone by in her new Instagram post and thanked her fans for their support throughout. She said that she hopes for 'an incredible 2022'. "A girl loves compliments!!! And boy, my timeline is blessed with an avalanche of those!!! Thank you beautiful people for being a part of my life & for believing in my journey!!! 2021 has been a gratifying year...with its delicious ups & downs (a graph called life)," she wrote.

This year has been eventful for Sushmita, personally and professionally. While her relationship of three years with Rohman Shawl came to an end recently, she was also praised for her performance in the second season of Aarya. "As we near the end of this year...I feel renewed, with a deep sense of gratitude...for all the goodness that has touched my life!!! YOU are a BIG part of it!!! I love you guys!! Look forward to an incredible 2022...A year of beautiful

manifestations!!! Stay positive...hopeful & happy!!! #itsallhappening for you & not to you!!!" she wrote. She added hashtags such as 'love', 'belonging' and 'note of gratitude'.

Last week, Sushmita announced her break-up with Rohman. "We began as friends, we remain friends!!! The relationship was long over...the love remains!!!" she wrote in an Instagram post. Earlier this month, the second season of the Disney+ Hotstar series Aarya, starring Sushmita in the titular role, released online. She plays the role of a doting wife and mother who is forced to take over the reins of her husband's drug empire when he is killed.

Co-directed by Ram Madhvani, Sandeep Modi and Vinod Rawat, Aarya is an adaption of the Dutch show Pinoza. The series will return for a third season.



Yash Dasgupta recalls how he and Nusrat Jahan once managed to hide from media after car chase

Actor-politician Yash Dasgupta, during an appearance on actor-politician Nusrat Jahan's radio show Ishq With Nusrat, recalled how their romantic drive once turned into a car chase, with mediapersons hot on their heels. He revealed that they somehow managed to escape unseen. Yash said that just before Nusrat was supposed to be admitted to a hospital, possibly referring to the third trimester

of her pregnancy, she wanted to go on a drive with him. She was not wearing a n y make-up and did not want to be c l i c k e d like that, he said.



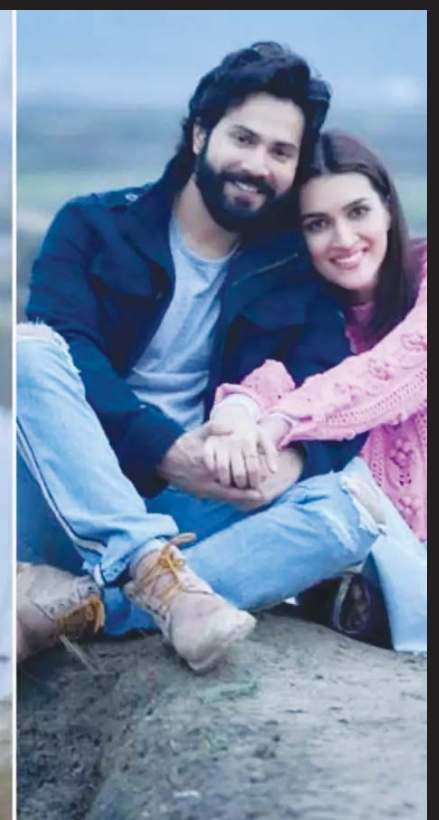
"The problems that heroes and heroines

face is that they always have to look good but that is not possible 24x7. We are sitting here now wearing these nice clothes but this is not how we are all the time. Heroines are not like this at home, so they have a fear that the audience might get a glimpse of that look and get scared. So with a face like that, we were going for a drive.

As Delhi shuts cinemas due to Omicron scare, Varun Dhawan-Kriti Sanon back multiplex association's plea to reconsider

While the film industry was on its way to bouncing back from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Delhi government on Tuesday ordered to shut down cinema halls, spas, and gyms in order to curb the rise in COVID-19 cases. However, the multiplex owners are concerned about the decision and recently wrote to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to reconsider the new rules and allow the operation of theatres with proper guidelines and protocols in place. Bollywood celebrities, including Varun Dhawan and Kriti Sanon, who will be next seen sharing screen space in Bhediya, have extended their support to the plea of the multiplex owners. Posting a statement on behalf of the Multiplex Association of India (MAI) on their Instagram stories, Varun and Kriti urged their fans to read and spread it, and the government to consider it. The appeal shared by Kriti and Varun on their Instagram stories. MAI's letter stated that the Delhi government's decision had caused "massive uncertainty" and that it could lead to

"irreparable damage" to the film industry. It further stated that the period from March 2020 was "undeniably the most challenging" for the film industry. "Not a single outbreak of COVID-19 anywhere around the world has been traced to a cinema," read the letter. It also sought "equal treatment" with other industries and institutions. It requested the Delhi government to introduce the double vaccination requirement to enter cinemas like in states like Maharashtra and resort to a 50 per cent capacity for seating. "We call on the Government to recognise the unique social, cultural and economic value of the Indian film industry, and to provide the support it so desperately needs to survive this unprecedented period," the statement concluded. Amid the rise in Omicron cases, the first film to postpone its release is Shahid Kapoor-starrer Jersey, which was earlier slated to release on December 31 this year. The makers of the film made the announcement on Tuesday. A new release date for the movie is yet to be announced.





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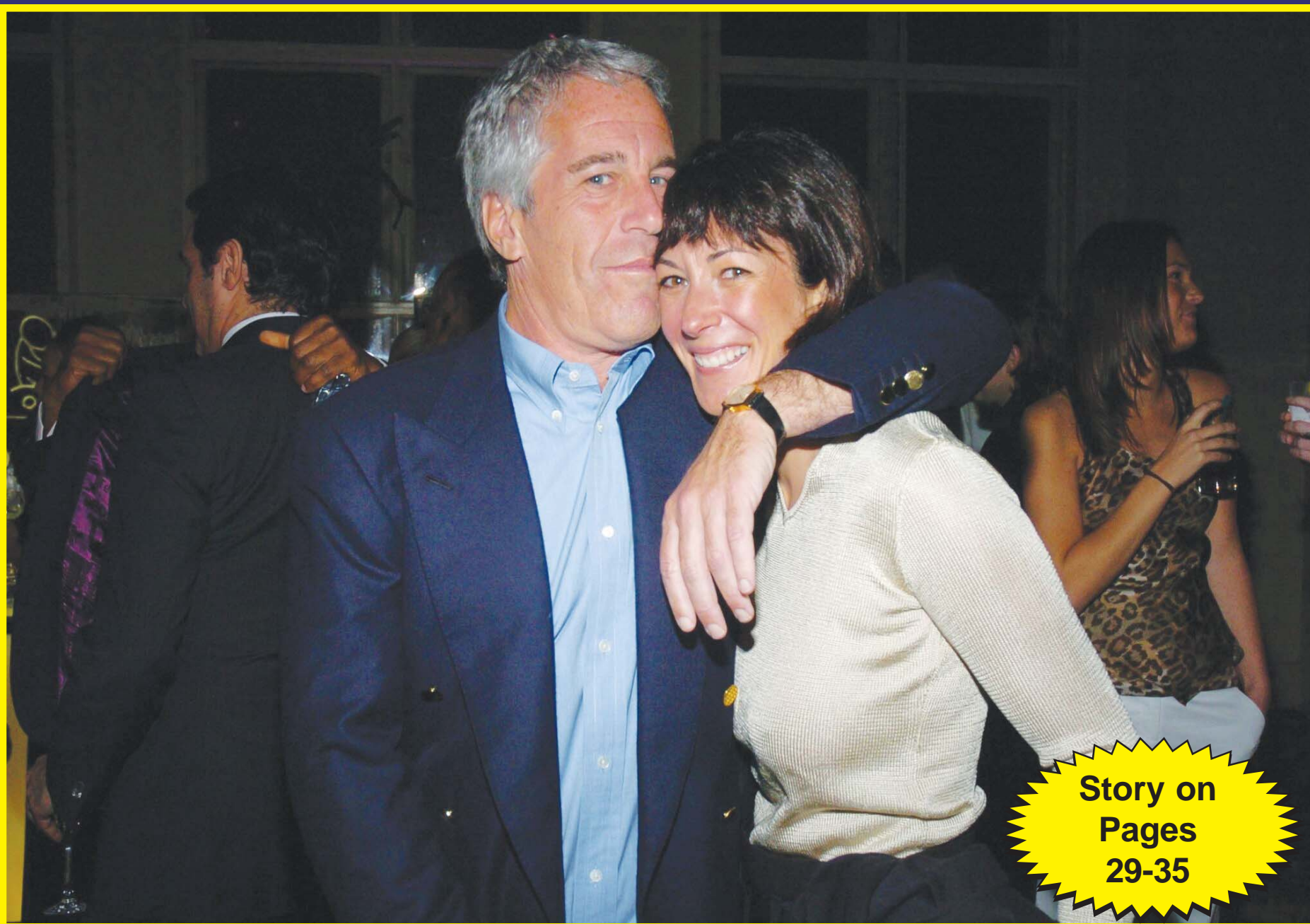
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29-35

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