



Issue 49

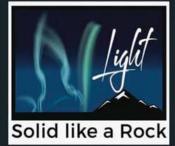
Friday 6 February to 13 February 2021

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# HOW Will 'Chipageddon' affect you? Chip Shortage Spirals Beyond Cars to Phones and Game Consoles

Semi conductor shortfall has disrupted the auto sector and other industries





#### NSIDER NSIDER

### **Scotland Yard Celebrates 50th Anniversary Of First Sikh Female Cop**



(Insider Bureau)-Scotland Yard has celebrated the left policing," she said. 50th anniversary of Karpal Kaur The National Sikh Police Sandhu joining its ranks as the Association UK joined forces with first South Asian and Sikh female the Met Police Sikh Association police officer, paving the way for for a special virtual event in others to follow in her footsteps. memory of PC Sandhu on Police Constable (PC) Sandhu Mondav. served the Metropolitan Police in "Today, London between 1971 and 1973 representatives from the Met"s and has been dubbed as a "true Sikh Association, Met police pioneer" for police forces across officers and staff and the wider the UK.

"PC Karpal Kaur Sandhu was a Karpal"s special contribution to true pioneer and ahead of her policing, as the UK's first female time. I have no doubt that her Asian and Sikh police officer." decision to join the Met Police said Ravjeet Gupta, Chair of the in 1971 was a brave one and she Metropolitan Police Sikh would have faced considerable Association.

challenges along the way," said Assistant Commissioner Helen Ball on Monday.

"As Britain's and the Met's first Asian female officer, Karpal paved the way for so many others who have gone into policing since 1971. Fifty years to the day (Monday) after PC Sandhu joined the Met, I am pleased that we are able to remember her life, her career and the legacy she has

together Sikh community, we remember

## On farmers' protest in India, Kamala Harris's niece says most populous democracy under assault

(Insider Bureau)-Meena Harris, the niece of US Vice-President Kamala Harris, took to Twitter on Wednesday to express outrage over the "internet shutdowns and paramilitary violence against farmer protesters" in India.

She shared an image of a woman farmer holding a placard that said "stop killing farmers". One of her tweets read, "It's no coincidence that the world's oldest democracy was attacked not even a month ago, and as we speak, the most populous democracy is under assault. This is related. We ALL should be outraged by India's internet shutdowns and paramilitary violence against farmer protesters. (sic)"

In another tweet, she condemned the violence and chaos at the US Capitol last month and said, "Just as outraged as we are about the traumas that @AOC and others experienced at the Capitol insurrection. And not just because fascism anywhere threatens democracy everywhere (although, uhhh, IT DOES). Trump



may have left office, but look to the farmers' protest against the around: the tide is still rising. (sic)" "Militant nationalism is just as is in India or any place else."

CAPITOLATTACK, (sic)" Meena Harris said.

activist Greta Thunberg's reaction Protest in India.'

three farm laws passed by Meena Harris further said, Parliament last year. Rihanna and Thunberg earlier posted tweets potent a force in US politics as it extending support to the ongoing farmers' agitation in India.

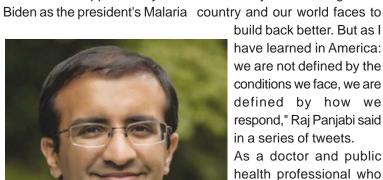
"It can only be stopped if people Sharing a news report from CNN wake up to the reality that about the internet shutdown in FASCIST DICTATORS aren't the outskirts of Delhi in wake going anywhere. Not unless: 1) of violence during farmers' we organize and 2) THERE ARE agitation, Rihanna posted a CONSEQUENCES FOR THE tweet late on Tuesday, saying, "Why aren't we talking about this?'

Meena Harris's statement Soon after, Greta Thunberg followed international pop star commented: "We stand in Rihanna and Swedish climate solidarity with the Farmers

#### Indian-Origin Man Is Global Coordinator For Biden's Malaria Initiative

(Insider Bureau)-US Liberia. A community of President Joe Biden has Americans rallied around my appointed Indian-origin Raj family to help us build back our Panjabi to lead his Malaria lives. It's an honor to serve the Initiative, which is mainly in country that helped build back African and Asian countries.

"After being sworn in this Harris Administration."In the face morning, I'm honored to share of unprecedented crises, I am that I've been appointed by" Joe humbled by the challenges our



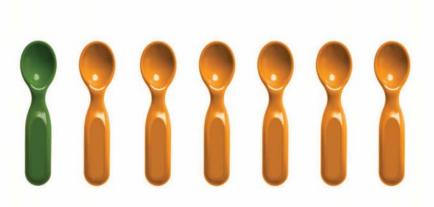
Coordinator to lead the US Initiative and its partners USAID

my own life as part of the Biden-

build back better. But as I have learned in America: we are not defined by the conditions we face, we are defined by how we respond," Raj Panjabi said in a series of tweets.

As a doctor and public health professional who has cared for patients alongside the staff of the President's Malaria

president's Malaria Initiative, Raj and Center for Disease Control, Panjabi said on twitter. "I'm Raj Panjabi said: "I've been grateful for this chance to serve," inspired by how they've responded he added.Born in Liberia, Raj to fight malaria, one of the oldest Panjabi and his family fled the and deadliest pandemics, and county during its civil war and saved lives around the world."He arrived in the United States as said this mission is personal for refugees in the 1990s. My family him. "My grandparents and and larrived in America 30 years parents were infected with ago after fleeing civil war in malaria while living in India.



#### 1 in 7 children faces hunger.

There's more than enough food in America for every child who struggles with hunger. Help get kids the food they need by supporting Feeding America, the nationwide network of food banks. Together, we can solve hunger™. Join us at FeedingAmerica.org







## Biden Revokes Trump Rule Ending Work Permit For H-1B Holders' Spouses

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

the US Citizenship and Information and Regulatory withdraw

technology companies depend authorisation cards.

(Insider Bureau)- A week on it to hire tens of thousands of Soon after coming to power, the after his inauguration. US employees each year from Trump administration in 2017 President Joe Biden has countries like India and China. announced that it would rescind withdrawn a Trump-era rule The H4 visa is normally issued that rule. However, the rescinding work authorisation for to those who have already Republican Party-led Trump H4 visa holders, who are started the process of seeking administration was not able to spouses of those possessing H- employment-based lawful complete the process in the four 1B work visas, with majority permanent resident status in the year of its rule. During the the technical expertise. The that gave employment Security publish a Federal important step towards rectifying per cent were issued to Register notice on day one of gender disparities in our individuals born in China.

being highly-skilled Indian US. The Office of Management presidential election, the Biden your administration that would immigration system, as around 95 women. An H-4 visa is issued by and Budget (OMB) and Office of campaign had promised to extend the validity period of all per cent of H4 visa holders who Trump expired H4 EADs (Employment have secured work authorisations Immigration Services (USCIS) to Affairs (OIRA) on Monday said administration's move. Soon after Authorisation Document)," the are women. As of December 2017, immediate family members the proposed rule titled, his electoral victory, a group of members of Congress wrote to USCIS had approved 1,26,853 (spouse and children under 21 "Removing H-4 Dependent 60 members of the US House of Biden in a letter on December 16. applications for employment years of age) of the H-1B visa Spouses from the Class of Representatives in a letter urged In 2015, the Department of authorisation for H-4 visa holders. holders, most of whom are Indian Aliens Eligible for Employment Biden, a Democrat, to Homeland Security (DHS) issued According to a 2018 report by IT professionals. The H-1B visa is Authorisation, was being "unilaterally extend" the a rule allowing certain H4 Congressional Research Service a non-immigrant visa that allows withdrawn. Spouses of Indian expiration work authorisation dependent spouses of H-1B visa (CRS) 93 per cent of approved US companies to employ foreign professionals on H-1B visas, documents for holders of H4 holders to legally seek applications for H-4 employment workers in specialty occupations mostly women, are the biggest visas."We respectfully request employment in the US, the letter authorisation were issued to that require theoretical or beneficiary of the Obama-era rule that the Department of Homeland said. This rule presented an individuals born in India, and five



## Indian-Origin Pediatrician Takes Hostages In US, Shoots Doctor, Self



terminal cancer shot dead a lady of the US state of Texas. The except a pediatrician named but were unsuccessful.

(Insider Bureau)- A 43- doctor and then killed himself Indian-origin after taking hostages at a but several escaped and Hostage negotiators had tried to an autopsy to determine the pediatrician diagnosed with medical office in Austin, capital others were allowed to leave, make contact with Narumanchi, official cause and manner of

cancer, police said.

into the offices of Children's duffel bags. were being held, police said, Narumanchi.

armed man was identified as Dr Katherine Dodson. The hostages After repeated attempts, SWAT Tuesday saying a man walked police said. He also had two said.

Department press release. were unable to find a connection investigation. Initially several hostages between Dr Dodson and Dr The Travis County Medical

Bharat Narumanchi, who was who escaped the office told officers entered the building recently diagnosed with terminal officers on the scene that the where they found Dodson and man was armed with a pistol and Narumanchi dead from apparent Police received a call on what appeared to be a shotgun, gunshot wounds, the report

"It appeared that Dr Narumanchi Medical Group (CMG) with a He had visited the CMG office a shot himself after shooting Dr gun and was holding hostages week prior to the shooting and Dodson," according to the police inside the building, the CNN applied for a volunteer position. department's news release. reported, citing Austin Police Other than his recent visit, police The incident is still under

Examiner will be conducting

### Indian-American Congressman Condemns Vandalisation Of Gandhi Statue

The 6-ft tall, 650-pound bronze statue of Gandhi in the Central Park of the City of Davis in Northern California was vandalised, broken and ripped from the base by unknown criminals early this week.

Khanna on Monday strongly criminals early this week. it as a shameful act.

American Congressman Ro from the base by unknown shameful act. At a moment in

condemned the vandalisation of "Nonviolent, respectful protest needs to be managed with a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in was the essence of Gandhi's life tolerance and patience, I urge the US state of California, calling mission. To see the desecration everyone involved to take the of this magnificent statue only time to listen and talk instead said he will continue to work through disagreement with bronze statue of Gandhi in the people to study Gandhi's vandalism," he said. Central Park of the City of Davis teachings, not unilaterally erase As the Democratic Vice Chair divisions." I in Northern California was him from the public discourse," of the India Caucus, Khanna everyone to join me in working society," he said.

(Insider Bureau)-Indian- vandalised, broken and ripped Khanna said. "This was a our history when disagreement



bridges across

The 6-ft tall, 650-pound (294 kg) underscores the need for more of resorting to acts of public with his colleagues to build dialogue and discussion, rather these than resorting to violence that encourage tears at the fabric of our



## Press Statement on recent comments by foreign individuals and entities on the farmers' protests

reformist legislation relating to their representatives. Union commemoration, pave the way for economically offered to keep the laws on Indian capital. and ecologically sustainable hold, an offer iterated by no less. Some of these vested interest, and in some cases stabbed and temptation of sensationalist

reforms. Respecting the protests, and derail them. This Gandhi statues have been democratic ethos and polity, responsible."

Parliament of India, after a full the Government of India has January 26, India's Republic This is extremely disturbing for Government and the concerned debate and discussion, passed initiated a series of talks with Day. A cherished national India and for civilised society farmer groups to resolve the the agricultural sector. These Ministers have been part of the anniversary of the inauguration reforms give expanded market negotiations, and eleven rounds of the Constitution of India, was access and provided greater of talks have already been held. besmirched, and violence and noted that hundreds of men and ascertained, and a proper flexibility to farmers. They also The Government has even vandalism took place in the

than the Prime Minister of India. groups have also tried to seriously wounded. A very small section of farmers Yet, it is unfortunate to see mobilise international support. We would like to emphasise comments, especially when in parts of India have some vested interest groups trying to against India. Instigated by that these protests must be resorted to by celebrities and reservations about these enforce their agenda on these such fringe elements, Mahatma seen in the context of India's others, is neither accurate nor

(Insider Bureau)-"The sentiments of the protestors, was egregiously witnessed on desecrated in parts of the world. and the efforts of the the everywhere.Indian police forces impasse.Before rushing to have handled these protests comment on such matters, we with utmost restraint. It may be would urge that the facts be women serving in the police understanding of the issues at have been physically attacked, hand be undertaken. The social media hashtags and

## Indian-American Bhavya Lal Appointed Acting Chief Of Staff Of NASA

Bhavya Lal served as a member of the Biden Presidential Transition Agency Review Team for the agency and oversaw the agency's transition under the administration of President Joe Biden.

American Bhavya Lal was on of Science and Technology and Engineering Advisory Monday appointed by NASA as Policy and National Space Committee of the NASA Advisory the Acting Chief of Staff of the US Council, as well as federal Council. Before joining STPI, Ms space agency.

the Biden Presidential Transition of Defence, and the intelligence policy research and consulting Agency Review Team for the community. agency and oversaw the agency's Ms Lal is an active member of director of the Center for Science transition under administration of President Joe community, having chaired, co- at Abt Associates, a global Biden.

In a statement, NASA said Ms impact National Academy of based Lal brings extensive experience Science committees. Institute (STPI) from 2005 to and was an External Council Space (NETS) and co-organises said.

the the space technology and policy

(Insider Bureau)- Indian- policy for the White House Office and the Technology, Innovation space-oriented organisations, Lal was president of C-STPS Ms Lal served as a member of including NASA, the Department LLC, a science and technology firm. Prior to that, she was the and Technology Policy Studies chaired, or served on five high-policy research consultancy Smithsonian National Air and degrees in nuclear engineering, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Space Museum.

For her many contributions to the

space technology, strategy, and Advanced Concepts Program history and policy with the Science and Master of Science policy honor societies.

as well as a Master of Science degree in technology and policy, in engineering and space She served two consecutive She co-founded and is co-chair space sector, she was from the Massachusetts Institute technology, serving as a member terms on the National Oceanic of the policy track of the nominated and selected to be a of Technology, and holds a of the research staff at the and Atmospheric Administration American Nuclear Society's Corresponding Member of the doctorate in public policy and Institute for Defence Analyses Federal Advisory Committee on annual conference on Nuclear International Academy of public administration from Science and Technology Policy Commercial Remote Sensing and Emerging Technologies in Astronautics, the statement George Washington University. She is a member of both the 2020. There, she led analysis of member of NASA's Innovative a seminar series on space Ms Lal earned Bachelor of nuclear engineering and public

## Gandhi Is Our Inspiration": Indian Americans On Vandalisation Of Statue



number of Indian Americans held allow this. Not on our watch." last week. The city has For investigating the incident.

(Insider Bureau)-A large is our inspiration and we will not attempt to stop the event and also tried to assault a woman a community vigil at a city park The vigil was organised by the speaker at the event. Police had in California, where some anti- Indian Association of Sacramento to be called in to control the social people vandalised a statue (IAS), along with other Indian- aggressive protesters. According of Mahatma Gandhi last week. A American and Hindu-American to a media release issued by the bronze statue of Gandhi in the organisations. Speaking at the association, a police report has Central Park of the city of Davis peace vigil at the park, Shyam been filed about the assault on the in northern California was Goyal, retired professor, woman speaker. The organisers of vandalised, broken and ripped University of California at Davis the vigil said Khalistani separatist from the base by unknown people and a member of Gandhi Statue organisations, led by the OFMI Peace Committee, and its leaders Bhajan Singh registered a case and is expressed deep shock at the act Bhindar and Pieter Friedrich, of vandalism and said. "Mahatma had been demanding that the Addressing the vigil at the Gandhi is inescapable in the Gandhi statue be removed from Central Park, Gloria Partida, the world today in order to solve our the park ever since it was Mayor of the City of Davis, problem in a peaceful and non- installed by the city of Davis in deeply regretted the act of violent way."The IAS said the pro- 2016. The IAS said it awaits vandalism and said, "Vandalism Khalistan protesters tried to justice and the restoration of the will never be condoned. Gandhi intimidate the attendees in an statue at Central Park.



### No propaganda can deter India's unity, Amit Shah on international comments backing farm stir

(News Agencies)- Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday slammed international celebrities for commenting on ongoing farmers' stir in India. The six-month-old protest grabbed international eyeballs on Tuesday when singer and Hollywood celebrity Rihanna tweeted about it. A few hours later, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg took to Twitter to extend support to the farmers' agitation. Soon after, a slew of international names had joined the chorus, Propaganda can not decide Rihanna and other celebrities backing farmers' agitation and India's fate only 'Progress' can. and activists on farmer protests, calling the Indian government out India stands united and together saying the facts on the issue on internet shutdowns and stiff to achieve progress," Amit Shah must be ascertained before security measures.

Home Minister Amit Shah termed official response to such sensationalist social media the comments as propaganda comments. and said that it won't deter India's MEA on Rihanna, Greta unity."No propaganda can deter In an official statement, released The MEA also said some "vested India's unity! No propaganda can on Wednesday, the MEA interest groups" are trying to to mobilise international support was egregiously witnessed on stop India to attain new heights! slammed the remarks made by enforce their agenda on the against the country.



said while retweeting the rushing to comment on it, and Reacting to the remarks, Union Ministry of External Affairs' asserted that the "temptation" of hashtags and views is "neither accurate nor responsible".

discussion.

issues at hand be undertaken." the MEA said in a statement.

comments, especially when already been held, it said. responsible," it said.

Emphasising that the protests Minister of India, it asserted. must be seen in the context of India's democratic ethos and polity, the ministry said some vested interest groups have tried

protests and that a very small Instigated by such "fringe section of farmers in parts of the elements", Mahatma Gandhi country has some reservations statues have been desecrated in about the farm reforms which parts of the world, it said, adding were passed by the Parliament this is "extremely disturbing" for after a full debate and India and for civilised society everywhere.

"Before rushing to comment on The ministry also noted that such matters, we would urge respecting the sentiments of the that the facts be ascertained, protestors, the Central and a proper understanding of the government has initiated a series of talks with their representatives and Union ministers have been "The temptation of sensationalist part of the negotiations. As many social media hashtags and as eleven rounds of talks have

resorted to by celebrities and The government has even offered others, is neither accurate nor to keep the laws on hold, an offer iterated by no less than the Prime

> "Yet, it is unfortunate to see vested interest groups trying to enforce their agenda on these protests, and derail them. This January 26, India's Republic Day.

#### may have had **Indians** coronavirus as estimates: crore

A source with direct knowledge of the government serological survey said that about one in four of India's 1.35 billion people may have been infected with the coronavirus.

one in four of India's 1.35 billion 300 million (30 crore). people may have been infected The Indian Council of Medical 15 Indians had Covid-19 with the coronavirus, said a Research (ICMR), which antibodies. The figure jumped to source with direct knowledge of conducted the survey, said it one in six in densely-populated a government serological survey, would only share the findings at urban slums. suggesting the country's real a news conference on Thursday. A survey released by the caseload was many times higher The source declined to be government of Delhi this week than reported.

India has confirmed over announcement. 1,07,00,000 Covid-19 infections, It was not immediately clear may have been infected with infected, its chief told Reuters Wednesday. Deaths rose by the most anywhere outside the how many people participated in United States. But the survey, the latest survey. whose findings are much more Following another survey done conservative than a private one in August and September using

(News Agencies)- About actual cases may have crossed 29,000 people older than 10, ICMR had concluded that one in

> named ahead of the official found that more than half of its showed 55% of the population the chain of transmission. India the coronavirus.

Separate tests done on more The from last week, indicates India's blood samples of more than Thyrocare Technologies needs to have immunity to break 1,00,000 a day.



20 million (2 crore) inhabitants may have already been reported 11,039 new cases on last week.

World than 7,00,000 people across Organization says at least significantly since a mid-India by diagnostics company 60% to 70% of a population September peak of nearly

110 to 154,596. Infections and Health fatalities have come down

### PM Modi's brother sits on dharna at Lucknow airport as police arrest his supporters for violating Sec 144



(News Agencies)- dharna at the Lucknow airport Prime Minister Narendra Modi's on Wednesday, alleging that brother Prahlad Modi staged a police arrested his supporters

outside while my supporters order copy." have decided to sit here information we have been able around 4 pm. Prahlad Modi said.

was this done, they said it was his supporters had come to and a half.

who had come to receive done on the orders of PMO. I receive him."Today, I was to go to asked them to show me a copy airport. According to Chaudhary Prayagraj and my programmes of the order, but they didn't. Charan Singh Airport's are going on since yesterday. Either they are trying to Additional General Manager It will be unfair if I walk free defame PMO or there is no (Operations) Bhupendra Singh,

[Lucknow airport] on a hunger to access, Prahlad Modi's He sat on a dharna on the

Prahlad Modi arrived at stay lodged in jail. Hence, I However, according to the Lucknow by an Indigo flight

strike. I have given up water supporters were arrested for airport premises as he was and food. I will not get up from violating Section 144 for unhappy over police stopping here, even if my life ends," assembly at the high-security his supporters from reaching zone in the airport. They have there, Singh told news Prahlad Modi further said, been released now. Prahlad agency PTI, adding that "When I asked the police why Modi said that around 100 of Prahlad Modi left after an hour



## Lok Sabha adjourned repeatedly as opposition continues protest over farm laws

The House was adjourned repeatedly on Wednesday as opposition party members continued to protest against the farm laws in Lok Sabha.

(News Agencies)- With President's Address to the joint border points of the national proceedings were adjourned Azad suggested that Prime repeatedly on Wednesday by Minister Narendra Modi himself Speaker Om Birla. Opposition should make the announcement demands repeal of farm laws As soon as the House met at 4 present in the House at the time. pm, Congress leader in Lok Declaring that disrespect to the Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury national flag cannot be tolerated, tried to raise the issue of farmers' he also condemned the violence agitation against the agricultural at the Red Fort during the laws, saying the matter is farmers' tractor rally on Republic maligning the image of the Day, reported PTI. country, reported news agency PTI.

"We are concerned," he said. Several opposition parties government should set up a He also demanded the including the Congress and the committee to find out the government announce a DMK asked the government to whereabouts of people "who compensation of Rs 20 lakh to withdraw the three contentious have gone missing" during the family of those who died during farm laws without making it a farmers' protest. prestige issue and not to treat DMK MP Tiruchi Siva sought job to their children. the agitating farmers as assurance from the government "Our farmers are sitting for "enemies", reported PTI.

opposition members demanding sitting of Parliament, Leader of capital and several parts of the a separate discussion on the Opposition in Rajya Sabha and new farm laws, Lok Sabha Congress member Ghulam Nabi

on repeal of the laws. Modi was

"I urge the government to withdraw these three bills." he said, and added that the laws.

and the prime minister on the months on protest. Many Participating in the discussion repeal of the three contentious farmers have lost their lives due

country.

He also expressed concern over the manner in which the farm bills were passed last year, but Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said that everything was done according to rule. Attacking the Centre for heavy barricading of farmer protest sites in the national capital, Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav urged the government not to treat farmers as "enemies" and concede to their demand for repeal of these

the protest and a government

on the Motion on Thanks to laws that have led to protests at to cold, hunger and other



reasons. But the government has families. They don't come from become merciless and cruel. families whom you are working Nothing is affecting it. There is for," he told the government. no impact," he said.

As per the report, on the security Several opposition members at the three protest sites, Yadav trooped into the Well, said, "Be it Ghazipur, Tikri or protesting against the farm Singhu, roads are cemented with laws. Urging the members to a bed of nails and concrete walls. return to their seats, Speaker The security at protest sites is Om Birla said they should more than (that in) our maintain the dignity of the Parliament. Even at Pakistan House or else he will have to borders, such security is not take disciplinary action. there. Are they coming to attack He said the Question Hour is

"Are they (farmers) enemies?" PTI quoted him asking.

country, but those protecting our adjourn the proceedings till 4.30 borders also come from their pm.

First adjournment till 4.30 pm

important and it should go on, reported PTI.

But the opposition members "Farmers not only feed the refused to relent, forcing him to

## India's reputation taking massive hit: Rahul Gandhi on Rihanna, Greta tweeting on farmers' protest

international community has taken a "massive hit" and the country's soft power has been "shattered by the BJP-RSS", said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Rahul Gandhi said the Narendra Modi government

needs to resolve the issues raised by farmers at the earliest.

"India's reputation has taken a massive hit. (Our) soft power (has been) shattered by (the) BJP-RSS," Rahul Gandhi said on the government's handling of the

ongoing farmers' protest at Delhi's borders.

His comment comes in the backdrop of the farmers' protest gaining support from international celebrities like pop icon Rihanna and climate change activist Greta Thunberg. On Wednesday, the Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement condemning tweets by international celebrities (without naming them) and said they should ascertain facts before commenting on the issue. "Before rushing to comment on such matters, we would urge that the facts be ascertained, and a proper understanding of the issues at hand be

(Insider Bureau)- India's reputation in the undertaken. The temptation of sensationalist social media hashtags and comments, especially when resorted to by celebrities and others, is neither accurate nor responsible," the statement said. Meanwhile, addressing his press conference, Rahul Gandhi said, "Delhi is surrounded by farmers. They are the people who give us

> sustenance. Why is Delhi being converted into a fortress? Why are we threatening, beating and killing them? Why is the government not talking to them and not resolving this problem? This problem isn't good for the country."Hitting out at PM Modi, Rahul Gandhi said, "The

PM is saying that offer is still on table to postpone laws for 2 years. What does it mean? Either you believe that you need to get rid of the laws or you don't. I feel this issue needs to be resolved as soon as possible and the government needs to listen as farmers aren't going away."He added that the country at present is "lacking leadership". "There is no leadership. There is just talk. Do your job. You have been elected to do your job. Your job is protect the kisan. Go hold their hand and help," he said in reference to the prime minister.

#### Don't want to interfere: SC refuses to entertain pleas on R-Day violence during tractor rally

Supreme Court on Wednesday sabotage the protest by refused to entertain a clutch of farmers. petitions demanding investigation The tractor parade on January into the violence in the national 26 descended into chaos as capital on Republic Day during protesters broke through the farmers' tractor rally.

SA Bobde and comprising overturned vehicles, and Justices AS Bopanna and V hoisted a religious flag from the Ramasubramanian allowed the ramparts of the Red Fort. petitioners to file a representation One of the pleas filed by before the government.

Updates

government is inquiring into it. comprising of two retired HC We read a statement by the judges for collecting and Prime Minister that the law is recording evidence and taking its own course. We don't submitting a report on the want to interfere in this case. violence to the top court in a You make a representation before time-bound manner. the government," said CJI Bobde. Last month, the Supreme The top court also dismissed Court another PIL, filed by advocate implementation of Manohar Lal Sharma, seeking contentious farm laws till direction to the media not to further orders and constituted declare farmers as "terrorists" a four-member committee to without any evidence. Sharma make recommendations to had claimed in his plea that there resolve the impasse.

(News Agencies)-The was a planned conspiracy to

barriers, clashed with the A bench headed by Chief Justice police in the heart of Delhi,

advocate Vishal Tiwari had Follow farmers' protest LIVE sought setting up of a threemember inquiry commission "We are sure that the under a former SC judge and

staved



## Farmers didn't insult Tricolour, Chinese army sitting in India did: Shiv Sena tells PM Modi

Shiv Sena in its mouthpiece Saamana on Wednesday said that the Indian flag was not insulted and it was intact when the farmer's agitation reached the Red Fort on Republic Day.

(News Agencies)- Shiv Sena in should be brought to books, but for the Tricolour, many of them are intact when the farmer's agitation article. reached the Red Fort on Republic It further added, "Farmers during Day. Prime Minister Narendra the Republic Day tractor rally Modi said last Sunday that India were carrying the Tricolour on the Tricolour.

The Saamana editorial said that The editorial has also said that news coverage shows that the that "the government is not Tricolour was untouched. "The paying heed to the farmers sitting done to demean the farmer's road is the real insult of Tricolour. of farmers broke the law and they risking their lives at the border Modi's latest Mann Ki Baat defence budget has been editorial.

was shocked to see the insult of their tractors as they love India more than BJP's cyber army."

narrative built by BJP is that the at the Delhi border for 60 days". Tricolour was insulted, which was "To let these farmers die on the protest. It is true that one group There are soldiers who are

its mouthpiece Saamana on to say that the entire protest is sons of these same farmers. How Wednesday said that the Indian anti-national is a wrong is sacrificing these farmers flag was not insulted and it was narrative," said the Saamana respecting the national flag," asked the editorial.

> Shiv Sena has also slammed the elaborate security arrangements being made at the Delhi border to stop farmers from entering Delhi

footage available from that day's the real insult of the Tricolour is been made in Ladakh, the Chinese Army wouldn't have entered our land and treated it like their father's, said the editorial. "Sir, Chinese army sitting in our territory is also insult of tricolour," said the editorial, referring to PM "Tricolour is important, hence the respectable," asked the Sena



Joshi.

While granting bail to journalist Mandeep Punia, the court said it was a well-

If such arrangements would have for the Tricolour is important, Central armed police forces said the Sena article, adding that like ITBP, BSF and CRPF have PM Modi was in the BJP-led been given budget allocation group which hoisted the Tricolour of Rs 1,03,802.52 crore for the at Lal Chowk under the respect of Tricolour. But to leadership of Murli Manohar make wrong narrative of what happened on Republic Day is

## Arrested during farm protest reporting, journalist Mandeep Punia gets bail



the Delhi Police arrested applicant can able to influence journalist Madeep Punia from a any of the police officials". The farmers' protest site at Singhu bail was granted by the court of border, a local court in Delhi Chief Metropolitan Magistrate granted him bail on Tuesday.

victims and witnesses in this arrested Mandeep Punia in an case were all police personnel FIR registered under various and hence there is "no sections of the Indian Penal

(News Agencies)- Two days after possibility that the accused/ Satvir Singh Lamba.

settled principle of law that "bail is a rule and jail is an exception". Code, including 186 (obstructing day". "Admittedly, the accused leave the country without its public servant in discharge of is a freelance journalist. prior permission. "The accused public functions), 353 (assault or Moreso, no recovery is to be shall not indulge into similar

Mandeep Punia, the court said it was a well-settled principle of an exception". According to new agency PTI, the judge also noted in the order that the alleged The court said the complainant, On Sunday, the Delhi Police scuffle incident of case was of around 6.30 pm. "however, the present FIR was registered at

around 1.21 am on the next him, including that he will not against the accused.

criminal force to deter public effected from the accused offence or any other offence in servant from discharge of his person and keeping the the event of release on bail. duty) and 332 (voluntarily causing accused further in judicial Accused shall not tamper with hurt to deter public servant from custody would not serve any the evidences in any manner," his duty). While granting bail to cogent purpose," the court the court said, adding that Mandeep shall join the The court granted bail to investigations as and when law that "bail is a rule and jail is Mandeep Punia on "furnishing required by the investigating bail bond in a sum of Rs 25,000 agency. In his bail plea, along with one sound surety in Mandeep Punia told the court the like amount". While the that he was innocent and was court has granted bail to falsely implicated in the Mandeep Punia, it has case."The offences as alleged in imposed certain conditions on the present FIR are not made out

## Mamata Banerjee hits out at BJP, says party full of greedy people who instigate riots

Trinamool Congress (TMC) There is no place for such greedy supremo Mamata Banerjee on people in TMC. Our party tickets Assembly election in Bengal." instigating riots.

Bengal's Alipurduar people who instigate riots."

(News Agencies)- "Those who are greedy have left. deserted TMC will not win polls,

Wednesday, CM Mamata There is no place for corrupt announced on February 1 that Banerjee said the Bharatiya people in TMC and those who Janata Party "is full of greedy wish to leave the ruling party of Life Insurance Corporation should do so immediately, (LIC) is on the cards. At the rally, Mamata Banerjee Mamata Banerjee said at the Mamata Banerjee is on a fouralso said that there is no place Alipurduar rally. The West Bengal day tour of North Bengal. On

their shops to get closed after Wednesday hit out at the BJP, are not for sale. Those who are Taking on the Centre over Budget accusing the party members of with people will automatically get 2021 proposal, Mamata Banerjee tickets. Our leaders are our booth said, "Even 74 per cent of LIC is Addressing a rally in West workers," Mamata Banerjee being sold now. They are selling everything. The Centre an initial public offering (IPO)

for the corrupt in the TMC. CM added, "Those who have Tuesday, Mamata Banerjee



MPs from the region.

accused the Centre of doing Mamata Banerjee said before nothing for the people of the every election, BJP leaders northern districts of the state make promises of reopening despite having "so many" BJP defunct tea gardens in North Bengal, but "flee" afterwards.



## Why Rihanna might have supported Indian farmers

Rihanna posted her tweet with "#FarmersProtest" to say, "Why aren't we talking about this?!" It is not clear whether Rihanna objected to the suspension of internet services or commented on the merits of the three farm laws. But her tweet was interpreted by supporters of farmers' protest as support for their demands.

International pop-star Rihanna Rihanna has a history of links between Rihanna and sharing a CNN news report that Covid relief, HIV/AIDS Singh.Filmmaker passed by Parliament last year. University "#FarmersProtest" to say, "Why 2017. objected to the suspension of about political protests in a internet services or commented foreign nation. In a celebrity on the merits of the three farm versus celebrity fight, Bollywood laws. But her tweet was actor Kangana Ranaut hit out at interpreted by supporters of Rihanna for her tweet. Kangana farmers' protest as support for Ranaut called her a "fool" for their demands.

at least two more internet India". Kangana claimed, "No celebrities -- climate activist one is talking about it because Greta Thunberg and porn actor- they are not farmers they are turned-model Mia Khalifa posted terrorists who are trying to divide tweets on the farmers' protest India so that China can take over in Delhi's outskirts. That the our vulnerable broken nation and three celebrities posted within make it a Chinese colony much 24 hours on an issue that has like the USA... Sit down you fool, united all anti-government we are not selling our nation like camps, leading many to you dummies."Other Indian speculate whether the tweets Twitterati asserted that Rihanna were part of a "coordinated was being paid to post against campaign" by some activist the Indian government and they

(News Agencies)- groups. Hailing from Barbados, traced their assertion to alleged naming

tweeting on something the actor Her post on Twitter went viral and called an attempt "to divide

stirred a row on social media speaking on global issues -- from Canadian lawmaker Jagmeet internet services in Delhi's even the right of international an ardent follower of Jagmeet border areas in the wake of students to attain higher Singh of Canada."But who is ongoing agitation by farmers' education in the US. Her Jagmeet Singh? Jagmeet Singh, unions over three farm laws philanthropic work led to Harvard a Canadian parliamentarian, is her accused of supporting Rihanna posted her tweet with Humanitarian of the Year in separatist Khalistan campaign and raising fund for terror aren't we talking about this?!" It However, this might be the first groups. He is seen as a "prois not clear whether Rihanna time she has actively spoken Khalistan" Canadian politician. The Indian government had denied him a visa in 2013 for his strong political views that contravene the official stand of India on its internal issues. He



Thunberg and Mia Khalifa who others, is neither accurate nor have a massive following on responsible."

Twitter, the Ministry of The government said, "a very External Affairs issued a small section of farmers has statement calling their reservations about the reforms".







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## Attempts to restrict farmers' peaceful agitation violate promise made to citizens by framers of our Constitution

On December 1 and 2, 1948, the Constituent Assembly debated the report of the Fundamental Rights Committee. K M Munshi made a profound statement: "As a matter of fact, the essence of democracy is criticism of the government."

The Constitution of India confers upon all citizens fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of speech and expression, to assemble peaceably and without arms, and to move freely throughout the territory of India. True, these rights are subject to any law imposing "reasonable restrictions", inter-alia in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, security of state, public order or incitement to offence.

Article 21 protects the life and personal liberty of all citizens. The Supreme Court interpreted "personal liberty" as a compendious term to include all varieties of rights which go to make up "personal liberties" of men, holding that, "the words, 'personal liberty' must be interpreted in a reasonable manner and to be attributed that sense which would promote and achieve objectives of the framers."

The Constitution bench of the Supreme Court in Himmat Lal K Shah (1973) affirmatively declared, "...the state cannot by law abridge or take away the right of assembly by prohibiting assembly on public street or public place. The state can only make regulations in aid of the right of assembly of each citizen and can only impose reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order" but "state cannot impose unreasonable restrictions. It must be kept in mind that Article 19(1)(b), read with Article 13, protects citizens against state action."

Justice Mathew, in a powerful concurring opinion, said, "Freedom of assembly is an essential element of any democratic system. At the root of this concept lies the citizens' right to meet face to face with others for the discussion of their ideas and problems - religious, political, economic or social." He held, "Public meeting in open spaces and public streets forms part of the tradition of our national life." He declared: "The conferment of a fundamental right of public assembly would have been an exercise in futility if the government and local authorities could legally close all places where alone only vast majority of people could exercise the right" and that "there is a fundamental right to hold [a] public meeting in public streets" and that right cannot be taken away under an unguided discretion.

This is the law. Under Article 141, all authorities, civil and judicial, are expected to act in aid of the Supreme Court - that is to say, they are bound to follow this law. Yet, the approach of the central and state governments in

dealing with the farmers' agitation is wholly contrary to this declaration. Not only are they flouting the Constitution but they are also disobeying the Supreme Court by not allowing farmers to assemble peaceably, to move freely and to speak freely. Fundamental rights are a gift of the framers of the Constitution to citizens and no one, including the Parliament and judiciary, much less the executive, has the right to limit them or take them away. The advisory committee on fundamental rights was chaired by none other than Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who said in his letter on April 24, 1947, to the president of the Constituent Assembly, "We attach great importance in making these rights justiciable..." and thus was born Article 32, the right to move the Supreme Court for enforcement of fundamental rights.

On April 24, 1947, he said, "But the two schools of thought that considered this report studied not the fundamental rights of one country alone but of almost every country in the World. They studied all the Constitutions of the world and they came to the conclusion that in this report we should include as far as possible rights which may be considered to be reasonable."

K T Shah, speaking in the Constituent Assembly, had warned us, "The liberty of the person ever since the consciousness of civil liberties has come upon the people, has been the main battleground of autocrats and those fighting against them... It was, therefore, that any time the slightest difference of opinion was expressed, the slightest inconvenience embarrassment was likely to be caused by any individual, the only course open to those who wanted to exercise autocratic power was to imprison or arrest or detain such a person without charge or trial."

Farmer leaders, who have spearheaded a peaceful satyagraha for over 60 days, are now sought to be implicated in criminal cases without any reason. Surprisingly, Delhi Police refused to take any action against political leaders of the ruling party who had made extremely provocative statements in February 2020, which actually resulted in hatred, violence and loss of lives. The violence that erupted on January 26 was shameful. Those "responsible" must be dealt with but those who had nothing to do with it must be spared. The police cannot absolve itself of its failures in protecting the Red Fort. The nation will never know how a large number of people could reach the Red Fort, enter and defile it without any effective preventive steps by the police. A section of people, masquerading as farmers, could indulge in violence resulting in the death of a young farmer and injuries to scores.

### Black History Month this year is more than a trip down memory lane

important to the future of American democracy than ever. At a critical time. it offers the nation a window into its own soul -- if we are only courageous enough to look. What gazes back at us is not just the past, but a way of better understanding the political, economic and social ills that plague us. The racial disparities so terribly evident in the Covid-19 pandemic and the most divisive presidential election in American history are rooted in circumstances that can best be explained, analyzed and interrogated through the lens of Black history. Last year's historic Black Lives Matter demonstrations proved to be the most potentially transformative social justice movement in American history. The massive numbers of White Americans who joined the protests inspired rounds of soul searching in virtually all sectors of American society. Luminaries connected to sports, technology, business, politics, and the arts publicly acknowledged the existence of systemic racism, admitted their own culpability in structures of racial justice, and vowed to do better in word and deed.

The millions of Americans from all backgrounds who gathered around the nation in support of BLM protests after the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor helped to shatter the longstanding disconnect between contemporary racial injustice and the deep-seated historical roots behind our current national crisis of race and democracy.

The protests offered Americans of all generations a chance to participate in the kinds of dramatic historical moments one usually reads about or watches in movies or hears about retrospectively.

The sea of White faces in the streets, often times outnumbering Black demonstrators in states such as Black community led by women as Stacey Abrams. In nearly same breath, the January 6 as world, in stark detail, the World, in stark detail, the World democracy that, historically has been most visible to Black people.

Black History Month is more Washington, Utah and Oregon, signaled ant to the future of American to the nation that this time was different.

Black history spans the world, with Black folk always finding themselves at the cutting edge of human rights movements domestically internationally. The Black Lives Matter Movement's recent nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, for instance, echoes the civil rights movement's heroic period, when a 35-year-old Martin Luther King Jr. accepted the award on behalf of the movement. Such international recognition of BLM as part of a human rights struggle has come only in the aftermath of critics who falsely labeled the group as violent, subversive and un-American. Black politics has been transformed from the bottom up through roiling street demonstrations that have demanded accountability within and outside of the civil rights community. BLM has been arguably the biggest shaper of Black history over the past year. But as the Nobel Prize nomination suggests, Black history shapes wider domestic and international currents of political transformation.

Black history is a story of heartbreakingly stark juxtapositions. In January, racial progress could be seen in the historic victory of Rev. Raphael Warnock to the US Senate from Georgia, the first Black person elected from the peach state. Warnock's victory was orchestrated by the organizing prowess, political resilience, and indefatigable will of a Black community led by women such as Stacey Abrams. In nearly the same breath, the January 6 assault on the US Capitol showed the entire world, in stark detail, the White supremacist underside of American democracy that, historically has only



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## The Secret Lusts of Moderate Democrats

Commission Responsibility and Reform. Whoa ... Talk about TMI.

like to think of themselves as company. there is a difference between demolition of deficit politics. those on other people.

transition, the long-time Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D- however, it is on the Democratic Democratic policy expert Bruce N.Y.), implored President Joe side that the shift on deficits -Reed saw his hopes of serving Biden not to give Reed a job, and not just on politics but on the in the new administration succeeded in keeping him out of actual substance - is more imperiled by persistent rumors one critical post, director of the consequential. For much of the - subsequently confirmed by Office of Management and past 30 years, the idea that news organizations - that a Budget, for which he was a progressives should reckon decade ago he was intimately contender. Instead he was named forthrightly with the costs of involved with the National White House deputy chief of staff. government and propose on Fiscal Reed surely did not appreciate credible ways to pay for the having his past involvement with programs they favor was Simpson-Bowles paraded considered a basic test of The revelations about Reed were through the news, but he can seriousness for Democrats. uncomfortable for people who take solace that he is in good That test, incidentally, was

the one hand, psychologists Democratic political and policy embraced the underlying irresponsible would assure us an interest in officials - as it happens, the premise. Budget politics was considerations. As the choice is assuring voters that he would be deficit reduction is a normal generation that now holds the not merely a matter of now framed, the temptation responsible with government variant of human behavior. Reed vast majority of top posts in the numbers. It had moral involves surrendering the short- spending. And he delivered on should not be shamed for his new administration, including overtones. In the old days, term imperative of helping that promise. The fact that he history as executive director of Biden himself - one of the most concerned about deficits individuals and the broader finished his eight years with the so-called Simpson-Bowles disorienting developments of the showed that an officeholder economy to a bogus pursuit of robust budget surpluses was commission. On the other hand, past generation has been the was not letting good policy be bipartisanship or a foolish not an acquiescence to

a powerful government job, Reed also transformed politics for temptation to surrender the dangers of deficit spending. could be in position to Republican politicians, who no long-term interest in sound For younger people, the notion since he

During the Biden voices on the left, led by Rep. president. For the moment, open-minded progressives. On For a certain generation of journalists, most of whom fully policy be

That's a big reason important when a Democrat happens to be raises suspicions that an flights: Did that really used to economy.

diluted

administered in part by officeholder is letting good be a thing? Yes, and not that by long ago. Bill Clinton got elected political in 1992 in large measure by diluted by irresponsible political adherence to discredited conservative priorities. It was tolerance and endorsement. In That demolition, of course, has considerations-specifically the orthodoxies about the long-term regarded as a substantial progressive achievement, proselytize for his fantasies of longer regard spending restraint budgeting for the short-term of Democrats obsessing about Democrats did this in concert fiscal discipline and impose and resistance to debt as an reward of popularity. These fiscal restraint may seem like with expanded social spending important policy objective, except days, concern about deficits smoking on commercial airline and a strong job-creating



## Better to Deal with China and Russia in Tanden



During the "opponent" and China as a increasingly aligned. lodged in separate silos.

or strategic rivalry between the Europe, subversion of U.S. critical points. First, it obscures weaken the effects of policies by either alone.

2020 United States and the world's two campaign, President Joe Biden other most formidable military characterized Russia as an powers, whose polices are

"competitor." That contrast is The tendency to assign different own right as a strategic actor; likely to reinforce the current priorities to the two countries is rather, it would be viewed through tendency to deal with Russia and understandable. With its immense the prism of U.S. relations with China independently and leave economic weight, world-class China. The aim of U.S. Russia policy toward the two countries technological capabilities, swelling policy would then become little geopolitical ambitions, and more than preventing Russia We think that would be a mistake. growing global influence at a time from drawing closer to China and Divorcing policy toward one of intricate U.S.-Chinese augmenting the latter's power. first, if not the second, approach diplomatically, and their country from policy toward the economic entanglement, China The Anonymous article on U.S. will deaden our sense of the cooperation in each of these other not only distorts policy poses an unprecedented strategic China policy recently published trends pushing the two together spheres crosses toward each country, it also leaves challenge that has to be carefully in POLITICO epitomizes this perhaps weighed. Russia, by contrast, approach. unrecognized, the overarching poses a more immediate threat Framing the policy challenge in challenge of the escalating with its aggressive actions in either of these ways misses two with China. Both, however, will challenge far beyond that posed

challenges to urge the new administration to focus its attention almost exclusively on

disregards the urgent reasons for closer

alliances and cyberassaults on the genuinely large stakes the intended to alter similarly U.S. elections and infrastructure, United States has in a better objectionable Russian and while America's negligible U.S.-Russian relationship. These Chinese behavior. And they will economic and political ties with include the loss of control over numb sensitivity to areas where that country allow a harsher Cold an increasingly complex and three-way cooperation is essential War-like response. In other dangerous multipolar nuclear as well as to ways of pursuing it. words. China has to be world that can be reversed only As is increasingly true, Russia meticulously managed; Russia with U.S.-Russian leadership; a and China coordinate key has to be resolutely contained- renewed military confrontation at elements of their policies toward or so the rhetoric of Biden and the center of Europe that can be the United States. This they do his senior officials would contained only with cooperation when, for example, they both suggest. Other observers have among Russia, NATO and the support third countries hostile to used this great asymmetry in the U.S.; the burgeoning threat to the United States, conduct nature of the China and Russia U.S. cybersecurity that can be military exercises designed to eased only by some level of U.S.- deal with U.S. contingencies, and Russian reciprocal restraint; and oppose norms undergirding the the security and environmental U.S.-backed liberal international China. Under this option, Russia risks associated with climate order. Their cooperation would receive little attention in its change in the Arctic that can be complicates the U.S. response to lowered only if the United States either of them separately. and Russia coordinate their Similarly, continued tensions with efforts. Second, separating U.S. Russia and growing tensions with policy toward the two countries China fuel greater collaboration or focusing exclusively on China between the two. As they draw crafting policy in tandem. The technologically, militarily and and the perils of a U.S.-China thresholds, their combined cold war that will be greater still weight in East Asia and across if Russia forms a hard alliance Central Eurasia swells the



## What options does Biden have in Afghanistan?

#### Withdrawing US troops in May could derail the Afghan peace process. So, what can the new US administration do?

On December 2, 2020, United States's longest war. Biden has shown unease with the Afghan government and the With the peace talks putting US troops in harm's way Taliban announced an agreement progressing slowly and the May in Afghanistan even before the on the procedural framework deadline for withdrawal fast US-Taliban agreement was document that will act as a code approaching, the Biden concluded. of conduct during their peace administration will have to make A full US military withdrawal by negotiations. Shortly afterwards, some difficult decisions. the teams exchanged their There are no easy solutions respective agenda lists and regarding Afghanistan. If the US announced a weeks-long hiatus. withdraws before significant Although the teams resumed their progress has been made in talks on January 6, the sides have intra-Afghan talks, there is a made little progress and have only risk the entire process could the US has reduced its military met a few times. It appears both collapse and result in renewed the Afghan sides are waiting for violence. If the US and NATO administration on their approach the ground beyond the May to Afghanistan instead of focusing deadline - as recent reports have on progress in talks. The indicated - it could result in an administration has thus far issued abandonment of the agreement vague statements regarding a and a renewed conflict with the review of the agreement and Taliban. assessing the Taliban's progress The Biden administration has in fulfilling their commitments.

Despite its shortcomings, the US- address the crisis. Taliban agreement consequent

from the Biden decide to keep their troops on

several policy options to

and Full withdrawal by May

May, however, leaves two major issues unaddressed. First, the presence of the US military in Afghanistan has ensured a military equilibrium between the two negotiating sides. Although engagement, its continued presence has prevented the Taliban from tilting the balance of power on the ground in its favour. In the case of a full withdrawal of foreign troops, unless the parties can make rapid progress in talks - which is unlikely - both sides would seek to exert pressure on each other in the military theatre. Any significant alteration in the battlefield could complicate the peace talks and make political intra-Afghan One policy option would be to compromise more difficult. negotiations provide a singular abide by the withdrawal Furthermore, the Taliban could opportunity to bring peace to war- schedule set up by the Trump abandon the peace process



attempt to take power by force. groups. Hardline armed groups Following the agreement largely will continue to exploit the unencumbered by US air raids, security vacuum to operate in the Taliban fighters have been country and possibly plan acts shutting down main highways and abroad. pushing government security That is why it seems less likely forces to the confines of urban the Biden administration will go centres or large military for this option. installations. Their success in Retaining a residual force storming previously impregnable Given the risks a complete areas has reinforced their withdrawal could bring, the new perception that Afghan security administration could consider forces could crumble in the face leaving behind a small US of a series of focused offensives. military force, focussed Second, unless a compromise exclusively on counterterrorism. between the two sides is This force would also act as an reached, neither the Afghan equaliser in the military theatre government nor the Taliban will and discourage outside torn Afghanistan and end the administration. President Joe altogether, perceiving the other be in a position to prevent threat interference.

## Oil companies are facing the moment of truth. The stakes couldn't be higher



The climate crisis and the reducing the need for dramatic coronavirus pandemic are rapidly overhauls. dividing the titans of the oil Both camps were hit with industry into two camps. There are billions of dollars in losses in big consequences depending on 2020 and face an uncertain which side they choose.

European oil giants like BP (BP), BP and Shell can point to their Shell (RDSA) and Total (TOT), green initiatives, US producers which are trying to pivot away from are under growing pressure, oil and gas production and especially given the change in transform their companies. Then direction of climate policy on there are America's ExxonMobil day one of the Biden (XOM) and Chevron (CVX), where administration. executives are betting that oil Experts say that if these demand will boom again after the companies are really going to annual low-carbon investments to invest in to higher climate community about what skills oil pandemic despite global pressure change course, it must happen \$5 billion. Shell wants to prioritize standards. In his annual letter to companies actually bring to

2021, according to recent One group is made up of earnings reports. But while the

[sides] can't be right," said plans to sell more electricity to asked companies to "disclose Andrew Logan, senior director of customers and have a bigger a plan for how their business oil and gas at sustainability network of electric vehicle model will be compatible with a nonprofit Ceres. "Billions of charging stations, Reuters net zero economy" achieved by dollars are being bet on the reported this week, citing 2050. Given that BlackRock is outcome."

The European route

BP, Shell and Total charted a new path last year when they unveiled pledges to cut greenhouse gas Last month, France's Total Across the Atlantic emissions from their own became the first major oil European companies are operations to net zero by 2050, and their CEOs have spoken powerful American Petroleum headway about the pressing need to Institute. The decision followed transformations. Some of this develop new lines of business to a number of splits with the will be painful, given that the offset reduced demand for oil.

"Nobody in his right mind at the moment denies that this is an candidates in recent elections Shell. issue that we need to tackle who backed former President They'll also need to convince urgently," Shell CEO Ben van Donald Trump's opposition to the shareholders that pushing into Beurden said last week during a Paris climate agreement, Total the panel discussion.

London-based BP thinks it's possible that oil demand peaked in 2019. The oil giant intends to activists and shareholders, technology. reduce oil and gas production by come as Wall Street is starting "[There's a] lot of skepticism

simply fall too far behind. "Both out its consumer business, with BlackRock CEO Larry Fink unnamed sources. The Anglo- the world's largest asset Dutch company, which will manager, with nearly \$8.7 trillion formally unveil its strategy on under management, the Feb. 11, declined to comment. request is significant. company to cut ties with the expected to use 2021 to make lobby on climate policy, overhauls involve slashing including its support for nearly 20,000 jobs at BP and said.

follow years of criticism from the can translate to new forms of

already-competitive renewable energy sector will These moves in Europe, which pay off, and that their expertise

40% by 2030, while increasing to hold the companies they around the investment to decarbonize the economy, soon, or their businesses will clean energy trading and building executives released last week, clean energy," Logan said.

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## Moving beyond Paris, India steps up its climate ambition

on climate', its foreign secretary

targets but are aspiring to more industrial strategies. ambitious climate goals.

Summit, Prime sight of the past. He added that sources. India would not only achieve its We intend to keep harnessing would exceed them.

an ounce of practice is worth expansion being undertaken is more than a ton of preaching. We also one of the largest in the are taking practical steps across all areas, including energy, industry, transport, agriculture the sun. We are seeing progress and protection of green spaces, already. We initially committed in our whole-of-society journey to to 175 GW of renewable energy and climate ambition.

change cannot be fought in silos. have an even more ambitious to provide safe and adequate 2014. Over the next decade, we expressed are personal.

approach. It requires innovation and adoption of new and Five years after the Paris sustainable technologies. Agreement, India is among the Conscious of these imperatives, few developing countries that are India has mainstreamed climate not only meeting their "green" in its national developmental and

Energy is at the center of all At the recent Climate Ambition climate strategies. We believe Minister India has become a clean energy Narendra Modi articulated the powerhouse and is a leader in Indian approach. He said that we energy transition from carbon must set our sights "even dioxide-producing sources to higher", even as we do not lose renewables and non-fossil-fuel

Paris Agreement targets, but India's renewable energy potential. Our renewable energy At the U.N. Climate Action capacity is the fourth largest in Summit in 2019, Modi said that the world and the capacity world. The bulk of this will come from the cleanest energy source, further and expect to cross 220

The country aims to be It requires an integrated, target of 450 GW by 2030. We are drinking water through individual are expecting even greater 'a leader in thought and action comprehensive and holistic working to ensure that 40% of household tap connections by electric power in India is from nonfossil fuel sources by 2030. This clean energy push goes hand-inhand with a parallel effort to reduce the emissions intensity of our economy by 33-35% (from to create a carbon "sink" that innovative instruments to further 2005 levels) by 2030.

> The Ujala scheme - a national drive to use LED lamps - is reducing CO2 emissions by 38.5 Ujjwala scheme, under which over 80 million households have been provided access to clean cooking gas, is one of of the largest clean energy initiatives in the world.

> Climate action and sustainability is being brought into government schemes across multiple sectors. Our Smart Cities Mission is working with 100 cities to help them become more sustainable and adaptable to the challenges of climate change. The National Clean Air Programme aims to reduce air

2024 to all households in rural India, has a strong sustainability

More trees are being planted and degraded land is being reclaimed

We are also working rapidly to We have created international create a green transport network, organisations polluting emissions particularly in our big cities.

transit systems, green highways and waterways. A national an e-mobility ecosystem with the growing international bodies. aim to have over 30% of all This combination of national vehicles on India's roads to be action our own good as India is among the impact of climate change.

reductions.

India intends to be a responsible global citizen in the climate space. We are not only going beyond our Paris Agreement commitments. We are adopting can absorb 2.5-3 billion tonnes international cooperation in climate action.

like million tonnes every year. The to offset a sector known for its International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure that are India is building next-generation working on creating global lowinfrastructure such as mass carbon pathways. More than 80 countries have joined the International Solar Alliance, electric mobility plan is creating making it one of the fastest-

and responsible electric. These initiatives are for international citizenship makes India unique amongst developing the countries most vulnerable to countries and is placing it on the path to realise its ambitions to We recognise there is still a long be a leader in thought and action way to go but these efforts are on climate. By Harsh V. Shringla become a leader in climate action capacity by 2022. We have gone pollution (PM2.5 and PM10) by already paying dividends. India's as published in Thomson 20-30% in the next four years. The emission intensity has reduced Reuters Harsh V. Shringla is India recognizes that climate GW in the next two years. We Jal Jeevan Mission, which aims by 21% over the period 2005- India's Foreign Secretary. Views

## In Bengal, the salience of Jai Shri Ram

The state is witnessing the fusion of Hindutva and subaltern mobilisation against the political-cultural elite

shared by a vast section of non-the narrative.

Jai Shri Ram has changing political context in the in three key moments - first, become a mudradosh (a last four decades, from the Left during the 2018 communal riot in catchphrase) for us", said a voter, Front to Trinamool Congress Asansol on the occasion of belonging to the Matua (TMC) rule, the Bhadraloks (the community, in Thakurnagar, cultural elite) have been fierce West Bengal. "We started using custodians of Bengal's sense of it to tease the Trinamool, but now exceptionalism and guarded it it has become as natural as passionately. For instance, a saving good morning in English." quintessential Bhadralok would When asked how Jai Durga or condemn and lament the rising Jai Kali - associated more deeply assertive religiosity in other parts with Bengal - hadn't, instead, of the country while defending become the rallying cry, he Durga Pujo in Bengal primarily responded, "Ram is as familiar as a social gathering. However, to us as you." As West Bengal since 2018, political shifts and heads to the polls, it is at the social changes, particularly intersection of changing cultural among the subaltern sections in contours, shifting political rural and mofussil Bengal, have dynamics and contested identity raised questions about the claims. Identity is always a two- Bhadralok sense of entitlement way process. A particular mode in representing and speaking for of recognition by a group requires the state. What Bengal is others to endorse it. Thus, the witnessing is a new wave of claim that Bengal is the subaltern assertion, using the intellectual-heartland of India is instrument of Hindutva to push incidents are also seen as the

Bengalis, thereby constituting The growing political and cultural the image of the state being salience of the Jai Shri Ram

Ramnavami; second, as chanted by people when chief minister Mamata Banerjee's motorcade passed through Chandrakona in West Midnapore and Bhatpara in North 24 Parganas in May 2019; and, finally, on January 23, when the slogan was raised in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Banerjee during the celebration of Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary in Kolkata.

The Bhadralok response to the slogan has been one of unease. It claims that the slogan has never been a part of Bengal's religiosity and is almost alien to the land, and therefore, those invoking must be the migrants from neighbouring states. These Janata Party (BJP). However, a closer look would reveal that this allegedly on account of rampant



to the BJP and migrants is not only untrue, but also fails to take into account the role played by the TMC. It also ignores ground

become apparent.

One, the BJP, outside Kolkata, is organisationally weak and, even after a spree of defections from the incumbent, lacks strong local leadership. Two, an resentment against the TMC. are polarised against the TMC, different. Irrespective of the slogan in Bengal was reflected argument, defending the corruption and systemic violence has deeper roots.

and shifting the blame entirely in connivance with the state police. Three, it is primarily the erstwhile supporters of the Left who have been at the receiving end of the TMC's excesses, and are now clamouring for "revenge". After having travelled through all And, finally, barring few pockets 294 assembly constituencies in such as parts of Murshidabad, the state, four ground realities Malda and Dinajpur, both the Left and the Congress are not considered as credible alternative by pro-change voters. Thus, the BJP has become the default beneficiary of the existing handiwork of the Bharatiya overwhelming majority of Hindus Even a cursory look at the

intersection of these facts shows that the salience of the slogan



## Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

**FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW:** If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

#### Stay home except to get medical care

• Stay home: People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. Do not leave, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.



- Stay in touch with your doctor. Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.
- · Avoid public transportation: Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

#### Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation

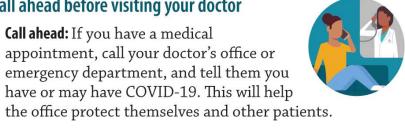
• Stay away from others: As much as possible, you should stay in a specific "sick room" and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.



- Limit contact with pets & animals: You should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.
  - Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people with the virus limit contact with animals until more information is known.
  - When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick with COVID-19. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.

#### Call ahead before visiting your doctor

• Call ahead: If you have a medical appointment, call your doctor's office or emergency department, and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



#### Wear a facemask if you are sick

**If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.



**If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live in the home should stay in a different room. When caregivers enter the room of the sick person, they should wear a facemask. Visitors, other than caregivers, are not recommended.

#### Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover: Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.



- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- Wash hands: Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

#### Clean your hands often

- Wash hands: Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

#### Avoid sharing personal household items

 Do not share: Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.







## A budget for a 'project finance economy

#### FM Sitharaman broke free of taboos and bet on growth. Now, meet divestment targets and monitor outcomes

and unapologetic India. In this year's budget. infrastructure needs to borrow to tinkering. meet its required expenditures. Sitharaman broke with the important area which continued for vaccines. The signal here is Project finance economies need constraint imposed by the Fiscal to attract focus was water ( to build the infrastructure lacking Responsibility and Budget ?2,87,000 crore allocation over in their nations so that they can Management Act. It transparently five years) - a key requirement for increase the productivity of their accounted for expenditures and the population, a basic human economies. Sustainable growth openly stated the true deficit this need which brings important side in Gross Domestic Product year at 9.5% and targeted a benefits in respect of health and (GDP) cannot be achieved deficit of 6.8% next year. She was hygiene. State power distribution without plugging the gap in hard clear that critical spending on companies were, at the same and soft infrastructure. What is infrastructure, health and time, asked to get ready for important is to ensure that the education could not be delayed if competition to shake up this vital

revealed the mindset of a confident this context that I applaud this some subsidy allocations were

newspaper, on January 22, I had Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala was sharply increased. All this argued for the need for developing Sitharaman was not coy in was done without tinkering with economies such as India to view signalling to the world her intent direct taxes and only some minor themselves as "project finance" to spend to grow out of the adjustments in tariffs and indirect economies and not "working pandemic. She was not cowed taxes. capital" economies of the down by the constraining consistency and an attempt was developed West. While a orthodoxy of neo-classical made at reducing tax harassment developed economy has good economic thinking that inhibited by reducing the time frame within near full action in the past. The budget was which tax cases could be taken employment and high per capita bold and unafraid in a crisis year. up and tried. The outlay for hard income so that it has the revenue It combined pragmatism in some infrastructure was increased to base to meet its expenditures, a areas, with a bold attack on the ?5.54 lakh crore from ?4.39 crore country with low per capita traditional holy cows of old and did spent this year. The allocation disguised not fall prey to ineffective was spread on roads, rail, urban unemployment and poor symbolism and needless populist infrastructure, ports, shipping,

borrowing is well-directed and India was to recover its old growth sector. The pandemic had put a reversal of the policy on

This year's budget spent on the right things. It is in path. Revenue expenditures and reduced, but capital expenditure waterways, and airports. Another



care system. The finance minister increased allocation for health care to ?22,3846 crore as against ?94,452 crore this year, a 137% increase, with ?35,000 crore of that amount earmarked very important but we all recognise this to be a multi-year journey. Perhaps some more could have been done for education and skilling, but one hopes it is recognised as a critical area for coming budgets.

The measures for the financial sector were long-overdue. The finance minister announced the

by setting aside ?20,000 crore to establish one to supplement needs of India's infrastructure. She announced the setting up of a bad bank to facilitate the resolution of bad loans and cleaning up of bank balance sheets to spur credit growth in economy.But announcement of privatisation, yes privatisation, of two public sector banks in addition to IDBI Bank, one general insurer, the listing of Life Insurance Company and allowing 74% foreign investment in insurance, were pathbreaking.

## Where the budget gets India's economy wrong



economic philosophy of the personal and business incomes 2021-22 Union Budget? Two sets in 2021-22 will not reach levels of numbers can answer this which should have been question. Let us look at the tax achieved in 2020-21. Lower projections first. The 2021-22 incomes will also mean lower Budget Estimate (BE) for Gross demand. Tax Revenue is ?22.17 lakh crore, Take government spending of income. This means the real GDP forecast given in the

What is the basic budget itself assumes that

which is lower than 2020-21 BE figures now. The BE for total figures of ?24.23 lakh crore. The central government spending for shortfall would have been higher 2021-22 is ?34.83 lakh crore. if collections from Union excise The Revised Estimate (RE) for duties (basically taxes on petrol-total central spending in 2020-21 diesel) had not increased by is ?34.5 lakh crore. The Gross ?68,000 crore between 2020-21 Domestic Product (GDP) deflator and 2021-22 BE figures. Tax - if one takes 14.4% nominal rates have not been changed in GDP growth projection for 2021this budget. Taxes are a fraction 22 given in the budget and 11%

#### The budget has pinned its hopes on supply-side economics, while the economy is facing a demand-side crisis

The fact that it has not happened were a year ago? to the economy.

If one reads both sets of together, the macroeconomic takeaway is clear. The budget has pinned its supply-side economics, while the economy is facing a demand-side crisis. To be sure, one could argue that Employment 2020-21 was an abnormal year -

government's view that the 2021-22 BE. PM-KISAN government's curve. But this argument is ?65,000 crore in 2020-21 RE and surprising.

latest Economic Survey - comes overoptimistic. If the economy has been maintained at that level to 3.4%. This means that central were indeed on a V-shaped in 2021-22 BE. Once the spending should have increased recovery path, why are the resource flow to such schemes to at least ?35.7 lakh crore to government's tax projections for reduces from April 2021, rural keep it unchanged in real terms. 2021-22 lower than what they incomes and demand will take a hit. When read with the fact that implies that the 2021-22 budget There is an additional problem even the better-looking highentails a negative fiscal stimulus with what is a premature frequency economic indicators, withdrawal of the fiscal boost. A such as Purchasing Managers' lot of the sequential recovery, Indices, have been highlighting especially in rural areas, was the fact that labour markets have contingent on the government's not recovered even though support. This has been production has picked up, this withdrawn in a big way. For has an ominous possibility. While example, spending on the India was spared a second wave Mahatma Gandhi National Rural of Covid-19 infections, it could Guarantee end up with a second round of Scheme (MGNREGS) is down distress in labour markets, and, therefore, the government from ?1.15 lakh crore in 2020- especially for those who are at is justified in rolling back its 21 RE to ?73,000 crore in 2021- the bottom of the pyramid and welfare spending push, as the 22 BE. Similarly, allocation for have the highest propensity to economy gets unlocked and Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna is consume. What explains a vaccination gains momentum. down from ?40,500 crore in negative fiscal stimulus in the This is in keeping with the 2020-21 RE to ?27,500 crore in wake of a contraction? Given the economy is already on the rising allocation was ?75,000 crore in philosophy even during the preside of a V-shaped recovery 2020-21 BE; it came down to pandemic slowdown, this is not





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## The end of Myanmar's limited experiment with democracy

Two key questions require unpacking at this stage. First, why did the Tatmadaw undertake a coup when it commands tremendous influence in Myanmar's politics? Second, why now?

At around 3 am on country adopted a seven-step counter to intuition, the Monday, Myanmar's dalliance with electoral democracy - never selectively removed restrictions, deeply uncomfortable with Suu a liberal experiment - came to and slowly opened up, raising Kyi. Her rising popularity among an end. State Counsellor Aung hopes of democrats the world the Bamar-Buddhist majority, San Suu Kyi and President Win over. Not anymore. Myint of the National League of Two key questions require populism (as witnessed during Democracy (NLD), which recently swept Myanmar's general elections, were detained undertake a coup when it by the military (also known as commands the Tatmadaw) on charges of electoral fraud. So were many other journalists, activists, and the military 25% seat share in trying to alter the civil-military artists critical of the military. The the parliament and does not balance of power. coup d'état of 2021, the third in Myanmar's political history - the first two being in 1962 and 1990was underway, unleashing horrific human suffering. Apart from altering Myanmar's political trajectory, the coup also risks destabilising the geopolitics of the South and Southeast Asian region. Historically, Myanmar has held a deeply isolationist streak in its foreign policy. But specifics of what triggered the made little progress in the last since the late 1980s, it became coup will slowly come in, there five years - as well as, to a increasingly dependent on China are two reasons why Senior- limited extent, external international criticism of the Tatmadaw's authoritarianism. This began to change in the first One, despite the pro-military Beijing for supporting the Arakan

roadmap to democracy,

unpacking at this stage.

First, why did the Tatmadaw influence in Myanmar's politics? The 2008 constitution guarantees permit constitutional amendments without a 75%-plus majority favouring such moves. This affords the Tatmadaw structural control of the country's lawmaking processes, even if decide on foreign and domestic policies - as witnessed in the past few years under Suu Kyi.

have opted to go ahead with this risky decision.

Tatmadaw had begun feeling more-nationalist-than-most the Rohingya crisis), and persistent demand to reduce the percentage requirement for tremendous ushering in constitutional amendments, deepened the Tatmadaw's suspicion of Suu Kyi

Such a combination of the military's insecurities and Suu Kvi's ambitions led to open spats between the State Counsellor and the Senior-General (S-G). There was elected representatives can increasing concern within the Tatmadaw that it risked losing influence and autonomy over critical policy domains, including Second, why now? Though the the peace process - which has the face of intense General Min Aung Hlaing might relations. The S-G, for instance, has been critical of China in recent months and blamed decade of the century, as the constitutional arrangements, and army in Rakhine state. Suu



Beijing, as seen in her redpolitical support for herself when within the Tatmadaw. the West had abandoned Suu For the purpose of analytical

the military an opportunity to oust Suu Kyi in the name of the popular, and equally insurgencies.

Kyi's perceived tilt towards autocratic, former Pakistani prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto carpet welcome to Xi Jinping in by the military dictator Zia-ul-January 2020, exacerbated Hag. But this in itself is these concerns. The Tatmadaw insufficient to explain the timing viewed it as a Machiavellian of the coup d'état. For that, one attempt to carve out more must focus on the power politics

ease, two broad factions can be In this backdrop, the alleged identified within the Tatmadaw. electoral inconsistencies in The so-called reformists, most recent elections, though denied represented by former President by the Union Election Thein Sein, are those who have Commission, ironically offered been relatively open to devolving power to elected civilian leaders, diversifying Myanmar's safeguarding the 2008 external relations by opening up constitution from a civilian to the West, and developing an autocrat. In comparative inclusive political formula that perspective, this situation is not could bring an end to the dissimilar to the 1977 ouster of country's multiple long-running

## Don't force farm laws, let states decide for themselves



and written about the farmers' understand that they are grossly wrong. It is not understood what these laws are not productivity levels and marketing

Over the last six implemented. Where is the months, so much has been said urgency to implement something whose outcome is not easy to agitation consequent to the quantify? The government has enactment of the new farm bills, been trying to convince people that I was wondering if anything that these laws will help in more can be said for the attracting private investment in the bureaucrats and politicians agriculture sector, which will engaged in defence of the farm increase the farmer's income. To bills that will make them achieve the goal to double farmer's income will depend on multiple factors such as the size is it that the government will lose of farm holding, nature of crop,

India is big and diverse. The solution is to allow states to legislate on this subject, as agriculture and marketing are in the state list under the Constitution

facilities. This can never happen to build up food reserves and the central government has not by one-size-fits-all farm laws. And there are millions of farmers who are not convinced.In fact, the farmers are agitating seeking the repeal of these laws as they feel the new laws will ensure that the present system of assured minimum support price will collapse, leading to the exploitation of the farmers at the hands of the private players. The Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act was enacted in Punjab in 1961, with a view to regulate sale, purchase, storage and processing of agricultural produce. Those were the times when India faced acute food shortages. When the Green Revolution started in Punjab, the consequently reduce the burden central government was looking of procurement. It is no secret that if the farm laws are implemented.

prevent shortages. This was followed by the minimum support price for wheat in 1966 and later for other crops. Over a period of time, the infrastructure created under the APMC Act, combined with MSP for wheat and paddy, not only reduced the shortages but created surpluses. Punjab and Haryana have been feeding the nation since the Green Revolution. In fact, paddy, which was never a traditional crop in Punjab and Haryana, has become one the main crops only because of MSP. Today, one of the undisclosed reasons for the enactment of the new farm laws is to bring down production of wheat and paddy and

been able to handle the surpluses in wheat and paddy. The new farm laws unfortunately are no solution to this. The solution lies in ensuring MSP and assured procurement for oilseeds, pulses and other crops where the government depends on imports. The farmer is willing to cultivate other crops in lieu of wheat and paddy, provided the returns on investment are assured through MSP and procurement. What is important is to understand that while there may be different views on this subject, one thing which should be clear to all policy makers in Delhi, is, that no immediate revolution is going to take place



## Global support pours in for protesting farmers, Twitter in frenzy

ongoing farmers' protest has now climate activist, Greta Thunberg produce. drawn global attention and too joined in and expressed her Popularly known by his stage several high-profile celebrities support. She shared the same name, Jay Sean, Kamaljit Singh spoke out in favour of the CNN news article and wrote "We Jhooti took to Instagram and farmers. Several international stand in solidarity with the wrote that despite the farmers' backgrounds have now put forth Hollywood actor John Cusack protests 'ever in history,' there their opinions on the social also expressed his support for was barely enough media networking site Twitter.

It all started with Rihanna's tweet post by Vanessa Nakate, a the US and I've barely seen it on on Tuesday night "Why aren't we talking about #FarmersProtest"?, which garnered major international attention. She #FarmersProtest." Notably, he shared a CNN news article with her 100 million followers, and CAA protestors in February graphic and heart-breaking to called out the internet shutdown at the protest site. The post had This development occurred as Even as a majority of the been shared around 2 lakh times thousands of farmers, mainly mainstream Indian celebrities in a little more than 12 hours.

ordered the shutdown of internet several Delhi border points since Kangana Ranaut, who is known services in the border areas of November 2020. It was in protest for her outspoken attitude on Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri from of the new farm laws the state socio-political issues, replied to Jan 30, and the Haryana planned to pass on. They Rihanna's tweet. "No one is government had cut off internet demanded the government to talking about it because they are

varied #FarmersProtest in India."

2020.

Government's handling of the solidarity with Rihanna, Swedish Support Price (MSP) for their

agitation being one of the largest the farmers as he retweeted a coverage of the event. "I live in Ugandan climate activist, which the news or mainstream media. read. "Let us talk about what is I don't know what needs to be happening in India right now done to raise more awareness and have more eyes on this but had also shown support to anti- I've seen videos that are far too post," he added.

from the states of Punjab and have kept their judgement The Ministry of Home Affairs had Haryana, have been camping at reserved on the issue, actress connectivity in at least seven repeal the three farm laws and not farmers, they are terrorists

you dummies".

and Swara Bhasker lauded farmer protesters." Bollywood celebrities. "Dear parliament. Indian celebrities/ actors/ housands

only in India, but globally too. being built to curb the agitation. The famous author Meena

Indian districts till Feb 3. Soon after, in legal guarantee of Minimum who are trying to divide India, so Harris, who is also the niece of that China can take over our US vice-president Kamala vulnerable broken nation and Harris, lends her voice to the make it a Chinese colony much movement, saying the world's like the USA! Sit down, you fool, oldest democracy was attacked we are not selling our nation like by the government. She stated, "We ALL should be outraged by On the other side of the India's internet shutdowns and spectrum, actors Richa Chadha paramilitary violence against

> Rihanna's tweet. They have The issue is also highlighted in been vocal with their huge the UK. There was an online support of the agitation. In petition supporting the protest, India where actors and sports which has gathered more than persons especially cricketers 100,000 signatures. As a enjoy massive following, their result, the Labour Party MP tweets and opinions become Claudia Webbe stated that instant news. Sayani Gupta, they will be taking up the the actor, lamented the issue of Indian farmers' silence of the mainstream protest for a debate in the UK

> sportsmen/ musicians/stars, personnel have now been grow some spine. Love," she deployed while many are on their way along the Delhi border. The farmers' protest is a Barbed wire barricades, concrete politically highlighted matter, not walls and nail studded roads are

> > By Susmita Ghosh

## Celeb Tweets: Did The Government Overreact?

The best reaction would have been to ignore Rihanna's tweet or allow the defenders of the government, including film stars and cricketers to respond. The entire issue would not have blown up as it now has.

a mountain out of a mole hole by case. having India's foreign ministry Not that this will make any has. The anxiety is about the

with a pro-Khalistan group.

official of the Delhi Police said including film stars and cricketers Departments comments made important to see such comments sector.

spokesman respond to tweets by difference to Greta Thunberg, huge social media following both pop icon Rihanna and climate sitting thousands of miles away Rihanna and Thunberg have. The activist Greta Thunberg over their in Europe. At best this is a government is of the view that support for the on-going farmers symbolic gesture to please the considering the reach and appeal protests, the government went BJP's domestic support base of social media in today's world, one step further on Thursday. enraged at international celebrities it had no option but to react. Delhi police filed an FIR against daring to comment on India's Earlier, New Delhi had reacted the Swedish teenager accusing internal matters. Many will see angrily to Canadian Prime her of "criminal conspiracy and this as an extension of the Minister Justin Trudeau's promoting enmity on grounds of government's muscular policy remarks on the farmers. when it comes to defending India's Canada's support led to BJP However, Delhi police clarified that "reputation" abroad.

the FIR was registered against Predictably the Delhi police move Khalistan lobby settled in that unknown persons in connection did not make Thunberg cower in country was using the protest as with the "toolkit", which was fear. Taking this in her stride, she an excuse to further the cause principles, the US will ensure that ongoing efforts of the shared by teen climate activist tweeted soon afterward that she of the now-defunct Khalistan this does not affect overall government and the concerned Greta Thunberg and others on still stood with farmers. By doing agitation. Twitter, with a top official saying this, the government has merely While the supporters of the strategic nature of these ties, impasse," that the initial probe has helped to draw international government have gone ballistic on more so with an aggressive spokesman said at his weekly suggested the document's link attention to the farmers' protest. international celebrity tweets, the China on its doorstep. So both briefing this evening. The US The best reaction would have been MEA's spokesman Anurag sides will be careful. "We have has welcomed the Narendra Asked whether the FIR has been to ignore Rihanna's tweet or allow Srivastava was measured in his taken note of comments by the Modi government's efforts to registered against Thunberg, a top the defenders of the government, response to the US State Department. It is reform India's agricultural

Not satisfied with making nobody has been named in the to respond. The entire issue would not have blown up as it now



new Biden administration would made and in their entirety. As want to undo the tremendous you can see, the US State progress made in Indo-US ties in Department has acknowledged the last few years and more. steps being taken by India Freedom of speech, democracy towards agricultural reforms. Any activists claiming that the and liberal values are the core protests must be seen in the values of the Democratic Party. context of India's democratic While emphasizing these ethos and polity, and the relations. India also knows the farmer groups to resolve the



## India Can't Afford To Bind



India's economy has promoting suffered more than most from the enhancing measures had to pandemic and so have its people. stand on a solid macro-The country has lost more than economic foundation. a year's worth of growth and The federal budget for the next perhaps a decade's progress in financial year, which starts in its efforts to reduce poverty. The April, has poked a hole in this economic contraction - the first optimistic narrative. Not only in India since the 1970s - has put has the fiscal deficit for the pressure on its government like current year exploded to 9.5% so many others to respond.

Until this week, that response higher than the consensus had been relatively restrained. estimate, but still defensible for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's a pandemic year - next year's government seemed recognize that there was only so almost 7%. The government has much it could do to address the effectively abandoned its longeconomic contraction, especially term commitment to bring the while the pandemic is still raging. deficit down to close to 3% of By its actions, the government GDP, pitching instead for a implied that any welfare-

and growth-

of GDP - two percentage points to deficit is now forecast to reach from now.

Once the pandemic retreats, India might end up with a debt-to-GDP ratio north of 90%, compared to In his pre-budget survey of the zero lower bound - quite the the low seventies at present. It economy, the government's opposite, we have an economy would be saddled with a permanently elevated fiscal deficit entire chapter attacking the And, finally, if there's a country and a financial system bogged ratings agencies - a pre-emptive somewhere with a government down by unknown levels of bad salvo against a possible bureaucracy efficient enough to debt. Consumer price inflation has sovereign downgrade. Print build really productive assets topped the Reserve Bank of India's money without fear, he urged, using sustained deficits, that target zone of 2%-6% since the saying that doing so would "not country definitely isn't India. This Covid-19 lockdown began last necessarily lead to inflation and is still a developing economy, year. These are, I am afraid, a debasement of the currency" which especially in bad times numbers more associated with if the extra money is invested in should tread carefully rather than Latin American stagnation than your typical Asian tiger.

The government is obviously hoping that increased spending will help India grow out of this predicament. Unfortunately, actual growth before the pandemic was already just 4% a year. Fitch Ratings thinks India's potential growth is at best 5.1%. That won't because of their supposed bias is borrowing, ending a tradition of be enough to deal with the macroeconomic predicament India's in. The only way India can pull itself out of this jam is if private need to grow in order to reduce debt, Modinow faces the prospect investment pours into the country, financing projects that push up the country's potential growth rate. that it can expect vast sums of inherited it. That would be a dire Yet the government, already investment to arrive even if the legacy indeed.

well.

countries in India's position which have neither a reserve currency nor strong growth

gentle descent to 4.5% - six years monopolizing domestic financial macro-economic numbers look savings, seems to want to go to bad and the sovereign rating is war with the global markets as junk. We don't have a history of deflation, we aren't hitting the seniormost economist spent an prone to sustained high inflation. the right projects. To paraphrase throw caution to the winds. "Tropic Thunder," never go full Modi's greatest strength as an MMT. Unlike the U.S. or China, economic manager had been his commitment responsibility. Some of that was visible in this year's budget as momentum - can't grow while well-which, for example, boasted exploding their debt. They can't a welcome return to transparency afford to ignore ratings agencies about how much the government or cock a snook at the bond fudging that has persisted since markets and just run the the last financial crisis. Yet, with currency presses instead. They this new willingness to binge on their debt. That's a very different of leaving India's macro-economy dynamic.India isn't so attractive far less secure than when he

## Modi Government's Paranoia On Full Display, Courtesy Rihanna

security and sovereignty had coordinated, expressions of the evening, however, my fears fragile foundations on which our and anxieties had somewhat nationalism now rests. abated. A statement by our The seventeenth-century French always truthful Ministry of writer La Rochefoucauld External Affairs, a tweet by our famously described hypocrisy as always honourable Home the homage paid by vice to virtue. by any kind of foreigner at all. reliance was entirely intact.

I went to sleep on the in which our government and its foolish. It was also extremely

satire can do justice to the way endorsement was extremely who has thrived and prospered on

night of February 2 secure in the useful idiots responded to a short counter-productive. Surely an knowledge that my country, tweet by a lady named Rihanna. Indian Prime Minister instructing Mera Bharat Mahan, was strong, Their response was steeped in Americans on whom to choose as secure, and self-reliant-in a hypocrisy and dishonesty, but their President is a more egregious word, atmanirbhar. I woke up the above all it lacked a sense of act than a Barbadian singer merely next morning to find that our proportion. Those collective, drawing attention to a news article detailing some facts about a been shaken to its foundations pride, solidarity, defiance and farmers' protest in India. Indeed, by a tweet from a foreigner. By resolution strikingly revealed the after Modi said what he did about Donald Trump in Houston with Trump beside him, the Indian government has absolutely no leg to stand on when confronted with any sort of criticism of its actions

Minister, and, above all, some This aphorism is particularly At a lesser level, the hypocrisy in profound thoughts from those apposite in this case. For it the government's response was great and visionary political should never be forgotten that as also manifest in the tweet from the theorists, Akshay Kumar and Prime Minister, Narendra Modi Home Minister. For the inventor Tendulkar, had actively intervened in the political and overseer of the ruling party's collectively ensured that I went affairs of another nation, by IT cell, for this Grand Master of to bed last night confident that asking Americans of Indian spin and distortion, to accuse our nation's pride and self- origin to vote for Donald Trump others of 'propaganda' brings to in the presidential elections of mind hoary proverbs both in Satire is not my natural style, 2020. In departing from decades English (the pot calling the kettle and I shall soon depart from it, of principled bipartisanship by black) and in Hindi (ulta chor but perhaps only mockery and previous Prime Ministers, that kotwal ko daante). For a politician



elsewhere, hypocrisy is indeed procedures, the price paid by vice to virtue. Government acted agricultural sector should first sheer dint of power."

stoking divisions of religion, have been discussed with the caste, language and region to states. They were not. They ask for the country to be 'united' should have been referred to a calls to mind the same cliches. parliamentary committee; they In India, even more than were not. After bypassing these Modi Meanwhile, the Ministry of brazenly still, by not even External Affairs or MEA issued a allowing a division and a formal statement that began with a lie. counting of votes in the Rajya This was that the farm laws had Sabha. As Pratap Bhanu Mehta been passed 'after a full debate wrote at the time, "This is a and discussion' in Parliament. In travesty of parliament. It is fact, laws that proposed such far- railroading a bill through, not on reaching changes in the its deliberated merits, but on the



### ED files supplementary chargesheet in Iqbal Mirchi case, adds name of DHFL ex-chairman Kapil Wadhawan

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has submitted a supplementary chargesheet in the Igbal Mirchi case, and named accused Kapil Wadhawan in it.

mentary chargesheet in the Mirchi's sons were also actively case of late underworld don and involved in smuggling and drug Fugitive Economic Offender ungangster Igbal Mirchi on Monday. trafficking activities, and this has der the Fugitive Economic Ofhas detailed information on the chargesheet through witness not respond to multiple sumsmuggling operations of Mirchi, statements. illegal businesses run by his There are multiple witnesses in sons and other associates, and the case who travelled from forproceeds of crime they have eign countries to record their been involved in like the UAE and statements with the ED. The produce themselves by Feb-

Kapil Wadhawan, former chair- mation dating back almost 35 to the court would declare man of the Board of Directors of 40 years ago, to build the case them Fugitive Economic Of-Diwan Housing Finance Limited against Mirchi who was then one fenders under the FEOA. (DHFL), who was arrested in of the biggest smugglers in The case initially came to January 2020 in the case, was Mumbai. chargesheet. The chargesheet filed in the case in December 2019 had named 16 accused and entities.

Total 16 persons, entities named in chargesheet

The 16 persons and entities late Iqbal Mirchi, his wife Hazra Memon, his sons Asif Memon and Junaid Memon, Haroon Rinku Deshpande, Ranjeet Singh Bindra, Jayant Soni, Joy Home Creations, Sunblink Real Realty and Mohammad Yusuf Trust.

properties - like hotels and build-

The Enforcement Direc- in Mumbai and Panchgani -

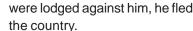
probe agency had to dig infor-

first proached the Special PMLA longed to Mirchi, but Sir in 1986, but as various cases Haroon Yusuf.

court seeking the court to detorate (ED) submitted a supple- worth thousands of crores. clare Mirchi's wife Hazra, her son's Asif and Junaid be declared Sources said the chargesheet been established in the fenders Act (FEOA) as they did mons and warrants issued against them. The court, after ruary 16, 2021, failing which

named an accused in the In December, the ED ap- Mumbai properties which be- properties were bought by Mirchi the chairman of the trust -

observing the ED's applica- Mohammad Yusuf Trust had told were lodged against him, he fled tion, has asked the three to the police and the SAFEMA the country. that it belonged to the trust.



The properties were The three prime properties purchased in the name of Sir were located in Worli which Mohammad Yusuf Trust were Rabia Mansion, Mariam which had transferred the Lodge and Sea View in Worli complete ownership to - sold for around Rs 225 crore. Mirchi and his family in light with the sale of three According to the agency, the 1993, and this was done by



### Former asst director arrested in Sushant Singh Rajput case for supplying drugs to him

named in the chargesheet are Bureau (NCB) on Tuesday arrested former assistant director Rishikesh Pawar in connection with the death of actor Sushant Yusuf, Humayun Merchant, Singh Rajput. Pawar had been on the run since last month.

Last month, the Mumbai sessions court rejected the antici-Estate, Dheeraj Wadhawan, patory bail plea of Rishikesh Sunny Bhatija, estate agent Pawar in the Sushant Singh Purushottam Budhrani, RKW Rajpur drugs case which is being probed by the NCB.

NCB officials had since January Earlier, the ED had attached 8 launched a manhunt to nab Rishikesh Pawar, who was quesings in the UAE belonging to the tioned by NCB in September last Mirchi family members other year when several people assothan various properties attached ciated with the actor were ques- Showik who were also arrested patory bail application by Pawar, was recovered.

The Narcotics Control tioned. Pawar's role in supply- by the NCB. ing drugs to late Sushant Singh Sawant in his statement had residence but found that he had Rajput came to light. Pawar al- said that before he started work- fled. legedly procured drugs and supplied it to Sushant Singh Rajput for monetary benefit. One of Sushant's staff members, residence was also raided by named in the C.R. no 16/20. He Dipesh Sawant, named Pawar as one of the persons supplying drugs to the actor. Sawant had told NCB officials that Pawar had died by suicide in June.

> Sawant was arrested by NCB for delivering drugs to Sushant on the instructions of actor Rhea

NCB in September last year.

Mumbai sessions court earlier, dream project. Various eviseeking anticipatory bail in the dences clearly reveal the role supplied drugs to Sushant in the NCB case and then approached played by the Rishikesh Pawar month of May while the actor the Bombay High Court. The in supplying drugs to the late proach the sessions court with for a monetary consideration".He the application where the appliadded, "In a search at his resication got rejected last month. dence, one laptop was seized, Chakraborty and her brother Following the rejection of antici- from which incriminating data

NCB officials visited his Chembur

ing for Sushant, it was Pawar Sameer Wankhede, Zonal Direcwho delivered drugs to the late tor of NCB, had then said, actor following which Pawar's "Rishikesh Pawar is an accused is Assistant Director of Pawar had approached the Sushant Singh Rajput's Bombay HC asked him to apactor Mr. Sushant Singh Rajput

## investigate blast outside Israel Embassy in

probed by the National Investi- that the attack near the Israeli conversation with Prime Ministion has handed over the probe tors brought to justice. Our close from Delhi Police to the National and valuable security coopera-Intelligence Agency (NIA). NIA, tion will continue," PM Modi had the aftermath of the terrorist the central agency is India's tweeted. A low-intensity improcounter-terrorism task force.

from the spot.

The low-intensity blast perpetrators will be brought to an "act of terror." which took place on Friday out- justice. "Spoke to my friend PM Prime Minister Benjamin side Israel Embassy will now be @netanyahu and assured him Netanyahu after his telephonic gative Agency. The Ministry of Embassy in New Delhi will be Home Affairs through a notifica- fully investigated and perpetravised explosive device (IED) in India.""Indian Prime Minister A team of NIA had visited the site detonated on Friday at 5.05 pm Modi noted that his country is of the blast on Friday and Sat- which shattered the windscreens urday to collect the evidence of at-least three cars. Primary investigation has revealed Iranian would continue to cooperate Prime Minister Narendra Modi on hand behind the attack however with Israel in the fight against Monday spoke to the Israel no concrete evidence apart from terrorism," tweeted Prime Min-Prime Minister Benjamin one letter has been found so far. ister Benjamin Netanyahu. A let-Netanyahu and assured him that Israel has termed this attack as ter, which is now part of the evi-

ter Narendra Modi through series of tweets thanked him for Indian government's "efforts to safeguard Israeli representatives in event near the Israeli Embassy committed to the security of our people and added that India



dence for the NIA, found at the "trailer". India Today TV has acblast site, calls the explosion a nated last year.

blast site outside the Israel Em- cessed the letter which mentions bassy on Friday evening, has killed Iran General Qasem hinted at an Iranian hand to be Soleimani and its top nuclear behind the attack. Sources say, scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh the letter, recovered from the as martyrs. Both were assassi-



## Indian-Origin Sheriff's Deputy In US Charged With Staging Fake Shooting

Sukhdeep Gill has been charged with "staging a shocking ambush in which he said he was shot from a passing car as he stood on a dark rural road near Morgan Hill," the release said.

ficer in the US state of California appeared that he had been shot intensive investigation," the Office ing incident last year following said, citing a statement issued release. which he was hailed as a hero by the district attorney's office. who had a miraculous escape, Sukhdeep Gill's report triggered with "staging a shocking ambush authorities have announced.

Sukhdeep Gill, who held the post He told officers that "he had a passing car as he stood on a of Deputy at Santa Clara County parked on the dirt shoulder to uridark rural road near Morgan Hill," Sheriff's Office, was arrested on nate during a routine patrol. While Friday as he on January 31, 2020 walking back towards the driver Now Sukhdeep Gill - who has had reported that he was shot side of his patrol car he was shot been with the Sheriffs' Office since from a passing car as he stood at by the passenger in a silver 2016 - is charged with felony vanon a dark rural road. Following the sedan that had turned off its lights dalism and falsely reporting a deeply disappointing," District

(News Agencies)-A 27-year-old sponded, no serious injuries were "However, the 27-year-old a manhunt for the alleged shooter. in which he said he was shot from incident when the officers re- as it approached him."

Indian-origin law enforcement of found on Sukhdeep Gill and it deputy's story fell apart during an has been arrested for allegedly only once on his body camera, of the District Attorney, County faking a shocking drive-by shoot- which was destroyed, the report of Santa Clara said in a press

> Sukhdeep Gill has been charged the release said.

incarceration if convicted, it said. Sukhdeep Gill was arrested on Friday after a warrant was issued, it said.

"This case is bewildering and crime, a misdemeanour. He faces Attorney Jeff Rosen said.

"Deputy Gill's actions abused the trust of his fellow officers and diverted public safety resources away from protecting the community to investigate a made-up crime."

Sukhdeep Gill was released on his own recognisance and has a court appearance scheduled for March 1, CNN reported.

His attorney, Nicole Pifari, issued a brief statement that said, "For now, all I can say is we are looking forward to getting our hands on the investigation and the evidence to understand why these charges are being pursued."

## After her sister's rape charge, live-in partner files complaint against Maharashtra minister Dhananjay Munde



Multiple complaints have been filed against Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Dhananjay Munde by his live-in partner on Wednesday. He was earlier accused of rape by the same partner's sister.

live-in partner of Maharashtra sister. However, those charges minister and NCP leader were later withdrawn. Dhananjay Munde has filed mul- Now, Munde's live-in partner, with tiple complaints against him un- whom he has two children, has der sections of rape, unnatural approached the Mumbai Police sex, kidnapping, domestic vio- Commissioner's office and sublence, and various others on mitted a complaint against him. Wednesday.

(News Agencies)-The of rape by his live-in partner's

In her complaint, she has al-

booked for sections of rape, un- ruary 20 if action is not taken mediation meetings have also natural sex, kidnapping, domestic violence, and various others. The complainant in the application submitted on Wednesday said that Munde had kept their two children at his bungalow named Chitrakoot and wasn't allowing her to meet them. She also has alleged that Munde is a person of 'ill character' and her children could be in harm's way if they aren't rescued. She also alleged that Munde called the police when she went to the bungalow to meet her children on

against her complaint.

"Allow me to sit on fast until death in front of Chitrakoot bungalow or Mantralaya or Azad Maidan. Action should be initiated against Munde and he shouldn't be allowed to contest any elections.

Sole intent of allegations to defame me, says Munde

Meanwhile, Munde has refuted the allegations levelled against him by his live-in partner.

"The issues between me and her are under the process of media-

taken place between us. The mediation includes the issue of custody of children and other issues raised by her. In spite of the terms of mediation being decided by the court, the allegations raise doubt. It seems that the woman has no interest in the mediation through legal process and it seems that the only interest is to run a media trial and defame me," he said, adding, "Whatever decision will be given by the court will be binding upon everyone. The allegations have January 24. She has warned of tion in court. A mediator has been made with the sole intent of Earlier, Munde had been accused leged that Munde should be a fast unto death beginning Feb-been appointed by the court. Two defamation and are baseless".

## Man kills friend over Rs 400 in Mumbai's Ulhasnagar

Aheated argument over Rs 400 tion. turned in a physical fight be-The accused friend has been Sonu. era.

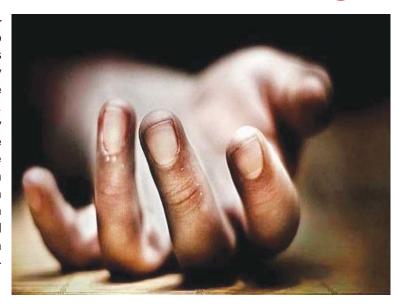
Sonu Gupta while the de- and had a heated argument the matter. It seems that both ceased is identified as Fahim over the borrowed money. In had fight over Rs 400 and Sheikh. The incident took the CCTV footage, it can be Fahim's head was banged on place in Ulhasnagar. A case seen that both are fighting and an electric pole. Further inveshas been registered at during the same time, Fahim's tigations are underway."

(News Agencies)- Ulhasnagar Hill Line Police Sta- head got banged on the elec-

According to police officials, tween two friends where one of Fahim and Sonu both worked them was banged on an elec- for the same company. Fahim post mortem suggests the tric poll and he died on the spot. had borrowed Rs 400 from

arrested and the whole incident Sonu was demanding the was recorded on a CCTV cam- money back while Fahim kept saying that he will return it The accused is identified as soon. On Tuesday, both met

tric pole. Fahim was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead. The primary cause of death to be unknown. Senior police inspector Sanjay Sawant of Ulhasnagar Hill Line police station said, "We have registered an FIR under section 302. We have arrested Sonu in







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### Kerala CM aide M Sivasankar gets bail in dollar smuggling case, likely to be released today

Minister's former aide and IAS officer M Sivashankar has been granted bail in the dollar smuggling case and is likely to be released from prison today. The Customs had last month arrested the suspended IAS officer in the dollar smuggling case that came to light during the

probe into the gold smuggling racket in Kerala in which he is also an accused.

He was arrested over his alleged links to the prime accused in the gold smuggling case. Earlier, he was given bail in two cases and the dollar case was the only one pending against him. He is likely to come out of the Kakkanad sub-

jail here, where he is lodged on February 3. Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Court in Kochi, handling economic offenses granted bail to Sivasankar under strict conditions. Sivasankar must present a bond of Rs 2 lakhs, two personal sureties and also surrender his passport. Senior IAS officer has now spent close to 100 days in Judicial Custody after he was arrested by the customs.

Interestingly, while considering Sivasankar's bail plea, the customs department did not raise any

(News Agencies)- Kerala Chief objections. Though they have filed a counteraffidavit against Sivasankar's plea, the probe agency did not raise any serious objection during the hearing. Sivasankar's council argued that the investigating agency has failed to produce any evidence to link him with the dollar smuggling case.

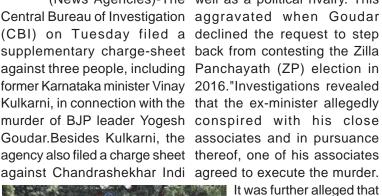
> Earlier Sivasankar's had got natural bail in the gold smuggling case after the Customs failed to submit the chargesheet within 60 days of recording his arrest. Subsequently he got bail in the money laundering case registered by ED from the High Court.

What is the dollar smuggling case?

The dollar case relates to alleged smuggling of USD 1,90,000 (equivalent to Rs 1.30 crore) by a former finance head of the UAE Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram to Muscat in Oman. Prime accused in the gold smuggling case Swapna Suresh and Sarith P S are also allegedly involved in the dollar case and had already been arrested by the Customs. Sivasankarwas suspended after his links to Suresh, also a former employee of the consulate, surfaced.

#### Karnataka: CBI chargesheet names former Congress minister in BJP leader's murder

(News Agencies)-The well as a political rivalry. This Central Bureau of Investigation aggravated when Goudar





a land deal was entered by the accused and a purported land dispute was portrayed as a motive for the murder," said CBI spokesperson Joshi.The

and Shivananand Birdar in a investigation into Yogesh

special court in Dharwad. The Goudar's death revealed that an central agency had earlier associate of Vinay Kulkarni charge sheeted eight persons, had arranged for the stay of namely Santosh Savadatti, the two accused from Dinesh M, Sunil KS, Harshith, Bangalore when they visited Aswath S, Nazeer Ahamad, Dharwad on two separate Shanawaz, and Nutan KS.The occasions, Joshi added. He CBI investigation revealed that also said that on the first Vinay Kulkarni and Yogesh occasion, the two accused Goudar had personal enmity as stayed in a resort at Dandeli.

## NYC: STOP THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS!

New Yorkers working together can slow the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in New York City.



#### PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- · Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing.
- · Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead wave or elbow bump.
- · Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.



#### STAY HOME IF SICK

- · Stay home and call your doctor if you have symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath, fever, sore throat.
- · If you do not feel better in 24-48 hours, seek care from your doctor.
- If you need help getting medical care, call 311.
- NYC will provide care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.



#### PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE

- · If you have chronic conditions like lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system, avoid unnecessary gatherings and events.
- If you have family or friends who have one of these conditions, do not visit them if you feel sick.



#### REDUCE **OVERCROWDING**

- · Consider telecommuting.
- Stagger work hours, starting earlier or later.
- Walk or bike to work, if possible.
- If the train is too packed, wait for the next one.







## Trial against ex-ICICI chief Chanda Kochhar likely to begin next week in ED case

The court has now sent summons to Kochhar and others, including her husband who is languishing in jail asking them to be present before the judge on February 12.

(News Agencies)-The special companies for siphoning off others for the offence under Mumbai court has cleared the money and proceeds of crime." Section 3 read with Section 70 way for trial against former ICICI The court said that, "Material punishable under Section 4 of Bank chief Chanda Kochhar and gathered and produced by ED Prevention of Money Laundering her husband Deepak and others constitutes the commission of Act. under the Prevention of Money schedule offence." Laundering Act (PMLA). It came Additional sessions judge agency, the Enforcement after the court went through the Abhijeet A Nandgaonkar Directorate (ED), Chanda Supreme Energy Pvt Ltd to the SEPL, which became 95 volume of evidence and observed, "I am of the opinion Kochhar was MD and CEO of submissions presented before it that this material is sufficient to ICICI Bank when between June by special public prosecutor proceed against the accused Sunil Gonsalvis.

The court said, "After going The court has now sent value loans to various companies accused Deepak Kochhar, per- trial will begin against them. quid-pro-quo transactions, created by the Kochhars, Venugopal Dhoot of Chanda Kochhar's husband held by VN Dhoot and Deepak and wrongful gain to the

persons."

through the submissions, written summons to Kochhar and of Videocon Group in the tune of complaints and statements others, including her husband recorded under PMLA, it appears who is languishing in jail asking the rules and policy of that, accused Ms Chanda them to be present before the sanctioning committee. Kochhar had misused her official judge on February 12. As per position in granting loan to established procedure, the judge accused VN Dhoot and/or is likely to ask them if they admit was disbursed. The very next day Videocon group companies and to the charges levelled against i.e. on 08.09.2009, accused VN got illegal gratification/undue them. If the accused say that Dhoot transferred an amount of advantage through her husband they are not guilty, a full-fledged Rs 64 crore to Nupower

web- The court sent summons to

According to the investigating 2019 and October 2011, ICICI Bank had sanctioned six high Rs 300 crore in contravention of

The ED alleged that on 07.09.2009 when Rs 300 crore Renewable Private Limited (NRPL) managed by accused



(SEPL). The ED alleged that this per cent shareholder of the was an illegal gratification that NRPL. The SEPL was Chanda Kochhar got from her husband via Dhoot.The NRPL was incorporated on 24.12.2008 and Deepak Kochhar, VN Dhoot and Saurabha Dhoot were the first directors of the company. VN Dhoot and Saurabha Dhoot resigned from the directorship of this company on 15.01.2009. However, before resigning VN Dhoot allotted 19,97,500 warrants (shares) to Deepak Kochhar @Rs10/- per warrant on an initial payment of Rs 1/- per warrant.On 05.06.2009, shares of the NRPL in wrongful loss to the ICICI Bank

incorporated on 03.07.2008. VN Dhoot and Vasant Kade were first directors.VN Dhoot resigned from the directorship of the SEPL on 15.1.2009 and transferred the control of the said company to Deepak Kochhar by selling/ transferring his shares to Pinnacle Energy (PE) managed by Deepak Kochhar."ICICI bank sanctioned various loans of Rs1,575/- to Videocon Group companies. However, these loans turned [into] NPA resulting accused persons through various Videocon Industries Ltd and Deepak, through his company Kochhar group were transferred borrowers and accused persons.

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### India, Pakistan must resolve Kashmir issue peacefully: Pak Army chief Bajwa

Pakistan Army chief General Asghar Khan Academy in to extend a hand of peace in all Qamar Javed Bajwa said the Risalpur issue of Jammu and Kashmir Pakhtunkhwa.

Agencies)- Pakistan Air Force (PAF) peaceful co-existence. It is time in

Khyber- directions," he said. He said, Pakistan occupied territories of

must be resolved between "Pakistan and India must erstwhile state of Jammu and Pakistan and India in a dignified resolve the longstanding issue Kashmir in 1947 months after and peaceful manner as per the of Jammu and Kashmir in a the Partition. India pushed back dignified and peaceful manner the intruding force of Pakistan Army and tribal militia after Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India. Later, the matter was referred to the United Nations, which held the merger as valid and asked the two countries to maintain status quo till the issue is resolved through a plebiscite. India was tasked with the responsibility of holding plebiscite after Pakistan withdrew from the entire occupied area. Pakistan never withdrew. The two countries have fought three wars in the region. Currently, most parts of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir occupied by Pakistan falls under the territorial jurisdiction of Ladakh Union Territory created in 2019. The rest of PoK falls in the territorial limits of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

#### Illegal Rohingya immigrants living in 12 states, UTs in India: Centre tells Rajya Sabha



(News Agencies)-Illegal Rohingya immigrants are staying in 12 states and union territories, including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday.

Minister of State (MoS) for Home Nityanand Rai said since illegal immigrants enter without valid travel documents in a clandestine and surreptitious manner, there was no accurate data regarding the number of

immigrants are presently staying in India mostly in Jammu and July 1, 2019.

Kashmir, Telangana, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Karnataka and Kerala," he said in a written reply to a question.

The minister said detection and deportation of illegal migrants, including the Rohingya from Myanmar, after due process of nationality verification, was a continuous process. Rai said consolidated instructions regarding deportation and such migrants living in the repatriation of foreign nationals had been issued to all state "As per reports, illegal Rohingya governments and union territories on April 24, 2014, and



aspirations of people of Jammu as per the aspirations of people and Kashmir.

Pakistan Army chief General Emphasis on resolving the and Pakistan.

the graduation ceremony at the ideal of mutual respect and

भारतीय-अमेरिकन्स कम्युनिटी द्वारा घोर निंदा

of Jammu and Kashmir."

Qamar Javed Bajwa has called Jammu and Kashmir issue by for resolving the Jammu and India and Pakistan in a peaceful Kashmir issue in a "dignified and manner is significant in the wake peaceful manner" between India of Pakistan insistence on thirdparty mediation in the past."We General Bajwa was speaking at stand firmly committed to the

ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਅਤ ਦਾ ਤਰਜ਼ਮਾਨ





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## Pakistan: Persecution of Ahmadis must end as authorities attempt shutdown of US website

following an attempt by the Mahershala Ali. Pakistan Telecommunications "Ahmadis in Pakistan have long According to a PTA press release based community.

themselves as Muslims. The Amnesty International. site's administrators have also "Digitally policing Ahmadis on expression and religion online been threatened with a fine of what they can or can't preach, every bit as much as in places 500 million PKR (US\$3.1 million) no matter where they are, is a of worship or in public spaces. if they fail to take the website flagrant violation of Pakistan's Far from facilitating such

Authority (PTA) to shut down the been the target of systematic on 22 January 2021, access to website of the Ahmadis' US- attacks, and successive trueislam.com has now been Pakistani governments have blocked in Pakistan. Amnesty its long arm to violate the rights prosecution and fines for On 24 December 2020, the PTA failed to respect, protect and International has been shown an sent a legal notice to the promote their human rights, email sent by the head of the PTA administrators of trueislam.com, forcing many to flee to other on 27 December 2020 to various stating that the site was in countries. The PTA's efforts to servers in the country, instructing violation of Pakistan's close down their US website them to remove access to the Constitution, and warning they shows that even then, a life free website, along with three others could be charged with blasphemy from discrimination can be out of related to the Ahmadi - a charge potentially carrying the reach," said Samira Hamidi, community. death penalty - for referring to Deputy Regional Director at "Pakistan has an obligation to

(News Agencies)-The website provides general International Covenant on Civil Pakistani authorities must end information about Ahmadi history and Political Rights to which the their ongoing persecution of the and beliefs, details the work country is a state party. We urge Ahmadiyya religious minority, carried out by the Ahmadi the PTA to desist from its which is now extending across community in the US, including targeted campaign against borders, said Amnesty blood drives and veterans' Ahmadis and to ensure that International, Human Rights support, and features interviews everyone in Pakistan is able to Watch and the International with prominent community express themselves and profess Commission of Jurists (ICJ), members such as the actor their religion freely, without fear of reprisals or discrimination."

protect the rights to freedom of down. The trueislam.com legal obligations under the protection, the PTA is extending

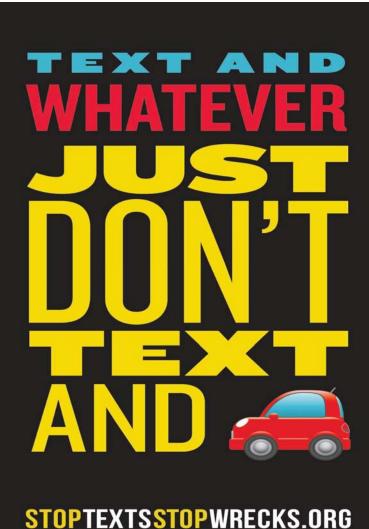


Policy Director.

The administrators of the website lawyer who was targeted. told Amnesty International that "It's obvious the PTA seeks to hate-filled messages from Pakistan's me a notice threatening criminal worldwide," Khan said.

of persons well beyond blasphemy and giving 24 hours Pakistan's own borders," said to remove the trueislam.com Ian Seiderman, ICJ Legal and website," said Amjad Mahmood Khan, a US-based Ahmadi

prior to receiving the notice, they prosecute US citizens received emails from various operating a US-based website. sources filled with hate speech. This is an unprecedented act "I was suddenly inundated with to extend the reach of abominable extremists on my email. And blasphemy laws to US then a few days later, on citizens, and it's a new frontier December 24, the PTA emailed in persecution for Ahmadis



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## Daughter: Pakistan arrests rights activist in sedition case



(News Agencies)- A Pakistani the northwestern city of teacher, social worker and activist Peshawar, after a court denied restricting the space for criticism aims to assist young girls with cases, being picked up without

was arrested on Wednesday in him bail on charges of terror and dissent. According to Gulalai safe abortions. It has an office any warning.

financing and sedition, his Ismail, the local court in inneighboring India, Pakistan's tweeted that her father, counter-terrorism authorities number of countries in Asia. mother since 2019. That year, she bail. The Ismail family have denied Pakistan's soldiers.

Pakistani activists and journalists have increasingly come under security

establishments, Abortion Partnership, which sedition charges and in some

daughter said. Gulalai Ismail Peshawar granted the provincial archrival, but operates in a Mohammad Ismail, was taken into permission to hold her father for Gulalai Ismail has been a custody in a long-standing case questioning for three days. Her longtime advocate of women's that also charges her and her mother, meanwhile, was granted and girls' rights, particularly in conservative fled to the U.S. and sought the charges against them. One of northwest. Before fleeing asylum there to avoid harassment the allegations claims a donation Pakistan, she published a report by Pakistani security agencies to the daughter's children's about alleged abuses by because of her investigations into charity, Aware Girls, was spent Pakistani troops in the former alleged human rights abuses by on cars that were used as tribal regions. The military denied suicide bombs. Aware Girls fights the allegations at the time. discrimination and abuse of girls However, criticism of the military and women. The donation came or its intelligence agency can attack by the government and the from a group known as Asia Safe result in threats, intimidation,

## Pakistan court orders release from prison of mastermind in Daniel Pearl case

Supreme Court ordered the normal life," said Justice Omar release from prison on Tuesday Ata Bandyal. of a British-born militant who had Bandyal headed a panel of three been convicted in the kidnapping judges that reviewed the case, and murder of U.S. journalist following a petition from the Daniel Pearl by al Qaeda and government after the court upheld Pakistani Islamist militants in last Thursday a lower court's 2002. In a decision that is decision to acquit Sheikh and Pearl," Faisal Siddiqi, a lawyer Guantanamo Bay, on the island become clearer once a written expected to draw criticism from three accomplices of all charges for the family, said. the United States, the court except abduction. recommended that Ahmad Omar The court said Sheikh should be Street Journal in the months after could face the death penalty. after spending 18 years on death Ahmad Sheikh told reporters. row.

"He should be moved to a Blinken comfortable

Saeed Sheikh be transferred to kept at a secure location under al Qaeda 9/11 attacks on the a government safe house as a a "supervision and some stepping stone to his full release surveillance," his lawyer Rauf

U.S. Secretary of State Antony "reinforced"

(News Agencies)- Pakistan's rest house where he can live a Friday with Pakistan's Foreign Sheikh, a former student at the Tuesday's hearing."It is not a Minister Shah Mahmood London School of Economics, complete freedom. It is a step Qureshi.Pearl's family had also petitioned for the Supreme Court to reverse the acquittal so that help of other Pakistani militants. members should be allowed to "Sheikh and co-conspirators are brought to justice for the kidnapping and murder of Daniel U.S. detention centre at The terms of Sheikh's release will

> United States, Pearl was kidnapped in Karachi and later beheaded. The militants videoed his execution.

Al Qaeda's number three leader residential Washington's concern over the Khalid Sheikh Mohammed later environment, something like a case in a telephone call on confessed to killing Pearl, while Saeed Sheikh, attended the U.S."

Mohammed is being held at the from prison. of Cuba, where he is a awaiting order is made public.

should stand, commuting his a

played key role in luring the toward freedom," he told Reuters journalist into a trap with the Television. The judge said family Captured in Pakistan in 2003, visit Sheikh once he was moved

On assignment for the Wall trial on multiple counts, and "Even if court orders for release, the government has prepared Sheikh's fortunes changed last other cases to charge him year, when a high court decided under a terrorism act and for only the kidnapping conviction treason," said Hassan Abbas, Washington death sentence to seven years international security professor. in jail, which he had already "The bigger challenge for served. Sheikh's father, Ahmad Islamabad will be pressure from

## lazaras fear for future as Afghanistan



(News Agencies)- The choice After spending a growing militia.

was straightforward for recovering from grave injuries Hamidullah Asadi, a member after an ISIL (ISIS) suicide of Afghanistan's minority attack, he was ready to fight. Hazara community - wait for "We were forced to take up the next deadly attack or join arms," said Asadi, now a spokesman for the Resistance

of Hazara fighters based in the racked by deep ethnic divisions. Hazara hostages. The growth of war-torn country's rugged, snowcapped central highlands."Our University in 2016 when he outfits are increasingly expectations of those who were supposed to defend us were not met."Afghan security forces are struggling to hold off an increasingly powerful Taliban as international troops withdraw from the county, with peace talks between the warring sides moving slowly. Fearing the of armed fighters ready to be few allies in Afghanistan over government will collapse and the mobilised by a single call from the generations. During the country may descend again into their commander, Abdul Ghani country's vicious civil war in civil war, Hazaras are starting to Alipur, a popular Hazara figure with the 1990s, they were prepare for the worst. a Robin Hood-like reputation. The mercilessly shelled in Comprising roughly 10-20 militia boasts of patrolling roads factional fighting and later percent of Afghanistan's 38- and launching brazen raids on massacred in the thousands million population, Hazaras have Taliban areas to abduct the relatives a mid the Taliban's ruthless long been persecuted for their of fighters, later to be used as conquest of the country.

violence targeting the Hazaras, fears a crackdown would ignite including assaults claimed by a confrontation with the

for Justice Movement - a band largely Shia faith in a country bargaining chips to release Asadi was a student at Kabul the militia and similar armed narrowly survived twin suicide problematic for the Afghan blasts at a rally that killed more government, which is wary of than 80 people and marked the allowing independent fighting beginning of a new wave of forces to build up, but also the ISIL armed group. He says communities that support he is now one of the thousands them. The Hazaras have had



## How the CIA's fake Hepatitis B vaccine program in Pakistan helped fuel vaccine distrust

#### Skepticism about vaccines is often rooted in history for many communities of color.

sorts of people - scruffy graduate vaccinated. students.

Agencies)-"Happy becoming more willing to take the shown adverse reactions? Or by vaccination day!" the nurse vaccine, but continue to express reminding him that everyone in administering my Covid-19 more hesitancy than white my family is vaccinated against vaccine tells me as I lower myself people. This did not hit home for other diseases: measles, into her chair. Almost a year of me until I realized that my mumps, and rubella; tetanus; social distancing has made me cousin, a medical resident who tuberculosis, even, with the highly attuned to all the surfaces grew up in Pakistan and now controversial BCG vaccine - used I'm touching: my elbow leaning works in Texas, refused the in Pakistan for decades after it on the desk, my hands signing vaccine. He was urged by was discontinued in the US - that the vaccine card with the pen. members of our family to wait for left us all with puckered scars on The hospital where I work as a more data, and even though he our arms? There are many roots research scientist in a synthetic works directly with Covid-19 of distrust around Covid-19 biology lab is vaccinating all its patients, he decided that, for vaccines, but it feels imperative staff, and excited voices from all now, he would not get to put them in the context of Pakistan's recent history. The put-together I was livid when I found out about country where most of my family receptionists - fill the air. One his decision, blaming myself for grew up struggles with vicious thing is immediately noticeable, the unread family group chats vaccination battles of its own, though: As someone who is and ignored video calls. Could I particularly with distrust around Pakistani, I am one of the few have convinced him by pointing the polio vaccine. This distrust people of color in the vaccination out the compelling data on the doesn't come out of nowhere.In room. Even in a hospital in a city safety and efficacy of the the early 2010s, the CIA ran a that is majority people of color, vaccine? Or with the fact that fake vaccination program in those being vaccinated are developers have been extremely Abbottabad, offering free vaccination teams, and the one of the three countries in the mostly white. Recent polls show transparent about the small Hepatitis B vaccines to children Taliban issued a fatwa against world where polio has not been



evidence linking Osama bin day, local leaders rail against Laden to the compound where vaccines as Western spying he was suspected of residing. It programs. In 2013, in response to is unclear how samples were to pressure from leaders in public be collected or how they would health and science, the CIA lead to bin Laden, but when promised to stop using news of this scheme broke, it vaccination programs to gather added proof to existing intelligence. However, the legacy conspiracy theories about of the fake vaccine campaign in vaccinations. As a consequence, Pakistan has understandably many local leaders began urging not been easy to overcome. Trust people not to vaccinate their kids, in public health officials has been various districts banned dangerously eroded. Pakistan is non-white people in the US are numbers of people who have in an attempt to collect DNA vaccination programs. To this eradicated.

## Bangladesh bought mass spying equipment from Israeli company

Israeli-made spying tools were bought for Bangladesh intelligence service, despite the South Asian country not recognising Israel.

(News Bangladesh has bought Israeli- name has been changed for his The revelation is part of the Al made surveillance equipment that security, said. Bangladesh has no Jazeera investigation All the can be used to monitor the mobile diplomatic relations with Israel Prime Minister's Men, which phones of hundreds of people and trade with it is prohibited. It exposes the close relationship simultaneously, an Al Jazeera has the world's fourth-largest between a powerful Bangladeshi investigation has found.

obtained by Al Jazeera's citing the military occupation of Prime Investigative Unit show that the Bangladesh army purchased the said it will not recognise Israel that a key figure in the Ahmed. Haris, who has now Bangladesh for a murder Israeli equipment in 2018 using a until there is an independent procurement of military equipment returned to Bangladesh, resettled committed in 1996. Bangkok-based middleman and Bangladeshi military intelligence officers were trained in Hungary by Israeli intelligence experts.

The contract Al Jazeera acquired lists the condition that both a four-day protest march from majority Sinhalese there and rejected a report by U.N. human option of referring Sri Lanka to parties to the sale sign a nondisclosure agreement. It also lists Wednesday to demand justice Sri Lanka marks its 73th Michelle Bachelet, who called for and investigate and persecute the country of origin for the for civilians killed and forcibly anniversary of independence equipment as Hungary, although disappeared during the country's from British colonial rule on secret recordings by Al Jazeera civil war, allegedly at the hands Thursday. The approximately allegedly committed during the extraterritorial or universal show the middleman explicitly of the government's military. saying the equipment was from Politicians, civil and religious from the east to the north, which report last week that Sri Lanka the Sri Lankan government at Israel."The contractor said no way leaders on foot and in cars Tamils that people in Bangladesh should joined the march, which is also homelands, is to end possibility of genuine progress alleged war abuses through know that this product comes protesting alleged plans by the Saturday.Relatives of missing being made to end impunity local courts and provide

Agencies)- undercover source, Sami, whose Palestinian state. Ahmed clan Muslim population and does not crime family, which the country's Documents and statements allow its citizens to travel there, head of the army belongs to, and is Haris Ahmed, a convicted in Hungary in 2015 using a fake Minister Palestinian lands. Officially, it has Hasina. The investigation reveals



Sheikh criminal and brother of the head passport when he was under an of the Bangladesh army, Aziz Interpol red notice and wanted in

#### Sri Lanka Tamils march to protest deaths, disappearances

eastern to northern Sri Lanka on taking over private lands.

Hundreds of ethnic Tamils began Tamil heartland by settling protests come after Sri Lanka member countries now have the

500-kilometer (300-mile) march 26-year civil war. She said in the jurisdiction. "In a 2015 resolution, consider

from Israel," Al Jazeera's government to change the people have also started a fast through a domestic transitional reparations.

Agencies)- demography of the traditional to mark Independence Day. The justice process." She said rights high commissioner the International Criminal Court "international action to ensure violations of international law justice for international crimes" under "accepted principles of their has "largely closed the the time pledged to investigate



## North Carolina discontinues license plates with Confederate battle flag

symbol's "potential to offend."

no longer issuing or renewing breaking the law. specialty license plates "bearing" "The NC-DMV has claimed that to their way of thinking." Abbott in a statement

have therefore concluded that Carolina," the group said in a issuance of a specialty plate," proven unsuccessful so far, the images of the Confederate flag, display of the Confederate battle statement. flag is inappropriate for display It continued, "This blatant "However, SCV's classification would no longer issue or renew last month after voters approved on specialty license plates, discrimination by our government as a civic organization does not these specialty plates."

(News Agencies)- North Carolina The Confederate flag license and a deep hatred for native

the Confederate battle flag or any our civic group's legally The DOT statement noted that variation of that flag," said North registered logo may be offensive the decision to no longer offer the Carolina DOT spokesman Steve and is inappropriate for display. Confederate flag license plates that specialty plate," the DOT the United States, and North Make no mistake about this... is "consistent with the ruling in said in the statement. "Efforts Carolina isn't the first to "The Division of Motor Vehicles We are a hereditary civic North Carolina Division of the were made, and will continue to reconsider its association. (DMV) has determined that organization that takes great Sons of Confederate Veterans v. be made, to work with the SCV Last year, the US Marines and license plates bearing the pride in our ancestry, our deep Faulkner." The DMV will continue to develop artwork for these the US Navy banned public Confederate battle flag have the roots, our ethnic heritage, and to recognize the Sons of specialty plates that does not depictions of the flag. potential to offend those who view our ancestor's sacrifices to the Confederate Veterans as a "civic contain the Confederate battle Mississippi, the last state to them," the statement read. "We Southern States including North organization entitled to the flag. Since these efforts have a flag bearing obvious

will no longer allow specialty plates are a specialty plate of the Southerners by others. We fear license plates depicting the North Carolina Division of Sons it is more of the latter, being Confederate battle flag, citing the of Confederate Veterans. The driven by racist organizations group has called the new rule and intolerant politicians that At the start of 2021, the state's "discrimination," and claimed in would rather condone violence Division of Motor Vehicles was a statement that the state is and destruction against anyone or anything that doesn't conform

the statement said.



DMV determined the agency officially changed its state flag

which remain property of the is being driven from ignorance of entitle it to dictate the contents. The Confederate flag has become features the state flower, a our State's true history by some of the government speech on a symbol of White supremacy in magnolia.

it in a referendum. The new flag

## Oregon's law decriminalizing small amounts of heroin and other street drugs officially goes into effect



(News Agencies)- decriminalize the possession Possession of drugs such as statement on Monday. Oregon has become the first and personal use of all heroin,

into effect Monday. The initiative similar to a traffic ticket. drugs.

of the vote.

cocaine

approved Measure 110 in be punishable by jail time, but harassment and criminalization

also expands access to "Today, the first domino of our access to the supports they addiction assistance and other cruel and inhumane war on drugs need." While possession of health services, offering aid to has fallen, setting off what we small amounts of drugs is those who need it instead of expect to be a cascade of other decriminalized, possession of arresting and jailing people for efforts centering health over larger amounts could result in a criminalization," Drug Policy misdemeanor charge. The move Measure 110 passed with 55.8% Alliance executive director to decriminalize drugs in Oregon Kassandra Frederique said in came after voters in a handful of

and "This law is meant to protect measures state in the nation to officially drugs. Voters in the state methamphetamine will no longer people against persecution, recreational marijuana.

November, but it officially went instead amount to something at the hands of the state for using drugs and instead given other states approved ballot

## s Draghi seeks party backing to end political turmoil

chief Mario Draghi on bolstering the currency bloc. a new administration.

Wednesday set about trying to All eyes turn to parliament, where Mattarella warned that a new form a government to end Italy's Draghi must win backing from political crisis, tackle the hesitant and divided parties coronavirus emergency and across the political spectrum to overcome deep economic get a government off the ground. recession. Draghi, widely "This is a difficult time," Draghi credited with saving the euro zone said after meeting Mattarella. to help overcome the economic said it would not. from collapse in 2012, accepted "Beating the pandemic, slump. Draghi said Italy must A political source said Draghi abstaining in votes of confidence the mandate from head of State completing the vaccination seize the moment: "We have might offer the former coalition to ensure Draghi can launch a Sergio Mattarella, saying he was campaign, offering answers to the extraordinary European Union partners cabinet positions to get government. confident he could find backing everyday problems of the people resources at our disposal, we them on board. in Italy's fractured parliament for and relaunching the country are have the opportunity to do so "WITHOUT PREJUDICE" the challenges we face."

Agencies)- in the euro zone's third largest Minister Giuseppe Conte's 17- rose 2.1%, the strongest gain in elections two years ahead of Former European Central Bank but most sluggish economy, month-old coalition imploded on a month. Tuesday evening.

immediately to prevent Italy from billion euros (\$243 billion) from a while its coalition ally, the anti- would never join a majority European Union fund designed establishment 5-Star Movement, together. A plausible scenario much for our country."

Early signs from the political Draghi's proposals "without parties were mixed. The centregovernment had to take office left Democratic Party (PD) signalled it was ready to support sworn political enemies who missing out on more than 200 the highly respected economist,

Financial markets rallied, hopeful The president moved quickly to Italy's borrowing costs fell by Matteo Salvini's League, and Mattarella gave him no time Draghi can spearhead long- anoint Draghi after talks aimed sharply on Wednesday while the which leads in opinion polls, said limit for finding a workable awaited reforms to boost growth at salvaging outgoing Prime Milan bourse blue chip index it preferred to go to early majority.

schedule, but would listen to prejudice".

The League and the PD are have repeatedly vowed that they may see several parties

Were he to fail, the blow to Italy's international image and market The alliance of rightist parties led backlash could be considerable,



#### Myanmar police file charges against Aung San Suu Kyi after coup

(News Agencies)-Myanmar police have filed charges against ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi for illegally importing communications equipment and she will be detained until Feb. 15 for investigations, according to a police document. The move followed a military coup on Monday and the detention of Nobel Peace laureate Suu Kyi and other civilian politicians. The takeover cut short Myanmar's long transition to democracy and drew condemnation from the United States and other

A police request to a court detailing the accusations against Suu Kyi, 75, said six walkietalkie radios had been found in a search of her home in the capital Naypyidaw. The radios were imported illegally and used without permission, it said. The document reviewed on Wednesday requested Suu Kyi's detention "in order to question witnesses, request evidence and seek legal counsel after questioning the defendant"

Western countries.

A separate document showed police filed charges against ousted President Win Myint for violating protocols to stop the spread of the coronavirus during campaigning for an election last November. The charges against Suu Kyi "just compound the undermining of the rule of law in Myanmar and the democratic process." United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters on Wednesday.

"We continue to call for her immediate release and the president's immediate release and all others who have been detained by the military in the last few days," he said.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won November's election in a landslide but the military, headed by Army chief General Min Aung Hlaing, claimed the vote was marred by fraud and justified its seizure of power on those grounds. The electoral commission had said the vote was fair. The chair of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Parliamentarians for Human Rights, Charles Santiago, said the new charges were ludicrous.

## "A symbol of hope" - German military aid arrives in Portugal



(News Agencies) -- A German military plane carrying over 20 doctors and nurses together with ventilators and hospital beds arrived on Wednesday in coronavirus-stricken Portugal, where a severe rise in cases has prompted several European nations to offer

The German team will manage a new unit of eight ICU beds in a private hospital in Lisbon, Hospital da Luz, which was equipped but lacked the staff to operate, Health Minister Marta Temido said at the military base where the plane landed.

"Eight beds may not sound like much, but it is a lot for a health system under significant pressure," Temido said."The help Germany extended is of great use for a health system facing the challenges we are - highly specialised health professionals." The medical team, consisting of eight doctors and 18 nurses, brought with them 150 hospital beds and 50 ventilators. "This is a vivid sign of European solidarity and a symbol of hope," German Ambassador Martin Ney said at the military base. Austria has offered to take in 10 to 15 COVID-19 intensive care patients who would be distributed in various hospitals across the country, its ambassador in Portugal told Reuters. Hospitals across Portugal, a nation of about 10 million people, appear on the verge of collapse, with

ambulances sometimes queuing for hours because of a lack of beds while some health units are struggling to find enough refrigerated space to preserve the bodies of the deceased. Slideshow (6 images) For most Portuguese, vaccination against the virus is the light at the end of the tunnel. But so far only about 75,000 people have been fully vaccinated with the two required doses. As elsewuere, there has been some controversy around the vaccination process, with some - from mayors to care home managers - jumping the queue to get the shot. The head of Portugal's vaccination task force Francisco Ramos stepped down on Wednesday after he became aware of "irregularities" in the process of selecting which health workers should be vaccinated at the Red Cross Hospital, where he is the chief executive, he said in a statement cited by daily Diario de Noticias and other media. Although daily infections and deaths from COVID-19 in the country on Wednesday retreated further from last week's records, doctors and nurses are still overstretched and the number of patients in need of critical care remains high. Portugal, which has so far reported a total of 13,257 COVID-19 deaths and 740,944 cases, reported close to half of all its COVID-19 deaths last month as cases accelerated.

## Italy's Draghi seeks party backing to end political turmoil



(News Agencies) -- Former European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi on Wednesday set about trying to form a government to end Italy's political crisis, tackle the coronavirus emergency and overcome deep economic recession. Draghi, widely credited with saving the euro zone from collapse in 2012, accepted the

Mattarella, saying he was confident he could find backing in Italy's fractured parliament for a new administration.

Financial markets rallied, hopeful Draghi can spearhead longawaited reforms to boost growth in the euro zone's third largest but most sluggish economy, bolstering the currency bloc. All eyes turn to parliament, where Draghi must win backing from hesitant and divided parties across the political spectrum to get a government off the ground. "This is a difficult time," Draghi said after meeting Mattarella. "Beating the pandemic, completing the vaccination campaign, offering answers to the

and relaunching the country are the challenges we face."The president moved quickly to anoint Draghi after talks aimed at salvaging outgoing Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's 17-month-old coalition imploded on Tuesday evening. Mattarella warned that a new government had to take office immediately to prevent Italy from missing out on more than 200 billion euros (\$243 billion) from a European Union fund designed to help overcome the economic slump. Draghi said Italy must seize the moment: "We have extraordinary European Union resources at our disposal, we have the opportunity to do so much for our country." Italy's borrowing costs

mandate from head of State Sergio everyday problems of the people fell sharply on Wednesday while the Milan bourse blue chip index rose 2.1%, the strongest gain in a month. Early signs from the political parties were mixed. The centre-left Democratic Party (PD) signalled it was ready to support the highly respected economist, while its coalition ally, the antiestablishment 5-Star Movement, said it would not. A political source said Draghi might offer the former coalition partners cabinet positions to get them on board. The alliance of rightist parties led by Matteo Salvini's League, which leads in opinion polls, said it preferred to go to early elections two years ahead of schedule. but would listen to Draghi's proposals "without prejudice".



## West concerned by closer Russia-China ties, top NATO general says



(News Agencies)- The United growing cooperation between States and its Western allies are Russia and China in areas of increasingly concerned about common interest, NATO's top China.

Pentagon has put countering Allied Commander Europe, or well as a trading partner. outstrips that of Moscow and Beijing.

exercises, featuring 300,000 could be to the detriment of Eu- mineral-rich far east. Russian troops.

the launch of a three-decade pipe- nuclear weapons, cyber attacks Ukraine in 2014. line project to transport natural and covert action. The European "We are ever so vigilant with re-

a partnership of convenience". And in 2019, Russian President rounding nations".

are members of NATO, sees tion," Wolters said.

general said on Wednesday. The Tod Wolters, NATO's Supreme China as a rival for influence as

China and Russia at the centre SACEUR, told reporters that Historically, relations between of its strategy since 2018, even the growing cooperation "really Russia and China, who share a though U.S. defence spending does suggest an emergence of land border of over 4,200 km (2,600 miles) have been marked He said the partnership was in- by distrust, with Russian nation-In 2018, China and Russia held tended to advance mutual inter- alists warning of encroaching their largest-ever joint military ests, "and that advancement Chinese influence in Russia's

rope and corresponding and sur- But Russia pivoted towards China after being punished with West-Vladimir Putin and his Chinese NATO accuses Russia of trying ern sanctions for its annexation counterpart Xi Jinping oversaw to destabilise the West with new of the Crimean Peninsula from

gas from Siberia to northeast Union, many of whose states spect to that growing coopera-

## Venezuela's offshore funds could pay for vaccines but Maduro not cooperating, Guaido says

(News Agencies)- Venezuelan "The (problem) is not the funds, interest in obtaining access to agreement between Venezuelan ceived, and Venezuela's opposaid on Wednesday that Ven- ganda to try to excuse itself and nism, as well as from other Guaido said. ezuelan funds controlled by the point fingers and confuse the sources, and the Guaido group U.S. Treasury Department could whole world," Guaido told a press be used to pay for coronavirus conference. vaccines but that President "If we are willing, and the regime Nicolas Maduro's government is is not, the funds cannot be transrefusing to cooperate. The gov- ferred." ernment has not accepted an Venezuela's information ministry nization (PAHO) that would en- comment. able Venezuela to join the Ciro Ugarte, PAHO's director of COVAX program, and has not health emergencies, told another fulfilled a prior deal regarding dispress conference on Wednesday tribution of COVID-19 tests.

tion"

The United States in 2019 recognized Guaido as Venezuela's legitimate president and created countries, according to esti- A PAHO official said on Tuesimplementation plan laid out by and the U.S. Treasury did not Maduro government that included with the situation. the Pan American Health Orga- immediately reply to requests for the seizure of nearly \$350 million held in U.S. accounts.

> Part of those funds were used last year to obtain test kits and

Venezuela needs to pay more ment and tests. has also expressed that inten- than \$100 million to get access Maduro has said the South access to shots for poorer vaccine from ally Russia.

pay due to sanctions.

that Maduro had "announced his medical workers, following an coronavirus tests it had re- Feb. 9.

opposition leader Juan Guaido that's the dictatorship's propa-vaccines via the COVAX mecha-officials and opposition leaders, sition said Maduro had not honored deals to distribute equip-

> to vaccines through the global American country will receive 10 COVAX program that allocates million doses of the Sputnik V

a sanctions package against the mates by diplomats familiar day that between 1.4 million and 2.4 million doses of the Maduro's allies in recent weeks AstraZeneca vaccine had have said Venezuela cannot been reserved for Venezuela and could arrive by the end of PAHO said last month Venezu- February, but that Caracas personal protective equipment for ela had used only 1% of the would have to pay for them by

(News Agencies)-Kremlin critic custody. Some of his supporters campaigning. Alexei Navalny's wife told his suphave suggested his wife Yulia porters on Wednesday they Navalnaya take up his mantle as would still triumph despite his in Belarus last summer where jailing and thanked them for pro-Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was testing in a case she said had thrust to the fore of national polimade her life a stream of police tics after her husband was jailed. stations, home searches and "I don't know what to entertain court hearings. A court on Tues- you with here. My life recently is day sentenced Navalny, a prominent opponent of Vladimir Putin, searches," Yulia Navalnaya to three and a half years for pa-wrote in a post on Instagram.

Navalny's supporters gathered to show support during the ruling and protested afterwards, down some metro stations in I'm okay." Moscow and detain more than Navalny's allies accuse the po-1,400 people, according to a protest monitor.

police stations, courts and

role violations he said were "I'm reading all your messages trumped up to sideline him, ig- and understand that so many noring calls from the West and good, strong and decent people protesters at home to release support Alexei and me that we shouldn't give in and be afraid. We'll win anyway.'

"A huge thank you to all of you for coming out (to the streets), prompting authorities to shut for writing and asking how I am.

lice of essentially outlawing public protest and of using dispro-Most of Navalny's prominent al-portionate force and violence to

On Wednesday, a court jailed Sergei Smirnov, editor-in-chief of independent outlet Mediazona that has covered the protests in detail, for 25 days after finding him guilty of repeatedly flouting protest legislation.

State investigators also charged Navalny's brother Oleg, an activist and a member of the Pussy Riot punk group with breaching COVID-19 regulations over a protest on Jan. 23, the RIA news agency reported.

The Kremlin said the police's response at Tuesday evening's protests had been justified because the protests were illegal and unauthorised. Spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused Navalny's allies of deliberately provoking the police by calling protests near the Kremlin following the ruling.

"The police reaction was due to the threats that could have arisen



told reporters on a conference man, said the incident was the of the fact that there were calls tion. yesterday for unsanctioned pro-

Navalny's allies have circulated footage of scenes they say show police violence, including officer strikes a cameraman with a truncheon, flooring him. lies are under house arrest or in break up rallies and stifle their from staging such a protest," he Peskov, the Kremlin spokes-

call. "The provocations comprise subject of an internal investiga-

The West has called on Moscow to release Navalny, but Russia has told it stay out of its sovereign affairs.

"The hysteria we've heard over the one clip in which a riot police legal process for the Navalny case is of course off the scale, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov



## Here are the executive actions Biden has signed so far

President Joe Biden has signed a flurry of executive orders, actions and memorandums aimed at rapidly addressing the coronavirus pandemic and dismantling many of former President Donald Trump's policies.

The executive actions Biden has taken in the first days of his administration include halting funding for the construction of Trump's border wall, reversing Trump's travel ban targeting largely Muslim countries, imposing a mask mandate on federal property, ramping up vaccination supplies and requiring international travelers to provide proof of negative Covid-19 tests prior to traveling to the US.

#### February 4 Immigration

Expands the United States Refugee Admissions Program and rescinds Trump policies that limited refugee admissions and required additional vetting

#### February 4 Immigration

Directs relevant agencies to ensure LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers have equal access to protections, requires the Department of State to lead a standing group to respond quickly to international LGBTQI+ human rights abuses and to report annually to Congress on global LGBTQI+ abuses, directs agencies to review Trump administration policies and rescind those that are inconsistent with this memo within 100 days

#### February 4 National Security

Establishes an interagency working group to propose improvements for recruiting, retaining and supporting national security professions

#### February 4 National Security

Outlines the structure of the National Security Council, incorporates more regular participation from Cabinet officials focused on domestic policy that influences national security

#### February 2 Immigration

Revokes Trump's order justifying separating families at the border and creates a task force that recommends steps to Biden to reunite separated families

#### February 2 Immigration

Aims to address economic and political causes of migration, works with organizations to provide protection to asylum seekers and ensures Central American asylum seekers have legal access to the United States. Rescinds Trump administration policies and guidelines and also initiates a review of policies "that have effectively closed the U.S. border to asylum seekers"

#### February 2 Immigration

Rescinds Trump's memo requiring immigrants to repay the government if they receive public benefits. Elevates the role of the executive branch in promoting immigrant integration and inclusion, including reestablishing a Task Force on New Americans. Requires agencies to review immigration regulations and policies

#### January 28 Health Care

Reopens enrollment on HealthCare.gov from Feb. 15 through May 15, and directs federal agencies to reexamine policies that may reduce or undermine access to the Affordable Care Act

#### January 28 Health Care

Rescinds the "Mexico City Policy," a ban on US government funding for foreign nonprofits that perform or promote abortions

#### January 27 Environment

Elevates climate change as an essential element of US foreign policy and national security and kicks off development of a new emissions reduction target, which will be announced by April 22

#### January 27 Environment

Reestablishes the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology

#### January 27 Environment

Charges the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy with responsibility for ensuring scientific integrity across federal agencies

#### January 26 Equity

Directs the Department of Housing and Urban Development to review the Trump administration's regulatory actions for their effects on fair housing and to then "take steps necessary" to comply with the Fair Housing Act

#### January 26 Equity

Directs the attorney general not to renew federal contracts with private prisons

#### January 26 Equity

Recommits federal agencies to "engage in regular, robust and meaningful consultation with Tribal governments"

#### January 26 Equity

Acknowledges the rise in discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the past year, directing the Department of Health and Human Services to consider issuing guidance on best practices to improve "cultural competency, language access and sensitivity toward AAPIs," in the federal government's Covid-19 response, and directs the Department of Justice to partner with AAPI communities to prevent hate crimes and harassment

#### January 25 Economy

Strengthens Buy American rules by closing loopholes and reducing waivers granted on federal purchases of domestic goods

#### January 25 Coronavirus

Reinstates Covid-19 travel restrictions for individuals traveling to the United States from the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom reland and South Africa

#### January 25 Equity

Reverses the Trump administration's ban on transgender Americans joining the military

#### January 22 Economy

Restores collective bargaining power and worker protections for federal workers, and lays the foundation for \$15 minimum wage

#### January 22 Economy

Calls for assistance to those who are struggling to buy food, missed out on stimulus checks or are unemployed

#### January 21 Coronavirus

Accelerates manufacturing and delivery of supplies for vaccination, testing and Personal Protective Equipment

#### January 21 Coronavirus

Directs FEMA to expand reimbursement to states to fully cover the cost for National Guard personnel and emergency supplies

#### January 21 Coronavirus

Establishes the Pandemic Testing Board to expand US coronavirus testing capacity

#### January 21 Coronavirus

Establishes a preclinical program to boost development of therapeutics in response to pandemic threats

#### January 21 Coronavirus

Enhances the nation's collection, production, sharing and analysis of coronavirus data

#### January 21 Coronavirus

Directs FEMA to create federally-supported community vaccination centers

January 21 Coronavirus



## What we know about the Florida raid that led to 2 FBI agents' deaths



#### shootout

A team of law enforcement Alfin's work helped lead to officers went to the Water Terrace apartment complex, an upscale arrests gated community outside Fort Lauderdale, to serve the search warrant Tuesday morning. authorities said.

The FBI hasn't said much about including online predators, the warrant, other than it was ordered by a federal court relating to a case of violent crimes against children.

The FBI Agents Association said the search warrant was related office in 2017. to suspected possession of child pornography.

Sunrise police have said the shooting happened at the apartment complex at 6:04 a.m. Details about the exact sequence of events haven't been released. but here is a summary of key known developments:

o The person officers were looking for had barricaded himself, Sunrise police spokeswoman Otishia Browning-Smith said.

o The suspect opened fire, Special Agent in Charge George Piro said. Details about who fired first, or what led to the gunfire, weren't immediately available.

Alfin, and 36 Schwartzenberger, 43, were shot dead, the FBI said.

o Three other agents were wounded, the FBI said. Two were taken to a hospital with multiple gunshot wounds and have been released. The third agent was treated at the scene.

So that the wounded agents could be pulled away, a SWAT vehicle had to be crashed into the building to provide cover, a law enforcement source familiar with the shootout said on condition of anonymity.

The FBI said its Inspection Division is investigating the shooting. "The review process is thorough and objective and is conducted as expeditiously as under possible circumstances," the FBI said.

Crime scene tape was still up Wednesday as FBI agents were still gathering evidence, and the entrance to the apartment complex where the shootout

What happened during the occurred was still being guarded by police.

> hundreds of child pornography Alfin Schwartzenberger worked at the FBI's Miami office in a unit that investigates crimes against children. That involves crimes sexual abuse, kidnappings and violent attacks.

> Alfin, a New York native, had joined the FBI's Albany office in 2009 before coming to the Miami

> And he once played a critical role in an investigation that led to hundreds of child pornography arrests, the FBI has said. In that case, Alfin investigated an online network called Playpen, through which users could "communicate anonymously 'hidden through service' websites," the FBI said in a May 2017 statement.

The investigation led to the arrest and conviction of the man who created the network in 2014 and FBI said.

But it also launched "thousands of follow-up investigations," becoming "unprecedented in its scope and reach," the FBI said.

By May 2017, the investigation had resulted in the arrests of at least 350 people based in the US, the prosecutions of 25 producers of child pornography, the arrests of 51 "hands-on abusers" and the identification or rescue of 55 American children. the FBI said.

Abroad, the investigation led to 548 arrests and the identification or rescue of 296 sexually abused children, the FBI said.

In 2018, federal officials honored Alfin. two assistant US attornevs and a federal trial attorney for their work on the case. At a wider award ceremony held by the Executive Office for US Attorneys in Washington, DC, they received a director's award for superior performance by a litigative team. Alfin is quoted in an 2017 FBI statement about the case.

"It's the same with any criminal violation: As they get smarter, we adapt, we find them," he said. "It's a cat-and-mouse game, except it's not a game. Kids are being abused, and it's our job to stop that."According to federal court documents unrelated to the 2017 case. Alfin said he is crimes.'

The documents added that he had testified on more than 20 occasions as a witness, across more than 10 federal jurisdictions.

He was married with one child, the FBI said.

Schwartzenberger spent years working to keep kids safe

Schwartzenberger, a Colorado native, had been an agent since 2005 and moved to the Miami bureau from the FBI's Albuquerque, New Mexico, office 11 years ago.

She worked on cases of crimes against children for more than seven years, the FBI said.

Schwartzenberger recently had a special connection with a Miami middle school, where she gave presentations to students in a law studies magnet program in the last five years.

The school offered its "deepest condolences to her family" and the FBI, and praised her impact on students in a statement posted on Twitter. "As an FBI agent, Laura taught our students each year about the dangers of social media and much more. She would always say, 'I feel that coming here and talking about the hard stuff means that I won't see you guys on my end.' "With her presentations, students would gain an awareness of online killing two agents and wounding "recognized as an expert in safety, cyberbullying, and five others before the suspects federal court in areas relating to experience the evidence computer forensics and the response process of an FBI

a takedown of the site itself, the investigation of child exploitation agent. "She would always answer all the students' questions directly with care, but with firmness, to always remind them of the real world." Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho wrote that Schwartzenberger "sacrificed her life to protect youth."

> "From speaking to @rmsfalcons students about cyber safety, to fighting crimes against children, @FBI Special Agent Laura Schwartzenberger was deeply devoted to her work," Carvalho posted on Twitter. "Our hearts go out to her family, as well as that of SA Daniel Alfin." She is survived by her husband and two

> On-duty deaths of FBI agents in shootings are rare

> Tuesday's shooting marks the first time since 2008 that an FBI agent was fatally shot on duty. In that case, Special Agent Samuel S. Hicks was shot and killed while trying to serve an arrest warrant in a drug trafficking case at a home near Pittsburgh. The Sunrise shooting is similar to another deadly firefight 35 years ago outside Miami that was a turning point in the FBI's history. On April 11, 1986, two violent bank robbers being pursued by FBI agents opened fire with high-powered firearms,

## India falls to 53rd position in EIU's Democracy Index

167 countries."With mounting pressure on India's democratic norms, India's score fell from a peak of 7.92 in 2014 to 6.61 in 2020 and its global ranking slipped from 27th (in 2014) to 53rd as a result of democratic backsliding" under the current regime, The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said.

Norway topped The Economist Intelligence Unit's latest Democracy Index report titled "Democracy in sickness and in health?", with Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Canada making up the top five.

Out of 167 countries, the Democracy Index classifies 23 countries as full democracies, 52 as flawed democracies, 35 as hybrid regimes, and 57 as authoritarian regimes. India has been classified as a "flawed democracy" along with countries such as the US, France, Belgium, and Brazil

The EIU report said that in India and Thailand, "democratic backsliding by the authorities and crackdowns on civil liberties led to a further decline in their global rankings".

It further alleged that the Narendra Modi-led government has "introduced a religious element to the conceptualisation of Indian citizenship, a step that many critics see as undermining the secular basis of the Indian state". "The authorities' handling of the coronavirus pandemic

led to a further erosion of civil liberties in 2020," the report said. India was ranked 51st in the 2019 Democracy Index. Among India's neighbours, while Sri Lanka, at 68th rank, is classified as a flawed democracy, Bangladesh (76), Bhutan (84), and Pakistan (105) are classified in the 'hybrid regime" category. Afghanistan is ranked 139th and classified as an "authoritarian regime" in the index.

The EIU report looks at the impact of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic on freedom and democracy around the world.

The Asia and Australasia region includes topscoring New Zealand, which retained its fourth position in the global ranking (out of 167 countries), and persistent laggard North Korea at the bottom of the global ranking in 167th place, the EIU said in a statement. The region's overall score fell in 2020, but it now has five "full democracies" with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan moving up the rankings compared with 2019. Australia retains its "full democracy" status and high ranking (9th). Japan and South Korea both returned to the "full democracy" fold for the first time since 2014. Taiwan attained "full democracy" status for the first time following a spectacular jump up the rankings. Despite these

upgrades, Asia's average regional score deteriorated to its lowest level since 2013 as official measures taken to combat the coronavirus pandemic led to some of the most severe constraints on individual freedoms and civil liberties in the world, the EIU said. China, Singapore, and others went much further than the rest of the world in tracking and policing their citizens and locking them down in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, it said. Joan Hoey, Editor of The Economist Intelligence Unit's annual Democracy Index report, said, "The symbolism of Asia gaining three new "full democracies" in 2020 and western Europe losing two (France and Portugal) was apt, as the coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the shift in the global balance of power from the West to the East."

"Asia continues to lag behind the West in democratic terms having only five "full democracies", compared with western Europe's 13, but the region has, so far, handled the pandemic much better than virtually any other, with lower infection and mortality rates and a fast economic rebound," she said. Asian governments reacted decisively (albeit deploying coercive powers in some cases), benefited from well-organised health systems and retained the confidence of their populations, she said.



## The gangster, the general and the prime minister of Bangladesh

other businesses. He has Pakistan army slaughtered at operated a student hostel, least 300,000 civilians. Pakistan another restaurant in the old was defeated with decisive quarter and a women's clothing military help from neighbouring store. Hasan has money India, which retains a powerful problems, but not the ones you influence in Bangladesh to would suspect. There are plenty this day. of funds flowing his way; his The young nation was problem is working out how to seething with political hide this wealth.

But this Mohammad Hasan, partnership was slightly built with a taste for soon to emerge expensive clothes, is a work of between pure fiction. It is a false identity politicians and built on dozens of carefully forged the documents that helped gangs. In return Bangladesh's "most wanted" for gangster effectively disappear patronage of into thin air. Now Al Jazeera's the politicians, Investigative Unit can reveal the gangs provided real identity of Mohammed the muscle that Hasan, a man who can boast the helped them survive. loyalty of a world leader and the The Ahmed clan's networks in the t h e protection of an army.

found demand for his talent for Bangladesh from exile in India in was murdered in 1999 violence and extortion among the 1981.

The money exchange, owners to pay for their Ahmed brothers became the changed the destiny of the none about the culprits. In 2004, called Bay of Bengal, is one of protection. Bangladesh in the unofficial security cordon that Ahmed clan forever. In 1996, Josef Ahmed was sentenced to several ventures Hasan has run 1980s was a good place for the shielded Sheikh Hasina. They Mustafizur Rahman Mustafa was death for the murder. His in Budapest since arriving in May Ahmed brothers to ply their guarded her at rallies and gunned down in a dusty back brothers, Anis and Haris, were 2015. The money exchange is trade, a violent and unstable provided safe houses where street by three Ahmed brothers; given life in prison but managed illegal with no license to operate, country still raw from civil war Awami League politicians could Anis, Haris and Josef. Despite to flee the country. It is thought but that does not matter to and a military coup in which the meet without fear of arrest or being riddled with bullets Rahman that Anis Ahmed went to country's founding president, attack. Next door, tucked away in a Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and his The brothers were feared. But star witness at his own murder hiding in India, possibly with the narrow street is another of his family were murdered by army they were also to face trial. His testimony, delivered protection of Indian military ventures - a small traditional officers. Before 1971, there was vengeance. Tipu was the from his deathbed in hospital, intelligence. Hungarian diner trading under the no Bangladesh, it was East name Gulyas Etterem, Goulash Pakistan and governed by and, Restaurant. It is in the heart of Islamabad. Known as the father according the old quarter where tourists of the nation, Sheikh Mujib had to a usually flock, but the restaurant led an uprising against Pakistan. fed is losing money just like Hasan's It was a savage war in which the

violence and a

Dhaka underworld proved critical m o His real name is Haris Ahmed and to the survival of the leaders of intelligent of the he is the third-oldest son of a the Awami League, the political brothers. After large family from the party previously led by the establishing Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka. murdered Sheikh Mujib. By now himself as the don Born in 1966, he left school early it was led by his daughter Sheikh who and as a young man quickly Hasina, who had returned to Mohammadpur, he

crime gangs of his city. Along It was a particularly challenging decades earlier, while four of the Hasing's father, and that he was League won another landslide with his brothers - Josef, Anis and time for the young politician, the Ahmed brothers worked their part of a mob that attacked her victory. That same year, Aziz's Tipu - the Ahmed clan built up a oldest of Sheikh Mujib's children. way up the ranks of Dhaka's house with grenades in 1989. In brother Josef, who had earlier fearsome reputation as back. She and her sister, Sheikh criminal underworld, a fifth, Aziz a bizarre twist, nearly a year after had his death sentence street enforcers for hire; men Rehana, only escaped the Ahmed, chose a different path Rahman's murder he was commuted to life imprisonment, capable of extreme violence violent fate of their family as they when he enlisted in the charged posthumously with the was released from prison by a when they deemed it necessary. were out of the country at the Bangladesh The rise of the Ahmed brothers time. In 1982, following yet colleagues at the Bangladesh place where her father was slain pardon. In the 1980s, the Ahmed clan had another coup, the military- Military Academy rated him as and that is now a national The bond of security and service established their grip on the backed government of General an unremarkable officer, but Aziz memorial. Others, including his between the Ahmed clan and the sprawling Mohammadpur district Hussain Muhammad Ershad rose quickly through the ranks, wife, claim his murder was a part politically ruthless Sheikh of Dhaka, which brought them seized power. Sheikh Hasina his promotions in lockstep with of a gang feud. The shooting took Hasina appeared to have come wealth and prominence. It was a faced the constant threat of the growing political power of place in broad daylight as a crowd full circle. The making of bustling area, full of small house arrest, detention and Sheikh Hasina. In the cycle of looked on. There were many Mohammad Hasan businesses and food stalls where physical attack. Amidst the shootings, beatings and murders witnesses, and while doubt Al Jazeera's Investigative Unit

in a gangland killing. Two

army.

youngest sealed the fate of the Ahmed

2004.

survived long enough to be the Malaysia and Haris went into

#### An important bond

gang at a To escape justice in Bangladesh trial in is one thing, but to stay beyond the reach of the law requires There are money, contacts and a powerful conflicting network. Here the Ahmed gang reports had a highly placed asset a b o u t thanks to the meteoric rise of w h o their brother, Aziz Ahmed, who Rahman by 2012 had been promoted to was; one head the Border Guards version is Bangladesh (BGB), the country's that he oldest uniformed force. Under his a command, the BGB launched a

crackdown on opposition parties. Aziz played an important role in securing an election victory for Sheikh Hasina during the street violence of the 2014 general election.By June 2018, Aziz was promoted to chief of army staff, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina personally presiding over the ceremony as the minister of defence. That the prime minister is also the head of the armed forces is a mark of the central role played by the military in Bangladeshi politics. The Ahmed clan had proved themselves loyal to Sheikh member Hasina and she, in turn, the appointed their brother to Freedom Party, command her army.

founded by the Later that year, General Aziz's who soldiers guarded the country's Sheikh polling stations as the Awami His assault on her home, the same highly unusual presidential

the four brothers extorted shop violence and uncertainty, the in Dhaka, one gruesome killing lingers over the motive, there is has obtained secret audio



officers

assassinated



# The gangster, the general and the prime minister of Bangladesh



were all around me."

brothers as her "mainstay". Prime Minister. "Listen, my simple enough request.

and immigration. No better place gangster on the run with more passport. to hatch a plan to smuggle a power and money than Sami Armed with a raft of forged increasingly frustrated General was then that Al Jazeera's fugitive across an international could imagine. In the months that paperwork, the newly created Aziz who started sending a Investigative Unit gained a new

recordings of phone calls made would have made a good case documents and papers from support from his brother, the Budapest. He was worried that by General Aziz that reveal the study for his fellow delegates. officers under Aziz Ahmed's general, moved swiftly to create "Hasan" was not making his new strength of that bond. In one call Bangladesh embassy officials command in the BGB. They were or buy stakes in companies in life and would eventually have to he recounts how Prime Minister had asked a young Bangladeshi stamped, signed and witnessed Hungary - Bay of Bengal Kft, return to Bangladesh. The tone Sheikh Hasina praised his to help General Aziz during his by officials from the Ministry of Taylorville Kft and briefly became threatening and dark. By brothers to senior party stay in Hungary. Sami, whose Foreign Affairs, bank managers, Consultech Europe Kft - which the summer of 2016 Sami sensed members: "Look, you don't know name we have changed for his lawyers and consulate staff in could own property, run danger. "If my brother has to better than me who his brothers safety, was a 30-year-old Bangladesh and India. It was an restaurants, import and export return, people responsible will are. Where were you all when entrepreneur making his way in elaborate paper chain of goods and even set up a money repent. They will curse their life, grenades were thrown in my Hungary. He felt honoured to help fraudulent documents that exchange kiosk for tourists. house? These things were a visiting VIP from his homeland. transformed Haris Ahmed into Now Haris had to handle large Sami wanted to find out more happening to my house. Where As the pair enjoyed a river cruise Mohammad Hasan. The sums of money being about "Mohammad Hasan" and were you? This chief's brothers on the icy waters of the Danube, subterfuge was on an impressive channelled into Europe from decided to use his contacts in the historic city of Budapest scale. How far back do you need Bangladesh. He had to keep the Bangladesh army who told According to Aziz, Sheikh gliding past their dinner table, to go to create a false identity for moving, keep buying property him to look no further than Hasina also described his General Aziz asked Sami a a notorious criminal? The man and businesses and keep Interpol's Red Notice list, an question: would he help the charged with guarding a nation's creating ways to hide hundreds electronic bulletin board for the In another covert recording to a general's brother, a man named borders, General Aziz, knew the of thousands of dollars. France world's most dangerous former military colleague, Mohammad Hasan, set up a answer; you have to go back to was his next target where, using criminals. Type in nationality -General Aziz underlined the business in Budapest and the beginning and you need to his fake identity, he bought a Bangladesh, name, Haris Ahmed Ahmed clan's loyalty to the acquire residency? It seemed a know the right people to get you stake in five companies and and hit return.

these brothers have not changed December night would eventually story, Al Jazeera's Investigative had a familiar ring; Bay of "Mohammad Hasan" - younger, sides. We just don't have that unravel a criminal conspiracy that Unit obtained more than 50 Bengal, Info Bay of Bengal as heavier and rougher-looking but sort of blood. We just aren't built reaches the highest political documents that became the well as Snigdha. For a short unmistakably the same man. It to betray."On December 9, 2014, office in Bangladesh and led a building blocks of Haris's new while, he also owned TPTY and was the convicted killer, Haris General Aziz strode into the young man to take a risk that identity: fake birth certificates, MHPB Holdings. At the Ahmed. swish marble lobby of the has left him fearing for his life. fake marriage certificates, fake registered address of one of his Sami was in too deep and Kempinski Hotel in Budapest. Sami agreed to help, but it was degree papers, fake bank companies is a store offering decided the only way to break The general was an official only a matter of time before he accounts, fake police reports, international money transfers. free from the powerful Ahmed clan delegate at the World Borderpol would discover the dangerous fake signatures attested by An undercover source Congress, where border police secret that Mohammad Hasan lawyers and, of course, the most Sami had helped "Mohammad their criminal network. He had chiefs gather to discuss security was really Haris Ahmed, a important fake document of all, a Hasan" in Hungary but there seen enough to know that Haris

frontier using a false passport. It followed, Sami was sent legal Mohammad Hasan, with close stream of emails and texts to asset, an undercover source who

purchased a house in Paris. Staring back at him was a faded

I promise," the general wrote.

friend, even after all these things, But that request for help on a cold In the course of investigating this The choice of company names black and white photo of

was to go deeper still and expose was growing pressure from an had powerful links in Hungary. It



## The gangster, the general and the prime minister of Bangladesh

the Ahmed clan's dealings.

juice in the business suite. laptop camera. On the Three men in smart suites phone was a photo of came to attention as a himself with General Aziz laptop sprang into life - a in full military uniform Skype call was incoming greeting from London and with it dignitaries. came the possibility of huge explained profits from a land deal in spontaneous Bangladesh.

introduced Haris Ahmed moment, his elder and his business associate, brother is running Mohammed Rahman, to a t h fictional investor who said he wanted to build a multimillion-dollar hotel

in Bangladesh. The Investigative Unit had set the entire meeting up to find out how Haris was making

Haris fiercely

scribbled numbers on a in fact, because our note pad while Rahman, prime minister leaves gangsters are who brokers citizenship-by- everything to (the) army RAB," he told investment passports to chief to run the country for Sami. "I don't Canada and elsewhere for the big developments." wealthy Bangladeshis, got Rahman and Haris went on are my thugs. They was good money to be made highest officials Bangladesh is a really great from the military chiefs to Displays of power and acts missing brother. idea, but there's some the prime minister herself. of defiance problems because still Over the following weeks, But what of the wider cover of a stormy night, we It dismissed statements there's political issues and Sami continued to operate Ahmed clan? After months watched as the Ahmed made by Haris, the brother a little bit of corruption." he as told the fake investor. "But investigator, probing Haris we were tipped off that diplomatic convoy, were army staff, as baseless and a good thing for Mr Hasan, for more information about General Aziz could be ushered through the said Haris Ahmed had no because he is very well the source of his wealth. In meeting the other brothers security gates of the links to Prime Minister connected with high our secret recordings, for a get-together in the nearby High Commission of Sheikh Hasina or any other officials, very connected Haris claimed that he had Malaysian capital, Kuala Bangladesh for the evening. state institution. with the government, been given the full support Lumpur.

very much."

foreign Rahman Haris's

It was a sting. Sami had "Basically at this

gesturing at the picture.

Europe, be they for military arrivals hall as passengers for the oldest son of Sami arranged a business Hidden cameras recorded bunk beds, bullets or peered anxiously, looking General Aziz. It was a meeting for Mohammad the scene as Haris Ahmed surgical masks. He relayed for friends or relatives. lavish event held over Hasan at a hotel along the became more animated. As to our hidden microphones Among the jostling crowds several river Danube. The hotel staff millions of dollars were how he could make money stood two men, mobile thousands of quests laid out the executive discussed he reached for from military postings, from phones clutched to their entertained by military breakfast of fresh fruit, his gold-coloured mobile fixing court proceedings or ears, waiting and watching bands at an exclusive army coffee, pastries and orange phone and thrust it at the from using the infamous for someone to come club. The Investigative Unit

> money from and Joseph Ahmed were to photos secretly taken businessmen. be the reception party for during the celebrations. Haris said he their brother, General Aziz. It was an extraordinary pays bribes A data search had also display of wealth and to both the revealed an address. A land power. It was an even bolder head of the registry shows that a large act of public defiance. The RAB and the gated house had been four Ahmed brothers, two of country's most purchased by Mohammad whom were criminals on the p o w e r f u l Hasan and Anis Ahmed, the run, were paraded before policemen. remaining brother who the political and military " My absconded in 2007 and has elite of Bangladesh. The

not been seen publicly guest of honour was the

need thugs, these

from any Bangladesh Kuala Lumpur International

of a large gated house in a response before the central Kuala Lumpur. release of the investigation. General Aziz, with Josef After the release of the down to business. There to promise access to the pick someone up and the gates. Anis Ahmed issued in detain them. They make emerged from the shadows, describing the Investigative and no time to waste. "To Bangladesh, from the money. I make money. It's The Investigative Unit had Unit's findings as a "smear

> The following day, under the based abroad. our undercover of tracking Haris Ahmed, clan, escorted by a of Bangladesh's chief of A week earlier, in March

would help reveal the full scale of minister herself likes him government contracts in airport echoed around the had taken place in Dhaka RAB to extort through customs. Haris was able to obtain several

> president of Bangladesh, As the light began to Mohammed Abdul Hameed. fail a small convoy It has been a long journey of cars, two for the Ahmed family but they have finally arrived. From being a small-time mafia on the dangerous streets of Mohammadpur, the clan now has a firm grip on the institutions of the state in Bangladesh.

The Investigative Unit contacted all those involved including Bangladesh's minister, president, the then-head of the RAB, Mohammed Rahman, and b e a r i n g all four Ahmed brothers diplomatic plates, inviting them to respond to swept up to the entrance its findings. None provided alongside, stepped briskly investigation, Bangladesh's into the wet. From behind Ministry of Foreign Affairs in banks to the ministries and a straightforward deal." tracked down the final campaign" orchestrated by opponents of the regime

By Will Thorne and Al especially the prime of Sheikh Hasina to profit The tannoy system at 2019, a society wedding Jazeera Investigative Unit, **Courtesy Al Jazeera** 



# After the Tears Rakesh Tikait Grown as Big tree in farmers Protest

than surrendering or talking of a government wants to talk about Q: Supporters of the ruling party A: It is a peaceful movement and will alive," said a BKU leader. Then came the defining movement which changed the course of events. Tikait went to the podium and made an emotional announcement, with tears in his eyes. He said he will commit suicide but not end the protest. His statement that he will not even drink water until a tractor from his village joins the protest at Ghazipur moved the hearts and minds of farmers across western UP.

His words spread like a wildfire and situation. within half an hour, thousands of people hit the road in Meerut, Hapur, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli and other parts of western UP.

Braving biting cold and rains, agitating farmers continue to camp on the borders of Delhi. They seem to be in no mood to withdraw the protest unless the government repeals the three controversial agricultural laws. After several rounds of talks with the government, which failed to deliver any result, farmers have begun holding round table discussions among themselves to revise their strategy on daily basis. Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait speaks on the farmers' protest which has completed 71 days today.

#### Q: What is your assessment of the government's stand on the farming laws as several rounds of talks have failed to yield any result?

A: My assessment is that the government is in no mood to repeal these laws. Farmers too are adamant on their demand for withdrawal of these laws. Guarantee on Minimum Support Price (MSP) is another demand on is the third major demand. The for the cause.

compromise will keep the movement amendments and hold discussion have raised suspicion over the remainso. Our volunteers are working

These us. discussions have not helped. The government does not want to discuss repeal of law and we do not want to discuss clause after clause. It is a wait and watch

Q: What is your

breakthrough in the next few days? A: We will depute young farmer leaders to go to the villages and apprise them of the talks and their outcome.

#### Q: Protesting farmers are facing hardship. Cold weather conditions and rains have made things difficult for them.

A: You are right. Farmers are facing a lot of hardships, but they are firm. For them, it is a do or die situation. Farmers know that if they return home without getting their due, they will never be able to prosper in their life. Farmers will not budge from the protesting sites. For them, these issues are close to their heart and hence they have decided to firmly fight for their right regardless of the outcome. It will be better for the government to resolve the issue at the earliest.

#### Q: More than 40 farmers have committed suicide and more than 100 or lost their lives during the protest. Your comment.

A: The government has compelled them to take this extreme step. They are which a law has to be made. martyrs. Therefore, the government Implementation of Swaminathan report should understand farmers' conviction

movement.

plan of action if there is no not at gun point. Had Opposition parties Punjab and Haryana are able to get offered support, the government would the rate at MSP for their produce. have condemned them. Sentiments of the public have given strength to this movement which is based on issues. benefit the corporate, but not the When agricultural produces were selling farmers. at half price, farmers took to roads and Q: How optimistic are you about that's how the movement started.

#### Q: What are the lessons you have movement? learnt from the famous 1988 stir in A: We do not know for how long this which your father Mahendra Singh movement will go on. But farmers are Tikait's campaign at Boat Club secured waiver of power and water their due. bills and higher price for sugarcane Q: Some on social media have

this movement. That had happened in langars', proper beds, heating pads Delhi's Boat Club while farmers are protesting at the borders of Delhi this time. This movement has spread to 200 kilometres (approximately). Farmers are protesting in different parts Farmers regularly eat food at home. Is of the country as well.

#### visible in the movement?

A: Women protesters come and go back home due to unavailability of clean toilets and bathing spaces.

undertaken to ensure that it battle of farmers, labourers and remains a peaceful movement?

clause-wise, but that is not acceptable nature of farmers' movement stating round-the-clock to ensure that no that Opposition untoward incident takes place. Rowdy parties have elements are kept at bay. We will extended their ensure that it remains peaceful.

#### support to this Q: Twenty-seven years ago, Mahendra Singh Tikait and other A: It is not true. It leaders had met then Prime people's Minister Narasimha Rao and asked movement based for permission to sell their products on ideological anywhere in the country.

issues. It needs A: We are not opposed to farm to be tackled reforms. We have demanded a legal ideologically and guarantee for MSP; Only farmers from Farmers are demanding repeal of three new agricultural laws. These laws will

#### outcome

determined for a long haul till they get

#### criticized the "lavish" aid being A: The 1988 protest was peaceful; so is **provided to farmers. Photos of 'Pizza** for farmers have gone viral.

A: It is wrong to project farmers in poor light. There is nothing wrong if someone has donated a dress to any farmer. it luxury? If some villagers have sent Q: Why are women protestors not blankets for them, what is wrong in it? It is a reflection of petty mind-set of people who are portraying poor farmers in such way. Moreover, people are sending donations to farmers at the Q: What are the steps being protest sites and not at home. It is a consumers.





# How will 'chipageddon' affect you?



For the most part they go unseen but computer chips are at the heart of all the digital products that surround us - and when supplies run short, it can halt manufacturing.

There was a hint of the problem last year when gamers struggled to buy new graphics cards, Apple had to stagger the release of its iPhones, and the latest Xbox and PlayStation consoles came nowhere close to meeting

Then, just before Christmas, it emerged the resurgent car industry was facing what one insider called "chipageddon".

New cars often include more than 100 microprocessors - and manufacturers were quite simply unable to source them all. Since then, one technology company after another has warned they too face con-

Samsung is struggling to fulfil orders for the memory chips it makes for its own and others' products.

And Qualcomm, which makes the processors and modems that power many of the leading smartphones and other consumer gadgets, has the same problem.

Pandemic's impact

Like much else wrong with the world, the coronavirus is partly to blame.

Lockdowns fuelled sales of computers and other devices to let people work from home - and they also bought new gadgets to occupy their time off.

The automotive industry, meanwhile, initially saw a big dip in demand and cuts its orders.

a result, chipmakers switched over their production

But then, in the third quarter of 2020, sales of cars came roaring back more quickly than anticipated, while demand for consumer electronics continued unabated.

5G infrastructure

With existing foundries running at capacity, building more is not a simple matter, though.

"It takes about 18 to 24 months for a plant to open after they break ground," analyst Richard Windsor says.

"And even once you've built one, you have to tune it and get the yield up, which also takes a bit of time.

"This isn't something you can simply switch on and switch

The rollout of 5G infrastructure

And Huawei put in a big order

is also adding to demand.

to build up a stockpile of chips before US trade restrictions blocked it from ordering more.

By contrast, the car industry is relatively low margin and tends not to stockpile supplies, which has now left it in a pinch.

Recently, TSMC and Samsung, the leading chip producers, have spent billions getting a new highly complex 5-nanometre chip-manufacturing process up to speed to power the latest cutting-edge products.

But analysts say more widely, the sector has suffered from under-investment.

"Most of tier-two foundries have been registering poor earnings, low margins and high debt ratio during the past few years," a recent report from Counterpoint Research says.

"From the profitability perspective, building a new fab[rication plant] for smaller foundries is difficult to consider."

And many of these chip producers will instead respond to the extra demand by increasing

their prices. Knock-on effects

Mr Windsor does not expect chip scarcity to be resolved until at least July.

Others suggest longer.

"We expect semiconductor industry supply constraints on both wafer and substrates to only partially ease in secondhalf 2021, with some leadingedge (computing, 5G chips) tightness to extend into 2022," a Bank of America research note says.

And one chipmaker told the Wall Street Journal backlogs were now so big, it would take up to 40 weeks to fulfil any order a carmaker put in today.

This could have expensive knock-on effects.

The consultancy AlixPartners has forecast the automotive industry will lose \$64bn (£47bn) of sales because it has had to close or reduce output.

Although, that sum needs to be viewed in the context of the sector typically generating about \$2tn of sales a year.

Monopoly producers

There are also geo-political implications.

The US still leads in terms of developing the components' designs.But Taiwan and South Korea dominate the chip-manufacturing industry.



#### The next victim of the global microchip shortage is Ford's most profitable truck, the F-150

Many companies have had to production in December due to Bloomberg has an overview of motor company would make scale back car production due to the shortage, and Honda and GM how most of Japan's automakers unless it had to. We here at The a global computer chip shortage, but CNBC is reporting that the shortages are finally hitting America's most popular vehicle: the Ford F-150. According to the report, Ford is temporarily cutting the number of shifts in its truck production plants in half: its Dearborn, Michigan, factory is going from three shifts a week to one, and its Kansas City, Missouri, plant is going from three shifts to two.

**CNBC** Ford quotes spokesperson Kelli Felker as saying Ford expects the plants to return to normal operation in a couple of weeks, and the company is "working closely with suppliers to address potential production constraints tied to the global semiconductor shortage."This isn't the first time the factory that made Ford vehicle in the country. They're Qualcomm's CEO is warning

have also had to cut back. are affected one way or another. Nissan and Toyota have had to While the shortages are hitting slow their truck production lines the entire industry, the F-150 is as well. For Ford's part, earlier a big deal in the US, where the this month, it had to shut down iconic F-series is the bestselling

microchip shortages have hit the Escapes and Lincoln Corsairs for also Ford's most profitable that it's not just the latest, car industry, or even Ford. a week because it couldn't get vehicles, so making fewer of them highest-tech products that will Volkswagen had to change car the computer parts it needed. isn't likely to be a decision the see shortages.

Verge often ask the question "what's a computer?" but I suspect most people wouldn't answer "the F-150." But modern cars have computer systems for

> almost every component these days, from digital speedometers to vital vehicle functions like controlling emissions and emergency brake systems. If Ford, or other car manufacturers, isn't able to get the computer chips it needs, it won't be able to build functioning modern cars. Of course, the chip shortages aren't just hitting the car industry -AMD, Nvidia, Microsoft, and Sony were famously not able to meet demand with their launches last year, and



#### A critical shortage of computer chips could cost automakers billions this year - now a group of Senators wants the White House to step in

in auto manufacturing.

supply chain due to COVID-19, production as well. lose as much as \$61 billion in automakers to prioritize revenue this year, Bloomberg the production of their reported in January, citing higher prices, and often estimates from the consulting more profitable, models. firm Alix Partners.

"We believe that the incoming its production of its fulladministration can continue to size Tundra. In Japan. play a helpful role in alleviating Nissan was forced to the worst impacts of the lower its production, shortage on American workers," while Volkswagen was the senators wrote. The already bipartisan group of 15 senators production rates in are from several states that could December, according to Carolina.

could cause car companies to The lack of chips has forced from Deloitte.

In Texas, Toyota limited lowering

Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Louisville and Fiat Chrysler has shortage.

global computer chip shortage Volkswagen, Ford, and Fiat automation and electrification. The production in North America, a tech that threatens to throw a wrench Chrysler plants due to the chips are used in navigation, spokesperson told Insider. shortage, Reuters reports. bluetooth, and collision detection "We continue to work closely



Several car companies are ABC reported. Semiconductor countermeasures to minimize the the work-from-home boom has Production at the manufacturing already starting to feel the pinch. chips have become an essential impact to production," a Toyota necessitated the purchase of sites also went back up as state Production of multiple car part of the manufacturing process spokesperson told Insider. "We more personal electronics and lockdowns eased and automakers models has already been for vehicles, especially as cars do not expect any impact to has only accelerated the worked to meet demand.

spokesperson told Insider.

companies had not responded to a request comment at the time of publication.

The car industry

Several senators have called for delayed at several General continue to become increasingly employment at this time." shortage, as chipmakers the White House to combat a Motors, Toyota, Nissan, sophisticated, leaning towards Nissan has had to adjust focused their product sales on automakers were mostly out of the game in the spring. Apple The shortage of semiconductor Analysts at IHS say the shortage systems, to name a few, and with our supplier partners to already saw the impact of chip chips, driven by disruptions in the will creep into third-quarter account for about 40% of a new monitor the situation and shortages in the production of its car's cost, according to a report assess the longer-term impact iPhone 12 in November, on our operations," the according to Bloomberg. The blow to the supply chain and future revenue of automakers The other auto comes during a time when the industry was just beginning to recover from shutdowns and for declining sales at the onset of the pandemic. Mass shutdowns at plants, reluctant shoppers who were less inclined to purchase a new car amidst the uncertainty isn't the only sector of the pandemic - especially on without a commute to use it on semiconductor chip caused companies like Ford and see a significant impact from ABC News. Ford is also slowing A Toyota spokesperson told supplies. These chips, which Nissan to furlough tens of declining production at car down its production on the Insider they are working to store data and programs, are also thousands of employees in the manufacturing plants, including Escape and Lincoln Corsair in address the impact of the prevalent in all electronics and spring. But demand returned over necessary for phones, gaming the summer as low interest rates Illinois, Indiana, and South already suspended production at "We are evaluating the supply systems, and computers. and stimulus checks made the plants in Ontario and Mexico, constraint and developing Demandfrom the tech industry as industry more appealing.

## A global chip shortage is hitting carmakers at the worst possible time



The world's largest statement last month that it will applications, including driver the components shortages.

carmakers are facing a critical need to adapt production at shortage of semiconductors that plants in China, North America threatens to hamstring and Europe this guarter. The production just as the industry changes will affect production of tries to stage a comeback from the bestselling VW Golf, as well a sales slump caused by the as models from its Audi, Skoda pandemic.Volkswagen and Seat brands.According to (FCAU) and Nissan (NSANF) largest carmaker could lose out are among major automakers on production of 100,000 units suffering from the global in the first three months of the shortage of chips, which are year, or roughly 4% of global used in a growing number of quarterly output, as a result of

assistance systems and "We are doing everything in our navigation control. The average power to minimize lost

can be resumed as rapidly as while ensuring we maintain A chip shortage December 18.

A Volkswagen spokesperson said in a statement. difficult. But it's not possible to that they too are facing supply if assembly lines slow. quantify the impact at this stage, issues, but declined to quantify When the pandemic forced the spokesperson added.

at its Louisville, Kentucky last week that Honda will slash leading Escape and Corsair, as a result this month, mainly affecting the production of the semiconductor shortage. Fit subcompact manufactured companies statement on Monday that it is in a statement on Tuesday that gaming devices. working closely with suppliers the factory is running normally and prioritizing "key vehicle lines at present. in Ontario, which produces the electric cars. Research firm The chips. Volkswagen said in a normal deliveries to customers current semiconductor shortage 15% decline last year.

possible," Volkswagen Group production at our other North The supply chain bottleneck purchasing manager Murat Aksel American plants," the company, could end up hurting business. said in a statement on which is set to merge with PSA. A much stronger than expected Group (PUGOY) this month, recovery in sales and production volumes has contributed to the told CNN Business on Tuesday Japanese carmakers Honda crunch, but carmakers risk that the situation remains (HMC) and Nissan confirmed missing out on the demand uplift

the impact. Nikkei, a Japanese automakers to temporarily Ford halted production this week business publication, reported shutter factories last year, assembly plant, which builds the production by about 4,000 units manufacturers reassigned The company said in a at its Suzuka plant. Honda said smartphones, laptops and

"With lead times of six to nine months, the semiconductor for production." Fiat Chrysler said The disruption comes at a industry has not been able to (VLKAF), Ford (F), Fiat Chrysler UBS analysts, the world's it will delay the restart of crucial time for carmakers, scale up fast enough to meet production following a scheduled which suffered a collapse in this unexpected growth in break at its Toluca, Mexico sales in the early months of the automotive demand," parts plant, which builds the Jeep pandemic, yet remain under supplier Continental (CTTAF) Compass. It will also schedule intense pressure from global said in a statement sent to downtime at its Canadian plant regulators to invest heavily in CNN Business on Tuesday. Chrysler 300, Dodge Charger Bernstein estimates global light expected to continue "well and Dodge Challenger. "This will vehicle sales will grow 9% in into 2021, causing major car has between 50 to 150 production and to ensure that minimize the impact of the 2021, following an expected disruptions in Continental's production.



# Government issues notice to Twitter to remove content on 'farmer genocide' tag



Ministry Electronics and Information as the act) and Rule 9[1] of the Technology on Wednesday sent Information a final notice to Twitter, taking a Procedure and Safeguards for rights of authorities. tough stand against "offensive" Blocking for Access of hashtags and handles on the Information by Public] Rules, microblogging-social networking 2009," the ministry said in its accounts/tweets despite the platform. The government has recent order. sent a notice to Twitter, warning The interim order was issued on the social media platform to take the ground that the said Twitter action against Twitter handles URLs and hashtag are spreading posting offensive hashtags, else misinformation about the ongoing satisfaction of authorities as to cases will be registered against farmers' protests and have the which inflammatory content will

#### THE ISSUE

Information Technology after SAY? Twitter on Monday restored In a 5-page notice, the ministry ministry.

Information Technology [Meity] incorrect." and 1 hashtag under section 69 statement said. A of the Information Technology The notice was signed off with a an intermediary."

of Act, 2000 (hereinafter referred to Technology

potential to lead to imminent arouse passion and impact violence affecting public order The notice was issued by the situation in the country.

Ministry of Electronics and WHAT DID GOVT'S NOTICE official statement said, "Twitter

nearly 250 accounts that were said, "The content with the government. Refusal to do so blocked earlier in the day, #ModiPlanningFarmerGenocide will invite penal action." following a complaint by the hashtag was posted on Twitter which was designed to inflame INTERMEDIARY' "The Ministry of Electronics and passions, hatred and factually

The Centre on Wednesday sent a final notice to Twitter, taking a tough stand against social media handles posting contents with offensive hashtags related to farmer genocide.

warning: "It needs to be He said, "Twitter cannot assume is necessary to lay down the mentioned that Section 69A[3] provides for specific penal consequences in case of noncompliance of the directions issued under section 69A of the Act.'

The government's notice quotes more than half a dozen Supreme Court judgments -- including those by Constitutional benches -- related to public order and the

The government further said, "Twitter unilaterally unblocked government order for blocking." The government said Twitter, being an intermediary, is obliged to obey the directions as per the public order.

Warning of penal action, the is an intermediary and they are obliged to obey the direction of

'TWITTER

A government official said, Twitter cannot sit as an had passed an interim order "Incitement to genocide is not a appellate authority over the dated 31.01.2021 as a matter of freedom of speech. It is a threat satisfaction of the authorities emergency blocking 257 URLs to law and order," the official about its potential impact on derailing public order. It is only

with government orders.'

The notice further said, "You The notice said, "Twitter is an prevailing situation, which not Section 2[1][w] only has the potential, but has, in fact, resulted in a major public and provides a platform order issue on 26.01.2021. The wherein opinions of persons statutory authorities are doing are communicated across the that no adverse public order see." situation takes place and no The government quoted committed.""In light of these developments and as a part of due process, and as per the where it considers it "necessary settled practice, an order was or expedient to direct an passed under Rule 9 of the intermediary to block for Information [Procedure and Safeguards for to be blocked for access by Information by Public] Rules, generated, transmitted, 2009, which have ensued in received, stored or hosted in the exercise of powers under any computer resource if the Information and Technology Act, the same is necessary or 2000." the statement read.

#### **GOVT'S EARLIER ORDER**

government communicated the order on around 3:00 PM January 31. In the Wednesday's notice, the government said, "It is unfortunate that though the said order was communicated by us received by immediately, you chose not to pm."

"The offending handles/hashtags were blocked only a few minutes before your Advocate appeared before the Committee, on 1.2.2021 at 3 pm. It is thus clear that the offending tweets/hashtag remained in the public domain and must have been tweeted and re-tweeted several times at the risk and cost of public order and the risk of incitement to the commission of offences " TWITTER DECLINES TO ABIDE

#### BY CENTRE'S ORDER

Twitter had replied to the ministry on February 1, declining to abide by the order issued by the government. The government has now read out the rule book to adverting to the facts at hand, it dated 31.1.2021."

the role of court and justify non-statutory framework. It may be compliance. Twitter may face noted that as per Indian law, with penal action for not complying which Twitter is bound to comply."

[Twitter] are aware of the "intermediary" as defined under οf Information Technology Act everything possible to ensure world and are open for all to

cognizable offences are Section 69A of the Act which provides jurisdiction to the central government in cases Technology access for public and or cause Blocking for Access of the public any information 69A[2] of the government is satisfied that expedient in order to prevent incitement to the commission had of any cognizable offence relating to public order".

> The notice warns that in case of non-compliance, statutory consequences shall follow. ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Citing global jurisprudence, the government said, "The principle of secondary liability provides comply with the same till almost that despite the intermediary not the time fixed for the meeting of being the creator of the the committee as contemplated problematic/illegal content, such under Rule 9, i.e. 1.2.2021 at 3 intermediary would have to share the liability in case such problematic content breaches the stipulations of the law as it enables the largescale projecting/publicising/advertising of the content. It may be noted that such liability is over and above the liability in case of deliberate noncompliance of orders of the central government." On issues of freedom of speech, the government said it is astonishing that Twitter, despite being bound by the statutory provisions validly enacted by the competent legislature, is commenting upon "significant issues relating to freedom of speech relating to the power of the central government under section 69A of the Act and the constitutional Twitter by stating: "Before desirability of the interim order

#### TikTok agrees to block users in Italy who say they are under 13 after girl dies



The popular video app TikTok said on Wednesday it had agreed with Italian authorities to block all users who gave their age as under 13, among other measures, after the death of a 10-year-old girl was blamed on a breathholding social media challenge.

Prosecutors in Palermo are investigating that case, which has led to increased scrutiny of

children's use of social media platforms. TikTok, owned by the Chinese company ByteDance, first gained popularity in Asia and now also has a big following in the West. It has become hugely popular among teenagers in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Italian regulator said TikTok had agreed to block all accounts in Italy from Feb. 9, and to readmit only users who provided a date of birth showing they were at least 13 years old. Alexandra Evans, Tiktok's head of child safety in Europe, said it would also

introduce a button into the app to enable members to report users who appeared to be under 13. The regulator said TikTok had also agreed to evaluate using artificial intelligence to detect under-age accounts. It will, however, have to discuss the proposal with the Irish privacy authority, which is the European Union's lead data protection authority for Tik Tok because the firm has its European head office in Ireland.



# Budget 2021: The Cost of Deficit Financing

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman came out with ambitious spending plans of the Rs 35 trillion for the year starting April 1. In this push for atmanirbhata, what happens to India's fiscal deficit. India Today's Data Intelligence Unit explains.

The Government of India fiscal deficit of 6.5 per cent of has announced a mammoth GDP. "We plan to continue on spending plan on Monday during our path of fiscal consolidation the Union Budget 2021-22 to and intend to reach a fiscal revive the pandemic-affected deficit level below 4.5% of GDP economy despite the crunch of by 2025-2026 with a fairly money. The gap between the steady decline over the period," spending plan and available Sitharaman said in her budget money will mostly be financed by speech. small savings and market Unlike the current financial year, borrowings.

the statistics ministry forecast sources in the financial year that the economic growth rate is 2022. In FY22, the government set to see the biggest contraction has estimated to finance only since 1952. Finance Minister Rs 1,514 crore from external Nirmala Sitharaman came out debt; 99.9 per cent of fiscal with ambitious spending plans of deficit will be financed from the Rs 35 trillion for the year domestic sources against Rs starting April 1.

the fiscal deficit target of 9.5 per in FY2021. cent of gross domestic product The gap between resource and (GDP) for the financial year 2021 spending (fiscal deficit) for this against the earlier estimate of 3.5 year is reported to be more than per cent. The government has Rs 18 lakh crore or 9.5 per cent fixed the target to spend Rs 11.7 of the country's GDP in FY2021. trillion in only three months in the Government has doubled the current financial year, which ends net market borrowing amount in on March 31. In the next financial a revised estimate of the year, net market borrowing would financial year 2021 from Rs 5.10 be Rs 9.17 lakh crore to meet the lakh crore to Rs 10.48 lakh

most of the fiscal deficit will be The economy has floundered, and financed through domestic 54,522 crore (97.1 per cent) The Finance Ministry has revised financed from domestic sources

crore. It is almost 69 per cent net of fiscal deficit.

The heavy borrowing will cost nearly 6.92 lakh crore and 8.09 lakh crore in the next two years; however, subsidies will reduce to Rs 3.7 lakh crore from Rs 6.5 lakh crore

The government continues to rely on small savings to finance its fiscal deficit. It revised the portion used for deficit financing of small savings from Rs 2.40 lakh crore to Rs 4.80 lakh crore (2.5 per cent of the country's GDP) for the current financial year. An almost similar portion of small savings will also be used for FY22 which is pegged at Rs 3.9 lakh crore or 26 per cent of the fiscal deficit (Rs 15.6 lakh crore) for the financial year 2022.

Experts say the government will not be going for a rate cut in the small saving scheme now. "This, in turn, underlines the importance of small savings collections for the government and bond market. For comparison, aggregate bank deposits have risen by Rs 2.52 lakh crore in the last 12 months. This indicates that it will be



said in its research

which underlines further said.

disinvestment for the next to higher borrowings".

difficult for the government to cut financial year, starting from April small savings rates so as to 1. Along with LIC'S IPO (Initial continue attracting inflows, and Public Offer), the government has that would continue to impair a plan to sell Air India, BPCL, monetary transmission," SBI Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, The Centre and States' net IDBI Bank, BEML, Pawan Hans borrowings are budgeted at Rs and Neelanchal Ispat Nigam 18.1 lakh crores, which is limited, in the financial year 2022. marginally higher than Rs 17.8 The heavy investment in lakh crores in the FY21 budget. infrastructure with low revenue "We must understand that out receipts will add to the debt of an estimated 9.5 per cent of burden in this financial year. The fiscal deficit for FY 21, 1.6 per government estimates that such cent of GDP is only because of investment will boost the GDP the jump in the food subsidy bill, growth, and debt ratio will come the down by 45.5 per cent in FY-23. humanitarian aspect of India's However, this year's budget pandemic response," the bank documents have not provided the exact outstanding debt figures DISINVESTMENT STRATEGY and only said that "Central FM Sitharaman has announced government Debt to GDP ratio is a target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore of estimated to be 3.1 per cent due

#### Battle for 'Sonar Bangla' heats up as Trinamool, BJP spar over Budget sops for state

Budget presented on February 1, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman allocated Rs 25,000 crore for highway projects in West Bengal. The money will be spent on upgradation of the road network between Kolkata in South Bengal and Siliguri in North Bengal. That this stretch passes through constituencies with high political stakes for both Trinamool Congress and BJP has Mamata Banerjee seeing red.

Soon after Sitharaman's presentation, Mamata lashed out at the Budget, calling it anti-farmer and anti-people. "In this Budget, there is a lot of cess and people of Bengal will be 'shesh' (finished). The government is selling away everything. They're selling off railways, ports, roads; they're selling off you and us," she said. One of Mamata's strategies is to cash in on the insecurity among people regarding economic growth and jobs. She will campaign that the Budget does not address the core issues of development. In this, she'll be aided by her finance

that the Budget is not generating any actual revenue, thus making it harder to overcome the deficit.

Bengal's panchayat and rural development minister Subrata Mukherjee has also termed the Kolkata-Siliguri road



upgradation scheme an old wine in new

BJP, on the other hand, believes that the Budget addresses each and every section of society. Dismissing the Trinamool's allegations, BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya said, "I thank the Prime Minister for the

path for building Sonar Bangla (Golden Bengal)."

The BJP's development campaign will be further bolstered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will be visiting Trinamool turncoat Suvendu Adhikari's

> turf Haldia on February 7. If sources are to be believed. Modi will announce several infra projects worth Rs 4,500 sector.

Why industrialisation is the catchword

Once the capital of British India, Kolkata

used to be the hub of trade and commerce in the entire South Asia, and aided by various social reform movements, attracted industries and businesses from across the globe.

In 1911, the British shifted the capital to Delhi; and Mumbai became the financial capital. Since the 1960s,

In the first paperless Union minister Amit Mitra, who is of the opinion development packages. He has paved the Bengal witnessed political and social turmoil in the form of Naxalite movement. Trade unionism blossomed under the Left regime, forcing industrialists to flee and set shop in cities such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad. What followed was the brain drain from Bengal.

Mamata, after coming to power, tried to curb the state's bandh culture. But her role in the anti-land acquisition movements in Singur and Nandigram crore in the oil and gas remain fresh in public memory. The movements catapulted her to power but further damaged the state's prospects as a potential investment destination.

> And now, BJP is pitching itself as the party that'll return industry in Bengal. Sources say Union commerce and industries minister Piyush Goyal is coordinating with the business community to attract investments in the state in case of a BJP victory. Faced with a resurgent BJP, Mamata too is trying up her development game.



# Pran to Sanjay Dutt, how the villain in Indian cinema changed over the years







culture villainisation has undergone a dramatic change over the past few decades in Indian Cinema. We The importance of an all-importake a deeper look at how things tant arch-villain in the typical have altered.

good emerges triumphant over the evil, it is the antagonist, as the evil, who takes it on himself making yet - the cult of villainisation.

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ATRA-**DITIONAL FILM VILLAIN**

of complete without the age-old villains, are now suffering from the paucity of them.

Hindi film was always paramount. In Indian cinema, if the onus is Film directors always fell over on the hero to ensure that the each other to incorporate the greatest star villains of their respective eras. It is not for nothing that Pran remained one of the to make that which is good ap- highest-paid actors during his pear better and far more relatable heyday. It is reported that in the to the viewers. Therefore, had it early 1970s, Pran was the secnot been for these wretched an- ond-highest paid actor in tagonists, cinema in general and Bollywood, only behind superstar the biggest stars of the 70s, it was creasingly entertaining. While Bollywood films, in particular, Rajesh Khanna. This created a would have missed out on their problem for filmmakers to cast most sensational aspect of film- them together as the budget of the film could overshoot well beyond the desired mark. Pran, who was majorly known for playing negative roles in the early years If heroes are immortals who leave of his career, ushered in the era footprints of love and kindness in of urban suave villains with his the mind of us mortals, villains sensational performances in are not far behind in leaving a classics like Madhumati (1958) long-lasting impression by suc- and Ram Aur Shyam (1967). His cessfully exuding a sense of hate persona as a negative lead tradeand disgust to startle the cine- marked iconic shots that saw him goer. Since it is the villains who create smoke rings from his cigahave traditionally made our herettes, and the impact of moneyroes look all the more heroic, it lenders as cruel villains gradually is not surprising then that main- started receding from the silver stream films, which seemed in- screen. This tradition was fol-

lowed by another iconic on-screen villain of his era, KN Singh.

If Pran was evil wrapped in style on-screen, Amjad Khan as Gabbar Singh was the devil incarnate who not only wreaked havoc in the lives of Jai, Veeru, Thakur and Basanti in Sholay, but also in the mischievous young minds who dutifully went to bed when they heard their doting parents calling his name during the late 70s. In a film that starred two of more exploitative but also in-



Amjad Khan's Gabbar Singh who the soft-spoken Danny successstole the show. Also, a new breed fully played a sophisticated vilof villains mushroomed - Danny Denzongpa, Amjad Khan, Amrish Puri, Jeevan, Raza Murad, Prem Chopra, Roopesh Kumar, Pinchoo Kapoor, Ranjeet, Gulshan Grover and Sadashiv Amrapurkar among others. The presence of these iconic names used to increase the saleability and the box office prospects of these films as traditionally, the villains used to bring in the repeat touch. In between these two Rajesh Khanna had played audience for their films after the star villains, some like Ranjeet anti-heroes in films like Amar, initial hysteria of the film used to and Jeevan managed to make Parwana, Red Rose and

lain to superstars like Rajesh Khanna, Amitabh Bachchan and Sunny Deol among others, Amrish Puri's histrionics as the gut-wrenching villain was more than evident in blockbusters like Mr India, Damini, Karan Arjun, and more. To top that, Puri was often seen with weird make-up and wacky hairdos that gave his on-screen portravals a definitive villains like Pran and Amjad Khan for the entry of local goons in floodgate open.

irrespective of the hero. ONSET

OF THE WACKY ANTAGO-

However, with the onset of the

80s, a rapid change was visible

and the villain wasn't always the

urbane guy anymore. With ac-

tors like Danny Denzongpa and

Amrish Puri taking centre stage,

the villain not only became even

used to ensure a big opening for Bollywood.

their respective releases as well, The importance of these legendary bad men increased further in the 1990s when filmmakers always needed a top-draw bad man to headline a mainstream film and make the new breed of Hindi film heroes look convincing on screen. No wonder then that Amrish Puri was the antagonist extraordinaire in films like Phool Aur Kaante and Deewana, films that propelled Ajay Devgn and Shah Rukh Khan, respectively to stardom.

> With the release and runaway success of films like Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak and Maine Pyar Kiya, which turned its lead stars Aamir Khan and Salman Khan into an overnight sensation each, the villain started residing in the vicinity, or to put it clearly, within the lead protagonist's family, which was a major diversion from the traditional villain. However, the actor who truly aced the villain in this era like none other was Nana Patekar. His bone-chilling portrayal as Anna in Vidhu Vinod Chopra's Parinda became the most definitive negative act on Hindi celluloid.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ANTI-

However, after this stellar act, Nana made a commendable transformation as a star actor who could be a top draw while blurring the lines between the hero and villain. In essence, this started the trend of the anti-hero. Sure, greats like Dilip Kumar, Amitabh Bachchan and recede. In fact, the unparalleled a mark for themselves, with the Dhanwan respectively. But, it was popularity of traditional on-screen former going on to pave the way Nana who threw the anti-hero



#### The powerful are abusing history to get their way -- and Americans will bear the consequences



On Nov. 22, 1963, Lee Walker because Walker had Harvey Oswald murdered the given speeches attacking Compresident of the United States. munism. Harvey Oswald was.

Oswald traveled to Mexico City "by hate," as they often put it.

There are a lot of questions about Lee Harvey Oswald never hid his what happened, but there was politics, not for a moment. He never any question about who Lee talked incessantly about Communism to anyone who would lis-Oswald was a passionate and ten. And yet many Americans committed Communist. In 1959, never really understood what Lee he gave up his American pass- Harvey Oswald believed, beport and defected to the Soviet cause news outlets didn't tell Union. There, he married a Rus- them. Instead, almost immedisian woman and lived in Minsk. ately, the media began spinning Three years later, he returned to a very different story. President this country and immediately be- Kennedy, they suggested, had gan attending rallies in support of been murdered by conservatives, Fidel Castro. In the fall of 1963, possibly by conservatism itself, and met with KGB agents there. The explanation was never very A few months before in Dallas, he precise, but the idea was always had tried to murder Gen. Edwin the same: Right-wingers killed

John F. Kennedy. The Soviet ture. History is used to hurt some choice for those of us who lived Union, naturally, was happy to people and to help other people in a world before the Internet. responsibility for the Kennedy history being written before us assassination lay squarely with, the coordinated lying paid off. A rian Michael Beschloss: election. By that point, many voters associated Goldwater with

media kept repeating this lie. On the 50th anniversary of the Kennedy assassination, The New Yorker magazine was still blaming anti-Communism for the fact that an avowed Communist had murdered the president. Just because it's absurd doesn't mean they won't say with a straight face. By now, it's likely that most Americans believe same sense that 7-Eleven is a "Where is she? Where is she? that's exactly what happened. And why wouldn't they believe it? That's what they've been told.

History is a political tool, not simply a record of what happened. History is a way to shape the fu-

right now. Consider the below

year later, Goldwater lost to BESCHLOSS: This was a presihistorically lopsided presidential an insurrection, a terrorist attack on Congress ... We observe 9/ 11. We remember the fact that there were attacks that landed, As the decades passed, the one that almost landed, which was an effort to fly an airplane into the Capitol [and] kill lot of members of Congress. That almost REP. ALEXANDRIA OCASIOhappened. Here is a terrorist at- CORTEZ: I jump into my bathtack that did happen.

> As Beschloss has said repeatedly and pointedly over the last bang ... I open the door when all 24 hours, we must "never forget." Now, it's true that Michael was trying to get inside got into Beschloss is a historian in the my office ... and I just hear, restaurant, but he sells what is And this was the moment where called popular history, the kind of I thought everything was over. history that sticks. That's just We've played clips like that for at this point are the media of it's not funny.

agree with the assessment. As gain power. History is never neu- For Americans under 30, history a Soviet spokesman put it, moral tral. We are watching our own is written exclusively on social media, and that's where the real demagogues live. Tech platforms "Barry Goldwater and other ex- statement, which was uttered on are the domain of people for tremists on the right." In the end, MSNBC Tuesday night by histo- whom factual reality is not even a consideration. What actually happened in a given place at a Democrat Lyndon Johnson in a dent of the United States inciting given time is totally and completely irrelevant. Ideology is all that matters. Sandy Cortez is a master of this medium, of course. Here's her description of the events of Jan. 6. as broadcast to kids across the country on Instagram.

> room and I close the door and I just keep hearing bang, bang, of a sudden I hear that whoever

the history being assembled in you before, and we've always print and on cable news, which made fun of them, but actually

# Pandering to extremists, ruining economy, Pak PM is running out of time

Imran Khan has about two years and nine months left in the present term. He stands by his slogan of building New Pakistan, but at present, that goal seems remote. It is sad. Khan's failure would be like hope slipping away.

field and came to bat on the true after 22 years of struggle style. political pitch - the world felt that and he became Pakistan's Khan signalled a break from the Pakistan had found a politician prime minister. out of the quagmire it was in. Just wonders: What kind of as Jayaprakash Narayan gave impression will Khan leave on the slogan of "total revolution" in the sands of time? Where did India, Imran Khan gave the hego-orisgoing-wrong? Last slogan of "corruption-free week's decision by the Pakistan Pakistan". His words found Supreme Court to let off Daniel traction with the people of Pearl's killer Omar Sheikh Pakistan. He struck a chord with shows how fragile the system the youth - lakhs would attend is. I have been to Pakistan his public meetings. It was during several times and have become this political journey that I met acquainted with the peoples' him and had discussions with battles and aspirations - they him about Pakistan in London. struggle with poverty and hunger He came across as earnest, and are blighted by corruption with a genuine desire to bring and unemployment. Terrorism about change. In his words and is a dominant force, the eyes, I saw the spirit of intelligence agency and the Pakistan's progress and a army have always been powerful

message of friendship for India. in Pakistan - today, ironically, message of friendship and the

There was euphoria He was moving ahead with a they are seen as an inalienable when Imran Khan left the cricket sporting spirit. His dream came part of democracy, Pakistan

past. Long before he became with the ability to get the country Over two years later, one PM, he built a state-of-the-art cancer hospital in Lahore and schools and colleges as well. After becoming PM, he started his work with great simplicity. He even scaled down his government security to a great extent and did not use the government aircraft but travelled on commercial flights. He wanted relations with India to improve. He said that if India took one step, he would take two! But neither could he move one step forward nor did India take two steps. The reason for this was the betraval in 1999, when Atal Bihari Vajpayee went to



Pakistan army inflicted the Kargil They argue that by not doing so, war. Narendra Modi had invited India fell into the ISI "trap" - Khan Sharif for his swearing-in drifted away from India and the ceremony and had also flown to ISI and Pakistan army Pakistan to meet the latter but succeeded in their nefarious India got nothing in return. As for designs. get Pakistan out of the morass. healthcare, industry and trade.

Khan's initiative, India felt that Today, both countries are forced history should not repeat itself to "burn" crores of rupees on the because the biggest charge border every day. There is loss against the Pakistan PM has of life and property on both been that he is the army's sides. Forget what the puppet. Some of Pakistan's old- mullahs want. I can say based timers and free-minded people on my experience that the say that India should have given people there want friendship Khan an opportunity, taking all with India because it will meet Nawaz Sharif with a precautions, and helped him to benefit Pakistan immensely in

# **Enter Sasikala**

#### Fight for Jayalalithaa's legacy gets complicated

Power behind the throne during J Jayalalithaa's time, Sasikala might have been stripped of her AIADMK membership, but the party has a lot to worry as she returns after serving her jail term.

what comes to mind? Obviously, Jayalalithaa's final resting place late J Jayalalithaa. She was hailed as Chinnamma, or junior Amma, the power behind the thrice on the samadhi with her throne, the operator behind the open palm. It was interpreted as iron curtains at Veda Nilayam in Poes Garden.

Supreme Court convicted return of Sasikala? Sasikala in the disproportionate The actions and the utterances assets case, her detractors of Edappadi Palaniswami, the painted her as the villain, the evil influence over an innocent chief minister after the verdict, are Puratchi Thalaivi (revolutionary a clear indication of the leader) who was accused number one in the case. Sasikala had virtually controlled the out, EPS made it clear that the AIADMK and had its leaders AIADMK doors were shut for her. falling at her feet in a post-Javalalithaa order. But once she was behind bars at Bengaluru returning to AIADMK," he Central Prison, she was stripped emphasised. And to buttress the of her post in the party and thrown

Last week, Sasikala finished her prison term and stepped out as a free woman. And the optics of her leaving the hospital where she was admitted after testing Covid-19 positive, were significant. She traveled in an SUV that was one of the vehicles used by the late chief minister. It conveyed that her route to reclaiming lost Jayalalithaa name association.

merely a vehicle, it was a

To top it, the AIADMK flag on the vehicle was unmissable and deliberate. If pictures could speak, they spoke a thousand words. A la Rajinikanth in his converted into a memorial. 2016 film 'Kabali', she was But is Sasikala likely to make announcing that she was back after having survived both a prison term and a Covid scare.

In a sense, these pictures took 1) Encourage unrest in the off from February 2017, when AIADMK in the run-up to the Sasikala traveled by road from elections. Her nephew TTV Chennai to Bengaluru to Dhinakaran who heads the surrender at the central prison. AMMK has already made claims

at the Marina beach where, in a dramatic gesture, she thumped taking a vow.

But the visual imagery apart, is Once Jayalalithaa passed away there a reason for those in charge in December 2016 and the of the AIADMK to worry about the

> man Sasikala had anointed as turbulence in the AIADMK camp. Even before Sasikala stepped "I can say 100 per cent that there is no chance of Sasikala point that she was never a political functionary in the party, EPS added, "Amma too had kept her away from the party. Only after Amma's death, Sasikala entered the party. She was not in AIADMK when Amma was alive."

But EPS who calls his administration 'Amma's government' knows that sooner than later, Sasikala will stake ground, lost political clout and claim to the inheritance to lost support will be through the Jayalalithaa's political legacy. And it is clear he is already watching over his shoulder. This The Toyota Landcruiser was not is perhaps why the CM strategically chose January 27, the official date of Sasikala's release from prison, to throw open Jayalalithaa's samadhi at the Marina to the public. Veda Nilayam too was officially

> her move on the Tamil Nadu political chessboard soon? She has three options before her.

When you think VK Sasikala, Before she left, she went to that she is still the general secretary of the AIADMK and would want to fire off Sasikala's shoulder to settle scores with the leadership of the ruling party. Despite attempts of the BJP to forge a common front against the DMK-led alliance, the AIADMK leadership has not been amenable so far to Dhinakaran returning to the party fold, a bitter pill to swallow for the oncepowerful Dhinakaran who had promoted O Panneerselvam in the party.

> 2) The second option is to campaign for the AMMK in the elections. But given that Dhinakaran's support base has

Nagar by-election in 2017, riding on the AMMK vehicle is not likely to help Sasikala rise like a phoenix from the ashes

3) The last option is to bide her time till the Assembly elections get over in May 2021. If she plays a prominent role in the elections and does not taste success, it will be interpreted as Tamil Nadu giving her a clear thumbs-down. If the AIADMK does not return to power as opinion polls suggest and that leads to a weakening of Palaniswami's hold over the party, it will provide Sasikala the right opportunity to strike. There are many in the AIADMK who have done business with dwindled considerably and has Sasikala in the days of not been able to make an impact Jayalalithaa and may not mind a in Tamil Nadu politics despite tall return to the status quo. In many thing or two from the story in her claims after his victory in the RK ways, the Sasikala versus EPS neighbourhood.Live TV

political fight mirrors the political battle that was fought between NT Rama Rao's widow Lakshmi Parvati and the then Andhra Pradesh chief Chandrababu Naidu in the late 1990s. Like Sasikala, Lakshmi Parvati too was demonised as the evil influence over NTR. The fight here too was for the leader, NTR's legacy. The party, the symbol and the government was with Naidu, just like it is with EPS now. Lakshmi Parvati waged a lone battle in the 1996 elections but came a cropper. It was only two decades later when Parvati ioined hands with Jaganmohan Reddy that she saw the political decimation of Naidu. Sasikala will do well to learn a

#### Alexei Navalny is going to prison. Can his movement to depose Vladimir Putin survive?

A Russian court has sentenced opposition leader Alexei Navalny to two and a half years in prison, striking a devastating blow to the prodemocracy movement threatening President Vladimir Putin's rule. Last August, Navalny was poisoned with Novichok, a highly lethal nerve agent that was placed on the inside of his underpants before a flight, an operation almost certainly directed by the Kremlin, if not by Putin himself.

Worried about the care Navalny was receiving at the Russian hospital where he was first taken, Navalny's team sent the dissident, who was at that point still in a coma from the attack, to Berlin for treatment. He remained in Germany for five months, using that time to expose his assailants, before returning to Russia in January. Navalny's decision to return to his home country was a defiant act not only because the Russian government had just tried to kill him, but also because he was sure to be arrested upon landing in Moscow. Late last year, the Kremlin placed Navalny on the government's federal wanted list, claiming he'd avoided Russian federal authorities while abroad. As part of a probation sentence for a 2014 embezzlement case, Navalny had to check in with inspectors regularly, but that's hard to do while you're in a coma. As expected, Navalny

was promptly arrested upon his return. At his trial on Tuesday, Navalny — never one to let a public moment go to waste — used the platform to rail against the Kremlin and the autocrat who leads it. "He's never participated in any debates or campaigned in an election. Murder is the only way he knows how to fight. He'll go down in history as nothing but a poisoner," Navalny said of Putin. "Now we'll have Vladimir the Underpants Poisoner."

"I demand my immediate release and the release of all political prisoners. I do not recognize your performance here - it's a deception and completely illegal," Navalny concluded before drawing a heart to his wife, Yulia, on the glass cage he was in. His speech failed to persuade the judge, however, who promptly sentenced Navalny to three and a half vears in prison, with a little less than a year taken off for time previously served under house arrest. Which means Navalny now faces roughly two years and eight months behind bars. It's possible Navalny won't spend the entirety of his sentence in prison. His lawyer, Olga Mikhailova, said after the trial that she plans to appeal the decision. And in 2013, Navalny was given a five-year sentence for a separate charge before being released just one day later.





news

as part of a massive relief package in early 2020 were issued refunds for taxes paid in emergency expense. the past, and those refunds It's worth stepping back to unconditional checks, as in

refunds. They were just checks, and they were available even to low-income Americans with low or no tax burdens.

These checks were the closest the US, or most other rich trying a universal basic income. By one estimate, 93 percent of to, say, a family of four as long as they earned under \$218,000. it's not far off, either.

March 2020 was a strange time knew it was collapsing, so it was natural to think this would be a Democrats in Congress pushed for more cash in the spring and summer. So did President Trump year. The result was a surprising most adults.

stimulus bill's passage, Trump basically everyone. even bigger \$2,000 check, a checks target enthusiastically embraced There's a great bit in the pilot by Democrats in Congress. episode of The Carmichael Show

allies in Congress are pushing for and his allies in Congress are a new round of \$1,400 checks to trying to send out \$1,400 checks all but the richest Americans. If to reach that \$2,000 goal. you've been following the ins and Meanwhile, progressives are outs of Covid-19 relief politics in pushing the administration to recent weeks, this isn't surprising support even larger checks not just \$1,400 to top up the \$600 But consider what a dramatic from December, but a full \$2,000. transformation of American Meanwhile, Utah Senator Mitt politics this represents. The first Romney, not just a Republican \$1,200 checks that were sent out but one of the most famous Republicans in the country, is pushing for checks of up to genuinely unprecedented in \$4,200 per year, per child, as a American history. The US has permanent policy not just an

sometimes looked a bit like appreciate just how much the politics of giving people money has shifted in the past year. The \$1,200 checks were not Sending cash is hugely popular and has become the subject of mass public attention in a way that's rare for legislative proposals. In late December, Google search interest in the \$2,000 checks exceeded interest countries, had ever come to in the Kardashians or Taylor Swift

Cash's bipartisan popularity, and Americans got money from the its ability to muster large-scale program, which offered benefits public interest and support, suggests that the future might involve a lot more policies like "93 percent basic income" is not checks — even when the quite universal basic income, but pandemic has passed. Covid-19, in other words, may have done what years of basic income when it felt like the world as we advocacy could not do on its own: convinced our political class that handing out cash is a good, one-off policy. But it wasn't. popular, economically effective

More than that, the surprising embrace of checks by some and some Republicans like Sen. Republicans suggests that the Josh Hawley (R-MO) late last tax cut-centered right-wing politics that emerged in the second batch of stimulus Reagan era may be waning. If checks: \$600 in cash sent to slashing rates is replaced in the Republican toolkit with handing In the wake of the December out checks, that's a win for

expressed his preference for an The self-sustaining politics of

The Biden administration and its Riding that momentum, Biden where Jerrod Carmichael's dad, played by David Alan Grier, confesses that he voted for George W. Bush in 2004. His liberal Black family is shocked and horrified. But his explanation is simple: Bush gave him a check in 2001. "He sent me that stimulator check. No president ever sent me \$1.600. Nobody ever sent me \$1,600. You can bomb whoever you want long as you send me \$1,600." I don't know how common a

reaction that was to the 2001 tax cut checks (which were more like \$600 for married couples). But Grier's character's reaction gets at the heart of why checks have taken off this year. Members of Congress often act, in the words of political scientist David Mayhew, as "single-minded seekers of reelection." There are lots of ways to get yourself reelected, but wouldn't sending your voters money be the simplest way of all?

Congress does all kinds of other giveaways, of course, from the mortgage interest deduction for the affluent to the earned income tax credit for the working poor. But they tend to be relatively complex and buried in the tax code, where it's hard for voters to know who, exactly, in Congress made this help for them possible. Why not simplify it dramatically? For years I've been somewhat baffled, as a writer on social policy, that this logic hadn't taken off more. Examples like Bush's 2001 refunds were rare: Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker (R) tried a similar approach with his "sales tax rebates" for families with kids in 2018, but the amounts were paltry, at just \$100 per child. It seemed like there was a strong taboo against simply attempting to send money to voters, as evidenced by the criticisms that Walker was engaged in "vote buying" by introducing his refund plan in the months leading up to his election.

That changed last year. The pushing for actions that result in \$1,200 checks included in the were much more universal, especially at the low end, than Bush's 2001 refund — were sufficiently popular that a groundswell of support built up for subsequent rounds. They were so popular, in fact, that they overshadowed every other aspect of the US's fiscal response, including the similarly unprecedented \$600-per-week boost to unemployment insurance payments.

A common genre of viral tweet in 2020 involved insisting that How much check money is given \$1,200 was all the US did for usually people, while exaggerating what other countries did (by, say, insisting Canada gave everyone \$1,433 a month when it just did so for month):

Obviously, Drake giving away about \$1 million as part of his music video for "God's Plan" does not remotely compare to the \$848 billion the federal government has spent on cash payments and bonus unemployment checks to date. But this reaction tells us something important: The flat cash checks to almost every American were by far the most visible part of the country's policy response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Even other good, relatively broad-eligibility policies like the unemployment bonuses were less salient to people

salient relief that's visible to all. This helps explain why Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, the two Democrats who flipped both Georgia Senate seats on checks proposal central to their Republican

immediate material gains for CARES Act in March — which voters. It's not hard to see why: That's a big part of the political strategy that made him a senator. Cash politics has downsides, but they're easy to overstate

> ot everyone, even on the left, is enthusiastic about the rise of checks as the de facto language of economic populism. The most compelling critique is that giving money to citizens is just one of many functions the government will perform — and that if checks become too popular, the other functions will get starved.

out, economic policy analyst Nathan Tankus notes, is "becoming a proxy for how good or bad legislation is. If this continues to be established as a benchmark, we will get worse unemployed people, to whom the and worse legislation." More US gave at least \$2,400 a money in checks can mean less money for public health infrastructure, education, medical research, and basically everything else the government does other than hand out money. That may not be a terrible thing if the benefits being crowded out can be replicated with cash -\$1,000 in cash is more valuable than \$1,000 in food stamp benefits, for instance, because it can be spent more flexibly and on more material needs. a common argument UBI advocates make. But there are other priorities like schools or medical insurance for which checks cannot substitute.

This has already happened to some degree in the one US And for politicians, there's a state with a universal cash real advantage to offer tangible, program: Alaska, which pays out a "dividend" from its oil wealth to all residents every year. Pressure to increase that dividend has translated into spending cuts, rather than January 5, made the \$2,000 tax hikes, from the state's leadership. campaigns. Ossoff is now Depending on what's being reportedly urging fellow cut, that can translate into a Democrats to be "bold" in net loss for many residents.



# Newsmax canceled MyPillow's Mike Lindell live or



MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell joined the conservative network Newsmax on Tuesday afternoon for a train wreck of an interview that ought to go down as one of the defining video clips of this bizarre era of American politics.

2020 election being stolen from disclaimer. former President Donald Trump, "Mike, Mike, you're talking ostensibly went on Newsmax to about machines that we at rail against "cancel culture." But Newsmax have not been able producers, can we get out of happened, all of us voting - it was his appearance immediately went to verify any of those kinds of here, please?" he said. "I don't probably 80 million votes who off the rails as he started allegations. We just want to let want to have to keep going over spreading lies about election fraud people know that there's nothing tied to voting hardware made by Dominion Voting Systems.

after the election as it carved out there were some clear evidence Lindell continued to try to talk pro-Trump rally in Washington, a niche as a source of Trump of some cases of voter fraud and over him, Sellers physically got DC. (Trump in fact received 74 election trutherism, abruptly election irregularities, the up and left the Newsmax set. changed course as Dominion election results in every state seeks legal action against those who falsely claim it rigged the accepts the results as legal and election for President Joe Biden. final. The courts have also Dominion's legal effort has already supported that view.' So we prompted Newsmax to read wanted to talk to you about just a defense of defamation disclaimers about the company canceling culture, if you will." on air.

account] was taken down because from Twitter] because I'm else in Trump's orbit to letters we have all the election fraud with reviewing all the evidence on advance an evidence-free Smartmatic sent to Fox News, Lindell, whose personal and these Dominion machines. We Friday of all the election fraud conspiracy theory that Newsmax, and other right-wing corporate Twitter accounts were have 100 percent proof," Lindell with these machines," Lindell Trump's loss to Joe Biden was media outlets warn that similar

won't stop spreading lies about the Sellers to jump in and read a think it's not real. It's real."

substantive that we've seen," Sellers said. "And let me read allegations -" Newsmax, whose ratings surged you something there. 'While were certified and Newsmax But Lindell wasn't having it.

recently banned because he claimed, prompting host Bob continued. "So I'm sorry if you the result of voting machines litigation is "imminent."

By this point, Sellers had had enough.

"Okay. Mike. Can I ask our like, .66, okay? When that this. We at Newsmax have not been able to verify any of those

Then, in a remarkable twist, as A clip of the debacle quickly went 81 million.)

The Lindell disaster inadvertently illustrated how railing against haven't just accepted these "cancel culture" is sometimes "Well, first [Lindell's Twitter "They did this [banned Lindell did perhaps more than anyone the company with fraud, and

flipping Trump votes to Biden. "Biden got, like, 1.2 votes for every vote, and our president got, came in for our great president and because of you, guess what? They all broke the algorithms and the machines," Lindell claimed during a December speech at a million votes, and Biden received

But voting machine companies like Dominion and Smartmatic untruths. Dominion has already filed a \$1.3 billion lawsuit In the months leading up to the against Trump lawyer Rudy January 6 insurrection, Lindell Giuliani for baselessly linking Dominion

# Jeff Bezos is stepping down as Amazon's CEO

#### Andy Jassy, currently the head of Amazon Web Services, will take over as CEO in the fall.

monumental change atop one of organizations can have." powerful companies.

Amazon made head of Amazon Web Services, Andy Jassy.

Bezos, until recently the world's richest man, said he would remain involved in Amazon leadership but would now have more time to pursue his other passions outside of the company. "In the Exec Chair role, I intend to focus my energies and attention on new products and a letter to employees on Tuesday GameStop The Washington Post, and my that big hedge funds had bet while AMC dipped 2.23%. Some swings. Hold and buy more "AMC official told Reuters."

Bezos is stepping down as CEO more energy, and this isn't about second-largest of the company he founded a retiring. I'm super passionate employer, has a market cap of quarter of a century ago, a about the impact I think these over \$1 trillion, and has become

America's most iconic and Bezos founded Amazon in 1994 questions about its market as an online bookstore, but over dominance. the two decades would expand it into Alongside the company's rise, announcement on Tuesday that America's foremost digital retailer, Bezos himself became one of company since he founded it - a tech giant that makes CEOs and an icon of sorts for a world's richest man, Bezos Origin, a private spacecraft would become its executive Hollywood blockbusters, has data-obsessed management developed a public profile that company; and he even was the chair, and that day-to-day created its own apparel, and style, which is memorialized in went far beyond his Amazon target of a hack believed to be operations beginning later this powers corporate America with its a series of leadership principles activities: He went on to buy perpetrated by the government of

Amazon founder Jeff other passions. I've never had Amazon now is America's mired in antitrust scrutiny and

its CEO - who has led the turning the scrappy company into America's most prominent in the runup to becoming the poured his fortune into Blue

year would be overseen by the Amazon Web Services (AWS). he called the Amazon Way. And the Washington Post; he Saudi Arabia.

#### Reddit rally' stocks bounce on day after selloff, then dip after hours

social media darlings rebounded retailer GameStop and cinema the volatility and warned that retail Avocadochicken93, "TO THE in calmer trading on Wednesday operator AMC. from their sharp sell-off in the prior GameStop had soared as high ultimately face big losses. session as investors turned their as \$483 last week, fueled by focus to the possibility of tighter posts on the Reddit forum known and obviously the stock year highs, and analysts U.S. trading regulations. However, WallStreetBets, then dived and the so-called "Reddit rally" cooled on Tuesday fell briefly below early initiatives," Bezos said in again in after hours trade, as \$90. and afternoon. "As Exec Chair I will Entertainment, the main targets 2.68% at around \$92.41. They told people just stay away, it is Commission will meet with stay engaged in important hyped on investment forums, fell. seesawed all day but within a dynamite and who knows when, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen Amazon initiatives but also have Mass buying over the past two range, while shares of AMC how or where it blows up. "Many and heads of the Federal the time and energy I need to weeks by amateur traders rose 14.71% a day after Reddit users on WallStreetBets Reserve and the Commodity focus on the Day 1 Fund, the following posts on social media dropping 41%. After the closing exhorted one another to stay in Futures Trading Commission as Bezos Earth Fund, Blue Origin, fueled a fierce rally in companies bell, GameStop was off 2.61% the stocks despite the big soon as Thursday, a Treasury

On

GameStop and other against, including videogame professional investors bemoaned shares, wrote Reddit user investors who piled in could MOON AND BEYOND!"

Silver prices advanced modestly "The fundamentals are well after surging on Monday to eightprices have detached from the expected more volatility, even fundamentals," said Stephen after Reddit posts urged traders Wednesday Massocca, senior vice president to avoid silver. The head of the AMC GameStop shares closed up at Wedbush Securities. "I have U.S. Securities and Exchange



#### The Dig movie review:

#### Carey Mulligan stars in an outright gem that needs to be unearthed from the depths of Netflix

The Dig movie review: Featuring Carey Mulligan and Ralph Fiennes in fine form, the new Netflix period drama is phenomenal.

The Dig Director - Simon Stone Fiennes, Lily James, Johnny

most radical-minded films in recent memory. Everything about it — from its unconventional structure, the oblique characters, to the experimental camerawork — goes against our understanding of what movies like be. And yet, on the surface, it's a stoic period piece — perhaps the most tradition-bound of all film genres.

film, Public Enemies. Over sev-film. eral years, we'd become accustomed to watching historical epwho with his handheld digital dissonance in the minds of au- a nation at the brink of war. Brown, out of his depth.

diences — we'd never seen played in The Dig by a brilliant Johnny Depp's moustache in 2K. Ralph Fiennes, was somewhat of Cast - Carey Mulligan, Ralph Interestingly, Carey Mulligan had an unheralded figure in British a tiny part in Public Enemies, history; his contributions to arwhich came out just a few months chaeology going largely uncred-The Dig, on Netflix, is one of the before her breakout film, An Edu- ited until recently, probably due cation. 2021 feels like Mulligan's to his class. year, and it's just January. She In a moving scene midway delivered the performance to beat at the Oscars in Promising Young Woman, and she plays a similarly fatalistic character in The Dig. As a performer, Mulligan has althis are, and what they should ways been mature beyond her that Basil Brown is a bit of a sayears. But in The Dig, she's required to play someone who's physically older, too. The site, Brown retreats to his room, landowning widow Edith Pretty A little more than a decade ago, was in her 50s at the time of the geology to Latin. He has also, director Michael Mann rewrote Sutton Hoo excavation, the his- Edith learns, written a book on the language of period dramas torical event that director Simon astronomy. with his Depression-era crime Stone dramatises in his gorgeous For instance, he correctly pre-

With death knocking at her door, Edith hired a local excavator ics that were shot, scored, and named Basil Brown to tackle the structured in a very familiar man-several burial mounds at her ner. And then, along came Mann, sprawling Suffolk estate in 1939 — an archaeological expedition cameras created an unexpected that soon attracted the interest of the sidelines, believing him to be

through the film, he opens up to the university educated Edith that he left school at the age of 12. But having observed his craft, and indeed, his artistry, Edith realises vant. Every evening, after a day of hard, manual labour at the dig where he studies everything from

dicts that the site could be Anglo-Saxon, rather than the more common Viking. But when representatives of the British Museum commandeer the dig site, sensing the importance of Brown's discoveries, they relegate him to



A similar theme was explored in cavating and have been in this the recent Netflix documentary, business for generations, are ig-Secrets of the Saggara Tomb, which followed a group of Egyptian archaeologists as they dehours, sometimes days, shovelabout the land that they are ex- in the present.

The Dig is a deceptive film. And it's quite astonishing how expanscend upon a particularly rich sive its themes are, considering piece of land at the Saggara its rather restricted scale. As necropolis. It was in this film that Edith oversees the exhumation of I learned about the men who do the past, the looming threat of a the actual digging. They spend great war, fought with machines of the future, lingers in the air. ling sand under the hot sun. And Romance blossoms in the mud. inevitably, after they unearth an We're all familiar with the talents artefact, hordes of infinitely more of Mulligan and Fiennes. educated archaeologists swoop There's such melancholy to in to make the final brush their performances in this film, strokes, and pose before the in- as their characters, in uncovternational press. The contribu- ering mysteries from the past, tions of these diggers, who are find themselves buried under the all formidably knowledgeable burden of living meaningful lives

#### The Little Things movie review:

# Denzel Washington dazzles in dreary ripoff of David Fincher's Se7en



The Little Things Director - John Lee Hancock Malek, Jared Leto

playful. Only Denzel, for killer in Los Angeles. dead body, and not immediately like collecting paperwork, and

alienate the viewer.

In The Little Things, the latest Cast - Denzel Washington, Rami dad-movie from director John Lee Hancock, Denzel plays disgraced there anything more former LASD detective Joe 'Deke' mesmerising than the sight of Deacon. Deke's past is blurry, Denzel Washington, slouching but it is implied through a series on the movie screen? He's like of flashbacks that things ended a jazz performer; utterly poorly for him after he became unpredictable and always obsessed with catching a serial

instance, can break out a full- Years later, Deke is a sheriff's toothed grin at the sight of a deputy, performing menial tasks

investigating petty crime. On one species. Hancock, however, has glee that Fincher showed in his of his courier jobs, he's sent maintained that he wrote the first back to his old stomping draft of The Little Things in 1993, grounds, the homicide division in before Andrew Kevin Walker prowl, and so is Deke.

So he takes a few vacation days and begins aiding the detective in charge on the down-low. Jimmy Baxter, played by Rami Malek, was Deke's replacement, and is, in many ways, the department's hottest new toy. It's endlessly engaging to watch the Jimmy's young interactions the considerably more cynical Joe. especially when you consider his more vouthful counterpart. Films like The Little Things, derivative as they may be of David to Brad Pitt.

Here, he takes over the Morgan Freeman role. As Joe and Jimmy close in on a suspect, played by Jared Leto, their relationship becomes very similar to that of detectives Somerset and Mills in Fincher's crime classic. There is even a meeting with Jimmy's wife; although their meal isn't along the corridors passing train.

because they're an endangered characters with the sort of morbid fruitlessly.

film — it is far more conventional in its approach.

Hancock, however, directs with LA. There, he learns that another wrote Se7en. Interestingly, unusual flair. His movie, unlike murder has been committed; the Denzel passed on playing Se7en, is based in reality. modus operandi seems very Detective Mills in that film. The Together with cinematographer familiar. The killer is back on the part, of course, eventually went John Schwartzman, Hancock captures the seediness of 90s Los Angeles with great skill. The Little Things isn't the sort of LA noir movie that takes the viewer on a guided tour of Los Angeles and its tourist hotspots; it unfolds mostly on the streets of forgotten neighbourhoods, inside the confines of sketchy hotels, and interrupted by the sound of a unremarkable public offices. This is the sort of movie that The similarities between the two revels in scenes where very that the veteran sees himself in films are far too obvious to little happens; it isn't in a completely ignore; and certainly, rush to tell its story. Instead, it on more than one occasion, they is more than happy to devote 15 hardly feel coincidental. But The minutes to a stakeout sequence Fincher's Se7en, are enjoyable Little Things never probes its which may or may not end



#### Bollywood celebrities, cricketers stand by Centre as India takes on Rihanna over support to farmers' protest

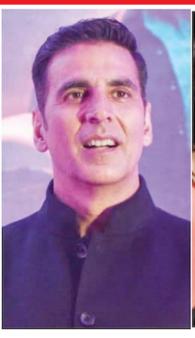
Aday after international celebrities Rihanna and Greta Thunberg called for support towards the farmers' protest, Bollywood superstars like Ajay Devgn and Akshay Kumar, and sportspersons like Sachin Tendulkar and Anil Kumble joined the Centre's call to stand united against "propaganda" against India's policies.

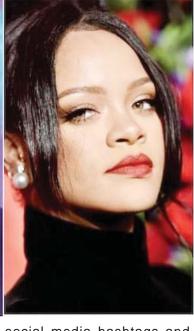
In a tweet, Ajay Devgn said, "Don't fall for any false propaganda against India or Indian policies. Its important to stand united at this hour w/o any infighting."

Sharing the MEA statement, Akshay Kumar said, "Farmers constitute an extremely important of the issues". "Before rushing to social media hashtags and director Karan Johar, too, voiced part of our country. And the efforts comment on such matters, we comments, especially when support being undertaken to resolve their would urge that the facts be resorted to by celebrities and government's campaign to than paying attention to anyone hand be undertaken. The statement on Wednesday. creating differences."

Sachin Tendulkar also backed the government's call for unity and condemned international remarks on India's internal matters. "India's sovereignty cannot be compromised. External forces can be spectators but not participants. Indians know India and should decide for India. Let's remain united as a nation," Sachin Tendulkar's tweet said.

The Bollywood actors and cricketers were reacting to a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which said celebrities should refrain from commenting on issues and try to get a "proper understanding" Promoted as India's first porn- Hain Hum 3.





temptation of sensationalist Ace Bollywood producer and is prudence and patience at protest.



towards

every turn. Let us together, make every effort we can to find solutions that work for everyone—our farmers are the backbone of India. Let us not let anyone divide us."

Suniel Shetty came out in support of the government stand and said, "We must always take a comprehensive view of things, as there is nothing more dangerous than half truth."

The government reaction came hours after international pop icon Rihanna, who has over 100 million followers on Twitter, posted a tweet asking why isn't there a discussion on the ongoing farmers' protest in

As soon as Rihanna brought global attention to the ongoing issues are evident. Let's support ascertained, and a proper others, is neither accurate nor stand united. In a tweet, Karan farmers' agitation, a number of an amicable resolution, rather understanding of the issues at responsible," said MEA in its Johar said, "We live in turbulent international celebrities started times and the need of the hour showing solidarity towards the

#### Kyaa Kool Hain Hum 3 is porn in the guise of adult comedy. On Wahiyat Wednesday

There are times in life when we com, Kyaa have to watch a film not because Kool it's great or because of peer pres- Hum 3 should sure, but only because it is so have been bad that you know you can gar- called a juvener enough content to satisfy the nile attempt meme-craving generation that we to have today. Umesh Ghadge's young boys.

excite

2016 film Kyaa Kool Hain Hum 3 On Wahiyat Wednesday this Kyaa Kool franchise, starring Shivdasani). By chaddi-buddy, is one such film that we watched, week, we are attempting to Tusshar hated and now cannot help but analyse why anyone would want Shivdasani and Krushna Rocky is 'kind of' a sex-addict who to make a film like Kyaa Kool Abhishek. Yes, there's no Riteish sleeps with multiple girls in a



Kapoor,

REGRES- done to introduce the word 'cock'. SIVE NON- He gets kicked out of his house SENSE by his business tycoon father (Shakti Kapoor). And guess who Kyaa Kool is Tusshar's aunt and step-Hain Hum 3 mother? Meghna Naidu. Rememis the third ber Kaliyon Ka Chaman? He has film of the a chaddi-buddy Rocky (Aftab Aftab we literally mean chaddi buddy. Deshmukh. Kanhaiyya (Tusshar single night all on different floors Kapoor) is a good-for- of a posh house. How? We don't nothing guy who know either. So these worthless turns cock-eyed men decide to meet their Thaieach time he land-based friend Mickey comes face-to- (Krushna), who would rather reface with anything fer to his place of residence as red. We're guess- 'Thai-land'. We don't think we ing this was need to explain this any further.

#### Sara Ali Khan's new pics from Maldives vacation is all about sibling love and

Dhanush.

sibling love and some yummy, yummy milkshake. In her latest post, Sara shared pictures from her Maldives trip. One of the photos also features her brother Ibrahim Ali Khan. Sara along with her mother Amrita Singh and Ibrahim holidayed in the Maldives last month.

#### WHAT DID SARA ALI KHAN SHARE?

Sara Ali Khan shared throwback pictures from her Maldives vacation on Wednesday. The first picture features the actress sitting on the beach wearing a blue and white floral print dress. The second picture features the brother-sister duo enjoying some delicious milkshake. Their expressions are the highlight of the photo.

**HOW DID FANS REACT TO THE PHOTOS?** 

Have you seen Sara Ali Khan's latest Fans of Sara Ali Khan commented on the pic-Instagram post? Sara's latest post is all about the with heart and love-struck emojis. Sara's post has over five lakh likes within an hour. The post has been liked by Ananya Panday, Manish Malhotra and Isabelle Kaif.

#### SARA ALI KHAN'S MALDIVES TRIP

It was a family vacation for Sara Ali Khan. She was in the Maldives with Amrita Singh and brother Ibrahim Ali Khan. The actress shared pictures of herself chilling by the beach and enjoying delectable food in the island nation. Sara Ali Khan was last seen in Coolie No 1. The actress is currently filming Aanand L Rai's Atrangi Re. The film also stars Akshay Kumar and





# The Girl On The Train trailer out. Parineeti Chopra promises an intriguing ride

The trailer of Parineeti Chopra-starrer The Girl On The Train is now out and it promises an intriguing ride. The mystery thriller film is based on Paula Hawkins' 2015 book of the same name. The Girl On The Train will be released on Netflix on February 26.

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN TRAILER The trailer begins with Parineeti introducing herself as Mira Kapoor as trailer also hints that Mira is suffering peacefully. "She is everything I have lives of the happy couple. Seconds into Netflix!" the trailer, a murder is committed and THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN TRAILER shared the release date of the Mira becomes one of the suspects. The DATE ANNOUNCEMENT



she watches a couple live their life from Amnesia. Sharing the trailer on Twitter, Parineeti Chopra wrote, "THE lost," says Mira as she fixates on the GIRL IN THE TRAILER. 26th Feb,

On Tuesday (February 2), Parineeti took to Twitter and shared the trailer date along new poster of She had written. "TRAILER U TOMORROW!,"

along with a folded hands and heart emoji. WHEN WILL THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN RELEASE? Earlier, Parineeti Chopra had film on social media.



## Kangana Ranaut trolls Diljit Dosanjh on new Rihanna song. He has a classy reply

Kangana Ranaut and Diljit Dosanjh got into another Twitter spat today when the Punjabi singer released his new song RiRi, which is dedicated to American pop singer Rihanna. Earlier, Kangana had called Rihanna a 'fool' and a 'dummy' after the pop star tweeted in favour of farmers' protest. The

Queen actress today accused Diljit of cashing in on the situation and asked how long he had been planning this for. But Diljit has a classy response.

WHAT DID KANGANA SAY AF-TER DILJIT RELEASED RIRI

Retweeting Diljit Dosanjh's tweet in which he announced his new song RiRi dedicated to Rihanna, Kangana wrote, "Isko bhi apne 2 rupees banane hain, yeh sab kabse plan ho raha hai? One month toh minimum lagega to prep for video and announcement, and

libru want us to believe it's all organic ha ha #Indiatogether #IndiaAgainst Propoganda (He also wants to make some money. Since when were you planning this? It would have taken at least one month to prep for the video and the announcement) (sic)."

DILJIT HAS A CLASSY REPLY

Diljit Dosanjh is not someone who will let Kangana Ranaut your work Khalistani) (sic)."

go after making such allegations without giving her a befitting reply. He wrote back saying, "2 Rupees. Apne Wali Job Mainu Na Das.. Gana Tan half An Hour Ch Bana Lene An Asi.. Tere te Banaun Nu Jee Ni Karda Mint tan 2 Hee Lagne an.. HAR JAGHA TU BOLNA HUNDA.. Ja Yaar

Bore Na Kar .. Kam Kar Apna.. (2 Rupees. Don't tell me about your job. I can make a song in just half hour. I just don't feel like making a song on you.2 minute for it. You have to speak everywhere. Please go away and don't bore me) (sic).'



Diljit's reply resulted in a Twitter fight between the two actors. Both of them were ready with their replies as soon as one tweeted in response to the other. Kangana then wrote, "Mera ek

he kaam jai Desh Bhakti... wahi karti hoon sara din.. main toh wahi karungi lekin tera kaam tujhe nahin karne dungi Khalistani... (I have only one job of being patriotic to the nation. I do the same the entire day. I will do that but won't let you do

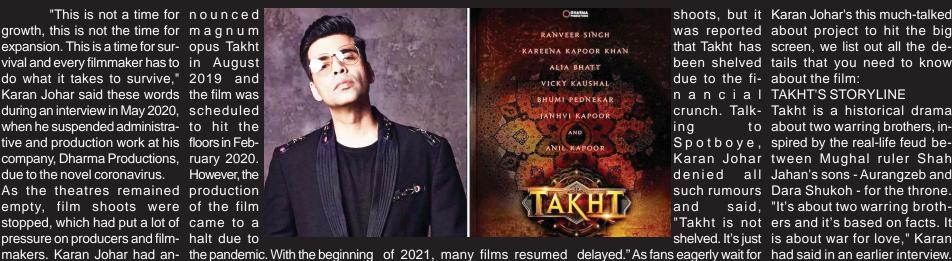


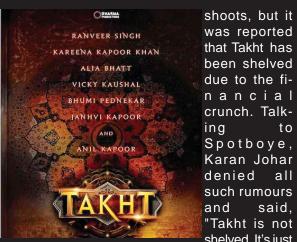


### Karan Johar confirms Takht not shelved. What you need to know

"This is not a time for nounced growth, this is not the time for magnum expansion. This is a time for survival and every filmmaker has to in August do what it takes to survive," 2019 and Karan Johar said these words the film was during an interview in May 2020, when he suspended administrative and production work at his floors in Febcompany, Dharma Productions, due to the novel coronavirus. As the theatres remained production empty, film shoots were of the film stopped, which had put a lot of pressure on producers and film-

opus Takht scheduled to hit the ruary 2020. However, the came to a halt due to





shoots, but it Karan Johar's this much-talked was reported about project to hit the big that Takht has screen, we list out all the debeen shelved tails that you need to know due to the fi- about the film: nancial TAKHT'S STORYLINE crunch. Talkto about two warring brothers, inina

'Takht is not

Takht is a historical drama Spotboye, spired by the real-life feud between Mughal ruler Shah denied all Jahan's sons - Aurangzeb and Dara Shukoh - for the throne. "It's about two warring brothsaid. ers and it's based on facts. It shelved. It's just is about war for love," Karan



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# The gangster, the general and the prime minister of Bangladesh

The story of how one of Bangladesh's most notorious gangsters came to have the protection of an army and the loyalty of a leader.

(SAI Bureau)-: "I can have you killed. But if I kill you, then you won't feel the pain. I will make you

suffer." Mohammad Hasan smiled grimly and took a deep drag on his cigarette. His hands, loaded with gold rings and bracelets, clinked as he described how he settled an old score with a rival. A cloud of smoke rose towards the ceiling of the cramped room in a money exchange kiosk on a quiet

score with a rival. A cloud of smoke rose towards the ceiling of the cramped room in a money exchange kiosk on a quiet Budapest backstreet. He expressed little emotion or pity. It appeared to be just business. It was like a scene from a mafia movie. He

explained how he had enlisted an infamous elite anti-

terrorism unit thousands of miles away to track his

victim's mobile phone and arrest him. His remarkable story of revenge and punishment links him to one of

the most feared paramilitary groups in the world: the Rapid Action Battalion or RAB, notorious for murders, abductions and torture throughout Bangladesh. It also links him to the very top of that country's political elite and to one of the most powerful men in the country. Who is Mohammad Hasan? Mohammad Hasan is two people,

one of whom has a very important family name. His first identity is that of a small-time businessman from Bangladesh who journeyed thousands of miles to build a new life in Europe. (Contd on page 33 to 34)

# What we know about the Florida raid that led to 2 FBI agents' deaths



(SAI Bureau)- The FBI on Wednesday named the man who shot five agents, killing two, as they tried to execute a search warrant in South Florida. David Huber, 55, of Sunrise, died in Tuesday's incident, but authorities have not said what led to his death. The FBI says it is reviewing what led to the shootout. The agents were at work in Sunrise as part of a violent crimes against children case when the gunfight with the suspect happened, FBI officials said. Killed were Special Agent Daniel Alfin and Special Agent Laura Schwartzenberger, the FBI said. Here's what we know about the incident so far:

(Contd on page 33)

# India falls to 53rd position in EIU's Democracy Index

(SAI Bureau)- India slipped two places to 53rd position in the 2020 Democracy Index's global ranking, according to The Economist Intelligence Unit, which said the "democratic backsliding"



by authorities and "crackdowns" on civil liberties has led to a further decline in the country's ranking. However, India is

ranked higher than most of its neighbouring countries. India's overall score fell from 6.9 in 2019 to 6.61 in the Index that provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide for

(Contd on page 33)

# Here are the executive actions Biden has signed so far

(Contd on page 32)

# After the Tears, Rakesh Tikait Grown as Big tree in farmers Protest

(By Anju Grover and Aruna Singh from New

Delhi): Son of legendary farm leader Mahendra Singh Tikait, Rakesh was down with fever when thousands of Uttar Pradesh Police personnel and

Ottar Pradesh Police personnel and CRPF jawans armed with weapons, lathis and tear gas gheraoed at the protest site and demanded dispersal of the protestors. Rakesh Tikait was in his tent when the security forces descended at the site, followed by a large contingent of mainstream media. It is worth mentioning here that the Delhi Police had issued a notice to Tikait for the violence during the

was put up outside his tent.Faced with the prospect of being forcefully evicted, the farmers'

leaders held a meeting and decided that clearing the



battlefield, rather (Contd on page 37)

