



Will Modi vs Mamata campaign bid for 2024 leave Congress further marginalised?



(SAI Bureau)-Trinamool Congress chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's bid to prop up a grand alliance minus the Congress is a posture that is aimed at showcasing the "Modi

Versus Mamata" battle for 2024. However, not everyone inside or outside the erstwhile United Progressive Alliance [UPA] is enthused by Bengal chief minister's grand standing. A lot

would depend upon the outcome of ensuing assembly polls in the five states of Goa, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Uttar Pradesh. Trinamool Congress party is aware
(Contd on page 35)

What the heck is going on with Kamala Harris?



(SAI Bureau)-In the space of the last two weeks, Vice President Kamala Harris has lost two of her senior aides.

First, just before Thanksgiving, news broke that Ashley Etienne, Harris' communications director, would be leaving the vice president's office. Then, on Wednesday night, CNN reported that Symone Sanders, Harris' chief spokesperson and a senior adviser, is also headed out the door.

(Contd on page 36)

CM Thackeray signs file to suspend Mumbai's former top cop Param Bir Singh, probe to begin



(SAI Bureau)- Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Thursday signed on the file to suspend former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh, pending a departmental inquiry against him.

(Contd on page 36)

Cryptocurrencies are rubbish and a ban may save many from future shock



(SAI Bureau)- Essentially there are two kinds of currencies: real and fictional. A real currency is something that has tangible and universal value. For example, a piece of bread can serve as a currency, like it had in the abject conditions of concentration camps, because it has

a tangible and universal value. It can alleviate hunger. Stretching this idea further leads us -- and the world -- to all kinds of objects and materials that can serve as currency. Gold and other precious metals. Gems. Utility goods. Even physical labour or a

(Contd on page 33)

Germany locks down unvaccinated people, as leaders plan to make shots compulsory



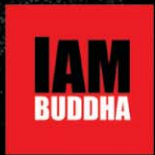
(SAI Bureau)- Germany on Thursday announced a nationwide lockdown for the unvaccinated, as its leaders backed plans for mandatory vaccinations in the coming months. Unvaccinated people will be banned from accessing all but the most essential businesses, such as supermarkets and pharmacies, to curb the spread

(Contd on page 35)



Insurance

Tel : 516 NLIGHT 8 (516 654 4488)



GLOBAL KASHMIRI PANDIT DIASPORA
IN ASSOCIATION WITH I AM BUDDHA FOUNDATION

BRINGS TO YOU AN
EXCLUSIVE PRE-RELEASE PREVIEWS
OF THE MOST AWAITED FILM

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
THE TASHKENT FILES

THE KASHMIR FILES

RIGHT TO JUSTICE



A VIVEK RANJAN AGNIHOTRI FILM

MITHUN CHAKRABORTY | ANUPAM KHER | DARSHAN KUMAAR | PALLAVI JOSHI
CHINMAY MANDLEKAR | PUNEET ISSAR | MRINAL KULKARNI | PRAKASH BELAWADI
ATUL SRIVASTAVA | BHASHA SUMBLI | PRITHVIRAJ SARNAIK

DIRECTOR & WRITER VIVEK RANJAN AGNIHOTRI
PRODUCERS ZEE STUDIOS | TEJ NARAYAN AGARWAL | ABHISHEK AGARWAL | PALLAVI JOSHI
AND VIVEK RANJAN AGNIHOTRI
CO-PRODUCERS MAYANK SINGHANIA | JAYA PRAKASH RAO DHOTE
CREATIVE PRODUCER MALLIKA AGNIHOTRI | CEO (AAA) KAALI SUDHEER
IMPACT ADVISOR-NORTH AMERICA PRIYA SAMANT | ROAD SHOW COORDINATOR | LEADER SUNIL HALI
GLOBAL PARTNER GLOBAL KASHMIRI PANDIT DIASPORA (GKPD)

"YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT CAUSED A GENOCIDE OR IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN."

BY INVITE ONLY. FOR DONOR PASSES AND OTHER DETAILS (LINK).

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

ATLANTA, GA. AUSTIN, TX. BOSTON, MA. CHICAGO, IL. DALLAS, TX. DENVER, CO. EDISON, NJ. HOUSTON, TX. LONG ISLAND, NY.
LOS ANGELES, CA. MANHATTAN, NYC. RALEIGH, NC. SAN FRANCISCO, CA. SEATTLE, WA. TAMPA, FL. VIRGINIA, MD. WASHINGTON, DC.



Contact - kpglobaldiaspora@gmail.com



Indians In Israel Remember 26/11 Mumbai Terror Attack Victims

(Insider Bureau)-Indians in Israel commemorated the victims of killings by Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks of 2008, demanding swift justice by punishing the masterminds of the crime and seeking coordinated efforts to tackle the menace of terror, on the eve of the 13th anniversary of the deadly attacks.

Indian students at all the leading institutions in Israel, members of the Indian Jewish community, and Indians living and working in Israel organised separate events across the country on the eve of the anniversary of 26/11 on Thursday, paying respects to the innocent victims of the terror attack, including six Jews who died at the Chabad House. Several events are also planned for today.

Isaac Solomon, 84, an Indian Jewish community leader in the southern coastal city of Eilat at an event organised at the club Sitar told the gathering that both India and Israel have been at the receiving end of terror even though both the countries

seek peace with their neighbours, as well as internationally.

"The terrorists do not really have a real objective. They have only one goal - to harm people. India and Israel are democracies that seek peace and will continue to raise their voice against the menace of terrorism anywhere in the world," Solomon said.

Eilat Deputy Mayor Stas Bilkin also participated in the event in solidarity with victims of the attacks.

Jewish outreach movement, Chabad, last year unveiled a plaque in the city in the memory of the six Jewish victims of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

"To the memory and rise of souls of Rabbi Gavriel Noah and Rivka Holtsberg, who were martyred during the time of their holy mission in a terror attack at Chabad house in Mumbai, India from which the message of Torah was being spread all over the area. And for the four guests who stayed in Chabad house at the time of the attack, and were

also martyred: Rabi Gavriel Taitelbaum, Mrs. Norma Rabinovich, Rabi Ben Zion Kurman, Mrs. Yocheved Orpaz. May their souls be bound up in the bond of eternal life", the plaque in Hebrew reads.

Ceremonies were also held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, Ben-Gurion University and Technion in Haifa with a large number of Indian students turning up to participate while observing COVID-19 norms.

"It is a shame that the real masterminds of the attack roam around freely while the families of the victims await justice. All peace seeking nations must unite in their resolve to defeat terror and their state sponsors. 26/11 is a shared pain between India and Israel and we must do everything to bring the perpetrators to justice," said Ankit Chauhan, a researcher at Ben-Gurion University.

"On this day, we remember the tragic loss of human life during the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai.

"Typical-Topper" And Other Words For Parag Agrawal From IIT Teachers



(Insider Bureau)-Indian Institute of Technology Bombay on Tuesday congratulated its alumnus Parag Agrawal on his elevation as CEO of the microblogging giant Twitter.

Focus and innovation made him stand out, his former teachers remembered.

"Congratulations to our alumnus Dr. Parag Agrawal for being appointed the new CEO of Twitter. Dr. Agrawal obtained his B.Tech. degree in Computer Science and Engineering from IIT Bombay in 2005," IIT Bombay tweeted.

"He was a typical topper type material. He was extremely well-organised and very well-behaved. He had all the qualities in him to excel in academics in IIT-Bombay," said Prof Supratim Biswas of the department of Computer Science and Engineering at the elite institute.

"We get toppers from all over the country. But to top among all of them requires a special calibre," Mr Biswas said, noting that Mr Agrawal, winner of a silver medal at the IIT, was awarded the Young Alumni Achiever Award in 2019.

Subhasis Chaudhuri, Director of IIT Bombay, said the significance of a university is often judged by the collective achievements of its alumni and the glory that they bring to their alma mater.

"Parag Agrawal is one such alumnus that IITB is proud of. The education and the ambiance that IITB provided to Parag, not too long ago, helped in bringing out the best in him. Building on top of it with hard work and dedication, Parag has reached the top," he said.

Anand Kumar, the principal of the Atomic Energy Junior College, Mumbai, where Agrawal did his Class XI and XII in 1999-2001, said he was always aiming for the IIT. He had opted for science along with Vocational Education with electronics in junior college. In the projects he undertook, Agrawal displayed a lot of innovation, Mr Kumar said.

Indian-Origin Singaporean Jailed Over 'Sex Video' Extortion Plan: Report

(Insider Bureau)-An Indian-origin Singaporean on Monday was sentenced to 18 months in jail after he pleaded guilty to one count of criminal intimidation while being a part of a four-man plan to extort SGD 60,000 from a married businessman who was secretly recorded having sex with another man in 2019, according to a media report. Initially, three men,

including the businessman's personal assistant were part of this extortion plan. They reduced the amount to SGD 50,000.

But police arrested them before cash could change hands. They were later released on bail.

However, on April 2, 2020, Tan Yong Jian, who was part of the trio, roped in 29-year-old Mahadevan Edwyn, a man of Indian-origin, to be part of the

extortion scheme, The Straits Times newspaper reported.

Mr Edwyn, who committed the offence while he was under a remission order, was promised a 50-50 split of the amount negotiated through phone calls from the 53-year-old businessman, according to the report. "The accused agreed to Yong Jian's plan, as his income was affected by the economic

downturn and he needed money to renovate his new... flat (apartment unit)," Deputy Public Prosecutor (DPP) Zhou Yang told the court.

In late 2019, the personal assistant secretly installed a camera in the businessman's home, and left the camera in his house for about three weeks, the report stated. During that time, he managed to record his boss

having sex with another man on at least five occasions.

On April 3 last year, Mr Edwyn sent the businessman a text, asking him to hand over SGD 50,000 in cash within 24 hours.

Mr Edwyn also told that videos of him "committing gay acts" would be uploaded on Facebook and other forums if he failed to deliver the cash within the stipulated time.

Madhya Pradesh: Gritty tribal woman fights off leopard, snatches her son from its claws

(News Agencies) -A mother loves and protects her child like no one! The saying was proved true by a feisty tribal woman from a Madhya Pradesh village who displayed immense courage and snatched away her son from the claws of a leopard while fighting valiantly with the carnivore.

Despite her son being suddenly taken away by the leopard, the woman did not lose her presence of mind as she confined her other children inside her hut and rushed towards a forest in the direction where the feline had taken away her eight-year-old son.

The child was wounded and the woman also suffered injuries when the leopard attacked her, but she managed to come back alive with her son, an act of strength and grit which was hailed by the forest department staff and state Chief Minister

Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

The incident took place on Sunday night in Badi Jharia village, in the buffer zone of the Sanjay Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district, located over 500 from the state capital Bhopal.

Kiran, a Baiga tribe woman, was sitting beside a fire with her three children to keep them warm outside their hut.

Suddenly, a leopard appeared there and in a split moment caught hold of her son Rahul with its jaws and ran away, a senior forest official said on Wednesday.

The woman was shocked by the sudden turn of events, but kept her cool. She made her other two children stay put inside the hut and immediately ran towards the forest where she saw the leopard taking away with her son, the tiger reserve's director, Y P Singh, said.

She chased the leopard for about a kilometre, but the big cat took cover in the bushes and then held the child with its claws.

Kiran also did not relent. She kept trying to scare away the leopard with a stick and also raised an alarm, the official said.

"The leopard probably got scared with the woman's courage and left the child. While Kiran immediately took her son in her arms, the feline attacked her. However, she overpowered the big cat with her valour," the official said. In the meantime, other villagers also reached the spot on hearing Kiran's call for help and the leopard then disappeared into the forest, he said.

The boy received injuries on his back, cheeks and eyes and his mother also got wounded in the



attack, the official said.

Buffer zone ranger Aseem Bhuria later got them admitted to a primary health centre and provided immediate assistance of Rs 1,000.

The forest department will bear all the expenses of their treatment, the official added. CM Chouhan in a tweet on Tuesday lauded the woman's courageous act.



**Shah Rukh Khan
victimised like many
others in Bollywood, says
Mamata Banerjee**



(News Agencies) -West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday claimed that Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan was victimised like many others in the film industry. The TMC chief, who is on a three-day visit to Mumbai, made the comments during an interaction with members of civil society in the city. "I know Mahesh Bhatt is victimised, Shah Rukh is victimised. There are many more... Some can open their mouths and some can't," Banerjee was quoted as saying by PTI. While responding to a question from Mahesh Bhat on how the liberal forces can be protected from the right-wing, Banerjee said, "India loves manpower and not muscle power. Unity in diversity is our origin. Unfortunately, we are facing a cruel, undemocratic and unethical attitude of the BJP." Apart from filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, lyricist Javed Akhtar, actors Shatrughan Sinha, Richa Chaddha, Swara Bhaskar, comedian Munawar Faruqui, and politician Sudheendra Kulkarni were also present.

Details of the case against SRK's son Aryan Khan

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) raided a cruise ship in Mumbai in early October and reportedly seized drugs from Aryan Khan and others, placing them under arrest. Aryan, 23, was in jail for nearly a month before he was granted bail by the Bombay High Court. The high court in its order said prima facie there was no positive evidence against the accused to show that they had conspired to commit an offence. Notably, Shah Rukh Khan is the owner of Kolkata Knight Riders IPL team and shares warm relations with Banerjee. Earlier, Banerjee met NCP supremo Sharad Pawar, and on Tuesday she had met Maharashtra minister Aaditya Thackeray and Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut.



Travelling to India?

Leave airport early if you can pay more for an RTPCR test

International passengers arriving at Indian airports can avoid long queues for an RTPCR test by paying more money.

(News Agencies) -If you are an international traveller arriving from at risk countries or otherwise and are worried about the long wait at an Indian airport, there is a way to avoid the long queues for an RTPCR test; pay more.

There are two types of RTPCR tests; the rapid RTPCR test and a regular RTPCR test. A rapid RTPCR test takes an hour to give you

the results, while a normal RTPCR test takes a minimum of 4 hours. Also, there is a cost factor here.

A rapid RTPCR test will cost Rs 3,900 per person. While a regular test will cost Rs 500 per person. The quick RTPCR could cost more if you are travelling with a family of four, which would increase the cost to Rs 15,600, while a normal test would cost Rs 2,000 for four members.

Read | Omicron: Govt's advisory for international travellers | All you need to know

Dr Alpana Razdan, Vice President of Genestrings Diagnostics - who are running the Covid testing at the Delhi International Airport, said they are trying to increase testing capacity. "We are handling more than 1500 samples at night time, but we are trying

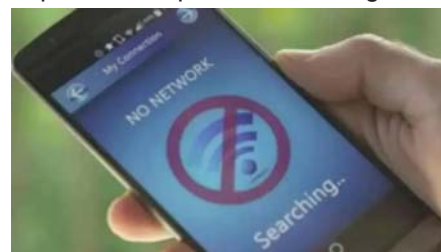
to reduce the time gap. A test that takes 6 hours, we have tried to reduce it to 4 hours," she said.

After the test, of course, one has to quarantine for 14 days if one is coming from an at risk country. There are different kinds of quarantine protocols that have been put forward by various states that need to be followed as international travel guidelines.

No Internet shutdown, have selective ban on FB, WhatsApp during unrest: Parliamentary panel to govt

(News Agencies) -The parliamentary panel on communications & IT is against an Internet shutdown during unrest but has strongly recommended having a selective ban on platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram to deal with crisis situations. The panel headed by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor is opposed to a blanket ban on Internet services in situations of unrest or law and order crisis. The panel suggests exploring options of a ban on selective services like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram instead of banning the Internet as a whole.

SELECTIVE BANNING OF SERVICES- The committee says it will be of great relief if the Department of Telecom can explore the option of banning



selective services such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, etc., instead of banning the Internet as a whole.

In its new report, the panel says, "This will allow financial services,

health, education and various other services to continue to operate for business as usual, thereby minimising

inconvenience and suffering to the general public."

The panel says selective banning can help control the spread of misinformation during unrest.

Adoption of such less restrictive mechanisms will be a welcome initiative, the panel says. The committee strongly recommends that the Telecom Department should urgently examine the recommendation of

TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India) and come out with a policy that will enable the selective banning of OTT services with suitable technological intervention, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram during periods of unrest/crisis that are liable to be used by the terrorists or anti-national elements/forces to ferment trouble in the specified regions. Till such time, every effort should be made to ensure that uninterrupted services are provided through the state broadband 7 network, which can be monitored easily for possible misuse, the panel says.

Families of Malegaon blast victims ask NIA to take ATS help as 8 witnesses turn hostile

(News Agencies) -The families of the 2008 Malegaon blast victims have written a letter to the Superintendent of Police, National Investigation Agency (NIA), to immediately seek assistance from the Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) that probed the case earlier.

The letter has been written to the NIA, which is probing the case now, given eight of the 208 witnesses presented turning hostile. Some of those who turned hostile lately have been crucial witnesses in the case. Advocate Shahid Nadeem submitted the letter in the special NIA court and also sent it to the central investigating agency. The special judge of the NIA court, PR Sitre, has taken the letter on record and exhibited it. The letter states, "It can be inferred that the NIA's competence regarding the trial is reducing based on the pattern of the witnesses. The



witnesses are called on by the prosecution without studying their statements and without following any particular sequence. While certain accommodations can be made in exceptional cases when witnesses are unable to be present, it can be seen that such lapses have become routine. The

court has also noted the same and asked the prosecution to study the relevance of the witness and their documents before calling them."

WHY BRING IN THE ATS

The letter adds, "The statements of the prosecution witnesses who have turned hostile were also

recorded by the ATS. The ATS is in a better position to brief and assist the NIA and the court regarding the same. However, no effort has been made to reach out to the ATS and seek their assistance for the trial even though they are the ones that conducted the investigation and

arrested the accused, including Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt Col Purohit and others."

The letter states that victims are ordinary people who lost their family members or were themselves injured in the bomb blast.

"They lead ordinary lives and do not have the same autonomy or power that many of the accused persons do. Despite the same, they are heavily interested in justice, and to that effect the victims have been part of the trial proceedings and appellate proceedings through the years. This letter is yet another attempt to assist the prosecution, in any capacity."

WHAT HAD HAPPENED?

Six people were killed and over 100 injured when an explosive device strapped to a motorcycle went off near a mosque in Malegaon, a power-loom town in north Maharashtra, on September 29, 2008.



Geeta Sexena
Bureau Chief (Punjab))

Gagandeep Singh
Deputy News Editor

Sharanjit Singh Thind
Editor in Chief

Susmita Ghosh
Deputy Managing Editor

Bengaluru: Congress leader caught on camera 'planning murder' of BJP's Yelahanka MLA



(News Agencies) - A video clip showing Congress leader Gopalkrishna talking about "killing" and "finishing" Karnataka MLA SR Vishwanath of the BJP has gone viral on social media. The video clip shows Gopalkrishna purportedly planning the murder of Vishwanath, who represents Bengaluru's Yelahanka in the Karnataka Assembly.

It is a three-minute video clip that shows the Congress leader in conversation with another person, who can be heard saying, "Kill him finish the MLA. Let it be Rs 1 crore or so. It's okay. Let's finish, no one should know...it should be between us." The police said the video was "undated" and that they were probing the matter for further action. Karnataka Home Minister Araga Jnanendra said, "The state police have taken the matter seriously...Vishwanath also spoke to me on the issue." "I got to know about the video last night. Police will take a call over the filing of an FIR. We will think of giving [him] protection. The intelligence department will decide [on giving protection to Vishwanath].



President signs off on Farm Laws Repeal Bill

President Ram Nath Kovind signs off on the Farm Laws Repeal Bill on Wednesday. The Parliament passed the three contentious Farm Laws in September last year.

(News Agencies) - President Ram Nath Kovind signed off on Farm Laws Repeal Bill on Wednesday. The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021, was passed in Rajya Sabha on Monday, November 29. Earlier in the day, it was cleared in Lok Sabha through a voice vote.

The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021, was tabled during the Winter Session of Parliament. The bill to repeal the three contentious farm laws was tabled by Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar in the Lok Sabha and passed amid loud sloganeering by Opposition.

After over one year of agitation over farm laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi

announced on Friday that the Centre will repeal the three controversial laws, which were passed in Parliament in September last year.

PM Modi apologised to the people of the country and said that the government "failed to convince a section of farmers" over the farm laws. He said the three contentious laws will be repealed during this month's Parliament session.

"I apologise to the people of the country... we were not able to convince farmers [over the farm laws]. I'm here to declare that we have decided to repeal the three farm laws...We will complete all the formalities during the Parliament session that begins

this month," PM Modi had said in his address to the nation.

PM Modi also urged farmers "to return home to their families and start afresh". He said that a committee will be formed to take decisions on the subjects of promoting zero-budget-based agriculture, changing crop patterns as per the changing needs of the country and to make MSP more effective and transparent.

Parliament passed the three farm laws in September last year. They had first come in the month of June as the three Ordinances before being approved by Parliament during the Monsoon Session by a voice vote.

Comedian Kunal Kamra says his shows in Bengaluru cancelled after 'threats'

(News Agencies) - Comedian Kunal Kamra has claimed that his upcoming shows in Bengaluru were cancelled due to threats that the venue will be shut down if he performs. In an Instagram post, Kunal Kamra said, "Hello Bangalore people. I am happy to inform that my shows in Bangalore which were scheduled over the next 20 days have been cancelled." "They have been cancelled for two reasons.



Firstly, we didn't get special permissions to seat 45 people in the venue that can seat more. Secondly, threats have been made to shut down the venue if I were to ever perform there. I guess this is also part of the Covid protocol and new guidelines. I suppose I am seen a variant of the virus now," he added. This comes days after another comedian, Munawar Faruqi, announced leaving stand-up comedy, claiming 12 of his shows were cancelled due to threats.



J&K: Jaish's IED expert, Pak terrorist killed in encounter at Pulwama

In a major breakthrough, the Army killed Yasir Parray, an IED expert of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed terror group, and a Pakistani militant in South Kashmir's Pulwama district.

(News Agencies) -The Army secured a major breakthrough on Wednesday when it killed Yasir Parray, an IED expert of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed terror group, and a Pakistani militant in South Kashmir's Pulwama district, officials said.

The nerve-wracking operation began at Parray's home village, Qasabyar, at 11 pm on Tuesday after the Army received input from police about the presence of terrorists in the locality.

Col A K Singh, Commanding Officer of the 44 Rashtriya Rifles, led the operation and ensured

that there was no collateral damage, the officials said.

The presence of two terrorists was confirmed at 3 am as they were hiding in a cavity created between the roof and the top floor of a building, they said.

Parray, who carried a cash reward, was behind the improvised explosive device (IED) blast on the multi-vehicle patrol of the 44 Rashtriya Rifles in June, 2019, when it was moving on the Arihal-Pulwama road. Two soldiers were killed and 17 were injured in the incident.

An emotional Col Singh, while talking to reporters after the

incident in 2019, said, "You (militants) can hide anywhere under the sun, we will find you, hunt you... because we never forget, never forgive."

On Wednesday, while supervising the entire operation, Col Singh summoned Parray's father to make the terrorist surrender but it could not be achieved because of heavy firing from the foreign militant, who was identified as Furqan, the officials said.

Parray was instrumental in guiding various groups of Jaish terror group in South Kashmir and he swiftly climbed up the

hierarchy of the banned terror group after joining them in late 2018.

Two AK series rifles, two UBGL along with 12 grenades, several AK magazines and rounds were recovered from the area after the operation ended at 8:45 am on Wednesday, the officials added. According to a Srinagar-based Army spokesperson, the Jammu and Kashmir Police described Furqan alias Ali Bhai as a ruthless category 'A+' Pakistani terrorist who has been known to be active with the Jaish-e-Mohammed since June, 2020. He was sent to Kashmir to

radicalise youths and incite them to take up arms to commit atrocities on innocent locals and prominent businessmen.

The second terrorist, Parrey, was a notorious category 'B' terrorist, who was known to be associated with various Pakistani terrorists and he acted as a guide for bringing them into Kashmir.

Parray was a known associate of Pakistani terrorist Abu Saifullah alias Lambu, who had planned the Pulwama convoy attack on the CRPF in February, 2019 that left 40 CRPF personnel dead, the spokesperson added.

Tharoor-led parliamentary panel flags frequent internet shutdowns, says it cost India \$2.8 bn in 2020

(News Agencies) - Congress leader Shashi Tharoor-led parliamentary panel on information and technology has flagged the issue of "frequent internet shutdowns" in India, saying it cost the country \$2.8 billion in 2020. The panel in its report submitted to the Lok Sabha on Wednesday called for defining the parameters and a "robust mechanism" for internet shutdown.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology's report titled, "Suspension of Telecom and Internet Services and Its Impact"

noted that frequent shutting down of telecom services and the internet affected life and liberty of people.

In January 2020, the Supreme Court declared internet access a fundamental right under Article 19. Tharoor-led panel which was reconstituted in October this year retaining him as chairperson recommended to undertake a study to assess the economic impact of internet shutdown saying, "India lost 2.8 billion US dollars in 2020 to internet shutdowns."

It said, "a thorough study should



be conducted by the DoT/MHA so as to assess the impact of internet shutdown on economy and also find out its effectiveness in dealing with Public Emergency

and Public Safety."

According to existing laws, public emergency and public safety are the only grounds on which internet shutdown can be imposed.

The panel said internet shutdowns should not be taken too frequently as matter of recourse since internet is indispensable to ordinary citizens in their daily lives, and vital for such matters as examination enrolment, tourism, and online enterprise. Raising concern over the lack of a uniform policy for enforcing internet shutdown, the panel said there was "no clear-cut definition of what constitutes

public emergency and public safety".

It said, "State governments are exercising their own judgment to decide the merits of the situation to impose internet shutdown."

The report highlighted that "lack of stipulated guidelines and safety measures gives a lever to state governments to resort to telecom shutdown on the slightest pretext of maintaining law and order and there is a need to follow the laid down procedure by states/UTs to avoid internet shutdowns in unwarranted situations".



Omicron: Long waiting time, jitters return for international travellers at airport

With the central government revising guidelines for international travellers, air travel is becoming longer and more expensive. This comes in the view of the threat of revival of Covid-19 pandemic due to newly identified Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2. The government has made Covid-19 testing mandatory for those coming from 'at-risk' countries namely South Africa, China, Botswana, the UK and other European countries, Brazil, Israel, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Israel and Hong Kong.

The decision to mandatorily test all incoming passengers from these countries has made travel time longer. For example, if one takes a direct flight from the United Kingdom to India landing at the Delhi airport, the usual travel time is nine hours.

However, with new guidelines in place, it may get longer. Once the traveller

reaches Delhi, she will have to take the RT-PCR test. Test result takes around six hours to be known. The travel time has thus increased from nine hours to 15 hours. Once travellers de-board the plane, they will have to get the test done and wait in the waiting area till the results are out. This is taking five-six hours.

"My wife gave me a call when she landed. The authorities asked her to take the RT-PCR test. She has been waiting for three hours for the result," Fred, 50, while waiting for his wife who was travelling from Israel's Tel Aviv to India told India Today TV. He said his wife Maya took the RT-PCR test for Rs 4,000. If the test returns negative, the passengers can leave the airport but will undergo a seven-day home quarantine. They will be re-tested for Covid-19 on the 8th day of home quarantine. State government officials will physically visit their homes to ensure effective home isolation. If test

result is positive for the virus, passengers will be isolated and treated. Their samples will immediately be sent to the INSACOG laboratory network for genome sequencing to ascertain if it has Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2. Fred said, "The airport authorities have told her [his wife] to observe self-isolation for the next seven days and to get tested again on the eighth day in case her report is negative." Khalid, 35, who returned from Dubai, UAE (which is not in the high-risk category of countries) told India Today TV that authorities were stamping boarding passes of international travellers. "Since Dubai is not on the high-risk list, travellers are being asked to monitor their health for seven days and to get a test done after a week," Khalid said. Several passengers stepping out of the airport told India Today TV that the queues for testing were long and the waiting period for test result was five-six hours.

India joins G20 Troika, to assume G20 presidency on Dec 1, 2022



(News Agencies) - India has today joined the G20 Troika, which consists of Indonesia, Italy, and India - the current, previous and incoming G20 Presidencies, respectively.

The G20 is the premier forum for international economic cooperation, which reflects a recognition that global prosperity is interdependent and our economic opportunities and challenges are interlinked.

G20 countries have come together to better prepare for the future. As a founding member of the G20, India has used the platform to raise issues of vital importance and those that impact on the most vulnerable around the world.

Indonesia assumed the G20 Presidency on Thursday and will convene various G20 meetings throughout the year, culminating with the G20 Leaders' summit on 30-31 October 2022 under the overall theme of "Recover Together Recover Stronger".

As a Troika-member, India will work closely with Indonesia and Italy to ensure consistency and continuity of the G20's agenda. India will assume the G20 Presidency on December 1, 2022 from Indonesia, and will convene the G20 Leaders' Summit for the first time in India in 2023.

India defers plan to resume international flights from Dec 15

(News Agencies) -The government on Wednesday decided not to resume scheduled international flights from December 15 in the wake of rising concerns over the new coronavirus variant, Omicron. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said that the effective date for resumption of international passenger services will be notified in due course. The announcement

comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked officials to review the plans for easing international travel restrictions amid concerns over Omicron. The DCGA on Wednesday said it is "watching the situation closely" after the new variant of coronavirus sparked concerns. The DGCA said, "An appropriate decision indicating the effective date of resumption of scheduled commercial international

passenger services shall be notified in due course."



In view of the evolving global scenario with the emergence of new variants of concern, the

situation is being watched closely in consultation with all stakeholders," it said in a statement.

Scheduled international flights have remained suspended in India since March 23 last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, special international passenger flights have been operating

since July last year under air bubble arrangements formed with 31 countries.

The Centre on November 26 had said that commercial international passenger flights would resume on December 15. The decision was taken after consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of External Affairs, and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.



Lt Governor Manoj Sinha interacts with industry leaders in Kolkata, invites them to invest in J&K

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha held interactions with the industry leaders in Kolkata and invited them to invest in Jammu and Kashmir.

The event organised by the Jammu & Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO), Department of Industries and Commerce, J&K in association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) included Industrialist/ Investors from Eastern India.

While discussing the host of interventions made by the UT Government for creating a sustainable, balanced, progressive, and competitive industrial ecosystem in the region, the Lt Governor made several important announcements on the occasion.

The Lt Governor has announced the enhancement of the Industrial Development scheme outlay to meet the exceeded expectation of investments in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The proposed investment has already reached Rs. 31,000 crore and is expected to cross Rs.51,000 crore by the end of the financial year. Given the response received, the government is enhancing the scheme outlay to meet the demand", the Lt Governor observed.

With the quantum jump witnessed in the proposals received for setting up business enterprises, the demand for land has correspondingly increased, and to meet the growing demand, Land Bank is being developed across the UT. The Lt Governor announced that the UT government is coming up with the rules governing change of land use shortly to facilitate the setting up of business enterprises on private land.

'This will ensure the seamless establishment of business enterprises on private lands. Business enterprises coming up on private land shall be entitled to all the incentives as per extant policy and procedure', the Lt Governor added.

Due to the second wave of Covid and subsequent lockdown, several new industrial units have not been able to come into production within the specified timelines. To redress the issue, the Government is mulling to give a one-time extension to such units,

up to March 31, 2022, for coming into production, announced the Lt Governor.

Speaking on the occasion, the Lt Governor said that J&K UT is on a mission to renovate, reinvent, and ready to take a quantum leap to become the fastest-growing region in the country, pushing the targets for economic growth and employment.

Our aim is to deepen the trust with the business conglomerate, build the industrial base and strengthen the socio-economic stability, observed the Lt Governor.

"Under the guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister and Hon'ble Home Minister, we worked out a blueprint to unlock investment flows and are in the process of developing a business culture, and industrial ecosystem in J&K that has been missing since Independence," the Lt Governor noted.

Elaborating on the efforts being made by the UT Government to encourage new investment, and to nurture the existing industries, the Lt Governor said that J&K is one of the best destinations in the country for setting up new businesses as of now with the best incentives and improving infrastructure facilities.

"We are fulfilling all the crucial requirements of the industries including the transparent policy of land allotment, private industrial estate development, ensuring ease of doing business, besides the administration has actively worked with solutions approach and introduced around 160 new initiatives and reforms in a short period of time", the Lt Governor observed.

Promotion of industrial units, providing capital incentive, a liberal capital interest subvention, GST linked incentive, ease of doing business, development of sector-specific industrial estates and parks, single window system, are some of the reforms brought in by the government to unleash the potential of the industrial sector, the Lt Governor added.

Highlighting the immense possibilities presented by Jammu & Kashmir, the Lt Governor observed that the region offers abundant raw material for Agro &

Food processing, manufacturing, land, labour, quick and competitive means of transportation. Besides, there is an 'amazingly easy interface with the government' through responsive governance and minimum government, in addition to being logistically the most attractive region with industrial land bank, sector-specific policy and international air cargo facility.

In addition, by December 2022, the train will also reach Kashmir giving alternate all-weather connectivity to the valley, he added. The Lt Governor further announced that the UT administration has a detailed "What you need" plan ready because we know that everybody wants a return on their investment sooner than later.

"This is the dawn of a new era for the growth, development, and overall well-being of the people of J&K. Barriers to trade and commerce have been removed. The people of J&K can now fully enjoy the rights and benefits enjoyed by all other citizens of India," the Lt Governor observed.

Sh. Ranjan Prakash Thakur, Principal Secretary to J&K Government, Industries & Commerce Department and Ms. Ankita Kar, Managing Director, JKTPO elaborated on investment opportunities that J&K is offering to the Industries.

Principal Secretary Industries invited industry members to visit J&K and witness the changes on the ground themselves and take benefit of the best industrial policy in the country.

"We are confident that such steps coupled with the Central Government's and UT Administration's efforts in J&K will soon create an environment for attracting industry to the UT," said Sh Subhasendu Chatterjee, Vice Chairman CII West Bengal State Council and Wholtime Director of Haldia Petrochemicals.

The interactive session facilitated prospective investors to have a dialogue on the immense investment opportunities presented by the verdant region.

**Some Call us a Media House
Others call us an Institution to learn from**



**Delivering News,
uncompromised
& Unbiased for the
Last 19 years**

**Email: editor@thesouthasianinsider.com
www.thesouthasianinsider.com**



Mamata Banerjee says 'there is no UPA now' after meet with Sharad Pawar

There is no UPA now, Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee said on Wednesday after her meeting with the NCP leader Sharad Pawar in Mumbai.

There is no United Progressive Alliance (UPA) now, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Wednesday after her meeting with the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Sharad Pawar in Mumbai.

Asked if Sharad Pawar should be declared as the UPA chairperson, Mamata Banerjee said, "What UPA? There is no UPA now. What is UPA? What will he do sitting there?"

The Trinamool Congress supremo is on a visit to Maharashtra, where she is holding back-to-back meetings with other Opposition party leaders. On Tuesday, the Bengal CM met with Shiv Sena leaders Aaditya Thackeray and Sanjay Raut.

Taking a dig at Mamata Banerjee for her cryptic remark, Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal said that if someone thinks that without Congress anybody can defeat the BJP, it is merely a dream. "Everybody knows the reality of Indian politics. Thinking that without Congress anybody can defeat BJP is merely a dream," Venugopal said.

Meanwhile, Sharad Pawar said that the meeting with Mamata Banerjee was constructive as both the leaders discussed various issues. Sharad Pawar

said, "We will go for an alternative that is capable of defeating the BJP in the country."

"We discussed the prevailing situation and the need for all like-minded parties to come together and provide a strong alternative to the BJP. The question of who will be the leader doesn't arise right now," the NCP chief said. Sharad Pawar also made a fresh pitch for the unity of opposition parties to take on the BJP.

"All those opposed to the BJP are welcome to join us. There is no question of excluding anyone. We need to unitedly work against the BJP," Pawar told reporters when asked if an alliance without Congress was on the cards.

Pleased to meet Hon'ble CM of West Bengal Smt @MamataOfficial at my Mumbai residence. We Discussed various issues. We agreed upon the need to strengthen the collective efforts and commitment towards safeguarding democratic values and ensuring the betterment of our people. pic.twitter.com/ryrVH2hD6N

- Sharad Pawar (@PawarSpeaks) December 1, 2021

"No one can do it [defeating BJP] alone. Whoever is strong at

whichever place need to join hands [against BJP]. Sharad [Pawar] is the senior-most leader. I have worked with Sharad Pawar for very long. That is why I came to meet him to extend political courtesy and discuss [the political situation]. What Sharad Pawar has said, I agree with his views [that those doing fieldwork will do well in politics]," Mamata Banerjee told reporters later.

Meanwhile, reacting to the development, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury accused Mamata Banerjee of creating a "pre-mediated conspiracy" to entrap Sharad Pawar and people of other parties and show that an alternative to the BJP has come. "Sharad Pawar didn't say anything against Congress. He's a senior leader. We respect him a lot. It's a pre-meditated conspiracy of Mamata Banerjee to entrap Sharad Pawar and people of other parties and show that an alternative to the BJP has come. This is benefiting BJP the most," Chowdhury was quoted as saying by ANI.

He added, "When the BJP is struggling in India & their situation is worsening every passing day, then Mamata Banerjee has decided to supply oxygen to them. Mamata Banerjee has become BJP's oxygen supplier. So, the BJP is happy with her." "If Congress is contesting in

Bengal, why can't I do so in Goa?"

Earlier in the day, the TMC supremo lashed out at the political pushback against her party's plans to expand outside of West Bengal, soon after the drubbing the TMC suffered at the hands of the BJP in the Tripura civic body polls.

"I want to see BJP out of this country politically. If Congress is contesting in Bengal, why can't I do so in Goa?," Mamata Banerjee said during an interaction with members of the civil society in Mumbai.

The Bengal chief minister said it was important to stay in the field and fight against the BJP, otherwise they will "bowl you out".

"If all regional parties are together then it will be easy to defeat BJP. I had to move out from Bengal even though things are good in the state so that others also move out and there is competition," she said.

Taking aim at the BJP-led central government, Mamata Banerjee said the Centre's decision to revoke the farm laws as well as the recent reduction in fuel prices were calculated moves with the upcoming polls in mind.

"During election time, PM Modi is scared and hence prices of petrol and diesel go down.

Akali leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa joins BJP after stepping down as chief of Delhi Gurdwara body



(News Agencies) -Akali

Dal leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa joined the BJP hours after he tendered his resignation as the president of Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) on Wednesday.

Manjinder Singh Sirsa resigned from the post of president citing personal reasons.

With gratitude to all office bearers, members, staff & people who worked with me; I am resigning from Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee as President. I will not contest upcoming DSGMC internal elections. My commitment to serve my community, humanity & nation remains same," he said in a tweet announcing his resignation.

The move comes ahead of the upcoming Punjab assembly elections slated for 2022.

The BJP tweeted a video of his joining the party.

LIVE: Former SAD leader Shri @mssirsa join BJP. <https://t.co/wNTfwwp3E>

- BJP (@BJP4India) December 1, 2021

Manjinder Sirsa joined the BJP in the presence of union ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. Shekhawat, who is the BJP's in-charge for the upcoming Punjab assembly polls, said that Manjinder Sirsa has a prominent place in the politics of northern India. "I include him in the BJP family. Sirsa's induction into the party will definitely be helpful for it in the upcoming state elections," Shekhawat said.

Meanwhile, the former Akali Dal leader thanked BJP national president JP Nadda and Union Minister Amit Shah. "I have served the country and humanity through Gurdwara Management Committee," Manjinder Sirsa said.

America's cash bail system has many flaws, here's a better solution

A bail system should focus on the offense conduct alleged and personal history

To require cash bail is to criminalize poverty. That's the kind of bogus claim you'd expect to hear from an overzealous criminal defense lawyer. To hear it, instead, from a prosecutor is quite something else. Yet, Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisolm, the self-styled paragon of progressive prosecutors, has made a career of advocating such reckless "reform" of the criminal justice system. And now, real world carnage is the consequence:

Darrell Brooks Jr., whom Chisolm's office released on ridiculously low bail from not one but two pending violent crime cases, has allegedly committed the mass-murder attack in Waukesha, Wisconsin, killing six of the people he mowed down in his speeding SUV, and injuring dozens of others.

For the most part, the Left's critique of bail is specious. Most criminals for whom bail is set at a dollar-amount too high for them to meet are recidivists. There is usually strong evidence that they have committed serious crimes. These are career criminals who should not be released because of the high probability that they would commit more crimes or ignore required court appearances – often both.

That said, there is no reason for the heavy reliance of many states on antiquated cash-bail standards. There is a better solution that would reduce the relevance of an accused person's financial means. Rather than financial means, a bail system should focus on the offense conduct alleged and personal history – particularly, the defendant's criminal history and the salient question of whether, at the time of the alleged crime, the defendant was (a) already on bail in connection with another offense; (b) on probation or parole in connection with a prior conviction; (c) an alien who either had no legal right to be in the country or whose alleged offense violated some condition of entry; or (d) under some other legal restriction, such as a protective order.

This approach has worked for sentencing. Prior to the legislative enactment of guidelines in the state and federal system, sentencing was susceptible to complaints similar to

those lodged today at bail. The former system led to scandalous iniquity because people who committed similar offenses and had similar histories received wildly different sentences.

In the main, the divergences were based on the judges' philosophies. Self-styled law-and-order types tended to mete out harsh terms; "bleeding hearts" issued slaps on the wrist. But, there being nothing new under the sun, there were race-obsessed criminal-rights advocates then, too. They rationalized that sentencing disparities stemmed from systemic bias. The chasm in financial resources was said to rig outcomes in favor of the well-to-do.

The advent of sentencing guidelines answered these concerns. In the federal system, for example, defendants are now sentenced according to a formula that weighs offense factors – violence, defendant's rank in a gang, weight of drugs, amount of fraud, and so on – to arrive at a total offense level, increasing in seriousness from level 1 to level 43.

This computes to a range of imprisonment – for example, 41 to 51 months at level 22. That range can be increased based on the defendant's criminal history, on a scale that rises from first-offenders in category I to incorrigible recidivist in category VI, for whom 41 to 51 months balloons to 84 to 105 months. It is all worked out on a simple graph. There is no reason the same kind of system could not work for bail. To be clear, because there is so much misinformation on this, there is no constitutional right to bail. There is an Eighth Amendment prohibition against excessive bail. That is, a court is not required to set bail, but if bail is set, it is not supposed to be pegged to an unrealistic amount that the accused cannot meet.

The problem is that many states require courts to set bail, even though the Constitution does not. That leads to the pretextual setting of high dollar-amounts – meant to deny bail, not grant it. This not only fuels the Left's narrative that the system is rigged in favor of the rich; it undermines the purpose of bail, which is to permit the accused to be at liberty pending trial, not prevent release.

Indian Parliament passes bill to cancel debatable farm laws

By Susmita Ghosh

The Indian parliament passed the bill to repeal the controversial three farm laws, on the very first day of the winter session. It was earlier announced by the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to the nation, while the ruling party helped him fulfil his promise to the farmers.

The highly contentious farm law was the main focus in the parliament which saw the suspension of twelve Rajya Sabha MPs. At the same time, the opposition created an uproar while there was no discussion on the bill according to the parliament traditions. Eventually, the bill was passed to renounce the farm laws after 14 months.

One of the biggest back-trackings in the Modi-led BJP-government regime is that the farm bills had their own flaws, yet the positive outcome could not have been denied. With the ongoing farmers' movement near the capital, the central government was in a catch-22 situation for months.

Even after the announcement of repealing the farm bills, PM Modi expressed his sadness, as the proposed farm bills had farmers' financial betterment potential. Referring to the massive farmers' agitation, he also said that his government's repeated attempt to convince - it was in their best interest, failed finally.

Narendra Singh Tomar, the Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare placed the bill to repeal the farm laws. At the

same time, the Congress-led opposition voiced their discontentment, demanding a discussion on the farmers who died in the year-long movement and to provide compensation to their families.

The farm law repeal comes at a very crucial time which will dictate the political scenarios for the coming years. There are several state elections knocking at the door, where the farmers' point of view can tip the balance of power. The most notable among them, is the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly election, to take place in 2022, followed by Punjab Election.

The number of representing farmers from both Uttar Pradesh and Punjab were quite high against the farm bills movement. In reality, the farmer-led agitation in the Singhu border between Haryana and Delhi was massively supported in the Western UP region. The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leaders Rakesh Tikait and Naresh Tikait hail from the area, also belong to the Jat clan. While the Jats are traditionally strong supporter of the BJP government, the farmer unrest could have proved costly for their vote bank in the coming elections.

The 2014 Lok Sabha Election and the 2017 UP assembly election showed unparalleled support for the ruling party where BJP won the majority of seats propelling them to power. There was a slight dip in the 2019 Lok Sabha election with Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party taking their shares. Now, with the proposed Farm bills, the

(Contd on page 36)



ISSN No. 1554 06X

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

A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Disclaimer The South Asian Insider is a weekly newspaper published every week by The South Asian Insider. It's available in community & religious centers, ethnic grocery stores and also available by mail, email & online to subscribers. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers, authors and forum participants in The South Asian Insider do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editor. All advertisers advertising in The South Asian Insider assume responsibility for accuracy of their advertisements. The South Asian Insider and/or people associated with it are not responsible for any claims made by the advertisers and don't endorse any product or services advertised in The South Asian Insider. We strongly urge consulting your lawyer before buying/contracting/hiring through the ads published in the newspaper. We are in the business of selling space and claims made by the advertisers are not authenticated or confirmed by an independent source

Judiciary reproofs administration over severe Delhi pollution



Delhi is suffering from severe air pollution with a thick smog cover and a hazardous air quality index in the major parts of the city. Even if the Kejriwal-led AAP government is trying its best to handle the problem, it's failing miserably though. The Supreme Court has held the state and the central governments accountable for the matter, taking up a petition filed by a group of concerned citizen.

Since the beginning of early winter every year, the recurring smog problem affects the nation's capital. Generally, the condition often is highlighted when it takes a severe turn after the Diwali celebration. While some people point their fingers at the festival of light for triggering the pollution cycle, it is not the straw that breaks the camel's back.

The general blame for the Delhi air pollution goes to the

stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana states with vast farmlands. Around Diwali, the farmers need to clean their fields fast to prepare wheat sowing after rice harvesting and the stubble burning is the fastest and the economical way. As Delhi is located at the head of the northern plains, the capital has to face inconveniences from the intrusion of pollutants of the farm fire.

The Aravalli range used to protect the Delhi region from sand and dust particles from the north-western direction. But, a huge part of the mountain range was ravaged by mining, keeping Delhi open to the external polluting wind. Internal human factors in the city itself is to be taken into consideration. The vast number of private vehicles, the industrial regions around the city and abundant construction sites contribute simultaneously to

instigate the complications.

There are several steps that can be implemented to counter the winter pollution problem in the Indian capital

By Susmita Ghosh

area. Proper planning and counter measures throughout the year hardly happen. The most effective system to stop the pollution

can be a green tree barrier only. The solution should be around Delhi. But it would take at least a few years to be fully effective.

The political squabbles between the Kejriwal

This annual Delhi pollution government at state level and the Modi government in the centre have worsened the condition. Now starts the blame game, making innocent residents of the region, the utter sufferers.

Based on the court's observation, the Indian bureaucracy is answerable for lack of actions, who kept waiting for court's orders to control vehicular pollution.

According to the Supreme Court, the people living a lavish lifestyle should not judge farmers burning the stables for the pollution years.





COMING SOON

Celebrating Big 40th Miss india New York 2022

Panache entertainment

in association with IFC presents



*Miss india New York 2022
Miss Teen India New York 2022
Mrs India New York 2022
Pre Teen New York 2022*



Registration is open now

Contact : Nishibahl 917-992-0076

Shilpa Jhurani 631-356-3655



Mamata Banerjee's Revenge Tourism vs The Congress

Mamata Banerjee's two days in Mumbai this week are her form of Revenge Tourism.

The Chief Minister of West Bengal held two important conferrals - with Sharad Pawar and Aaditya Thackeray. Both are leaders of parties who run the government in Maharashtra with a third ally - the Congress - who needs to be called out as the weakest link in the anti-BJP Opposition league, according to Mamata Banerjee.

On this, she was brutal about both the party and its top leader, stating "You can't be abroad all the time", a blunt appraisal of Rahul Gandhi whose scanty presence on the ground is repeatedly marked by opponents. Of his outfit, she was equally dismissive, commenting, "What is UPA? There is no UPA", a pithy and unsentimental obit for the national alliance led by the Congress. If her opinion on the Congress, led by the Gandhis, is explicit, her own plan is implicit: PM Banerjee. Though the 66-year-old likes to call herself "LIP" or "Least Important Person", she knows that if there ever were a time to audition for the country's top job, it is now.

In May, from the confines of a wheelchair, she collected a lush victory in Bengal, returning for a third term as its head. Her record numbers were even more impressive coming, as they did, after a campaign against her led by the Prime Minister and Home Minister Amit Shah and their combined firepower.

Mamata Banerjee's triumph over them was exemplary for an Opposition that seemed to have

accepted that the PM was invincible in elections where he took the lead role. And having accumulated massive political capital, Mamata Banerjee is now exercising her spending power, not least by suggesting that the Congress' impotent but aggressive self-regard as a national party instrumental to an anti-BJP formation needs to be shot down.

To that end, she is being ably assisted by aide-de-camp Prashant Kishor or "PK" who helped design her Bengal campaign and has emerged as among her closest advisors. PK had worked earlier with the Congress in states like Punjab. And after enabling Mamata Banerjee's re-election, he began in earnest talks for a top role in the Congress. The negotiations were held directly with the Gandhis but sank over differences about PK's role and accountability for the approaching elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

Since then, PK appears to have placed the Congress at the centre of his dart board, hurling at it, one after another, moves to further diminish its standing. Happily for him and Mamata Banerjee, this is best-accomplished by his skills as a headhunter - he has in states ranging from Goa to Meghalaya enlisted leaders from the Congress to join Mamata Banerjee's party. Many of those leaders have publicly credited PK for placing them. It looks like the Gandhis jilted the wrong guy, a move not foreign to their playbook - and PK wants them to know it.

Mamata Banerjee's itinerary is likely to include more meetings soon as she roll calls other leaders to gauge whether they will agree to her as the new centre forward. The fact that the Congress' allies in Maharashtra, one of the few states it still governs, did not avert their eyes as she made her notions known, will embolden her.

"What Sharad-ji said (is that) there should be a strong alternative of those who fight. What do we do if one is not fighting?" she remarked, suggesting that the Congress' inertia is now bogging down others who want to defeat the BJP.

Sharad Pawar was more circumspect, as always, typical of his always-shrewd politics where he dials up or dials down pressure (and support) on demand.

Both his party and Mamata Banerjee's were born out of the Congress and they share an anti-Congressism as a reflex, as also an unflattering opinion of Rahul Gandhi. Significantly, Sharad Pawar, on an earlier occasion, described the Congress as an "old zamindars still reminiscing about their lost lands". A leader from Sharad Pawar's party said to me, "The Congress is (still) trying to make Rahul Gandhi happen. The country has already decided that his leadership won't happen. We have to move on. If the Congress is asleep at the wheel, it is not our problem". Even Rahul Gandhi's critics concede though that for all his failings, he remains a leader who refuses to soften in any way his stand on the BJP and its majoritarianism politics.

'Uttarakhand's decade'

PM Modi inaugurates projects worth Rs 18,000 crore in poll-bound state

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of multiple development projects worth around Rs 18,000 crore in poll-bound Uttarakhand on Saturday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of multiple development projects worth around Rs 18,000 crore in poll-bound Uttarakhand on Saturday. He also inspected the models of the projects, including that of the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor which will be built at a cost of around Rs 8,300 crore.

Addressing a rally at Parade Ground in Dehradun to kickstart the BJP's campaign in the state's imminent Assembly election, PM Modi said, "These projects will help make this Uttarakhand's decade. In the last five years, the Centre has approved more than Rs 1 lakh crore for the development of Uttarakhand."

He added, "Today, India is moving forward with the intention of investing more than Rs 100 lakh crore in modern infrastructure."

Speaking on the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway or economic corridor, PM Modi said, "Today, I am very happy that the foundation stone of this project has been laid. When it is ready, the time taken to travel from Delhi to Dehradun will be almost halved."

The expressway will reduce the distance between the two cities from 248 km at present to 180 km.

At the rally, PM Modi also claimed that the central government in the years 2007-2014 had only built 288 kilometres of national highways worth Rs 600 in Uttarakhand.

"Our government in its seven years has constructed national highways of more than 2,000 km worth Rs 12,000 crore in the state," he said.

PM Modi added, "Our mountains and culture are not only our faith but also the fortresses of our country's security. We prioritise ease of living for people living in the mountains. Unfortunately, it was nowhere in the policy strategy of those who remained in power for decades."

"The government today cannot come under pressure from any country in the world. We are people who follow the mantra of nation first, always first. Whatever schemes we bring, we will bring it for everyone, without discrimination. We did not make vote bank politics the basis but gave priority to the service of the people. Our approach has been to strengthen the country," PM Modi said. The 120 mw Vyasi hydro-electricity project, a 38-km long stretch between Devprayag and Shrikot on NH-58 and a widened 33 km stretch between Brahmapuri and Kaudiyala on Rishikesh-Badrinath national highway were among the other crucial projects inaugurated by PM Modi on Saturday.

He also announced that the services of three new medical colleges would soon be available in the state. The Uttarakhand Assembly election will be held early next year.



Cooperative Banks - Safe As Houses Or Dodgy As Casinos? ..Could thou and I with Fate conspire

To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,

Would not we shatter it to bits -
- and then

Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's
Desire!"

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

When most of us put money in the bank, we expect three things: Safety, Safety, and Safety. Else, why would we settle for a savings account interest rate of 2.5-3.0%? We could play the stock market with its gyrations, or invest in mutual funds (and become either billionaires or paupers). These are all high-risk, high-return ventures. When we invest in mutual funds, we are reminded "Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks". Bank deposits are supposed to be 'Safe as Houses', which means riskless. So, what happens in India to a depositor when a Cooperative Bank's numbers go deep into negative territory either because it has very large NPAs, or there is skulduggery, or acts of sheer incompetence - or a combination of all three?

We are close to the final shameful chapter in the saga of the Punjab & Maharashtra Co-operative Bank Limited (PMC). It is time for us to ask if this is the best the nation can do for bank depositors - particularly

those not-so-affluent ones who deal with cooperative banks.

First, a bit about these banks, a large portion of which across the country are controlled by local politicians or their surrogates. What better examples than the sugar barons-cum-politicians of Maharashtra controlling sugar cooperatives and rural Cooperative Banks? There are also some urban Cooperative Banks that are run/patronised by specific castes or communities. These hold deposits of small businesses, small traders, housewives, pensioners, etc.

Some Cooperative Banks are run very professionally; some are not. Cooperative Banks often provide banking services in areas not well-covered by commercial banks. One of their attractions is that they pay a somewhat higher rate of interest than commercial banks.

Until recently, while Cooperative Banks were licensed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), they were regulated by the central bank as also state governments. After the Banking Regulation Act was amended in September 2020, these banks were brought under the direct regulation of the RBI.

The PMC went bust in September 2019. The allegation

is that the promoters, in league with the Management, got away with around Rs 6,500 crore.

But this story is primarily about its depositors, and how shoddily they have been treated. During the first six months of the moratorium, they could withdraw only Rs 1,000 - later raised to Rs 25,000. No exemptions for emergency medical expenses, weddings, business expenses, expenses concerned with education.

Well - are not deposits with banks insured? Yes, of course they are insured by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), which is a 100% subsidiary of the RBI. The DICGC is funded by a levy on all banks of Rs 0.10 on every Rs 100 deposited but until last year, the DICGC insured deposits only up to Rs 1 lakh. In 2020, the levy was raised to Rs 0.12 per Rs 100 and the amount insured was raised to Rs 5 lakh.

Two questions arise:

If Rs 1 lakh per depositor was insured when PMC went bust, why were depositors not paid up to Rs 1 lakh right away?

In today's day and age, is Rs 5 lakh insurance cover adequate for banks that claim to be 'safe as houses'?

Now to the grim part of the story. The DICGC pays pretty quickly

(in less than a month), but only after all the long-winded bureaucratisation has been borne. On average, over the past five years, it has taken 1,028 days between the de-registration of a bank and settlement of the first claim. After an exceptional year (2017-18) among the five, the average still comes to 767 days. According to media reports, after PMC went bust, there was total chaos and over 50 PMC depositors died within the first year and many have been put through enormous financial stress.

In other words, some depositors may have died because they could not get medical treatment, or of shock from seeing their lifetime's savings frozen indefinitely; many small businesses went bust because they had no cash flow; ambitions for higher education of many young people were shattered; many marriages broke up over money matters; many houses were taken over by banks for non-payment of EMIs, etc., etc. And we call this 'safe as houses'?

The RBI subsequently allowed depositors of PMC to withdraw up to Rs 1 lakh by June 2020. This allowed over 80% of depositors to withdraw their entire balance.

Last week, the RBI unveiled a

plan for the PMC. According to the Mint, as far as individual depositors are concerned: "The payout plan will work out like this: The first payment of Rs 5 lakh to all depositors will be made as soon DICGC transfers the funds. The repayment clock starts ticking once the Centre notifies the amalgamation in the official gazette (the so-called appointed date). At the end of the second, third, fourth and fifth years, retail depositors will receive additional Rs 50,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 3 lakh and Rs 5.5 lakh, respectively. This means retail deposits up to Rs 15 lakh will be repaid in full by the end of the fifth year. For the next five years, there won't be any repayments. At the end of the 10th year, those who still have residual amounts with the bank will be repaid in full."

Net-net: for some, more than 10 years to get their own money back. Some justice.

If you are an institutional PMC depositor, a bigger bonanza awaits you in the form of a massive haircut. 80% of those deposits will be converted to perpetual non-convertible preference shares at 1% interest for ten years and various scenarios thereafter. And all kinds of complicated stuff for the other 20% - but no cash.



After Michigan, Wisconsin attacks, do we need a domestic terrorism law?

There has been outcry over what some see as a disparity in the criminal charges following two recent mass-casualty attacks.

In Michigan, alleged school shooter Ethan Crumbley faces terrorism-related charges in the death of four students and the wounding of seven others. In Wisconsin, Darrell Brooks, alleged to have mowed down 68 people with his vehicle, killing six, faces more typical homicide charges rather than anything terrorism-related. Some see prosecutorial bias at work here, but in fact the reason lies in America's lack of a federal domestic terrorism statute. Do we need one? We do, and these two cases demonstrate why.

In a general sense, "terrorism" is defined as an illegal act committed to influence a civilian population or government. America has both federal and state terrorism laws. Historically, terrorism has been charged under the federal law. Since 9/11, however, 34 states have enacted their own terrorism laws, providing another option for police and prosecutors.

The problem is that federal terrorism law requires the perpetrator to be acting in support of a "designated foreign terrorist organization" (ISIS, Hamas, Hezbollah, al Qaeda, for example). If prosecutors cannot show that the perpetrator was acting "in support" of a foreign group designated

by the State or Treasury Departments as being "terrorists," the federal law generally doesn't apply.

In both the Wisconsin and the Michigan incidents, no such link to a designated terrorist organization has apparently been found; a federal terrorism charge is therefore off the table.

What police and prosecutors will then do is look to the possibility of charges at the state level, where the "foreign organization" requirement is generally not required. And here, then, our disparity: Michigan has a state-level terrorism law; Wisconsin does not.

As such, Crumbley now faces a Michigan state terrorism charge. Brook's Wisconsin state charges invoke no element of terrorism.

One way to cure this disparity would be for every state to enact its own terrorism statute. Simpler, however, would be for the federal government to enact a domestic terrorism statute, giving federal prosecutors this option coast-to-coast. There will be challenges. An oft-invoked impediment to such a federal law has been the "designation" aspect. Which groups would we designate as "domestic terrorists"? And what arm of the government would make these designations?

The country can usually agree on what a foreign terrorist group looks like. In today's political environment, however, one could hardly conjure a more polarizing issue than deciding who among America's various pressure groups

qualifies as a "terrorist."

A better solution is for the feds to jettison the "designation" prong and follow the states' more practical approach. In New York State, for example, a long list of typical criminal charges, including murder and arson, can be charged "as a crime of terrorism" if the intent to influence the civilian population or the government is present. No prior "designation" is required.

This is generally the construction state charges follow across the country (including in Michigan), and it works. The basic formulation of the federal statute would be:

Intent to Influence + Certain Crimes = "Terrorism"

The written law would need to list which acts would qualify as the required crimes. If arson, for example, is included in the list (which of course it would be), and if it can be shown that the arson was committed to influence the civilian population or an arm of the government, we would then have a federal crime of terrorism.

This is hardly a revolutionary approach. Aside from the states' models, this is the basic structure of federal hate crime statutes, which have been shown to work in instances like the Wisconsin and Michigan attacks. In the case of Dylann Roof for example, who in 2015 killed nine African American congregants in a South Carolina church, federal

prosecutors could not charge terrorism - no evidence of Roof acting to support a foreign designated entity could be shown. As such, federal prosecutors charged him with 24 hate crime counts.

Similarly, in 2018 when Robert Gregory Bowers shot and killed 11 congregants in a Pittsburgh synagogue, federal prosecutors charged dozens of hate crime counts - but no terrorism.

Using the state model for a new federal statute avoids the fraught issue of criminalizing opinions among our domestic population. Instead, the criminal acts themselves are deemed terroristic, not the group involved.

The First Amendment remains perhaps the most unique and important aspect of the American system; there's a reason it's first. A federal law modeled on the approach most states take would be the best way to safeguard free speech protections, while still prosecuting those who wish to commit violence for the purposes of a political statement. Having such a statute in place would have allowed the possibility of Dylann Roof, Robert Bowers, Ethan Crumbley and Darrell Brooks all to be prosecuted under a single federal charge with the word "terrorism" at the top of their indictments. On a commonsense level, does this not feel closer to justice than our current regime?



Tyranny is coming unless someone stops Democrats' COVID power grab

People living in the nation of Mozambique along the southern coast of Africa woke up to pretty surprising news this week, not a ton has been happening in Mozambique in recent years, but this really rattled them a little bit. The Biden administration informed the people of Mozambique in a presidential proclamation supposedly signed by Biden himself that they are no longer allowed in the United States. It's nothing personal. It's omicron, the new COVID variant that has been used to justify lockdowns around the world. The problem is the confusion came from the fact that there was no omicron at the time in Mozambique. There wasn't a single reported case of it in the country when the proclamation was signed.

So it's possible that one of the equity hires at the White House confused Mozambique with Botswana, where the other day two people may possibly have died of omicron. Either way, Mozambique and Botswana don't even share a border, so people in Mozambique were highly confused and probably a little hurt. Today, Tony Fauci, who is the person, of course, who signed off on this travel ban, was asked about this by an African reporter. You know, Fauci replied, That's a good question. An important question. And then Fauci didn't answer it or even hint at an

answer.

So as of right now, we still don't know why there is a White House travel ban on Mozambique. Presumably, the answer is because it's in Africa and Africa is where all of this started. Just a few days ago, when the head of the South African Medical Association, a

stunned at the response," Coetzee wrote this week in a piece for the Daily Mail. "No one here in South Africa is known to have been hospitalized with the Omicron variant, nor has anyone here believed to have fallen seriously ill with it." In other words, omicron, whatever it is, is far less dangerous than pretty

DR. FAUCI: The recent case of COVID 19 among an individual in California was caused by the omicron variant. The individual was fully vaccinated and experienced mild symptoms, which are improving at this point.

OK, so let's just parse this just for a moment. A fully vaccinated



physician called Angelique Coetzee, noted that she had seen patients with a new variant of the coronavirus. Within hours of her, saying that politicians in the United States and many other countries began planning elaborate and highly punitive new measures against their own populations.

From her office in Pretoria, Dr. Coetzee watched all of this happen with her jaw open. She was horrified. "I have been

much everything else that's currently going on in South Africa at the moment. But it didn't matter.

By this point. The Biden administration had stopped listening to Dr. Angelique Coetzee. They'd gotten what they needed from her, and they moved on.

So here's Tony Fauci today announcing that the terrifying scourge of omicron has reached our shores:

person in California has omicron and is doing fine. So what can we conclude rationally from this? Well, obviously the most stringent COVID restrictions in the country are not stopping the spread. Masking, social distancing, nonstop anxiety, talking about COVID from dawn to dusk. None of it worked, and the vaccines didn't work, either. The patient in California had two injections and still got omicron. So maybe the lesson here is

viruses are very hard to stop. Sometimes they're virtually impossible to stop because they spread with remarkable efficiency. In the case of coronaviruses, they live in animals, so they're never going away, ever. No matter what. They don't tell you that, but it's true.

So given all of those facts, it's possible we'll be better off working on medicines to keep those viruses from killing vulnerable people. That seems like a rational approach to the problem, and yet is the one thing the Biden administration is completely uninterested in doing. No interest whatsoever in doing that.

Instead, Biden announced today that the lesson he is drawing from the harmless infection of a fully vaccinated person in the state of California is that this is a pandemic of the unvaccinated. They're the ones to blame for it, not the Chinese government which likely created this virus and has definitely profited from it immensely. No, no, no. Omicron and COVID more broadly said the president, are the direct responsibility of the 20% of the adult American population, many of whom have natural immunity, who have resisted submitting to his injections, and they must be crushed for that. Now, this one is hardly worth explaining how far from legitimate science this is. It's nonsense. It's actually demented. But more than that, it is dangerous. On the basis of no demonstrated threat to public health whatsoever, the Biden administration is once again locking down the country and persecuting its perceived political opponents, otherwise known as the unvaccinated.

So you have to ask yourself, when will this end? Viruses mutate constantly. That's their nature. Will every new omicron variant mean massive, new and unconstitutional powers for our political class? That's what is meant so far.

This is a cycle, and it's not a cycle that any democracy can survive. You'd think some of the media might point this out. What are the limits here? No. Instead, they're making certain you're as terrified as Joe Biden wants you to be. ALI VELSHI, MSNBC: The new covid 19 variant is causing global alarm as countries scramble to enact travel restrictions to contain the coronavirus threat...



Biden's COVID task force is a failure and urgently needs a shakeup

As President Biden announces a slew of new COVID restrictions on Thursday it's worth taking a look back at the failures of the cast of bunglers and bumbleres he has put in charge of what we can and cannot do. It is a shameful record that strongly suggests none of these people should be in charge of an Arby's drive-thru, much less our pandemic response.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the self-appointed Emperor God of Science, is taking a lot of heat these days, and for good reason. It's not just his cavalcade of mistakes over the past two years but also his refusal to accept any criticism of himself as even vaguely legitimate. But, honestly, the problem is far bigger than Fauci. In fact, the entirety of President Joe Biden's White House COVID Task Force has been an abysmal disaster, and it is time for a change. The task force is led by Jeff Zientz, and features CDC Director Rochelle Walensky and Fauci as the scientific faces of the operation. Let's take a look at the havoc they have wrought.

In early May, the CDC quietly announced they would stop tracking breakthrough cases that did not lead to hospitalization or death. At the time experts warned this was a terrible decision. Why? They feared it would leave scientists blind if a new variant emerged. That is, of course, exactly what happened.

By August, as the delta variant was surging, Fauci would reverse course, telling "Meet the Press" that "we need to do more testing" of the vaccinated. In fact, at that point, nobody in the task force or at the White House could

answer just how susceptible vaccinated people were to the new strain of the virus, or how much they could spread it, because they hadn't bothered to track it.

As a result of this throughout the summer, confusion reigned as anecdotal breakthrough cases emerged from every corner of the country. When 10 out of 60 vaccinated Texas Democrats arrived in Washington, D.C., testing positive, it was clear to anyone with eyes that vaccinated people were getting and spreading COVID.

But answers for the American people were not forthcoming from the Biden administration. In late July, when a breakthrough case was reported at the White House, press secretary Jen Psaki was asked how many there were and declined to answer, saying, "Why do you need to have that information?" A week later the CDC reversed course on masking, urging vaccinated Americans to once again don the mouth muzzles.

Now, as the micron variant looms on the horizon another abject failure of the Biden Task Force has become clear. Once again it involves a lack of testing. As Dr. Marc Siegel put it, "It is inexcusable that almost two years in the worst pandemic in a hundred years, we still don't have free testing in every home, provided by the federal government through public-private partnership like Operation Warp Speed."

Perhaps the greatest failure of this iteration of the task force is its utter inability to communicate effectively with the American people. Whatever one may say about the excessive nature of the marathon task force press

conferences of the Trump era, every question was answered.

This task force instead holds Zoom pressers, often as short as 25 minutes, with few questions and fewer follow-ups. The result is that the citizenry, through its news media, has been utterly unable to effectively interrogate the ivory tower, elite scientists apparently making huge decisions about our lives.

The mismanagement listed above is far more egregious than any mistake made by Trump's task force, despite the fact that when Biden took office we had been studying COVID for a year and had three working vaccines. Had the task force allowed its feet to be held to the fire by the press, many of the mistakes listed above could have been avoided.

Instead, a steady lack of trust has taken hold. Americans are needlessly confused and have been almost since the moment Biden took the oath of office. Transparency has been replaced by "shut up and do as you're told." From the border to Afghanistan to the economy, it is clear that Biden has no desire to punish incompetence. It is hard to imagine what, if any, kind of disastrous mismanagement could get anybody in the administration fired. But as regards the task force, change is needed and it is needed today. We need transparency, we need competence, we need real press conferences. Put simply, we need wholesale change in the scientific leadership of our pandemic response. More than anything, we need a task force that does the research and tells us the unvarnished truth, not whatever they think will bend our behavior to their will. Until that happens, this national nightmare will never end.

Anil Ambani's Reliance Capital unraveling shows why RBI hates big business in banking



The crisis of confidence that erupted in India's shadow banking industry in 2018 has claimed its most high-profile casualty yet. In a surprise announcement Monday evening, the central bank said that it had superseded the board of a financier controlled by Anil Ambani, the younger brother of India's richest man, appointed an administrator, and would soon be sending the firm to the bankruptcy tribunal. The unraveling of Reliance Capital Ltd. shows why the Reserve Bank of India remains reluctant to allow big business groups into mom-and-pop banking, despite facing huge pressure to allow a wave of corporate capital into the industry and reignite credit growth. The financiers' potential to do harm is lethal even without access to insured deposits. More superficially, this is a story of two siblings and their dramatic divergence of fortunes. As Reliance Capital was being sent to the chopping block, Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. was in the news for different reasons. Shares of BT Group Plc jumped as much as 9.5% in London after the Economic Times reported that the Indian tycoon was considering an unsolicited bid for Britain's largest phone company. Reliance said the article was "completely speculative." Anil Ambani's misery couldn't be more real, though. Creditors, including the government, are scrambling to recover the Rs 75,800 crore (\$10 billion) owed to them by Reliance Communications Ltd., which shuttered its mobile service four years ago. Last year, the 62-year-old former billionaire was ordered by a London judge to pay more than \$700 million to a trio of Chinese banks that had lent money to RCom against personal guarantees by Ambani. Reliance Naval & Engineering Ltd., which had a contract to build patrolling vessels for the Indian Navy, is also in insolvency. Creditors are looking at 80%-90% haircuts, Bloomberg Quint reported in September. Now that Reliance Capital joins his other group businesses in the bankruptcy slaughterhouse, investors will get a clearer assessment of why their firm, which was once worth more than \$3 billion, is most likely headed for a complete wipeout of the \$64 million in shareholder value that still remains.



The ONLY temple in the world outside India
dedicated to Shri Shani Maharaj

Shri SHANI DEV Mandir, New York

Sarvamangala Shri SANEESWARA Temple, New York

*Regular Poojas' and
Homams' are conducted on
daily basis:*

Special Poojas:

- + Sri Saneeswara
homam
- + Sri Saneeswara -
parikara pooja
- + Sri Saneeswara
harati
- + Sri Navagraha Homa
- + Poornima: vrata
Pooja
- + Pradosham Pooja
- + Sri Sankatahara
chaturthi Pooja
- + Sri Satyanarayana
Vratha
- + Birthdays / Wed-
dings / Upanayanam &
More... ..



**1616 Hillside Avenue, Temple Suites
New Hyde Park NY 11040
Ph: 718 740 9400 / 516 358 9400
Email: temple.navagraha@gmail.com**

Temple Hours: 8.00 am to 9.00 pm

*The Temple entrance is in the western side parking lot behind Hot Breads &
Maharajas in New Hyde Park NY*

Functions of the space:

*Temple / Community Events / Senior Social Day Care Center /
Art & Music School / Library / Spiritual Lounge / Gift Shop*

www.NavagrahaUSA.com

As Chris Cuomo is being dragged, we're missing the big picture



Happy Wednesday everyone. Or as the Cuomos call it - "hump day."

So how is CNN covering the Chris Cuomo scandal? He was once their big star. But now, how do they feel?

Skit of CNN guests complaining about Chris Cuomo's Hampton parties

On Tuesday, Anderson Cooper did address the suspension. But look who was on set with him as he did it.

Cooper: Jeff Toobin, John Dean appreciate it. Some news now about this network. It is about Chris Cuomo the host of Cuomo Prime Time Well that's awkward. Having Toobin there, as you discuss Chris, it's a weird message you're sending - at CNN you can't defend a weenie, but it's alright to throttle one in public! It also shows you how shallow the talent pool is at CNN. But I guess Anthony Wiener was busy. Meanwhile, on his radio show, Chris Cuomo figured out who to blame.

Chris Cuomo blaming media for not liking his brother: You can fight against the other party, and you can fight against the media, but only if you have your party ... he had the Republicans hating him ... the media never really liked him

So the media never liked his brother. You sure about that? Montage of media fawning over Andrew Cuomo - Yeah - the media never liked him. And what better way to show their dislike for someone than by awarding them an Emmy! Following that logic, I better start building a trophy case tonight. But as Chris is being dragged, we're missing the big picture. And I don't mean a photo of Brian Stelter's astrology sign. Chris is in trouble for supporting his brother. So he's a terrible journalist, but a helluva brother. But what's the media's excuse for doing the same thing? Hate him or not, Chris did what any family member would do - and broke whatever journalistic laws CNN still observes in the process. Fire him, I guess. But if CNN fired everyone for violating basic journalism, their newsroom would be emptier than your medicine cabinet after Kat visits you. Anyway, if anything were to happen to a sibling or a child in your family - jerk or not - you'd probably do everything possible to help them out. Except maybe Jesse Watters' family. Kidnappers could mail them one of Jesse's fingers, and they'd be like: "Eh, he's got nine more!" But, if I ever get busted for something, and my sisters don't help me bury the bodies - they're out of the will.

Omicron needs 3 evolutionary surprises to wreak havoc

Scientists have been so surprised by the number of mutations in omicron that they've been calling it 'insane', but they don't yet know what they mean.

There's a lot to be learned about the omicron coronavirus variant, but scientists already know enough to prescribe a rational response to the threat. As the world waits for data, there's plenty of useful knowledge that comes from evolutionary biology.

Revamping vaccine formulas and updating travel restrictions to slow down and catch omicron infections make sense, even understanding that the new variant might well fizzle out. Failing to prepare for a worst-case scenario would be a potentially disastrous mistake.

That worst-case would require the coincidence of three simultaneous evolutionary advances. The variant would have to be transmissible enough to defeat the now-dominant delta strain and thereby spread throughout the human population. It would have to be virulent enough to overwhelm hospitals and provoke damaging lockdowns and restrictions. And it would have to be novel enough to infect and sicken the growing number of people who are immune to previous versions of SARS-CoV-2 by virtue of vaccines or previous illness.

That combination of evolutionary surprises is possible, but not all that likely. Scientists have been so surprised by the number of mutations in omicron that they've been calling it "insane," but they don't yet know what they mean.

Some researchers are scrambling to test how well omicron can stand up to the antibodies that are elicited by existing vaccines, and preliminary data show it can bypass these antibodies more readily than existing variants. But antibodies provide only part of the protection immune systems generate, so their potential vulnerability is only part of the story.

On a more optimistic note, the chair of the South African Medical Association, Angelique Coetzee, observed that infections in many of her patients were mild - an indication that omicron is probably not vastly more virulent than existing strains. But since mild cases are common with delta as well, it will take a few weeks to see how they compare.

In the meantime, an understanding of evolution can also inform predictions and decision making - sorting out what's likely from what's possible from what's extremely improbable.

There are two important parts of evolution.

The first is the generation of new diversity through mutations and other genetic changes. In 2020, scientists were thinking that SARS-CoV-2 would do this more slowly than influenza viruses, but because the new virus has spread to so many people in such a short time, it's getting millions of chances to stumble on new combinations of genes. SARS-CoV-2 can generate new variants by mutations as well as a process called recombination, by which viral particles exchange genetic material.

The other component of evolution is natural selection; survival of the fittest in response to what scientists call evolutionary pressure.

Evolutionary pressure would favor new variants that spread faster than existing versions. That's why delta took over, and now accounts for more than 99% of cases in the U.S.

Listen to discussions of evolutionary pressure with researchers Andrew Read of Penn State University and Jesse Bloom of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in episodes of Faye Flam's podcast, "Follow the Science," which explores the distinction between scientific ideas and chatter, speculation

and noise.

There are different ways the virus can become more transmissible. It can get better at multiplying fast in parts of the human respiratory tract where it's easily aerosolized. It can stumble on better ways to survive in the air, and it can improve its ability to invade the cells of a new host. But delta is already good at all of these - so a successful new variant will have to beat tough competition.

Immunity creates a new evolutionary pressure, bestowing a bigger advantage to newcomers that can evade antibodies from vaccination or past infection. Jesse Bloom, a researcher at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, has already jumped into studying omicron, and told me by email that his educated guess is that vaccines will remain at least somewhat effective in preventing severe disease and death.

Then there's a big wild card: whether the new variant will cause more severe or less severe disease. There's no evolutionary pressure to make the virus more deadly, so new variants might be more or less deadly by chance. (There's even a best-case scenario where a new variant comes to dominate and proves relatively harmless, thereby turning the pandemic into something like the flu or the common cold.)

Given what's known, then, revamping the existing vaccines makes sense, because they're unlikely to cause different or worse side effects. Moderna has already announced it will start work on making a new booster adjusted for omicron. And BioNTech, Pfizer's partner, has promised to start getting ready to do the same.





Mizoram feeding over 14,000 Myanmar nationals since last 9 months, CM Zoramthanga requests PM for assistance

nationals including many children are currently taking shelter in different districts of the state. groups are providing them with food, clothes, medicines etc," said Lalchaliana.

"More than 10 MPs and MLAs from the neighbouring country are also taking shelter in the state. Our government has been continuously requesting the centre to provide humanitarian assistance.

Apart from the Chief Minister, Mizoram's lone Lok Sabha MP C Lalrosanga also called on Home Secretary (Border Management), Additional Home Secretary (North East) and External Affairs Ministry urging assistance to the Myanmar refugees," said Lalchamliana.

He also said that the majority of the Myanmar nationals are currently lodged in relief camps set up by villagers, NGOs, civil society groups.

"The administration of different districts, NGOs, civil society

According to the Mizoram government, out of these Myanmar nationals, a maximum number of people are in Chaphai and Lawngtlai districts and around 7200 Myanmar nationals are taking shelter alone in Champhai district.

On the other hand, the Mizoram government has enrolled around 2000 Myanmar kids in schools in different districts of the state. A senior official of the Mizoram Education department said that a responsible government cannot ignore the right to education and future of children. "Around 2000 Myanmar students, including 965 girls, have been enrolled in the schools from pre-primary to Class 12.

(News Agencies) - Despite not getting any support from the centre, Mizoram- a tiny mountain range in the North-Eastern Indian state, has been feeding more than 14,000 Myanmar nationals for the last 9 months who have currently taken shelter in the state following the military coup in their country in February this year.

According to the reports, more than 14000 Myanmar nationals, including many children from Myanmar's Chin state have crossed over to Mizoram

following the military coup in their country in February this year and they are currently taking shelter in different parts of the state.

Meanwhile, Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga on Tuesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi and requested him again to be sympathetic to the Myanmar refugees who are currently taking shelter in the state.

During the meeting held at the Prime Minister's office in the Parliament building on Tuesday afternoon, the two leaders

discussed various issues concerning the state and its developmental needs. The Mizoram Chief Minister also asked the Prime Minister to render possible assistance to the distraught people.

Earlier in September, the Mizoram Chief Minister had sent a letter to the Prime Minister seeking humanitarian assistance for Myanmar refugees.

Mizoram Home Minister Lalchamliana told Aajtak/India Today TV over the phone that more than 14,000 Myanmar

Invest in First Mortgages

**EARN 8-15%
ANNUALLY ON WELL
SECURED, SHORT TERM,
1ST MORTGAGE LOANS.
MONTHLY DIVIDENDS**

Learn about Investment Opportunities

B-1 Business Visas

EB-5 Investor Visas

Hotel - Land - Business

Investment/Partner Opportunities

For details & disclosures

WREAM

Whitestone Real Estate Asset Management Corp.

Phone: 917 612 3158 Email: whitesone1979@gmail.com

Real Estate Broker/Investor/Private Lender Since 2009



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.



UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP



Fantastic!

Burgers-Lobster-Shakes

and a whole lot more

Sandwiches, Wraps, Salads, Kids' Meals

Order Online For
TAKE OUT OR DELIVERY
www.bethpageburgerbar.com

CATERING
On or Off Premises
Private Room Available

Open 7 Days a Week 11:30AM to 9:00PM

\$5⁰⁰ OFF

**ANY DINE-IN ORDER
\$30 OR MORE
MON-THURS ONLY**

With coupon only. Cannot combined with any other
coupon or special. Exp. 10/28/21.

BETHPAGE: 4011 Hempstead Turnpike
Right off the Route 135/Seaford Oyster Bay Expressway

516-597-5309

Insurance
Property & Casualty
 (See Full Page Advt. on Page 31)

**Business, Liability,
 Disability, Workers
 Comp., E & O,
 Auto, Home,**

917-612-3158
www.whitestonecorpusa.com

Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi likely to get first verdict in junta trial today

(News Agencies) - Ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi is expected to hear the verdict in her incitement trial on Tuesday, the first judgement from her many junta court cases that could see her jailed for decades.

The Nobel laureate has been detained since the generals ousted her government in the early hours of February 1, ending the Southeast Asian country's brief democratic interlude.

More than 1,200 people have been killed and over 10,000 arrested in a crackdown on dissent, according to a local monitoring group.

Suu Kyi faces three years in prison if found guilty of incitement against the military - although analysts say it is unlikely she will be taken away to jail on Tuesday. Instead, the court may delay its verdict or commute any jail term to house arrest in order to keep the popular leader out of sight as the junta works to consolidate its



rule.

Journalists have been barred from proceedings in the special court in the military-built capital Naypyidaw and Suu Kyi's lawyers were recently banned from speaking to the media.

The courtroom will remain off-limits to reporters for the verdict, junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun

recently told AFP.

Days after the coup, Suu Kyi was hit with obscure charges for possessing unlicensed walkie-talkies, and for violating coronavirus restrictions during elections her National League for Democracy (NLD) won in 2020. The junta has since added a slew of other indictments, including

violating the official secrets act, corruption and electoral fraud.

Suu Kyi now appears most weekdays at the junta courtroom, with her legal team saying last month the hectic schedule was taking a toll on the 76-year-old's health.

LAWYERS GAGGED

Suu Kyi's long spells of house

arrest under a previous junta were spent at her family's colonial-era mansion in Yangon, where she would appear before thousands gathered on the other side of her garden fence. Min Aung Hlaing's regime has confined her to an undisclosed location in the capital, with her link to the outside world limited to brief pre-trial meetings with her lawyers.

At her first court appearance, she used them to send a message of defiance, vowing the NLD would endure and asking the party faithful to remain united.

But in October, her team were hit with a gag order after they relayed vivid testimony from deposed president Win Myint describing how he rejected a military offer to resign to save himself during the coup.

In recent weeks the trials of other ranking members of Suu Kyi's NLD have wrapped up, with the junta doling out harsh sentences.

A former chief minister was sentenced to 75 years in jail earlier this month, while a close Suu Kyi aide was jailed for 20 years.

**TEXT AND
WHATEVER
JUST
DON'T
TEXT
AND**



STOPTEXTSSTOPWRECKS.ORG



WE THANK OUR CUSTOMERS FOR THEIR TRUST & LOYALTY

28 YEARS OF EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE



INDO US EXPRESS, INC.

HICKSVILLE, NEW YORK

WORLDWIDE COURIER FREIGHT-FORWARDER

DOMESTIC & LOCAL DELIVERY

CALL US AT: 212-447-5720 or FAX 516-932-3750

ALTERNATE NUMBER: 347-538-7041

OR EMAIL US: INDOUSEXPRESS@GMAIL.COM

www.indousexpress.com

GREAT SERVICE, 7 DAYS A WEEK, 365 DAYS A YEAR!

AUTHORIZED AGENT FOR:

UPS - FedEx - DHL - USPS - Amazon

CALL ABOUT OUR SPECIAL RATES

TO & FROM INDIA/WORLDWIDE





Taliban kill, abduct dozens of ex-officers: Rights group

Since taking power in Afghanistan, Taliban fighters have killed or "disappeared" more than 100 former police and intelligence officers, according to a report released Tuesday by Human Rights Watch.

Taliban fighters have summarily killed or forcibly "disappeared" more than 100 former police and intelligence officers since taking power in Afghanistan, Human Rights Watch said in a report Tuesday.

The group pointed to continuing retaliation against the armed forces of the ousted government despite an announced amnesty. Taliban forces have hunted down former officers using government employment records and have targeted those who surrendered and received letters guaranteeing their safety, the report said. In some cases, local Taliban commanders have drawn up lists of people to be targeted, saying they committed "unforgivable" acts. "The pattern of killings has sown terror throughout Afghanistan, as no one associated with the former government can feel secure they have escaped the threat of reprisal," Human Rights Watch said in the report.

The Taliban seized power on August 15 when they swept into the capital Kabul as the internationally-backed government collapsed. Kabul's fall capped a stunningly swift takeover by the insurgents, who had taken a string of cities as US forces and their allies withdrew from Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of war.

Since that time, the Taliban have been struggling to deal with the collapse of the country's economy and have faced an increasingly deadly insurgency by the Islamic State group. Taliban forces have also targeted people they suspect of supporting the Islamic State group in eastern Nangarhar province, an epicentre of IS attacks, the

report said.

In the province's capital Jalalabad, a fierce, 8-hour gun battle erupted Tuesday when Taliban forces raided a suspected hideout of IS militants, witnesses said.

Provincial intelligence chief Tahir Mobariz said that during the fighting, a woman and a man in the house detonated suicide vests, dying in the blasts, and third person was killed by gunfire.

Two suspected militants were arrested, he said.

The Taliban leadership has repeatedly announced that workers of the former government, including members of the armed forces, have nothing to fear from them.

Former army officers have said they were ordered to give up their weapons, and in return, they received a document confirming their surrender and ensuring their safety.

On Saturday, Taliban Prime Minister Mohammed Hassan Akhund denied in a public address that any retaliation was taking place.

When the Taliban took over, "they announced an amnesty for all. Has there been an example of this?" he said, referring to retaliation. "There is no problem for anyone." But he added that if any former security officer "resumes his bad deed...then he will be punished based on his crime."

But Human Rights Watch said the promised amnesty has not stopped local commanders from retaliating against former members of the army, police and intelligence services. "The burden is on the Taliban to prevent further killings, hold those responsible to account and compensate

the victims' families," said Patricia Gossman, the organization's associate Asia director.

Through interviews with witnesses, relatives, former government officials, Taliban officials and others, Human Rights Watch said it had documented the killings or enforced "disappearance" of 47 former armed forces members in four provinces between Aug. 15 and Oct. 31. It said its research indicated at least another 53 killings or disappearances took place as well.

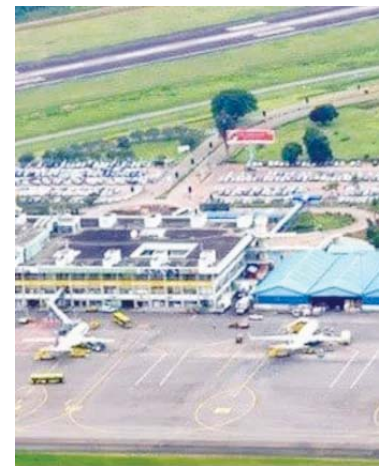
The research focused on Ghazni, Kandahar, Kunduz and Helmand provinces. "But the cases reflect a broader pattern of abuses" reported in other provinces, it said.

Taliban fighters have carried out night raids on homes to detain former security officers or threaten and abuse their relatives into revealing their whereabouts, it said. In multiple cases it documented, the bodies of those who had been taken into detention were later found dumped in the street.

While some "opportunistic" killings took place immediately after the Taliban takeover, "killings and disappearances appear to have become more deliberate since then as Taliban commanders...have used informants and information from the previous government to locate others" linked to the former armed forces, it said.

In one case cited by the report, a former fighter in the National Directorate for Security named Abdul Qadir went into hiding in Kunduz province after the government fell, then resurfaced to live with his in-laws. On Aug. 25, he was stopped at a checkpoint by Taliban fighters.

Uganda loses its only international airport to China for failing to repay loan: Reports



(News Agencies) -

Uganda has lost its only international airport, the Entebbe International Airport, to China for failing to repay a loan, African media reported. The government has failed to reverse a loan agreement with China which had repayment conditions for attaching its only airport.

In 2015, China's Export-Import (EXIM) Bank lent Uganda \$207 million at two per cent upon disbursement. The loan, meant for the expansion of Entebbe airport, came with a maturity period of 20 years including a seven-year grace period, News X reported.

However, as per international media reports, the Ugandan government waived off the clause for international immunity for securing the loan, following which the Chinese lender can retake possession of Entebbe International Airport without any international arbitration.

A statement from the Uganda Civil Aviation Authority (UCAA) reportedly suggested that some provisions in the Financing Agreement with China exposed Entebbe International Airport and other Ugandan assets to be attached and taken over by Chinese lenders upon arbitration in Beijing.

Last week, Ugandan Finance Minister Matia Kasaija had apologised to Parliament for "mishandling" the multi-million dollar loan.

According to the latest media reports, a delegation of Ugandan officials also visited China earlier this year in an attempt to renegotiate the clauses of the loan agreement. However, the visit was unsuccessful as the Chinese authorities refused to allow any alteration in the original terms of the deal.



Afghanistan's key Taliban leaders studied at Pakistan's madrassa: Report

Darul Uloom Haqqania madrassa in Pakistan has educated more Taliban leaders than any school in the world and its alumni now hold key positions in Afghanistan, a report said.

(News Agencies) -Darul Uloom Haqqania madrassa, one of Pakistan's largest and oldest seminaries and dubbed as the 'university of jihad' by its critics for helping sow violence across the region for decades, has educated more Taliban leaders than any school in the world and its alumni now hold key positions in Afghanistan, according to a media report.

The seminary in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has had an outsize effect in Afghanistan. The seminary's alumni founded the Taliban movement and ruled Afghanistan in the 1990s. The school has argued that the Taliban should be given the chance to show they have moved beyond their bloody ways since they first ruled Afghanistan two decades ago, The New York Times reported on Friday.

"The world has seen their capabilities to run the country through their victories on both the diplomatic front and on the battlefield," Rashidul Haq Sami, the seminary's vice-chancellor, told the NYT.

Seminary's late chancellor Samiul Haq, who was murdered at his residence in Islamabad in 2018 and was Sami's father, was known as the "father of the Taliban." "Being the alma mater of scores of Taliban leaders, Haqqania certainly commands their respect," said Azmat Abbas, author of 'Madrassa Mirage: A Contemporary History of Islamic Schools in Pakistan.'

Sirajuddin Haqqani, 41, who led much of the Taliban's military efforts and carries a USD 5 million bounty from the US government on his head, is the new acting interior minister of Afghanistan and an alumnus. So is

Amir Khan Muttaqi, the new foreign minister, and Abdul Baqi Haqqani, the higher education minister, the report said.

The justice minister, the chief of the Afghan water and power ministry, and a variety of governors, military commanders and judges also passed through the Haqqania seminary, school administrators say.

"We feel proud that our students in Afghanistan had first broken the Soviet Union and now sent the US packing. It is an honour for the madrassa that its graduates are now ministers and hold high positions in the Taliban government," Sami said.

Many of the alumni adopt the name Haqqani as a symbol of pride. The Haqqani network - the Taliban's military wing, responsible for hostage-taking of Americans, complex suicide attacks and targeted assassinations - is named after the madrassa and retains connections there, the report said.

The Taliban victory in Afghanistan is a source of great pride for the seminary's students. The school's critics call it a 'university of jihad' and blame it for helping to sow violence across the region for decades. And they worry that extremist madrassas and the Islamist parties linked to them could be emboldened by the Taliban's victory, potentially fueling further radicalism in Pakistan despite that country's efforts to bring more than 30,000 seminaries under greater government control.

Pakistan has long had an uneasy relationship with madrassas like Haqqania. Leaders who once saw the seminaries as a way to influence events in Afghanistan now see them

as a source of conflict within Pakistan. The country has its own Taliban movement, the Pakistani Taliban, or TTP, which has been responsible for a slew of violent attacks in recent years. The two sides reached a cease-fire this month. Renewed signs of radicalism in madrassas have appeared, especially since the fall of Kabul, Afghanistan. Students have held pro-Taliban rallies. At the Red Mosque in Islamabad, the site of a deadly raid by security personnel 14 years ago, Taliban flags were raised above a girls' madrassa next door. Pakistan's government has tried a mix of financial support and behind-the-scenes prodding to dial down radicalism within the seminaries. The government of Prime Minister Imran Khan gave the Haqqania seminary USD 1.6 million in 2018 and USD 1.7 million in 2017 for "mainstreaming" it. The funds helped the madrassa construct a new building, a badminton court and a computer lab, among other projects, the report said. Haqqania has broadened its curriculum to include English, math and computer science. It demands full documentation from foreign students, including those from Afghanistan, and administrators said it adopted a zero-tolerance policy for anti-state activities, it said. Experts on education in Pakistan say that the effort has had some success and that Haqqania does not advocate militancy like it once did. "In an environment of widespread support for the Taliban, both with the government and society, it would be naive to hope that madrassas and other mainstream educational institutions would adopt a teaching approach other than a pro-Taliban one," said author Abbas.

New Chinese surveillance system targets journalists, foreign students



(News Agencies) -Security officials in one of China's largest provinces have commissioned a surveillance system they say they want to use to track journalists and international students among other "suspicious people", documents reviewed by Reuters showed.

A July 29 tender document published on the Henan provincial government's procurement website - reported in the media for the first time - details plans for a system that can compile individual files on such persons of interest coming to Henan using 3,000 facial recognition cameras that connect to various national and regional databases.

A 5 million yuan (\$782,000) contract was awarded on Sept. 17 to Chinese tech company Neusoft (600718.SS), which was required to finish building the system within two months of signing the contract, separate documents published on the Henan government procurement website showed. Reuters was unable to establish if the system is currently operating.

Shenyang-based Neusoft did not respond to requests for comment.

China is trying to build what some security experts describe as one of the world's most sophisticated surveillance technology networks, with millions of cameras in public places and increasing use of techniques such as smartphone monitoring and facial recognition.

US-based surveillance research firm IPVM, which has closely tracked the network's expansion and first identified the Henan document, said the tender was unique in specifying journalists as surveillance targets and providing a blueprint for public security authorities to quickly locate them and obstruct their work.

"While the PRC has a documented history of detaining and punishing journalists for doing their jobs, this document illustrates the first known instance of the PRC building custom security technology to streamline state suppression of journalists," said IPVM's Head of Operations Donald Maye, using the initials of the People's Republic of China.

Reuters was unable to find any documents identifying journalists or foreigners as specific targets of surveillance systems in other parts of China.

The Henan provincial government and police did not respond to requests for comment. The Ministry of Public Security and China's Foreign Ministry also did not comment.

In US, Pence and allies eye end to 50 years of abortion rights

(News Agencies) -US abortion rights may soon be consigned to the "ash heap of history," former vice president Mike Pence told activists Tuesday on the eve of a crucial Supreme Court hearing. As the top court -- which shifted to the right under Donald Trump -- prepares to hear a case that may roll back 50 years of abortion

rights, anti-abortion activists believe their moment may have finally arrived. And Trump's former deputy, known for his firm Christian faith and conservative family values, said he was confident the landmark 1973 court decision guaranteeing a woman's right to abortion would be struck down. "I do believe that Roe versus

Wade will be overturned, whether it's now or in the near future," the Republican said in a Washington speech. "I believe with all my heart that day will come," added the 62-year-old. The case before justices on Wednesday regards a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. The Supreme Court has previously

guaranteed a woman's right to an abortion until the fetus is viable outside the womb, which is typically around 22 to 24 weeks. Pence said the high court has a chance to right a "historic wrong" once and for all by ultimately invalidating Roe and handing authority on the matter back to the states. "It will

not come as a surprise. It will simply be the culmination of a 50-year journey," Pence said. "We have not struggled for so long... to turn back so close to the finishing line." A segment of the American population, particularly on the political right and religious Christians, has never fully accepted the 1973 abortion ruling and has waged a full-fledged fight to have it overturned. Abortion opponents for years have mobilized near health clinics seeking to discourage women against terminating their pregnancies and shame doctors who perform the procedures.

At the same time, in conservative states mostly in the US South, emboldened legislatures have passed hundreds of restrictive laws, some of which directly contravene Roe's constitutional guarantee of abortion rights -- and therefore provide an opportunity for the Supreme Court to revisit the issue. The anti-abortion movement received a massive boost when Trump, aided by Republicans in the US Senate, installed three judges believed to have anti-abortion leanings on the high court, bringing the conservative majority to six of nine justices.

ADVERTISEMENT



Happy Diwali & prosperous New Year to all with best healthy & wealthy best wishes!



INDO US EXPRESS, INC.

**Worldwide Couriers / Freight Forwarders
Domestic Rush Delivery / Import / Export
Custom Clearance / Trading Consultant**

Gurinder Singh
CEO

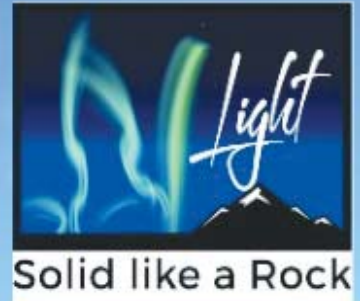
SALES OFFICE

224 West 30th St., #604, New York, NY 10001
Mail: P.O. Box 7304, Hicksville, NY 11802

Office: 212.447.5720 Fax: 516.932.3750
Delhi: 98.1849.0552
Mumbai: 92.2453.1807
New York: 347.538.7041

Visit US Online: www.indousexpress.com
Email: indousexpress@gmail.com

Insurance



**Are you paying too much for Auto,
Home, Business, Workman
Compensation, Contractors,
General Liability, E&O ?**

Call us today for complimentary analysis of your policy.



Sharanjit Singh Thind
Licensed P&C Insurance Broker/ Notary Public
(Service with Honesty & Smile, Since 2012)

Tel: 516-654-4488

insure@nlightfin.com www.nlightfin.com

fddasf34



US bids farewell to Trump hotel that offered luxury and access

Trump had promised to "drain the swamp" of corruption in Washington, but instead opened his very own quagmire on Pennsylvania Avenue -inviting a dizzying array of conflicts of interest.

Occupying an entire city block a short walk from the White House, the Trump International Hotel is a splashy neoclassical palace steeped in more than a century of Washington lore.

The towering atrium features a huge skylight that dapples the lobby bar in the winter sun as the nation's power brokers savour USD 140 glasses of wine served in Hungarian crystal, or \$10,000 tumblers of vintage Macallan scotch.

After a drink, guests with \$385 to spare can rejuvenate with a "hydrafacial" skin treatment downstairs before reclining on designer linens in one of the 263 stately, wood-panelled rooms.

"It's a beautiful place," one-time White House spokesman Sean Spicer gushed about the hotel, which is set to become a Waldorf Astoria in the New Year, ending six years of ownership by Donald Trump.

"It's somewhere that he's very proud of, and I think it's symbolic of the kind of government that he's going to run." Spicer turned out to be correct.

Trump promised to "drain the swamp" of corruption in Washington, but instead opened his very own quagmire on Pennsylvania Avenue - inviting a dizzying array of conflicts of interest. During Trump's four years in office, the 19th-century Romanesque revival-style hotel became a magnet for top donors, corporate lobbyists and foreign

governments seeking to spend big in the hope of winning influence.

"The law is totally on my side, meaning the president can't have a conflict of interest," Trump said in 2016 when asked about mixing his day job with promoting his sprawling business empire.

'INFLUENCING PEDDLING'

The Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) lobby group tracked 150 officials from 77 foreign governments that visited a Trump property during his presidency. According to a congressional probe, the Washington hotel took in USD 3.7 million from countries including China, Kuwait, Turkey, India, Brazil and Romania.

The Philippines told a television station back home its decision to use the hotel for a 2018 Independence Day celebration was "a statement that we have a good relationship with this president."

The clientele raised concerns about possible violations of anti-corruption provisions written by the nation's founders restricting the acceptance of gifts to office-holders from foreigners. "Donald Trump should never have been allowed to keep his DC hotel as president," CREW's head Noah Bookbinder said.

"He should have divested himself of it along with the rest of his businesses

before taking office. Instead, he rode out four years of using it for influence peddling and constitutional violations." Altogether, domestic political groups spent \$3 million at the hotel across some 40 political events during the Trump era.

Special interest groups, such as the American Petroleum Institute, often took part in White House meetings alongside a hotel event, and many secured favourable policy outcomes, according to CREW.

AFP reached out to the Trump Organization, but there was no response.

The former president handed control of his businesses to his two adult sons and a trustee when he entered the White House, promising not to get involved while, in reality, promoting the venues at every opportunity.

Meanwhile, the Trump Organization pledged to donate its profits from foreign governments to the US Treasury.

Built in the 1890s, the 12-story Old Post Office that houses the Trump International is the third-tallest building in the capital, after the Washington Monument and National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

USD 12,000 A NIGHT

Scheduled for demolition several times, it was bailed out in 2011 when Trump pipped Hilton and Hyatt with a bid

pledging to sink USD 200 million into a makeover.

The hotel opened in the fall of 2016, a few months before Trump entered the White House, effectively making the new president his own landlord, in violation of a provision banning elected officials from "any share" of the lease. A review of rates by AFP found the least expensive room around the end of November would cost USD 512 per night. A night in the Franklin Suite, including breakfast in bed, was on offer for a cool USD 12,109.98.

But the sky-high prices did not translate into profit.

Investigators in Congress found the hotel lost more than \$70 million during Trump's presidency, concluding that he had "grossly exaggerated" its profits. The Trump Organization called the report "intentionally misleading, irresponsible and unequivocally false" and described it as "political harassment."

But reports in US media have chronicled low occupancy as Trump International has struggled to contend with the Covid-19 pandemic. The Trump Organization sold the lease for a reported \$375 million to an investment fund, which plans to reopen the hotel in the first months of 2022 as a Waldorf Astoria. "Selling it now that he's out of the office and the grift has dried up is, to say the least, too little, too late."



What we know about the Michigan high school shooting

A gunman opened fire at Oxford High School in Michigan on Tuesday afternoon, shooting 11 people. Three students were killed and several others were left critically and seriously injured. A 15-year-old male student was later arrested in connection with the shooting and was being held at a juvenile jail, authorities said.

The deadly gunfire in Oxford, in Oakland County - about 30 miles north of Detroit - added to a growing list of shootings on U.S. school grounds this year after a lull during the coronavirus pandemic, when many schools held classes remotely.

The shooting was the deadliest this year, according to Education Week, which tracks such shootings and reported that there had been 28 so far in 2021.

Many details, including the name of the suspect and a motive, remained unclear. Here's what we know.

What happened at the school? At 12:51 p.m. Tuesday, authorities received the first of more than 100 calls to 911 about the shooting.

When students at Oxford High School first heard the gunshots, they rushed for cover and used chairs to barricade themselves behind

classroom doors. Within five minutes, authorities said, 11 people had been shot.

The gunman fired 15-20 shots with a semi-automatic handgun before being apprehended by deputies in the school hallway, authorities said. Seven bullets remained in the gun, the county sheriff, Michael Bouchard, said at a news briefing Tuesday night.

Had there been no intervention, Bouchard added, "we might be, if it's possible, in a worse situation."

What was the aftermath?

After the shooting, students said they fled from the building. Some parents rushed to a nearby grocery store to reunite with their children.

Officials across the country expressed shock and issued statements of sadness and frustration, as residents of Oakland County announced a vigil and prepared for funerals. Democratic leaders renewed their calls for more to be done to reduce gun violence.

"No one should be afraid to go to school," Gov. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan said in a statement. Later, at a news conference, she added. "I think this is every parent's worst nightmare."

What do we know about the victims?

Authorities identified those

killed as Hana St. Juliana, 14; Madisyn Baldwin, 17; and Tate Myre, 16, who died in a sheriff's squad car while on the way to a hospital.

"There was no time to wait," Bouchard said of the deputy who put Tate, who had been a football player, into his car.

Seven other injured students ranged in age from 14-17, officials said, including three who were in critical condition and another who was in serious condition.

Those in critical condition included a 15-year-old boy who had been shot in the head, a 17-year-old girl who had been hit in the chest and a 14-year-old girl who had been wounded in the chest and neck. She remained on a ventilator Tuesday night.

"It's looking very tough for this young girl," Bouchard said.

The only adult who was injured, an unidentified 47-year-old teacher, had been discharged from the hospital, he added.

What do we know about the suspect?

Few details are known about the arrested student, whom authorities have described as a sophomore at Oxford High School and a resident of the Village of Oxford, a community of about 3,500 people located

in the center of the larger Oxford Township area.

After the suspect was apprehended, he declined to speak while in the presence of his parents, officials said. The family has hired an attorney, they added.

Officials have not identified a motive.

"The person that's got the most insight into the motive is not talking," Bouchard said at the news briefing.

He added that the 9 mm Sig Sauer handgun used in the shooting had been bought by the suspect's father four days earlier. The gun had 15-round magazines, he said, two of which had so far been found at the school.

Authorities said that they did not believe that the student had planned the shooting with anyone else and that they were still investigating. Mass shootings at schools have been a recurring tragedy in the United States. In 2018, a gunman killed 17 people and injured 17 others at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. That same year, a gunman killed 10 people at Santa Fe High School in Texas. "This is a uniquely American problem that we need to address," Whitmer said Tuesday.

Texas: Man uses COVID-19 relief funds to buy Lamborghini, Rolex; imprisoned for 9 years



A man in Texas has been imprisoned for nine years for using his coronavirus relief funds for purchasing a Lamborghini car and a Rolex watch.

According to the US Justice Department, Lee Price III had acquired \$1.6 million by submitting fake Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan applications.

The 30-year-old laundered money and committed wire fraud by opening three shell companies as a front to hide his illegal activities. The Department of Justice said Price had submitted a fake driver's license and tax records to substantiate his loan requests.

His attorney Tom Berg said, "Mr. Price recognises that the stiff sentence imposed today by Judge Gilmore was triggered both by his fraudulent conduct in this PPP loan case and by the rather ragged criminal history he brought to the table." "The Court found that he did fully accept responsibility by unconditionally pleading guilty to the indictment," he added. The relief programmes for COVID-19 were started to provide financial aids to the victims suffering from the novel virus. They ended on May 31, 2021.

While 474 people have been charged with crimes related to these programmes, the government has suffered a setback of over half a billion dollars in fraud.

Cryptocurrencies are rubbish and a ban may save many from future shock

certain skill-set. All of that can serve as currency.

Then there is the fictional currency. This fictional currency doesn't have any tangible value but it allows the currency holders to exchange it for tangible goods and services. An example of this currency is our good old Rupee. Or a Dollar note. Or a cheque with someone's signature giving it its value. The value of fictional money comes from some powerful entity that authorises it. This powerful entity has almost always been some sort of a king, queen or a government. If a government doesn't offer this authorisation, the fictional money collapses and its value turns to zero.

Cryptocurrencies claim to seek parity with the other fictional monies of the world, including Dollar, in the name of some mumbo-jumbo. For their fiction, the cryptocurrencies rely on technological gobbledygook that uses big words like Blockchain and crypto and public keys and private security and decentralisation. But what they fail to tell people, the regular people who can't differentiate between hash of # and the hash of hashish, that there is no regulatory mechanism governing the rules of cryptocurrencies and that there is no central agency -- like a king, queen or a government -- that can guarantee its value. In fact, this lack of structure is sold as a feature: It's decentralised, it is said, so not even a government controls it. And it is said as if this is a good thing. When it comes to tangible assets like bread and gold one may not want to have any government interference. After all, the value of gold or bread is universal. But why would someone want a fictional currency without an authority overseeing it? It will be chaos. A clear example of limitations of Blockchain is the current chaos inherent in the world of cryptocurrencies. It is now home to cryptocurrencies that are limited like Bitcoin of which only 21 million units can be "mined" because of their specific algorithms as well



crypto coins that are jokes, like near unlimited Doge Coin. And this is just the beginning. Any number of cryptocurrencies can be created, with different feature sets and using different technologies. I mean there is, right there on Google, if you search "How To Create Cryptocurrency" you will get 1000 tutorials. Right now the cryptocurrency market is an edifice created of nothing except whims, fancies, ignorance and hope. The argument for cryptocurrency as an asset is stronger, but look closer and even this falls apart. The inherent problem with cryptocurrency is that there is nothing beneath it except technological gibberish. There is nothing tangible under it. Even mutual funds are built on top of something that exists, something real. Under the paper trail of mutual funds there are real funds flowing, there is real business taking place on the ground, there are roads getting constructed, there are houses getting built, there are factories producing something tangible. There is nothing under cryptocurrency at the moment. And there will not be anything significant under it unless the space is regulated, norms are set, methods are created and mechanisms are made.

BAN MAY HELP MANY

I don't like the word ban. I am never in favour of a ban. But sometimes a bit of regulation, some semblance of order, can be helpful.

The current cryptocurrency scene in India is a perfect example of an area that needs some order. Cryptocurrencies right now are like virtual casino chips and nothing more. Delving into them is akin to gambling, which is actually not an issue. If

someone adult, in all their wisdom, wants to gamble it ought to be up to them.

The cryptocurrency advertisements during IPL were odious. They were selling a false idea, a senseless hope, to arguably some of the most vulnerable segments of the

society. One advertisement was asking gully boys to invest Rs 100 into crypto currencies.

Another was singing virtues of putting the first salary of life into cryptocurrency. One was promising that instead of Fixed Deposit people should invest money in some crypto fund.

The messaging right now is that cryptocurrencies are the surest, fastest and easiest way to get rich. And that is just wrong on so many counts. Can people get rich by gambling? Yes, many do. But most lose their money. Cryptocurrency is the same right now. Most people are going to lose money in it. Some will lose Rs 100, while some may see crores wiped off whenever the crypto mania crashes. But losses will be there. And a ban, or at least some sort of regulation right now, will ensure that people lose money in crypto because they wish to gamble and not because they were sold dreams of a rich and glorious crypto future.

Let's go to explore a magical place

*Come into the lap of Nature, Explore Hiking, Day Camping, *fishing & *Hunting on 100 Acres of Unexplored & Beautiful land backing to thousands of acres of state land.*

Email: whitestone1979@gmail.com

Catskill, New York

** Limited spots available, Terms & Conditions apply.*

APOLLO
FARMS & RESORTS

Will Modi vs Mamata campaign bid for 2024 leave Congress further marginalised?



of a degree of unease over ready acceptance of Mamata Banerjee's leadership. Therefore, some "action" in Punjab and Uttarakhand before the votes are cast cannot be ruled out.

Mamata Banerjee is correct in asserting that UPA is defunct and history. The logic and rationale of any front is to form an alternative government. It paved the way for the creation of Janata Party, literally days before the 1977 polls when many political parties fought polls on an election symbol that had belonged to the Lok Dal.

Post-Bofors, Opposition parties had again closed ranks to form a 'National Front' with NT Ramarao as its convener. By the time 1991 general election were held, the National Front was dead and gone. In 1996, the non-Congress, non-BJP-NDA parties regrouped to form a 'United Front'.

Barely two years in power that saw two prime ministers, the United Front was not even a talking point between 1999-2004. When Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led NDA tasted defeat in May 2004, the UPA was born with speed and a sense of purpose that empowered its constituents for ten long years. The enormity of defeat in May 2014 was such that the UPA, as it had existed during 2004-2014, was not revived. Nor did it hold periodic deliberations since then. Some of its partners, however, did come together (both before and after polls) in the state assembly elections of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh,

Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra for example. Historically, the Congress has only had alliance partners in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Jammu and Kashmir.

I have often written and quoted how on May 20, 2019, three days before the 2019 Lok Sabha verdict, the DMK leader and currently Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin had denied media reports that Congress president Sonia Gandhi had convened a meeting of the UPA on May 23, the day votes in the Lok Sabha elections were to be counted.

"Who said there is an Opposition parties' meeting on the 23rd? The meeting will be useful only for election results," Stalin had told reporters reinforcing a thought that the UPA's logic and mandate had been to form a government rather than to act as an umbrella of opposition parties.

It needs to be emphasised again that the story of Opposition's unity, rather disunity, is highly exaggerated and part of a politically motivated subtext that is constantly dished out that the Narendra Modi government may have its weaknesses, but the Opposition is not capable of governance or that it cannot be trusted in serious matters such as the national security and economy.

The Opposition, instead of countering it, is not helping its cause. The discord among the Opposition ranks such as the Trinamool versus Congress, Trinamool versus Aam Aadmi

Party, Congress versus Rashtriya Janata Dal, Priyanka Gandhi versus Akhilesh Yadav was on full display during the recently held by-elections and in the ensuing state polls of Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur and Uttar Pradesh.

While the Trinamool Congress is well within its rights to expand politically well beyond Bengal, past precedence has to be kept in mind. The DMK and the AIADMK have been winning in Tamil Nadu with élan, but in neighbouring Puducherry, the two Dravidian parties have not been major players.

Famous Yadav faces of Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad tried to enter into adjoining states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh respectively, repeatedly, without any success. The 'Nationalist' Congress Party under Sharad Pawar tried hard to expand outside Maharashtra in Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya, Gujarat, Goa, and Daman and Diu but little success.

However, on the other hand, breakaway groups of the erstwhile Janata Party and the Janata Dal such as the Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, JDU, JDS, and BJD have expanded exceedingly well tasting power and success while the parent organisation withered away.

Would the Congress meet the same fate?

It is difficult to predict anything. "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated" may be a popular misquote attributed to

author Samuel Clemens, known by his pen name, Mark Twain but it is a constant companion of senior Congress leaders who rule out any early or imminent downfall of the Congress.

In the Congress internal assessment, the party is holding a pole position in both Punjab and Uttarakhand and is expected to outperform both the Trinamool Congress and the AAP in Goa.

Such an outcome in early March 2022 would boost Rahul Gandhi and the Congress and perhaps prove Trinamool leader Mukul Sangma's assertion wrong that 15 out of G 23 (disgruntled Congress leaders) are ready to switch sides. A 0-5 verdict, on the other hand, may accelerate exodus. That is where posturing comes in. Pawar, a politician among politicians, is waiting and watching without posing any threat to the MVA government in Maharashtra. Pawar clearly knows that as a leader of a non-NDA constituent, he has to do

business with the Gandhis.

Pawar's earthly wisdom was on full display in 1999 when within six months of breaking away from the Congress (on the grounds of Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin), the Maratha strongman chose to share power in Maharashtra under a Sonia Gandhi-nominated Congress chief minister.

A word about Rahul Gandhi is required. The Gandhi scion is in no hurry to be projected as prime minister. For him, issues are far more important than trappings of power.

Rahul Gandhi is emotionally detached over a possibility of some party leaders quitting or switching sides simply because he does not believe in bargaining or cajoling the disgruntled lot moving to the 'greener pastures'.

In other words, there is no remorse or regret over losing Jyotiraditya Scindia, Jitin Prasada, Sushmita Dev and the rest. "His doors are open for those willing to leave," says a senior Congress leader part of Team Rahul. However, the Congress cannot escape the blame by sticking to Rahul Gandhi's 'idealistic' positions. A year has passed since the death of Ahmed Patel but Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi have not propped up an effective political manager to reach out to the Opposition, hold secret parleys and keep the façade of Opposition unity or revive the idea of an umbrella of Opposition parties. The fault lies at 10, Janpath's doorsteps while the BJP eyes its electoral insurance policy in divided Opposition.

Indian Parliament passes bill to cancel debatable farm laws

Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) is also trying to stage a revival. Under the leadership of Jayant Singh Chaudhary, they are trying to cash the farmers' grievance and confusion to build their Jat vote bank.

The development will continue to impact on a national scale for days to come. While the Samyuk Kisan Morcha deferred

their planned tractor rally to Parliament, they stated that the protest will still endure. According to the leaders, it is only a half-victory as they demand a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all the crops, approving stubble burning, along with case withdrawal by all state governments and railways.

By Susmita Ghosh

Germany locks down unvaccinated people, as leaders plan to make shots compulsory

of coronavirus, outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel and her successor, Olaf Scholz, announced Thursday, following crisis talks with regional leaders. Those who have recently recovered from Covid-19 are not covered by the ban.

The pair also backed proposals for mandatory vaccinations, which if voted through the parliament could take effect from February at the earliest.

Under the tightened restrictions, unvaccinated people can only meet two people from another household. Bars and nightclubs must shut down in areas with an incidence rate above 350 cases per 100,000 people over one week. And the country would limit the number of people at large events like soccer matches.

Acting Chancellor Angela Merkel and Olaf Scholz hold a press conference on tightened Covid-19 restrictions Thursday.

The announcement comes as Germany battles a surge in cases that has pushed Europe back to the epicenter of the pandemic, heightening fears over the newly discovered Omicron variant.

The press briefing is also Merkel's last before she leaves office; a grim note to end her 16 years as German chancellor.

"We have understood that the situation is very serious and that we want to take further measures in addition to those already taken," Merkel told reporters at Thursday's news conference.

"The fourth wave must be broken and this has not yet been achieved," she added.

A nationwide vaccination mandate could come into effect from February 2022 -- after it is debated in parliament and following guidance from Germany's Ethics Council, Merkel said.

She added that vaccinated people will lose their vaccination status nine months after getting their last shot, apparently in an effort to encourage booster uptake.

Europe mulls mandates

If approved, Germany's vaccine mandate would follow in the footsteps of neighboring Austria, which also plans to make inoculations for eligible adults compulsory from February.

Elsewhere, Greece announced



that vaccines would be refusing to do so would face 100 mandatory for people aged over euro (US \$113) fines for each 60 from mid-January. Those passing month, the government

said Tuesday.

European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said it was time to "potentially think about mandatory vaccination" within the bloc, as it faces the double onslaught of a fourth coronavirus wave and concerns over the Omicron variant discovered by South African health officials last week.

"Two or three years ago, I would never have thought to witness

what we see right now, that we have this horrible pandemic, we have the vaccines, the life-saving vaccines, but they are not being used adequately everywhere," von der Leyen told a press briefing Wednesday.

"How we can encourage and potentially think about mandatory vaccination within the European Union, this needs discussion.

This needs a common approach but it is a discussion that I think has to be led," she added.

PASRICHA & PATEL^{LLC} ATTORNEYS AT LAW

NOW REPRESENTING LONG ISLAND & QUEENS

SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT,

Pasricha & Patel has always strived to provide superior legal representation to its clients in a vast array of fields such as:

Business
Closings

Technology
Law

Commercial
Litigation

Commercial
Transactions

25+
Years of
Excellence

- ✓ **Real Estate**
- ✓ **Immigration**
- ✓ **Trust & Estates**



55 NORTH BROADWAY, SUITE 201, HICKSVILLE NY 11801

Visit www.pasricha.com | Call 516-530-1596 | Write to us at law@pasricha.com

1794 Oak Tree Road
Edison, NJ 08820
T: (732) 593-6200

381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1220
New York, New York 10016
T: (646) 741-9399

What the heck is going on with Kamala Harris?

Harris allies quickly moved to explain both of these departures away as long-planned and not part of any sort of problem within the Veep's office. "It's natural for staffers who've thrown their heart and soul into a job to be ready to move on after a few years," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki of Sanders' departure on Thursday. If you believe that, well, you haven't been paying attention. Top advisers to a vice president don't just randomly leave less than a year into a term. One departure might be explained away by extenuating circumstances. Two? No way.

The decisions by Etienne and Sanders to head for the exits then raises a simple question: What is happening in Harris world?

While the question is simple, the answer -- or answers -- are not. There are those who dispute even the premise of the question, insisting that Harris is being judged by an unfair standard because of her history-making status as the first woman, first African American and first Asian American to hold the vice presidency.

But, staff departures at such a senior level this soon into a term would provoke questions no matter who was in the vice president's office because, well, they are odd and not typical.

So, again, what is going on? We have some window into that



via reporting by my CNN colleagues Edward Isaac Dove and Jasmine Wright last month. Wrote the duo:

"Worn out by what they see as entrenched dysfunction and lack of focus, key West Wing aides have largely thrown up their hands at Vice President Kamala Harris and her staff -- deciding there simply isn't time to deal with them right now, especially at a moment when President Joe Biden faces quickly multiplying legislative and political concerns. "The exasperation runs both ways. Interviews with nearly three dozen former and current Harris aides, administration officials, Democratic operatives, donors and outside advisers -- who spoke extensively to CNN -- reveal a complex reality inside the White House. Many in the

vice president's circle fume that she's not being adequately prepared or positioned, and instead is being sidelined. The vice president herself has told several confidants she feels constrained in what she's able to do politically. And those around her remain wary of even hinting at future political ambitions, with Biden's team highly attuned to signs of disloyalty, particularly from the vice president."

When a politician is feeling stress or believes they are being misused, they almost always exert pressure downstream of them -- on their staffs. And, reports of issues within Harris' staff are nothing new.

As far back as July, Politico reported that Harris' staff was "experiencing low morale, porous lines of communication and

diminished trust among aides and senior officials." (The publication laid much of the blame for those problems at the feet of Harris' chief of staff, Tina Flournoy.)

And, Harris struggling with retaining staff is, well, not a new thing.

"I didn't cover her closely in Sacramento, but I know she did churn through staff," said Mark Z. Barabak, a veteran Los Angeles Times political reporter, of Harris' time as California attorney general. "Especially in the communications end of operation." (Worth noting: The California Department of Justice paid \$1.1 million in settlements to former Harris staffers in the AG's office to settle allegations of sexual harassment and retaliation during her time in

office. A Harris spokesman said in 2019 -- when the settlements were revealed -- that Harris did not know about them. "As the chief executive of a department of nearly 5,000 employees, the buck stopped with me," Harris said in a statement at the time. "No one should face harassment or intimidation in the workplace, and victims of sexual misconduct should be listened to, believed and protected.")

Barabak has his own theory of why Harris has struggled so mightily: It's part of the job.

"Even as she shoulders an array of policy portfolios, even as she visits Paris this week seeking to address the administration's ruptured relations with France, it remains a fact that the No. 2 job in the White House is inherently a diminishing one," he wrote in a mid-November. Later, in the same piece, he added this:

"Virtually every vice president in modern history -- save Dick Cheney, who played an unusually prominent role guiding defense and foreign policy under President George W. Bush -- has looked smaller than when he or she accepted the position.

"That's because a main job requirement is stepping away from the spotlight, except when cheerleading for the president and his agenda." Regardless of the reason, Harris is not anywhere near where she and her team hoped to be as she finishes up her first year as vice president.

CM Thackeray signs file to suspend Mumbai's former top cop Param Bir Singh, probe to begin

Thackeray signed the file on his first official day at work after being discharged from a south Mumbai hospital following a cervical spine surgery last month. "Orders have been issued to the Director General of Police (Sanjay Pandey) to serve the notice to Param Bir Singh. The suspension is pending departmental inquiry for prolonged, unauthorised absence from work," a source from the Chief Minister's Office told ThePrint.

A senior CMO official added that the file was for a departmental inquiry against Param Bir Singh, for unauthorised absence.

"The suspension in itself is not a punishment. Sometimes, suspension is done to ensure that someone against whom you are starting an inquiry is not influencing that inquiry, so the suspension spin came subsequently," the official told ThePrint. Singh, a 1988-batch IPS officer, was shunted out as Mumbai's commissioner of police in March after alleged lapses in the probe into the recovery of explosives outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's Mumbai home, Antilia. He was transferred as Director General, Home Guards. Soon after his suspension in March, Singh



wrote a letter to CM Thackeray, alleging that then-Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh had directed his officers, including now-dismissed assistant sub-inspector Sachin Waze, to extort Rs 100 crore a month from Mumbai's bars and restaurants. Deshmukh resigned in April and the charges of

extortion and corruption against him are being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate. Untraceable for months- Singh went on a medical leave on 4 May, and was untraceable until late last month, when he returned to Mumbai. In the months after Singh's disappearance, the Mumbai and Thane Police filed multiple cases of extortion and corruption against the IPS officer. In three of these cases, Singh also faced non-bailable warrants due to his prolonged absence despite multiple summons. However, two of these warrants

have been rolled back ever since he returned to Mumbai. A Mumbai court Thursday also cancelled an order declaring Singh to be a proclaimed offender in connection with one of the extortion cases after he returned to Mumbai and joined the investigation.

Departmental inquiry A plan for a departmental inquiry against Param Bir Singh was initiated in September by DGP Pandey. He sent a proposal to the state home department to also suspend 24 other officers also booked for extortion charges in the cases against the former Mumbai Police chief.



Looking to Buy/Sell ?

We know the difference between Home & House

Honesty, Integrity & Experience



Specializing in Investment & Income Producing Real Estate

Nlight Real Estate

Tel: 516 NLIGHT4



Sharanjit Singh Thind
Real Estate Broker/Notary Public



180 Broadway, PH 3A, Hicksville NY 11801
Email: homes@nlightrealestate.com
www.nlightrealestate.com



How did mountains like Everest, Kangchenjunga form?

Study finds answer in oceans

A study reveals that while the formation of mountains is usually associated with the collision of tectonic plates, the movement was triggered by an abundance of nutrients in the oceans two billion years ago.

The highest peak in the world, Mount Everest, is 8,849 metres in height, the highest in India is the Kangchenjunga, standing at a staggering 8,586 metres tall. But, how did it all begin and what led to the creation of these tall structures across the world? Scientists have unearthed the source of these structures in nutrients found in the ocean.

A new study reveals that while the formation of mountains is usually associated with the collision of tectonic plates, the movement was triggered by an abundance of nutrients in the oceans two billion years ago which caused an explosion in planktonic life. Published in the journal Nature Communications

Earth & Environment, the study states that the Great Oxidation Event holds evidence for high carbon burial and the emergence of widespread mountain building. When the plankton died, they fell to the ocean floor, eventually forming graphite which played a crucial role in lubricating the breakage of rocks into slabs, enabling them to stack on top of each other to make mountains.

Researchers found that the amount of planktonic life was unusually high in this period, which led to the creation of necessary conditions that were crucial to the emergence of mountains over millions of years. Led by Professor John Parnell, from the University's School of Geosciences, researchers state that the

geological record, for this period includes evidence of an abundance of organic matter in the oceans, which when they died was preserved as graphite in shale.

"Mountains are an essential part of the landscape, but big mountain chains only formed halfway through Earth's history, about two billion years ago. While it has long been known that tectonic processes were lubricated, our research shows that it was the sheer abundance of carbon in the ocean that played a crucial role in the crustal thickening that built the Earth's mountain ranges," Professor John Parnell told the University of Aberdeen.

Researchers said that the evidence can be seen in the

northwest of Scotland, where the roots of the ancient mountains and the slippery graphite that helped build them can still be found, in places like Harris, Tiree and Gairloch. "Graphite buried in Earth's crust is in high demand for future green technology, for use in items such as fuel cells and lithium-ion batteries. It's interesting to think that this two-billion-year-old event which was responsible for shaping our natural world now has the potential to play a key role in its preservation for future generations," Dr Connor Brolly of the University of Glasgow, who is also a co-author of the study said.

No proposal to recognise Bitcoin as currency: Indian finance minister



India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday that there were no plans to recognise Bitcoin as currency in the country. She was replying to a question in Indian Parliament. She also told the House that the government does not collect data on Bitcoin transactions.

Bitcoin, the digital currency allows people to buy goods and services and exchange money without involving banks, credit card issuers or other third parties. Bitcoin was introduced in 2008 by an unidentified group of programmers as a cryptocurrency as well as an electronic payment system. It is reportedly the first decentralised digital currency where peer-to-peer transactions take place without any intermediary.

Meanwhile, the government plans to introduce the Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill 2021 in the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament. The Bill seeks to ban all but a few private cryptocurrencies to promote underlying technologies while allowing an official digital currency by RBI.

In reply to another question, Sitharaman said, ministries and departments have spent Rs 2.29 lakh crore as capital expenditure during the April-September period of the current fiscal.

Meghalaya farmers earn the most, those from Jharkhand, Odisha and Bengal the least: Govt tells Lok Sabha

The farmers from Meghalaya have been earning the highest average daily income, followed by Punjab and Haryana in India. The revelation, which comes as a part of the government's reply on farmers' income in Lok Sabha, has put Meghalaya ahead of Punjab and Haryana in terms of average monthly income from farming.

While farmers from Meghalaya earn about Rs 29,000 per month, those from Punjab and Haryana

earn a little over Rs 26,000 and Rs 22,000 respectively. However, the farmers from Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal have been ascertained to have the lowest monthly income. As per the government's reply, farmers from these three states earn little over Rs 4,000, Rs 5,000 and 6,000 on an average, monthly. On the other

hand, the average income of farmers all over India, has been

ascertained to be about Rs 10,000. The data as given by the



government in Lok Sabha, is from the National Statistical Office (NSO) survey on Situation

Assessment of Agricultural Households and Land and Livestock Holdings of rural areas of the country with an integrated schedule of enquiry during the period January 2019 to December 2019.

In its reply, the government added that an inter-ministerial Committee was constituted in April, 2016 to examine issues related to

"Doubling of Farmers Income" (DFI) and recommend strategies to achieve the same." The Committee submitted its report to the government in September, 2018, containing the strategy for doubling of farmers' income by the year 2022. After acceptance of the Doubling of Farmers Income (DFI) Committee recommendations, the government constituted an 'empowered body' to review and monitor the progress," the reply added.



A powerful and underappreciated ally in the climate crisis? Fungi

If we want to tackle the climate crisis, we need to address a global blindspot: the vast underground fungal networks that sequester carbon and sustain much of life on Earth.

Fungi are largely invisible ecosystem engineers. Most live as branching, fusing networks of tubular cells known as mycelium. Globally, the total length of fungal mycelium in the top 10cm of soil is more than 450 quadrillion km: about half the width of our galaxy. These symbiotic networks comprise an ancient life-support system that easily qualifies as one of the wonders of the living world.

Through fungal activity, carbon floods into the soil, where it supports intricate food webs - about 25% of all of the planet's species live underground. Much of it remains in the soil, making underground ecosystems the stable store of 75% of all terrestrial carbon. But climate change strategies, conservation agendas and restoration efforts overlook fungi and focus overwhelmingly on aboveground ecosystems. This is a problem: the destruction of underground fungal networks accelerates both climate change and biodiversity loss and interrupts vital global nutrient cycles. These networks should be regarded as a global public good to be mapped, protected and restored as a matter of urgency.

Fungi lie at the base of the food

webs that support much of life on Earth. About 500m years ago, fungi facilitated the movement of aquatic plants on to land, fungal mycelium serving as plant root systems for tens of millions of years until plants could evolve their own. This association transformed the planet and its atmosphere - the evolution of plant-fungal partnerships coincided with a 90% reduction in the level of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Today, most plants depend on mycorrhizal fungi - from the Greek words for fungus (mykes) and root (rhiza) - which weave themselves through roots, provide plants with crucial nutrients, defend them from disease and link them in shared networks sometimes referred to as the "wood wide web". These fungi are a more fundamental part of planthood than leaves, wood, fruit, flowers or even roots.

We are destroying the planet's fungal networks at an alarming rate. Based on current trends, more than 90% of the Earth's soil will be degraded by 2050. Modern industries, from agriculture to forestry, have failed to take account of the life in the soil. Despite the fact that mycorrhizal fungi supply as much as 80% of a plant's nutrients, intensive farming practices - through a combination of ploughing and application of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and fungicides - severely reduce the abundance, diversity and physical integrity of fungal networks. Logging wreaks havoc below

ground, decreasing the abundance of mycorrhizal fungi by as much as 95%, and the diversity of fungal communities by as much as 75%. A large study published in 2018 suggested that the "alarming deterioration" of the health of trees across Europe was caused by a disruption of their mycorrhizal relationships, brought about by nitrogen pollution from fossil fuel combustion and agricultural fertiliser.

Mycorrhizal fungal networks make up between a third and a half of the living mass of soils and are a major global carbon sink. When we destroy them, we sabotage our efforts to limit global heating. Plants supply carbon to their fungal partners in exchange for nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus - much of the phosphorus that makes up the DNA in your own body will have passed through a mycorrhizal fungus. In their exchange, plants and fungi engage in sophisticated trading strategies, striking compromises and resolving dizzyingly complex trade-offs. The influence of these quadrillions of microscopic trading decisions spills out over whole continents.

Globally, at least 5bn tons of carbon dioxide are sequestered within mycorrhizal networks each year, a quantity roughly equivalent to the amount of

carbon dioxide emitted annually by the US (unpublished data suggests this figure is closer to 17bn tons). Even small reductions in the prevalence of fungal networks have significant consequences: a release of just 0.1% of the carbon now stored in Europe's soils is equal to the annual emissions from 100m cars.

Mycorrhizal fungi are keystone organisms that support planetary biodiversity; when we disrupt them, we jeopardise the health and resilience of the organisms on which we depend. Fungal networks form a sticky living seam that holds soil together; remove the fungi, and the ground washes away. Mycorrhizal networks increase the volume of water that the soil can absorb, reducing the quantity of nutrients leached out of the soil by rainfall by as much as 50%. They make plants less susceptible to drought and more resistant to salinity and heavy metals. They even boost the ability of plants to fight off attacks from pests by stimulating the production of defensive chemicals. The current focus on aboveground biodiversity neglects more than half of the most biodiverse underground ecosystems, because areas with the highest biodiversity aboveground are not always those with the highest soil biodiversity.

Mycorrhizal fungal networks and the nutrient flows and

processes they manage should be considered a global public good, analogous to clean air and water. For millennia in many parts of the world, traditional farming and land management practices have attended to the health of the soil and thus supported plants' fungal relationships implicitly. But over the course of the 20th century, our behaviour has led us into trouble.

Organisations like the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks (Spun), the Fungi Foundation and GlobalFungi are advocating for soil ecosystems, and leading a massive global sampling effort to create open-source maps of Earth's fungal networks. These maps will help chart the properties of underground ecosystems, such as carbon sequestration hotspots, and document new fungal species able to withstand drought and high temperatures. Researchers will be able to track the distribution of fungal networks as they shift in response to changing climates and patterns of land use, much as they already do for global vegetation, climates and ocean currents.

A deeper knowledge of these dynamic living systems will support conservation projects and policies that aim to halt their destruction and encourage their recovery, besides driving much-needed innovation in underground ecosystem science and technology.



Glitz, glamour and gambling:

Sexual violence and abortion restrictions in Paraguay are fueling an epidemic of childhood pregnancy: Amnesty



An epidemic of childhood pregnancy in Paraguay is being fueled by widespread sexual abuse and restrictive abortion laws, according to a new Amnesty International report. At least 1,000 girls aged 14 or younger gave birth in the country between 2019 and 2020, the report says. It adds that more than 12,000 teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 19 gave birth in 2019. The report, titled "They are girls, not mothers," highlights a crisis of sexual violence against children, who are then forced to carry resulting pregnancies to term under Paraguayan law. The South American nation's abortion laws are some of the most extreme in the region, with the procedure criminalized in almost every circumstance, except when the life of the mother is recognized to be in danger. Paraguay has one of the highest child and teenage pregnancy rates in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Early childbirth can pose significant health risks. Girls under the age of 15 are four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications, according to the Latin American Consortium against Unsafe Abortion. In Paraguay, girls and teenagers between the ages of 10 and 19 account for one in ten maternal deaths nationwide, as well as 13% of maternal deaths caused by unsafe abortions, according to Amnesty. Paraguay adopted a law in 2018 to prevent sexual abuse and guarantee comprehensive care for child and teenage survivors of sexual abuse. However, the report describes the law's implementation as insufficient, highlighting holes in the protection of young people, "such as the absence of appropriate public policies and the failure to enforce existing laws to prevent abuse and provide redress when it does occur."

Behind China's secret societies and crime syndicates

Secret societies and criminal organisations have been part of the fabric of Chinese society and politics since the beginning of the 20th Century. But we aren't talking about the next blockbuster film about crime syndicates of Shanghai, this is a real story of Chinese politicians and criminals working in tandem.

On Monday, Macau police arrested Alvin Chau, junket boss and CEO of Suncity - one of the world's biggest junket companies listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. Junket system is a gambling operation in Macau that attracts high-end gamblers from across the world.

According to Chinese state media, Chau's operations include 12,000 gaming agents and 80,000 gambling members. He has been arrested for setting up overseas gambling platforms and is said to have ties with Macau 'triad' - a term used for Chinese transnational organised crime groups.

Following Chau's arrest, the Suncity stock on Hong Kong bourse plunged 48 per cent at a time when other gambling-related stocks have also recently slumped.

In 2019, Chau was barred from entering Australia after concerns about "large-scale money laundering activities" through his partnership with Crown Resorts, Australia's largest gaming group.

China's secret societies

The history of Chinese politicians mingling with secret societies goes back to Chinese nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen who had an extensive association with underground networks in Shanghai. Chiang Kai Shek, Sun Yat-sen's successor, relied on a secret society named "Green Gang" to collect information on communists.

After coming to power in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cracked down on the "Green Gang" for its ties with Chiang Kai Shek's Kuomintang and its involvement in the 1927 Shanghai anti-communist attack. The CCP forced out the Chinese

triads and secret societies from the mainland during the Chinese civil war. These societies and triads moved to Hong Kong and Taiwan, where they continued to operate.

CCP's relationship with triads began to change under Deng Xiaoping - China's leader between 1978 and 1989.

On 23 May 1982, Deng Xiaoping met Hong Kong tycoons Li Ka-shing and Henry Fok to establish ties with the city's triads. Deng said in 1984, that "not all triads are bad, many of them were good, and many are patriots". The idea of patriotic triads legitimised the criminal organisations and gave them the immunity to operate.

The key to understanding CCP's relationship with the triads is through the United Front Work Department. United Front is a political tool used by the CCP to create divisions while achieving its agenda through non-government entities and affiliated individuals. United Front groups can often be private Chinese citizens living outside of China as students or workers. The United Front Department and the Chinese intelligence agencies work in tandem with triads to run their businesses, launder money, and seek political influence in the West. United Front organisations are usually hidden behind innocuous-sounding non-governmental organisations. They're also called a "magic weapon" by the party. CCP-triad linkup

Over the years, the CCP has come to use these organisations to achieve various political goals in Taiwan, Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities. The CCP has used the triads to attack civil society activists, journalists and other opponents in Hong Kong.

In Taiwan, a party named China Unification Promotion Party (CUPP) was founded by organised crime member Chang An-Le, who has sought to do Beijing's bidding. Chang An-Le, also known as 'White Wolf', is a

convicted extortionist, heroin trafficker and kidnapper, who has close ties with CCP princelings. The 'Bamboo Union' - Chang original triad - has moved drugs and firearms in the region.

Chang doesn't hide his ties with the CCP and has acknowledged meeting the party princelings. He has openly called China to invade Taiwan militarily. "Because my country is China, and I am on the Chinese Communist Party's side, so these Taiwanese laws cannot apply to me," Chang had said in the past.

Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party members have called on the judiciary to charge Chang An-Le for endangering Taiwan's national security law. He is one of the many actors in Taiwan who have ties to Beijing and seek to create a more favourable political environment for CCP in Taiwan.

Canada has been one of the "permissive targets" of triads, Chinese intelligence, and the United Front Department. Canadian journalist Sam Cooper described in his recent book the story of how Chinese intelligence, gambling, triads, and money launderers have operated in public view. Canada's real estate and casino gambling are the targets of Chinese intelligence and triads to launder money.

"The implication is that Chinese organized crime networks are not just laundering drug cash through casino junkets. They also use casinos and real estate investment to produce cash for Chinese Communist Party operations in North America, including political bribes. In intelligence-speak, this would be called threat-financing," Cooper writes in his book, 'Willful Blindness: How a Network of Narcos, Tycoons and CCP Agents Infiltrated the West.'

China's presence in Canada and Australia have given the CCP access to the West's corridors of power.



Govt and military owe India an authentic history of the 1971 Bangladesh War. Rest is mythology

Halos around personalities from the 1971 Bangladesh War victory have no sanctity. Myths and claims of self-aggrandisement must be debunked.

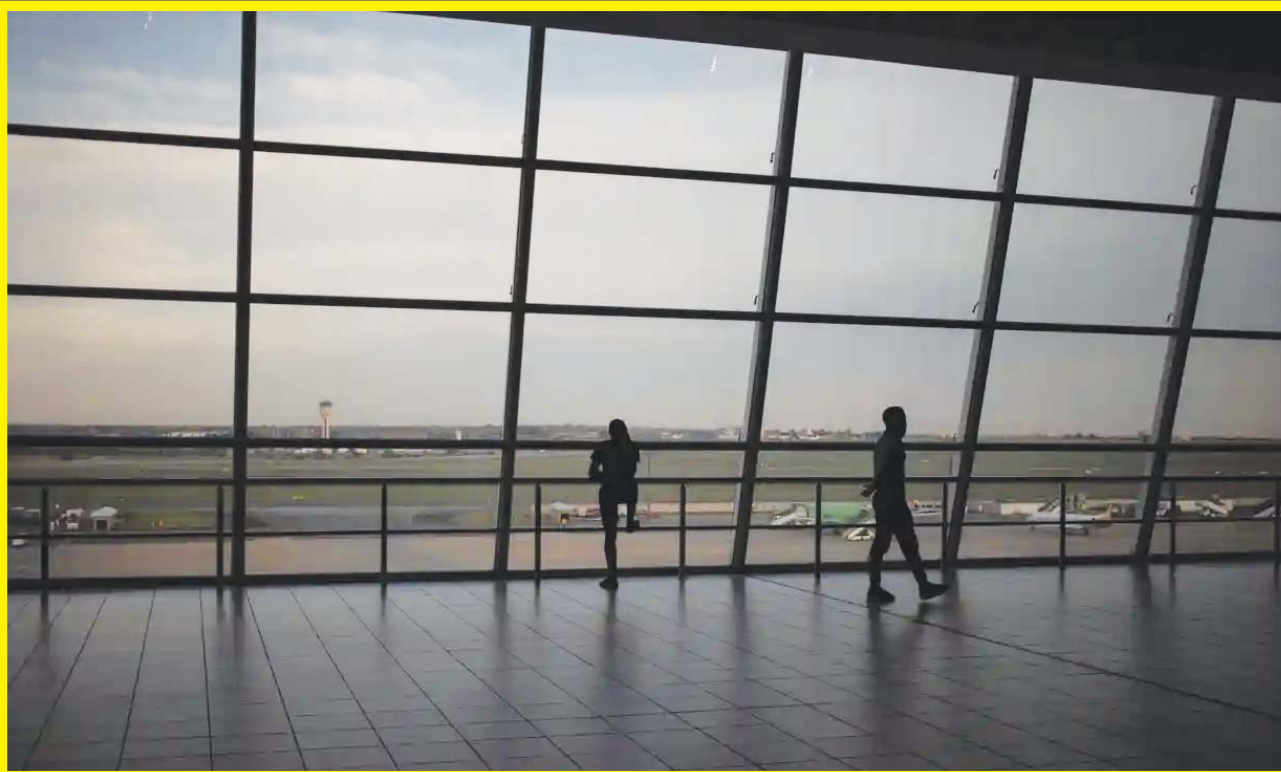
By all yardsticks, the 1971 Bangladesh War was India's greatest feat of arms, and ranks high among the all-time great military campaigns in the annals of history. By design or default, there was a clear politico-military strategic aim, political/diplomatic/military conditions were shaped over 10 months, and the coup de grace was dealt between 3 and 16 December 1971 through a lightning operational-level military campaign to create a new nation. It was the culmination of nine years of military reforms in thought, leadership, training and equipment after the catastrophic defeat in the 1962 War against China. The military machine had been tested in the 1965 War and lessons learnt and imbibed. Military reforms were supported by an optimum defence budget, which was 3-4 per cent of the GDP from 1962 to 1971, equalled only once more from 1980 to 1990 when the last major defence reforms took place. It is ironic that as a grateful

nation that celebrated the Swarnim Vijay Varsh to commemorate 50 years of the 1971 War, we do not have an official military history based on authentic government and military documents. An "unofficial history" was published in 2014 by Dr S.N. Prasad and U.P. Thapliyal, retired officials of the history division of the Ministry of Defence. This history is based only on limited declassified documents and remains below par, as it is merely a chronological record of events and not their critical analysis in terms of the theory of war. There have been a fair number of books written by military historians, veterans and retired officials. Most are based on secondary sources and lack the authenticity of primary sources in the form of official documents. These books create more controversies than they settle. A recent book, 'Bangladesh Liberation War: The Definitive Story' by Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, a former Ambassador

to China and the European Union, has rekindled these controversies. Earlier, books by Lt Gen JFR Jacob (Chief of Staff Eastern Command in 1971) - 'Surrender at Dacca: Birth of a Nation' - and Srinath Raghavan's '1971: A global history of the creation of Bangladesh', created similar controversies. I had written earlier in detail about our shoddy track record in writing authentic military history. In this column, I analyse some of the controversies of the 1971 War. Timing of the war The 1971 Bangladesh War is India's strategic and military success story. It was a collective effort of the nation. Obviously, the political and military hierarchy gets the lion's share of the credit, but the decisive victory could not have been possible without the brilliance and hard work of the subordinates. Most of the controversies centre around the share of credit for the victory. The monsoon season in Bangladesh is from June to mid-October. The campaigning

season, thus, is from November to June. In the two month period between 26 March and 31 May 1971, theoretically, a military campaign was possible, provided all political and military preparations had been done and world opinion shaped. But this was not practical. The government needed time to shape the opinion of a Cold War international order wedded to the Westphalian model of nation-states. The Chinese threat and American support for Pakistan had to be counterbalanced. The military had to make preparations for a three-front war - West and East Pakistan, and China. Troops had to be moved and equipment deficiencies made up. These factors ruled out a summer campaign. Hence, early intervention was an emotion divorced from reality. This was clear to both the government and the military. Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw was the Chief of the Army Staff and Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee in 1971. In his typical

flamboyant style, he used to colourfully narrate how he single-handedly dissuaded Prime Minister Indira Gandhi from ordering immediate intervention in Bangladesh. While she was alive, he used to do this only in military forums with the safety of Chatham House Rules and after her death, did so in public forums too. His language became progressively more colourful. Given his larger-than-life image, the Field Marshal's words have become part of the nation's lore. But this lore must not be misconstrued as authentic military history. I have no doubt that the Field Marshal must have given forthright advice to the Prime Minister in person and in the then-avatar of the Cabinet Committee on Security. He would have put across the pros and cons, and concluded that no military campaign could be launched before November. His language would have been respectful and as per protocol.



We can prevail over Omicron.

We just need to use the tools we have

Last week, we learned from virus sequencing and rapid reporting by South African scientists that there is a new variant with 50 mutations compared with the original Wuhan strain. It quickly was named Omicron and categorized as a variant of concern by the World Health Organization, a designation that has been used for only four previous variants (Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta) among thousands of variants noted in the evolution of the Sars-CoV-2 virus.

We do know a few things about Omicron, namely its sequence and the site of its abundant mutations, far more than previous variants of concern, and some at spots in the virus RNA that may substantially affect transmission or impair our immune system (or vaccine-induced immunity) to respond. That is all theoretical, since there have been other mutation-laden variants in the past that were picked up but turned out to be void of any clinical consequence.

We also can deduce that Omicron must have originated from an immunocompromised host to have such an extensive number of mutations (from an initial Alpha variant lineage) to rapidly evolve in the person's body. That phenomenon has been demonstrated with multiple previous cases whereby there are unrestrained virus mutations inside a person's body due to an inadequate immune system defense. And the individual's chronic infection subsequently transmits to other people.

The other thing we know is that there has been an outbreak in the Gauteng province in South Africa and, after

Omicron was flagged for the rest of the world, more than 15 countries have confirmed new cases, predominantly from travelers but now multiple community transmissions have been documented.

To date, the pattern of hospitalizations in Gauteng is the same as with the prior waves, no worse or better. It is likely that Omicron has been around for months, but only recently was there the first sign of a sudden rise in one place. Fortunately, it was diagnosed quickly, and the rest of the world was forewarned, far better than for the previous variants of concern.

It remains unclear whether the proliferation of cases is related to high transmission, like Delta, or immune evasion, like Beta. Most likely because of the extensive mutations or what is known as "antigen drift", it will behave more like Beta, with some immune evasion properties. The extent of that will be sorted out in the next couple of weeks by lab studies that look at the virus in culture and sera from people who are vaccinated to see how their neutralizing antibodies fare against Omicron.

But no matter the results of these lab studies and what tracking of new cases around the world show, we have all the tools to prevail over Omicron. That includes mitigation measures like masks, especially medical grade ones, physical distancing, ventilation and air filtration. We have remarkably potent vaccines with 95% efficacy against symptomatic infections, hospitalizations and deaths. And even though these mRNA vaccines have some waning of effectiveness over five

to six months, their efficacy is fully restored to 95% with a third shot (booster).

Moreover, that third shot induces remarkably high neutralizing antibodies, much higher than the second vaccine dose, and much broader activity against variants. Furthermore, the T-cell response to vaccines are far less variant sensitive than neutralizing antibodies, which puts us in good stead for fully vaccinated people to reduce the risk of severe disease.

Beyond mitigation and vaccination, we soon will have potent pills, when taken early in the first few days of a Covid infection, one with about 90% efficacy, to prevent hospitalizations and deaths. The protective benefit of pills such as Paxlovid is not expected to be affected by Omicron in any substantive way.

There are many fully validated rapid antigen tests that should be made freely available as in many other countries to help diagnose infectiousness in people with or without symptoms, which can promote early use of treatments, such as anti-Covid pills. Accordingly, we are better positioned to defend against Omicron than we would have been earlier in the pandemic. We are also probably on the cusp of developing pan-sarbecovirus vaccines, which may protect against all future variants, and just needs a global prioritized, coordinated and funded effort to accelerate the process. Yet the paramount thing holding us back is human behavior: the unwillingness and resistance to use all these tools.

Madagascar food crisis caused more by poverty, natural weather than climate change: Study



Poverty, poor infrastructure and natural weather variability are bigger contributors to Madagascar's food crisis than climate change, according to a study released on Thursday by international research collective World Weather Attribution.

But the crisis still highlights vulnerabilities that will only worsen as global temperatures continue to rise, scientists for the organization said.

Southern Madagascar's worst drought in decades has devastated crops and pushed the region to the brink of famine. More than a million people in the African island nation require emergency food aid, with the U.N. World Food Programme reporting "pockets of famine" already appearing in the region. Half a million children are on the verge of becoming acutely malnourished, and 110,000 severely so, the agency says, causing developmental delays, disease and death.

In October, the United Nations said the drought and food shortage in Madagascar could become the world's first "climate change famine," with a recent U.N. climate report showing increased aridity in Madagascar.

The new study determined that although climate change may have slightly increased the likelihood of the current low rainfall levels, the recent dry weather is still within expected natural variability. Researchers estimated a drought this severe has a 1 in 135 chance of happening in the region each year under today's climate.

"The drought strongly shows what a very narrow range of possible weather we are actually adapted to," said study co-author Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at the University of Oxford and co-leader of World Weather Attribution.

"We are not even adapted to the present day. And so it (climate change) will only make things more difficult for these regions in the world," she said.

The paper has not yet been submitted for peer review, but uses peer-reviewed rapid attribution methods to produce findings quickly.

MORE DROUGHTS PROJECTED

Madagascar has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, with more than 90% of the population in the affected southern Grand Sud region living below the poverty line, according to Amnesty International. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the problem, causing a devastating effect on household incomes and access to food, the organization said. Though Thursday's study found climate change played no more than a small role in the current drought, Madagascar is projected to experience increased droughts and more severe cyclones as global warming worsens, according to an August report by the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Coal shortage situation improves as India's power demand growth eases in November

India's electricity demand grew 2.2% in November, slower than the 4.1% increase in October, a Reuters analysis of government data showed, helping the energy-hungry nation tide over a crippling coal shortage that caused widespread power cuts.

Surging power demand and high global prices in October left utilities scrambling for coal, India's dominant fuel for power generation, despite record supplies from state-run Coal India, which has a near-monopoly of production.

Average daily coal-fired power



generation in November was down 2.8% from October, an analysis of load dispatch data from federal grid regulator Power System Operation Corporation

Ltd (POSOCO) showed.

The number of plants having supply agreements with Coal India with inventories of three days or less fell to 31, as of Nov.

29, latest data from the federal power ministry shows, compared with 44 out of the 135 plants in October.

The average coal inventory held by power plants would last nine days, higher than six days on Oct. 31, but still lower than the average of 12 days three months ago.

Dependence on coal for electricity generation rose to 75.2% in November, compared with 70.6% in October, though the total electricity production from coal fell.

India's renewable output typically slows in the first and last quarters every year due to lower generation from sources such as hydro, solar and wind, and increasing dependence on coal.

The rise in power demand last month was driven by growth in electricity consumption in India's most industrialised state Maharashtra.

Other industrialised states such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu registered a decline in power use, while Gujarat's consumption growth was largely flat.

GST collections in November at Rs 1.31 lakh crore, second highest since rollout



Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections jumped to over Rs 1.31 lakh crore in November, the second highest since its implementation in July 2017, in line with the trend in economic recovery, the finance ministry said on Wednesday.

"The gross GST revenue collected in the month of November 2021 is Rs 1,31,526 crore of which CGST is Rs 23,978 crore, SGST is Rs 31,127 crore, IGST is Rs 66,815 crore (including Rs 32,165 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess is Rs 9,606 crore (including Rs 653 crore collected on import of goods)," the ministry said in a statement.

CGST refers to Central Goods and Services Tax, SGST (State Goods and Service Tax) and IGST (Integrated Goods and Services Tax). The GST revenues for the month of November 2021, are 25 per cent higher than November 2020, and 27 per cent higher over November 2019.

"The GST revenues for November 2021 have been the second highest ever since introduction of GST, second only to that in April 2021, which related to year-end revenues and higher than last month's collection, which also included the impact of returns required to be filed quarterly.



Indian Railways' revenue remains off track for 2nd straight financial year

Revenue generated by the Indian Railways remained weak for the second consecutive year due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the passenger ticket sales segment, the railways lost revenue worth Rs 35,421 crore in 2020-21, compared to 2019-20. After eight months of FY22, the revenue remained Rs 10,000 crore short of the halfway mark in comparison to the pre-pandemic financial year. Reduced train travel and social distancing norms have impacted other income avenues of the railways as well. The railways earned Rs 166.87 crore from the sale of platform tickets in 2019-20. However, in 2020-21, the platform ticket sales dropped steeply to just Rs 15.48 crore.

Having said that, the situation has improved in the current financial year as earnings from platform ticket sales up to September

2021 increased to Rs 60.79 crore. But top rail ministry officials said the pre-pandemic level would be difficult to reach.

Curtailed passenger rail operations during the first two waves of Covid-19 pandemic, however, helped railways reduce the revenue foregone due to concessions on passenger fares to various categories of passengers during the financial year.

The railways took a hit of Rs 2,059 crore due to concessions in 2019-20. However, in 2020-21, the subsidy cost of passenger tickets was only Rs 38 crore.

The railways earned Rs 50,669.09 crore from passenger ticket sales in 2019-20, Rs 15,248.49 crore in 2020-21, and Rs 15,434.18 crore as of September. The Railways stopped passenger services in March last year due to the outbreak of the pandemic as the government wanted to avoid the spread of Covid-19. Rail services

have resumed gradually from May 2020 onwards in a phased manner. Most of the resumed trains were operated as 'special trains' and to recover the high cost associated with low volumes, passenger ticket fares were higher than regular trains. All concessions were suspended later. It may be noted that the information was shared by the government in Lok Sabha in reply to a question.

The Ministry of Railways delegated powers to Zonal Railways in March 2015 to increase the rate of platform tickets beyond Rs 10 to avoid overcrowding. Train passenger fares in India are highly subsidised and revenue generated from them is less than the operating cost. This is why the Indian Railways has been exploring avenues for additional revenue, including revision of various charges.



In 5 years, world's 95% electricity to come from clean sources, India's capacity to jump by 86%: IEA

The IEA report indicated that renewable energy could account for nearly 95 per cent of the increase in power capacity in the world in the next five years.

A new report from the International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts that India is expected to add 121 gigawatts (GW) of electricity to its current capacity from clean energy sources by 2026. The agency predicted an 86 per cent jump from its current capacity of 154.9 GW. The report indicated that renewable energy could account for nearly 95 per cent of the increase in power capacity in the world in the next five years.

The capacity to generate electricity from solar, wind and other renewable technologies is on course to accelerate over the coming years, with 2021 expected to set a new all-time record for new installations, the report said, taking into account a 44 per cent drop in renewable installations in 2020 in India due to Covid-19 led lockdown and supply chain disruptions.

"The growth of renewables in India is outstanding, supporting the government's newly announced goal of reaching 500 GW of renewable power capacity by 2030 and highlighting India's broader potential to accelerate its clean energy transition," IEA

Executive Director Fatih Birol said in a statement.

The report forecasted a jump of 16 per cent in power production from wind and hydropower while solar remains the powerhouse of growth in renewable electricity, with its capacity additions forecast to increase by 17 per cent in 2021 to a new record of almost 160 GW.

The report also highlighted the critical challenge facing the distribution companies (DISCOMs) in India, stating, "The government's financial aid in 2020 put overdue payments on a downward trend in Q1 2021, improving the companies' finances. Following the second wave of restrictions, their total overdue payments started to rise again in Q2 2021. As a result, they are postponing the finalisation of wind and solar PV PPAs while seeking to renegotiate downwards the contract prices already awarded in competitive tenders." During the recently concluded COP26 Summit in Glasgow, India had announced that it will fulfil 50 per cent of its energy requirement through renewable energy by

2030, bringing its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW in the same time period and bringing its economy's carbon intensity down to 45 per cent.

The report also indicated that if the government accelerates clean energy production, it could put the country firmly on the pathway towards achieving the 2030 targets.

"Governments can further accelerate the growth of renewables by addressing key barriers, such as permitting and grid integration challenges, social acceptance issues, inconsistent policy approaches, and insufficient remuneration. High financing costs in the developing world are also a major obstacle," the report noted.

The report further predicted that global renewable power capacity this year will rise to a second consecutive all-time high in 2021. In its annual Renewables Market Report, the Paris-based energy watchdog said that renewable electricity capacity by 2026 will equal the current total global power capacity of fossil fuels and nuclear energy combined.

Indian astronomer reveals why stars are rich in Lithium



Scientists from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) have discovered clues to the mystery behind the high abundance of Lithium in some evolved stars. The element is found in trace amounts on Earth.

The presence of Lithium in evolved stars has always been a mystery for scientists as models predicted that the element should have been destroyed in the hot plasma of the star. However, Deepak from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) Bangalore and Professor Emeritus David L. Lambert from the University of Texas at Austin has confirmed that the production of lithium is related to the burning of helium in the core of these stars.

The researchers in a study published in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society state that all the lithium-rich stars are burning helium in their core.

"About four decades ago, a red giant with extraordinarily high lithium abundance at its surface was discovered. In all other respects, this red giant was of normal composition. Early follow-up investigation of lithium among red giants showed that just about one per cent of sun-like red giants had a lithium-enriched surface. The questions on processes that led to a 100-fold or so increase in the lithium abundance in this exceptional red giant and reason behind this selective enrichment of lithium in the one per cent of red giants intrigued us," Deepak explains. The two researchers drew data from a large survey of the composition of red giants undertaken by the Australian Astrophysical Observatory. The survey provided a collection of about 5,00,000 stars with well-determined physical and chemical properties, including lithium abundances.

They then separated the stars into different mass and metallicity ranges and then searched for lithium-rich giants among these groups. "This exercise, done for the first time on such a large scale and across a wide range of mass and metallicity, reveals the rare presence of lithium-rich giants in all the Sun-like low-mass stars," the Ministry of Science & Technology said in a statement.

The comparison then confirmed that all the lithium-rich stars are burning helium in their core.

Meanwhile, to assess the origin of these lithium-rich stars, researchers combined information about oscillations in stars' interiors with their lithium abundance. They derived on the theory of a sequence of nuclear reactions involving a collision between the two stable helium isotopes which led to a stable lithium isotope.

They collected asteroseismic data (information about oscillations in stars' interiors) for giant stars with measured lithium abundances.

Where did water come from on Earth?

Evidence points to the Sun



Analysis of an ancient asteroid collected by Japan's Hayabusa mission in 2010, suggest that water was brought to Earth in extraterrestrial dust grains as the planet formed.

Water is the most precious resource that is needed to sustain life on Earth, but where did it come from? Scientists may have solved the mystery of the origin of Earth's water and evidence points to the Sun.

Researchers from the UK, Australia and America, who analysed an ancient asteroid collected by Japan's Hayabusa mission in 2010, suggest that water was brought to Earth in extraterrestrial dust grains as the planet formed. This water in the grains was produced when charged particles from the Sun known as solar wind altered the chemical composition of the grains to produce water molecules.

Scientists call this process space weathering.

In the study published in the journal Nature Astronomy, scientists state "the composition of water in Earth's oceans is challenging to recreate using a plausible mixture of known extraterrestrial sources such as asteroids. The Sun's solar wind could provide an answer."

Planetary scientists have long been

puzzled over the ancient source of Earth's oceans with theories suggesting a type of water-carrying asteroid could have brought it to the planet in the final stages of its formation 4.6 billion years ago. Researchers believe that while some of Earth's water must have come from C-type meteorites, the forming Earth must have received water from at least one more isotopically-light source which originated somewhere else in the Solar System.

The new findings could answer the questions surrounding how and when the water reached Earth and ended up covering 70 per cent surface of the planet - far more than any other rocky planet in our Solar System. Scientists hope that it could also help future space missions find sources of water on airless worlds.

An international team of scientists led by the University of Glasgow conducted an atom probe tomography to scrutinise samples from a different type of space rock known as an S-type asteroid, which orbits closer to the sun than C-types. The samples were from the Itokawa asteroid, and analysis showed the presence of water molecules when scientists measured the atomic structure of the grains one atom at a time.

"The solar winds are streams of mostly hydrogen and helium ions which flow constantly from the Sun out into space. When those hydrogen ions hit an airless surface like an asteroid or a space-borne dust particle, they penetrate a few tens of nanometres below the surface, where they can affect the chemical composition of the rock. Over time, the space weathering effect of the hydrogen ions can eject enough oxygen atoms from materials in the rock to create H₂O water trapped within minerals on the asteroid," Dr Luke Daly, lead author of the study, said in a statement.

Scientists say that the early solar system was a very dusty place, providing a great deal of opportunity for water to be produced under the surface of space-borne dust particles. This water-rich dust, the researchers suggest, would have rained down onto the early Earth alongside C-type asteroids as part of the delivery of Earth's oceans.

"Crucially, this solar wind-derived water produced by the early solar system is isotopically light. That strongly suggests that fine-grained dust, buffeted by the solar wind and drawn into the forming Earth billions of years ago, could be the source of the missing reservoir of the planet's water," Dr Daly added.

Scientists to map underground fungal networks, determine their role in tackling climate change



Scientists from the United States and Europe announced plans Tuesday to create the biggest map of underground fungal networks, arguing they are an important but overlooked piece in the puzzle of how to tackle climate change.

By working with local communities around the world the researchers said they will collect 10,000 DNA samples to determine how the vast networks that fungi create in the soil are changing as a result of human activity - including global warming. "Fungi are invisible ecosystem engineers, and their loss has gone largely unnoticed by the public," said Toby Kiers, a professor of evolutionary biology at Amsterdam's Free University and co-founder of the non-profit Society for the Protection of Underground Networks that's spearheading the effort.

"New research and climate models are providing irrefutable evidence that the Earth's survival is linked to the underground," she said.

Experts agree that tracking how fungal networks, also known as mycelia, are affected by climate change is important for protecting them - and ensure they can contribute to nature's own mechanisms for removing carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, from the air.

Fungi can do this by providing nutrients that allow plants to grow faster, for example, or by storing carbon in the trillions of miles of root-like mass they themselves weave underground.

But Karina Engelbrecht Clemmensen, a fungal expert at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences not involved in the project, caution that while having better fungi maps would be useful for future conservation efforts, it was unclear how the researchers planned to go about that vast challenge. "This is not trivial on a global scale," she said.

Singapore tests out 'smart bandage' to monitor wounds via app



A research team at the National University of Singapore has created a wearable sensor attached to a transparent bandage to track progress in healing.

Researchers in Singapore have developed a smart bandage to enable patients to have chronic wounds monitored remotely via an app on a mobile device, potentially saving them visits to the doctor.

A research team at the National University of Singapore has created a wearable sensor attached to a transparent bandage to track progress in healing, using information like temperature, bacteria type, and levels of pH and inflammation.

"Traditionally, when someone has a wound or ulcer, if it's infected, the only way to examine it is through looking at the wound itself, through visual inspection," said Chwee Teck Lim, lead researcher at the university's department of biomedical engineering. "If the clinician wants to have further information then they will obtain the wound fluid and send to the lab for further testing," he said. "So what we're trying to do is use our smart bandage to cut the number of hours or days to just a few minutes." The "VeCare" technology will enable patients to convalesce more at home and visit a doctor only if necessary.

Omicron vs Delta: How the two Covid-19 variants are different from each other

Scientists across the world are racing to understand the Omicron variant of Covid-19 that has led to major panic with the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring it a Variant of Concern. While the Omicron variant is speculated to be more dangerous than others, it was the Delta variant that wreaked havoc in several parts of the world, including India, earlier this year.

The WHO said it is coordinating with several researchers worldwide to better understand how the new variant will impact the Covid-19 pandemic, with new findings expected within "days and weeks." Scientists are closely monitoring whether cases caused by the Omicron variant reported on public databases start to supplant those caused by Delta.

But how different is the Omicron variant when compared to the Delta variant? Read on, as we compare the two mutations that have emerged as a global cause of concern.

DELTA VS OMICRON: ORIGIN OF THE VARIANT

The Omicron variant was first detected in Botswana (on November 11) and three days later in South Africa, which has since then reported an increasing number



of cases caused by the new Covid-19 variant. Meanwhile, the Delta variant was first identified in India in December 2020 as it swept rapidly through the country before reaching the United Kingdom and the United States. According to Yale Medicine, the Delta variant is currently the predominant SARS CoV-2 variant,

accounting for more than 99 per cent of Covid-19 cases.

DELTA VS OMICRON: DIFFERENCE IN MUTATIONS

Gene sequencing of the Omicron variant showed that it had more mutations than the Delta variant of Covid-19. Researchers found 43 aa mutations in the spike proteins of the Omicron variant as compared to 18 found in Delta. According to Claudia Alteri,

professor of clinical microbiology at Milan State University and a researcher at Bambino Gesù, the high number of mutations does not automatically mean that these variations are more dangerous, but simply that the virus has further adapted to the human species by generating another variant.

DELTA VS OMICRON: VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

A Lancet study released today showed that the Covishield vaccine was effective in fighting the deadly Delta variant during its surge in India and led to the development of antibodies. Globally, vaccines have been able to counter Delta, however the same cannot be said about the Omicron variant yet. Scientists speculate that Omicron could render vaccines less effective as it shares several key mutations with two previous variants, Beta and Gamma, that made them less vulnerable to vaccines. However, this is still being researched.

Omicron has 26 unique mutations, many of them in regions targeted by vaccine antibodies. "So the question, really, is how transmissible Omicron is relative to Delta. That's the major, major, major thing that we need to know," John Moore, a professor of microbiology and immunology at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York told Reuters.

ADVERTISEMENT

WARNING: MAY CONTAIN LEAD

Sindoor can contain lead, which can cause learning and behavior problems in children, miscarriage in pregnant women, and infertility.

- Wash your hands after handling.
- Keep away from children.
- If you use sindoor, ask your doctor for a blood lead test.

Call 311 or visit nyc.gov/leadfree for more information.



Bill de Blasio
Mayor
Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc
Commissioner

Kriti Sanon apologises after man accuses her of 'ruining his life', says he's been bullied '1000 times' for this reason

Kriti Sanon had a good laugh over a fan's tweet, which said that the song Param Sundari from her film Mimi apparently 'ruined' his life.

Fan clubs dedicated to Kriti shared the conversation she had with the fan a few days ago on Twitter. The Twitter user

named 'Param Chhaya' narrated the hilarious story of his name being

equated with Param Sundari to the Mimi actor and said: "As

a kid, nothing ever bothered me in school. I wasn't angry on anyone who teased my last name or my name itself. Since the time

Kriti Sanon's Param Sundari dropped, I have been bullied by the song at least 1,000 times already. Why did you do this, Kriti? Why ruin my life?" He added a few laughing-out-loud emojis.

In response, Kriti posted a bunch of laughing emoticons and apologised on a lighter note: "Oops! Sorry!" she tweeted. The song Param Sundari turned out to be a huge hit when it released earlier this year. The song is sung by Shreya Ghoshal. Oscar winning music composer AR Rahman composed the film's soundtrack. Directed by Laxman Utekar, Mimi cast Kriti as a surrogate mother navigating her way through pregnancy. Kriti has an interesting list of films lined-up for release. She co-stars with Akshay Kumar in

Bachchan Pandey, while in Adipurush, she works with Prabhas. In Bhediya, Kriti will be seen with Varun Dhawan, in action film Ganpath, her co-star is Tiger Shroff. Kriti will also be seen in Shehzada, which stars Kartik Aaryan.

Also read: KBC 13: Kriti Sanon blushes as Amitabh Bachchan says he has been complimenting her for years, watch - Kriti is best known for her performances in films such as Bareilly Ki Barfi, Raabta, Stree, Housefull 4, among others. In an October episode of Kaun Banega Crorepati 13, Amitabh Bachchan made Kriti blush with a unique way of praising her: "...I have been complimenting you for years, what about that?" Amitabh Bachchan had said on the show.

Kajol reveals how Ajay Devgn's mother reacted when her friends asked 'doesn't she call you mummy?'

Kajol praised Ajay Devgn's mother, Veena Devgan, for giving her the time and space to grow their bond organically. The actor was asked how she went from calling her mother-in-law 'aunty' to 'mummy ji' overnight, and she said that she did not. Speaking to Twinkle Khanna in an interview for Tweak India, Kajol said Veena would 'very proudly' reply when her friends questioned her about the actor not calling her 'mummy' or 'maa'. Kajol said that she really respects

Veena for it. "Fortunately for me, my mother-in-law has given me the time and space. I know for a fact that we used to sit and her friends would come over. Her friends would be like, 'Arre, woh tumhe mummy nahi bulati hai? Maa nahi bulati hai (Doesn't she call you mummy or mother)?'

And my mother-in-law would turn around very proudly and say that, 'Woh jab maa bolegi na, dil se niklega, dimaag se nahi niklega (When she calls me mother, it would be from the heart and not because she has to)'," she said. "I was

so heartened and touched that she is giving me that time to grow into whoever I am supposed to be, that she is giving me that space. I really respect her for that, my respect for her has deepened after that," she added. Kajol shares

a close relationship with Ajay's mother. On her birthday in February, the actor shared a sweet Instagram post for her. "Happy birthday to my partner in crime and crab for the last 22 years. Aapki hansi kabhi kam na ho (May you always continue to smile). #motherbylaw #mominspirit," she wrote.



Kangana Ranaut crowns herself India's 'most powerful woman' after plea filed in SC seeks censorship of her future posts

Kangana Ranaut declared herself the 'most powerful woman' in India after a plea was filed in the Supreme Court seeking to censor her future posts on social media. She is currently at the centre of a controversy for her recent comments on 'Khalistani terrorists', which the Sikh community has objected to.

Taking to Instagram Stories, Kangana shared a news report on a plea seeking censorship of her future social media posts to maintain law and order. "Ha ha ha most powerful woman in this

country," she wrote along with it. She added a crown emoji as well. Advocate Charanjeet Singh Chanderpal, in his plea, also sought the transfer of all FIRs filed against Kangana to the Khar police station in Mumbai. He said that the chargesheet should be filed within six months along with an expedited trial within two years.

"The remarks are not only outrageous and blasphemous but also intend to cause riots, hurt religious sentiments, they are defamatory as well as portray Sikhs in a totally anti-national manner.

It also justifies the innocent killing of Sikhs. The remarks are totally against the unity of our country and the actress deserves a serious punishment in law. They cannot be brushed aside or excused," the plea read. Kangana's social media posts must be amended, deleted, modified or censored to maintain law and order, the plea said. It also mentioned her 'irresponsible' comments on the recent farmers' protest and her alleged portrayal of Sikh farmers as separatist 'Khalistanis'.





Vicky Kaushal, Katrina Kaif to stay in exclusive royal suites worth 7lac per night

The wedding preparations for Bollywood megastars, Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif, are underway and media reports claim that these two are leaving no stone unturned to make this the most memorable event of their lives.

It has been confirmed by various outlets that the wedding is taking place at Six Senses Fort Barwara, of Sawai Madhopur, in Rajasthan between December 7-9. Now, according to local Jaipur news outlets, the couple has booked exclusive royal suites for their wedding day that are priced at a whopping 7 lac per night.

Groom Vicky Kaushal is reportedly staying

at Mansingh Suite and bride Katrina Kaif will be putting up in the Rani Rajkumari suite.

These opulent suites have been booked by the couple from December 6 to 11, meaning they will be shelling out a total of 42 lacs for five nights.

Vicky, Katrina and their respective families are expected to reach Jaipur by December 6, and the sangeet ceremony will take place on December 7. The Mehendi ceremony will take place on December 8, followed by a grand reception after tying the knot in traditional Hindu ceremony on December 9, as per reports.

It has also been reported that around 400 cones of Sojat Mehendi from Pali have been sourced by the couple's team. It is believed that 20 kgs of Mehendi will be used at the wedding and Katrina Kaif will be applying a special kind of Mehendi that costs 1lac, as per reports. A total of six different vendors have been hired for the wedding. According to reports, Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal are going to wear ace Indian designer Sabyasachi, who is known for his bridal collections. Katrina Kaif will also be wearing designers Abu Jani (for Mehendi), Manish Malhotra (for Sangeet) and global brand Gucci (for reception).

Salman Khan reaches Chandigarh for Antim The Final Truth screening



Fans could not control their excitement after Salman Khan and Aayush Sharma's Antim: The Final Truth saw a theatrical release. Sallu fans had been waiting eagerly to see the star on the big screen. Although theatres have just opened during the novel coronavirus pandemic, audiences are thronging cinema halls to catch Salman in action. While the film has received a positive response from the audience and has gathered Rs 17 crore over the weekends, the promotions of the film are still in full swing.

Salman Khan was recently spotted promoting the film in Chandigarh, where he reportedly will be attending a fans screening at the Elante Mall.

SALMAN KHAN GREETES FANS IN CHANDIGARH

Salman Khan's Antim is making waves at the box office. The actor recently took to his social media and shared videos all the way from Chandigarh.

Priyanka Chopra roots for Miss India Manasa Varanasi, wishes her 'lots of love' for Miss World

Actor Priyanka Chopra on Thursday rooted for Miss India Manasa Varanasi, who will represent the country at the Miss World 2021 pageant. Taking to Instagram Stories, Priyanka shared a picture of Manasa and also a message for her. In her message on Instagram, Priyanka Chopra wrote, "Lots of love and luck to @manasa5varanasi for the 70th Miss World competition." Priyanka also added

a link to Manasa's Facebook page for people to vote for her.

In the picture, Manasa wore a pink dress and tied her hair up in a bun. A message read on the photo, "Let's all support Manasa Varanasi at the

70 Miss World competition!"

Priyanka shared a picture and also a message for Manasa. The Miss World pageant will be held on December 16 this year in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Manasa Varanasi is a model and engineer. Earlier this year, she was crowned as Femina Miss India World 2020.

Priyanka, too, had won the Miss World crown in 2000 and went on to feature in films. She debuted with the Tamil

film Thamizhan in 2002 and has starred in many films so far. Priyanka's movies include Andaz, Mujhse Shaadi Karogi, Krrish and Don, Dostana, Barfi!, Mary Kom, Bajirao Mastani and The Sky Is Pink among many others.



The trailer for the year's most-awaited Indian film has arrived with Ranveer Singh's 83 telling the incredible true story of the underdogs who pulled off the unthinkable. Reliance Entertainment will release this epic event movie in cinemas across North America this holiday season on December 24th. On 25th of June 1983, the Lord's Cricket Ground witnessed one of the biggest underdog stories in the history of sports. Fourteen inspired men fought against all odds and orchestrated India's greatest sporting triumph by beating the twice over World Champions West Indies! This victory put India on the map again and provided the platform to make India the greatest cricketing nation in the world today. Armed with self-belief and conviction, one man guided the team to a historic victory.