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## Who is happy and who is sad with Union Budget 2022-23?



(SAI Bureau) Introduction of Digital Rupee, education, urban revamp initiative, and special programme to address mental health issues stood out in the Union Budget 2022-23, said: Dikshu Kureja,

infrastructure expert and urban planner, told India Today, "The budget, anchored on a vision for India at 100 years, has created a blueprint for sustainable development for India's modernisation and transformation." "The emphasis on urban planning as a medium for examining the development of our cities is a very welcome development. As India's urban population continues to grow and is expected to account for half of the country's total population by 2047, a significant shift toward urbanisation is required to prevent our cities from collapsing," he said.

(Contd on page 31)

## Report on London police highlights culture of misogyny and racism



(SAI Bureau) London police officers routinely made jokes about rape and exchanged racist messages, according to a report from England's official police watchdog that detailed a pattern of misogyny and bullying in the force, the latest blow to an embattled service that has faced intense

scrutiny in recent months. The findings reflected a troubling culture within the London Metropolitan Police Service, according to the report released Tuesday by the Independent Office for Police Conduct, the police watchdog, which made more than a dozen recommendations to tackle the problem.

(Contd on page 32)

## Trump's words and deeds, reveal depths of his drive to retain power



(SAI Bureau) A series of new remarks by Donald Trump about the aftermath of the 2020 election and new disclosures about his actions in trying to forestall its result - including discussing the use of the national security apparatus to seize voting machines - have stripped away any pretense that the events of January 6, 2021, were anything but the culmination of the former president's single-minded pursuit of retaining power.

(Contd on page 34)

## As relations deteriorate with the West, Putin and Xi are getting closer



(SAI Bureau) When Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomes leaders from around the world for the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics on Friday, it will be his first time meeting foreign counterparts face-to-face in more than 400 days. And at the top of his guest list is Russia's Vladimir Putin. A summit between the two leaders, expected to take place on the day of the Opening Ceremony, comes at a

pivotal moment for both sides, as the massing of Russian troops at the border with Ukraine fuels fears of an imminent invasion -- an event that would be sure to overshadow China's Olympic moment. The face-to-face will also add a new milestone in what has become an increasingly close partnership between Beijing and Moscow, as relations with the West deteriorate for both.

(Contd on page 35)

## SpaceX successfully launches Italian satellite



(SAI Bureau) SpaceX Falcon-9 two-stage rocket topped with Italian Cosmo-SkyMed satellite successfully lifted off on Monday at 6:11 pm EST (Tuesday at 4:41 am as per IST.) The launch took place from Florida's Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. The launch was to initially take place on January 27. But it was postponed due to bad weather. Anderson said.

(Contd on page 33)



# Insurance

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## Indian-Origin US Man Jailed For 15 Months For Sexually Abusing Teen



**News Agencies** A 41-year-old Indian-origin man in the US has been sentenced to 15 months in prison for sexually abusing a minor boy seated next to him on an airplane in 2019, according to the Justice Department.

District Judge Nancy E. Brasel sentenced Neeraj Chopra, who is from Minneapolis, for engaging in sexual contact on an airplane during a flight from Boston to Minneapolis, according to a statement by the US Department of

**Justice on Friday.**

Chopra was convicted of the crime in July last year following a three-day trial. According to court documents, Chopra knowingly engaged in abusive sexual contact with a 16-year-old victim who was seated next to him aboard a Jet Blue flight from Boston to Minneapolis in April 2019. During the flight, Chopra retrieved a blanket from his backpack and draped it over his lap, with a portion of the blanket also covering the victim's right leg.

## A Gujarat Village, A Family That Froze To Death And The American Dream

(News Agencies) Lack of quality job opportunities is driving residents of this village in Gujarat to pursue their dream of migrating to the US and other developed countries for a better future and that urge is so strong that some of them do not mind taking the illegal route and endangering their lives in pursuit of their goal.

Dingucha village in Gandhinagar district is under international spotlight after a family of four - a couple and their two children - froze to death in Canada while allegedly attempting to cross over illegally to the US. It is believed the family belonged from this village though there has been no confirmation of this yet.

A large number of people from Dingucha are settled abroad, mainly in the US, Canada and Australia and they have generously donated money for construction of the panchayat

building, a school, temple, health centre and a community hall, among others, in the village, said local residents.

Many more keep looking for an opportunity to move abroad in

proficiency test required for admission to universities in these countries.

A few other hoardings about "study in Canada and US" in the village, located some 40km



search of better opportunities, they said.

On entering Dingucha, one gets the feeling of being in a town and not a village.

A wall painting advertisement right across the panchayat building at Dingucha promises enrolment to a university in the UK or Canada "with or without IELTS" -- the English

from Ahmedabad, target the youth in the village who always dream of moving abroad in search of better opportunities. It is the lack of opportunities here that is driving people to go abroad, said Amrut Patel, a man in his late 60s who had himself migrated to the US 33 years ago before taking his family there.

## Indian Family That Froze To Death Near Canada-US Border Identified

Jagdish Baldevbhai Patel, 39, Vaishaliben Jagdishkumar Patel, 37, Vihangi Jagdishkumar Patel, 11 and Dharmik Jagdishkumar Patel, 3, all from the same family, were found dead near Emerson, Manitoba, approximately 12 metres from the Canada/US border on Jan 19.

(News Agencies) A family of four Indian nationals found frozen to death near the Canada/US border has been identified, with Canadian authorities saying the family had moved around the country for a period of time and was driven to the border by someone in a case being described as that of human smuggling.

Jagdish Baldevbhai Patel, 39, Vaishaliben Jagdishkumar Patel, 37, Vihangi Jagdishkumar Patel, 11 and Dharmik Jagdishkumar Patel, 3, all from the same family, were found dead near Emerson, Manitoba, approximately 12 metres from the Canada/US border on January 19 by Manitoba Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Earlier, authorities had said that the family included an adult male, adult female, teen male and infant. But it has now revealed the victims included a young girl and not a teen male.

Identities of the victims were confirmed by Canadian authorities and autopsies were

completed on January 26.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of Manitoba has confirmed that the cause of death was due to exposure, a statement from Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said on Thursday.

India's High Commission in Ottawa, Canada said in a press release, which also identified the four victims, that the next of family of the victims have been informed.

The Consulate General of India in Toronto is in touch with the family of the victims and is providing all consular support. "The High Commission offers its sincere condolences to the family and friends of the victims," it said.

The press release from the Indian High Commission added that Canadian authorities have also, after medical examination, informed that based on the circumstances, the death of all the persons have been determined to be consistent with exposure to the outdoor

elements. The RCMP confirmed that the Patel family arrived in Toronto on January 12, 2022 and from there they made their way to Emerson around January 18. "There was no abandoned vehicle located on the Canadian side of the border. This indicates that someone drove the family to the border and then left the scene," RCMP said adding that it is looking to determine how they travelled from Toronto to Emerson.

"With what we know so far of their activities in Canada, along with the arrest that occurred in the United States, we believe this to be a case of human smuggling," it said. RCMP said the Patel family moved around Canada for a period of time and "we are looking for anyone that may have had encounters with them." A criminal complaint was filed last week in the US District Court for the District of Minnesota against 47-year old US citizen Steve Shand, who has been charged with



human smuggling.

**Indian Family That Froze To Death Near Canada-US Border Identified**

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of time and was driven to the border by someone in a case being described as that of human smuggling. Jagdish Baldevbhai Patel, 39, Vaishaliben Jagdishkumar Patel, 37, Vihangi Jagdishkumar Patel, 11 and Dharmik Jagdishkumar Patel, 3, all from the same family, were found dead near Emerson, Manitoba, approximately 12 metres from the Canada/US border on January 19 by Manitoba Royal Canadian Mounted Police.



# Former ED Joint Director Rajeshwar Singh gets voluntary retirement, likely to fight UP polls on BJP

(News Agencies) The Centre on Monday approved the request for voluntary retirement (VRS) from the service of Rajeshwar Singh, an IPS officer and former Joint Director with the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The star officer who has worked with the Uttar Pradesh Police and the ED for more than 24 years, is expected to fight the UP assembly elections on BJP's ticket.

"Today (Monday) I am 'hanging up my boots' after 10 years in the service of Uttar Pradesh Police and about 14 years in the Enforcement Directorate in senior positions. While I still have eleven years to superannuate, I was constantly feeling a greater sense of service to the public at large and a complete dedication to the nation at heart, the right medium for propelling which I believe is politics," said Rajeshwar Singh.

On Monday, in a tweet, Rajeshwar Singh thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and ED Director SK Mishra. A native of Uttar Pradesh's Sultanpur, Rajeshwar Singh is an engineer by degree from the Indian School of Mines in Dhanbad. He also has a law and human rights degree. "During my tenure in the Uttar Pradesh Police, it has been my endeavour that women, children and victims get speedy justice. I always tried that their faith in the police remains strong. Be it the arrests and encounters of ruthless criminals, saving innocent children and youth while destroying the then flourishing kidnapping industry in the state, or juxtaposing technology with policing - my aim has been to do something new and good every

day. And for this, I was showered with immense love and respect from people.. I am sincerely grateful for that," added the



statement by Singh. Rajeshwar Singh commenced his deputation to the ED from the year 2007. Since then, he has investigated many scams of national ramification and public significance. This includes the investigations in high profile cases like 2G spectrum allocation scam, AgustaWestland helicopter deal,

Aircel Maxis scam, Amrapali scam, Noida Ponzi scheme scam, Gomti riverfront scam - in which many white-collar criminals were sent to jail. While working with the Enforcement Directorate, under the PMLA Act, he made attachments of movable and immovable properties of more than Rs 4,000 crores.

"I am deeply satisfied that despite various threats and pressure tactics from unscrupulously corrupt leaders, my courage to do my job without bowing down has been appreciated time and again by the Hon'ble Supreme Court and considering my work, in 2014, an order was passed to absorb me into the cadre of Enforcement

Directorate. During government service, I also experienced the ground reality and public aspirations from the elected representatives," the statement by Rajeshwar Singh further said.

Rajeshwar Singh also said that he wants to venture into the domain of politics.

"Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, Hon'ble Home Minister Shri Amit Shah ji, Hon'ble Shri Jagat Prakash Nadda ji and Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Yogi Adityanath ji have taken the resolve to make India a world power and a vishwa guru, I shall also be a participant in this mission and contribute with conviction in this process of nation building. On the path of public service, I shall remain so beholden, till my last breath," the statement further said.

## Tamil Nadu civic polls: DMK names candidates, BJP to go solo

(News Agencies) The ruling DMK on Monday released two lists of candidates for the urban civic polls on February 19 and the main opposition AIADMK continued to announce nominees for the second successive day while the BJP said it would face the elections on its own. The two lists named candidates for the districts of Villupuram, Thanjavur, Thoothukudi, Kanchipuram, Vellore and Tirunelveli. The DMK nominees for the other districts would be announced later.

Indicating friction in seat-sharing with the DMK, Congress MP Jothimani left the local office of the party in Karur District in a huff.

The AIADMK, which released its first list on January 30, came up with two more lists today. The main Opposition party announced nominees for the districts of Salem, Tiruchirappalli, Tiruvannamalai, Madurai, Virudhunagar and Thoothukudi. Also, it named candidates for Theni, Kancheepuram, Chengelpet, Tiruvallur, Cuddalore, Vellore, Krishnagiri, Erode, Thanjavur, Mayiladuthurai, Dindigul, Kanyakumari, Nilgiris, Tenkasi and Ariyalur.

The BJP said it would fight the polls on its own and that its alliance with the AIADMK remained intact. State

BJP president K Annamalai said the AIADMK leadership came forward to allot 10 per cent of seats. The AIADMK, given its compulsions, could not accommodate the saffron party as regards the number of seats and the aspiration of cadres to contest in more segments was conveyed to the national leadership, he told reporters.

Asked if the BJP legislator Nainar Nagendran's recent 'AIADMK does not have spine' remark had a bearing on the Dravidian party's stand on seats, Annamalai apologetically said sometimes remarks turn out to be contradictory.

The expression of regret for Nagendran's remark was immediately conveyed by the MLA and others to the AIADMK leadership and both the parties did not blow up issue, he said. "Everyone has forgotten that."

Top AIADMK leader K Palaniswami told reporters in Salem that his party and BJP would face the polls separately. As regards elections in future, the stand of the AIADMK would be made known at the appropriate time, he said. On Nagendran's remark, Palaniswami said the MLA himself has already expressed regret.

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Donate to organizations, campaigns and initiatives who are committed to racial justice.



Let's come together to take action against racism and fight for racial justice for the Black community. Visit [lovehasnolabels.com/fightforfreedom](https://lovehasnolabels.com/fightforfreedom)







## Farmers warn of resuming agitation if promises not fulfilled by Centre

(Staff Reporter) Farmers will be left with no option but to resume their agitation if the Government of India continues to renege on the promises made to protesting farmers in December 2021, declares Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) in a memorandum addressed to the President on Monday.

The memorandum addressed to President Ram Nath Kovind stated that as the Head of the State, it is the President's constitutional obligation to protect the interests of the Annadata farmers, the largest section of the country, and warned the government against committing this fraud against the

farmers. The country has become self-sufficient in food grains because of the toil of the farmers, the memorandum said. "Due to the tireless efforts of the farmers, despite the lockdown and the economic slowdown, the agricultural production of the country increased continuously. Playing tricks with farmers can be disastrous for the whole country," it added.

The government's alleged renege of the promises made to the farmers of the historic Kisan Andolan of 2020-21 was marked as "Betrayal Day" with demonstrations, marches, and effigy burning in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar,

West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tripura among other states on Monday.

The memorandum added that of the written assurances made by the Government of India in the letter to Samyukta Kisan Morcha dated December 9, 2021, not one of the promises has been fulfilled.

The Morcha warned the BJP government against challenging the farmers' patience, and declared that if the promises were not fulfilled at the earliest, the farmers would be left with no

option but to resume the agitation.

The memorandum, while mentioning SKM's demand for legally guaranteed MSP, accused the government of continuing with its falsehoods related to the current MSP (announcement) regime. "The cost concept being used continued to be A2+Family Labour, ignoring the C2 cost of production, denying farmers their true entitlement," it said.

It is also a false claim that crop diversification has happened with the empty promises of meagre MSPs being declared. However, farmers do know that such diversification is indeed possible if MSP is legally guaranteed as

an entitlement for all crops, including oilseeds, millets and pulses, the memorandum stated. Meanwhile, the SKM took cognizance of the Central Trade Unions' notice changing the day of the nationwide strike from February 23-24 to March 28-29 in the light of ongoing elections. "SKM fully endorses and supports the call from the trade unions and stands in solidarity with the workers and labourers across India, and will conduct a rural strike on 28th and 29th March," it said.

The memorandum also issued the date of a press conference to talk about the new phase of "Mission Uttar Pradesh".

## Rajasthan: Months on, youth arrested for chopping woman's feet to steal anklets to clear debt

(Staff Reporter) Three months after a woman's feet was chopped off and a man reportedly stole her anklets, Jaipur (rural) police have claimed to crack the case. The police have arrested a college student for chopping off a woman's feet and for her silver anklets, hitting her on her head and neck to pay off his debt. The youth was reportedly addicted to playing online card games in Jamwaramgarh and he needed money to clear his debt.

In October last year, the accused, Pawan Kumar, killed a woman identified as Geeta Devi when she had gone to graze cattle. The body of the

deceased woman was found in a pool of blood in Khetpura village India (TOI).

Now, the police have claimed to

purchased stolen jewellery.

Earlier, the family members of

at 15 different places on her body. Upon interrogation, police learnt that the accused was addicted to a mobile game 'Teen Patti'. Police told TOI that the accused lost Rs 20,000 on a mobile game and needed the money to clear his debt. According to police, they resorted to traditional investigation and no CCTV footage was available. Police treated the case as a blind 'murder case' and made different teams to arrest the accused. Yadav told TOI that the police teams quizzed nearly 3,000 people when they stumbled across intelligence input about a suspect. The police team collected information about prisons and also travelled far and wide to solve the case.



and the police suspected murder as the jewellery was missing on her body, reported the Times of

crack the murder case and arrested the prime accused and also nabbed four accused who

the victim accused the police of suppressing the facts and also claimed that she was cut



## Udupi student moves Karnataka High Court to declare wearing hijab as fundamental right

**A writ petition has been filed in the Karnataka High Court by a student from Udupi seeking a declaration that wearing a hijab is a fundamental right.**

(Staff Reporter) Awrit petition Shathabish Shivanna, Arnava Bagalwadi and Abhishek Karnataka High Court by a Muslim girl student from court on behalf of the petitioner.



The plea states that the Indian constitution guarantees the Freedom of Conscience and the right to profess, practise and propagate

Udupi seeking a declaration that wearing a hijab is a fundamental right.

As many as six students were barred from wearing hijab inside classrooms as it was against the uniform policies of the school in Udupi. The girls have been asked to attend online classes till the issue is resolved. Advocates

religion. The Karnataka government has set up an expert committee to resolve the issue. Until the committee recommendation comes, all girls have been asked to adhere to uniform rules. It was informed that students will not be allowed to attend classes with hijabs till the government committee submits its report.

## Evidence of Pegasus use in phones, cyber expert tells SC

(SAI Bureau) Acyber expert on Monday told the Supreme Court that there was evidence of the government's role in deploying the Pegasus malware against individuals. The cyber expert, who had earlier been deposed before the committee investigating the malware attack on public and private individuals, filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court on Monday. In the affidavit, the expert said that the malware had evolved since 2016.

The expert also pointed out in the affidavit that there are "strong indicators that point to the involvement of the State, its intelligence and law enforcement agencies in deploying the Pegasus. malware against individuals. Speaking to India Today, a source close to the inquiry commission said that so far, only two persons whose devices had been hacked had submitted the electronic equipment to the committee.

"Another advertisement is being issued because very few people have responded", said the official who did not wish to be named.

One independent cyber security



expert, who had been invited as an expert witness by one of the petitioners in the Pegasus case, has filed an affidavit in the Supreme court giving details of his analysis of the devices owned by two senior journalists, which had been put under Pegasus surveillance. According to the expert, the phones owned by both journalists indicated the presence of Pegasus malware. He has also explained in detail

how the Pegasus malware has evolved, and has been studied by reputed cyber-security organisations, forensic research forums and other open-source research laboratories. He has also given examples of the research methodology that identified infection of devices owned by activists in Morocco and Azerbaijan, as well as the phone owned by Indian scholar and former terror accused SAR Geelani. The affidavit by the expert stated that phones with iOS systems have software which makes it possible to recognise Pegasus malware, while forensic determination is more difficult on Android devices. The affidavit was filed on 27 January before the Supreme court. While the Apex court had given 8 weeks time to the expert committee to conduct an investigation and file a report, the time period expired in the last week of January.



**Geeta Sexena**  
Bureau Chief (Punjab))

**Gagandeep Singh**  
Deputy News Editor

**Sharanjit Singh Thind**  
Editor in Chief

**Susmita Ghosh**  
Deputy Managing Editor





# India abstains from procedural vote ahead of discussion on Ukraine at UN Security Council

Ten member states voted in favour of and two - Russia and China - against the discussion on Ukraine at the United Nations Security Council.

(SAI Bureau) India on Monday abstained from the procedural vote at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) ahead of a meeting to discuss the situation on the Ukraine border.

Ten member states, namely the US, UK, France, UAE, Ghana, Albania, Norway, Brazil, Mexico and Ireland, voted in favour of taking up the Ukraine issue. On the other hand, only two member states - Russia and China - voted against it. Meanwhile, three member states - India, Gabon and Kenya - abstained from the vote.

The Security Council only required nine votes in favour to go ahead with the discussion. India's representative to the UNSC, in a statement, said, "We have been closely following the evolving

developments relating to Ukraine, including through ongoing high-level security talks between Russia and the United States, as well as under the Normandy format in Paris.

"India's interest is in finding a solution that can provide for immediate de-escalation of tensions taking into account the legitimate security interests of all countries and aimed towards securing long term peace and stability in the region and beyond. We have also been in touch with all concerned parties. It is our considered view that the issue can only be resolved through diplomatic dialogue," the statement went on to add. Meanwhile, Russia accused the United States of trying to "create hysteria" over the situation on Ukraine's borders. US President Joe Biden



responded by warning Russia of "severe consequences" should Moscow "walk away from diplomacy". "If Russia is sincere about addressing our security concerns through dialogue, the US and our allies will continue

to engage in good faith. If instead Russia attacks Ukraine, it'll bear the responsibility and face swift and severe consequences," US President Joe Biden said.

Russia has reportedly amassed an estimated 1,00,000 troops

near its border with Ukraine. While Moscow denies that it has any plans to invade Ukraine, the mobilisation of troops along the Ukrainian border has resulted in repeated warnings from Nato member states.

## Decomposed body of Gujarat fisherman reaches home from Karachi jail after 45 days; officials blame Pak for delay

The decomposed body of a 53-year-old fisherman from Sutrapada in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district finally reached his native town on Monday, nearly 45 days after his death in a Pakistani jail

(SAI Bureau) The body of a 53-year-old fisherman from Sutrapada in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district finally reached his native town on Monday, nearly 45 days after his death in a Pakistani jail, an official said. The last rites of the deceased were performed by his family members, who expressed anguish over the decomposed condition of the body.

The official blamed Pakistani authorities for the delay, saying they informed about the death of the fisherman, Jenti Solanki, in Landhi jail in Karachi on January 12 but didn't hand over his mortal remains saying they had to conduct the autopsy.

Solanki had spent nearly two years in the Landhi jail before he died of illness on December 14, said the official from the Gujarat

fisheries department.

The body of the fisherman was finally brought to the Wagah-

From Ahmedabad, the mortal remains were taken to his hometown in an ambulance, They delayed it on the grounds

informing Indian authorities about his death on January 12. They delayed it on the grounds

January 29, he said.

Solanki was held by the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) along with his companions, who claimed that their boat, 'Rasul Sagar' had entered the Pakistani territorial waters after crossing the notional international maritime boundary line in February 2020, the official said. Solanki's relatives said that the body was in a decomposed position as he died nearly 45 days back. They appealed to Indian authorities to intervene and ensure that bodies of fishermen who die in another country are brought back on time so that their kin could perform the last rites properly. Pakistan recently released 20 Indian fishermen lodged in Karachi's Landhi jail on humanitarian grounds, but 568 fishermen from India are still lodged there.



Attari border on January 29. Gujarat Fisheries Department officials received the body and took it to Amritsar, from where it was brought to Ahmedabad by air.

covering a distance of about 400 km, on Monday, he said. "Pakistani authorities delayed handing over the mortal remains of Solanki after

that they had to perform a postmortem," said the official. There were further delays before the body was finally handed over at the Indo-Pak border on





## Role of women continuously expanding, women commissions need to widen their scope of work: PM

**Speaking on the 30th foundation day of the National Commission for Women, PM Modi said the participation of women in the growth cycle of a "new India" is increasing and the commission should also promote the role of women in entrepreneurship as much as possible.**

(SAI Bureau) Noting that the role of women in the society is continuously expanding, Prime Minister Narendra on Monday said the women commissions will have to increase their scope of work and give a new direction to the women of their states. Speaking on the occasion of the 30th foundation day of the National Commission for Women (NCW), the prime minister said the participation of women in the growth cycle of a "new India" is increasing

continuously and the commissions should also promote the role of women in entrepreneurship as much as possible. "Today, the role of women is continuously expanding, so all women's commissions will also have to increase their scope of work and give a new direction to the women of their states," he said. Modi also said people with old thinking considered the skills of women as a matter of domestic work but it is necessary to change this mentality to bolster the country's economy. Taking a swipe at the previous governments, he said those who did not give priority to women safety, women did not hesitate to remove them from power. Highlighting the steps taken by his government toward women empowerment, Modi said both the Make in India and the Self-reliant India initiatives are utilising the skills of women for the country's progress. With 26 weeks, he said India is one of the countries that give maximum maternity leave to women. "About 70 per cent beneficiaries under the Mudra Yojana are women and crores of women have started their business using the scheme," the prime minister said.

## Two former PCC presidents return to Congress after two years

(SAI Bureau) Two former Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) presidents returned to the party after two years on Monday.



Monday.

Both veteran leaders, Pradeep Balmuchu, who led Jharkhand Congress for over seven years, and Sukhdev Bhagat, who served as PCC chief for over four years, left the party ahead of the 2019 Assembly Polls.

Party general secretary in-charge Avinash Pandey

expressed his pleasure over the rejoining of both the leaders. He said it's a big day for Jharkhand Congress as two major leaders

have made a comeback. "Of course, their homecoming means a lot and will go a long way to strengthening the party. Jharkhand Congress president Rajesh Thakur also expressed his happiness and said it's an achievement for both him and the party since two big players are back in the team. "It will rejuvenate the energy of the party

workers," he said. Meanwhile, veteran Pradeep Balmuchu said that he had realised his mistake of leaving the party. He expressed his gratitude to the central leadership for reposing trust in him and said he will rise to the expectations. Sukhdev Bhagat said that his family had been an ardent supporter of the Congress. He has missed the party in the last two years. In 2019, ahead of elections in Jharkhand, four former PCC presidents, including Dr Ajoy Kumar, Pradeep Balmuchu, Sukhdev Bhagat and Sarfraz Ahmad, left the party. After RPN Singh's exit last week, the party workers said on record that all four former PCC presidents had left the party allegedly after facing harsh treatment by RPN Singh.

## Gujarat: BSF nabs Pakistani fisherman, seizes three fishing boats



(SAI Bureau) The Border Security Force (BSF) on Monday apprehended one Pakistani fisherman and seized three fishing boats from Lakhpatwari Creek near the Sir Creek region in Kutch, Gujarat. The BSF troops patrolling in the region observed the movement of some Pakistani fishing boats with four to five fishermen onboard. They were attempting to enter into Indian territory through rough sea route. The alert patrol party of BSF intercepted the

intruders the moment they tried to enter into Indian territory. Meanwhile, the Pakistani intruders also saw the BSF patrol party and tried to escape. The BSF personnel apprehended one Pakistani fisherman while the others managed to flee the spot. Three fishing boats were also seized. However, nothing suspicious was recovered from the boat. A thorough search operation of the area is being carried out.



# 'Cooler' February likely, says weather office

(Staff Reporter) India is all set to experience below normal temperature over most parts of the country in February, while Punjab and Haryana are expected to get above normal rainfall, the weather office said on Monday.

According to the monthly outlook for rainfall and temperature for February, the India Meteorological Department said the forecast suggests that normal to below normal rainfall is most likely over most parts of North India except most parts of Punjab and Haryana where above normal rainfall was expected. "During the month of February 2022, below normal minimum temperatures are most likely over most parts of the country except eastern parts of northeast India, south peninsular India and southeastern parts central India, where normal to above normal minimum temperatures are likely," it said. "Below normal maximum temperatures are likely over most parts of the country except along the



eastern and southwestern coastal areas of peninsular India where it is likely to be normal to above normal," the outlook for February said.

It said currently, weak La Nina conditions are prevailing over the equatorial Pacific region.

The latest Monsoon Mission Climate Forecast System (MMCFS) forecast indicates that these La Nina conditions are likely to weaken starting from the northern hemisphere spring season and to reach cold ENSO neutral conditions during the

second quarter of 2022. It said IMD has adopted a new strategy for issuing monthly and seasonal outlooks of rainfall and temperature over the country. The new strategy is based on the newly developed Multi-Model Ensemble (MME) based

forecasting system. The MME approach uses the coupled global climate models (CGCMs) from different global climate prediction and research centers including IMD/MoES Monsoon Mission Climate Forecast System (MMCFS) model.

## Mohammed Nalapad appointed as president of Karnataka Youth Congress

Mohammed Nalapad, son of MLA NA Harris, has been appointed as president of the Karnataka Youth Congress with immediate effect. He was disqualified earlier following the 2018 brawl incident

(Staff Reporter) Mohammed Nalapad, son of MLA NA Harris, has been appointed as president of the Karnataka Youth

Ballari district Youth Congress president, along with two of his associates were allegedly attacked on January 19. The

highest votes in the Youth Congress election but was disqualified as he was out on bail in a pub brawl incident. He was arrested in 2018 for bashing up the son of a prominent businessman in the city. Nalapad Harris was out on bail after remaining in judicial custody for three months for attempt to murder. However, after rounds of talks with high-level leaders within congress, Nalapad was assured he would be given charge on January 31. The order was issued by the national president of Youth Congress BV Srinivas. Raksha Ramaiah was appointed as Karnataka Youth Congress President after the incidents of 2018. His term came to an end today.



Congress with immediate effect. Siddu Gowda, a Youth Congress leader from Ballari, had accused Nalapad of assault, only to withdraw the statement later. Gowda, the

incident came to light when Gowda allegedly posted about the incident on Congress' internal WhatsApp group. However, he has since denied the incident. Nalapad had received the

## Man killed in rhino attack in Assam's Majuli



(Staff Reporter) A 50-year-old man was killed in a rhino attack near Samaguri in Assam's Majuli district. The victim was identified as Madan Das.

"When injured Madan reached his home, he was rushed to Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH) where he died during the treatment," a village resident said.

According to the villagers, the rhino strayed out of Kaziranga National Park and entered the village area a few days back. The

Deputy Commissioner of Majuli district tweeted: "A rhino attack occurred at Eri Chapori today morning where one Madan Das sustained grave injuries and later succumbed at JMCH. I, along with ADCs and COs rushed to the location. All steps will be ensured to provide Ex Gratia to the family."

On November 5 last year, a 45-year-old man was killed in a rhino attack at Abhoypur Maj village near Dhakuakhana in Assam's Lakhimpur district.





## 'Inhuman treatment not expected': Bombay High Court on solitary confinement

**The Bombay High Court said a convict may be a hardened criminal but should receive human treatment in prison. The bench was hearing a plea filed by Rubeena Shaikh, wife of the convict, Imran Shaikh who was kept in solitary confinement for over two years**

(Staff Reporter) The Aurangabad Bench of Bombay High Court said a convict may be a hardened criminal but should receive human treatment in prison. The bench was hearing a plea filed by Rubeena Shaikh, wife of the convict, Imran Shaikh who had been kept in solitary confinement for about two years and 4 months. "He may be a hardened criminal, but what is expected is human treatment and not in-human

treatment. The medical examination in future may reveal a psychological problem," the bench comprising of Justices VK Jadhav and SC More said. The bench directed the Aurangabad prison officials to inform the court about the statutory procedure for sending any prisoner into an "anda cell" (an isolated cell) and whether any records are maintained for the same. Additional Public Prosecutor DS Kape submitted to the bench that the facts in the petition had been misinterpreted and the prisoner was not in solitary confinement but in an isolated cell that had more security than the regular cells in the prison.

He sought time to place these details on record along with the answers to the queries put by the court. The court also asked him to place on record details of the prisoners who had been placed in the "anda cell" before the present prisoner and what their durations were. The bench had last week directed a medical and judicial inquiry into

the allegations made in the petition and the court received the reports on Monday. After going through the report, the bench asked the prison officials to place on record the statutory procedure to be followed for sending a prisoner to the "anda cell" or isolated cell of the prison. "If a certain procedure is followed, then we would like to know where the procedure is prescribed. This has to be done based on procedure, otherwise, it cannot be done arbitrarily", the bench said.

After going through the reports submitted by the Chief Judicial Magistrate at Aurangabad, the Superintendent of Aurangabad prison and also the Dean of Government Medical College, the bench said that Shaikh's health was stable and he did not require any psychiatric intervention or medication.

The bench permitted Advocate Rupesh Jaiswal, the petitioner's advocate, to peruse the magistrate's report from the court records and make his submissions on the same in the next hearing, scheduled to be held after four weeks.

## After Mamata Banerjee, Derek O'Brien blocks Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Twitter

**Hours after Bengal CM Mamata BANerjee said that she had banned Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Twitter, her party's MP Derek O'Brien lauded her and said that he is going to do the same**



(Staff Reporter) Trinamool Congress MP Derek O'Brien on Monday said that he will block West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Twitter. His statement came hours after his party's supremo and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee told a press conference that she had blocked the governor on the social media site. "Gold. BLOCKING @jdhankehar1," Derek O'Brien tweeted. Addressing a presser in Kolkata earlier in the day, Mamata Banerjee accused Governor Dhankhar of "tapping

phones" and "threatening" the state's chief secretary and director general of police. "I have written several letters to the PM about him. That he [Governor] is not listening and he is threatening everyone. I have even been to him and spoke with him.

"We have been patiently suffering for the past year. He has not cleared several files. He is keeping every file pending. How he can speak about policy decisions," CM Mamata Banerjee told reporters. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee even accused Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar of "tapping phones" and "threatening" the state's chief secretary and director general of police. "Why PM has not removed him [Governor]? Pegasus is running from Governor house. He is tapping phones," she said.



# No legislative business during first part of Budget session, says govt

The government on Monday said that it will not take up any legislative business in Rajya Sabha during the first part of the Budget session. Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal said this during a virtual meeting called by House Chairman and Vice President Venkaiah Naidu to discuss forthcoming session. Chairman Naidu told the House leaders that the first part of the Budget session till February 11 will have only 23 hours for business other than Zero Hour, Question Hour and Private Members' Business. He further said that Discussion on Motion of Thanks to the President for his address to Members of both the Houses today [Monday] and discussion on Union Budget to be presented on Tuesday will get priority during the first part of the session.

He informed the leaders that these two major items of business took a total time of over 26 hours during the last

**The government has told a virtual meeting of Rajya Sabha leaders that it will not take up any legislative business during the first part of the Budget session due to time restraint**



Budget session and 23 hours time is available for the same in the first part of this Budget session. To this, Piyush Goyal said that the government is not planning to take up any legislative proposals during the first part of this session. Many of the leaders echoed the same sense of priorities for the first part of this Budget

session and called for a disruption free Budget session. BJD Leader Prasanna Acharya urged all parties and members of respective parties not to disrupt Zero Hour and Question

Hour since Chairman Naidu has been endeavouring to give opportunities to as many Members as possible there by enabling wider participation of Members of Rajya Sabha.

Disruptions deny a large number of Members such opportunities of participation, he said.

"The Budget session provides guidance to help the national economy recover from the impact of Covid pandemic over the last two years which continues with the third wave. I earnestly appeal to all the leaders to enable a productive Budget session by urging members of respective parties so as to make meaningful contributions for economic recovery and all round development at this hour of challenge," Chairman Venkaiah Naidu said.

Chairman Naidu informed that meeting of the Business Advisory Committee of Rajya Sabha will be held on Tuesday to allocate time for discussion on Motion of Thanks to President and Union Budget.

## Fire breaks out in Mumbai's Kanjurmarg area



A major fire broke out in the grassland at suburban Kanjurmarg in Mumbai on Monday. The incident happened near the Kanjurmarg bus stop where a metro car is being built. The blaze erupted on the Thane end of the land reserved for the metro carshed and it was confined to 1000 x 1000 square feet of land, adjacent to the Eastern Express Highway, according to officials.

As many as four fire tenders reached the spot and doused the flames. No injuries have been reported yet. The reason behind

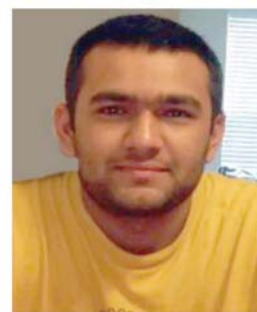
the fire is yet to be ascertained. The Centre and the Shiv Sena-led Maharashtra government are locked in a tussle over the ownership of the land earmarked by the state for constructing the metro carshed at Kanjurmarg, which was earlier planned at Aarey Colony, a green belt in suburban Goregaon.

The Aarey car shed spread over 30 hectares was meant for Metro line 3, while the 40-hectare Kanjurmarg land would be used for a car depot catering to metro lines 3, 4 and 6.

## FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

### BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

**Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution - First Degree Murder, Second Degree Murder, First Degree Assault, Second Degree Assault, Dangerous Weapon with Intent to Injure**



Photograph taken April 2015

#### DESCRIPTION

<b>Alias:</b> Bhadreshkumar C. Patel	<b>Place of Birth:</b> Kantrodi Ta Viramgam, Gujarat, India
<b>Date(s) of Birth Used:</b> May 15, 1990	<b>Eyes:</b> Brown
<b>Hair:</b> Brown	<b>Weight:</b> 165 pounds
<b>Height:</b> 5'9"	<b>Occupation:</b> Employee of donut shop
<b>Sex:</b> Male	
<b>Nationality:</b> Indian	

#### REWARD

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$100,000 for information leading to the arrest of Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel.

#### REMARKS

Patel was last known to be in the Newark, New Jersey, area.

#### CAUTION

Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel is wanted for allegedly killing his wife by striking her multiple times with an object while they were both working at a donut shop in Hanover, Maryland, on April 12, 2015. A local arrest warrant was issued in the District Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County on April 13, 2015, and Patel was charged with first degree murder, second degree murder, first degree assault, second degree assault, and dangerous weapon with intent to injure. A federal arrest warrant was issued in the United States District Court, District of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland, on April 20, 2015, after Patel was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

#### SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Baltimore



# Renewal of Pegasus controversy haunts Indian Government

By Susmita Ghosh

The Indian government is caught in a fresh stint of controversy, which is again linked with the Pegasus software. Report reveals in leading international media house claims that the Indian government did purchase the controversial software and it was a part of a larger arms deal with Israel back in 2017.

The Pegasus spyware controversy came to the spotlight a year back in India. The software was developed by the NSO group from Israel, which deals in cyber-arms and technology. Pegasus can be deployed without any trace in devices running Android OS, to gain complete control of the device. As a part of an ongoing investigation globally, in a list of 50,000 phone numbers worldwide, affected by Pegasus, 300 of them were from India.

Simply the presence of a phone number in a list does not confirm that the software was present in the phone. It can only be confirmed by a forensic expert who has to thoroughly examine the phone and determine any misdeeds. Still, the list of Indian numbers contained prominent opposition leaders from India, human rights activists, political strategists, government officials and even leaders from the ruling party in India and ministers with important portfolios.

The opposition raised a united voice against the Indian government regarding the misuse of the app and mishandling of personal freedom. As Pegasus is marked as a cyber-weapon in Israel, it cannot be sold to anyone but a national government only. Hence, the fingers started pointing to the Indian government. However, they provided a mixed response initially, with deniability of any association with the software usage and branding it as an international conspiracy.

The official response from Government of India against the post stated that there was no concrete evidence against the Indian

government and such a report only attempts to malign the institution of Indian democracy. The opposition parties, on the other hand, joined forces to discuss the snooping issue in Lok Sabha. The central government denied the request for an independent inquiry or court-monitored probe in the matter. However, the honourable Supreme Court of India felt the need for a central inquiry into the matter and arranged a three-member committee for the same.

The cyber-security experts and researchers appointed by the Supreme Court committee have told the panel that there was concrete evidence of the Pegasus software on a number of phones. In their investigation, the software was said to be found not only on Android OS but on iOS devices too. Various variants of the malware were found to be affecting the devices periodically, across the recent years.

The Indian government is firm on its position, as the official statement claims deniability in any involvement with the malpractice and misuse of the software for snooping. A country cannot, should not, and need not divulge all the information out in the open, for the sake of national interest. For the very reason, they could not admit the software acquisition, even if they have bought it, as per the claims in the media.

Still, there is the matter of accountability and proper usage of the software, which cannot be ignored. If the software was indeed used in India, there should be a proper framework and guideline on whom it can be used, for how long and for what purpose. Pegasus, in the wrong hands, can abuse personal freedom. Hence, if India indeed decides to use this tool, it is the duty of the government to ensure that there is the prohibition of misuse of this powerful cyber tool.

**If the software was indeed used in India, there should be a proper framework and guideline on whom it can be used, for how long and for what purpose.**

## What is the hype behind pricey pixels, why people spend fortunes on NFTs or digital art?

Each day, thousands of artists work to create images to sell as digital tokens (NFTs) on online exchanges. The markets are booming, the most popular pieces can sell for millions, but it is not clear to outsiders why anyone would be willing to pay anything at all for a jpeg.

### How do NFT purchases work?

These transactions do not involve the exchange of physical pieces of art. Those who purchase art use cryptocurrencies and receive NFTs in return for a unique piece of computer code relating to that work that is stored on a blockchain, a kind of digital ledger that cannot be altered.

**Those who purchase art use cryptocurrencies and receive NFTs in return for a unique piece of computer code relating to that work that is stored on a blockchain, a kind of digital ledger that cannot be altered.**

### When did the craze for NFT's start?

In 2021, the market for NFTs exploded, driven by high-profile auctions, with sales worth more than \$40 billion, according to analytics firm Chainalysis. There's no reason to believe that last year's prices won't hold up in 2022; for instance, Justin Bieber paid more than \$1.3 million last week for an NFT from the collection "Bored Apes Yacht Club". With 10,000 cartoon ape images with variations to the background and other details generated by an algorithm, the collection sold dozens of NFTs daily for an average price of \$250,000.

### Why would anyone buy an NFT?

Some critics suggest that big transactions are motivated by pure profit, with major players using technobabble and celebrity endorsements to mask their true motives. Nevertheless, fans see the technological complexity as an inherent part of the value of these and have a cultish devotion to it. Malaysian artist mumu\_thestan describes it as a varied landscape.

"You can't treat the whole NFT community

as one,"

"The mainstream audience thinks NFTs are about selling a jpeg for millions or making a monkey picture. That's not all it is."

Yet, one of the most common narratives surrounding NFTs is one in which speculators make crushing profits by flipping their assets.

### How do these artists find sellers?

Buzz generated by social media and celebrity endorsements fuels the boom.

The must-have collection in 2021 was CryptoPunks, a collection of blocky

images of punk rock in the 1970s. The likes of Jay-Z, Snoop Dogg, and YouTuber Logan Paul own some of these for millions.

Now, it is Bored Apes, Justin Bieber dropped an image of an ape to his 200 million Instagram followers, giving a powerful boost to an already popular collection already hyped by the likes of tennis star Serena Williams.

It is crucial to maintain a buzz around the work, whether it is meticulously crafted original artwork or algorithmically generated ape pictures.

### How does this compare to "traditional" art?

It is evident that this community-building has parallels to the traditional art market, in which young artists often work as hard to cultivate a following as on their work. The auction house Christie's helped cement this connection last year when it sold an NFT by American artist Beeple for \$69 million, making him the third most valuable living artist. It may surprise you to know that it would not have been a stretch for the buyer to acquire a Van Gogh or a Monet work for similar prices last year.



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Editor in Chief & Publisher :

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) :

Aruna Singh

Dy Managing Editor India :

Susmita Ghosh

(Legal Columnist) Anusha Syed

Special Correspondents:

Gagandeep Singh (India)

(Insider Show Host) Geeta Saxena

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

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REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

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# What is reverse repo normalisation?

To understand what is reverse repo normalisation, it is important to understand what is reverse repo and how it is not “normal” at present

In a recent report, State Bank of India, which is the largest public sector bank in the country, has stated: “...we believe the stage is set for a reverse repo normalisation.”

To understand what is reverse repo normalisation, it is important to understand what is reverse repo and how it is not “normal” at present. It is also important to understand why the SBI is talking about the reverse repo rate and not the repo rate, which is often considered to be the benchmark interest rate in India. India's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India, keeps tweaking the total amount of money in the economy to ensure smooth functioning.

commercial banks (and the rest of the banking system), in turn, will feel incentivised to lower interest rates. Lower interest rates and more liquidity, together, are expected to boost both consumption and production in the economy. For a consumer, it would now pay less to keep the money in the bank — thus it incentivises current consumption. For firms and entrepreneurs, it would make more sense to borrow money to start a new enterprise because interest rates are lower.

The reverse of a loose monetary policy is a “tight monetary policy” and it involves the RBI raising interest rates and sucking

economy. That's because it is the lowest rate of interest at which funds can be borrowed. As such, the repo rate forms the floor interest rate for all other interest rates in the economy — be it the rate you pay for a car loan or a home loan or the interest you earn on your fixed deposit etc.

But imagine a scenario where the RBI pumps more and more liquidity into the market but there are no takers of fresh loans — either because the banks are unwilling to lend or because there is no genuine demand for new loans in the economy.

In such a scenario, the action shifts from repo rate to reverse repo rate because



As such, when the RBI wants to boost economic activity it adopts a so-called “loose monetary policy”. There are two parts to such a policy.

One, the RBI injects more money (liquidity) into the economy. It does so by buying government bonds from the market. As the RBI buys these bonds, it pays back money to the bondholders, thus injecting more money into the economy.

Two, the RBI also lowers the interest rate it charges banks when it lends money to them; this rate is called the repo rate. By lowering the interest rate at which it lends money to commercial banks, the RBI hopes that the

liquidity out of the economy by selling bonds (and taking money out of the system). When any central bank finds that a loose monetary policy has started becoming counterproductive (for example, when it leads to a higher inflation rate), the central bank “normalises the policy” by tightening the monetary policy stance.

The reverse repo is the interest rate that the RBI pays to the commercial banks when they park their excess “liquidity” (money) with the RBI. The reverse repo, thus, is the exact opposite of the repo rate. Under normal circumstances, that is when the economy is growing at a healthy pace, the repo rate becomes the benchmark interest rate in the

banks are no longer interested in borrowing money from the RBI. Rather they are more interested in parking their excess liquidity with the RBI. And that is how the reverse repo becomes the actual benchmark interest rate in the economy.

As this story from early 2020 explained, the reverse repo had become the benchmark rate in India since the start of the Covid pandemic. In short, the RBI had widened the gap between repo rate and reverse repo rate (SEE CHART) in order to make it less attractive for banks to simply park their funds at the RBI. A lower reverse repo rate pushed banks to extend more fresh loans in the economy.

Economic Survey points to scope for greater govt aid to economy. Credible path for fiscal consolidation is also needed

The continuing distress in the labour market, the sharp rise in inequality, the lingering financial stress among the MSMEs, especially those operating in the informal parts of the economy, are issues that need to be explored more exhaustively



The economic survey 2021-22, tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament on Monday, expects the Indian economy to grow by 8-8.5 per cent in the upcoming financial year, on the back of a 9.2 per cent expansion in 2021-22. The Survey's projections appear conservative when compared to recent assessments of the IMF, which has pegged the economy to grow at 9 per cent, or the World Bank which expects it to grow at 8.7 per cent. As the annual flagship document of the Ministry of Finance, it is disturbing that the Survey does not examine the uneven nature of the recovery in greater detail. The continuing distress in the labour market, the sharp rise in inequality, the lingering financial stress among the MSMEs, especially those operating in the informal parts of the economy, are issues that need to be explored more exhaustively. While the Survey has sought to assure that when it comes to macro-economic stability, India is better placed than it was at the time of the global financial crisis and the taper tantrum, what is less clear is the extent to which the recovery will heal the scars induced by the pandemic in the near term.

While there is always a gap between growth projections and reality, the Survey has rightly flagged the risks to these projections. To begin with, the external environment is likely to be less benign, and financial conditions will tighten considerably. In its recent World

Economic Outlook, the IMF has pegged global GDP growth at 4.4 per cent in 2022, down from 5.9 per cent in 2021, with global trade volumes growth expected to fall in 2022. There is also the threat of another wave of infections and the associated impact on economic activity. Elevated crude oil prices are another area of concern — while the Survey has assumed oil to remain in the range of \$70-75 per barrel, crude oil prices are currently around \$90.

The Survey has, once again, mounted a strong defence of the policy response to the pandemic, arguing in favour of the emphasis on supply-side oriented measures, rather than relying solely on “demand management”. Even so, coming ahead of the Union budget on Tuesday, the underlying message is of continued government support to the economy. The “government has the fiscal capacity to maintain the support, and ramp up capital expenditure when required,” it says. The sharp rise in central government revenues provides it with the necessary fiscal space. However, considering that the general government debt stands at 89.3 per cent in 2021-22 (BE), up from 74.6 per cent in 2019-20, the government needs to remain mindful of its constraints. The upcoming Union budget will be judged on how the finance minister balances the twin objectives of supporting the economy and putting government finances on a credible path of consolidation.





# Uttar Pradesh polls and the way forward for minority politics

**Invocations of the Indian Constitution and one's rights as citizens alongside religious symbols suggest a deepening of the cultural aspects of a secular democracy**

As the election dates close in, there is a scramble among parties to get the social formula right in the selection of candidates. The last few days have seen major political players like the Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajwadi Party and the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen announcing a significant number of Muslim candidates. The NDA, too, has announced one Muslim candidate. The Muslim-majority districts of Uttar Pradesh are expected to play an important part in the first phase of elections, the results of which may hold the key to power.

This suggests a growing claim for greater political representation from the community and the deepening of secular democracy in a society that is diverse and divided along caste and religious lines. It also seems to suggest that the BJP under CM Yogi Adityanath is under pressure as it tries to consolidate the votes of all caste fragments under the Hindutva banner. But is it possible that competition between Muslim candidates will end up being an advantage for the BJP again? The use of Muslim cultural symbolism by leaders such as AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi has been criticised for attempting to rouse communal sentiments. What is the use of community identification by Muslim candidates meant to achieve —

separatism or representation?

Electoral competition may not necessarily be bad for Muslims because, as scholars have pointed out, they, like others, tend to vote based on issues rather than the identity of the candidate. Even in a communally polarised constituency, what matters is local issues of

access to public services and amenities. Electoral competition has, in the past, led to a change in patronage politics of the Congress that would field very few Muslim candidates, despite the rising threat of BJP. Politically underrepresented social groups within Muslims have joined other political parties and forged alliances with other traditionally marginalised groups such as OBCs and Dalits to counter the communal agendas of dominant caste Hindus. This has also helped counter the prioritising of personal gain by elite Muslims over addressing local issues concerning equitable development, justice and dignity.

Muslims, like Hindus, are not a

homogenous community. Factions based on class, sect and jaat/biradari are part of the Muslim social world. Electoral competition may only create

**Electoral competition may only create more opportunities for politically underrepresented groups within the community. It might force Muslim candidates to walk the talk to keep one's electoral constituency**

more opportunities for politically underrepresented groups within the community. It might force Muslim candidates to walk the talk

in order to keep one's electoral constituency. Using Muslim symbols in this context may not necessarily mean stirring communal sentiments. Since these refer to forging a collective identity not violently opposed to Hindus, such symbols could be seen as a way to mobilise Muslim votes with the acknowledgement that being part of a secular democracy also means inclusive development for all citizens. It is an attempt, often found effective in Indian political culture, to forge an identity by stringing together a common experience of marginalisation and political alienation. Invocations of the Indian

Constitution and one's rights as citizens alongside Muslim symbols suggest a deepening of the cultural aspects of a secular democracy. The BJP and the Sangh Parivar have been actively engaged in appropriating Hindu secular symbols in an attempt to empty democracy of its cultural signifiers. The use of Muslim symbols in this context across parties may be a way to break the cycle of a long-standing political alienation of Muslims, for a more inclusive secular democracy. The new generation of Muslim voters is starting to connect to such an identification in the context of a dominant Hindu right-wing discourse, as opposed to an earlier tendency to downplay their identities when aligning with secular liberal parties. Even though representation might seem to be at the heart of modern democracies, it will always be a challenge for Muslim politics in a Hindu majoritarian democracy to be acceptable and endorsed. If the thwarting of the anti-CAA protests was a display of how the state uses violence to discipline its subjects, "Muslim" politics requires new ways of making demands for representation. The upcoming elections in UP might just be showing us the way it could be done.



# Here's how scientists use Penguins to predict climate change



Penguins have become more than just a symbol of the frozen south of the earth. Researchers now use them as indicators of climate change near the South Pole. Certain western regions, such as the Antarctic Peninsula, have experienced rapid warming while East Antarctica remains cold and ice-covered.

Nothing is easy in the remote and icy reaches of Antarctica, but penguins are easier to track

than other species because they nest on land and their black feathers and waste can be observed against the white ice. "We are counting penguin nests to understand how many penguins are in a colony, producing chicks every year, and whether that number is going up or down with the environmental conditions," said Borowicz, of Stony Brook University in New York. "We can use penguins as a bioindicator to see how the

rest of the ecosystem is operating," said Wethington, also of Stony Brook. Counting individual penguins along with other methods such as satellite images provide a nuanced picture, showing some penguins dubbed 'winners' prosper as climate change opens new habitats, while others are compelled to migrate to colder climates. The Gentoo penguin, with its bright orange beak and

distinctive white marking on its head, prefers open water with chunks of ice bobbing about.

During the latter half of the 20th century, temperatures on the Antarctic Peninsula began rising faster than almost anywhere else in the world, leading to Gentoo populations expanding southwards - known as the "gentoofication" of Antarctica. The reduction of sea ice at the western end of the peninsula has enabled the Gentoos to thrive. For tuxedo-wearing Adelies, which rely on sea ice for breeding and feeding, the same conditions have made it worse. "When we find Adelie penguins, we typically know that sea ice is nearby," Wethington said. "And whenever we've seen sea ice declining or disappearing altogether, then we're seeing corresponding Adelie penguin populations decline substantially." Overall, Adelie penguin populations are increasing, but some populations have declined by more than 65 per cent. Scientists from Stony Brook University made an expedition to the region in January and found that Adelie colonies around the still-icy Weddell Sea had remained stable over the past decade. "This peninsula is maybe a safe space as we see climate change

progressing and overall warming throughout the globe," Wethington said.

MV Arctic Sunrise expedition leader Heather Lynch believes the findings point to the conservation value of the region.

Using satellite images, a team from the British Antarctic Survey discovered 11 new emperor penguin colonies in 2020, increasing known colonies by 20 per cent.

The Halley Bay colony, on the most eastern side of the Weddell Sea, is home to the second-largest breeding colony of emperor penguins in the world, with about 25,000 breeding pairs gathering each year.

However, since 2016 every chick in this colony has perished. Researchers believe the 2016 El Niño event altered the sea ice dynamics in the area, and penguins are at risk as climate change increases the frequency and severity of El Niños.

In spite of the chicks' deaths not being directly linked to climate change, Peter Fretwell, a geographic information scientist with the British Antarctic Survey, noted there was a climate change component to the loss.

## The right voices are missing from the budget

**Palanivel Thiaga Rajan writes: It encroaches on state's rights and domains, its politics is evident in low allocations to health, MNREGA and absence of policy push on employment generation and protection**



The annual budget is a statement of the government's economic philosophy. It translates into numbers the principles and priorities that guide the government's actions. Most politicians would agree that reduced communication and feedback are the unfortunate but inevitable corollary of increasing responsibility and authority. More so at the Union than at the states, the key is to ensure that the finance department doesn't shape policy with the inputs of only those who can reach the rarified corridors of power, and makes conscious efforts to seek out the voices of the under-privileged who are rarely heard. In that context, I fear that this budget leaves something to be desired.





## Why UNSC joint statement on nuclear weapons is important

***It reaffirms that nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought and recommits to the principles of non-proliferation***

The nuke-wary people of Earth have not risen in unison to welcome the statement made on January 3 by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (P5). Yet, the assurance about “avoiding an arms race and not targeting each other or any other state”, and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, is important. The P5 statement reaffirms that a “nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought” because of its “far-reaching consequences”. The statement further reaffirms that nuclear threats must be addressed and emphasises the importance of “preserving and complying with our bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments”. The statement also expresses a commitment to the group’s Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) obligations and “to prevent the unauthorised or unintended use of nuclear weapons”. Declaring that an arms race would benefit none and endanger all, the P5 have undertaken to: (1) “work with all states to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament with the ultimate goal of a world without

nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all”; (2) “continue seeking bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, increase mutual understanding and confidence”; and (3) pursue “constructive dialogue with mutual respect and acknowledgement of each other’s security interests and concerns”.

This is a major statement. It is not a binding resolution and reiterates some of the core obligations of the NPT, while a review of the NPT remains postponed till

August due to the Covid-19 pandemic. But none of these factors diminish the urgency and the political significance of the statement, especially given the unimaginable danger posed by the 13,000 nuclear weapons currently believed to be held by a handful of countries, and the growing spectre of loose nukes, which may be deployed by armed terrorist groups for nefarious purposes. The P5 statement was followed by a warning from UN Secretary-General António Guterres that nuclear annihilation is “just one misunderstanding or miscalculation

away”.

Bold action on six fronts was necessary, he said. First, that member states should chart a path forward on nuclear disarmament; second, they should agree to new measures of “transparency and dialogue”; third, they should address the “simmering” nuclear crises in the Middle East and Asia; fourth, they should strengthen the existing global bodies that support

***It reaffirms that nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought and recommits to the principles of non-proliferation***

non-proliferation, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); fifth, they should promote the peaceful use of nuclear technology, and finally, they should remind “the world’s people – and especially its young people – that eliminating nuclear weapons is the only way to guarantee that they will never be used”. Gandhi taught us that the right to peace is an essential framework for all human rights and that waging peace is everyone’s work, regardless of vocation, profession, or discipline. Peace is necessary for rights, freedom, equality, and justice and for that reason, we need what Justice Oliver

Wendell Holmes Jr. called “education in the obvious” — namely, peace education. This is required at multiple levels, ranging across the planetary, global, supranational, regional, national, and local levels of social cognition and action. These spheres are intensely related, critical and transformative. As Betty Reardon writes: “... the general purpose of peace education... is to promote

the development of an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing the social structures and the patterns of thought that have created it.” If this “transformational imperative” is placed at the centre of peace education, there will be a “profound global cultural change” that will influence ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviours, relationships, and the structures of public order — “a change in the human consciousness and in human society of a dimension far greater than any other that has taken place

since the emergence of the nation-state”. Critical peace education should perform a number of tasks. Among these are: Bearing witness to negativity (that is, telling the truth about the realities and inequalities of this society); throwing light on spaces for possible actions that can challenge these realities; and acting (to borrow the words of the introduction to Rita Verma’s 2017 book *Critical Peace Education and Global Citizenship*) as the “critical secretary of the people, programmes and practices that are actually interrupting the dominant relations and building workable alternatives to them in educational institutions, communities and other sites”. Instead of creating cadres of techno-public intellectuals, peace education requires the creation of a mass of “critical secretaries” to people’s movements. Gandhi would have certainly welcomed the slender but significant UN Resolution 39/11 (November 12, 1984), which “solemnly proclaims that the peoples of our planet have a sacred right to peace” and equally solemnly declares that the “preservation of the right of peoples to peace and the promotion of its implementation constitute a fundamental obligation of each State”.





## Why is the 'Chinese' New Year celebrated, what is eaten, and how?

**The Chinese lunar new year is celebrated by millions of people across the world, from China all the way to North America, including in India, wherever Chinese communities are found**

Millions of people have started to celebrate the Chinese lunar new year on Tuesday (February 1), and you may have even received some good wishes in your mailboxes starting from the new year's eve. The Year of the Ox has given way to the Year of the Tiger, and the celebrations will culminate with the Lantern Festival on February 15. Before we go any further, here is the basic stuff and the Covid context.

Chinese New Year celebrations

traditionally end after 15 days, starting on Chinese New Year's Eve and continuing till the Lantern Festival. This year, the Lunar New Year celebrations are being held between January 31 and February 15. Since the Chinese calendar is a combination of solar and lunar movements, the New Year arrives on a different date every year. The festival is celebrated by millions of people across the world, from China all the way to North America, including in India, wherever Chinese communities

are found.

Before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic — which hit the world hard around the same time as the Chinese New Year in 2020 — the festival brought with it large spikes in international and domestic travel in China, as people moved in large numbers to celebrate with their families.

For the last two years, global travel restrictions and public health protocols have impacted movement, and altered some of the ways in which people mark

this festival, including in China that has implemented strict Covid-19 protocols. Why is this festival called the Chinese New Year?

Countries across Asia have their own New Years, with their own celebrations, with their own names for the festival, that coincide with the festival in China. The popularity of the name notwithstanding, clubbing all these celebrations under the label of 'Chinese' is in fact not accurate. Over the past few years, many people have tried

consciously to use the more inclusive term 'Lunar New Year'. In China itself, the festival is popularly known as the Spring Festival, because it marks the beginning of the new season.

In South Korea, it is called Seollal, and it marks the first day of the Korean calendar. According to an entry in the Google Arts & Culture platform, "like most traditional calendars of other East Asian countries, the Korean Calendar is mainly derived from the Chinese calendar" — an explanation for why the dates coincide.

The Vietnamese celebrate Tết, and Tibetans celebrate Losar.

In Mongolia, it is called Tsagaan Sar, and it marks the first day in the Mongolian lunisolar calendar. Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and other countries in the region also celebrate the festival, both as large public celebrations in neighbourhoods, as well as privately, especially if they have groups of people from countries where the festival is traditionally marked. Japan seems to be an exception to the list of countries in the region that celebrate the festival. Yes, Japan isn't included in this list of East Asian countries because the country has its own customs. Five years after the Meiji Restoration, that restored practical imperial rule under Emperor Meiji in 1868, Japan adopted the Gregorian calendar and switched to marking January 1 as New Year. The one exception though is the island of Okinawa, which has held on to its unique Okinawan culture, and its traditional Lunar New Year customs.

A chef prepares the "Poon Choi" dish in Hong Kong. To make up for lost business from dining-in, many restaurants are offering takeaways for a traditional dish known as "poon choi" for people to enjoy in the comforts of their own homes.



## Why Sweden is afraid of Russian aggression in the Baltic Sea

**Sweden has responded swiftly and decisively after noticing a number of Russian ships in the Baltic Sea and particularly large drones flying above its nuclear plants. Why are the Swedes afraid?**

The Swedish Armed Forces reported mid-January that six Russian Amphibious Warfare ships had left their naval base in Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave located between Poland and Lithuania, and entered the Baltic Sea. Although it is not uncommon to see Russian vessels move into this area, a number of them moving in was surprising. Around the same time, Swedish police received several reports of particularly

large drones flying above Sweden's nuclear plants along with other key targets. The origin of the drones is yet to be identified. Looking ahead, the domestic factors that will have a bearing on the trajectory of markets are the upcoming Union budget, and the outcome of the monetary policy committee meeting a few days thereafter, which is expected to provide some clarity over the timelines for the normalisation of policy.



# Why AIIMS wants a pan-India study on post-Covid cases of Avascular Necrosis

Many patients are being diagnosed with the long post-Covid complications of Avascular Necrosis (AVN), referred to as bone death. What is it, and why are patients developing it? What are the symptoms? Why does AIIMS want to do a multicentric study?



The health woes of the patients infected with Covid-19 in the second wave still continues as many are being diagnosed with the long post-Covid complications of Avascular Necrosis (AVN), referred to as bone death. To find a clinical explanation, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has submitted a proposal to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) seeking approval for a multicentric study to probe cases of AVN among Covid-19 recovered patients.

What is AVN or bone death?

The AVN is not a new ailment. Before Covid, this case was found due to smoking, alcoholism, and steroid use

linked to other conditions. AVN, or Osteonecrosis, is a common cause of painful hips in youngsters. It occurs due to the restricted blood supply to the bone, resulting in loss of its density and weight-bearing capacity. As the bone breaks into small pieces, the patient suffers unbearable pain and loses mobility completely. Hip bones are more prone to this. AIIMS has detected AVN among 50 Covid-19 recovered patients. Of this, five underwent hip replacement surgeries. At Mumbai's Nanavati Hospital, ten such patients have undergone hip replacements after recovering from Covid-19. Major private hospitals in states like Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka

and Kerala that recorded a high caseload of Covid-19 last year, have reported an average of 10 such cases so far.

In the second wave, due to the Delta variants, the infection among patients was severe. Patients developed acute pneumonia requiring heavy doses of steroids as a life-saving drug. Excessive and prolonged use of steroids to treat Covid-19 contributes in suppressing immunity when used for patients with low oxygen levels. As seen in AIIMS, out of the 50 patients, 12 didn't get steroids. So, intravascular blood clots among Covid-19 patients also lead to the death of the femoral head.

"Primarily, there are two causes of AVN among such patients. It could be because of excessive use of steroids during Covid-19 treatment or the inherent ability of Covid-19 to cause blood clots which disrupts the blood flow," said Dr Pradeep Bhosale, Director – Arthritis and Joint Replacement Surgery at

Nanavati Hospital, Mumbai.

As per doctors, if blood supply to the heart decreases, the patient can get a heart attack. An avascularity in the brain can cause a stroke. When this happens to a bone, it becomes soft and collapses. It may also affect the shoulder, knee, hand and foot. Dr Vijay Mohan, orthopedic and joint replacement surgeon and the present chairman of the academic forum of Kerala Orthopaedic Association, said, "It takes months for Covid recovered patients to develop the symptoms of AVN. Maybe after a year, with more studies, we would get a clinical explanation behind it."

In May 2021, Hinduja Hospital, Mahim, Mumbai published a research paper— 'Avascular necrosis as a part of 'long COVID-19' with only three case studies. One of the main findings was that patients generally take six months to a year to develop AVN post steroid exposure. But the

studied patients were 'symptomatic and developed early AVN presentation at a mean of 58 days after Covid-19 diagnosis.' During the second wave, a large number of Covid-19 patients developed mucormycosis or 'black fungus' that causes blindness, organ dysfunction, loss of body tissue, and even death.

Mucormycosis is caused by a group of moulds called mucormycetes which live in the environment. The infection causes death of tissues due to inadequate blood supply to the affected area. Doctors attributed this to the unregulated usage of steroids that compromise immunity, especially among patients with diabetes. AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria had advised that overuse of steroids should be controlled since a weakened immune system is a major cause behind the fungal infection.

## Motivated campaign launched to defame admin reforms: JNU on professor emeritus row

JNU on Wednesday said a "motivated campaign" had been launched to "defame administrative reforms and application of rules" using the "name of one Professor Emeritus" and stressed that it was not targeting "one professor"

The Jawaharlal Nehru University on Wednesday said a "motivated campaign" had been launched to "defame administrative reforms and application of rules" using the "name of one Professor Emeritus" and stressed that it was not targeting "one professor".

The varsity said there was a "huge skew" in the earlier appointments and this was done to make the process "broad-based" so that more Professor Emeriti can be appointed.

The university's statement came a day after the Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association accused it of spreading "blatant falsehood" over its letter to historian Romila Thapar asking her to submit her CV. They demanded that it immediately retract such letters sent to 12 professors emeriti, besides tendering a personal apology.

The varsity said "no single emeritus professor has been targeted, as has been falsely alleged", and "it has only sought to implement a rule that is part of the

university's ordinance". "Several news reports and social media opinions have been circulating giving one-sided views on the issue of Professor Emeritus position in JNU. Clearly, there is a motive to defame administrative reforms and application of rules that are based on statutes and ordinances of the university by the administration," it said in a statement. Last year, one such step taken by the JNU Executive Council, the highest statutory body of the university comprising deans, chairpersons, and renowned academicians from outside JNU, was to regulate the process of appointments and continuation of the positions of Professor Emeritus in the university, it said. "The goal was to make the process broad-based, time-bound and rule-based selection, so that Professors Emeriti are appointed across disciplines and schools in the university," the varsity said. Currently, there are 21 Professors Emeriti in JNU -- 17 from Social Sciences and Humanities and four from

Sciences. "One can see that there is a huge skew in the earlier appointments of Professor Emeriti. A substantive number of faculty members in JNU from various disciplines to have numerous academic achievements and laurels," the varsity said. Many eminent faculty members who could have positively guided upcoming researchers in many fields have missed out in the past from being appointed as a Professor Emeritus and the objective was to set an age limit and make the selection broad-based so that justice is given to the deserving retired faculty members, the varsity said. Accordingly, a committee was set up to analyse the current status of this position and recommend suitable steps for consideration by the Executive Council of the university. The committee gave its recommendations and the Executive Council approved it after deliberations. It was then put in the ordinance of the university. It was on the basis of this new ordinance that Professor Emeriti who had

attained the age of 75 were requested to submit their contributions to the university in the last few years so that a committee set up for reviewing the position could look into it. Since everyone is equal before the law, letters were sent to all 12 professor emeriti who have attained the age of 75 to know their availability and willingness to participate in the academic activities of the university, it said. "But a motivated campaign was soon launched using the name of one professor emeritus, among many, primarily to find fault with a new rule that was made part of the academic rules and regulations of the university much earlier," the varsity said. The JNU administration's decision to ask Thapar to submit her CV for assessment for her continuation as professor emerita had drawn sharp criticism from various quarters with JNUTA terming it "politically motivated", following which the university registrar on Monday said that there are 11 others who have also been asked to submit their CVs.



# Gilani resigns as Leader of Oppn in Pak Senate after backlash over his absence from house

**Gilani, the 69-year-old Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader, was among eight opposition senators who had skipped last Friday's Senate session during voting on the crucial State Bank of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill**

Pakistan's Leader of the Opposition in the Senate Yusuf Raza Gilani resigned on Monday after backlash over his absence from the house, which allowed the government to narrowly manage to get a controversial bill passed from the opposition-dominated upper house. Gilani, the 69-year-old Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader, was among eight opposition senators who had skipped last Friday's Senate session during voting on the crucial State Bank of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill.

Opposition parties, of which the PPP is a part, enjoy a comfortable majority in the upper house but the government presented the bill on a day when eight opposition Senators were absent, which

helped it pass the bill with a slim majority of one vote.

Gilani was criticised because due to his absence the vote was tied at 42 in support of the bill and an equal number of senators opposing. It created an opportunity for the Chairman Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani, to use his decisive vote in the favour of the government and the bill was passed. "I want to thank Gilani and the PPP (for support)," Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry had said after the bill was passed. Leader of the House in the Senate, Wasim Shehzad, in his tongue-in-cheek style thanked Gilani in the house and quoted a verse that there should be a "reason if he (Gilani) was absent during voting". Gilani was sacked as prime minister in 2012 after his conviction by the



Supreme Court for disobeying its orders and banned from politics for five years. He returned to the house only last year and the criticism proved too much for him. "I am not astonished by the harsh words from my opponents, but I am astonished by the silence of my well-wishers," Gilani said in a

speech in the Senate on Monday. "If ministers would have said something, it would have been an honour for me. But some turncoats are saying that I helped the government and I am saying that (the government) won because of your votes," he said, apparently referring to

Information Minister Chaudhry who was part of the PPP when Gilani was the prime minister. During the speech, he also lashed out at the Chairman for using his vote and ended his address by announcing his resignation as the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate.

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## Pakistan police call for PUBG game ban after family massacre

Pakistani police called for the online. Police said Ali Zain shot the winner is the last survivor. they will also come back to life, wildly popular PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG) game to dead his mother, two sisters and Kishwar told reporters in the as happened in the game". Often be banned after a teenager a brother on January 18, and eastern city of Lahore, adding complete isolation in his room and film series "The Hunger confessed to killing four claimed under questioning at the "so we have decided to and was addicted to the game. Games", PUBG has become members of his family in a rage weekend that the game had recommend a ban". Dawn newspaper quoted a Lahore police officer as saying one of the world's most popular after bingeing for days playing not the first incident of its nature," PUBG is an online multiplayer "battle royale" game in which Ali "fired at his family thinking that mobile games.

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# Afghan soil would not be used against neighbours, Taliban govt assures Pak NSA during Kabul visit Pakistan's

**National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf travelled to Afghanistan where he discussed trade ties and other issues with the top Afghan Taliban leaders.**



National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf travelled to Afghanistan where he discussed trade ties and other issues with the top Afghan Taliban leaders who assured him that the Afghan soil would not be used against its neighbours, including Pakistan. Yusuf, who led a high-level inter-ministerial delegation to Kabul on January 29-30, held talks with Afghanistan's acting Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi and Acting Foreign Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi. Hanafi assured the delegation led by Yusuf that the Afghan soil would not be used against its neighbours, including Pakistan, Dawn newspaper reported. "The policy of the Islamic Emirate (of Afghanistan) is clear that we will not allow anyone to use Afghan soil against [our] neighbours and other countries," a statement issued by the presidential palace in Kabul quoted Hanafi as saying, according to the paper. Pakistan is yet to recognise Afghanistan's

government led by the Taliban. Yusuf - the third senior Pakistani official to visit Kabul since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in August just before his visit said that Pakistan was "not completely optimistic" of the Taliban government as organised terrorist networks are still operating in the war-torn nation and the Afghan soil is still being used against his country. The top security official made the remarks while briefing the National Assembly Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs here on Thursday where he spoke about the threat posed to Pakistan by the presence of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Afghanistan. His remarks came in the wake of spike in terrorist attacks in Pakistan since August after the Taliban came to power, belying Islamabad's expectations that they would take harsh measures against their former comrades-in-arms and expel them. The Afghan Taliban had persuaded Pakistan to enter into talks with the TTP,

which Islamabad did with the vain hope that the Afghan Taliban would use their influence to tame the militant group. The TTP announced a month-long ceasefire on November 9 and presented tough conditions, including implementation of their brand of Shariah and release of all detained rebels. The government faced a backlash and refused to accept the demands and the TTP refused to extend the ceasefire once it ended. The TTP, known as the Pakistan Taliban, was set up as an umbrella group of several militant outfits in 2007. Its main aim is to impose its strict brand of Islam across Pakistan. The group, which is believed to be close to al-Qaeda, has been blamed for several deadly attacks across Pakistan, including an attack on the Army headquarters in 2009, assaults on military bases and the 2008 bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad. Meanwhile, a statement issued by the NSA

office here on Sunday said that during his visit to Afghanistan, Yusuf, who also heads Afghanistan Inter-Ministerial Coordination Cell (AICC), discussed trade ties and other issues with the leaders of the host country. "The objective of the visit was to discuss with Afghan leadership the humanitarian requirements of the country and Pakistan's proposals for deepening economic engagement to overcome the current challenges Afghanistan is facing," it said. The statement confirmed Yusuf's meetings with Hanafi and Acting Foreign Minister Muttaqi, but said they discussed the current situation in Afghanistan and strengthening of bilateral relations between the two countries. He also held delegation-level meetings with other relevant Afghan Ministers and senior officials dealing with humanitarian and economic issues. The visit yielded substantive outcomes in terms of forward movement on trade facilitation and

social sector support as both sides agreed to establish a National Level Coordination Mechanism for enhancing facilitation at Border Crossing Points, it said. They also agreed to initiate barter trade, modalities for which will be worked out immediately. During the two-day visit, Pakistan offered Afghanistan capacity building and training support in multiple sectors including Health, Education, Banking, Customs, Railways and Aviation, among others, it added. Both sides also reiterated their commitment to early completion of the three major connectivity projects, CASA-1000, the Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India (TAPI) pipeline, and Trans-Afghan Rail project. Afghanistan and Pakistan emphasized their commitment to ensuring peace and stability in both countries, the statement added.



# Former Afghan officials, others killed by Taliban, says UN report



A United Nations report seen by Reuters says the Taliban and its allies are believed to have killed scores of former Afghan officials, security force members and people who worked with the international military contingent since the US-led pullout. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' report to the U.N. Security Council paints a picture of worsening living conditions for Afghanistan's 39 million people despite an end of combat with the Taliban's takeover in August. "An entire complex social and economic system is shutting down," Guterres said. The report sounds the latest in a series of warnings the UN chief has issued in recent months about the humanitarian and

economic crises that accelerated after the Taliban seized Kabul as the last US-led foreign troops left and international donors cut critical financial aid. Guterres recommended the council

approve a restructuring of the UN mission to deal with the situation, including the creation of a new human rights monitoring unit.

The UN mission "continues to receive credible allegations of killings, enforced disappearances and other violations" against former officials, security force members and people who worked for the U.S.-led international military contingent despite a general amnesty announced by the Taliban, the report said. The mission has determined as credible reports

**A United Nations report has said the Taliban and its allies killed scores of former Afghan officials, security force members and people who worked with the international military contingent since the US-led pullout**

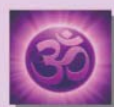
that more than 100 of those individuals have been killed more than two-thirds of them allegedly by the Taliban or their affiliates since Aug. 15, it said. There also are credible allegations of the extra-judicial killings of at least 50 people suspected of belonging to the local branch of the Islamic State militant group, according to the report. "Human rights defenders and media workers continue to come under attack, intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment and killings," it said.

## Election fraud trial of Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi set for Feb 14

**The election fraud trial of Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi will begin on February 14**



Her supporters and rights groups say the cases against her were contrived by the military to justify its takeover and prevent her from returning to politics. The legal official said the trial is scheduled to last 180 days, with the prosecution being given the first 90 days to present its case, after which the defence has 90 days. The court sessions will be held on Monday every week. Ahead of the one-year anniversary of Myanmar's military takeover, the US announced on Monday new sanctions on top members of the country's judiciary — including its attorney general, supreme court chief justice and others



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# US blocks Pak ambassador Masood Khan's appointment over 'possible terror links'

**The United States has blocked the appointment of the next Pakistani ambassador, Masood Khan, over possible terror links.**

The United States has blocked the appointment of the next Pakistan ambassador, Masood Khan, over possible terror links. US Congressman Scott Perry wrote to the US President, Joe Biden, and requested him to reject Masood Khan as 'the next ambassador. The US Congressman mentioned that Masood was known to have praised Burhan Wani.

In his letter to the US President, US Congressman Scott Perry wrote: "I write with grave concern about the appointment of Masood Khan as Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States. Imran Khan's nomination of a bona fide terrorist sympathizer 'working to undermine our interests in the region — as well as the security of our Indian allies — can only be described as a

breath-taking lack of judgment at best, and a demonstration of Islamabad's unmitigated contempt for the United States at worst."

The US Congressman urged President Joe Biden to reject "any diplomatic credentials presented to him by Masood Khan". The letter said: "While I am encouraged that the State Department has reportedly placed a pause on approving Masood Khan as the new Ambassador of Pakistan, a pause is not enough. I urge you to reject any diplomatic credentials presented to you by Masood Khan and reject any effort by the Government of Pakistan to install this jihadist as Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States." In his letter, the Congressman mentioned that

Masood Khan had "encouraged young men to emulate jihadists like Burhan Wani, a former commander of Hizbul Mujahideen who dedicated his life to 'holy war against India'. The letter added: "Masood Khan has praised both terrorists and foreign terrorist organizations —

including Hizbul Mujahideen — in stark and unsettling terms. In 2017, Khan lashed out at the United States for designating the leader of Hizbul Mujahideen for sanctions, calling those sanctions "unjustifiable" In 2019, Khan willingly appeared alongside

Fazlur Rehman Khalil, a Specially Designated Global

Department in 2014 due to his "close relationship with al-

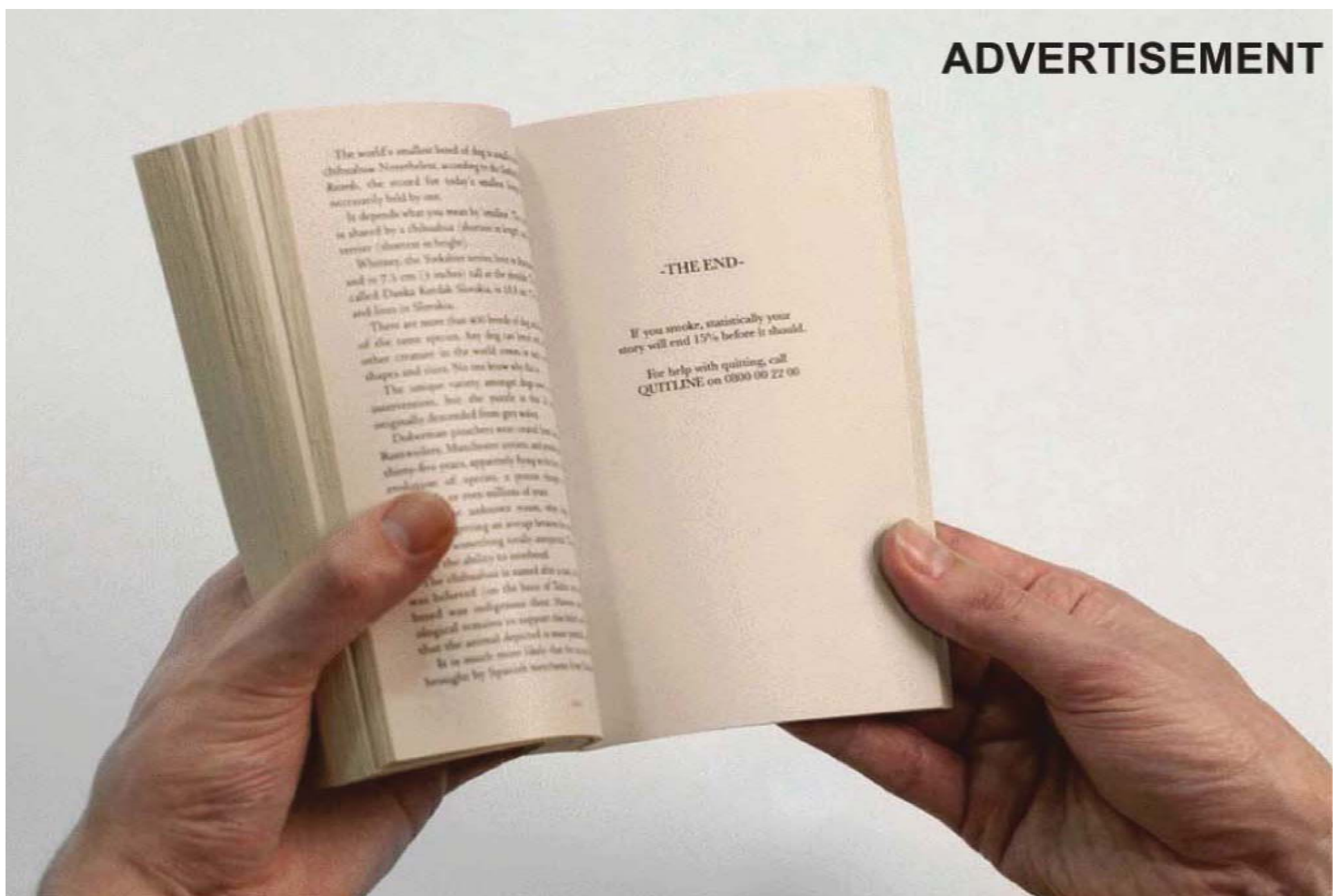


'Terrorist (SDGT) who is the founder of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), a US-designated foreign terrorist organization."

The Congressman mentioned that Khalil's SDGT designation was justified by the Treasury

Qaida, including with Usama Bin Laden (UBL) prior to his death. Khalil was a key member of UBL's International Islamic Front and a cosignatory of LUBL's first fatwa, issued in 1998, calling for attacks against the United States."

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# 770-km megaflash lightning in US sets new world record, says UN



**The new record for the longest detected megaflash measured in the southern US on April 29, 2020, stretched a full 768 kilometres, or 477.2 miles, across Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas**

in northern Argentina.

"These are extraordinary records from single lightning flash events," Randall Cerveny, the WMO rapporteur of weather and climate extremes, said in the statement. The technology used to detect the length and duration of lightning flashes has improved dramatically in recent years, enabling records far greater than what was once the norm.

"Environmental extremes are living measurements of the power of nature, as well as scientific progress in being able to make such assessments," he said.

The previous "megaflash" records, from 2018 and 2019, were the first verified with new satellite lightning imagery technology and were both

more than double the prior records using data collected from ground-based technology.

"It is likely that even greater extremes still exist, and that we will be able to observe them as lightning detection technology improves," Cerveny said. The WMO highlighted that the new record strikes happened in the Great Plains in North America and the La Plata basin in South America, known as hotspots for so-called Mesoscale Convective System (MCS) thunderstorms, which enable megaflashes. It stressed that the flashes that set the new records were not isolated events, but happened during active and large-scale thunderstorms, making them all the more dangerous. "Lightning is a major hazard that claims many

lives every year," WMO chief Petteri Taalas said in the statement. "The findings highlight important public lightning safety concerns for electrified clouds where flashes can travel extremely large distances." WMO pointed out that the only lightning-safe locations are big buildings with wiring and plumbing, or fully enclosed, metal-topped vehicles. The UN agency maintains official global records for a range of weather and climate-related statistics, including temperature, rainfall and wind. All such records are stored in the WMO Archive of Weather and Climate Extremes. The archive currently includes two other lightning-related extremes. One is for the most people killed by a single direct strike of lightning, when 21 people died in Zimbabwe in 1975 as they huddled for safety in a hut that was hit. The other is for an indirect strike, when 469 people died in Dronka, Egypt when lightning struck a set of oil tanks in 1994, causing burning oil to flood the town.

A single flash of lightning in the United States nearly two years ago cut across the sky for nearly 770 kilometres, setting a new world record, the United Nations said on Tuesday. The new record for the longest detected megaflash, measured in the southern US on April 29, 2020, stretched a full 768 kilometres, or 477.2 miles, across Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. That is equivalent to the distance between New York City and Columbus, Ohio, or between London and the German city of Hamburg, the UN's World Meteorological

Organization (WMO) pointed out in a statement. That lightning bolt zig-zagged some 60 kilometres further than the previous record, set in southern Brazil on October 31, 2018. The WMO's committee of experts on weather and climate extremes also reported a new world record for the duration of a lightning flash. A single flash that developed continuously through a thunderstorm over Uruguay and northern Argentina on June 18, 2020 lasted for 17.1 seconds — 0.37 seconds longer than the previous record set on March 4, 2019, also

## 'Milder doesn't mean mild': Omicron drives US deaths higher than in Delta wave

**The Omicron variant sweeping across the US is driving the daily death toll higher than during last year's delta wave, with deaths likely to keep rising for days or even weeks**



Omicron, the highly contagious coronavirus variant sweeping across the US, is driving the daily American death toll higher than during last fall's delta wave, with deaths likely to keep rising for days or even weeks. The seven-day rolling average for daily new Covid-19 deaths in the U.S. has been climbing since mid-November, reaching 2,267 on Thursday and surpassing a September peak of 2,100 when delta was the dominant variant. Now omicron is estimated to account for nearly all the virus circulating in the nation. And even though it causes less severe disease for most people, the fact that it is more transmissible means

more people are falling ill and dying. "Omicron will push us over a million deaths," said Andrew Noymer, a public health professor at the University of California, Irvine. "That will cause a lot of soul searching. There will be a lot of discussion about what we could have done differently, how many of the deaths were preventable. The average daily death toll is now at the same level as last February, when the country was slowly coming off its all-time high of 3,300 a day. More Americans are taking precautionary measures against the virus than before the omicron surge, according to a AP-NORC poll this week. But many people, fatigued by crisis, are returning

to some level of normality with hopes that vaccinations or prior infections will protect them.

A Omicron symptoms are often milder, and some infected people show none, researchers agree. But like the flu, it can be deadly, especially for people who are older, have other health problems or who are unvaccinated.

"Importantly, 'milder' does not mean 'mild,'" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said this week during a White House briefing. Until recently, Chuck Culotta was a healthy middle-aged man who ran a power-washing business in Milford, Delaware. As the

omicron wave was ravaging the Northeast, he felt the first symptoms before Christmas and tested positive on Christmas Day. He died less than a week later, on Dec. 31, nine days short of his 51st birthday. He was unvaccinated, said his brother,





# US brought 'pure Nazis' to power in Ukraine: Russia at UN

**Tensions between Russia and the United States over Moscow's troop build-up near Ukraine spilled into the United Nations Security Council with both countries accusing each other of being "provocative."**

Russia accused the West on Monday of "whipping up tensions" over Ukraine and said the US had brought "pure Nazis" to power in Kyiv as the UN Security Council held a stormy and bellicose debate on Moscow's troop buildup near its southern neighbour.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield shot back that Russia's growing military force of more than 100,000 troops along Ukraine's borders was "the largest mobilization" in Europe in decades, adding that there has been a spike in cyberattacks and Russian disinformation.

"And they are attempting, without any factual basis, to paint Ukraine and Western countries as the aggressors to fabricate a pretext for attack," she said.

The harsh exchanges in the Security Council came as Moscow lost an attempt to block the meeting and reflected the gulf between the two nuclear powers. It was the first open session where all protagonists in the Ukraine crisis spoke publicly, even though the UN's most powerful body took no action.

Hours later, the Russian government sent a written response to a US proposal aimed at deescalating the crisis, according

to three Biden administration officials. The officials all spoke on the condition of anonymity. A State Department official declined to offer details of the response, saying it "would be unproductive to negotiate in public" and that they would leave it up to Russia to discuss the counterproposal.

Although more high-level diplomacy is expected this week, talks between the US and Russia have so far failed to ease tensions in the crisis, with the West saying Moscow is preparing for an invasion. Russia denies it is planning to attack. It demands pledges that Ukraine will never join NATO, a halt to the deployment of NATO weapons near Russian borders and a rollback of the alliance's forces from Eastern Europe. NATO and the US call those nonstarters. Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the US of interfering in his country's internal affairs and seeking "a classic example of megaphone diplomacy." Thomas-Greenfield countered that the US has held over 100 private meetings in the past few weeks with Russian officials and European and Ukrainian colleagues and "it's now time" for a discussion in public.

To Russia's assertion that the US called the meeting to make all council members feel uncomfortable, she retorted, "Imagine how uncomfortable you would be if you had 100,000 troops sitting on your border."

After the council gave a green light for the meeting, Nebenzia accused the Biden administration of

chamber as the Ukrainian Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya started to speak. "How long Russia will pressure, will pursue a clear attempt to push Ukraine and its partners into a Kafka trap?" Kyslytsya asked.

The vote on holding an open meeting passed 10-2, with Russia and China opposed, and India, Gabon and Kenya abstaining. Nine "yes" votes were needed for the meeting to go ahead.

The US and its allies had pressed to hold the meeting Monday, the last day of Norway's rotating presidency of the council, before Russia takes over Tuesday for the month of February.

Any statement or resolution by the Security Council is extremely unlikely, given Russia's veto power and its ties with others on the council, including China.

After all 15 council members spoke, the US and Russia sparred again, with Thomas-Greenfield saying she was "disappointed" in Nebenzia's comments, stressing that Russian threats of aggression are "provocative." US President Joe Biden said in a statement that the meeting was "a critical step in rallying the world

to speak out in one voice" to reject the use of force and seek military de-escalation. At the start of a White House meeting with the ruling emir of Qatar, Biden said the US continues to engage in "nonstop diplomacy," but "we are ready no matter what happens."

The State Department on Monday ordered the departure of families of American diplomats in Belarus, where Russia is deploying troops, tanks and other materiel in what Moscow says is a military exercise. Western officials fear Russia's troop buildup could use Belarus as a jumping-off point to invade neighboring Ukraine, especially its capital, Kyiv, from the north. Tens of thousands of other Russian troops already are staged elsewhere along Ukraine's borders.

Belarus officials already have pushed most US Embassy staff out of the country, leaving fewer family members to be affected by Monday's order. The US has also drawn down its diplomatic presence in Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken are expected to speak by phone Tuesday, according to the Russian Foreign Ministry. A senior State Department official confirmed the Russian account.

**The State Department on Monday ordered the departure of families of American diplomats in Belarus, where Russia is deploying troops, tanks and other materiel in what Moscow says is a military exercise.**

"whipping up tensions and rhetoric and provoking escalation."

"You are almost pulling for this," he said in his speech to the council, looking at Thomas-Greenfield. "You want it to happen. You're waiting for it to happen, as if you want to make your words become a reality."

He blamed the US for the 2014 ouster of a Kremlin-friendly president in Kyiv, saying it brought to power "nationalists, radicals, Russophobes and pure Nazis" and created the antagonism that exists between Ukraine and Russia. Nebenzia pointedly left the council



# US, UK ready to punish Putin associates if Russia invades Ukraine



**The United States and its allies have prepared a list of Russian elites in or near President Vladimir Putin's inner circle to punish with sanctions if Russia invades Ukraine**

The United States and its allies have prepared a list of Russian elites in or near President Vladimir Putin's inner circle to punish with sanctions if Russia sends troops into Ukraine, a senior U.S. official said on Monday. Britain urged Putin to "step back from the brink" after the Russian buildup of troops near Ukraine stoked fears of war, and also warned that any incursion would trigger sanctions against companies and people with close links to the Kremlin. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov called the British warning "very disturbing", saying it made Britain less attractive to investors and would hurt British companies.

"It's not often you see or hear such direct threats to attack business," he said. "An attack by a given country on Russian business implies retaliatory measures, and these measures will be formulated based on our interests if necessary."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was due to speak to Putin by telephone on Monday and travel to Ukraine on Tuesday.

"What I will say to President Putin, as I've said before, is that I think we really all need to step back from the brink, and I think Russia needs to step back from the brink," Johnson told reporters Britain

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The U.N. Security Council met in public on Monday, at the request of the United States, to discuss Russia's troop build-up. The United States described the meeting of the 15-member body as a chance for Russia to explain itself. At the meeting, Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, Vasily Nebenzya, said the West's assertion that it had

amassed 100,000 troops near Ukraine had not been confirmed by the international body.

He said the United States' talk of war was provocative, said Russia frequently deployed troops in its own territory, and that Ukraine's crisis was a domestic issue.

China's ambassador to the United Nations said China did not view Russia's troops near the border as a threat and urged all parties to not aggravate the situation. read more

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, London has become the haven of choice for a vast outflow of money from former Soviet republics.

Opponents of Putin have long urged the West to get tough on Russian money, though oligarchs and Russian officials continue to flaunt their wealth at Europe's most luxurious destinations.

Both Washington and London declined to name the individuals they planned to target.

"The individuals we have identified are in or near the inner circles of the Kremlin and play a role in government decision making or are at a minimum complicit in the Kremlin's destabilizing behavior," the U.S. official in Washington said.

"Putin's cronies will no longer be able to use their spouses or other family members as proxies to evade sanctions. Sanctions would cut them off from the international financial system and ensure that

they and their family members will no longer be able to enjoy the perks of parking their money in the West and attending elite Western universities."

Although Russia, which seized Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and backs pro-Russian rebels fighting government forces in east Ukraine, denies planning any further incursion, it is demanding sweeping security guarantees including a NATO promise never to admit Ukraine.

Some NATO countries including the United States and Britain have sent arms to Ukraine although they have ruled out sending troops there to fight.

Poland, a NATO member that borders Ukraine as well as the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and Belarus - which is hosting Russian drills - said it had offered Ukraine tens of thousands of munitions, and was awaiting a reply.

British foreign minister Liz Truss on Sunday announced a plan for new legislation this week to broaden the scope of sanctions that can be applied to Russia. Britain has already imposed sanctions on about 180 people and 48 entities since Russia annexed Crimea, including six people it says are close to Putin. The sanctions allow Britain to bar individuals from entering and to freeze their assets.

Still, Britain has in the past taken a softer line on Russia's business elite than the United States - for instance sparing Igor Sechin, one of Russia's most powerful men as CEO of oil producer Rosneft, whom Washington sanctioned in 2014. The European Union, many of whose members are in NATO, has also threatened "strong political consequences and massive economic costs" for Russia over any new incursion into Ukraine. read more Europe's dependence on Russian energy supplies weakens the West's hand. The United States has asked top gas producer Qatar and other major exporters to study whether they can supply extra gas to Europe if Russian flows are disrupted.

**US blocks Pak ambassador Masood Khan's appointment over 'possible terror links'**



The United States has blocked the appointment of the next Pakistan ambassador, Masood Khan, over possible terror links. US Congressman Scott Perry wrote to the US President, Joe Biden, and requested him to reject Masood Khan as the next ambassador. The US Congressman mentioned that Masood was known to have praised Burhan Wani.

In his letter to the US President, US Congressman Scott Perry wrote: "I write with grave concern about the appointment of Masood Khan as Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States. Imran Khan's nomination of a bona fide terrorist sympathizer 'working to undermine our interests in the region — as well as the security of our Indian allies — can only be described as a breathtaking lack of judgment at best, and a demonstration of Islamabad's unmitigated contempt for the United States at worst."

The US Congressman urged President Joe Biden to reject "any diplomatic credentials presented to him by Masood Khan". The letter said: "While I am encouraged that the State Department has reportedly placed a pause on approving Masood Khan as the new Ambassador of Pakistan, a pause is not enough. I urge you to reject any diplomatic credentials presented to you by Masood Khan and reject any effort by the Government of Pakistan to install this jihadist as Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States." In his letter, the Congressman mentioned that Masood Khan had "encouraged young men to emulate jihadists like Burhan Wani, a former commander of Hizbul Mujahideen who dedicated his life to 'holy war against India'."

The letter added: "Masood Khan has praised both terrorists and foreign terrorist organizations — including Hizbul Mujahideen — in stark and unsettling terms."



# Blizzard batters US East Coast with deep snow, winds, flooding



A nor'easter with hurricane-force wind gusts battered much of the US East Coast, flinging heavy snow that made travel treacherous or impossible, flooding coastlines, and threatening to leave bitter cold in its wake.

A nor'easter with hurricane-force wind gusts battered much of the East Coast on Saturday, flinging heavy snow that made travel treacherous or impossible, flooding coastlines, and threatening to leave bitter cold in its wake. The storm thrashed parts of 10 states, with blizzard warnings that stretched from Virginia to Maine. Philadelphia and New York saw plenty of wind and snow, but Boston was in the crosshairs. The city could get more than 2 feet (61 centimeters) of snow by the time it moves out early Sunday.

Winds gusted as high as 83 mph (134 kph) on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. More than 22 inches (45 centimeters) of snow had fallen by midafternoon on part of Long Island in New York, while Bayville, New Jersey, had 19 inches (48 centimeters). The wind scoured the ground bare in some spots and piled the snow into huge drifts in others. Forecasters watched closely for new snowfall records, especially in Boston, where the heaviest

snow was expected later Saturday. The Boston area's modern snowfall record is 27.6 inches (70 centimeters), set in 2003.

New York City and Philadelphia were far from setting all-time records but still saw significant snowfall, with at least 7.5 inches (19 centimeters) in New York's Central Park and at the Philadelphia airport. Many flights at airports serving New York, Boston and Philadelphia were canceled Saturday, according to FlightAware. More than 4,500 flights were canceled across the U.S., though airports in the Northeast didn't report evidence of mass strandings, given that the storm was anticipated and many airlines called off flights in advance. Amtrak canceled all its high-speed Acela trains on the busy Boston-to-Washington corridor and canceled or limited other service. In Boston, Dominic Torre was out driving his snow dump truck since the storm began overnight, picking up loads of plowed snow from the streets of and dumping it in unused parking lots known as "snow farms." It was about time for such a big storm, he said.

"You know, we were overdue," he

said. "It's pretty hairy, you know, a lot of snow. A lot of snow, a lot of trips, a lot of loads. And it ain't over yet. It ain't done yet."

Videos on social media showed wind and waves battering North Weymouth, south of Boston, flooding streets with a slurry of frigid

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water. Other videos showed a street underwater on Nantucket and waves crashing against the windows of a building in Plymouth. Over 120,000 homes and businesses lost power in Massachusetts, with failures mounting. No other states reported widespread outages.

Climate change, particularly the warming ocean, probably influenced the strength of the storm, atmospheric researchers said. Much warmer ocean waters "are certainly playing a role in the strengthening of the storm system and increased moisture available for the storm," said University of Oklahoma meteorology professor Jason Furtado. "But it isn't the only thing." The storm had two saving

graces: Dry snow less capable of snapping trees and tearing down power lines, and its timing on a weekend, when schools were closed and few people were commuting.

Parts of 10 states were under blizzard warnings at some point: Maine, New

Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey, along with much of the Delmarva Peninsula in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia.

The National Weather Service considers a storm a blizzard if it has snowfall or blowing snow, as well as winds of at least 35 mph (56 kph) that reduce visibility to a quarter-mile or less for at least three hours. In many areas, Saturday's storm met those criteria. Rhode Island, all of which was under a blizzard warning, banned all nonemergency road travel.

In West Hartford, Connecticut, a tractor-trailer jackknifed on Interstate 84, closing several lanes. Massachusetts banned heavy trucks from interstate highways. Ocean City, Maryland, recorded at least a foot (30 centimeters) of snow. Maryland State Police tweeted that troopers had received more than 670 calls for service and

responded to over 90 crashes by midmorning.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul advised people to stay home and warned of below-zero windchills after the storm passes. The state had declared a state of emergency Friday evening.

"This is a very serious storm, very serious. We've been preparing for this. This could be life-threatening," Hochul said. "It's high winds, heavy snow, blizzard conditions — all the elements of a classic nor'easter." Police on Long Island said they had to help motorists stuck in the snow, and an elderly man shoveling snow died after falling into a swimming pool. In Philadelphia, few drivers ventured onto streets covered in knee-high drifts.

Hardy New Englanders took the storm in stride.

Dave McGillivray, race director for the Boston Marathon, jokingly invited the public to his suburban Boston home on Saturday for a free snow-shoveling clinic.

"I will provide the driveway and multiple walkways to ensure your training is conducted in the most lifelike situation," he said.

Washington and Baltimore got some snow but were largely spared. The worst of the nor'easter was expected to blow by Sunday morning into Canada, where several provinces were under warnings.





# Who is happy and who is sad with Union Budget 2022-23?

**Here's everything you need to know about who is pleased and who is disappointed with the Union Budget 2022-23**

Introduction of Digital Rupee, education, urban revamp initiative, and special programme to address mental health issues stood out in the Union Budget 2022-23, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. India Today spoke to experts to simplify the budget proposals for the benefit of its readers. Here's what they said: Dikshu Kureja, infrastructure expert and urban planner, told India Today, "The budget, anchored on a vision for India at 100 years, has created a blueprint for sustainable development for India's modernisation and transformation."

"The emphasis on urban planning as a medium for examining the development of our cities is a very welcome development. As India's urban population continues to grow and is expected to account for

half of the country's total population by 2047, a significant shift toward urbanisation is required to prevent our cities from collapsing," he said.

"The proposed focus on Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities will result in more balanced development. The allocation of Rs 250 crores to five institutions for the development of new urban planning ideas will encourage innovation. This would necessitate a reimagining of our cities based on a model of sustainable development," he said.

Misra said, "Charging income from the transfer of digital assets with a 30 per cent tax is a better outcome that puts an end to the ambiguity surrounding crypto-assets."

"The fact that the surcharge on capital gains on unlisted shares, such as ESOPs, will be capped at 15 per cent is also a plus, as it was previously limited to listed

shares."

Shruti Adani, Co-founder of Wellnest, said, "There is an undeniable need to digitise healthcare data, so a 'National Digital Health Ecosystem' is a wonderful initiative."

"I hope that the government collaborates with the numerous health-tech companies developing HIMS/EMR software to avoid duplication of effort and loss of value."

"I believe that the government should establish specific SOPs for medical software companies [or impose international standards] and focus on HIE, or Health Information Exchange, which allows multiple software to work with one another under a single umbrella [NDHE] to seamlessly and securely share information in order to provide optimal care to the patient," she said.

Ujjwal Singh, CEO and

President of Infinity Learn, said that the Budget 2022-23 was inclusive. "We are pleased that the government has recognised the importance of digital learning provided by EdTech companies in India," Singh said.

"The expansion of the PM e-VIDYA initiative from 12 to 200 TV channels will provide the segment with the requisite boost. Furthermore, the availability of regional language educational modules from Class 1 to Class 12 will enhance literacy rates in India's hinterlands, in addition to the metro cities. This will be the catalyst for socioeconomic change, made possible by technology," said Ujjwal Singh. "Education, in particular, has taken a new path that has made technology-based learning, whether online or blended, indispensable to our educational systems. Through democratised access to

education, digital learning has the potential to empower the country's grassroots population, allowing for continued learning without infrastructural challenges across India," he said.

NCPEDP executive director Arman Ali expressed his dissatisfaction with the lack of specific allocation in the NGO sector. "It is disheartening to note that persons with disabilities receive no substantive mention in the FM's Budget Speech for 2022-23," Ali said. "The disability sector had been demanding an insurance scheme for all persons with disabilities, and the FM's announcement of payment of an annuity/lump sum amount to persons with disabilities during the lifetime of a parent/guardian attaining 60 years does not provide much relief to persons with disabilities," Arman Ali said.



# Report on London police highlights culture of misogyny and racism

London police officers routinely made jokes about rape and exchanged racist messages, according to a report from England's official police watchdog that detailed a pattern of misogyny and bullying in the force, the latest blow to an embattled service that has faced intense scrutiny in recent months. The findings reflected a troubling culture within the London Metropolitan Police Service, according to the report released Tuesday by the Independent Office for Police Conduct, the police watchdog, which

made more than a dozen recommendations to tackle the problem. It said the episodes it detailed were not isolated ones or the work of a few "bad apples." The report comes amid growing calls for increased scrutiny of the force after the kidnapping, rape and murder of Sarah Everard, a 33-year-old London woman, by a Metropolitan Police Service officer in March 2021 highlighted broader concerns about misogyny within policing, and violence against women and girls. "The

behaviour we uncovered was disgraceful and fell well below the standards expected of the officers involved," Sal Naseem, the police watchdog's regional director, said in a statement, adding that the "issues are not isolated or historic." Naseem said that the watchdog welcomed current efforts to root out problematic behaviour and attitudes from the police force, including a continuing formal independent review of the standards and culture within the service, but "more is required." "Our recommendations focus on the identified cultural issues and aim to

ensure that those who work for the force feel safe with their colleagues, and that communities feel safe with those whose job is to protect them," Naseem said. The Metropolitan Police Service said in a statement that the actions of the police officers in central London that the report detailed do "not represent the values" of the force. The report was the result of findings from a series of investigations into the Metropolitan Police Service that uncovered evidence of bullying and discrimination within its ranks.

# SpaceX successfully launches Italian satellite

SpaceX Falcon-9 two-stage rocket topped with Italian Cosmo-SkyMed satellite successfully lifted off on Monday at 6:11 pm EST (Tuesday at 4:41 am as per IST.) The launch took place from Florida's Cape Canaveral Space Force Station.

The launch was to initially take place on January 27. But it was postponed due to bad weather.

The booster landing was the 104th that SpaceX has pulled off to

date during an orbital mission, SpaceX production manager Jessie Anderson was quoted as saying during the webcast of Monday's launch.

This particular first stage had flown twice before, as a side booster on SpaceX's massive Falcon Heavy rocket. The mission marked the first time that a Heavy side booster had been reconfigured and launched alone as a Falcon 9, Anderson said. Such reuse is key to SpaceX's long-

range goals, as the company aims to reduce the cost of spaceflight to make ambitious exploration feats such as Mars colonisation economically feasible. SpaceX also aimed to recover the CSG-2 mission's payload fairing -- the protective "nose cone" that surrounds a payload during launch -- Monday for reuse down the road, Anderson said. The Cosmo-SkyMed programme consists of two

satellites, which are designed to observe Earth using synthetic aperture radar (SAR), the report said.

CSG is an enhanced follow-on to the original Cosmo-SkyMed system.

The first CSG satellite, CSG-1, launched atop an Arianespace Soyuz rocket from Kourou, French Guiana in December 2019 and is currently operating in a sun-synchronous polar orbit with an altitude of 385 miles (620 km).

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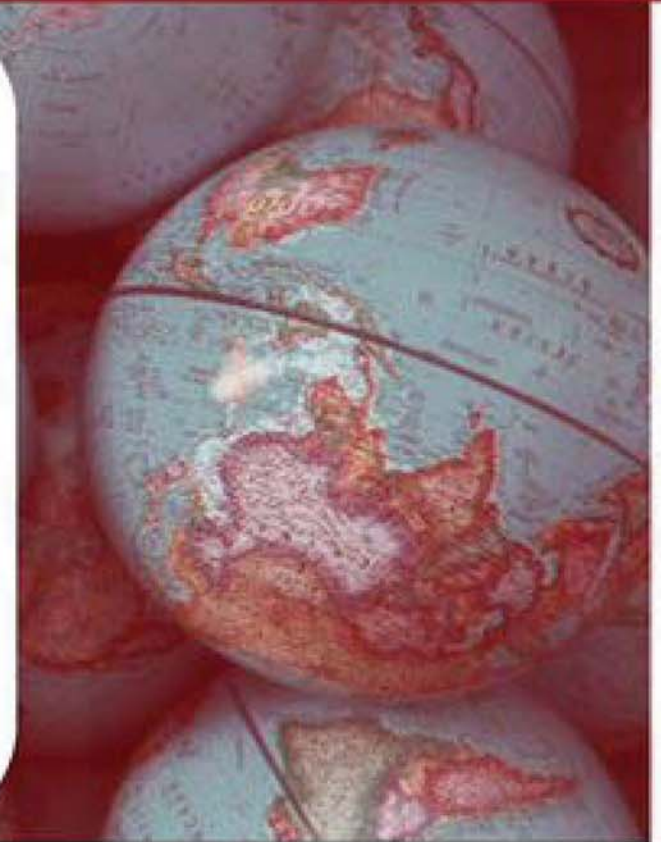
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# Trump's words and deeds, reveal depths of his drive to retain power

A series of new remarks by Donald Trump about the aftermath of the 2020 election and new disclosures about his actions in trying to forestall its result - including discussing the use of the national security apparatus to seize voting machines - have stripped away any pretense that the events of January 6, 2021, were anything but the culmination of the former president's single-minded pursuit of retaining power.

Trump said on Sunday that Mike Pence "could have overturned the election," acknowledging for the first time that the aim of the pressure campaign he focused on his vice president had simply been to change the election's result, not just to buy time to root out supposed fraud, as he had long insisted. Those efforts ended at the Capitol with a violent riot of Trump supporters demanding that Pence block the Electoral College vote.

Over the weekend, Trump also dangled, for the first time, that he could issue pardons to anyone facing charges for participating in the January 6 attack if he is elected president again - the latest example of a years-long flirtation with political violence. And, ignoring what happened the last time he encouraged a mass demonstration, Trump urged his supporters to gather "in the biggest protests we have ever had" if prosecutors in New York and Atlanta moved further against him. The prosecutor examining Trump's efforts to overturn the election in Georgia immediately asked the FBI to conduct a "risk assessment" of her building's security. The events of January 6 played out so publicly and so brutally - the instigating speech by Trump, the flag-waving march to the Capitol, the violent clashes with the police, the defiling of the seat of democracy - and have since been so extensively reexamined that at times it can seem as if there were little more to be discovered about what led up to that day.

Then, The New York Times reported this week that Trump had directed his lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, to ask the Department of Homeland Security whether it could legally seize voting machines in three key swing states. Trump also raised, in an Oval Office meeting with Attorney General William Barr, the possibility of the Justice



Department's seizing the machines.

Both ideas quickly fizzled.

But historians say the episodes and Trump's new comments acknowledging his determination to stay in power - and his effective embrace of the rioters who stormed the Capitol, whom he said must be treated "fairly" - have newly underscored the fragility of the nation's democratic systems.

Jeffrey Engel, director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University, said voters were understandably desensitized, if not numb, after a year in which Trump methodically sought to undermine faith in the electoral process.

"I actually think the American public is dramatically underplaying how significant and dangerous this is," he said, "because we cannot process the basic truth of what we are learning about President Trump's efforts - which is we've never had a president before who fundamentally placed his own personal interests above the nation's."

Already, Trump is gearing up for a potential third run for the White House, announcing on Monday that his political accounts had banked \$122 million - a show of financial force as some polls show his support softening among Republicans.

In the year since he left office, he has systematically tried to remove those who were obstacles to him in 2020 and its aftermath: seeking to drive out of office the Republicans who voted to impeach him on charges of inciting the riot, recruiting challengers to Republican officials who certified the 2020 vote, and backing new candidates to

serve as election administrators and legislators in key states.

Trump has made clear he is not necessarily seeking more Republican officials. He wants more election-denying Republican officials. On Tuesday, Trump appeared in a new television ad attacking Georgia's Republican governor, Brian Kemp, with whom he has feuded for

**Trump's discussion of pardons and of Pence's potential to overturn the election, as well as his encouragement of another mass rally - against law - enforcement officials - were met mostly with a shrug among Capitol Hill Republicans**

refusing to overturn the result there. He also hosted a fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago for Joe Kent, a Republican in Washington who is challenging one of the House Republicans who voted to impeach him.

And on Wednesday, Tudor Dixon, a Republican candidate for governor of Michigan, where Trump lost and sought to undermine the results, is holding a Mar-a-Lago fundraiser of her own. Meanwhile, congressional investigators with the Democratic-led January 6 commission are busily examining what took place inside the White House in the weeks and months leading up to that day, interviewing senior administration officials and issuing subpoenas. A central focus of their inquiry is the attempt by Trump's legal team and advisers to persuade him to use his presidential powers to deploy national security agencies to seize voting machines.

It has been known for months that some advisers, including lawyer Sidney Powell and

Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, pitched Trump in December 2020 on using the military to seize the machines in order to check the validity of their tallies. But new accounts suggest that Trump was more receptive to this - even taking steps to act on some ideas - than previously understood. "Donald Trump's

ball," said Rep. Jake Auchincloss, a freshman Democrat from Massachusetts, who saw the mob overrun his workplace in his first days on Capitol Hill. "To borrow a term from the financial markets, that's

priced in. So his revelations and his rhetoric are important. They are a clear and present threat to our democracy. But they're also priced in." The real question is for congressional Republicans, Auchincloss said: "They know as well as we do what threat he poses to our constitutional order. Are they going to stand up to him?" Trump's discussion of pardons and of Pence's potential to overturn the election, as well as his encouragement of another mass rally - against law-enforcement officials - were met mostly with a shrug among Capitol Hill Republicans. "I'm just glad that there were people in the right places and that the system worked - I mean, obviously, people who had positions of responsibility held their ground even when being asked to do things that they knew they shouldn't do," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the No. 2 Republican, who has occasionally clashed with

Trump. "Things may have been bent a little bit, but they didn't break." Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., said that "at the end of the day, as contentious as January 6 was, as confrontational as that whole process was, the process worked." A rare voice of dissent was Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, one of the few outspoken Republican critics of Trump and the top Republican on the January 6 committee. "He has acknowledged he was trying to overturn the election," Cheney wrote on Twitter Tuesday. "He is making clear he would do this all again if given the chance."

Long before the Capitol riot, Trump spoke approvingly of political violence among his supporters.

In 2015, he said of a protester at one of his rallies, "Maybe he should have been roughed up." In 2016, he floated the idea of paying the legal fees of supporters who turned violent.

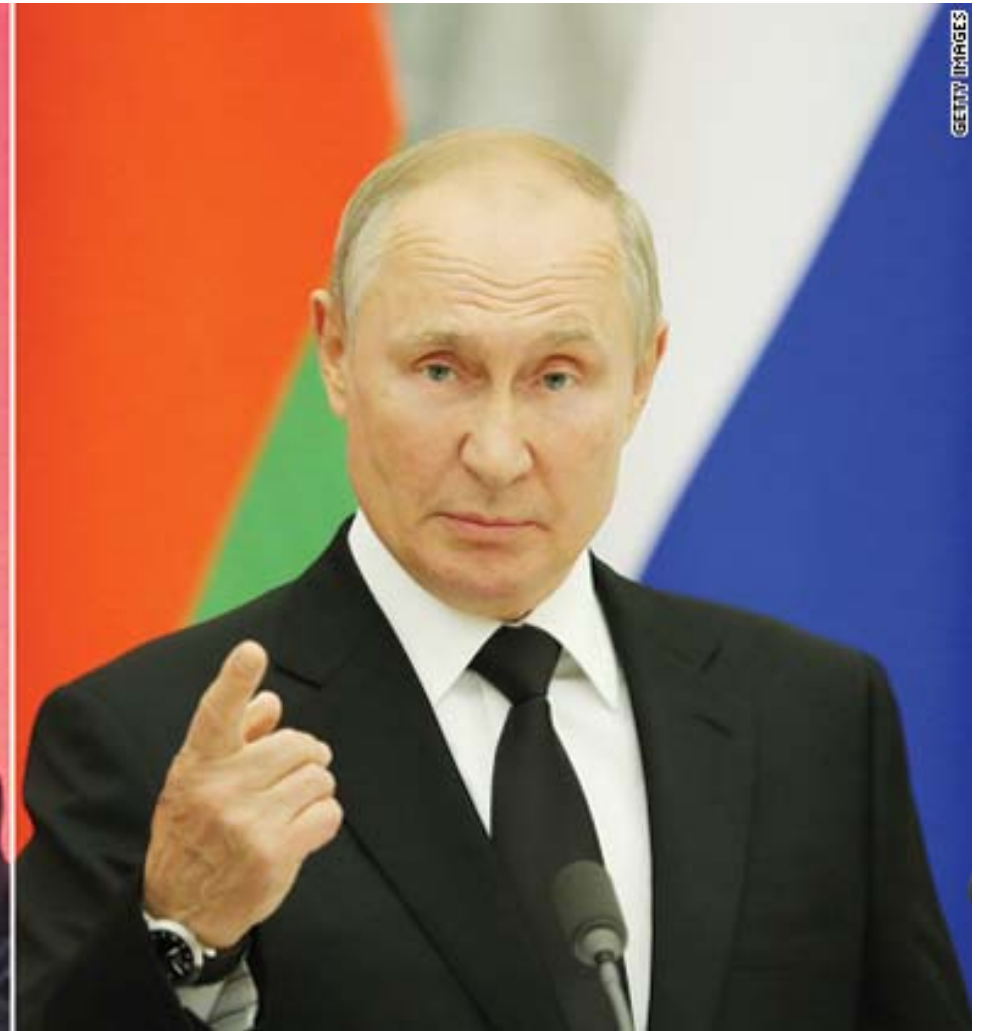
While president, he said on Twitter, "When the looting starts, the shooting starts," in a warning to demonstrators after the police killing of George Floyd. And in the first 2020 presidential debate, Trump famously declined to condemn white supremacist groups like the Proud Boys for their role in creating violence. "Stand back and stand by," Trump urged the Proud Boys. Members of the far-right group cheered for what they took as encouragement from the commander in chief.

"He is using his supporters as his own kind of militia," said Douglas Brinkley, a professor of history at Rice University. Trump, he said, was essentially telling his followers to "be ready because this could end up being the new civil war."

"He is just wanting to have people angry and ready to take up arms if need be," Brinkley added. "And that feeds into the fantasy-scape of every militia group in the country." The district attorney in Fulton County, Georgia, Fani Willis, took Trump's rally comments seriously, she wrote to the FBI, because "his statements were undoubtedly watched by millions." She added that she had already taken extra security precautions because of people "unhappy with our commitment to fulfill our duties."



# As relations deteriorate with the West, Putin and Xi are getting closer



When Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomes leaders from around the world for the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics on Friday, it will be his first time meeting foreign counterparts face-to-face in more than 400 days. And at the top of his guest list is Russia's Vladimir Putin.

A summit between the two leaders, expected to take place on the day of the Opening Ceremony, comes at a pivotal moment for both sides, as the massing of Russian troops at the border with Ukraine fuels fears of an imminent invasion -- an event that would be sure to overshadow China's Olympic moment.

The face-to-face will also add a new milestone in what has become an increasingly close partnership between Beijing and Moscow, as relations with the West deteriorate for both.

Putin is among a small group of world leaders to attend the Games, with Western governments including the United States, Britain and Australia, having declared a diplomatic boycott over China's human rights record. Other leaders have turned down invitations, citing Beijing's stringent Covid-19 controls.

This means Beijing 2022 will cut a sharp contrast to the city's 2008 Summer Games, when then-US President George Bush

and other Western leaders were pictured glad-handing Chinese officials while cheering on their national teams.

Instead, this Olympics is set to spotlight the space that has appeared between China and the West during the intervening years, while the summit -- and Putin's top billing on a list of visiting dignitaries published by China's Foreign Ministry -- points to the closeness between the two neighboring powers.

The question now being asked by many in the West is whether these Olympics will see a replay of what happened during the last time Beijing hosted an Olympics, when Russia invaded a different former Soviet state, Georgia. And as tensions continue to build on the Ukraine border all eyes will be on Putin.

"It's a very dramatic moment in Russia's confrontation with the West and, in a way, China's confrontation with the West," said Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow and the chair of the Russia in the Asia-Pacific Program at the Carnegie Moscow Center.

That it represents the first in-person meeting between the two leaders in more than two years only serves to underscore its significance. Xi has not left China since January 2020, instead

relying on "cloud diplomacy," delivering speeches at major international events and meeting foreign leaders via video link. He did not host a foreign dignitary for the entirety of 2021, as China maintained closed borders and its "zero-Covid" policy.

In his last known in-person meetings, Xi welcomed

**In a video-call with Putin, Xi called for China and Russia "to step up coordination and collaboration in international affairs" and to reject "hegemonic acts and the Cold War mentality"**

Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni in Beijing in November, 2020, and prior to that held talks with visiting Pakistani President Arif Alvi in March of that year.

All this hits at a time when Beijing and Moscow have been burnishing their partnership in trade, technology and coordination of military exercises, while becoming increasingly vocal about how their cooperation can push back on a Western world order dominated by what China has referred to as "so-called alliances and small cliques."

In a December video-call with Putin, Xi called for China and Russia "to step up coordination and collaboration in international affairs" and to reject "hegemonic acts and the Cold War

mentality."

While analysts say that Beijing is likely to maintain a broadly ambivalent tone and call for peace when it comes to any future Russian actions over Ukraine, China has already shown sympathy with Moscow's message to NATO -- which calls for security guarantees to limit

the organization's footprint along Russia's border.

In a phone call between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US Secretary of State

Antony Blinken last week, Wang called for "Russia's legitimate security concerns" to be taken seriously.

Russia and China have a long history of supporting each other against what they view as Western interference in their domestic affairs, pushing back on US-led sanctions and often voting as a bloc in the UN.

On Monday, China was the only member of the United Nations Security Council to vote alongside Russia to dismiss a council meeting called by the US to discuss Russia's military build-up at the Ukrainian border -- a call that Russia said amounted to the US "whipping up hysteria."

The neighboring powers have been drawn closer over time by

their economic ties, the need for security along their more than 4,000 kilometer (2,485 mile) border, as well as similarities in the nature of their regimes, according to Gabuev.

But the "secret sauce" of their tightening ties in recent years has been their simultaneous confrontations with Washington, he said.

"For Russia (relations with the US) have gone from bad to worse ... and with China we've seen consistent US policy to compete with the Chinese," Gabuev said. 2021 was a banner year for Chinese-Russian relations, as the two sides renewed a 20-year treaty on friendly cooperation, racked up a record-breaking \$146 billion in bilateral trade, and declared their relations had reached "the highest level" in history.

They've also looked to bolster coordination of military exercises, holding a large-scale joint military exercise in northern China and the first joint China-Russia naval patrol in the western Pacific.

These ties are still a far cry from a formal military alliance, however, and both have shied away from becoming directly involved in each other's potential conflicts, experts say -- something that's likely to be the case in the latest tensions.



# US exposes what it says is Russian effort to fabricate pretext for invasion



**The United States says Russia's plan involves staging and filming a fabricated attack by the Ukrainian military either on Russian territory or against Russian-speaking people in eastern Ukraine.**

Russia, the officials said, intended to use the video to accuse Ukraine of "genocide" against Russian-speaking people. It would then use the outrage over the video to justify an attack or have separatist leaders in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine invite a Russian intervention.

Officials would not release any direct evidence of the Russian plan or specify how they learned of it, saying to do so would compromise their sources and methods. But a recent Russian disinformation campaign focused on false accusations of genocide and efforts in the Russian parliament to recognise breakaway governments in Ukraine lent credence to the intelligence.

If carried out, the Russian operation would be an expansion of a propaganda theme that US intelligence officials and outside experts have said Moscow has been pushing on social media, conspiracy sites and with state-controlled media since November. The video was intended to be elaborate, officials said, with plans for graphic images of the staged, corpse-strewn aftermath of an explosion and footage of destroyed locations. They said the video was also set to include faked Ukrainian military equipment, Turkish-made drones and actors playing Russian-speaking mourners. American officials would not say precisely who in Russia was planning the operation, but a senior official said the GRU, Russia's military

intelligence arm, was "deeply involved" in the effort.

Ned Price, the State Department spokesperson, discussed some details of the planned video at his daily news conference Thursday, though he said evidence of the plot remained classified to protect US sources.

"The production of this propaganda video is one of a number of options that the Russian government is developing as a fake pretext to initiate and potentially justify military aggression against Ukraine," Price said.

A British official said its government had done its own analysis of the intelligence and had high confidence that Russia was planning to engineer a pretext to blame Ukraine for an attack. Another British official, Liz Truss, the foreign secretary, said the intelligence was "clear and shocking evidence of Russia's unprovoked aggression and underhand activity to destabilise Ukraine."

"The UK and our allies will continue to expose Russian subterfuge and propaganda and call it out for what it is," Truss said in a statement.

The Kremlin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, dismissed the US' allegations in comments carried by Russian news

agencies. "This isn't the first report of its kind," he said. "Similar things have been claimed before. But nothing ever came of them."

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ever came of them." While it is not clear that senior Russian officials approved the operation, it was far along in the planning, and the United States had high confidence that it was under serious consideration, officials said. Russian officials had found corpses to use in the video,

discussed actors to play mourners and plotted how to make military equipment appear Ukrainian or NATO-supplied.

While the plan sounded far-fetched, American officials said they believed it could have worked to provide

a spark for a Russian military operation — an outcome they said they hoped would be made less likely by exposing the effort publicly.

The highlights of the intelligence have been declassified in hopes of both derailing the plot and convincing allies of the seriousness of the Russian planning. The officials interviewed for this article requested anonymity to discuss declassified but sensitive intelligence before it was released publicly.

Avril Haines, the director of national intelligence, and other top administration officials briefed members of Congress on the material Thursday. Details of the

information have also been shared with allies as the United States and Britain push a kind of intelligence diplomacy.

In recent weeks both Washington and London have outlined elements of Moscow's war planning, highlighting planned troop buildups, exposing false-flag sabotage plots and revealing Russian plans to install a friendly government in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said the recent work by the United States and Britain to publicise plots being considered by Russia was an important development. Making the information public, he said, provides notice to Ukrainians and will help the world make different, more accurate judgments about Russian actions.

"Too often we come in after the fact and say that was a false-flag operation," Warner said. "By forewarning, it diminishes the Russian credibility and ability to use something like that as an excuse." The American and British strategy aims to persuade allies that Russia is not posturing and has real war plans that it could put into effect. The releases also aim to force Russia to drop and redraft plans, further delaying any invasion plan. The longer the international community can delay a decision by Russian President Vladimir Putin about whether to approve a military operation against Ukraine, the more of a chance there is that he will reconsider his plans, according to diplomats.



# Indians want govt to give health sector top priority on social front in Budget 2022: Survey

A pre-budget survey showed that Indians want the government to give top priority to the health sector in Budget 2022. Most people wanted the government to allocate an increased amount to the health sector. A survey done by Local Circles showed people wanted **health to be the top area of allocation**. 47% of citizens in the survey demanded the government's top focus of Budget 2022 should be on health. Data analysis shows that 40% of taxpayers are likely to switch to the new income tax structure if the government reduces the tax rate by 2% to 5%. 64% of citizens surveyed demand that the top focus area of Budget 2022 **on the development front** be either roads & highways or agriculture. The survey asked citizens: "What, according to you, should be the top focus area for Budget 2022 on the social front?" In response, the majority of 47% of citizens said "Health" as top priority. This was followed by 19% of respondents, giving priority to education/online education enablement.

6% of respondents, however, said clean air was what they wanted the government to allocate funds to, while another 6% said "women and child safety should be given priority". The past year was marked by the world's largest vaccination drive in India that started in January, followed by the 2nd wave of Covid outbreak led by the Delta variant, which reached its peak in May 2021. Just as the economy was recovering after the sudden decline in cases, the country faced its 3rd Covid wave, starting December last year, led by a more transmissible Covid variant, Omicron. The Union Budget is expected to put the economy on an accelerated growth path after the impact caused by the pandemic. The Narendra Modi-led Union Government of India is expected to bring amendments to the tax law that is necessary for the growth of economic sectors like agriculture, roads & highways, telecom and Internet, airports, as well as spending in social sectors like health, clean air, clean water, education, women and child safety, to name a few. Citizens have high hopes

that the upcoming Union Budget 2022 will lay the path for faster growth along with providing some relief to the tax-paying middle class in form of lower tax rates/incentives. With the pandemic still raging on, the majority of citizens in the Local Circles survey said that the Government of India should expedite a project to either build permanent or temporary Primary and Community Health Centers (PHCs and CHCs), which will not only address the shortage of these centers across rural areas but can act as the first response to meet the Covid-19 emergency need of the villagers for the future pandemic. Given the need for isolation of the villagers, citizens believe that the government should create a National Mission to convert Panchayat Ghars into isolation centers with basic infrastructure like beds and toilets.

People want this budget to focus on district and panchayat level healthcare and isolation facilities not only to better handle a future Covid wave but to increase the general wellbeing and quality of healthcare in rural India.

The survey asked citizens, "What according to you should be the top focus area for Budget 2022 on the development front?" In response, 33% of citizens said "Agriculture", 31% said "Roads & highways", 14% said "Telecom and Internet", 3% said "Airports", and 2% said "Railways". 14% of citizens cited "Other areas" while 3% did not have an opinion. The findings indicate that a whopping 64% of citizens surveyed demand that the top focus area of Budget 2022 on the development front should be agriculture, and roads and highways. 40% of taxpayers surveyed say they are likely to switch to a new income tax structure if Government reduces the tax rate by an additional 2-5%. Lowering of tax rates has been a long-standing demand of the taxpayers for the last 3 years. While corporate taxes were reduced in Budget 2020, little or no relief has been given to the middle class tax-payers in the recent past with a new alternate



income tax structure that was introduced in 2020. The final question in the survey asked citizens, "The new personal income tax rate structure doesn't permit deductions but lowers tax

rates. What should it take for you to migrate to this structure?" In response, 37% said they would migrate if tax rate is "reduced further by 2-5%", and 3% said if it is "reduced further by 0-2%.

There were 28% of citizens surveyed said "Regardless of tax rate, I will not migrate". 13% said they were already on the new tax rate structure and welcomed the reduction in rates

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# UP CM Yogi Adityanath says no riots, brought down crime rate

Adityanath also accused the previous governments of Samajwadi Party and BSP of indulging in favouritism in the name of development



A day before filing nomination from Gorakhpur Urban seat, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday presented a "report card" listing "the achievements" of his government in the past five years and said that no communal riots took place during his term. Adityanath also accused the previous governments of Samajwadi Party and BSP of indulging in favouritism in the name of development. Presenting the report card at state BJP headquarters here in presence of Deputy CM Dinesh Sharma and Union minister Anurag Thakur, Adityanath cited figures from the National Crime Records Bureau to claim that the crime graph in the state came

down in his tenure. "In the BSP regime (2007-2012), there were 364 incidents of riots. More than 700 riots were recorded in the previous SP regime (2012-17). Since 2017, no riots or terrorist activities have taken place in the state. Yet, the government isn't quiet. We are building an Anti-Terrorism Squad Centre at sensitive places in view of national security," he said, adding that improved law and order has made the state a preferred destination for investors. Adityanath also accused the previous SP, BSP governments of failing to undertake police reforms and its modernisation and alleged that the two parties wanted to use the police department as their "personal tool".

## Artificial intelligence technologies have a climate cost

The AI-climate change link is understudied, not least because the largest companies working in this space are neither transparent nor meaningfully committed to understanding it

We often think of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies as a gateway to a future written in chrome, operating on a virtual cloud. This techno-optimism underpinned FM Nirmala Sitharaman's 2022 budget speech, where AI was described as a sunrise technology that would "assist sustainable development at scale and modernise the country." While there is an allure to national dreams of economic prosperity and global competitiveness, underwritten by AI, there is an environmental cost and — like any issue at the nexus of technology, development, growth and security — a cost that comes with being locked into rules about said environmental impact set by powerful actors.

The "race" for dominance in AI is far from fair: Not only do a few developed economies possess certain material advantages right from the start, they also set the rules. They have an advantage in research and development, and possess a skilled workforce as well as wealth to invest in AI. North America and East Asia alone account for three-fourths of global private investment in AI, patents and publications. We can also look at the state of inequity in AI in terms of governance: How "tech fluent" are policymakers in developing and underdeveloped countries? What barriers do they face in crafting regulations and industrial policy? Are they sufficiently represented and empowered at the international bodies that set rules and standards on AI? At



the same time, there is an emerging challenge at the nexus of AI and climate change that could deepen this inequity. The climate impact of AI comes in a few forms: The energy use of training and operating large AI models is one. In 2020, digital technologies accounted for between 1.8 per cent and 6.3 per cent of global emissions. At the same time, AI development and adoption across sectors has skyrocketed, as has the demand for processing power associated with larger and larger AI models. Paired with the fact that governments of developing countries see AI as a silver bullet for solving complex socio-economic problems, we could see a growing share of AI in technology-linked emissions in the coming decades.

The idea of sustainability is rapidly entering mainstream debates on AI ethics and sustainable development. In November 2021, UNESCO adopted the

Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, calling on actors to "reduce the environmental impact of AI systems, including but not limited to its carbon footprint." Similarly, technology giants like Amazon, Microsoft, Alphabet and Facebook have announced "net zero" policies and initiatives. These initiatives are a good sign, but they only scratch the surface. Both global AI governance and climate change policy (historically) are contentious, being rooted in inequitable access to resources.

Developing and underdeveloped countries face a challenge on two fronts: First, AI's social and economic benefits are accruing to a few countries, and second, most of the current efforts and narratives on the relationship between AI and climate impact are being driven by the developed West.

What then is the way ahead? Like most

nexus issues, the relationship between climate change and AI is still a whisper in the wind. It is understudied, not least because the largest companies working in this space are neither transparent nor meaningfully committed to studying, let alone acting, to substantively limit the climate impact of their operations.

Governments of developing countries, India included, should also assess their technology-led growth priorities in the context of AI's climate costs. It is argued that as developing nations are not plagued by legacy infrastructure it would be easier for them to "build up better". These countries don't have to follow the same AI-led growth paradigm as their Western counterparts. It may be worth thinking through what "solutions" would truly work for the unique social and economic contexts of the communities in our global village.





## Chennai Metro to roll out debit cards to board trains

**People could simply tap their debit or credit cards to board a Metro train by mid-2022 in Chennai. The ticket fare will get deducted from the debit card**

People could simply tap their debit or credit cards to board a Metro train by mid-2022 in Chennai. The ticket fare will get deducted from the debit card. The Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) is planning to launch debit or credit cards for commuters by mid-2022. If you are a frequent metro traveller in Chennai, then soon you may be able to board the train by simply tapping their debit or credit card. The distance travelled by the commuter will be installed by the machine installed in the AFC

gate and the fare will be deducted. The commuters will have to tap their card on the reader of the automatic fare collection gate (AFC) gate for it to open. The passengers must tap again to exit the station when the journey ends, the Times of India (TOI) revealed in its report. As per the reports, the ticket fare will be deducted from the card and commuters can use the cards on the AFC gates on the concourse level. An official told TOI, "In an account-based

ticketing, commuters must tap their debit or credit card at the AFC gate for it to open. "At the end of the journey, they must tap again to exit the station," he said. The Metro is also planning to launch account-based ticketing in a few months and commuters will not have a paper ticket. An official said that it would be a bank transaction working through the internet. The officials working at the Metro station said that they are in talks with payment processing

companies and they will also launch the account-based ticketing in three to five months. In another significant development, the CMRL is also planning to roll out a Smart Card for metro commuters which will be compatible with the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) of the Government of India. As per the reports, commuters will be able to pay for multiple modes of public transport after the launch of this ticketing service.

The installation of card readers at metro stations has already commenced and a trial is expected to start soon. NCMC cards be used for multiple purposes, such as shopping and public transport services that have compatible readers. The officials said that they wanted to shift from closed-loop cards to open-loop cards and gradually phase out tokens. The commuters will have a choice of account-based ticketing, QR-card ticketing and NCMC cards.

## US diplomats, spies may have been hit by electromagnetic energy

**Some of the 1,000 US diplomats and intelligence officers hit by a mysterious illness known as Havana Syndrome could have been targeted by electromagnetic energy pulses, according to a report to US intelligence leaders**

Some of the 1,000 US diplomats and intelligence officers hit by a mysterious illness known as Havana Syndrome could have been targeted by electromagnetic energy pulses, according to a report to US intelligence leaders released on Wednesday. "Pulsed electromagnetic energy, particularly in the radio frequency range, plausibly explains" the ear pain, vertigo, and other symptoms of some of those suffering the ailments first reported by US diplomats in the Cuban capital in 2016, experts from inside and outside the US government said. The panel of experts was convened by Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines and CIA Deputy Director David Cohen. The combination of symptoms "cannot be easily explained by known environment or medical conditions" among a subset of victims.<sup>1</sup> The number of those people was not disclosed in the report's unclassified executive summary. Cases have been reported in Russia, China, Tajikistan and some African countries.

The findings echo a 2020 National Academy of Sciences study and follow a Jan 20 interim CIA report

which concluded that it was unlikely that Russia or another foreign adversary was behind most of the so-called "anomalous health incidents." The CIA report, however, said there were about two dozen cases of the 1,000 that remained unexplained. The report released on Wednesday did not delve into responsibility. But its conclusions will likely fuel frustration among current and former US officials who lack a clear explanation for their chronic afflictions. "We were not looking at attribution or assigning it to a foreign adversary or actor. We stuck to the causal mechanism," a US intelligence official familiar with the report told reporters. The findings "reinforce the need for a coordinated, whole of government approach," Mark Zaid, a lawyer representing victims from numerous US government agencies, said in a statement.

"These piece-meal agency reviews at times reveal inconsistent and even contradictory results," Eric Lander, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, said in a statement that the panel worked for nearly nine months and was the first

of several expert groups to have such extensive access "to intelligence reporting and patient data." The panel found that the symptoms "are genuine and compelling" based on medical reports and interviews with physicians and victims. In finding that "pulsed electromagnetic energy" could be the cause, the panel said "information gaps exist" but there are several plausible ways the energy could have been generated "each with its own requirements, limitations and unknowns." Such sources exist that "are concealable and have moderate power requirements," the report said. "Using non-standard antennas and techniques, the signals could be propagated with low loss" through the air and building materials. Individuals accidentally exposed to electromagnetic energy signals – which include radio waves, microwaves and X-rays – have reported "sensations" similar to the symptoms reported by Havana Syndrome victims, the report noted. Ultrasound also could account for the symptoms, but only if a victim was in close proximity to the beam because ultrasound "propagates poorly through the air and building materials," it continued.



# Compromise in rape cases: Delhi HC orders vigilance inquiry



**“This court notes that non-registration of an FIR in the event that the commission of a cognizable offence is disclosed goes against the law laid down by the Supreme Court,” said Justice Subramonium Prasad, while referring to the sexual assault complaint made at Kapashera police station in July 2020 by a woman**

Observing that it has been time and again held that rape cases cannot be settled on the basis of a compromise, the Delhi High Court Tuesday ordered a vigilance inquiry into a matter in which the police, instead of registering an FIR on a complaint alleging sexual assault, chose to “put to rest” the case on the basis of a compromise arrived between the parties.

“This court notes that non-registration of an FIR in the event that the commission of a cognizable offence is disclosed goes against the law laid down by the Supreme Court,” said Justice Subramonium Prasad, while referring to the sexual assault complaint made at Kapashera police station in July 2020 by a woman.

In a related matter, the court also questioned the delay in registration of an FIR at Moti Nagar police station last year and asked whether the same was also because of a negotiation.

“A perusal of the record indicates that the medical examination of the prosecutrix/complainant in relation to FIR was conducted before the registration of the FIR but the MLC was conducted on the basis of DD Entry... This raises the suspicion that the instant FIR had not been registered at the time it was alleged...,” it said.

The court directed the DCP, Vigilance, Delhi Police to submit a report on its queries within two months. It passed the order while hearing an accused’s anticipatory bail plea in the Moti

Nagar FIR. The complainant in both matters – in respect of the FIR filed last year and the ‘compromised matter’ before Kapashera police station in July 2020 – is the same. However, the allegations in both cases were levelled against two different men. The counsel representing the accused in the Moti Nagar FIR submitted that it was a “classic case of honey trap” as the complainant and her husband have been previously involved in a similar case. The court was told that one another man had been “similarly trapped” by the woman and her husband, who only “sought to extort money from the victims” by lodging false complaints of sexual assault. The counsel made mention of the Kapashera police station complaint.

“The learned senior counsel has submitted that in (that) case, Rs 50 lakhs had been demanded from him by the prosecutrix and her husband for the matter to be settled. It has been stated that on settlement, the prosecutrix did not undergo medical examination and even gave in writing to the SHO, police station Kapashera that she was retracting her complaint regarding allegations of rape on the ground that she had filed the same in a fit of anger,” recorded the court in its order.

Regarding the Moti Nagar FIR, the police told the court that the call detail records revealed that both the woman and the accused would frequently talk to each other. The police told the court that a chargesheet was filed without the accused’s arrest and

a non-bailable warrant was issued against him only after he failed to appear before the court. The police confirmed that the woman had compromised the 2017 complaint which was made before Kapashera police station.

The counsel representing the complainant denied the allegation of the case being a honey trap and submitted that it was only a means to discredit her and her allegations. Directing the trial court to reconsider the matter pertaining to the issuance of the non-bailable warrant, which was under challenge, the High Court restrained the police from arresting the accused till February 2, the date on which the trial court will hear the matter.



# Oxytocin injections worth Rs 21 lakh seized at New Delhi Railway Station



## Oxytocin injections worth Rs 21 lakh were seized on Tuesday at the New Delhi Railway Station

A huge stock of oxytocin drug worth nearly Rs 21 lakh has been seized from New Delhi Railway Station, drugs control department authorities said on Tuesday. Oxytocin is used on milch cattle

to enhance milk production. The drug is known to have adverse effects on cattle as well as those who drink their milk.

The Delhi government authorities had received information about

the delivery of veterinary oxytocin injections from Gaya, Bihar at an inward parcel godown of the New Delhi Railway Station, officials said.

On January 31 at about 2 pm, a team of drugs inspectors was deputed to inspect the premises of the parcel godown at Ajmeri Gate side of the city station, they said. "Upon search of the said

premises in the presence of the parcel supervisor, a huge stock of oxytocin injections [approximately 2 lakh ampoules or vials] were found stocked," a senior official said. When inquired, the parcel supervisor said that the consignment was meant to be delivered to two men who did not turn up, the official said. "Apparently, the drugs were

suspected to be of doubtful quality. Samples of these drugs have been collected for test and analysis and their report is awaited," he added.

"The court concerned has been informed about the said seizure of drugs. Further investigation in the case is under progress so as to establish the supply chain of these drugs," the official said.

## Soon, use Google Lens to analyse images on your Chrome browser for desktops

### Google may soon bring Google Lens support to Chrome browser. The feature has been spotted under testing, hinting at its arrival in Chrome for desktops soon

Google has constantly improved upon its search engine capabilities over the years, and Google Lens has been one of the best examples of that. The visual lookup tool helps users on mobile devices search for anything that they are not able to identify in real life, over the internet. It is now being hinted that this ability may not remain limited to mobile phones. As per a user cited in a 9to5google report, Google Chrome on the desktop has been spotted featuring the Google Lens option on its Google Search. The option consists of

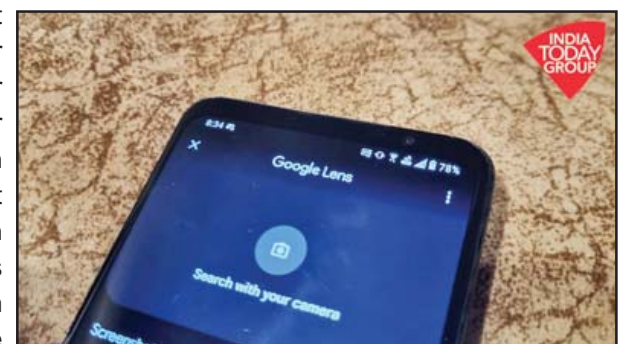
the same camera icon that we are used to seeing on smartphones for Google Lens. On desktops, the icon can be seen placed right next to the microphone icon on the search bar meant to activate a voice search. This is a notable hint of what Google is planning to do with its Google Lens capability. The image search technology by Google lets you search what you see, using your phone's camera or an existing photo. While the prior does not make any sense, it seems like Google will now bring the latter to desktops

through Google Lens. That is also what the report highlights. It mentions that tapping on the new camera icon on the search bar asks users if they would want to "Search any image with Google Lens." Users can then drag and drop any image on their computer onto the search bar, or they can choose it through the in-built file browser.

The process is quite the same as we use while performing an image search through the existing Google Search. Both the features are different though.

While Google's image search only tries to find similar pictures, Lens actually tries to identify things in a picture. Google Lens can spot people or subjects or texts or locations in an image. It can even copy this text from within the image and present it in an editor. It is unclear how efficient the Google Lens will be on desktops for now. The feature seems to be in a testing phase, as the report is the only indication of its existence so far. The user found

it on Chrome's Incognito Mode and revealed that any search on Lens brings out the result in a known format - image on the left,



Knowledge Panels on the top-right and a grid of "Visual matches."

A wider rollout of the feature is yet awaited and we may see it soon as Google increases the prominence of Lens even more



## 'Normalisation' kicks off: Subsidy levels tapered, starting with food, fuel, fertilisers

### The Budget projected the Centre's total subsidy bill for FY23 at Rs 3.56 lakh crore, down 27.1 per cent from Revised Estimates for the current fiscal



The Centre has reduced its subsidy budget for food, fertiliser and fuel in the upcoming fiscal by 26.6 per cent, compared to the Revised Estimates for this fiscal.

Experts have noted that the

move signals a normalisation of subsidy levels after two fiscals, which saw subsidy bills soar as the government sought to dampen the impact of the pandemic by offering a free food programme and bore the brunt of

higher international fertiliser prices. The Budget projected the Centre's total subsidy bill for FY23 at Rs 3.56 lakh crore, down 27.1 per cent from Revised Estimates for the current fiscal. The food subsidy bill in the

upcoming fiscal is projected to come down to Rs 2.07 lakh crore from Rs 2.86 lakh crore and the fertiliser one is set to come down to Rs 1.05 lakh crore from Rs 1.40 lakh crore in the current fiscal. After the onset of the pandemic, the government had announced 5 kg of free grain per person a month, apart from the regular 5 kg quota of wheat or rice at Rs 2 and Rs 3/kg, respectively. The programme, which was initially announced for the first quarter of FY21, has been extended till March 2022. D K Joshi, chief economist at CRISIL, said the reduction in subsidies was part of a process of normalisation as the pandemic winds down. Aditi Nayar, principal economist at ICRA, said the Budget allocation for subsidies was in line with expectations, adding the food subsidy would likely be reinstated if the country

witnesses "a moderate to severe wave of Covid-19 infections." Fertiliser subsidy bill for this fiscal was about 76 per cent higher than Budget Estimates due to high international prices, according to experts. "Fertiliser subsidy is to a large extent dependent on global prices of fertilisers. This fiscal global prices were very high, that's why there was a need to increase fertiliser subsidy during the year," said D K Pant, chief economist at India Ratings. According to the World Bank data, in December 2021, the international price of urea had risen to \$890 per tonne, up from an average of \$351 per tonne in the first quarter of the fiscal, while the price of di-ammonium phosphate had risen to \$745 per tonne from an average price of \$574 per tonne in the same period.

## Sensex surges 813 pts, Nifty above 17,300



The BSE Sensex surged 813 points to reclaim the 58,000-level while the Nifty breached the 17,300-mark on Monday on account of intense buying across sectors after the Economic Survey 2021-22 projected healthy growth for the economy in the near term. A positive opening in European markets and a firm trend in Asian equities also supported the domestic bourses, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex opened with significant gains and kept its momentum throughout the session. It finally closed at 58,014.17, clocking a gain of 813.94 points or 1.42 per cent. Likewise, the NSE Nifty rallied 237.90 points or 1.39 per cent to end at 17,339.85.

In the Sensex pack, major

gainers were Tech Mahindra, Wipro, Bajaj Finserv, Infosys, SBI and PowerGrid.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Bank and HUL closed in the red. The Economic Survey 2021-22, tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament, expects the economy to grow by 9.2 per cent during the current financial year, indicating a recovery to the pre-pandemic level. The economy had contracted by 7.3 per cent in 2020-21 on account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent nationwide lockdowns to check the spread of coronavirus. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong and Tokyo finished with gains.

## Indian economy may reach \$5 trillion mark by FY2025-26, says CEA Nageswaran

India will become a \$5 trillion economy if the current growth rate is retained, Chief Economic Advisor Dr V Anantha Nageswaran told media during a post-Budget press conference in New Delhi on Tuesday.

"If we continue to retain the path of 8 per cent of real GDP growth, it will translate into even 8 per cent dollar GDP growth. If we extrapolate it, we should be a \$5 trillion economy in terms of nominal GDP in the Financial Year 2025-26 or Financial Year 2026-27," Dr V Anantha Nageswaran said.

Responding to a question, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the government had taken several steps to tackle unemployment and inflation issues.

"Our government did not allow inflation to go double-digit. Yes, it breached the 6 per cent limit for a month but never crossed it. However, before 2014 it was always in the range of 10, 11, 12, 13," FM Sitharaman said.

On unemployment, FM Sitharaman said that the



pandemic had impacted job market across the globe, however, the government has made efforts to control the situation.

"Pandemic snatched away so many jobs across the world. Our Atmanirbhar Bharat Package saved the jobs of a lot of people. We are trying to help those who lost their jobs, through various schemes," the finance minister said.

On doubling the farmers' income, the finance minister said that the record procurement and minimum support price

sanctioned in the budget indicates that the government was well on its way to fulfil its promise.

Sitharaman also said that the government schemes like urea subsidies, PM Kisan Nidhi yojna, ecommerce support for beekeeping, solar panels for pumps, solar farms, micronutrients, agri credit, etc, also support farmers and aides in increasing their income. The FM said that the food processing at farmgate mentioned in the current budget will also help boost farmers' income.





## Scientists detect colour blindness in jumping spiders

Scientists have detected colour blindness in jumping spiders in a recent study.

The research, published in 'The Science of Nature,' examines *Saitis barbipes*, a common jumping spider found in Europe and North Africa.

It was conducted by University of Cincinnati associate professor Nathan Morehouse and an international team of researchers led by Cynthia Tedore at the University of Hamburg. The flamboyant dandies of the eight-

legged set, have names inspired by peacocks, cardinals, and other colourful icons.

"We assumed they were using color for communication. But we didn't know if their visual system even allowed them to see those colors," said David Outomuro, a UC postdoctoral researcher now at the University of Pittsburgh. Outomuro was first co-author of the study with Mateusz Glenszczyk, a researcher from the University of Hamburg.

Biologists identified patches on

the spider that strongly absorb ultraviolet wavelengths to appear as bright "spider green" to other jumping spiders.

The red colours that are so vivid to us likely appear no different than black markings to jumping spiders. "It's a bit of a head-scratcher what's going on here," professor Morehouse said. "We haven't solved the mystery of what the red is doing." Animals use color in all sorts of ways, including camouflage, warning potential predators of their toxicity,

showing off to potential mates or intimidating rivals. But it's not always apparent what bright colors might signify, Morehouse said.

"We spent a lot of time talking about it as a group. What else could it be? I feel there's an interesting story behind the mystery," he said. The results were surprising, said senior study author Tedore, a research associate at the University of Hamburg. "Males have bold red and black coloration on their

forward-facing body surfaces which they display during their courtship dances; whereas, females lack red coloration altogether," she said. "This initially suggested to us that the red color must play some role in mate attraction. "Instead, we found that red and black are perceived equivalently, or nearly so, by these spiders and that if red is perceived as different from black, it is perceived as a dark 'spider green' rather than red," Tedore said.

## Huge asteroid to pass 'near' Earth

An asteroid, which is bigger than world's tallest building, will pass 'near' Earth on February 1.

There is absolutely no need to worry as the Asteroid 7482, which is near-Earth object, is "very well-known and has been studied for decades" by NASA's Planetary Defense Coordination Office.

An object, which comes within 30 million miles of Earth, gets classified as a near-Earth object.

It is also known as 1194 PC1 in NASA's asteroid database. NASA said, "Rest assured, 1994 PC1 will safely fly past our planet 1.2 million miles away." Dr Susanna Kohler of American

Astronomical Society, said, "One of the really cool things about a close-passing rock, like Asteroid 7482 (1994 PC1) is being able to watch as it soars past.

"There are a tonnes of asteroids and comets out there, but the majority are so far away that we can't see their motion in real-time. The fact that this one's coming so close provides a unique opportunity to actually watch it move across the sky," added Kohler.

"There are lots of observatories that will be live-streaming the event on the internet as Asteroid 7482 (1994 PC1) passes," Kohler further added.







## Chinese researchers claim to have developed AI nanny

In what may seem like a rerun of a Hollywood movie, Chinese researchers have claimed to develop an artificial intelligence nanny, which can monitor and take care of embryos as they grow into fetuses in an artificial womb environment.

Does it ring any bells? Well, certainly, you must have witnessed the scene in some big budget movies. Let's get to the depth of the claim.

The AI system has been developed by researchers in Suzhou, which is located in eastern Jiangsu province of China. The findings of the study have been published in the

domestic peer-reviewed Journal of Biomedical Engineering last month. The AI nanny is currently looking after a large number of animal embryos, the researchers said. The team, which is led by professor Sun Haixuan at the Suzhou Institute of Biomedical Engineering and Technology, a subsidiary of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said that the artificial womb, or "long-term embryo culture device", is basically a container where mouse embryos are growing in a line of cubes filled with nutritious fluids. Although the breakthrough may

pave the path for the future of childbearing in a country facing low birth rates, it can eliminate the need for a woman to carry her baby as the fetus may grow safely and efficiently outside her body, as per the research paper. The AI technology also helps the machine detect the smallest signs of change in the embryos and make changes. The technology would "not only help further understand the origin of life and embryonic development of humans, but also provide a theoretical basis for solving birth defects and other major reproductive health problems", they added.

## Octopuses came from space?

Octopuses are surely strange to look at. A blob of jelly with two eyes and tentacles can scare the tific community. In our search for life in space, we often look for presence of water.



life out of you if you happen to cross their path in the sea. The slimy creature slips in and out of sight and is able to compress its soft body to an astonishing degree. But calling them aliens would be the last thing on our minds!

But a study has said that octopuses may have fallen to Earth from space in icy bolides hundreds of millions of years ago. We know the accepted scientific view of origin of life on Earth. But Panspermia, the argument that life was 'brought' to Earth by celestial bodies like comets also has solid interest in the scien-

A comet contains ice. It is therefore, at least in theory, held to be acceptable to propose that life forms like microbes were carried through space in comets and brought to Earth. The study on the octopuses suggests that cryopreserved eggs of either squids or octopuses could have arrived on Earth hundreds of millions of years ago preserved in ice. The study was published in journal Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology in the year 2018. It is important to note that scientific community has not found solid evidence about octopuses.

## Zoologist resolves 100-year-old mystery of why this insect can float in water

Zoologist Philip Matthews has resolved the 100-year-old mystery of why Chaoborus midge can float in water.

The findings of Matthews, who is a professor at the University of British Columbia, have been published in Current Biology.

Chaoborus midge is also called the 'phantom midge' due to its near transparency. The transparency makes the larvae resemble tiny ghosts as they move through lakes, ponds, and puddles.

Some fish regulate their buoyancy by inflating a swim bladder with oxygen unloaded from the hemoglobin in their blood.

In 1911, Nobel laureate August Krogh discovered Chaoborus larvae use a completely different mechanism, regulating their buoyancy using two pairs of internal air-filled sacs.

"These bizarre insects were floating neutrally buoyant in the water, which is something you just don't see insects doing," said Matthews.

"Some insects can become neutrally buoyant for a short time during a dive, but Chaoborus larvae are the only insects close to being neutrally buoyant."

When Matthews mounted the air-sacs of the larvae from the cattle tank on a microscope, they started glowing blue due to ultraviolet light illuminating the microscope's stage.

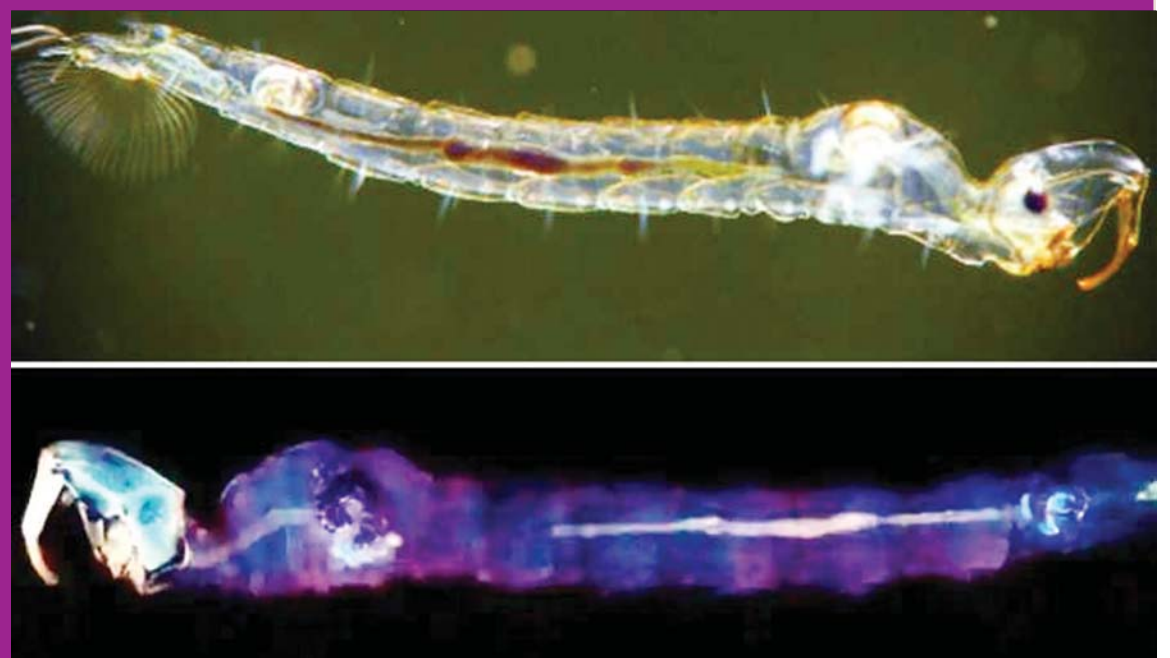
The blue fluorescence was due to resilin, an almost perfect rubber found in parts of insects where elasticity is key, as in the elastic energy that powers a flea's incredible jump.

"The weird thing about resilin is that not only is it really elastic. It will swell if you make it alkaline and contract if you make it acidic."

With Ph.D. student Evan McKenzie driving experimental investigations, the researchers discovered that the insect doesn't secrete gas into their air-sacs to make them expand. Instead, they change

contract in response, and the volume of the sac adjusts.

"This is a really bizarre adaptation that we didn't go looking for," said. Matthews.



the pH level of the air-sac wall, the bands of resilin within the air-sac wall swell or

"We were just trying to figure out how they can float in water without sinking!"



## Can eating junk food cause liver cancer or fatty liver? Here's what doctors say

Liver cancer is the third leading cause of cancer related deaths globally. Ahead of World Cancer Day 2022, doctors spill the beans on the junk food's role in it and how to prevent liver tumour or chances of a fatty liver



The campaign theme for World Cancer Day 2022 is 'Close the care gap' and for the uninitiated - liver is the largest internal organ that lies under our right ribs, just beneath our right lung, has two lobes or sections and cancer in the liver starts when cells anywhere in the liver begin to grow out of control. Apart from removing toxins and other chemical waste products from the blood, the liver is also responsible for continuously filtering blood that circulates through the body and converting nutrients and drugs absorbed from the digestive tract into ready-to-use chemicals.

What is liver cancer and its causes?

In an interview with HT Lifestyle, Dr Rajiv Lochan, Lead Consultant and HPB and Liver Transplantation Surgery at Manipal Hospital Old Airport Road in Bengaluru, shared, "Liver cancer is the third leading cause of cancer related deaths globally and the most common form of liver cancer is Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC), Intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma (bile duct cancer), etc and benign liver tumours such as Hepatic adenoma and Focal nodular hyperplasia."

He added, "The key causes include hepatitis B and C viral infections, cirrhosis (end stage liver disease), drinking water contaminated with

arsenic, obesity, diabetes and high alcohol intake. Fatty liver can promote liver inflammation. This can progress to cirrhosis and ultimately may lead to liver cancer. Fatty liver usually develops in people who are overweight, have diabetes or high lipid profile. Poor eating habits, especially a diet rich in fats and sugar can promote fatty liver. This can later turn to a liver tumour in many with those with faulty metabolism."

Is junk food related to liver cancer and how to prevent it?

Offering a solution, Dr Rajiv Lochan revealed, "Junk food has become a routine part of people's lives. All these fast food items not only cause obesity but can also damage your liver leading to cirrhosis and increase the risk of developing liver cancer."

Dr Pramod Kumar Julka, Principal Director and Medical Oncology at Max Institute of Cancer Care in Delhi's Lajpat Nagar elaborated, "Junk food has been known to cause cancer in a different way. Junk food means the food which you take have not been properly cooked or has hydrocarbon, we call it polycyclic hydrocarbon or has certain chemicals which are carcinogenic. There are certain chemical which cause carcinogen-like effect and hence, called chemical carcinogen and chemically they cause cancer in certain individuals."

Explaining how certain individuals are prone for cancer because of low immunity or smoking or

alcohol, Dr Pramod Kumar Julka asserted, "We all have the gut microbio which means intestinal flora (we have both good and bad bacteria in our intestine). That is why we say if you take junk food, it will enhance the bad bacteria in the intestine and cause cancer. That is why we should avoid junk food in any form and take healthy food with high proteins carbohydrates fats in adequate quantity to stay healthy."

Pointing out how in recent times, one of the common findings in patients presenting to a gastroenterology practice is finding of fatty liver during routine health checks, Dr G Harshavardhan Reddy, Medical Gastroenterologist at Kamineni Hospitals in Hyderabad, blamed it on a sedentary lifestyle, eating calorie rich foods, high carbohydrate content foods, aerated drinks along with lack of exercise.

Saying that it is fuelling a silent endemic in the form of NAFL (non alcoholic fatty liver), Dr G Harshavardhan Reddy alerted, "India is being labelled as a diabetic capital of the world, which also is a big contributing factor for liver disease especially in people who are regular consumers of junk food. Various scientific studies have showed us the progression of NAFL to NASH (non alcoholic steatohepatitis) to cirrhosis, likelihood of hepatocellular carcinoma is high in patients with cirrhosis."

## Pfizer Vaccine Could Be Available for Kids Under 5 by End of Feb



A COVID-19 vaccine may soon be available to children under 5 years old in the United States, according to a report from The Washington Post.

The Pfizer pharmaceutical company and its partner BioNTech are reportedly expected to ask the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to grant an emergency use authorization for their COVID-19 vaccine to be used in children ages 6 months to 5 years. Currently, children under 5 are the only age group without access to a COVID-19 vaccine in the United States.

In a statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics said they were encouraged by the news, but that they would like the data to be released.

"Pediatricians have seen

firsthand the fear, stress and hardship that so many families of young children have endured as they await a vaccine," the AAP said in a statement. "We urge a transparent and data-driven process to evaluate this vaccine for this age group and look forward to offering its protection to our youngest children." In December, Pfizer and BioNTech announced they were changing the clinical trials for children under age 5 to add a third vaccine dose.

The reason for the change was that a two-dose regimen did not stimulate a protective immune response for young children against COVID-19, according to a press release.

There were no safety concerns identified, according to the press release.

## How Adding 10 Minutes of Exercise a Day Can Boost Your Health

People in the United States average about 5 hours of free time daily. Trusted Source, with men tending to have more of it than women. However, those hours can get quickly overtaken by life's necessities, leaving less time for exercise.

But almost anyone can find 10 minutes in their day to exercise. And that might be enough to prolong your life, a new study Trusted Source suggests. Researchers said

that if adults ages 40 to 85 engaged in just 10 additional minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day, it would save 110,000 deaths a year.

Not that you have to stop at 10 minutes. If the same groups increased their exercise by 20 minutes, it could save 209,459, and 30 minutes could prevent 272,297 deaths, the researchers reported. "We have known that regular exercise is essential and has tremendous health benefits," said

Dr. Vanita Rahman, clinic director of the Barnard Medical Center at the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, a



nonprofit organization that promotes preventive medicine. "What is unique about the study is that it shows us just how beneficial exercise is by providing quantitative measures," she said. "Regular exercise benefits virtually every organ system in our body. It reduces blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels. Exercise can also help us sleep better and improve our mood, sense of well-being, and quality of life," Rahman told Healthline.



## Why hydrogen water is the new health fad



Hydrogen water is the latest wellness trend to hit the US and UK. After vitamin-fortified water, health buffs are now buying hydrogen-enriched water with much-touted benefits such as reducing inflammation, wrinkles, bone loss and helping metabolise fat and glucose faster. These benefits can be achieved by chugging just about 500 ml (two glasses) of hydrogen-rich water a day, much less than the recommended 8 to 10 glasses a day of regular water, say studies.

Regular water which has two molecules of hydrogen and one molecule of oxygen is neither alkaline nor acidic. But when it is infused with hydrogen — by either adding magnesium or through the process of electrolysis — it becomes rich in antioxidants. A 2013 review published in the journal Medical Gas Research found that when ingested hydrogen acts as an antioxidant, mopping up free radicals — inflammation-causing molecules linked to everything from accelerated skin ageing to cancer.

While the US and UK are new to this trend, the Japanese have long been advocating use of hydrogen-rich water, or the Shin'noor solution, as they call it.

## Do you eat healthy?

**Beware, you may still develop deficiencies and fall sick**

Nowadays, people are becoming obsessive for losing weight and switching to healthy eating. But most people don't know what they actually are eating and this has become a common problem. A study has found that an obsession with eating vegetarian food may be endangering lives, reports The Independent.

Nutritionist Patrick Denoux believes that a purely vegetarian diet can lead to B12 deficiency which can cause various health problems. B12 is not made by the body and most people get the required nutrient from animal products like eggs, dairy products, meat or fish. If untreated, a vitamin B12 deficiency can lead to

vision loss, weakness, tiredness and light-headedness, heart palpitation, nerve problems, depression and memory loss. Earlier studies suggested that children who lacked this vitamin perform poorly in cognitive tests. The other issue with healthy eating is that it could be leading to orthorexia nervosa — a term first coined by physician Steven Bratman in the year 1990. Someone suffering from orthorexia is imprisoned by a range of rules which they impose on themselves. Orthorexia is not part of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, set down by mental health professionals in the United States that is also widely used as a benchmark



elsewhere.

Experts believe that orthorexia sufferers could be treated with cognitive behavioural therapy, which may involve learning how to deal with situations that can cause anxiety about eating, relaxation techniques and discussing excessive beliefs.

## Want that glowing, healthy skin this Diwali? Then stop stressing out

**You don't want a dull face, especially during festive season. Here's how to save your skin from side-effects of tension.**

You can buy designer clothes for Diwali and wear the best of gems and baubles, but if your skin isn't healthy and glowing, you won't be able to look your best for festivities. We often blame bad diet and genetics for our skin problems, but stress equally harms it. In fact, with our increasingly hectic lifestyles, it has become a major culprit. Dermatologists Rajat Kandhari and Lokesh Kumar tell us how stress impacts our skin, and how to fix the

problem.

Cortisol disturbs the hormonal balance in the body. So, stress becomes one of the major reasons for acne breakout, as it causes inflammation of the skin. It can also upset the balance of good and bad bacteria in the gut, causing acne and pigmentation on the neck.

Fix: Avoid anxiety food such as sugar. Drink loads of water and consume a high-fibre diet. Your skin specialist will prescribe topical and



oral medicines, depending on the severity of your acne.

2) Dryness: When you are stressed, you drink less water, and consume more tea and coffee. This causes dehydration, leading to dry skin. Stress also increases the level of hormone cortisol, which reduces the skin's ability to retain water, again causing dryness.

Fix: First and foremost, consciously drink more water when you are stressed. You can opt for warm water to calm you down, besides it also helps your skin. Go for foods and drinks rich in antioxidants. Prunes, blackberries, amla juice, pomegranate, and green tea are all good choices.

3) Fine lines: When feeling stressed, we tend to frown or purse our lips. Facial muscle tension can cause wrinkles and fine lines. Cortisol also causes an increase in blood sugar, which through glycation (the bonding of a sugar molecule to a protein or lipid molecule without enzymatic regulation) harms collagen. Fix: Take a deep breath, and relax your facial muscles, especially those around the eyebrows and cheeks. Chewing gum can also help.

## Trying to lose weight ?

Here's how you can consume fewer calories in a day



**If you wish to shed those extra kilos, then skipping your breakfast and fasting until lunch may help you eat around 353 fewer calories every day, a recent study has found.**

and 375ml of orange juice, for three days. Their overall diets were assessed via food diaries, while their physical activity levels were determined by acceleration devices. The results revealed that skipping breakfast causes people to eat 353 fewer calories a day. Although people eat around 115 more calories a day when they have breakfast, that meal alone contains on average 468 calories. The researchers noted that they do not know why eating breakfast is associated with a lower likelihood of being overweight or obese, or whether eating breakfast can be used effectively as a weight-control strategy. The findings are published in the Journal of Nutrition.

While there are many local superfoods that help you get in shape, sometimes skipping a meal may also help you trim your waistline. A recent study discovered that skipping your breakfast and fasting until lunch may help you eat around 353 fewer calories every day. According to researchers, fasting until lunch causes people to eat around 353 fewer calories a day, a study found. Study author Dr Keith Tolfrey said, "There is a common belief that breakfast is the 'most important meal of

the day". However, around one third of children and adolescents in many countries skip breakfast regularly. The findings from the Universities of Loughborough and Bedfordshire support a growing body of evidence that restricting calories, via fasting, boosts weight loss by reducing people's calorie intake and regulating hormones involved in fat storage. The team analysed 40 girls aged between 11 and 15 years old. The participants ate no breakfast or 6.3g of Weetabix with 188ml of semi-skimmed milk



# Basant Panchami 2022: Date, history, significance, puja timings, celebrations

Basant Panchami 2022: Basant Panchami is about new beginnings and considered an auspicious day in India. The



festival also known as Vasant Panchami is celebrated on the first day of spring and falls on the fifth day of the month of Magha.

Basant Panchami also marks the beginnings of preparation for Holi, which falls forty days after the festival. The festival is dedicated to Maa Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, music and art. On this day goddess Saraswati is

worshipped in temples as well as by students in schools and colleges. Vasant Panchami is also known as Shri Panchami

and Saraswati Panchami.

Date and Saraswati puja time:

This year Basant Panchami will be celebrated on February 5 and the Vasant Panchami Muhurat is from 07:07 AM to 12:35 PM. Vasant Panchami Madhyahna Moment will be at 12:35 PM, according to drikpanchang. Although there is no special time to perform Saraswati Puja on Vasant Panchami day one should make sure that Puja is

done when Panchami Tithi is prevailing.

Significance:

The colour yellow has a lot of significance on the day. People celebrate the day by wearing yellow outfits, worshipping goddess Saraswati and eating traditional dishes. The colour yellow symbolises knowledge and also denotes mustard fields that are associated with the arrival of spring season.

Celebrations:

Basant Panchami is celebrated across the country with slightly different traditions. Delicious

traditional dishes are cooked and enjoyed on this day. While in North India, especially in Punjab and Haryana, people fly kites, in eastern part of the country like West Bengal, it is celebrated as Saraswati Puja. In the southern states, it is known as Sri Panchami. In Gujarat, bouquet and garlands of flowers set with mango leaves are exchanged as gifts. In the states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh people worship Shiva and Parvati on this day. History of Basant Panchami

The legends says that Kalidasa saddened by the abandonment from his wife planned to commit suicide by drowning himself in a river. He was about to do that when goddess Saraswati came out of the water and asked Kalidasa to take a bath in it. His life changed thereafter as he got blessed with wisdom and became a great poet. Another legend is based on the Hindu god of love Kama. According to mythology, Kamadeva once disrupted Lord Shiva's meditation. Shiva was immersed in deep meditation after his wife Sati's demise. To

awaken him from the meditation, seers approached Kama so that Shiva could reconnect with the world and notice Maa Parvati's efforts for him. Kama agreed and shot arrows, made of flowers and bees, at Shiva from his bow of sugarcane. An enraged Lord Shiva opened his third eye and burnt Kama to ashes. After Rati's (his wife) 40-day penance Shiva agreed to bring him back to life on the day of Basant Panchami. It is said he was later born as Pradumna, son of Lord Krishna.



## Basant Panchami 2022: How to make Meethe Chawal



Basant Panchami 2022: One of the popular Basant Panchami recipes is Meethe Chawal that can serve both as main course and dessert. Take a look at the recipe. Basant Panchami 2022: Basant Panchami marks the advent of the spring season and all things basanti (yellow). On

this day dedicated to goddess Saraswati, the colour yellow is considered auspicious and people wear yellow or white outfits and gorge on delicious foods and desserts that match the spirit of the festival.

One of the popular Basant Panchami recipes is Meethe

Chawal that can actually serve both as main course and dessert. Meethe Chawal is prepared with rice, sugar or jaggery, saffron, a dollop of ghee and generous amounts of dry fruits. Saffron in this dish lends a beautiful yellow colour to it as well as amazing flavour. Saffron

also contains powerful antioxidants and has anti-cancer properties. Saffron is also known to control appetite and aid in weight loss.

The spices and dry fruits used in this recipe too pack in a lot of health benefits. Apart from adding to the taste, spices like cloves,

cardamom and cinnamon help with digestive issues and have antibacterial, antiviral, analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties. Eating dry fruits like almonds, cashewnuts reduces diabetes and heart disease risk apart from taking care of bad cholesterol.





# Harshaali Malhotra recreates Kareena Kapoor's scene from Jab We Met, repeats 'main bhaag rahi hoon' line

Harshaali Malhotra shared a video in which she channelled Geet from Jab We Met. In the film, Kareena Kapoor had essayed the role

Harshaali Malhotra, who featured as Munni in Salman Khan's film Bajrangi Bhaijaan, has recreated a scene from Kareena Kapoor's film Jab We Met. Taking to Instagram Reels, Harshaali shared a video as she stepped in the shoes of Kareena's character in the film Geet.

In the video, Harshaali enacted the Jab We Met scene in which Kareena's character ran away from her home. The original scene featured Kareena's late-night conversation with Shahid Kapoor, with whom she co-

starred in the film.

In the clip, Harshaali mouthed the line, "Main toh ja rahi hoon (I'm leaving)." When Shahid's character asked, "Kaha ja rahi hai (Where are you going)?" she replied, "Kaha matlab? Main bhaag rahi hoon (Where as in? I'm running away)."

An agitated Shahid tried to stop her from taking the step saying, "Tu aisa kabhi mat karna, ok (Don't you dare do it ever, ok)?" Kareena replied, "Main aesa kar rahi hun. Sara sab kuch planned hai. Tumhe bye bolne aayi hun (I'm doing it. Everything is

planned. I've come to bid you goodbye)."

Jab We Met, released in 2007, is a romantic comedy written and directed by Imtiaz Ali. The film features Kareena and Shahid along with Dara Singh, Pavan Malhotra and Saumya Tandon. Last month Harshaali received the prestigious Bharat Ratna Dr Ambedkar Award, which she dedicated to Salman Khan. Harshaali took to Instagram and shared a picture from the ceremony. "Blessed to receive Bharat Ratna Dr Ambedkar award from Shri Bhagat Singh

Koshyari (Governor of India and travels back to her



Maharashtra)," she wrote in the caption. In Bajrangi Bhaijaan (2015), Harshaali played a Pakistani girl who gets lost in

homeland with the help of an Indian, Pavan Kumar Chaturvedi, played by Salman. The film was directed by Kabir Khan.

# Suniel Shetty gives tour of his Khandala home with ceiling that 'opens up' and a breathtaking view

## Suniel Shetty gave a tour of 'Jahaan', his home in Khandala. Check out glimpses of a canal, swimming pool, and room with a ceiling that 'opens up'

Actor Suniel Shetty has given a glimpse inside his home, Jahaan, in Khandala, near Mumbai. In the first episode of the YouTube show Where the Heart Is, Suniel opened the doors of his house built over a hilltop. His home, spread over a huge area, is a mix of earthy colours. The actor's house stands amidst lush greenery while the interiors are also decorated with plants.

The property has a canal with a wooden entrance and a bridge over it. Suniel's lawn has a huge Buddha statue in a sitting position next to a few patio furniture. The garden also features several other statues including that of Lord Shiva.

In the video, Suniel gave a peek of the living room which has a wood coloured marble floor with stairs on either side leading to the first floor. The area is adorned with wooden furniture around a coffee table and a few potted plants. A section of the wall is also dedicated to his mask collection. A huge piece of rock has also been placed next to the steps. The high ceiling has

several pendant lights.

As he gave a tour of the area, Suniel said, "This is my space. I call it my space because once we come down here, we are settled here. The beauty is probably the high ceiling that is something that I have always wished and liked and always wanted. Right from the exterior to the interior there is a lot of earthy textures, there is rust, greens, browns. We have got a lot of plants and trees. I am obsessed with plants, I am obsessed with nature and wood." The dining room has a huge wooden geometric shaped table with several chairs around it. It overlooks the garden on one side. He called the dining area one of his favourite rooms adding that it is 'every Mangalorean's favourite room' as they 'love to eat'.

Next, Suniel moved to a sitting area with a ceiling that opens up to give a glimpse of the sky. The room has glass walls allowing natural lights to flow in. Several beige coloured couches adorned the room. Suniel next gave a glimpse of his 'den' which had picture frames of his movie posters including Border, Dhadkan, Main Hoon Na, Dilwale

among others hanging on the walls. A few frames had also pictures from the movies of his children, actors Ahan Shetty, and Athiya Shetty. A few charcoal coloured couches stood in the room next to a coffee table that looked like a travel trunk. Suniel said that the rooms help him disconnect from 'everything that happens in Mumbai'. The video also showed several recliners inside an indoor theatre.

A swimming pool stood at the edge of the property amid the greenery. The water from the canal

17 years ago. The video showed several photos frames, spread across the house, of the couple with their family members. Suniel also recalled how they decided

Suniel and Mana, in December, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. After a long courtship, Suniel and Mana tied the knot on December 25, 1991,



to build their home in that space. He said that during one Holi, he and Ahan took a walk and chanced upon the place which was barren, had cactus and rocks. Suniel said, "We stood there and Ahan, a little boy, held my finger and said, 'Isn't this place beautiful?'"

and welcomed their first child, daughter Athiya in 1992 and their second child, son, Ahan Shetty, in 1996. In 2015, Athiya debuted in Bollywood with Hero opposite Sooraj Pancholi and Ahan made his debut with Sajid Nadiadwala's film Tadap, which released in theatres last year.



## Twinkle Khanna says she became an actor 'out of necessity', to support Dimple Kapadia: 'I had a single mom'

**Twinkle Khanna revealed how she opted for a career as an actor as it was a necessity. She also spoke about Dimple Kapadia, who was a single mother then.**

Actor-turned-author Twinkle Khanna has spoken about how she didn't want to become an actor but had to take up the career 'out of necessity'. During her recent chat with actor Kareena Kapoor for her Tweak India platform, Twinkle revealed how she chose the profession as she had a single mother. Twinkle is the daughter of actor Dimple Kapadia and late actor Rajesh Khanna. In the show, Kareena



Kapoor spoke about choosing the career of an actor, "I think being an actress is also, I mean you have been an artist, movies, since girls from 'the Kapoor clan weren't allowed into movies'. She responded, "I think that mom also was very very 'no, we can't do this, this tradition and that'. So we are very lucky in that way that kind of, you know, happens and Lolo kind of paved the road and I just followed." Twinkle said, "I know for you it was a choice, but for me, I really didn't want to become an actress. It was out of necessity, I had a single mom and she was providing for everyone." She continued, "I think even for Lolo, it was pretty much that, she had to drop out of college and get into that." When Kareena pointed out that they started 'very young', Twinkle said, "We started very young and really it was about, 'This is the quickest way of us being able to support our families'." Also Read | Twinkle Khanna shares pic of her 'maal' Akshay Kumar from holiday, says he's 'ageing like whiskey'

Dimple tied the knot with Rajesh in 1973 and separated from him in 1982. The couple had two daughters--Twinkle and Rinke Khanna. Twinkle got married to actor Akshay Kumar in January 2001 and together have a son, Aarav and a daughter, Nitara.

Kim Kardashian sizzles in crop top and thong underwear as she licks cake frosting off her fingers to promote new SKIMS Valentine's Shop

Last week it was revealed that her net worth jumped up \$600 million to \$1.8 billion after her SKIMS brand value hit \$3.2 billion.

And on Tuesday, billionaire Kim Kardashian posed up a storm to promote the latest drops for her hugely successful loungewear, intimates and clothing brand.

The 41-year-old entrepreneur and businesswoman sizzled in a pink crop top and matching high-waisted underwear as she licked some frosting off her finger to promote SKIMS' Valentine's Shop.

The scorching image was shared on Tuesday morning to the SKIMS Instagram page, with the caption: 'Just dropped: 'The SKIMS Valentine's Shop. New styles, new colors, new ways to go all in on the sexiest day of the year. Limited edition sexy sets and luxe little things to fall in love with, designed for all of your after-hours plans.'

Kim showcased her flat midsection and her curvy hips in the SKIMS micro cording v cheeky bikini bottoms, which retails for \$22.

## Huma Qureshi calls herself 'muhfat' as she talks about her character in Mithya

Huma Qureshi is gearing up for the release of her upcoming web-series Mithya. In an exclusive conversation with Hindustan Times, Huma revealed her experience of working in the project and how she is a true blue 'muhfat (sharp-tongued)'. Huma, who plays the role of a Hindi teacher in Mithya, talked about her character and told HT, "The challenge was not to play the role like a quintessential Hindi professor, like the image that is shown in Hindi films. I referenced it to one of my Hindi teachers in school who was very prim and proper and very articulate. My character is of a Hindi professor but she is quite well spoken, bilingual and she is doing well for herself. I

realised I have not done anything like this before." When asked if she relates to the character she is playing in the show, Huma said, "Bilkul bhi nahi, mein ek number ki muhfat insaan hun. Mere dimaag mein jo aata hai bol deti hun (Not at all, I am very sharp-tongued person, I just speak whatever is on my mind)." Sharing her experience of working with Bhagyashree's daughter Avantika Dassani, who will be making her debut with the series, Huma said, "My experience of working with her is very good. She is very talented and bright. People would be really surprise to see her do this as her debut show. We had so much fun. She was the youngest one on the set. We pulled her leg and we all had a blast and it didn't

feel like we were shooting such a heavy show." Heartbroken Huma Qureshi says she's 'stuck in a never-

ending world of cheats' in cryptic posts Mithya will premiere on Zee5 on February 18. Apart from Mithya, Huma will also be seen

in Double XL with Sonakshi Sinha. She also has Netflix film Monica, O My Darling and Valimai in the pipeline.







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