



The South Asian



# INSIDER

Looking to Buy/Sell ?

We know the difference between Home & House



**Nlight  
Real  
Estate**

**Sharanjit Singh Thind**  
Real Estate Broker/Notary Public

**Tel: 516 NLIGHT8**

Vol. 20

Issue 6

Friday 10 April to 17 April 2021

\$1

[www.thesouthasianinsider.com](http://www.thesouthasianinsider.com)

## A New Cold War

*Relations between the US and China are the worst they have been for many years and look set to become worse still. It has become commonplace to describe the US-China relationship as a new "Cold War", a reference to the generation-long rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union that cast a shadow over the latter half of the 20th Century.*



Story on  
Pages  
31-33



# Insurance

Tel : 516 NLIGHT 8 (516 654 4488)



# Kamala Harris Applauds US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy For Tireless Efforts To Combat COVID-19



**43-year-old Indian-American physician Vivek Murthy was sworn in as the 21st Surgeon General of the US last month.**

(Insider Bureau)-US Vice President Kamala Harris has applauded Surgeon General Vivek Murthy for his tireless efforts in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic that has battered the country.

The 43-year-old Indian-American physician was sworn in as the 21st Surgeon General of the US last month.

"Thank you, Mr Surgeon General Murthy. And in front of all of the friends who are here, I just have to tell you he has been tireless for months and months, working on this issue," Ms Harris said during a virtual meeting to discuss COVID-19 public education efforts.

"So, in front of everyone, I want to thank you, Vivek, for all you have been doing to lift us up as a nation and to also lift up the importance of following the science and the fact that we are in this together, and so lifting up the power and significance of the collective," Ms Harris said.

"I'm so honoured to introduce one of our nation's most important leaders. One who has broken barriers and lifted up communities, a leader who is kind, and strong, and who inspired millions of people, including myself and a daughter, who called her Kamala auntie," Dr Murthy said.

"To serve as a surgeon, in my

role, I'm charged with looking out for the health and well-being of each and every American. I consider this to be a sacred responsibility, particularly in this great moment. When we are living through a once in a century," he said.

Observing that COVID-19 has caused tremendous suffering for millions of Americans, he said many of them lost family members to this virus.

The US has the highest coronavirus case tally in the world at 30,539,175 and the highest number of deaths at 553,120, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

COVID-19 has taken the lives of several members of Dr Murthy's extended family. During his confirmation hearing in February, he said that seven of his family members in India and America have died due to the virus.

"I myself have lost seven, including my uncle earlier this year. Many of us have also felt

what it's like to be worried about your loved ones getting killed, especially family members of ours who are elderly, or who might work on the frontlines," he said.

In her remarks, Ms Harris, the first woman, the first Black American, and the first Indian-American to be elected Vice President, talked about racial inequalities.

"It is very important to the President that we speak truth and address racial inequities across the board, but on this topic, in particular, in our healthcare system. And, again, these disparities existed long before," she said.

"When we look at the rates of infection and death in the Asian community, in the African American community, Latinos, our native community, the numbers are really unacceptable and tragic. In terms of the impact on these communities, of course, profound, she said.

This is something that the administration has been addressing, she said.

"We have a Racial Equity Task Force that is very much a part of our whole approach to this. And, in addition, you will often hear the president and all of us talk about the importance of equitable distribution of resources and support," Ms Harris said.

As US Surgeon General, Dr Murthy will advise President Biden on the coronavirus pandemic and will be the federal government's leading voice on public health.

In 2013, Obama nominated Dr Murthy to be the Surgeon General. He was the youngest ever to hold the office at the age of 37. However, he had to abruptly leave the position during the Trump administration.

During his previous tenure as 19th Surgeon General, Dr Murthy has created initiatives to tackle America's most pressing public health challenges.

## Indian-Origin Steel Tycoon Sanjeev Gupta Rules Out Bailout, UK Closures



(Insider Bureau)-Indian-British billionaire Sanjeev Gupta on Thursday ruled out a bailout or factory closures for his steelmaking group GFG Alliance after the collapse of corporate finance firm Greensill.

The remarks come after the UK government earlier this week refused GFG a rescue package totalling 170 million pounds (\$234 million, 200 million euros).

There is growing concern in Britain about the future of GFG and Liberty Steel, which together employ 5,000 people domestically and 35,000 worldwide. GFG Alliance had been

Greensill's biggest customer. "I am not waiting for anybody to come to the rescue. We will help ourselves but of course all help from everybody is always welcome," Gupta told the BBC.

He admitted that his company owed "many billions" to Greensill, but insisted that no facilities would face closure.

"Our overall global operations are profitable," the GFG founder said. "We have refinancing offers, we will refinance, and we will support our UK business also," he said. "None of my steel plants under my watch will be shut down."



**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](https://www.FeedingAmerica.org)



# Police identify six dead Bangladesh family members in Texas murder-suicide plot



Authorities have identified six people found dead in a suburban Dallas home in what police said was an apparent murder-suicide plot.

The Allen Police Department said investigators believe brothers Tanvir Towhid, 21, and Farhan Towhid, 19, made a pact to kill their parents, sister and grandmother before killing themselves. The bodies were found early Monday by officers performing a welfare check, Sgt. Jon Felty said. It appears that the two brothers had entered into an agreement,"

Felty said.

The victims were identified as Altafun Nessa, 77; Iren Islam, 56; Towhidul Islam, 54; and Farbin Towhid, 19.

Felty said the younger brother wrote a lengthy post on social media in which he said he and his brother had a plan to kill their family members and then themselves. He also wrote that all of his decisions were based on weighing pros and cons, including the decision to kill his family. Several members of the Bangladesh Association of North

Texas gathered near the home Monday after news of the family's death was released, the newspaper reported. Ahmad Hossain, who lives about a block away, told the newspaper that the family moved to the area about seven or eight years ago from New York. Hossain said Nessa, the grandmother, was visiting the fam-

ily from Bangladesh. He said she was scheduled to return home last week but couldn't because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fazia Rahman, who graduated Allen High School last year with Farhan and Farbin Towhid, said the family was welcoming and the parents "treated

everyone like they were their own kids." "We don't want this to be their family legacy," she said. "They were such great people, they genuinely touched the lives of everyone who they came in contact with. ... They were good people who had bright futures ahead of them."

## Won't allow Guru Teg Bahadur's statue in Delhi, Sikh bodies tell Centre

Amritsar : The Centre's proposal to set up a 'memorial' or a 'statue' dedicated to the 400th birth anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur outside Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib, Chandni Chowk, in old Delhi, has triggered a controversy. Following reports in this regard, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) has lodged its protest with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) asking it to immediately drop the proposal of erecting a statue or any kind of structure outside Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib or anywhere else in Delhi.

The DSGMC and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) said the installation of the statue of the Guru would defy

the Sikh 'rehat maryada' which prohibits creating idols of Gurus. Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa has shot off a letter to PM Narendra Modi contesting that the statue of Guru or any memorial could not be built without taking the Sikh body into confidence. "We will never allow the Centre to have direct intervention in our religious matters. Nothing can be built outside the historic shrine. The statue culture is certainly against our tenets and any kind of structure about which we don't have an idea will create unrest. Such a proposal will end up hurting Sikh sentiments and hence this proposal should be withdrawn."

# Josh

## India WebTV



**Geeta Saxena**  
Show Host (Prime Time News)

joshindiatv@gmail.com

## 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.



CS 116129-A 01/20/2020

[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)



## Death Count In Ludhiana Factory Roof Collapse Rises To 5: Cops



(News Agencies)-With the death of a labourer on Wednesday, the count in the roof collapse incident of an auto-parts factory in Ludhiana has climbed to five.

The worker identified as Santosh Kumar succumbed to injuries in a hospital, an official said. While five have now died in the incident, eight others had been injured when the roof of an auto-parts factory collapsed at Baba Mukand Singh Nagar in Ludhiana on Monday.

After the incident, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh had ordered a magisterial probe into the circumstances leading to the roof collapse of the factory and asked Divisional Commissioner

of Patiala division to submit his report within two weeks.

"The factory owner was lifting the lintel level without permission of the municipal corporation," civic official Varinder Sharma had earlier said.

Teams of the National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force and civic body undertook the rescue operations.

A case has been registered against the factory owner and the contractor, Ludhiana Police Commissioner Rakesh Aggarwal had earlier said.

The Chief Minister had announced a compensation of ₹ 2 lakh each for the families of the victims and free treatment for the injured.

## Sachin Waze's Posting Was On Ex-Top Cop's Orders: Mumbai Police Report

(News Agencies)-Sachin Waze - the police officer suspended since 2003 over the alleged custodial death of a bomb blast accused - was appointed to the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) in June last year by ex-top cop Param Bir Singh, despite objections from the then Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime), according to a Mumbai Police report submitted to the Maharashtra Home Department.

Waze - in NIA custody after being arrested in connection with the Mukesh Ambani bomb scare case - reported directly and solely to Mr Singh, who himself has been replaced as Police Commissioner over "unforgivable" lapses in investigating that case, the Mumbai Police report said.

This included attending ministerial-level briefings with Mr Singh in high-profile cases like the TRP scam case and the DC (Dilip Chhabria) car finance case, despite holding the relatively junior rank of Assistant Police Inspector; the rules say the CIU must be led by a Police Inspector or higher rank. Officially Waze - who has also been linked to the death of auto parts dealer Mansukh Hiran - whose SUV was recovered from the scene of the bomb scare - and 56 others were reinstated because of a lack of manpower to deal with the Covid pandemic. On June 8, days after the then Joint CP (Crime) tried to oppose his reinstatement

- but was left "helpless" - Waze was posted to the Crime Branch. 24 hours later he was moved to the CIU and, according to the report, senior officers there were moved out on oral orders by Param Bir Singh.

Weeks before these orders, the report said, Mr Singh passed another order - that senior appointments could only be finalised and

approved by him.

In the nine-odd months that Waze was at the CIU he was handed 17 major cases.

Details of those cases were sought by the NIA (National Investigation Agency), which is investigating the arrested cop and the Ambani bomb scare case.



Waze, the Mumbai Police report said, would refer all action on these cases directly to Param Bir Singh. This would include whom to arrest, locations to raid and summoning of witnesses. He had also ordered CIU officers to not report to their respective in-charges.

As part of his appointment, Waze was also allotted three Mumbai Police cars. However, the report said he would arrive in private luxury vehicles - an Audi or a Mercedes Benz, for example. Several such vehicles have been seized by the NIA as it investigates the Ambani case.

## Second CBI team arrives in Mumbai to probe charges of corruption against Anil Deshmukh

**Two teams of the CBI are in Mumbai to probe allegations of corruption levelled against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh by ex-Mumbai Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh.**

(News Agencies)-A second team of the CBI arrived in Mumbai on Wednesday to probe allegations of corruption against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh. This comes a day after the Central Bureau of Investigation initiated an inquiry into the matter.

Nearly half a dozen officers from CBI led by a Superintendent of Police (SP) rank officer will be recording statements in connection with the case, sources told India Today.

In a letter to Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray, former Mumbai Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh had accused Anil Deshmukh of corruption.

A team of CBI officers had arrived in Mumbai on Tuesday after registering a preliminary inquiry (PE) against Anil Deshmukh at

the direction of the Bombay High Court.

Sources privy to the probe said both teams of the CBI will record the statements of potential witnesses, suspects and complainants in the case.

If the CBI finds evidence to support Param Bir Singh's allegations against Anil Deshmukh, an FIR will be lodged against the former home minister of Maharashtra.

The agency is also expected to record the statement of Param Bir Singh and other senior officials of the Mumbai Police.

Unclear if CBI will examine Waze. It is still unclear whether the agency will interrogate suspended cop Sachin Waze, who is in NIA custody in connection with the Antilia bomb scare and Mansukh Hiran murder cases. Sachin Waze was arrested

by the National Investigative Agency for allegedly planting an explosive-laden SUV outside Antilia, the Mumbai residence of Reliance Industries owner Mukesh Ambani on February 25. The involvement of 'encounter specialist' Waze is also being probed in the mysterious death of Thane-based car dealer Mansukh Hiran, whose body was found in a creek on March 4. What is the case against Anil Deshmukh



Following his removal as Mumbai Commissioner of Police, Param Bir Singh wrote to the Maharashtra CM. In his letter, Singh said then home

minister Anil Deshmukh directed Sachin Waze and other police officers to collect Rs 100 crore from businesses in Mumbai each month.

## "No Shortage Of Vaccine", Says Union Health Minister As Covid Cases Surge

(News Agencies)-In a massive row between the centre and Maharashtra over the availability of vaccines, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan told NDTV that "there is no shortage".

"I want to say this on record. I said this even when we had a

meeting with 11 states. There is no shortage of vaccine. States are given vaccines on the basis of their requirement and the stocks are continuously replenished," Harsh Vardhan said in an exclusive interview. The Maharashtra government said earlier today that it would

soon run out of vaccines. In a letter to the central government, Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said vaccinations must be allowed for all above 18 and that doses must be increased, since Maharashtra was the single biggest contributor to India's Covid tally.



# Pakistan-Linked ISI Terror Module Caught In Gujarat; 3 Arrested

**Pakistan-Linked ISI Terror Module: Deputy Commissioner of Police Chaitanya Mandlik said Baba Bhai used to send friend requests to people having criminal mentality and those in need of money.**

(News Agencies)-The Ahmedabad crime branch today arrested three persons for allegedly setting ablaze seven shops in the city as part of a larger conspiracy of Pakistan's spy agency ISI to spread terror by luring unsuspecting petty criminals in need of money, officials said.

They have been charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code for waging war against the government and provisions of the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), they told news agency Press Trust of India.

An unidentified ISI agent, without revealing his true identity or motive, had allegedly lured the three men to set the shops on

fire here in Gujarat as part of the ISI's plans to spread terror, jeopardise internal security and cause economic losses to India, the police told news agency PTI. Those arrested have been identified as Bhupendra Vanzara, Anil Khatik and Ankit Pal, they said. Ankit Pal was admitted to hospital under police protection as he had tested positive for COVID-19. As directed by the ISI handler, who used to identify himself as Baba Bhai and has several Facebook profiles with similar names, the three accused set ablaze seven cloth shops in Kalupur area here on the night of March 20, Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime) Premvir Singh told reporters.

"After the incident, we received intelligence inputs that the shops were deliberately set on fire by some men at the behest of the ISI. Following a detailed probe into the matter, we caught the three men," he told news agency Press Trust of India.

"The three accused received 1 1.5 lakh from the ISI agent via Dubai-Mumbai 'angadia' (courier) route for setting the shops on fire," he said. Bhupendra Vanzara is a petty criminal and came in contact with the ISI agent through Facebook, the official said.

'Baba Bhai', without revealing his identity or motive, offered money to Vanzara to kill some people and set shops afire, the official claimed. "Vanzara had earlier



taken 1 25,000 from the ISI agent through Paytm to buy a gun," Mr Singh said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Chaitanya Mandlik said Baba Bhai used to send friend requests to people having criminal mentality and those in need of money. "We traced some of the IP addresses, used by the ISI agent to chat with Vanzara, to Karachi, which establishes the ISI connection. This was a money

trap laid by them to lure Indian citizens to spread terror and cause economic losses," Mr Mandlik said. The trio and the unidentified ISI agent, who was giving instructions to them from abroad, have been booked under Indian Penal Code Sections 121 (waging war against the government) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy), and relevant provisions of the UAPA, the police said.

## "No Shortage Of Vaccine", Says Union Health Minister As Covid Cases Surge

**Calling the surge of cases "a matter of concern", Harsh Vardhan remarked that this time the government was better prepared to handle it.**



(News Agencies)-In a massive row between the centre and Maharashtra over the availability of vaccines, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan told NDTV that "there is no shortage".

"I want to say this on record. I said this even when we had a meeting with 11 states. There is no shortage of vaccine. States are

given vaccines on the basis of their requirement and the stocks are continuously replenished," Harsh Vardhan said in an exclusive interview.

The Maharashtra government said earlier today that it would soon run out of vaccines. In a letter to the central government, Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi

said vaccinations must be allowed for all above 18 and that doses must be increased, since Maharashtra was the single biggest contributor to India's Covid tally. In Delhi, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) cornered the central government on its "Vaccine Maitri" programme to ship vaccines to other countries. Party leaders led a protest march to the BJP headquarters saying: "Vaccinate Indians first before offering help to others."

Dr Harsh Vardhan clarified: "Indians are not suffering on account of Vaccine Maitri." The country had enough doses to fulfil its domestic requirements and also

help other countries, said the Health Minister.

Calling the surge of cases "a matter of concern", Harsh Vardhan remarked that this time the government was better prepared to handle it.

"The basic problem is that people are lax. They are not taking Covid-appropriate behaviour seriously," he said. Asked whether he would say the same about politicians campaigning for state elections, he agreed that "the problem exists in political rallies as well." But it was for the Election Commission to monitor such gatherings, he asserted. On the demand to open up vaccines for all, Harsh

Vardhan said: "We are following WHO-suggested practices on vaccines in which the most vulnerable sections will be vaccinated first."

Dr Harsh Vardhan also commented on Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawala's interview to NDTV, in which he admitted that his vaccine manufacturing capabilities were "very stressed". Mr Poonawala also appealed for financial assistance from the government. The Health Minister said: "Financial aid to vaccine-developers is a collective decision which will be taken by a number of experts who monitor this situation on a regular basis."

## 4 Arrested After BJP MP's Car Vandalised By Farmers In Haryana: Police

(News Agencies)-The Haryana Police arrested four people today, a day after protesting farmers gheraoed BJP MP Nayab Singh Saini's car, smashing its windscreen as he tried to leave a party worker's house. Kurukshetra MP Saini on Tuesday said the police had a tough time in extricating him out of the mob of protesters at Shahbad Markanda, 20 km from Kurukshetra. The police said four people have been arrested after a case was registered under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code, including those of attempt to murder, rioting, unlawful assembly and wrongful restraint. "Four

were arrested on Wednesday and produced before the local court which sent them to judicial custody for 14 days," a police official said. While ten people have been named in the case, around eight are unidentified. The police said video footage of the incident shows the protesters surrounding the MP's car, jumping onto its bonnet and breaking the windscreen. A large number of farmers today held a demonstration in front of the police station Shahbad Markanda to



protest the arrest of four men, stated to the Bharatiya Kisan Union members. A large contingent of the police force had to be deployed around the police station building and its doors were closed. As the police station is situated on the service lane of the National Highway-44 (GT Road), the traffic remained blocked on the service lane. The agitating farmers gathered at Udhm Singh Smarak Park on the GT road as soon as four farmers were rounded up by the police. The farmers

proceed towards the police station waving black flags and raising anti-government slogans. They staged a dharna and demanded their release. Describing the attack on Mr Saini as "murderous", Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had on Tuesday said that it is the democratic right of farmers to hold a protest but violence will not be tolerated. Farmers protesting over the three farm laws were sitting on a dharna in front of Jannayak Janta Party MLA Ram Karan Kala's residence on Tuesday when they learnt that Mr Saini had reached a BJP worker's house in nearby Majri mohalla.



# Pakistani Smuggler Shot Dead Along India-Pak Border In Amritsar; Drugs, Arms Seized

**During the operation, the movement of a Pakistani smuggler was noticed. The smuggler fired at the Indian troops and was killed when they returned the fire under Lopoke police station area, a senior police official said.**

(News Agencies)- A Pakistani smuggler who crossed over to Indian territory with over 22 kg of heroin was shot dead along the International Border (IB) in Amritsar in a joint operation by the Amritsar rural police and the BSF, officials said today.

With this, the police claimed to have unearthed a major narco-terror module.

Based on inputs about the movement of Pakistani smugglers towards the Indian territory with a consignment of drugs, the Punjab police team led by SSP Dhruv Dahiya along with Border Security Force (BSF) troops launched a joint operation at the Kakkar border outpost (BOP), the officials said.

During the operation, the

movement of a Pakistani smuggler was noticed. The smuggler fired at the Indian troops and was killed when they returned the fire under Lopoke police station area, a senior police official said.

A joint combing operation was launched at the site and 22 packets of heroin (weighing 22.660 kg), one SAIGA - MK Rifle (semi-automatic rifle) along with two magazines and 24 live rounds of 7.50 mm, one AK - 47 rifle along with two magazines and 21 live rounds of 7.62 mm, Pakistani currency, one mobile phone along with two Pakistani SIMs (Telenor and Jazz), and a pipe which bore a 'made in Pakistan' marking were recovered, the Punjab police said in a statement.

During preliminary investigation, it was found that the smuggler was known to his two Indian handlers, it said.

The police have registered an FIR against the two others - Jagdish Bhura, who is a terrorist of Khalistan Zindabad Force and currently based in Belgium; and Jaspal Singh, a resident of Ferozepur's Gatti village, who has been arrested.

Singh was in close contact with Bhura and was involved in the smuggling of composite drugs and weapon consignments across the border in Amritsar sector, according to the statement.

Singh is learnt to have close links with Pakistan's ISI, the statement quoted SSP Dahiya as saying.



A case has been registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, the Arms Act, the Foreigners Act and the Indian Passport Act at the Lopoke police station, the statement said.

Director General of Police (DGP), Punjab, Dinkar Gupta said follow-up action is being taken to unearth the entire network of border couriers and Bhura's

associates who are active on the India-Pakistan border, as well as to establish the entire network of his foreign and Indian associates.

Arrest of Jaspal Singh is also likely to lead to further vital disclosures regarding the physical and financial flows associated with the recovered drugs and weapons consignment," Mr Gupta said.

## Indian firm in Rafale controversy denies irregularities, releases 'proof'



(News Agencies)- Defsys Solutions, the Indian defence firm at the heart of the controversy around the purchase of Rafale fighter jets from French company Dassault Aviation, has reacted to the reports of it receiving 1 million Euros under dubious payments. Defsys Solutions

has issued a statement claiming the reports published by French publication Mediapart were misleading.

Terming the media reports "wholly unsubstantiated, baseless and misleading claims", the Indian firm said it indeed received and completed the contract of

**Indian defence firm Defsys Solutions has denied allegation of irregularities in the Rafale jet deal and has released documents which it claims prove its case.**

supplying 50 Rafale mockups. "Based on a purchase order received from one of our clients, Dassault Aviation, we delivered on contract, 50, 1:10 replica models of Rafale aircraft, to Dassault Aviation," a Defsys spokesperson told India Today TV.

However, the spokesperson did not address the lofty pricing issue of the Rafale replica.

To support its claims, the company released copies of delivery challans, E-way bills and GST returns, associated with the order. WHAT IS THIS CONTROVERSY ALL ABOUT?

French news portal Mediapart on Sunday had published a report that pointed out irregularities in the audited accounts of Dassault group, where 1 million Euros were committed to Defsys Solutions under the category "gifts to clients". The e-way bills released by Defsys suggest that the Rafale mockups were likely delivered in four installments of 5, 4, 15 and 26.

### THE FIRM'S DEFENCE

The company says the Rafale mockups were delivered from its facilities in Bengaluru to Dassault Aviation's office at

Delhi's Defence Colony. The GST receipts show that the Rafale mockups were transported between September 2017 and January 2018.

According to one of the receipts from September 29, 2017, the taxable amount for five models was Rs 76,69,500. All 50 models were delivered via Aastha Enterprises DTDC on four different dates.

Earlier, French publication, Mediapart had cited an audit report by French Anti-Corruption Agency, Agence Française Anti-corruption (AFA).

## Private firms allowed to partner up with DRDO in missile development, production



**The DRDO has allowed private firms to partner up with it for missile development and production.**

sector firms to partner up with it in development and production of missile systems indigenously.

"Under the Development-cum-Production Partner programme, private firms have been allowed to forge partnership with the DRDO to develop and produce missile systems," top DRDO officials told India Today TV.

One of the first missile

programmes opened for the private sector under the DCP project includes the Vertical Launched Short Range Surface to Air Missile system (VL-SRSAM), they said. Private firms have already started submitting their bids for the project to the premier defence research agency for participation, they said.

The aim of the programme is to

help the private sector industry and enable them to produce world-class defence hardware systems, they said.

Designed and developed by DRDO for Indian Navy, the VL-SRSAM is capable of neutralising various aerial threats at close ranges including sea skimming targets. The VL-SRSAM with weapon control system was deployed during the trials.

Seeking to help the complex military hardware, the domestic industry to develop DRDO has allowed private



# UP Police silent on why Mukhtar Ansari's convoy halted in Agra for several minutes

*Agra police officers are unable to answer why the convoy ferrying don-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari from Punjab's Ropar to the Banda jail in UP had stopped in Agra on Tuesday night.*

(News Agencies)-The police convoy that ferried notorious UP musclem and gangster Mukhtar Ansari from Ropar district in Punjab to the Banda district jail in UP passed through Agra last night.

However, despite the strict instructions to the police team against stopping in the way, the convoy stopped at the village Wajidpur in the PS Dauki area of Agra at around 10 pm.

Although the halt lasted only five minutes, Agra SSP Muniraj G and other senior officers are unable to answer why the convoy had stopped in Agra and whether anyone contacted the gangster

during that stop. According to available information, Mukhtar Ansari's convoy had 40 vehicles, including an ambulance. The Yamuna Expressway toll gates no. 8 and 9 on Khandauli toll plaza had been kept open by the police for unrestricted passage of all vehicles. The escort from Agra brought the vehicles from Khandauli to the Inner Ring Road, from where they entered the Lucknow Expressway.

SSP Muniraj G confirmed that a police escort had been provided to the convoy within the district limits of Agra. Police teams had reached both

Lucknow and Yamuna Expressways two hours before the convoy arrived. Police teams from Khandauli, Etmadpur, Dauki, and Fatehabad escorted the convoy.

One of Mukhtar Ansari's relatives from Ghazipur, who was travelling with the convoy, said that the ambulance in which Mukhtar was brought from Punjab, had been extensively checked before Mukhtar alighted. 60 policemen, most of them wearing bulletproof vests, were in the convoy. Mukhtar Ansari is a native resident of Mau district and has been MLA from the district five times. He



also contested parliamentary elections on a BSP ticket but failed to win. He faces trial in several cases including murder and attempt to murder in UP. Mukhtar Ansari was lodged in Rupnagar jail in January 2019 in connection with an extortion case. Acting on a Supreme Court order, the Uttar Pradesh Police took his custody at Rupnagar jail on Tuesday to bring him back to the Banda prison. He is facing 52 cases in Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere, and 15 of them are in the trial stage.

## Amid US warnings, India, Russia vow to enhance defence cooperation, additional procurement

(News Agencies)- Despite US pressure against defence procurement from Moscow, India and Russia on Tuesday decided to enhance defence cooperation not only in procurement, but also explored the possibility of "additional" production of Russian military equipment in India.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was on a working visit to New Delhi where he held bilateral talks with his counterpart External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

"We discussed prospective and additional manufacturing of

Russian military equipment in India within the concept 'Make in India'. So here, I didn't see any changes from our Indian partners and friends," Lavrov said during the press interaction after talks with Jaishankar.

Asked about the US's objections on procuring the Russian S400 missile defence system, Jaishankar said "specific" issues did not come up during the talks

However, Lavrov said, "We did not discuss these responses from the US, but we confirmed that we will deepen our military

cooperation. We also discussed the prospects of manufacturing Russian military equipment under 'Make in India' scheme," said Mr Lavrov.

Jaishankar directed the specific queries to departments in the Ministry of Defence. "We did not get into specific discussions. That is the responsibility of different bodies headed by defence ministers, which is due to meet end of this year," he said.

On the QUAD cooperation becoming an alternative security structure, he called it the 'Asian NATO' and said that Russia was



not for military alliance systems. "Today we exchanged views on these. Our Indian friends have the same position. We are interested in inclusive cooperation, which is

for something and not against somebody," he said. Both sides spoke at length on regional issues, especially on Afghanistan.

## Gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's key aide held in Himachal

**Gagan Brar 'connected' to Youth Congress leader Gurlal Singh Bhalwan's murder**

Chandigarh : The Punjab Police, in a joint operation with the Himachal Pradesh Police, arrested a close aide of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, who played a key role in the planning, execution as well as providing shelter to killers of Youth Congress leader Gurlal Singh Bhalwan on the directions of Bishnoi and Canada-based Goldy Brar. The suspect has been identified as Gagandeep Singh, alias Padda, alias Gagan Brar, alias Labh Singh Labhu, alias Gogi, of Panjgarai Kalan village in Kotkapura. He used to work as a bouncer in clubs and hotels of Chandigarh. DGP Dinkar Gupta, in a press communiqué, said the killing was organised by Goldy Brar, with help of Bishnoi, to avenge the murder of his cousin Gurlal Brar. A few hours after the murder, a Facebook post purportedly by

Bishnoi, currently lodged in Rajasthan's Ajmer jail, linked the crime to the death of Gurlal Brar. On February 21, the Delhi Police arrested three men — Gurvinder Pal, alias Gora, Sukhwinder Dhillon, and Saurabh Verma — involved in the murder. The next day, Punjab Police nabbed Gurbinder Singh, a resident of Ghania Wala village, in the murder case for providing weapons to the assailants. Investigations revealed Gora shared a flat with Gagan Brar in Kharar and the conspiracy was hatched in the rented accommodation. Gagan, being a close associate of Goldy Brar, was



wanted by the Delhi Special Cell and Faridkot Police for his involvement in the murder. The Delhi Police had raided the Kharar accommodation, but Gagan gave them the slip. The DGP said based on inputs, teams of the Organised Crime Control Unit (OCCU) and Counter Intelligence Units of the Punjab Police were tasked with arresting the accused under the supervision of Additional DGP (ADGP) Internal Security RN Dhole. The teams tracked Gagan's location to Kasol and apprehended him in a joint operation with the Himachal Police. Gagan revealed he was working as a bouncer

in night clubs in Chandigarh and was friends with Gora and Gurlal Brar for over five years. He had got the job through Gurlal Brar's reference. The DGP said Gora introduced Gagan to Goldy Brar. On the instructions of Goldy, Gagan handed over a bagful of arms and ammunition to an unidentified person in Kharar, a day before the murder. This bag was brought by Gora and kept in his room's wardrobe. After the Delhi Police raided the accommodation, he took shelter in a friend's flat in Kharar for two days and then went to Golden Temple in Amritsar, from where he went to McLeodganj before reaching Kasol. During his escape, Gagan remained in contact with Goldy through OTT apps and Goldy also sent him money via Google pay for expenses, he added.



## Bihar police arrest 5 accused in Madhubani murders case: 10 points

**The Bihar Police on Wednesday said it arrested five accused in the Madhubani massacre case. Five people had died in the March 29-incident. Main accused, Praveen Jha and Bhola Singh were arrested along with Chandan Jha, Kamlesh Singh and Mukesh Saafi.**

On the day of Holi, Bihar witnessed the killings of five people, including a family of four, in the Madhubani district. One of the deceased was a Border Security Force (BSF) jawan who was visiting home on leave to celebrate Holi.

The Opposition attacked the Nitish Kumar government calling the incident a "massacre". Even leaders from the BJP, an ally of Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal-United, criticised the law-and-order situation in Bihar after the Madhubani massacre.

Bihar Police has now arrested five accused in the Madhubani murders. Main accused, Praveen Jha and Bhola Singh have been arrested along with Chandan Jha, Kamlesh Singh and Mukesh Saafi.

MADHUBANI MASSACRE: 10 POINTS

1A group of around 35 people opened fire on another group on March 29 over a dispute that is being investigated by the Bihar Police. Four of a family, including three brothers, were killed in the incident that took place at Mohammadpur village of Madhubani district.

2Initial reports claimed that the incident took place due to caste rivalry. Police later rejected the theory saying the incident happened due to an old dispute. Police have registered an FIR against 35 people, including around a dozen named accused.

3On Wednesday, Bihar Police arrested five people, including the main accused Praveen Jha and Bhola Singh. Others nabbed by the police were identified as Chandan Jha, Kamlesh Singh and Mukesh Saafi. The arrested

men belong to either side of the rival groups.4What led to Madhubani massacre is still unclear. But reports suggest that the two parties were involved in fish trade — a thriving business in the region. Praveen Jha is a rival of former armyman Surendra Singh of Mohammadpur in the fish trade. Singh's sons run his fish-trade business.

5Both parties have taken ponds on lease for fish-farming and operate in the same area for their businesses. Their rivalry is said to have intensified in the past two years.

6Tension soared between the two sides during Chhath festival last year, leading to one of Surendra Singh's son lodging a police complaint against his rivals under the SC/ST Act. Reports say police arrested a person acting on the



complaint.7On the day of the incident, reports say, Praveen Jha and Surendra Singh's sons came face-to-face, and resulted in heated arguments. After some time, Praveen Jha led a group of armed men to attack Surendra Singh's family.

8Two persons died on the spot during the firing. Three others died of bullet injuries at a hospital. While four of the deceased belonged to Surendra Singh's family, the fifth was identified as the son of a local mahant (priest).9The Madhubani massacre led to fresh barb-

trading between the Opposition and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejaswhi Yadav has alleged that the "killings were carried out under the protection of his [Nitish Kumar's] MLA and government".

10Nitish Kumar responded by saying, "Those who want publicity start speaking against me. They don't anything else to do." Nitish Kumar spoke to DGP SK Singhal directing the police to bring all the culprits to justice at the earliest.

### INX Media case: Delhi court grants exemption from personal appearance to Chidambaram

(News Agencies)-A Delhi Court on Wednesday granted exemption from personal appearance to former union minister P Chidambaram and his son Karti Chidambaram for the day in the INX Media scam related money laundering case.

Special Judge M K Nagpal granted relief to the Chidambarams after an

Arshdeep Singh said.

The court also issued notice to the ED on a bail application moved by co-accused Peter Mukharjea in the case.

P Chidambaram was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the INX Media corruption case on August 21, 2019.

On October 16, 2019, the ED arrested him in a related money-laundering case.

Six days later, on October 22, the apex court granted bail to Chidambaram in the case lodged by the CBI.

In the ED case, he got bail on December 4, 2019.

The CBI had registered its case on May 15, 2017, alleging irregularities in a Foreign Investment

Promotion Board (FIPB) clearance granted to the INX Media group for receiving overseas funds of Rs 305 crore in 2007, during Chidambaram's tenure as finance minister.

Subsequently, the ED had lodged the money-laundering case.

Karti was arrested by the CBI in February 2018 and he was granted bail in March 2018 in the INX Media corruption case.



application in this regard was moved by their lawyer, saying the accused were busy in assembly election campaign in Tamil Nadu.

The accused were summoned by the court on March 24 after taking cognisance of a supplementary charge sheet filed by the ED.

The court will further hear the matter on April 16. Both are star campaigners, their lawyer

## Thinking of Buying/Selling ?



**WINZONE** REALTY INC.



# Baldev Singh

Associate Broker/Notary Public

146-20 34 av. Flushing NY 11354

Cell : 917-224-7395

Email : josanbaldev@yahoo.com



# What is driving India's second Covid-19 wave?

We have seen miracles, and we have seen disasters. In September 2020, India came close to 100,000 Covid-19 cases a day, and it seemed an inexorable rise. And then magically, the cases started to dip, and with a few blips here and there in specific cities, by January, we were seeing fewer than 10,000 new cases a day. In February, the numbers started heading up again, and we have now breached 100,000 new cases per day, the second country in the world to do so. Why did this happen now? Why did the numbers escalate beyond what India had at its peak the first time? For the Sars-CoV-2, it does not take a lot of virus to infect another person. When people mingle, speak, shout and sing, they unknowingly spew out infectious virus.

This clear mode of transmission is what makes masks, distancing and ventilation so effective. In September, we cared about prevention, and emerging from severe restrictions, were willing to do what it took to keep spread down. From then on, week by week, we have been slipping, first in some regions, then others, with some activities and then others. Crowding on public transport, in markets, at festivals, at family celebrations and during elections are back to being acceptable.

The communication from the government and of experts seem to go unheard. This lack of appropriate behaviour that could prevent the virus' spread has increased, and potentially been amplified, because of viruses that are more transmissible than the ancestral version of the virus that we had last year. We are still not clear about the proportion of B.1.1.7 or the United Kingdom variant, which spreads more easily and may cause more severe disease, and which has badly affected Punjab, and possibly other states. The new Indian so-called "double mutant" variant is now the global lineage B.1.617. But is this virus more transmissible? Does it cause more severe disease? Will vaccines work? These are questions that we will be able to answer if we can interrogate our health data and back it up with standardised laboratory investigations as in other parts of the world.

We have two vaccines that work well against Sars-CoV-2. Covishield had the advantage of large-scale clinical trials being conducted elsewhere that generated efficacy data quickly, requiring small scale studies in India. But it also has a disadvantage - the initial messy data about doses, intervals and age groups and miscommunication by AstraZeneca have led to confused messaging about how to use the vaccine. Covaxin has the advantage of tremendous support from the government of India but the disadvantage of needing to do large-scale clinical trials in India, never an easy task, given the lack of clinical research experience at many

sites. But the roll-out of vaccines, despite the fast-tracking of approvals, prioritisation frameworks, central procurement, efforts at preparedness for vaccination sites and sessions, establishment of process and development of the CoWin app, has been slow. The government originally planned to immunise 300 million people by June-July (later July-August), and this appears very unlikely if the pace of vaccination does not increase several-fold. Are we in the same position that we were in during the rapid increase of the first peak in India? If not, what makes it different? From the serological surveys, between a quarter and one-third of the population has been infected but this is not evenly distributed by place and stratum of society; so those who had the ability to isolate last year and are not yet vaccinated, are more likely to get infected. But given that vaccines work much better than expected, it is not unreasonable to suppose that our immune systems are capable of handling this virus well. This means that previously infected people should expect some protection against severe disease for several months.

Additionally available vaccines provide some, not complete, measure of protection against most viral variants. If one-third of the population is already protected at least against severe disease, and we can ramp up vaccination quickly while continuing the measures that we know restrict the spread of the virus, then control is feasible, even with the new variants. We know what works, but to use the tools we have most effectively, we need more detailed data. We are not in the same situation today that we were in last year, so control measures cannot be one-size-fits-all. We need to know more about the people who are getting infected. Where are they from? Age? Gender? Vaccinated? Previously infected? Disease severity? If we have this information and can tie it together, we can achieve more tailored strategies for control instead of strategies that have an uncertain effect. What does a night curfew prevent and how effective is it? We don't really have the data. Yet, on the other hand, we are bombarded by news that affects vaccine uptake, for instance, "Doctors infected after vaccination", "Healthcare worker in XX dies two days after vaccination". Conveying both truth and uncertainty is important, as is explaining with facts that vaccines are not perfect, that care continues to be required when there are high numbers of cases in our communities, that we have a surveillance system for picking up vaccine side-effects, but it may not be always able to assess the relationship with the vaccines.

This is a challenging time, but we have the science to help us get through this pandemic and future ones. We need to use it, together.

# Bengal Elections: Four Possible Scenarios And Their Implications

The polls to the legislative assemblies of four states and one union territory have understandably generated considerable public attention and have captured most of the media space in the past few weeks. The first phase of the polls in Assam and West Bengal culminated last week, but with several more weeks of campaigning for the eight phase elections still left, there is considerable speculation as to the outcome of polls on 2nd May. Analysts and politicians across the spectrum agree that the results of the five Vidhan Sabhas, but particularly West Bengal, will, in a substantial manner, shape the national narrative for the next Lok Sabha elections and be an important indicator of whether the saffron surge in the country is unstoppable or whether a group of strong regional satraps can indeed halt the Modi-Shah juggernaut. Most surveys or opinion polls conducted before the commencement of the first phase of polls suggested that the battle for Bengal was going to be a close one, with the BJP and Trinamool Congress closely vying to be the single largest party in the state. With the exception of one or two surveys predicting a comfortable majority for either side (Jan ki Baat and People's Pulse have predicted a clear BJP win, while C-Voter has forecast a clear TMC win), most pollsters agreed that the battle was neck and neck with TMC enjoying a slight lead. Some surveys even indicated that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee could face a possible setback in Nandigram, with her confidante turned rival Suwendu Adhikari seemingly in a position to defeat

her. Virtually all surveys agreed that the Sanyukta Morcha or Third Front in the state, comprising of the Congress, Left Parties and the Indian Secular Front would be a fringe player, winning a couple of dozen seats at best. These surveys are in line with the assembly segment-wise lead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, where BJP led in 121 assembly constituencies, while TMC led in 160 seats. Although opinion polls and surveys need to be taken with a pinch of salt and have been proven off the mark on far too many occasions, as things stand today, by all accounts, it is likely to be a neck and neck fight between the BJP and the TMC. The following plausible scenarios could play out on 2nd May when the results of the state assembly elections are counted: Scenario 1: TMC wins with a comfortable majority (155+ seats), Mamata Banerjee wins from Nandigram. This is the only scenario where TMC can hope to form a stable government that can last its full term. In a house of 294, although the number required to form the government is 148, TMC would ideally want a buffer of at least 10-15 seats for it to be able to govern without fear of the government being toppled. With the BJP having mastered the art of weaning away dissatisfied ruling party members using all possible tactics (sama, dama, danda, bheda), it could easily take a leaf from its playbook in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, and Manipur and wean away a dozen or so members from TMC and other parties to form a government either immediately after polls or in a few months thereafter.



ISSN No. 1554 06X

Editor in Chief &amp; Publisher :

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) :

Aruna Singh

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Special Correspondent :

Gagandeep Singh (India)

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD &amp; MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

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



# The gulf between Delhi and Moscow



Russia's foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, and external affairs minister, S Jaishankar, have reiterated their commitment to the bilateral relationship. But beneath the story of cordiality is a story of increasing differences on two key issues, visible during the joint press conference of the two ministers on Tuesday. The first is on the wider relationship with the United States (US) and China. Moscow sees Washington as a belligerent actor out to contain Russian influence and punish it through sanctions. This has pushed it

**India and Russia are talking frankly, but the "time-tested relationship" is clearly headed for greater challenges**

towards Beijing, though Mr Lavrov emphasised, in response to a question from this newspaper, that a military alliance with China was not on the cards. New Delhi sees its partnership with Washington as an important security pillar, and views Beijing as the core problem. India, thus, has chosen to remain more aligned with the US - while keeping up its independent relationship with Russia, especially on defence. Till the US and Russia achieve a degree of rapprochement or Russia and China fall out, none of which are imminent, India will have keep striking this difficult balance. On Afghanistan, Mr Lavrov was unequivocal that the Taliban had to be a part of any sustainable peace process and power-sharing compact. India has reconciled itself to the changed dynamic - but New Delhi is approaching the peace process with its eyes open, sceptical of the possibility of any inclusive political settlement, and aware that neither the Taliban nor its patron across the Durand border, Pakistan (which Mr Lavrov is now visiting, clubbed with his trip to India, a first for Russia) is about to change its stripes. India and Russia are talking frankly, but the "time-tested relationship" is clearly headed for greater challenges.

# Maoists cross a red line, again

In a reminder that India's single biggest internal security threat, as former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh framed the challenge from Left-wing extremism, is still alive, the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) killed 22 security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district over the weekend. While reports suggest that up to 20 Maoists were killed in the encounter too, there is little doubt that the incident represents a grave setback to the Indian State in general, and security forces in particular. It appears that Maoists planted intelligence about the presence of a dreaded commander, Madvi Hidma, in a particular location; over 1,700 men from various security agencies launched an offensive from Sukma and Bijapur; Maoists then executed a "U-shaped attack" where they fired from the two hilltops as the jawans were at lower levels in two villages, both of which had already been evacuated by the Maoists. The forces walked into the trap, losing brave men and dealing a blow to India's battle against the Maoist insurgency. The incident reveals State failure at two different levels.

**The State must embark on a multi-pronged approach to defeat Left-wing extremism. It must act against Maoist terror, but smartly and carefully. And quickly.**



One, at the level of principle, any State must have a monopoly over force - the fact that there is an armed insurgent outfit in the country that openly espouses war against the State, in itself, reflects the continued failure of governments across the political spectrum. Two, more specific to this incident, despite denials by security agencies, there has been

a clear operational and intelligence failure. Did the forces exercise due diligence on the intelligence they received? Did they follow all SOPs before launching the combing operation? Was there any contingency planning for a scenario where Maoists would launch a surprise attack, which they have done in the past too?

While home minister Amit Shah has promised a fitting reply, it is important that the government embark on a careful multi-pronged approach. One, ramp up security and intelligence, track Madvi Hidma, and bring the culprits of the recent attack to justice. Two, enhance coordination between the Centre and all Maoist-affected states.

Three, ensure that any security offensive does not lead to human rights violations, which provide fertile ground to Maoists to recruit. Four, ensure participatory development and greater incomes to local population, and ensure justice to stem any sense of alienation. The State must act against Maoist terror, but smartly and carefully. And quickly.



# Under Biden, our southern border has become a crime scene

President Joe Biden's "come one, come all," promises and policies have turned the U.S.-Mexico border into a humanitarian catastrophe, a public-health calamity, and a national-security crisis.

Biden also has transformed America's southern frontier into a gigantic crime scene.

The border criminals include every illegal alien who invades America without permission. They undermine U.S. sovereignty, fleece beleaguered American taxpayers, and mock millions of immigrants who arrive legally.

Foreigners who breach the border without passports violate U.S. Code § 1325(a) - Improper entry by alien. Border Patrol encounters with such illegal immigrants soared from 36,687 in February 2020 to 100,441 in February 2021 - up 173 percent. The analogous figures for March 2020 were 34,460 and, according to strictly preliminary data, 171,700 for March 2021 - up 71 percent since last month and 398 percent, year on year.

Even more nefarious are apprehensions of aliens with criminal convictions. President Donald J. Trump slashed these from 4,269 in FY 2019 to 2,438 in FY 2020 - down 42.9 percent.

Customs and Border Protection reports that, for FY 2021 to date (October 1, 2020 through last February 28) that number swelled to 4,140 - up 69.8 percent.

"Here we are, not even halfway through FY 2021, and a year's worth of criminal aliens [compared to FY 2019] already have been encountered by the Border Patrol," Jessica M. Vaughan, Director of Policy Studies with the Center for Immigration Studies, tells me. "That's alarming, and suggests that the criminal aliens feel empowered by Biden's welcome-wagon policies."

These criminals have ugly rap sheets.

In Texas' Rio Grande Valley Sector, "a Salvadoran man with a prior conviction for murder was discovered," CBP's Chief Patrol Agent Brian Hastings revealed March 27 via Twitter. For FY 2021 to date, "RGV agents have arrested over 861 criminal aliens, to include 63 gang members and 92 sex offenders."

Even scarier than these specific arrests are the border-wide convictions for other illegals captured this fiscal year:

oHomicide - three

oIllegal weapons possession and trafficking - 140

oSexual offenses - 210

oBurglary, robbery, larceny, theft, and fraud - 308

oAssault, battery, and domestic violence - 484

oDriving under the influence - 715

oIllegal drug possession and trafficking - 816

Convictions across these seven categories totaled 1,672 in FY 2019. Trump cut them to 1,309 in FY 2020 - down 21.7 percent. FY 2021 to date: 2,676 - up 104.4 percent.

Others got away.

Even more menacing, Axios reported on March 16 that three Yemenis and a Serb on the FBI's Terrorism Watch List have been nabbed at the border since October.

Then, on Monday, a CBP press release datelined "CALEXICO, Calif." announced that the Border Patrol caught two Yemeni men on the southern frontier. Both were on the FBI's Terrorism Watch List and the No-Fly List. In one of these cases, the news release states, "agents found a cellular phone sim card hidden underneath the insole of his shoe." Oddly enough, this April 5 CBP press release vanished from the agency's website. At this



writing, this communiqué's URL yields a page that brusquely declares: "Access denied."

This smells like yet another example of Team Biden covering up evidence of their totally destructive policies on the border. (Biden's enforcers asked senators who visited federal facilities last week to delete photos they snapped of unaccompanied minors who were about as socially distanced as canned anchovies.) Thankfully, the priceless Wayback Machine/Internet Archive captured this document before it tumbled down an Orwellian memory hole.

Here is a link to CBP's deleted, and now resurrected, press release. The agency did not respond to requests for comment. Aside from these Yemenis and this Serb, how many others on the Terrorism

Watch List have slipped through amid Biden's border bedlam?

Meanwhile, Biden's human-trafficking bonanza is huge business for seriously bad guys. "We just come here to earn our daily bread, like everyone else," a smuggler who calls himself "Lily" told Univision on March 26. Standing in the shallow Rio Grande, beside the small boat that he uses to ferry illegals across the river from Mexico to America, "Lily" adds, "In all honesty, there are way too many people. Believe me. With the benefits your new president is now granting, people found the courage to come."

And how much "bread" do these traffickers collect per alien escorted? CBP figures suggest that 100,441 illegals typically paid some \$4,096 each to surge the border in February.

## Israel's election aftermath: The good, the bad and the ugly



The results of Israel's fourth election in a little more than two years looks very much like the wash, rinse and repeat cycle of the previous three. Nonetheless, this was not a repeat of the last three elections. This round produced results that may well carry longer-term consequences for Israeli politics. With apologies to Clint Eastwood, Sergio Leone and his spaghetti Westerns, let's call them the good, the bad and the ugly. The Good

Perhaps the most intriguing development of this fourth round, particularly for those who believe in the importance of strengthening Israeli democracy and integrating Israel's Arab citizens (21% of the population) into the body politic, was the performance of the United Arab List -- one of the two parties representing Israel's Arab citizens.

A small conservative Islamic party that broke away from the larger Joint Arab List, the United

Arab List led by Mansour Abbas has publicly stated its willingness to join either a government headed by Netanyahu or his opponents. Indeed, Mansour believes that Israeli Arabs can best advance their community's interests and wield real influence from inside, rather than outside the government.

Abbas's four seats at least on paper put him in the position of kingmaker, and he seems willing and able to trade that support if he gets commitments on issues vitally important for his community -- namely stopping the surge of crime and violence in the Arab community and more resources for economic and social development.

Indeed, Netanyahu, after exploiting some Jewish Israelis' fear of the Arabs in previous elections, cynically courted Abbas in this campaign to hedge his bets. And Yair Lapid's heading of the second largest party and

with hopes to assemble a coalition to turn Netanyahu out of power has already met with Abbas about joining a government.

All of this constitutes something of a revolution in Israeli politics. No Israeli government has ever included an Arab party in a coalition. And no leader of an Arab party has ever seemed more eager to put aside ideological concerns, accept joining together with Jewish Zionist parties in exchange for a clear list of demands to benefit his community.

Both Netanyahu and his main opponent Lapid might actually agree to accept Abbas into their governments; but the putative right-wing parties among their respective allies likely won't. To quote Anshel Pfeffer, senior columnist for Haaretz, it may be too early for this "taboo to be broken" but it's closer than ever. And that is good news for

realizing Israel's promise as an inclusive democracy.

The Bad

The bad news, of course, is that Israel again seems stuck in kind of a doom loop of perpetual dysfunction -- with a real possibility of a fifth election in September. Repeated elections waste time and resources. Israel is operating off a budget passed in 2019; planning at various ministries, including the Defense Ministry, is impossible amid this kind of uncertainty.

And while Netanyahu's government certainly delivered on vaccines, Israel went through several chaotic lockdowns, lost more than 6,000 dead as a result of opening up too fast and in the process strained the government's credibility. Indeed, it's no coincidence that Netanyahu's Likud party lost six seats in last week's election.



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



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

**Email: [editor@thesouthasianinsider.com](mailto:editor@thesouthasianinsider.com)  
[www.thesouthasianinsider.com](http://www.thesouthasianinsider.com)**



# It's time to remember what 'asylum' really means

Former President Donald Trump spent four years inflicting untold damage to the rights of immigrants, including people seeking safety in this country. As asylum seekers came to the United States to flee violence and persecution, the Trump administration detained upwards of 50,000 people (a figure Immigration and Customs Enforcement confirmed), prolonged the detention of families and exercised authority over a system that saw an uptick in deaths in detention -- which the House Oversight Committee determined was often due to inadequate medical care. It's time we end the use of expansive detention we've seen from both Republican and Democratic administrations. With over 14,000 immigrants and asylum seekers still detained by ICE, simply rolling back previous administrations' harmful policies won't be enough: We need transformative change that restores humanity, dignity, respect and fairness to the entire immigration detention system. And Congress must lead the way in implementing this change.

One reason the United States' immigration system is so broken is because it uses detention as the answer to almost every situation. Those who come seeking protection are detained while they await a determination on their case, as well as immigrants who have community ties in the US but still end up separated from their loved ones. Unfortunately, judges' discretion to assess an individual's particular situation has been severely constrained, resulting in 71% of those who are in detention being mandatorily detained. Once in detention facilities, people often face unsafe and unsanitary conditions, without adequate access to basic hygiene or medical care. This is, in part, due to the fact that immigration detention has become a lucrative profit-making endeavor, which encourages cost-cutting measures that could endanger the health of people in detention. According to Freedom for Immigrants, a national visitation network working to end detention, the vast majority -- over 70% of people in ICE custody -- are detained in facilities owned

or managed by private corporations. Not surprisingly, several private detention facilities that have received large numbers of immigrants and asylum seekers have seen their profits soar over a four-year period. Meanwhile, detention costs taxpayers an average of \$127 per night per adult or \$319 per night per family, according to the Detention Watch Network, an immigration advocacy organization. The travesty of this process has been laid bare during the Covid-19 pandemic, as many immigrants and asylum-seekers continue to live in tinderbox-like conditions with little ability to physically distance or access PPE, testing and other protections. To date, despite ICE's claim that it takes the health and safety of its detainees seriously, more than 10,000 people in detention have contracted Covid-19, and at least eight have died after testing positive for the virus in 2020, according to ICE data. Of course, the risk isn't just limited to the lives of the immigrants in detention, but also the lives of the workers, their families, and the



surrounding communities. Marilyn and her son Yunion, whose names have been changed to not jeopardize their safety, are tragic examples of the cruel nature of immigration detention. According to Amnesty International USA, they left Honduras to escape years of violence from Marilyn's ex-partner and an international criminal organization. In search of protection, they were thrown into family detention in one of the country's largest immigration detention centers in Dilley, Texas. Because of Marilyn's high blood pressure and prediabetes, she was at high risk of becoming severely ill should she contract Covid-19

while detained in a facility that has confirmed over 230 Covid-19 cases since February 2020. She suffered chest pain near her heart, and sometimes at night her whole body trembled. Convinced she would die in detention, she called her family to lay out a makeshift will and testament and to ensure her son would be cared for. After relentless advocacy from their lawyers at Proyecto Dilley and pressure from Amnesty International USA and its activists, Marilyn and Yunion were finally released last October after over a year in detention and are able to continue to pursue their claim for asylum in safety and freedom.

## Trump shouldn't get credit for the economic rebound. Neither should Biden



Presidents typically get too much credit -- or blame -- for the US economy's current performance, while the unseen drivers of the economic cycle get way too little. The economy is like a supertanker -- it generally takes time for it to change direction. But sure as the sun will rise tomorrow, policymakers will take credit for a cyclical shift that was a year or more in the making. Of course, presidents, Congress and the Fed can nudge the economy in a particular direction, but the results typically take shape with long lags.

Biden will benefit from the robust revival that began under Trump's watch. And we can't just attribute the revival to Operation Warp Speed, though the extraordinary ramp-up in vaccinations wouldn't be possible without Covid vaccines being developed and approved in record time. It's the economic cycle that deserves the lion's share of the credit for the strong recovery from the Covid recession. The pandemic-related shutdowns suddenly plunged the economy into a deep recession over a year ago, but as the economy began

opening up, economic activity automatically rebounded, starting a new cyclical upturn. Real GDP growth bottomed out in the second quarter of 2020 and has been reviving ever since. Record GDP growth followed in the third quarter of 2020 off the bottom of the recession, which was followed by some flattening in the fourth quarter as the second wave of infections took its toll. Naturally, a rebound in growth in the first quarter of 2021 is to be expected as vaccinations ramp up and stimulus checks boost spending, allowing the economy to open up more quickly. As important as vaccinations and stimulus checks are to people's lives, the cyclical upturn in GDP growth that began last spring would have continued regardless. We know this because the forward-looking Weekly Leading Index (WLI), which forecasts the economy's direction over the coming few months based on its cyclical drivers, anticipated that

upturn in GDP growth a year ago. This is why last June we wrote that -- despite the deepest recession in living memory -- the stock market's "upturn makes perfect sense if you understand the historical relationship between stock price cycles and business cycles." This upswing in growth started well before the 2020 election and is now benefiting Biden. Similarly, Trump's presidency benefited from a cyclical upswing in economic growth that began under President Obama, well before Trump was elected. Again, the evidence comes from actual GDP growth, which turned up in the second quarter of 2016. Because stronger economic growth prospects in 2016 were international in scope, we knew before the 2016 presidential election that the global growth outlook had already begun to improve. And yes, we fully expected that the cyclical improvements were going to be claimed as successes by policymakers for, as

the saying goes, "victory has a thousand fathers but defeat is an orphan." Then, in early 2017, the cyclical upturns in our forward-looking international indexes flagged the brightest global growth outlook since 2010. In essence, while expectations of more business-friendly policies buoyed US business expectations and stock prices after the 2016 election, this was much bigger than Trump. All presidents benefit from the actions of their predecessors. But they are truly at the mercy of the economic cycle. And Weekly Leading Index growth, having turned up during the last year of Trump's presidency, continues to climb apace. If it turns down, however, it would be a clear omen of an upcoming cyclical slowdown. The US growth outlook still looks sunny. But as international interest rates rise, there are already some storm clouds on the far horizon.



# It's time to face the new reality on mask wearing

Walking around my Brooklyn neighborhood as the country comes out of a long, Covid-depressed winter, I notice nearly everyone engaging in a curious pandemic ritual: as we stroll past brownstones, we all pull our masks up as soon as we see one another coming.

"Science is real," the yard signs on the block declare, and I suspect my neighbors and I generally agree, as we avoid eye contact over the tops of our KN95s.

Joggers in the park do this mask up, mask down business every few seconds, gasping for air when their faces are free. Restaurants dutifully squirt sanitizer onto diners' hands before seating them inside. Local scolds scan the horizon for the maskless, and meet them with a glare or some choice words. I've been there myself: in the first several months of the pandemic, I found myself irrationally angry at any maskless runner who passed me by.

But now that we better understand the real risks of Covid, and that vaccines are rolling out, might it be time to adjust our social mores?

These mores, of course, are not the same everywhere. In much of the country, people are living life as if there were no pandemic at all, as if more than half a million Americans weren't dead from a contagious respiratory illness. They are dining, shopping, barhopping, going to weddings and baby showers and doing it all inside and maskless.

It's no wonder that our individual responses to Covid change with our politics -- the pandemic has been politicized from the start. Many liberals (myself included) have emphasized that wearing masks isn't just about reducing personal risk -- it's about protecting the whole community, and especially the most vulnerable in it. Wearing a mask is no big deal, and we are happy to do it -- and not reluctant to shame others, in person or online, who refuse.

But today we know much more about Covid than we did when mask mandates began.

The evidence points to one conclusion: Being outside and away from others -- or even passing by others for a second or two at close distance -- is incredibly unlikely to spread Covid. It's not impossible, but it's so rare that researchers have had a hard time identifying many cases of outdoor transmission.

Indoors is a different story. It's clear that masks work, and that Covid thrives in contained spaces where people are breathing the same air. Masks remain necessary, and should be mandated, in

the grocery store, on public transport, on airplanes and in airports, and anywhere else we're inside. And given that Covid rates continue to climb, it's absurd that we're allowing indoor dining, drinking and event-attending, particularly among the unvaccinated.

Crowded outdoor events are also a bad idea without masks. A concert where revelers are pressed together and everyone is screaming and singing for hours is practically inviting infections. Two unvaccinated people sitting inches away from each other and talking at length are taking a risk, even if they are outside.

Dr. Anthony Alberg, the chair of the department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health, told the Charleston Post and Courier, for example, that issues like crowd density -- can people stay relatively far apart? -- are key for outdoor events, because "At a concert, people are going to be, depending on the kind of concert, likely to be yelling and shouting and cheering and that sort of thing. The more vocal we get the more likely we are to spread the coronavirus further

distances."

All other things being equal, though, outdoors is preferable to indoors.

Maybe we should do what so many liberals demand and follow the science instead of our political beliefs. The directives could be pretty simple: mask up indoors, in a crowd or at close distance. Don't feel you have to if you're outdoors and vaccinated, or outdoors and not getting close to anyone for more than a few seconds.

The pandemic has made us more sedentary than ever, which is bad for our bodies and minds. People should be encouraged to go for a walk, jog or outdoor workout class -- and they should be able to do so in comfort and with the ability to breathe, which means maskless.

We are shifting toward a new normal, and that will be rocky -- our social skills are rusty and our anxieties high. Simply being near strangers pitches many of us into hypervigilance. And we want to demonstrate that we are doing our part to protect our communities.

But we can put a balanced public health perspective at the center of this readjustment, and trust that our fellow citizens know the difference between outside and in. Right now, we're going about it in exactly the wrong way: Increasingly allowing masklessness inside, while socially enforcing mask-wearing outside. It's the worst of all worlds, especially as infections climb.



# Forensic pathologist: The real key to the Chauvin verdict

I perform autopsies for a living, on people who have died suddenly, violently, or unexpectedly. I often testify in criminal and civil cases, where I explain medical terminology to juries. The medical evidence in George Floyd's death is complex -- and likely key to whether Derek Chauvin, the former officer accused of killing Floyd, will be convicted. The Hennepin County Medical Examiner found a combination of injury, natural disease and drugs were responsible for his death. Some of these findings, individually, could have caused his death, and yet in this case they appear to have worked in concert.

Many of the terms being used by expert witnesses -- doctors, emergency medical responders -- and lawyers in the trial are complicated or unfamiliar to the public.

Understanding these may be crucial to following the proceedings.

Hypoxia or anoxia. These terms, respectively, describe a lack or absence of oxygen going to the brain or other organs. The prosecution has been asking witnesses whether Floyd died because not enough oxygen was going to his brain. They will likely be arguing that Chauvin killed Floyd by putting his knee on Floyd's neck, cutting off the flow of blood -- and thus oxygen -- to his brain. The defense will likely argue that the main cause of Floyd's hypoxia was not Chauvin's knee, but Floyd's heart disease, compounded by a fentanyl overdose.

Respiratory depression. Opioid drugs like fentanyl cause the brain to slow down breathing, also known as respiratory depression. The likely defense case is that the fentanyl found

in Floyd's system caused his breathing to slow so much that it killed him.

Excited delirium. This is a syndrome that can be brought on by stimulant drugs like methamphetamine, or mental illness, or both. Methamphetamine, which was found in Floyd's blood, can induce a dangerous rise in body temperature (hyperthermia) and a state of agitation causing acid buildup in the blood (acidosis), resulting in a fatal heart rhythm. One of the police officers who restrained Floyd mentioned that he was concerned about excited delirium. But patients with excited delirium are often sweaty, hallucinating, violent or acting bizarrely, like undressing themselves. None of those symptoms applied to Floyd, as witnesses attested. Asphyxia. From a Greek word meaning "without a pulse,"



Asphyxia occurs when there is appears to be neck obstruction to airflow or blood compression by Chauvin, as seen on the bystander video, cause asphyxia by obstructing though the other officers the windpipe or by stopping pressing down on Floyd's chest and limbs may have played a part, can contribute to asphyxia by too. Cardiorespiratory arrest. This simply means that the your chest, and by slowing heart and breathing have cardiac return -- the flow of stopped. It doesn't tell you why. The medical examiner's report to the heart. The medical indicates that Floyd's heart examiner's report and and lungs stopped working prosecution say the primary when he was subdued and cause of Floyd's asphyxia restrained.



# Why are Jan. 6 protesters still in jail while murderers walk free?



Today is the three-month anniversary of January 6th. For those who aren't good with dates or don't have calendars, this is the day we pause to remember the White supremacist "QAnon insurrection" that came so very close to toppling our government and ending this democracy forever. You saw what happened. It was carried live on television, every gruesome moment.

A mob of older people from unfashionable zip codes somehow made it all the way to Washington, D.C., probably by bus. They wandered freely through the Capitol, like it was their building or something. They didn't have guns, but a lot of them had extremely dangerous ideas. They talked about the Constitution, and something called "their rights." Some of them made openly seditious claims. They insisted, for example, that the last election was not entirely fair. The whole thing was terrifying. And then, as you've been told so often, they committed unspeakable violence. By the time thousands of soldiers arrived to restore order, an unarmed woman, an Air Force veteran, lay dead. To this day, that woman is the one completely verified casualty of the insurrection, the only person whose death we can say definitively was caused by specific events on January 6th. We know how she died. The funny thing is, you almost never hear that woman's name. Possibly that's because she wasn't a Democratic member of Congress, or even a Joe Biden voter. She was a protestor. Her name was Ashli Babbitt. She was 35.

We still don't know who shot Ashli Babbitt, or why. No one will tell us. But then, when you're fighting insurrectionists, you don't have to explain yourself. You just hyperventilate about QAnon, and then you do whatever you want. When a group of sad, disenfranchised people who have been left out of the modern economy show up at your office, you don't have to listen to their complaints, not for a second. Why would you? You thought listening to people's complaints was democracy? No, these

people threaten democracy. You can even shoot one of them, if you want, and get away with it. Killing people without explaining yourself is an established part of counterinsurgency. If you don't believe it, check out what happened in the Second World War.

CHUCK SCHUMER, JAN. 6: President Franklin Roosevelt set aside December 7th, 1941, as a day that will live in infamy. Unfortunately, we can now add January 6th, 2021 to that very short list of dates in American history that will live forever in infamy.

January 6th was equivalent to Pearl Harbor, says Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. Schumer has never really gotten appropriate credit for the grandeur of that statement, considering the fact that we entered the Second World War the day after Pearl Harbor. That war went on for four years. More than 400,000 Americans died. That was the cost of stopping fascism.

We don't yet know the cost of stopping White supremacist QAnon insurrection, but you can be certain Chuck Schumer is prepared to have you pay whatever it costs. Joe Biden's Justice Department is on the front lines of this new war.

Until late last month, a man called Michael Sherwin worked for the administration as a prosecutor in Washington. Sherwin bragged that his office rounded up about 400 people who were in or near the Capitol on Jan. 6. You may be wondering if 400 people really committed crimes that day. It depends how you define "crime." Here's Michael Sherwin's definition:

MICHAEL SHERWIN: After the 6th, we had an inauguration on the 20th. So I wanted to ensure, and our office wanted to ensure that there was shock and awe, that we could charge as many people as possible before the 20th. And it worked because we saw through media posts that people were afraid to come back to D.C. because they're like, "If we go there, we're gonna get charged." ... We wanted to take out those individuals that essentially were thumbing their noses at the public for what they did.

So now it's clear. It wasn't that 400 people broke actual laws. No, their crime, said the federal prosecutor, was "thumbing their noses at the public," meaning the Democratic Party. It wasn't "insurrection." It was showing disrespect to Joe Biden and his enforcers like Michael Sherwin, and that can't happen. That's why Michael Sherwin decided to use "shock and awe" - to teach them a permanent lesson about expressing their political opinions. As Sherwin explained, "the scope and scale of this investigation are really unprecedented, not only in FBI history but probably DOJ history."

And he may be right. How big and how serious is this investigation into those insurrectionists? So serious that the FBI has stopped investigating other crimes, and not minor crimes.

According to USA Today, "Investigators who typically work cases involving the trafficking of drugs, child pornography and sex have taken calls from rioter's [sic] angry ex-wives and former girlfriends and employers turned tipsters."

So, in order to send a message to people with unacceptable political ideas in Washington, D.C., we're not going after people who sell fentanyl, a drug that has killed more than 100,000 Americans, or child pornographers. They won't be punished. So who are these people who are being perused in lieu of tracking down fentanyl dealers and child pornographers? Who's experiencing the Biden administration's "shock and awe"?

Well, people like Anthony Alfred Griffith of Oklahoma. Griffith didn't throw fire bombs at a police car. He didn't loot anything. He didn't torch a Wendy's. He did something far worse. According to KFOR-TV:

"Griffith walked into the U.S. Capitol building through the open doors on January 6, telling the agents he did not see any police officers as he entered the building. He then went into a nearby office where he 'interacted with some individuals' before exiting the building. However, he reentered the U.S. Capitol Building again a short time later, where he meandered through the hallways and took a few photos."

For that act of terrorism, Anthony Griffith faces seven years in prison. Prosecutor Michael Sherwin is fine with that. At one point in his interview with "60 Minutes," Sherwin was asked about bringing sedition charges against the people he arrests, the people who meandered. Sure, he replied. Why not?

SCOTT PELLEY: Sedition occurs when anyone opposes by force the authority of the United States, or by force hinders or delays the ex-

ecution of any law of the United States ... Do you anticipate sedition charges against some of these suspects?

SHERWIN: I believe the facts do support those charges. And I think that, as we go forward, more facts will support that, Scott.

Meandering is sedition, says Michael Sherwin.

Just for reference, federal prosecutors aren't supposed to reveal themselves as partisan lunatics on television. Sherwin's comments were so grotesquely out of line that a federal judge appointed by Barack Obama, Amit Mehta, said he was considering issuing a gag order to make Michael Sherwin be quiet. The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals -- the most powerful appellate court in the country -- just ordered the DOJ to start distinguishing between actual criminals, and people who walked through open doors inside the Capitol building.

That ruling came after the DOJ tried to convince a judge that two defendants -- Lisa Eisenhart and her son, Eric Munchel - should face indefinite detention. Neither Lisa Eisenhart nor her son damaged any property at the Capitol or committed any violence. They just walked in to what we used to refer to as the People's House.

And yet, somehow Joe Biden's DOJ convinced a trial judge that Lisa Eisenhart was a "threat to our Republic," and that her son was a "would-be martyr." Keep in mind, these are people whose only crime was trespassing in the Capitol. We're not endorsing that, but some perspective please.

It took a ruling from the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals to bring some perspective.

Two individuals who did not engage in any violence and who were not involved in planning or coordinating the activities - seemingly would pose little threat," the appellate panel wrote. Yeah, seemingly.

But the judges still didn't release Eric Munchel or Lisa Eisenhart. That's how much power these prosecutors have. They can keep you in prison even when a three-judge appellate panel concludes there's no reason for you to be in prison.

That's probably why prosecutors still haven't, as of tonight, released a man called Jacob Chansely, otherwise known as the "Chewbacca Guy." Like Eric Munchel and Lisa Eisenhart, Jacob Chansely isn't accused of committing any act of violence. He's not accused of breaking any property. What exactly did he do? We can answer that question. Video shows him walking through the Senate chamber.

"Chewbacca Guy" is still in jail. He'll be there indefinitely. Before you shrug that off, think about what that's actu-

ally like. You don't want to think about it.

A number of people arrested on Jan. 6 are still rotting in the D.C. municipal lockup, one of the foulest detention centers in the country. It's a truly repulsive, mismanaged place. Ask anyone from Washington, D.C. what they would do not to be thrown in the D.C. jail. It's that bad. Some say they've been beaten, not surprisingly, by guards there. Lawyers for one, a man called Ryan Samsel, say he was beaten so badly, he has a skull fracture and is now blind in one eye.

How many Antifa rioters or BLM vandals can say that? Did they lose their eyesight from being beaten in jail? Well, as a group, they didn't spend much time in jail. Most were spring on bail immediately, which politicians like Kamala Harris helped them pay.

Last summer, for example, authorities released a terrorism suspect in Oklahoma called Eric Christopher Ruffin, after Black Lives Matter posted his \$750,000 bond. According to authorities, Ruffin, "encouraged others to burn an Oklahoma County sheriff's van and an Oklahoma City bail bonds business May 30. The van was destroyed. C.J's Bail Bonds had \$8,850 in damage from broken windows."

But Eric Christopher Ruffin went home, and he went home for one reason: Unlike the Chewbacca Guy, he didn't upset the people in charge. He didn't walk in their "sacred chamber" and talk about "liberty and rights." He just tried to vaporize some police vehicles, and that's exactly what our political class wanted him to do. So he's a hero, he's fine. He hasn't lost his eyesight getting a beating in jail.

This kind of thing, unequal treatment under the law, is on stark display across the country right now. We could spend an hour giving you examples, but here are a couple:

On Saturday, police say, a criminal released on "emergency coronavirus bail" stabbed an elderly Asian woman to death in Riverside, California. The suspect, Darlene Montoya, was in jail for a serious crime -- she'd been accused of assault with a deadly weapon. But, is that really as serious as meandering through the Capitol building? No, of course not, it's not "insurrection." So, Darlene Montoya got to walk out of jail and find someone else to hurt. In December, a New York judge released a murder suspect named Jordon Benjamin, just in time for Benjamin to go out and allegedly stab a woman in the stomach. Jordon Benjamin then got out of jail again.

**By Tucker Carlson, Courtesy Foxnews.com**



# Where PM Modi Could Be Just As Wrong As Nehru

A critical component of the myth-making around Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is to minimize the contribution of the country's foundational figures. None has suffered more than Jawaharlal Nehru, the man who laid down the rails on which the republic has run for 74 years. Which makes it surprising that Modi is emulating a signature Nehru policy and, paradoxically, one that failed: self-sufficiency. Why is a 21st-century leader borrowing a discredited 1940s idea that was given up in the 1990s?

The Harrow and Cambridge-educated Nehru, son of a wealthy lawyer, was an internationalist. But when it came to picking a developmental strategy, he never had much of a choice. Taking charge in 1947 of a newly independent nation ravaged by two centuries of British colonial plunder, he was forced to follow a closed-economy approach. For one thing, World War II had caused a huge global shortage in capital goods. The steel that could go into tractors had

ended up in tanks. How to import any machines, or pay for them? Especially when India's export advantage in cotton and jute was lost after partition, to West and East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Modi is relying on the same formula that won him success as chief minister of Gujarat.

Nehru's other problem was the state: highly capital-intensive Soviets. By the mid-1950s, they had infiltrated the Indian infrastructure and investor-planning process with their friendly policies.

To turn India into a factory model of rapid, heavy industrialization. The idea of the world, Modi has put producing one's own steel to together a five-year infrastructure project pipeline make machines to then manufacture bicycles was worth 111 trillion rupees (\$1.5 seductive, even if it meant not having enough trousers and toys, or shirts and shoes, to sell the previous two decades. He cheaply at home and globally has slashed corporate tax and absorb surplus farm labor. rates, merged 29 labor codes This put India on a path of slower urbanization and growth than in East Asia's tiger economies.

Modi is approaching the problem from a different angle. A popular leader who came to parts to politics on a platform of muscular nationalism, he dismantled Nehru's planning apparatus shortly after becoming prime minister in three years and boost wages 2014. Modi had none of Nehru's by \$55 billion annually, class privileges. As a young boy, he helped his father sell of S&P Global Inc. That's the



good part, one that has a shot at success in the current climate. Rising U.S.-China tensions are forcing global firms to broaden their supply chains. Where Modi is going wrong - and repeating Nehru's mistake - is in choosing self-sufficiency over openness.

East Asian countries like Taiwan and South Korea recognized fairly early that labor-intensive manufacturing was their natural advantage. They played to it. India didn't. Nehru's heavy-industry approach failed to create employment for the huddled masses. Perhaps the Soviets wanted the consequences of their model to creep up on India and lead to collectivization of farming

under pressure from a growing, restive population that wasn't really needed on the land but had few factory jobs to go to. Luckily for India, Nehru never went that far.

The economy started opening up in the 1990s. Industrial licensing went away, tariffs began to fall. Led by computer software, skills-based exports grew rapidly. Yet the blunder of not exploiting cheap, unskilled labor never really stopped mattering. India was teeming with 500 million people at the time of Nehru's death in 1964. Modi has to create jobs for a population of more than 1.3 billion that's bulging with young people - and youth underemployment.

## Hope Floats For India-Pakistan Trade Developments



After almost two years, there was excitement among the advocates of India-Pakistan trade. Developments such as ceasefire along the Line of Control, exchange of peace overtures, and trade ban lift created an impression that relations between India and Pakistan are moving towards normalisation. The mood changed in less than 24 hours when the decision to allow imports of limited commodities was rejected, in a meeting chaired by

Prime Minister Imran Khan on April 1, 2021. The trade relations between India and Pakistan had changed drastically after the militant attack in the Pulwama district in February 2019, post which India withdrew the status of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) for trade granted to Pakistan in 1996, imposed a 200 per cent duty hike, suspended trade across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir region and Pakistan suspended all economic ties with

India after the J&K Reorganization Bill in August that year. Pakistan's proposal to resume trade arose out of increasing prices and decreasing yield of cotton and sugar in the country. While Pakistan grows cotton domestically, majority of its cotton imports came from India, for example, in 2018, India accounted for 40 per cent of Pakistan's cotton imports. After the trade ban between India and Pakistan in 2019, Pakistan began sourcing cotton and cotton yarn from the US, Vietnam, and Brazil, thereby witnessing a rise in cotton prices, amid low production and higher import tariffs. One of Pakistan's major imports from India was cotton yarn (HS Code 520524), the import tariff on this product category is 11 per cent from the US and Vietnam, compared to 5 per cent from India. The textile industry is one of the major industrial sectors of Pakistan, accounting for 60 per cent of the country's total exports.

Pakistan's government targets raising the country's textile and clothing exports from USD 13.5 billion in 2018 to USD 25 billion by 2025. Expensive cotton can impact Pakistan's competitiveness in cotton-based readymade garments. This matters even more with the China Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (CPFTA2) in the background. Under CPFTA2, China has eliminated tariffs on 313 priority tariff lines of Pakistan's export interest. Of the 313 high-priority products that Pakistan can now export duty free to China, 130 are from the textiles and clothing sector. For Pakistan to fully reap the benefits of the CPFTA2, access to low-priced cotton is essential to maintain export competitiveness for cotton-based readymade garments globally.

After textiles, the sugar industry in Pakistan is the largest agro-based industry, with an annual production of 5.5 million metric tonnes. In 2019-20, the global

sugar production stood at 167 million metric tonnes, 18 per cent of which is constituted by Brazil, 16 per cent by India, and 3 per cent by Pakistan making it the eighth largest producer and consumer of sugar. After Pakistan banned trade with India, it started importing sugar from Brazil, China, and Thailand, among others, leading to a surge in prices and restricted supply.

Before February 2019, cotton and sugar were the top items exported by India to Pakistan, and the imports of fruits, vegetables, and nuts from Pakistan constituted a significant share of India's total imports from Pakistan. Upsetting the cross-border trade dynamics can often have more repercussions than foreseen. Trade disruptions often cause fluctuations in the price of goods that would have otherwise been kept under check by the balancing out mechanisms of international trade.





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

## Shri SHANI DEV Mandir, New York

### Sarvamangala Shri SANEESWARA Temple, New York

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

*Special Poojas:*

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



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

**Temple Hours: 8.00 am to 9.00 pm**

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

*Functions of the space:*

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

**www.NavagrahaUSA.com**



# Despite 2019 rural boost, why BJP may find it tough to dislodge Mamata in Bengal

**Despite rural constituencies of West Bengal giving a sizeable lead to the BJP over the Trinamool Congress in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, data shows that the ruling TMC still dominates Bengal's urban landscape.**

(News Agencies)- In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, it was the rural constituencies of West Bengal which gave BJP a sizeable lead over the Trinamool Congress. This was in sharp contrast to how several political analysts view BJP as an urban, upper-caste and upper-class party. Bengal is unique in the way that it has nearly equal share of urban (149) and rural (145) constituencies. But if the saffron camp has pipped Trinamool in the state's rural belt, the ruling party still dominates Bengal's urban landscape.

It is these urban seats that go to polls from the third phase onwards. The BJP is hopeful of denting Mamata Banerjee's popularity among this section. If it indeed manages to do so, it might well augur a new beginning in Bengal's politics, marked by the expansion of Hindutva politics into hitherto uncharted territory.

Over the years, BJP has reached out to every section of society and made significant inroads in rural constituencies and among the disadvantaged communities. This new avatar of the BJP, which has retained its traditional support base of urban class and upper caste voters, and is powered by the growing acceptance of Subaltern Hindutva, has made it a force to reckon with in Indian politics. Barring a few states of South India, this experiment has paid rich electoral dividends for the BJP in successive elections.

In 2019, the BJP pulled off a massive surprise in Bengal and Odisha, two East Indian states where it was only a marginal player till a few years back. The performance was especially spectacular in Mamata land due to two major reasons. One, the BJP never had a strong presence in Bengal. Its maximum vote share in the

state was 17 per cent in the 2014 general elections. Five years later, it not only breached the 40 per cent vote share mark, but was only 3 per cent votes and 4 seats behind Trinamool. Second, the rise of BJP came at the expense of Left, an unprecedented incidence in India's electoral history. But despite that, the BJP lagged behind where it is traditionally strong. Its performance in urban Bengal was way below its state-wide blitzkrieg.

Changing dynamics

The 149 urban and semi-urban seats in Bengal have been identified on the basis of satellite data of the European Space Agency in 2015, calculated and provided by Shamindra Nath Roy, senior researcher at the Centre for Policy Research (CPR). The final identification and categorisation of urban, semi-urban and rural constituencies



have been done by Roy, political scientist Neelanjan Sircar and this author using mathematical tools.

What changed the political scenario of the state in 2019 was the massive decline of Trinamool in rural areas. Historically, it did not enjoy a strong support in rural areas as this space was usurped by the Left. However, the Trinamool improved its performance in this constituency since the 2011 assembly elections, only to decline again in 2019.

In the 2016 assembly election, BJP had won only one rural assembly constituency of the total 145. Come 2019, and it registered a lead in 82, while

the Trinamool led in only 59. The situation reversed completely in the urban seats the Trinamool led in 105 and BJP in 39. What is important to note here is that in rural constituencies, it wasn't only the Left, but also a sizeable share of Trinamool votes which went into the BJP kitty. Our analysis shows the BJP and Trinamool vote share was almost equal in rural areas, but the saffron camp trailed the ruling party by 6 per cent votes in semi-urban seats and 9 per cent votes in urban seats.

For example, the 11 urban seats of Kolkata gave a lukewarm response to the BJP juggernaut even in 2019.

## Why Delhi's Covid-19 positivity rate gives a negative feeling



**Delhi's Covid-19 positivity rate touched 5.5 per cent on Monday. This is the highest positivity rate for a day in Delhi since December 2 last year. What makes the current spike in positivity rate a cause for concern? Read on to know.**

(News Agencies)-The second wave of Covid-19 has gripped the country. In Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

says Covid-19 pandemic is having its fourth wave in the city. It has pushed the positivity rate beyond five per cent - considered as a threshold - once again triggering a serious cause for concern.

The Delhi government has responded with imposing night curfew from 10 pm to 5 am effective from Tuesday night in

the wake of consistent spike in Covid-19 cases in the city.

THE WORRY

On Monday, Delhi recorded 3,548 Covid-19 cases from 64,003 samples tested. This puts the positivity rate in Delhi for Monday at 5.5 per cent. This is the highest Covid-19 positivity rate for a day in Delhi since December 2 last year. However,

Monday was not the day to record highest number of Covid-19 cases in the fresh wave of pandemic. On April 4, Delhi recorded over 4,000 cases, with a positivity rate of 4.6 per cent.

THE TOPSY-TURVY TALE

This is not the highest positivity rate for Delhi since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic.

## Was Mukhtar Ansari running his gang from Punjab jail? Opposition parties demand probe

(News Agencies)- Opposition parties have demanded a probe into allegations that don-turned-MLA Mukhtar Ansari was getting VVIP treatment and running his gang from Punjab's Rupnagar jail.

"Mukhtar Ansari's henchmen had been living in rented houses near Rupnagar jail for the last two years. The gangster was getting VVIP treatment. The government also spent public money on hiring advocates to

fight the don's case in the Supreme Court," BJP national secretary Tarun Chugh said.

Senior Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Dr Daljit Cheema demanded that people behind "a deep-rooted conspiracy" to keep Mukhtar Ansari in Rupnagar jail be exposed and punished. There are also allegations that Ansari's wife and a cook were also living in a rented house in Rupnagar. "The Punjab government is in the dock for trying to stall the handover of Mukhtar Ansari. The

Uttar Pradesh government was compelled to approach the apex court to get his custody. Was there a criminal conspiracy behind stalling Ansari's handover? If yes, those behind the conspiracy should be exposed," Dr Daljit Cheema said.

It was not easy for the UP government to get Ansari's custody. Punjab jail authorities had denied his custody to the UP Police nine times. It was finally given after the intervention

of the Supreme Court. The court had observed that the custody was being denied on trivial grounds. Medical grounds such as a slipped-disk problem, high blood sugar levels and depression were not considered as grounds to keep him in Rupnagar jail.

Senior BJP leader Vineet Joshi demanded a CBI probe into the allegations against the Captain Amarinder Singh government. He alleged that a close relative of a senior Congress leader was

a business partner of Mukhtar Ansari's son and that's why Ansari was getting patronage of this kind.

"Locals say that Mukhtar Ansari's men had rented out over two dozen houses near the jail. The Punjab government was opposing his handover due to his relations with a senior Congress leader's son. The government should clarify why it was spending public money on a gangster," Vineet Joshi said.





# NEW FORMS OF THE VIRUS, SAME FIGHT!

It's been a long year of change. And now, even COVID is changing—with new forms of the virus called variants that may spread more easily. But one thing is the same: our determination to help slow the spread of COVID. If we remain vigilant and continue what we've been doing—wearing masks, keeping 6 feet apart, and getting vaccinated when it's our turn—we can beat this virus together.

Learn more at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)



Brought to you by the  
U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services.

**WE  
CAN  
DO  
THIS**



# Jordan's royal family drama sends shudders around the region. Here's what we know

*For a country often seen as a bastion of relative calm in a troubled region, the events that unfolded in Jordan over the weekend were among the most dramatic in decades.*

(News Agencies)-Around 15 people were detained, including a high-profile political figure and at least one member of the royal family. A popular former crown prince, Hamzah bin Al Hussein, publicly slammed Jordan's leadership in a video sent to the media, and was publicly banned from political activities. The prince claimed to have been restricted to his home and certain family gatherings, as well as deprived of internet and phone lines.

Authorities said they had foiled a plot in which Hamzah was working in collusion with unnamed foreign entities to "destabilize" Jordan. The prince denied the claims and dismissed the arrest sweep as a bid to silence growing criticism of government corruption.

The crisis has thrust Jordan, one of the Middle East's most stable countries, into uncharted waters. Here's what we know.

What just happened in Jordan?

On Saturday evening, reports circulated that Prince Hamzah had been placed under house arrest. The country's military chief swiftly denied the statement. A few hours later, the prince released Arabic and English video recordings that stunned the nation.

With a portrait of his late father King Hussein in the backdrop, the 41-year-old prince claimed that he was told to stay home, stripped of his security, and cut off from his communications. He also claimed that several of his friends and acquaintances were arrested. He lashed out at the country's leadership, airing grievances over living conditions, government corruption and mismanagement. Never named in his scathing criticism was his half-brother, King Abdullah II. Yet his tirade posed the most explicit and high-profile challenge to the monarch's authority in his 22-year reign.

Jordanians' "well-being has been put second by a ruling system that has decided that its personal interests, financial interests, that its corruption is more important than the lives and dignity and future of the ten million people who live here," said the prince.

Jordanians are accustomed to hearing these complaints from ordinary citizens. To see them



echoed by a prominent royal blindsided many.

Bassem Awadallah, who formerly headed King Abdullah's royal court, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, were also detained on Saturday evening, along with other unnamed figures. Awadallah's arrest was perhaps the second most significant event of the night. An unpopular figure in Jordan because of widespread accusations of corruption levelled against him, Awadallah is also an advisor to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. That fact fueled speculation about whether a foreign plot was at play.

On Sunday, deputy prime minister Ayman Safadi made it official -- authorities believed that Hamzah was part of plan hatched by undisclosed foreign entities and opposition figures abroad to "destabilize" Jordan. The plot, said Safadi, was "nipped in the bud" and definitively thwarted.

Meanwhile, a second recording by Hamzah has since surfaced, in which the prince vows not to comply with the restrictions placed on him.

"Of course I'm not going to obey when they say you can't go out, you can't tweet, you can't communicate with people, but you are allowed to see your family," he said in the audio recording, which is believed to have been made on Saturday. CNN could not independently authenticate the veracity of the recording.

Hamzah also said in the audio that he had recorded a threat made by the military chief of

staff. He said he shared this with his friends and relatives in case something was to happen to him.

Who is Hamzah bin Hussein?

Prince Hamzah is the younger half-brother of King Abdullah.

He is the son of Jordan's late King Hussein, who reigned for nearly 50 years, and his US-born wife Queen Noor. He was groomed to be monarch. The late king, who the nation continues to idolize, once described him as "the delight in his eye."

On his death bed in 1999, King Hussein changed the country's succession plan, removing his brother Prince Hassan as the heir apparent and naming Abdullah, his eldest son from his second marriage, as his successor.

Hamzah, who was 17 at the time, was named crown prince. In 2004, Abdullah removed Hamzah's title. Five years later, he named his son, Prince al-Hussein, as his successor.

However, Prince Hamzah, known for his uncanny resemblance to his father, enjoys widespread support from Jordanian tribes. Those groups serve as the backbone of the monarchy, and the prince's regular visits to them in recent months may have contributed to the royal tensions that have gripped the country.

What does the royal drama say about the stability of the country, and how does it affect the region? For decades, Jordan has managed to emerge from the wars and unrest that surround it almost unscathed. Stability and constancy are the



bedrocks of the state, which marks its centennial later this month.

Its ruling family, the Hashemites, is one of the world's oldest dynasties, tracing its lineage to the Prophet Mohammed. Opposition to the country's royalty is rare, bordering on being sacrilegious. Jordanians also typically shun the prospect of domestic unrest, with the political discord that is the hallmark of the region serving as a cautionary tale.

Western nations, especially the US, have relied on this strategic state as a diplomatic, military and counter-terrorism partner over the years. Jordan also has one of the longest-running peace treaties with Israel, with whom it coordinates closely on defense and intelligence.

If Jordan were to slip into turmoil, the foundational role it plays in regional security could quickly change. This was evidenced by the outpouring of support from international and regional partners. Powerful Arab Gulf states were quick to reiterate their support for the king, who later fielded a flurry of phone calls from those leaders. They seemed intent to distance themselves from the alleged foreign plot, but the endorsement of King Abdullah as a key partner appeared largely sincere. There was a clear recognition of what was at stake - destabilizing a country like Jordan can mean trouble for many other countries in the region.

If Jordan's monarch were to be deposed, it would create a transnational ripple effect that could threaten other monarchies in the

region. Projecting an image of solidarity and an ironclad rejection of sedition appeared imperative.

Why is the timing of the developments important? This could not have happened at a worse time in Jordan. Anger has been building among its youth - who account for most of the population - over the state of a deteriorating economy made worse by the pandemic. Unemployment and poverty rates have reached record highs. Alleged corruption and mismanagement are widely named as the culprit. Discontent has driven Jordanians to the streets, but tolerance for protests has diminished significantly. Last month, at least eight people died after a disruption to the oxygen supply at a public hospital in the city of Salt. The incident was blamed on negligence and incompetence, something that has plagued the public sector.

Within hours of the incident, angry crowds began to gather around the hospital. In a rare move, King Abdullah, clad in his military fatigues, arrived at the facility. Visibly angry, he questioned hospital management. He later fired local health officials and the health minister. This was the clearest example of the country's leadership acknowledging the gravity of the situation in the country and its potential to ignite civil unrest. Still, small protests continued to erupt in several Jordanian cities. When Prince Hamzah appeared to publicly take up the mantle of anti-corruption protesters, he may have poured fuel on the fire. Hamzah enjoys popular support, and many openly opposed his alleged detainment on social media. But King Abdullah is also popular -- Jordanian Twitter and the audio-only app Clubhouse were awash with debates that pitted people with avatars of the king against those with images of the prince. Unlike the king, Hamzah has no discernible institutional backing, and it is unclear how he can tangibly rattle Jordan's establishment. Still, he has a touched a raw nerve. And while the country has shown an incredible ability to repeatedly walk back from the brink, the leadership has reason to be nervous.



# Myanmar's military is waging war on its citizens. Some say it's time to fight back

(News Agencies)-From a fenced-off compound close to the Myanmar border in northern Thailand, a rebel leader offers a bleak view of Myanmar's future, as the country is cleaved apart by a military coup.

The possibility of a deepening civil war in Myanmar is "high," Gen. Yawd Serk said from his administrative base in Chiang Mai province.

"The world has changed. I see people in the cities won't give up. And I see (coup leader) Min Aung Hlaing won't give up. I think there is possibility that civil war might happen."

Yawd Serk is an old hand at confronting military rulers. He is chairman of the ethnic minority political organization Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and founder of its armed wing, the Shan State Army (SSA), which controls large pockets of land in Myanmar's east. His is one of more than two dozen ethnic armed groups that have been fighting against the Myanmar military -- know as the Tatmadaw -- and each other in the country's borderlands for greater rights and

autonomy, on and off for 70 years. Since the military seized power on February 1, deposing the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, many of these rebel groups -- including the RCSS -- have expressed support for non-violent nationwide protests against junta rule, and condemned the indiscriminate brutality and deadly use of force inflicted on Burmese civilians by junta-controlled soldiers and police.

But as security forces continue their deadly campaign, there are signs the country is reaching a turning point where rebel groups could engage in renewed conflict, while some in the protest movement start to push for armed resistance in a bid to defend themselves.

A senior rebel leader and several protesters, whom CNN is not identifying for security reasons, say a small, but growing number of pro-democracy activists are heading into the jungles where they are receiving combat training from ethnic militias.

There are also increasing calls from the urban centers for the ethnic rebel groups to do more to

protect people from the military violence.

A protest group formed by some of the myriad ethnic minorities in the country recently called on 16 ethnic armed organizations to "urgently" protect the lives of the people.

And last Tuesday, three rebel groups in the north of the country, which call themselves the Three Brotherhood Alliance, said if the Myanmar military does not stop killing civilians, "we will join the spring revolution with all the ethnicities for self defense actions."

If the military "continues to shoot and kill people, it means the junta have simply transformed themselves into terrorists," Yawd Serk said. "We won't just sit still, we will find every means to protect the people."

Myanmar's military junta has repeatedly blamed the violence on protesters and said security forces were using "minimum force."

Military spokesman Major General Zaw Min Tun said during an interview that junta forces cracked down because "the crowd are blocking with sand bags, shooting



with handmade guns, throwing with fire, throwing with molotov and the security forces have to use the weapons for the riot."

He also said the junta "will hold a free and fair election after the state of emergency," which is in place for one year.

**Airstrikes and refugees**

The Tatmadaw is a highly trained fighting force that ruled the country for more than half a century through brutality and fear, turning Myanmar into a poverty-stricken pariah nation.

Its sustained conflict with ethnic minorities has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, and rights groups have long linked soldiers to atrocities and human rights

abuses, such as rape, torture and other war crimes. Min Aung Hlaing oversaw the campaign of killing and arson waged against the Rohingya ethnic minority population in the country's west in 2016 and 2017, which prompted a genocide case at the International Court of Justice. Both the NLD-led government at the time and the military denied the charges and have long claimed to be targeting terrorists.

In the cities, elite counter-insurgency troops involved in these atrocities have been deployed and seen armed on the streets alongside other security forces.

## Invest in First Mortgages

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

**Learn about Investment Opportunities**

**B-1 Business Visas**

**EB-5 Investor Visas**

**Hotel - Land - Business**

**Investment/Partner Opportunities**

**For details & disclosures**

# WREAM

**Whitestone Real Estate Asset Management Corp.**

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

**\*Real Estate Broker/Investor/Private Lender Since 2009\***



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





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

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

**917-612-3158**  
[www.whitstonecorpusa.com](http://www.whitstonecorpusa.com)



# Russia to boost ties with Pakistan, supply military gear

**Russia's foreign minister on Wednesday said Moscow and Islamabad will boost ties in the fight against terrorism, with Russia providing unspecified military equipment to Pakistan and the two holding joint exercises at sea and in the mountains.**

(News Agencies)-Sergey Lavrov spoke on the second day of a two-day trip to Pakistan. It's the first visit by a Russian foreign minister in nine years, part of a warming of frosty relations. It comes as Moscow seeks to increase its stature in the region, particularly in Afghanistan, where it seeks to inject itself as a key player in efforts to find a peaceful end to decades of war.

"We stand ready to strengthen the anti-terrorist potential of Pakistan, including by supplying Pakistan with special military equipment," Lavrov said, without going into detail about the equipment.

Washington is reviewing an agreement it signed more than a year ago with the Taliban as it rethinks a May 1 withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Moscow has stepped up its involvement there and hosted talks last month

between the Taliban and senior Afghan government officials. Lavrov suggested another high-level meeting could again be held in Moscow.

Lavrov arrived in Pakistan on Tuesday from neighboring India, with which Moscow has had a long and solid relationship. The apparent reset in Pakistani-Russian relations, however, is by contrast a more recent phenomena.

Pakistan was a staging arena in the 1980s for anti-communist Afghan rebels aided by the U.S. to oust the Soviet Union, which in 1989 negotiated an end to its 10-year occupation of Afghanistan.

A statement from the Pakistani military after Lavrov's talks with Pakistan's army chief, Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, said they discussed "enhanced defense and security cooperation,



regional security, particularly the Afghan peace process."

Bajwa also reportedly told Lavrov that Pakistan wants

regional cooperation, though he did not mention Pakistan's

uneasy relationship with neighbor India.

## Afghan president proposes three-phase peace roadmap: Report

(News Agencies)-Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani will put forward a three-phase peace roadmap for Afghanistan during a proposed meeting in Turkey, seeking an agreement with the Taliban and a ceasefire before elections, a document seen by Reuters news agency shows.

The United States is pushing for a conference to be hosted by Turkey, with the involvement of

the United Nations, this month to finalise a peace deal between the government and the Taliban as a May 1 deadline looms for the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

Ghani's plan will be presented as a counter to proposals put forward by Washington - and rejected by the Afghan government - that envisage immediately drawing up a new

legal system for an interim administration to include Taliban representatives.

The document shows that Ghani's Reaching an Endstate proposal will include, in the first phase, a consensus on a political settlement and an internationally monitored ceasefire.

The second phase will be

holding a presidential election and the establishment of a "government of peace" and implementation arrangements for moving towards the new political system.

The third phase will involve building a "constitutional framework, reintegration of refugees and development" for Afghanistan moving forward.

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



**STOPTEXTSSTOPWRECKS.ORG**



WE THANK OUR CUSTOMERS FOR THEIR TRUST & LOYALTY

28 YEARS OF EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE



**INDO US EXPRESS, INC.**

HICKSVILLE, NEW YORK

WORLDWIDE COURIER FREIGHT-FORWARDER

DOMESTIC & LOCAL DELIVERY

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

ALTERNATE NUMBER: 347-538-7041

OR EMAIL US: [INDOUSEXPRESS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:INDOUSEXPRESS@GMAIL.COM)

[www.indousexpress.com](http://www.indousexpress.com)

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

AUTHORIZED AGENT FOR:

UPS - FedEx - DHL - USPS - Amazon

CALL ABOUT OUR SPECIAL RATES

TO & FROM INDIA/WORLDWIDE





# Pakistan faces dilemma over trade ties with India

The Pakistani government's recent flip-flop on the partial resumption of trade with India highlights how geopolitical considerations - rather than economic or rational - drive policymaking.

Pakistan's government last week put a hold on restarting limited imports of sugar, cotton and wheat from India until New Delhi reviews its 2019 decision to revoke the Kashmir region's special status.

It reversed the decision made earlier by Pakistan's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) to give the green light for imports from India, which would have ended nearly 20 months of trade suspension between the rivals.

The government's decision came after sharp criticism from opposition parties. They

slammed Prime Minister Imran Khan's administration for not consulting the parliament and trying to mend ties with New Delhi without first resolving the Kashmir dispute.

After the reversal, Khan stressed that trade with India would not be normalized until New Delhi resumed Kashmir's special constitutional status.

Tensions over Kashmir remain high

Kashmir is a territory that is claimed by both India and Pakistan and partly controlled by each, with China also controlling the most remote segment of the region. India and Pakistan fought two of their three full-fledged wars over the Kashmir region.

Pakistan halted trade and diplomatic ties with India in 2019 after New Delhi imposed direct

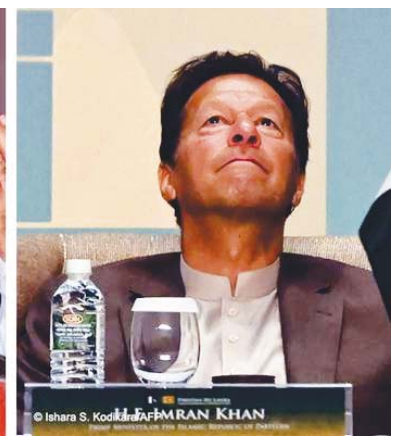
rule on the part of Kashmir it administers and imposed strict security controls there in anticipation of unrest at the decision.

There has been a frosty standoff since, but signs of rapprochement recently have included Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exchanging letters with his Pakistani counterpart, Khan, as well as a resumption of talks last week on the use of resources from their shared Indus River.

In February, Pakistan and India also agreed to continue a ceasefire at the often-tense Kashmir border.

Distrust and animosity cloud policymaking

Anti-India sentiment runs deep in Pakistan, but experts say it does not help the struggling



Pakistani economy.

"Anti-India sentiments have always been there in Pakistan, and those in power have successfully exploited them for their benefits," Amit Ranjan, a research fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, told DW.

He pointed out that New Delhi's

moves affecting Kashmir over the past two years have further strengthened anti-India forces in Pakistan, resulting in a total breakdown in trade and diplomatic ties.

"Cutting off such relations has been far from being practical as it puts a tremendous burden on the economically struggling Pakistan.

## Pakistan: Women's rights activists face new allegations of blasphemy



While organizers of Pakistan's Women's March have long been the subject of threats and criticism, allegations of blasphemy could put women's rights activists in a new kind of danger. Blasphemy accusations have resulted in killings in the past, and human rights activists believe that these allegations have created a widespread climate of fear, especially for women's rights advocates. "Pakistan is not a demo-

cratic state but a religious state where clerics wield a lot of influence," Mehdi Hassan, a former chairperson of Pakistan's Human Rights Commission, told DW. "Hurling allegations of blasphemy amounts to jeopardizing the lives of people here. We fear that the lives of women activists are in danger because there are so many extremists out there in the streets who could target them at any time."

**Politicians and rights activists say organizers of Pakistan's Women's March are being threatened with dangerous blasphemy accusations by religious conservatives.**

"At least seven people have been killed just because of blasphemy allegations. Therefore, it is important that the government provides them [the activists] with protection." "Who is threatening activists in Pakistan?"

At least two local courts - one in the northwestern city of Peshawar and another in the southern port city of Karachi - have asked police to register cases against organizers of the march, alleging violations of blasphemy and other laws. A petition seeking to ban the annual gathering has also been lodged with the Islamabad High Court.

Lahore-based activist Shazia Khan said friends and relatives have pressured them to maintain

a low profile following the accusations and legal cases.

"Hatemongers and misogynistic media personalities have been spewing venom against us, jeopardizing the lives of women in a country where people are killed merely due to false accusations of blasphemy," said Khan. Khan believes it is difficult to say who is behind these threats and litigation.

"However, the individuals and organizations that are issuing threats or registering cases are believed to have worked for the intelligence agencies in the past, or to have their support."

"All the videos and posters have been fabricated or doc-

tored. There is no truth to these accusations," prominent activist Farzana Bari told DW. Organizers of the march have also written an open letter to Prime Minister Imran Khan in order to draw his attention to the threats. Why is Women's March targeted?

Some prominent right-wing TV anchors and media personalities have also spoken out against the leaders of the march, accusing them of spreading Western culture.

"Blasphemous slogans were used during the Women's March," Ibrar Hussain, who filed a case against the activists, with a local court in Peshawar, told DW.

## Afghanistan's last known Jew is leaving for Israel

(News Agencies)- The man who has been known as the last Jew in Afghanistan for well over a decade is leaving for Israel, fearing that the US military's promise to leave the country will leave a vacuum to be filled with radical groups such as the Taliban.

"I will watch on TV in Israel to find out what happens in Afghanistan," Zabulon Simantov told Arab News on Sunday.

Simantov, 61, said he will leave

after this year's High Holidays season in the fall. His wife, a Jew from Tajikistan, and their two daughters have lived in Israel since 1998. But Simantov has stayed in his native Afghanistan to tend to its lone synagogue, located in the capital Kabul, through decades of violence and political turmoil, including a period of Taliban rule and the country's war with the US.

"I managed to protect the synagogue of Kabul like a lion of

Jews here," he said to Arab News. Simantov, a carpet- and jewelry-seller, was born in the Afghan city of Herat, which decades ago was home to hundreds of Jews. He eventually moved to Kabul but fled to Tajikistan in 1992 before returning to the capital city. Without him around, the synagogue will close, ending an era of Jewish life in the country that scholars believe began at least 2,000 years ago.

"If the Taliban return, they are



going to push us out with a slap in the face," Simantov told Radio Free Europe last week for an article on the exodus of many of the country's minority populations.



## Two New York doormen who closed the doors while an Asian woman was attacked have been fired



Two New York doormen who closed the doors to their building's apartment lobby while a 65-year-old Asian woman was punched and kicked outside have been fired, according to the building's owner.

The Brodsky Organization, which owns the building at 360 W. 43rd St. in Manhattan, said

in a statement Tuesday that it had completed an inquiry into the doormen's response to the March 29 attack.

Although the two employees seen on video closing doors in response to the perpetrator brandishing a knife did then emerge to assist the victim and flag down an NYPD officer, both remain

suspended pending determination of whether all emergency protocols were sufficiently followed," they said in a statement to CNN. "We are extremely distraught and shocked by this incident, and our hearts go out to the victim," it added.

It's unclear what specific emergency and safety protocols the company has in place, and CNN has reached out to Brodsky Organization for further clarification. The two doormen's names have not been made public.

Another video shows a more complete picture

A longer video obtained by CNN gives a fuller picture of the incident -- the viral clip appeared to simply show someone closing the door to the building after the woman was brutally attacked.

In the longer version, which captures more than six minutes of footage, a delivery person initially appears to witness the attack and the two doormen come to the door only after the perpetrator begins to walk away.

After one person closes the door, the three individuals inside appear to wait about a minute for the perpetrator to leave the vicinity before responding to the situation. During that time, two other people came and went from the building.

Within a couple of minutes, an emergency vehicle pulls up to the curb.

The New York Police Department said in a news conference the next day that there were no 911 calls for the incident and patrol officers drove by and came upon

the victim after she was assaulted.

The doormen were suspended after the attack, pending the outcome of the investigation.

Building residents had defended the men in an open letter to the organization, saying surveillance footage "most certainly mischaracterizes" their actions and that they did not believe the staff members had "failed us as residents, our Midtown Manhattan community, nor our fellow AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) New Yorkers."

Local union SEIU 32BJ identified the two fired employees as a doorman and a concierge who are members of the union, but said they were not speaking to news media at the moment.

## California utility PG&E facing criminal charges over the state's largest 2019 wildfire



(News Agencies)- Criminal charges have been filed against the Pacific Gas and Electric Company over the 2019 Kincadee Fire in California.

The massive fire, which burned through more than 77,000 acres of vegetation in Sonoma County,

was ignited by electrical transmission lines owned and operated by PG&E in northeast Geyserville, a Cal Fire investigation found. The fire destroyed 374 structures, damaged another 60 and caused injuries.

Sonoma County District Attorney Jill Ravitch charged PG&E with five felonies and 28 misdemeanors Tuesday. The charges include unlawfully starting a fire which caused bodily injury, unlawfully burning inhabited structures, unlawfully causing a fire which burned forests, and various air pollution crimes, the District Attorney's Office said in a statement.

The utility has faced scrutiny in recent years over its equipment's role in a spate of deadly and destructive California fires. Last summer, PG&E pleaded guilty to 85 counts, including involuntary manslaughter and unlawfully starting the Camp Fire, the deadliest blaze in the state's

history.

The Kincadee Fire resulted in the largest evacuation in Sonoma County history, which included the towns of Healdsburg, Windsor and Geyserville. It torched more than 5,000 acres within the first three hours.

A hearing in the latest case is scheduled for April 20 in Sonoma County. Tuesday's filing comes after interviews with dozens of witnesses, the issuing of search warrants, a review of hundreds of thousands of pages of documents and consultation with law enforcement and regulatory agencies, as well as independent experts, the District Attorney's Office said. "I went with others from my team, along with CalFire,

to the location in the Geysers where we believe the fire began as soon as it was safe to do so," Ravitch said in a statement. "Since that time, we have been working with CalFire and independent experts to determine the cause of and responsibility for the Kincadee fire. I believe this criminal complaint reflects our findings."

In the spirit of working to do what's right for the victims, we will accept CAL FIRE's finding that a PG&E transmission line caused the fire, even though we have not had access to the agency's report or the evidence it gathered," a PG&E spokesperson told CNN in an email.

## Deb Haaland creates unit to investigate killings and disappearances of Indigenous people

**Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced a new unit within Bureau of Indian Affairs that plans to tackle the decades-long crisis of missing and murdered Native Americans.**

(News Agencies)- "Violence against Indigenous peoples is a crisis that has been underfunded for decades," Haaland said in a statement Thursday. "Far too often, murders and missing persons cases in Indian country go unsolved and unaddressed, leaving families and communities devastated."

Thousands of Indigenous women and girls have been killed or vanished for years. Their families and activists say the cases are often disregarded by law

enforcement, which has forced them to bring the spotlight on the issue through social media campaigns, marches and protests.

The new unit is expected to "help put the full weight of the federal government" to investigate the cases and coordinate resources among federal agencies and Indian country, according to the Department of Interior.

About 1,500 American Indian and Alaska Native missing persons have been recorded across the

United States by the National Crime Information Center, and 2,700 homicide cases have been reported to the federal government's Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

The Justice Department has reported that on some reservations, Native American women are murdered at a rate more than 10 times the national average.

But the existing data and statistics about the crisis of missing and murdered



Indigenous people across the US is not comprehensive, advocates say.

Annita Lucchesi, a descendant of the Cheyenne tribe and executive director of the Sovereign Bodies Institute, has been tabulating missing and murdered cases for the past few

years.

The Indigenous-led research organization has documented 2,306 missing Native American women and girls in the US since the 1900s -- and about 58% of those cases were homicides, the group said in a report last year.



# Supreme Court wipes away ruling that said Trump violated Constitution by blocking Twitter followers



(News Agencies)-The Supreme Court on Monday wiped away a lower court opinion holding that then-President Donald Trump violated the First Amendment when he blocked followers from his Twitter account. The high court dismissed the case

because Trump is not in office so there is no longer a live case or controversy. Trump established his Twitter account in 2009, and in May and June of 2017, while serving as President, he blocked seven individuals who had expressed displeasure with him. Lawyers from the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University sued on behalf of the individuals, arguing Trump's action violated their First Amendment rights. In court papers, they said the President's account, @realDonaldTrump, "functions as an official source of news and information about the gov-

ernment, and as a forum for speech by, to, and about the President."

A district court said the then-President's action of blocking followers violated the individuals' First Amendment rights because it excluded them from a public forum based on their viewpoints -- a decision an appeals court later affirmed. Then-Solicitor General Jeff Wall asked the Supreme Court to take up the case, arguing that Trump's account is personal, even if it is sometimes run by his assistant Dan Scavino.

"By ignoring the critical distinc-

tion between the President's (sometimes) official statements on Twitter and his always personal decision to block respondents from his own account," Wall argued, the lower court opinion "blurs the line between state action and private conduct -- notwithstanding this Court's repeated and recent exhortations to heed that line carefully in applying the First Amendment." But after the election and after Twitter banned Trump from the platform for violating its policies related to the US Capitol insurrection, Wall asked the Court to dismiss the case and wipe away the lower court opinion.

## 21 people injured in 8-alarm fire at an apartment building in Queens, New York

(News Agencies)- Over 350 firefighters are battling an eight-alarm fire that tore through an apartment building in Queens, New York, on Tuesday. A total of 21 people were injured in the fire, according to the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) Deputy Assistant Chief Michael Gala. The injured includes 16 firefighters, two who suffered burns, and five civilians, according to Gala. None are facing life-threatening injuries. The building houses around 150 apartments, according to Gala. About 240 people, or 90 families, have been displaced by the fire, Gala said. The Red Cross is on scene and assisting those families.

The fire was found in an apartment on the sixth floor of the building and quickly spread to the area between the apartment ceiling and the roof, known as the cockloft, according to the FDNY. The occupant of the apartment fled the fire and left the door open, according to FDNY. Because the door was left open, the fire spread out into the hallway and spread much more rapidly, according to the FDNY. The fire has consumed one side of the building, said Gala. Video from the scene shows thick smoke rising from the roof of the red building in the Jackson Heights neighborhood. "Everybody was panicking, all you see is the smoke," resident Edwin

Martinez told CNN affiliate WABC. "When you came out of the building, you couldn't see anything. it was just all gray." Another resident, Kimberly Singhi, said she "got scared, because everything went black." "I grabbed my mom, I grabbed my dog and the pets we have, and we just ran out," Singhi told WABC.

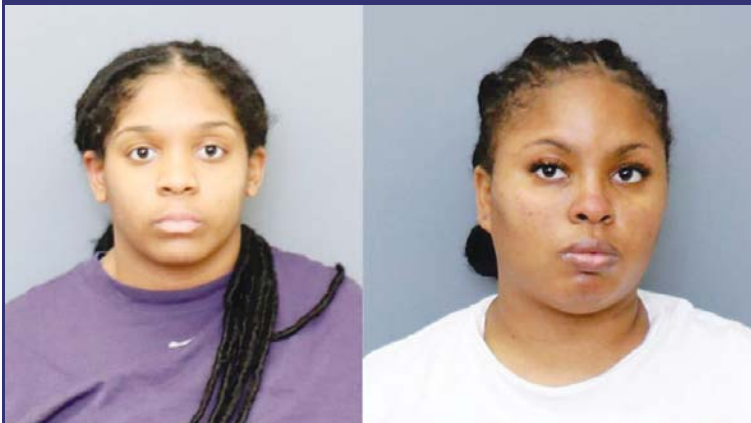
FDNY continues to battle the fire from the outside. The cause and origin of the blaze will be determined by the fire marshal when they can get into the building, fire department officials said. First responders will probably be on-scene at least through the night, Gala said. In a post on FDNY's Instagram page, Gala



described this is a "very complicated and prolonged operation." While giving updates at the scene, fire officials emphasized the importance of closing doors if a fire breaks out in your residence. This helps prevent the fire from spreading.

"We've stressed over the years the seriousness of that if you do unfortunately have a fire in your home or apartment, how important it is to close that door," FDNY Commissioner Daniel Nigro told CNN affiliate WABC.

## Two female county corrections officers accused of ramming Waldorf Taco Bell employees



(News Agencies)-Officers with the Charles County Sheriff's Office continue to investigate an incident at a Waldorf Taco Bell after they say several people including employees were hit by a car. According to the sheriff's office, the incident happened around 10:23 p.m. on Wednesday, March 31, on

Smallwood Drive. A spokesperson for the Prince George's County Department of Corrections confirmed to 7News that both suspects involved in the incident are correctional officers and were off-duty at the time. Tanesha Renea Williams, 25, of Waldorf, has been identified as the driver in the incident by

the Charles County Sheriff's Office and the alleged passenger has been identified as Diamond Shanay Johnson, 28, of Waldorf. Officers say they responded for a report of an assault and a preliminary investigation shows that an argument broke out between passengers in a vehicle and an employee at the drive-thru window about a food order.

According to the sheriff's office, both Williams and Johnson got out of the vehicle and Williams assaulted the employee at the drive-thru window during the argument before getting back into the vehicle. Williams, the driver, left the drive-thru and pulled to the

front of the business with the car before driving the vehicle towards a group of people standing outside of the front doors, including employees, officers say. She then drove toward the group, hitting several people before crashing into the front doors of the Taco Bell, according to the sheriff's office. According to officers, the vehicle continued to drive into the restaurant before backing up and leaving in the car. Officers say two people were treated by responding paramedics, and one person was hospitalized for non-life-threatening injuries. Investigators positively identified Williams and Johnson and arrest warrants were obtained

on Saturday. The sheriff's office says the suspects were served the arrest warrants on Monday. Both Williams and Johnson are being charged with attempted murder and face additional charges as well as being placed on "non-operational status" with the department of corrections, according to police. Williams also faces charges for first-degree assault, second-degree assault, and traffic violations. Johnson was also charged with first-degree assault, second-degree assault, and other related charges. Williams and Johnson are currently being held at the Charles County Detention Center without bond.



## Family of Black man fatally shot by Northern California police officer files civil rights lawsuit

The family of a 32-year-old Black man who was fatally shot by a Northern California police officer last month has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the town and police officers after video which captured a part of the shooting emerged. A video released Tuesday by family attorney shows the last seconds of the encounter between Tyrell Wilson and a Danville, California, police officer on March 11.

Wilson was carrying a grocery bag, walking by himself across a street toward his homeless encampment, according to a statement from his family's attorney John Burris.

According to the Danville Police Department, Officer Andrew Hall was responding to calls police dispatch received of rocks being

thrown from an overpass onto Highway 680. When Hall arrived at the scene, he approached Wilson and tried to talk to him but "the subject pulled out a folding knife and then opened it," police said.

Hall ordered Wilson to drop the knife several times, but Wilson "advanced toward the officer, who discharged his weapon striking the subject once," the police department said.

The police department also shared photos of Wilson holding a knife in his hand along with the release. Video of the entire encounter has not been released.

It's unclear from the video whether Wilson was holding a knife or advanced toward the officer.

Addressing the video in the

complaint, Burris notes "even if (the knife) was still in Mr. Wilson's possession at the time of the shooting, the video shows clearly that Mr. Wilson took no aggressive action whatsoever in that time frame."

In a news release, Burris also said there was no evidence, "Wilson was involved with the rock-throwing" and added that Wilson, who was "well known amongst daily commuters who all knew him as likable and easy-going." The press release also notes that Wilson was homeless and had been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic.

In a news conference Tuesday, Burris said they "did not see the knife in the video and the witnesses did not see that."

"My son has never, ever been violent," Wilson's mother Diana



said. "I have not seen the video, I do not want to see the video. I want my last thoughts and pictures of my son to be the beautiful man he is."

"I do want the officer to come to some kind of justice because I don't want another parent or father to go through what we're going through now," she added. "I think about my child, it makes me cry."

Lee Housekeeper, a spokesperson for Burris, told CNN that the attorney's office was in the process of filing the lawsuit last month when it found multiple eyewitnesses to the shooting who offered new information, including the video. "The video and witness accounts show this was a cold murder," Burris said in a statement.

## Breach continues but evacuation orders lifted near Florida reservoir



(News Agencies)-Evacuation orders near a Tampa-area reservoir where there still is a breach have been lifted, officials said Tuesday.

Acting Manatee County Administrator Scott Hopes said the situation at the former Piney Point phosphate plant is "very

much under control now."

Water from the breach has been routed to an unused retention pond on site that has a liner in it, according to Hopes.

And around 34 million gallons a day are being moved as part of the controlled release through pumps, vacuum trucks and other

methods, officials said.

Hopes said they have successfully released approximately 180 million gallons of water.

A leak in a containment wall was discovered about a week ago, and residents in the area were evacuated Thursday, officials said.

Officials were concerned the leak could cause a collapse of phosphogypsum stacks, waste that is created during fertilizer production and phosphate rock mining. At least 137 people and 36 pets were impacted by the evacuation orders, but as of Tuesday afternoon they could return safely, Manatee County Public Safety Director Jacob Saur

said at a news conference.

There is "diminished risk" to outlying areas, which is allowing the evacuation orders to be lifted, he said.

There are still some road closures in place in the area, Saur said, but US Highway 41 was opened Tuesday. Officials have said they are sending wastewater into Port Manatee and Tampa Bay, where it will ultimately flow into the Gulf of Mexico and be pushed southward by the Gulf Stream. Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried said Tuesday the state had "averted a huge, catastrophic event."

Had workers not slowed down the leak, the water would have devastated homes and taken a

natural gas plant offline.

"You also would have had all of this water going into the bays and other freshwater, which is what red tide feeds off of," she said. In 2018, a massive and prolonged red tide bloom devastated marine life, and tourism, along Florida coasts. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the US Environmental Protection Agency are testing the water in the pond and the release, she said. The water quality is still safe, she said, but they will continue to monitor it until the breach is fixed. State Sen. Janet Cruz also pointed out that if contaminated water were to reach the water table, the implications could be dramatic.

## Iraq battles two killer epidemics at once: Crystal meth and Covid-19

(News Agencies)-For nearly a month, Khaled lay on a threadbare mattress, writhing in pain. Until 2014, he worked as a security contractor in northern Iraq. When ISIS swept through the area, he lost his job and spiraled into a depression. Now in a prison cell, he has just recovered from withdrawal symptoms after years of crystal meth abuse. "The situation in the country was rough. You go and try to find work, but there was no work," he says. "Once, twice and I was hooked (on crystal meth). I was trapped. I couldn't get out." The woman he says was the love of his life left him.

Different versions of this story echo in the cells of the anti-drug police department prison in Baghdad's western district. The mix of drug users and dealers who we spoke to say Iraq's socioeconomic decay triggered their cycles of abuse. The prison cells hold double the number of men the space was intended for.

Throughout this report, Iraq's drug users have been identified by pseudonyms to protect their privacy. "We don't have the capacity," Col Mohammed Alwan, the commander of the drug unit in this part of the capital says. "Sometimes we have to

slow down work because we don't have the capacity to keep detainees and prisoners, especially not with the pandemic." He estimates that 10% of the population in his area of operations is addicted to drugs, overwhelmingly to crystal meth. Multiple officials told CNN that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the drug trade in Iraq. Years of war severely fractured the Iraqi state, with various powerful armed forces operating outside of government control. Corruption is rampant, and the economy, for most Iraqis, is on a seemingly endless downward



cycle. Iraqi youth struggle to find jobs, regardless of their education levels. In 2020, the pandemic dealt a blow to an already fragile economy. According to a fall 2020 World

Bank report, millions of Iraqis are expected to sink into poverty due to the twin shocks of the Covid-19 and a global collapse in the price of oil, which fuels Iraq's economy.



# Why China's space program could overtake NASA

In the summer of 2019, a small Chinese rocket launched from an inland spaceport in the southern part of the country. Close-up photos, posted afterward on Chinese social media accounts, showed small grid fins affixed to the upper part of this Long March 2C rocket for the first time. They were virtually identical in design to the grid fins SpaceX uses to steer its Falcon 9 rocket through the atmosphere for landings on its ocean-based drone ships.

A year after this test, China's main space contractor revealed plans to develop the ability to reuse its Long March 8 booster, which is powered by kerosene fuel, the same type of power that fuels SpaceX rockets. By 2025, Chinese officials said, this rocket would be capable of landing on a sea platform like SpaceX's Falcon 9 booster.

And it is not just the Chinese government contractors that are emulating SpaceX. A growing number of semi-private Chinese companies have also announced plans to develop reusable rockets. Chinese firms such as LinkSpace and Galactic Energy have released schematics that seem to mimic SpaceX technology. None of this should be particularly surprising. Government-launched enterprises in both Russia and Europe also recently revealed plans to develop reusable rockets that are similar

both in appearance and function to the Falcon 9 booster. But what makes the Chinese efforts to emulate SpaceX particularly notable is the country's expansive ambitions in space and its vast resources to back up these long-term goals.

## ADVERTI

Earlier this month, the Chinese government signed an agreement with Russia to work together to build a Moon base. China has also begun planning to launch crewed missions to Mars and deploy a massive space-based, commercial-scale solar power plant by 2050. They're playing the long game, and they're playing to win. Based on China's recent accomplishments in space, it would be wise to take these grand ambitions seriously. In December, China became only the third nation to return Moon rocks to Earth. Later this spring, it will seek to join the United States as only the second country to land and operate a rover on the surface of Mars.

All the while, China is racing across a number of other fronts in space, from building an orbital space station to maturing anti-satellite capabilities in space to establishing a base on the moon. As China advances in space, NASA has spent more than \$20 billion building a large rocket, the Space Launch System, that could soon be obsolete. And flying

this single-use rocket is so expensive that, in combination with its Artemis program, NASA could exceed its congressional funds by more than 43%.

NASA could also abandon the International Space Station in a few years. Meanwhile, China is training European astronauts and teaching them Chinese so that they might visit its large, modular space station. Some of these European astronauts may subsequently join the China-Russia lunar exploration effort.

Increasingly, the US' main advantage over China lies in its burgeoning commercial space industry, led by SpaceX. If America wants to compete, it should unleash the full potential of SpaceX and other commercial space companies that seek to go further in space, faster and for less money. This kind of public-private partnership has already worked in low-Earth orbit, with NASA buying services from companies such as SpaceX, Northrop Grumman and Boeing to deliver cargo and astronauts to the International Space Station. This is one reason why, about five years ago, China began backing dozens of companies to commercialize rockets and satellites. The 21st century space race, therefore, is not so much between China and NASA. Rather, it is between China and the US commercial space

industry. Nearly a decade ago, SpaceX attracted international acclaim when it began to successfully land its Falcon 9 rockets, accomplishing an engineering feat many previously deemed impossible or impractical. While historically rocket boosters have been discarded in the ocean after they expend their fuel on the way to orbit, SpaceX figured out how to land its boosters upright on platforms at sea and on land, allowing the company to recover and refurbish the rockets and save money.

Later, the company strapped three of these Falcon 9 cores together to build a larger and much more powerful rocket, called the Falcon Heavy. And it is now testing an even larger, reusable booster, its Starship vehicle, intended to ferry humans to and from Mars. In late February, China unveiled strikingly similar space plans. The country's space agency said it would build a triple core rocket, which looks like a SpaceX Falcon Heavy. And it also confirmed plans to move forward with its titanic Long March 9 rocket, capable of lifting as much as 140 metric tons to low-Earth orbit, the same amount as the Saturn V rocket, an American super heavy-lift launch vehicle that remains the most powerful

rocket that has ever flown successfully. This massive rocket would be unlike anything NASA built, however; Chinese officials, taking a page from the SpaceX playbook, said they would like it to be reusable. And, they added, they aim to one day launch the Long March 9 to take its taikonauts to Mars.

While SpaceX became a transformational space company, the US and China have been locked in an increasingly intense battle for influence and economic resources on Earth. That conflict, which has already emerged in low-Earth orbit, will extend to the Moon and eventually Mars in the coming decades. In the contest for geopolitical influence and economic wealth, space will come to represent the ultimate high ground. China is definitely going. For now, the US and NASA have the advantage of a more robust space program and a stronger commercial space industry. But for the last decade, the US commercial space industry has succeeded despite Congress, not because of it. Unless Congress and NASA more closely embrace commercial space and follow a bold plan of exploration, China's constancy of purpose and mimicking of Western strengths will overcome this head start.

# China capable of launching cyber-attacks against India, says CDS Gen Rawat

either through an alternative or preventive means through firewalls. So, while we are trying to create firewalls for cyber-attacks, yet we are quite sure they (China) will be able to break through the firewalls... But then what we are trying to do is how long will your system be down, and how will you be able to operate through that phase of cyber-attack you have been put through. That is one thing we are looking at and addressing in a serious manner," he said.

The CDS's comments come at a time when India and China are locked in a border standoff in eastern Ladakh and efforts are underway to withdraw front-line troops and weaponry from friction points along the contested Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Rawat said India was developing new technologies to bridge the

gap with China. The CDS said closing the technology gap with the neighbour would require integration of the resources of the three services.

"The three services are at different levels as far as our technology orientation is concerned. The navy is far ahead of the army and the Indian Air Force (IAF) in the way they have imbibed technology. If you integrate, you will at least be able to catch up with them (China). We may not be able to fully catch up with China, so we are trying to develop some kind of a relationship with western nations to see how we can get better support from them during peacetime at least to see how we can overcome this deficiency," Rawat said.

Cyber has, perhaps, come to acquire a pivotal position in any

nation's security architecture, said Air Vice Marshal Manmohan Bahadur (retd), additional director general, Centre for Air Power Studies.

"While preparing to acquire offensive capability, it is critical that one's own systems are protected. While we may be lagging behind China, our nation does not lack cerebral capital to catch up unlike in other capital acquisitions. All efforts must be made to tap the nation's inherent cyber know-how to protect our vital infrastructure from cyber intrusions," Bahadur said.

Responding to a question on the challenges to theatreisation and the ongoing efforts to bring about jointness among the three services, Rawat said India as a nation believed in status quo and there was always a hesitation to change.

"Also, there is a feeling amongst the three services that army being a very large service --- compared to navy and IAF --- will possibly usurp the two entities and everything will become army-centric. I think this is a misnomer because the army, navy and IAF have their own specialties. They will retain their autonomy and integration will only ensure that we have systems that at least operate together," Rawat said.

On women in the armed forces, the CDS said the services were opening more roles to them and there were some areas where they were performing better than men and vice-versa. He said the armed forces were looking at exploiting the capabilities of both men and women and ensuring they were utilised in

roles they were best suited for. "There are some tasks that are better performed by women. For example, when we look at cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum computing --- areas where you need concentration and the ability to sit long hours on the desk --- we have found that the women workforce is better capable than the men folk. So somewhere the women have shown better capability and there are some areas where men have better capability," Rawat said.

One of the turning points for women in the military came in 2015 when IAF decided to induct them into the fighter stream. Tanks and combat positions in infantry are still no-go zones for women, who were allowed to join the armed forces outside the medical stream for the first time in 1992.



# Andrew Yang's Asian American Superpower

As he delivered terse answers to the professional photographer asking him whether he preferred the Mets or the Yankees, I saw curious onlookers and fans snapping photos from afar, from millennials to immigrant grannies. He kept glancing at them, as if he wanted to bolt from the photo shoot, go back to the Yang Gang and avoid our scheduled interview. Which was not the best mood for the purposes of our lunch. This was supposed to be the moment when Yang finally opened up about his experiences as an Asian American man - a topic he'd sidestepped, as far as I could tell, his entire life. But now he could sidestep the issue no longer.

Asian grandparents and elders were being accosted and in some cases beaten on the streets of Manhattan, and Yang had agreed to talk about it. Then, a week before our proposed lunch, a man in Georgia massacred eight people, six of them Asian women. A story struggling to break out of the back pages had suddenly become urgent, national news, and the Asian American community - long a fragmented, disempowered collection of subcultures and nationalities - was at once enraged and terrified. Our dim sum appointment also happened to coincide with an astrologically impossible

moment, where an Asian American man was the frontrunner to be mayor of New York City - at a moment when the city he wants to lead has become the nation's epicenter of anti-Asian violence, with hate crimes against AAPI residents up by 833 percent from 2019.

All this was forcing Yang to address his heritage in a way he never really had before.

During his presidential run, Yang had exhibited an awkward relationship to his Asianness at times. He joked about knowing lots of doctors because he was Asian; he slapped "MATH" ("Make Americans Think Harder") onto campaign swag; in his campaign biography, he referred to being "self-conscious" when a childhood bully asked if "Chinese guys have small dicks." At the beginning of the pandemic, he wrote an op-ed urging Asian Americans to fight back against a swell of xenophobia by, among other things, wearing "red, white and blue."

Now, during the heat of a Democratic primary with the New York press pack hanging on his every word, Yang's relationship with his heritage was now the topic of endless news articles, cable shows and City Hall chatter. A topic that Yang had avoided was

now unavoidable, not just for politics, but for himself. Two days after the Atlanta shooting, when he spoke at a presser with his fellow candidates hosted by the Rev. Al Sharpton, the pain in his voice was raw, and real. "I've been Asian all my life, and I remember vividly growing up with this constant sense of invisibility, mockery and disdain," Yang said, his voice cracking. "A sense that you cannot be American if you have an Asian face. But this has metastasized into something new and deadly and virulent and hateful."

And so, Yang finally opened up over lunch, the two of us chatting fluently to each other in the shorthand of Asian immigrant kids - me, the Vietnamese American smartass from Boston's South Shore, and him, the sunny child of Taiwanese academics who settled in Westchester County. We talked about Asian American bloggers, John Cho, classic anime and Korean martial arts; we griped over people

automatically assuming we were from California. No matter how much we had in common, though, there were enormous chasms between our views on how America worked. But it's always been like that inside the census demographic known as "Asian American" - a broad, loose confederation of 21 million people from dozens of countries who might share the same types of eyes or other facial features, but not the same circumstances. And at a time when Asian Americans are finding their political voices amid fear and loss, Yang, whose own experience as an Asian American man turned him into a man who happens to be Asian American, is wrestling with it, too.

I'd now fully absorbed Yang's anxious energy and fretted that the interview would suck, fiddling with a Diet Coke can as he fulfilled roughly a dozen selfie requests outside the restaurant. Then an aide mentioned that Yang's wedding reception had been held at Peking Duck House - a Chinatown institution with, of course, a world-famous Peking duck.

Wait, what? I'd been there before, and the thought of their moist duck breast with crispy, fatty skin and a glossy shellac of hoisin sauce made me salivate. And if Yang liked it, too ... Why didn't you tell me this? I asked. I love that place. We could have gone there! It's literally across the street. When I told Yang this, he perked up, a

bubble of nerves bursting into effervescence. Oh my God! Do you want to go there? Should we get a Peking duck? Let's go!

We had no choice but to roll with the irrepressible Yang, who bounded out the door, happily posed for more selfies as he crossed the street, waved to several others who hollered "Yang Gang!" at him, faster than I could pay the disappointed-looking owners of Shanghai 21 for my Diet Coke. In less than five minutes, we were settled in the corner of Peking Duck House, ordering an entire roasted duck for lunch (\$60 for four people). "Obviously, when you come to Peking Duck House, you just order Peking duck," Yang laughed,



clearly more relaxed in a place associated with the day he got married. This would have been just another zany, peak Andrew Yang moment - his seeming M.O. being anything is possible if you just go for it - if it weren't for the fact that the dining room had been completely emptied of furniture, with three set tables lining the wall and a handful of tables on the sidewalk outside, and if it weren't for the anxiety humming in the air. We were two Asian Americans in New York City, eating in a restaurant run by Asian immigrants in a once-bustling neighborhood decimated by a year of Covid and "Wuhan Flu" slurs, all of us quietly worrying that at any unexpected moment, we'd be punched in the face for having the wrong eye shape.

The night I'd arrived in New York City, the radio in my hotel aired a report that three women of Asian descent had been assaulted in Manhattan - where I'd once roamed freely for eight years prior to the pandemic - in the past 24 hours. Yang, on the other hand, had been smothered with love as he wandered around Chinatown in his "Yang for New York" mask. In the colder months, he'd draped an orange and blue-striped Mets scarf over an overcoat during his campaign appearances, creating a look so identifiable to New Yorkers that it could be a last-minute Halloween costume.

So what was it like, I asked, when he took off the scarf and put on a

plain mask, and looked like just another Asian dude?

"I've been on the streets in New York and on the subways any number of times when I didn't have a 'Yang For New York' mask on and the rest of it," he said after a pause. "And the first time someone shrinks away from you on the subway, or looks at you a little bit too long, you think, 'well, maybe that was in my head.' But then if it happens repeatedly, then you start thinking, 'this is not in my head.' And you can sense a degree of both visibility and hostility or awareness of your presence, but not in a welcome way. It's like: 'I'm aware of your presence and I'm not thrilled about it.' And that's a very different feeling, and a very different energy."

But on that sunny street in Chinatown, everyone knew that the guy wearing a "Yang for New York" mask and being a professional photographer was the Andrew Yang: the

Universal Basic Income guy, the former presidential candidate, the could-be mayor - a guy who also happened to be one of the most prominent Asian American political figure in the country. It was as if Yang had willed his own post-racial celebrity into existence, simply by believing in himself as hard as he could. "I frankly have been accustomed to being able to blend into the woodwork for most of my life. Because I think that's something of an Asian American superpower, where, like, prior to the last 14 months, you could become quite inconspicuous," he said. "When I'm very obviously Andrew Yang - the scarf, the mask - then I get a lot of love and warmth and support. But if I'm not as readily identifiable, then there is a different energy." The term "model minority" entered the mainstream in a 1966 New York Times Magazine article, when sociology professor William Petersen drew an indelible line between Japanese Americans and "problem minorities" who'd suffered various - and, he believed, equal - types of setbacks. "When whites defined Negroes as inherently less intelligent, for example, and therefore furnished them with inferior schools, the products of these schools often validated the original stereotype," Peterson wrote. "Once the cumulative degradation has gone far enough, it is notoriously difficult to reverse the trend." And yet, he marveled, Japanese Americans

had done so, less than 20 years after the internment camps of World War II. "By any criterion of good citizenship, the Japanese Americans are better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites. They have established this remarkable record, moreover, by their own almost totally unaided effort. Every attempt to hamper their progress resulted only in enhancing their determination to succeed." With that backhanded praise, Japanese Americans, and the millions of other Asians who followed them as America's immigration laws changed, were squeezed into a box nearly impossible to break out of: How could they prove that they face discrimination if everyone thought they were the embodiment of the "Horatio Alger hero," as Peterson put it? How could they find allies to achieve equality - cultural, political, societal - if everyone thought they were successful by some sort of ethnic disposition? And if they weren't successful, well, weren't they just bad at being Asian? There are endless books, essays, films and shows that try to shatter that idea. But there are also plenty of Asian Americans who meet every criteria of this myth, and even more Asian parents who push their kids to embody it. Andrew Yang grew up as one of these kids. With two parents with Berkeley postgrad degrees, an upbringing in the quaint upstate New York town of Somers, and an education from Phillips Exeter, Brown University, and Columbia Law - a pedigree that Mayflower descendants would stab each other to obtain - Yang occupies an elite demographic slot, as Pulitzer Prize-winning author Viet Thanh Nguyen (no relation), who has interviewed Yang, told me: "Ivy League, East Coast, model minority Asian American, whether he calls himself that or not." "I feel some sympathy for him, because he's caught up in a dynamic of race that he doesn't want to be caught up in and no one should have to be caught up in," Nguyen said. "But that's just the nature of race in the country. If [he] can be a good politician, he has to figure out a response to that. Not because he may care, but because other people care." I had wondered if, in his journey to get ahead in America, Yang had distanced himself from the AAPI community or any characteristic of being a Taiwanese immigrant kid, especially after talking to Peter Kiang, the director of Asian American studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

By TINA NGUYEN, Courtesy Politico.com



# Netflix and Amazon gave daring Indian filmmakers hope. Now that's turning to fear

Since then, the Mumbai-based filmmaker says she has "been inundated with work." Her film "Guilty" - a social issues drama about a rape investigation - was released by the streaming giant in 2020. In the same year, Disney+ Hotstar released her 8-part comedy series "Hundred." Now, increasing government scrutiny of these more provocative projects and other groundbreaking stories is worrying Narain and many other creators in Mumbai, the home of India's film industry.

Original shows on Amazon Prime and Netflix have lately drawn ire from Indian politicians and regular citizens who consider these films and TV shows insensitive to cultural and religious beliefs.

Police complaints have also piled up against creators and company executives, and some of the offenses they have been accused of - including committing "deliberate or malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings" - carry prison terms of up to three years, a fine, or both. And, in recent months, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has announced new rules and guidelines for streaming services, though no explicit bans on particular themes.

India's creative community now fears that streaming services may buckle under the pressure, and refrain from touching stories

that are even remotely controversial. It's a troubling sign for an industry that had just begun experimenting with new forms of storytelling and producing shows capable of worldwide appeal. Just last year, Delhi Crime, a Netflix drama series based on the real rape and murder of a 23-year-old student in India's capital, won an international Emmy.

Start of a new era

The arrival of Amazon (AMZN) and Netflix in India has been a boon to directors and writers like Narain, who had long languished on the fringes of Bollywood - an industry often accused of nepotism. Several filmmakers



told CNN Business they thought the international streaming services introduced a degree of professionalism.

"I co-directed a film called 'House Arrest,' which was released on Netflix in 2019, and everyone on set was thrilled just because they were getting paid on time," said

Samit Basu, novelist and filmmaker. He added that the culture changed to one where rigorous research and development were commonplace.

"A lot of book rights were auctioned and writers' rooms started happening," Basu added. "Earlier, people in the film industry hardly ever read books."

More importantly, these companies made it possible for storytellers to explore subjects that had previously been untouched.

Bollywood films are hamstrung by the Central Board of Film Certification, which forces filmmakers to remove everything

from kisses and swear words to shots of drug abuse - once even from a film about drug abuse. Indian TV, which is also regulated by the government, is dominated by often regressive stories about housewives and mothers-in-law. Streaming content broke that mold because it was, until

recently, unregulated by the government. "Sacred Games," Netflix's first original series in the country, shocked Indian viewers by casting well-known actors in a show that liberally made use of abusive language, violence and nudity. The program was compared to "Narcos," Netflix's hit American drama about Colombian cocaine kingpin Pablo Escobar.

Amazon's first series in the country, meanwhile, was "Inside Edge" - a show about the dark underbelly of cricket, a sport that is worshipped in India. Both "Inside Edge" and "Sacred Games" were nominated for International Emmy awards.

Several other shows on the platforms have also taken an unflinching look at subjects ranging from politics to female sexuality, which Bollywood and Indian TV have typically shied away from. "I am glad I did my film for Netflix because they did not dilute anything," said Narain, referring to her project "Guilty."

When a kiss offends

Politically-fueled uproar over shows on these international video platforms isn't new. "Sacred Games," which was released in 2018, managed to offend lawmakers from Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the opposition Congress Party. In 2019, a politician from the BJP filed a police complaint against the creator of the show

for a "scene which disrespects Sikh religious symbol Kada."

But lately, the political and public outrage has reached a crescendo.

Netflix faced boycott calls in November over "A Suitable Boy," an adaptation of the award-winning novel of the same name by author Vikram Seth. Some viewers and BJP politicians were angered by a scene that depicts a Hindu man and a Muslim woman kissing in a temple, which led to complaints against Netflix executives. The company did not respond to CNN Business's request for an update on these complaints.

In January, Amazon's political drama "Tandav" - which has been likened to the Netflix series "House of Cards" - faced a backlash from politicians who said they complained to the police about the company and the show's creators for depicting Hindu Gods in a derogatory way. Aparna Purohit, the Head of India Originals at Amazon Prime Video, was questioned by police for several hours.

Both Amazon and the show's creators issued an apology. "We respect our viewers' diverse beliefs and apologize unconditionally," Amazon said in a statement.

That same month, an Indian journalist filed a police complaint against Amazon's crime series "Mirzapur" for "showing the city of Mirzapur in a bad light," according to media reports. And this month, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights asked Netflix to stop streaming "Bombay Begums," a drama about five ambitious women, because of its "inappropriate portrayal" of children, who were shown sniffing cocaine.

The government has also taken official action to rein in streaming services and the content they provide. Last November, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry brought the previously unregulated services within its scope.

Three months later, the government announced new rules for online content, including a requirement for video platforms to classify their content into age-based categories. They also have to appoint a "grievance redressal officer" in India who has to address every complaint made

## India a world leader in deployment of renewable energy: US envoy John Kerry

(SAI Bureau)- US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry said India was a major player on the global stage and a "red-hot investment" destination because of its efforts on renewable energy transition. Delivering the keynote address at the South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE) Leadership Summit, Kerry said, "You (India) are indisputably a world leader already in the deployment of renewable energy and your leadership of the international solar alliance promises to advance clean energy across India and other dynamic growing economies around the world." Kerry also appreciated Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's target of 450 GW of renewables by 2030, calling

it a "strong" example on how to "power a growing economy with clean energy".

He emphasised that decisive actions taken by the Modi administration could lead to huge generation of jobs in this sector, making India a "red-hot" destination for future investments. "A zero emissions future offers huge opportunity for business and for economic growth as the world recovers from Covid-19. Investments in clean energy transition could kick-start an unprecedented wealth and job creation opportunity, so we are taking this very seriously. President Joe Biden took steps to rejoin the Paris Agreement just hours after being sworn in as President," he said.

While speaking on the role of women in fighting climate change at the virtual event, Kerry said, "Advancing gender equality and the promotion of women's leadership is not only critical for economic growth and sustainable development, it is essential to tackle the climate crisis."

Kerry said the US would always support India on its path to a sustainable future. "India is a major player on a the global stage. Decisive action from India now, in partnership with the rest of the world, will determine what this transformation will mean for all generations to come," he said. The US India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF),

in partnership with USAID, launched SAWIE in September 2019, a platform built for leaders in the energy, manufacturing and the industrial sectors, to come together and deliberate the importance of gender diversity in decision-making and leadership roles and inspire change. USISPF President and CEO Mukesh Aghi said, "We have also seen that the current health and economic crisis and the climate crisis has had a disproportionate impact on women. We need gender equity to be the front and center of business priorities, build a work culture where women can thrive and grow to their true potential."





# US-China relations: Beyond the 'Cold War' cliché

The meeting between senior Biden administration officials and their Chinese counterparts marks the first face-to-face opportunity to gauge the dynamics of the relationship between the two most important global powers.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan will meet with China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Alaska on Thursday.

There are no illusions in the Biden team. Ahead of the meeting Mr Blinken noted this was "not a strategic dialogue" and there was "no intent at this point for a series of follow-on engagements".

"These engagements," he noted, "if they are to follow, really have to be based on the proposition that we're seeing tangible progress and tangible outcomes on the issues of concern to us with China."

Relations between the US and China are the worst they have been for many years and look set to become worse still. Well before his appointment Mr Sullivan, co-authored an article in Foreign Affairs magazine with Mr Biden's top Asia adviser - Kurt Campbell - which bluntly stated that "the era of engagement with China has come to an unceremonious close".

It has become commonplace to describe the US-China relationship as a new "Cold War", a reference to the generation-long rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union that cast a shadow over the latter half of the 20th Century. How you characterise the relationship between Washington and Beijing matters. It helps to determine the sorts of questions that we ask and the answers that we receive. It sets the parameters for policy options, drawing us down some paths and perhaps blocking off other avenues. Using historical analogies is often said to be helpful in clarifying options, context and dilemmas. But others argue that it can be counter-productive. History

does not repeat itself in this way and differences may outweigh similarities.

If by "Cold War" one means a great titanic struggle involving all aspects of national power waged between two incompatible political systems, then clearly the US-China rivalry has echoes of the US-Soviet confrontation. As the Biden Administration's interim foreign policy strategy released earlier this month notes, a more "assertive" China "is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system". Challenge China whenever necessary and cooperate where possible is the mantra in the Biden White House.

For its part, China takes a similar stance, signalling its desire for a constructive relationship, while continuing to double-down on its own interests - the anti-democracy clamp down in Hong Kong, and the unashamed treatment of its Muslim Uighur minority (described by Mr Blinken as "genocide"). Beijing rarely wastes an opportunity to point up the ills of the US system. It has seized upon the catastrophic handling of the Covid-19 pandemic during former President Donald Trump's tenure and the storming of the US Capitol to cast its own social and economic model as superior.

So in superficial terms maybe the "Cold War" label appears appropriate, but how useful is it really? In the original Cold War, the Soviet Union and its allies were largely isolated from the world economy and subject to strict export controls. In stark contrast, China is a lynch-pin of the global economy, and its own economy is deeply integrated with that of the United States. Details released of Biden's first call with Xi

While the original Cold War had an important technological dimension - primarily in weaponry and the space race - the new US-China rivalry involves the essential technologies that drive and will drive our societies in the future, such as artificial intelligence and 5G. The global context is also different. In the Cold War, the world was divided into two static camps, plus a significant non-aligned bloc (which was often seen by the West as favouring the Soviets). Today we have an essentially multi-polar world, but one in which the institutions of the liberal world order are under threat like never before.

This gives China leverage in seeking to impose its own world view. But the Cold War model is deeply dangerous in a fundamental respect.

The Cold War was a zero-sum political struggle where each side denied the legitimacy of the other. While the US and the Soviet Union rarely came to blows, huge numbers of lives were lost in proxy conflicts around the world. In the final analysis, one side was actually defeated - the Soviet system was swept away on the tide of history. And many fear that seeing the US-China rivalry in these stark ideological terms could lead to miscalculation on both sides, and give Beijing in particular all the more reason to go to potentially catastrophic lengths to avoid a possible defeat.

China, though, is not the Soviet Union. It is significantly more powerful. At its peak the Soviet GDP was some 40% of that of the US. China will have the same GDP as the United States within the decade. China is a more powerful competitor than anything the US has faced since the 19th Century. And it is a relationship that is going to have to be managed for perhaps decades to come.

This is the essential rivalry of our times. Cliché and false historical analogy must be set aside. This is not "a Cold War mark II" - in fact, it is

something far more dangerous. China is already a peer competitor of the US in many areas. And while not yet a global superpower, it is very much a military rival to the US in the areas that matter most to China's own security.

President Biden's China problem is complex. His foreign policy goals prompt conflicting approaches to Beijing. How do you press China on introducing fairer trade practices, on democracy or on human rights, while still hoping to cooperate on tackling climate change and ensuring stability in the Asia-Pacific region? It is going to be all about managing strategic competition.

But while the nature of the competition should not be understated, neither should it be overstated. The lazy cliché of a rising China and a declining US - like all clichés - has an element of truth. But it does not tell the whole story.

Can the US recover from the Trumpian chaos and revitalise its own democracy? Can it convince its allies that the US is permanently back as a dependable player on the world stage? And can the US rapidly expand its own educational and technological base?

Beijing has in many ways stolen a march on Washington. But will its authoritarian drift hamper its economic progress? Can China cope with slowing economic growth and an ageing population? And will the Communist Party be able to retain the loyalty and support of Chinese society in the long-term?

China has many strengths but also many vulnerabilities. The US has great weaknesses but also a remarkable dynamism and capacity to re-invent itself. But as the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated in stark terms, what happens in China does not stay in China. It is a world player that matters to all our lives. Buckle up! It's going to be a bumpy ride. And it's only just beginning.



# US military cites rising risk of Chinese move against Taiwan



The American military is warning that China is probably accelerating its timetable for capturing control of Taiwan, the island democracy that has been the chief source of tension between Washington and Beijing for decades and is widely seen as the most likely trigger for a potentially catastrophic U.S.-China war. The worry about Taiwan comes as China wields new strength from years of military buildup. It has become more aggressive with Taiwan and more assertive in sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea. Beijing also has become more confrontational with

Washington; senior Chinese officials traded sharp and unusually public barbs with Secretary of State Antony Blinken in talks in Alaska last month.

A military move against Taiwan, however, would be a test of U.S. support for the island that Beijing views as a breakaway province. For the Biden administration, it could present the choice of abandoning a friendly, democratic entity or risking what could become an all-out war over a cause that is not on the radar of most Americans. The United States has long pledged to help Taiwan defend itself, but it has

deliberately left unclear how far it would go in response to a Chinese attack.

State Department spokesman Ned Price on Wednesday expressed "great concern" at what he called pattern of Chinese efforts to intimidate others in the region, including Taiwan.

"The United States maintains the capacity to resist any resort to force or any other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security or the social or economic system of the people on Taiwan," Price said.

This accumulation of concerns meshes with the administration's view that China is a frontline challenge for the United States and that more must be done soon - militarily, diplomatically and by other means - to deter Beijing as it seeks to supplant the United States as the predominant power in Asia. Some American military leaders see Taiwan as potentially the most immediate flashpoint.

"We have indications that the risks are actually going up," Adm. Philip Davidson, the most senior U.S. military commander

in the Asia-Pacific region, told a Senate panel last month, referring to a Chinese military move on Taiwan.

"The threat is manifest during this decade - in fact, in the next six years," Davidson said.

Days later, Davidson's expected successor, Adm. John Aquilino, declined to back up the six-year timeframe but told senators at his confirmation hearing: "My opinion is, this problem is much closer to us than most think." Biden administration officials have spoken less pointedly but stress the intention to deepen ties with Taiwan, eliciting warnings from Beijing against outsider interference in what it considers a domestic matter.

On Wednesday, Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu said the military threat against his country is increasing, and while he said it was not yet "particularly alarming," the Chinese military in the last couple of years has been conducting what he called "real combat-type" exercises closer to the island.

"We are willing to defend ourselves, that's without any question," Wu told reporters.

"We will fight a war if we need to fight a war, and if we need to defend ourselves to the very last day, then we will defend ourselves to the very last day." Hardly an aspect of China's military modernization has failed to rile the U.S. military. Adm. Charles Richard, who as head of U.S. Strategic Command is responsible for U.S. nuclear forces, wrote in a recent essay that China is on track to be a "strategic peer" of the United States. He said China's nuclear weapons stockpile is expected to double "if not triple or quadruple" in the next 10 years, although that goes beyond the Pentagon's official view that the stockpile will "at least double" in that period.

Taiwan, however, is seen as the most pressing problem.

U.S. officials have noted People's Liberation Army actions that seem designed to rattle Taiwan. For example, Chinese aerial incursions, including flying around the island, are a near-daily occurrence, serving to advertise the threat, wear down Taiwanese pilots and aircraft and learn more about Taiwan's capabilities.

## US and China trade angry words at high-level Alaska talks

US and Chinese officials have exchanged sharp rebukes in the first high-level talks between the Biden administration and China, taking place in Alaska. Chinese officials accused the US of inciting countries "to attack China", while the US said China had "arrived intent on grandstanding".

Relations between the two superpowers are at their most strained for years.

The US pledged to raise contentious issues such as Beijing's treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Who are the Uighurs? The ill-tempered talks in Anchorage involved Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan on the US side, facing off with China's most senior foreign policy official, Yang Jiechi, and foreign minister Wang Yi.

However, a US official said the subsequent talks behind closed doors had been "substantive, serious and direct" and ran over the planned two hours.

Are the US and China in

a new 'Cold War'?

Details released of Biden's first call with Xi In a blunt opening statement before the talks in private, Mr Blinken said the US would "discuss our deep concerns with actions by China, including in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Taiwan, cyber attacks on the United States, economic coercion of our allies".

"Each of these actions threaten the rules-based order that maintains global stability," he said. In response, Mr Yang accused Washington of using its military might and financial supremacy to suppress other countries.

"It abuses so-called notions of national security to obstruct normal trade exchanges, and incite some countries to attack China," he added.

Mr Yang said human rights in the US were at a low point, with black Americans being "slaughtered". Mr Sullivan hit back, saying Washington did not seek a conflict with China, but added: "We will always stand up for our principles for our people, and for our friends."

Can the US and China work together?

The exchange, which took place in front of the world's media, went on for more than an hour. It came at the start of three sessions, which are due to end on Friday morning.

It is the first high-level meeting between the US and China since last June - during the administration of the previous US President, Donald Trump.

It was an unusually undiplomatic sparring match, especially for a meeting called to take stock of the US-China relationship under a new American administration. Beforehand the Biden team had been blunt in public criticism of Beijing. So the Chinese knew what to expect and seemed to have come prepared to hit back.

They were particularly angry that Washington had imposed sanctions on them the day before the talks, over a crackdown on pro-democracy advocates in Hong Kong.

There may have been a certain amount of posturing involved, as a US official said the private



conversation that followed was substantive and serious.

The Biden administration has said it will be tough on issues of concern, but willing to work with Beijing on matters of interest. However, it has described the relationship as a geopolitical competition between democracy and autocracy.

And the Chinese have refused to compromise on what they say are matters of national sovereignty and security. Whether or not they can find pragmatic points of co-operation will be the measure of how the relationship moves forward.

Afterwards, the US delegation accused China of violating the agreed protocol of two minutes of

opening remarks by each side.

"The Chinese delegation... seems to have arrived intent on grandstanding, focused on public theatrics and dramatics over substance," a senior administration official said.

The official said the US would continue with the talks as planned, adding that "exaggerated diplomatic presentations often are aimed at a domestic audience". In later remarks via state media, Chinese officials said it had been the US, not China, that had violated protocol by exceeding the agreed time in opening remarks. They accused the US of making a "groundless attack on China's domestic and foreign policies".



# The U.S. will remain richer than China for the next 50 years or more, says economist



"the leading country" globally. "I see stiff competition with China. China has an overall goal - and I don't criticize them for the goal. But they have an overall goal to become the leading country, the wealthiest country in the world and the most powerful country in the world," Biden said.

"That's not gonna happen on my watch," he added.

U.S.-China may be 'evenly matched'

Baptist said China will become "the other very large power" alongside the U.S. on the global stage. Which of the two is more powerful depends on where they wield that power, he added. "I think in Asia, it probably will be very difficult for the U.S. to remain the most powerful country through the 2030s, but they're going to remain evenly matched for quite a long time," said Baptist.

Asia has emerged as an important battleground in the ongoing U.S.-China rivalry.

Beijing expanded its economic and political influence in the

region when the U.S. under former President Donald Trump appeared to be retreating.

In contrast, Biden has made Asia a priority in his foreign policy. Biden has recruited several prominent Asia experts into his administration. In one of his first foreign engagements as president, he also met virtually with leaders of Japan, India and Australia.

U.S.-China relations have been off to a rocky start under the Biden administration.

Last week, the first high-level meeting between the two countries kicked off with an exchange of insults. Earlier this week, the U.S. and some of its Western allies slapped sanctions on Chinese officials and entities for human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region - Beijing has since retaliated against the European Union and the U.K. China set to be world's largest economy

The Chinese economy - in nominal U.S. dollar terms - is projected to overtake the U.S. around 2032 and become the

world's largest, said Baptist. That forecast was brought forward from 2034 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, he added.

China has bounced back sharply from the coronavirus-induced economic crisis. It became the only major economy to grow last year, after posting GDP growth of 2.3%. In contrast, the U.S. economy contracted by 3.5% in 2020 compared to a year ago, estimated the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Baptist's forecast appeared more conservative than others. Helen Qiao, head of Asia economics at Bank of America Global Research, told CNBC last month China's economy would surpass the U.S. around 2027 to 2028. The U.S. economy "ultimately will become smaller just because China's population is so much bigger," said Baptist. "Now it doesn't really mean anything in particular when your dollar value of GDP takes over, but it's a bit of a milestone."

(News Agencies)-The U.S. will remain wealthier than China for the next 50 years or more - long after the Asian economy is expected to overtake the U.S. to become the world's largest, an economist said on Friday.

"I think it's very unlikely that ... China will get to U.S. levels of GDP per capita - that's our measure of wealth - for at least the next 50 years if ever," Simon Baptist, global chief economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit, told CNBC's

"Street Signs Asia."

GDP per capita measures an economy's output per person and is a common gauge of prosperity. The latest International Monetary Fund data available showed China's GDP per capita was forecast to be \$10,582.10 in 2020 - roughly six times smaller than \$63,051.40 in the U.S. Baptist's comments followed Joe Biden's first official press conference since taking office, during which the U.S. president said he will not let China become

## China-US Relations: Views From China

While I was working on this article about Chinese views toward the United States and its diplomacy, there was an unexpected twist: a campaign to boycott Nike.

Some Western companies like Nike, Adidas, and H&M, under pressure at home, have announced they will not use Xinjiang cotton due to human rights concerns. This became a dramatic outlet for Chinese people to express their dissatisfaction with the West and display Chinese nationalism.

This provided a new perspective and another dimension for the discussions I had on Sino-U.S. relations while researching for this article.

I have been a reporter for more than 15 years, so I was not surprised by the quarreling at the Alaska talks between China and the United States. What has me more worried is a recent Gallup poll showing that a plurality of American people believe China is the biggest threat to the U.S., even surpassing Russia. Worse, 93 percent of Americans see China's economic power as

either a "critical" or an "important" threat to the United States.

There is a Chinese saying: Friendship between nations lies in the friendship between the people. If China and the United States do not pay more attention to the views of the people, it will seriously damage diplomatic relations between two countries.

For this article, I wanted to talk about how some ordinary Chinese people view the United States' diplomacy toward China, hoping to bring attention to this important factor and thus help boost the relationship.

The daughter of my neighbor, a college student, likes all kinds of sports and is fascinated by foreign sports brands. But she told me she would "never wear Nike again!" The news of Nike's decision to boycott Xinjiang cotton had a strong impact on her.

She is not alone. Among young Chinese people, a wave of boycotts against American and Western sports brands is currently emerging. They feel that these countries are bullying China too much, and Chinese

people must show their attitude clearly in order to do their part for their country.

I asked her, "Do you know what has happened in Xinjiang?"

She replied dismissively, "Anyway, it's not like what the Americans said."

U.S. foreign policymakers may not be aware that most Chinese think U.S. accusations toward China sound like a joke. It's time to pay more attention to the thinking of ordinary Chinese people.

Consider this basic fact: Most Chinese people are still relatively poor. There are 600 million people in China - 45 percent of the total population - with a monthly income of less than 2,000 renminbi (about \$300). These people are also the most prone to nationalist sentiments, because they want to get rich. To get rich, they believe they need a safe and stable environment.

The current U.S. policy toward China makes them fear an unstable future. How to make money in a world like this?

A few days ago, I hired a migrant rural worker who came to Beijing to work. When he found



out I was a reporter, he wanted to chat with me about China-U.S. relations.

He asked me if China will become Afghanistan one day. I was surprised by his thought. His logic went like this: Australia is far inferior to the U.S. and the U.K., but their soldiers dared to kill civilians casually in Afghanistan (referring to allegations of war crimes against individual Australian soldiers, which were emphasized in Chinese media). The United States is so much stronger than Australia, and is now putting heavy pressure on China. Won't the Chinese also be massacred by the

Americans?

Around this time, the TV was covering the news that a U.S. official said if China wants to improve Sino-U.S. relations, it must first improve Sino-Australia relations. That deepened this worker's concerns about the United States favoring Australia and forming a unified bloc against China. He said to me the only solution to the dangerous situation is to have a war with the United States. As extreme as this sounds, I don't think he's alone in thinking it. Many people of his socioeconomic status share this view, which may surprise observers in the United States.



# An Endgame in the Endless War

When Americans call Afghanistan an "endless war," they are generally referring to the conflict that began with the U.S.-led invasion of the country in 2001—an event many of the U.S. troops now there may barely remember, if they were even alive for it. In fact, this understates things. Afghanistan has been in a state of ever-mutating war for more than 40 years, with various levels of American involvement throughout.

Last year, the Trump administration attempted to bring an end to the 20-year portion of the war by striking an agreement with the Taliban for the withdrawal of the last U.S. troops from the country by May 1, 2021. Technically speaking, that deadline is still in place. But at his first press conference as president last week, Joe Biden all but confirmed what's been obvious for some time: U.S. troops will still be in the country in May. "It's going to be hard to meet the May 1 deadline," he said. "Just in terms of tactical reasons, it's hard to get those troops out."

It's true that such a withdrawal would take months to carry out, but this answer was also somewhat misleading, given that the administration has been in office for more than two months and could have ordered withdrawal preparations immediately had it wanted to.

Biden is a longtime skeptic of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan—almost alone among Barack Obama's senior officials, he opposed the 2009 troop "surge"—but he also doesn't particularly relish watching the country collapse, or the Taliban take power, after the U.S. leaves. This has led to a last-ditch effort to forge a peace agreement between the Taliban and the U.S.-backed Afghan government. However, Biden also said that he "can't picture" U.S. troops being in Afghanistan next year, which gives diplomats just a matter of months to end the 40-year war. It's a tall order.

"Again we are in this same pattern where it's U.S. thinking and U.S. timetables that are determining what's happening in Afghanistan," says Thomas Ruttig, co-director of the Afghanistan Analysts Network. "It's a bit like the U.S. government shedding responsibility for the china shop they have broken." In fairness, the Biden team was left in an ago-

nizing position by its predecessor. In February 2020, the Trump administration's negotiators reached what was optimistically called the "Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan" with representatives of the Taliban in Doha, Qatar. Under the deal, the U.S. committed to a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, and until now it has been following that timetable. Around 2,500 American troops remain in the



country, and under the deal, they are to be out on May 1. (There are also about 6,500 troops from other NATO countries, who would likely follow the Americans to the exit.) In return, the Taliban pledged to refrain from attacking U.S. troops and to "send a clear message" that it was cutting ties with terrorist groups like al-Qaida. It has mostly stuck to the first part of the deal—no Americans have been killed in combat in Afghanistan in the past year—but not the second. There's been no public disavowal of al-Qaida, and Afghan forces killed one of the group's senior commanders, who was allegedly being sheltered by the Taliban, in October.

The Taliban also made vague commitments in Doha toward a reduction of violence, which has definitely not happened: The number of attacks by the group increased significantly late last year, and they've been much deadlier. The deal called for peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government to begin in March of 2020, but because of various disagreements, they didn't start until September, by which time both sides had one eye on the U.S. presidential election and little incentive to give ground. Now, the clock is ticking.

Afghan officials claim the

country's military can hold its own without U.S. support, but it's barely doing that now. According to Long War Journal's map based on open-source reporting, the Taliban now fully control 75 of the country's 398 districts and partially control 187 of them. The government controls most of the urban centers, though the Taliban have been making inroads, even in Kabul. The fear is that if the government falls, it could hasten

a return to either the Taliban's harsh theocratic rule or the kind of all-consuming civil war that wracked the country in the 1990s. Two decades of gains for Afghan women could be lost, ethnic and religious minorities could face persecution, a new refugee crisis could begin, terrorist groups like al-Qaida and ISIS would exploit the chaos for their own gain. Biden is no doubt thinking about the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq in 2011, and their return three years later after the rise of ISIS. Another precedent could be the collapse of the Soviet-backed Afghan government a few years after Russian troops left in 1989.

The current U.S. troop commitment might seem like a small price to prevent such a scenario, given the lack of casualties in recent months. Until recently, more U.S. troops were deployed in D.C. to maintain order in the wake of the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol. The U.S. has far larger troop presences in Japan, South Korea, and Germany, decades after fighting ended in those countries. The difference in Afghanistan is that if the deadline passes and American troops are still in the country, they could once again come under attack. "Come May 1st, if we are still here, I think it's game on for the

Taliban," one U.S. officer recently told the New Yorker's Dexter Filkins. The administration is coming under increasing lobbying pressure from members of Congress and some veterans' groups to bring the rest of the troops home, if not by May 1, then as soon as possible.

This has led to hopes that the U.S. can help turn the tide at the negotiating table rather than on the battlefield. Zalmay Khalilzad, the special representative for Afghanistan who stayed on from the Trump administration and has been involved in Afghanistan policy in various capacities since the 1980s, has been shuttling between both sides as well as regional powers ahead of a planned peace conference in Istanbul sometime later this month. (Khalilzad's attendance at a Russian government-hosted peace conference in Moscow last month was widely seen as a sign that the Biden administration is open to cooperating on Afghanistan with regional powers it's otherwise at odds with.)

Presumably, priority No. 1 is getting the Taliban to agree to at least some extension of the troop withdrawal date. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has also tried to dial up the pressure on the Afghan government with a letter to President Ashraf Ghani—which was quickly leaked—urging him to rapidly move to negotiations with the Taliban on "governance, power-sharing, and essential supporting principles." The letter warned that the U.S. "has not ruled out any option" including a full troop withdrawal on May 1. In Afghanistan, many saw this as handing a diplomatic victory to the Taliban by bullying the Afghan government into making concessions based on an American timetable. "The Trump administration very effectively disincentivized the Taliban from making any good-faith effort, and the Biden administration unfortunately, due to its apparent haste, is compounding this," says Muska Dastageer, a professor of gender, peace, and security at the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul. "Any sort of time-bound commitment that divorces the matter of U.S. troop withdrawal from progress in negotiations will fail." Also leaked last month was a draft U.S. proposal for a peace agreement, including a structure for a new

power-sharing interim government, which would replace the current government. Given the situation on the ground, it's now generally accepted that Afghanistan's future political order will have to include the Taliban. But some experts worry it will be hard to forge an agreement that's both sustainable and inclusive with the threat of troop withdrawals hanging over the process.

The administration's proposal "would have had a greater likelihood of success than now if it had been introduced in October," says Madiha Afzal, an analyst at the Brookings Institution. "The problem is it's asking so much, so fast, that it's unlikely to be effective."

Since the current American power-sharing plan would necessarily require Ghani to step down, he's unsurprisingly unhappy with the proposal and has put forward an alternative: The Taliban agree to a cease-fire, and he'll call for early elections under the current constitutional system.

The Taliban have also expressed skepticism about the idea, with a spokesman telling Al Jazeera that the country has had American-brokered transitional governments before that have not "solved the country's problems" and that what's needed is "an Islamic system that is strong and independent."

It's a little unclear what sort of government the Taliban want for Afghanistan. When they previously controlled the country, from 1996-2001, there was no written constitution and they have been vague about their goals beyond the removal of U.S. troops. While the movement's leaders continue to say reestablishing this emirate is their goal, it's also widely thought that they accept that this time around they will have to accept some level of pluralism and engage with other political forces in the country.

The U.S. proposal tries to bridge the gap between the two sides by including both elected leadership and rights guarantees for women and minorities as well as a new "High Council for Islamic Jurisprudence" to "provide Islamic guidance on social, cultural, and other contemporary issues." In an ironic twist, the American government is looking to set up something that looks an awful lot like the government of its regional foe, Iran.



# The congressman and his wingman

***How Matt Gaetz's relationship with a scandal-prone local tax collector got him into big trouble.***

Florida has never seen a tax collector like Joel Greenberg. His Seminole County tax office was the only one in the state where employees were armed with pistols and body armor. He wore his own law enforcement badge and carried a sidearm at tax collector conferences. He let people pay property taxes with Bitcoin. He tweeted Islamophobic comments, installed a remote-controlled sprinkler system to spray petition gatherers he didn't like and doled out fat contracts to his groomsmen shortly after winning the usually humdrum Orlando-area office with a campaign to stop "crony capitalism."

Now Greenberg's in a federal jail, awaiting trial on a wide-ranging 33-count indictment alleging a host of financial crimes, stalking, identity theft and sex trafficking a minor, all of which have become national news because of his close association with Rep. Matt Gaetz, the Florida Republican congressman fighting for his political life.

Their relationship is central to the allegations against Gaetz, a fierce Donald Trump ally who denies having sexual relations with a 17-year-old and prostitutes. Together, the taxman and the congressman shared a life-in-the-fast lane existence that contradicted the staid image that most elected officials are careful to maintain.

The only-in-Florida political drama has taken one bizarre twist after another in the week since the news broke of the investigation into Gaetz. It's a tale marked by a complicated extortion allegation involving Iran and Israel, alleged sexual crimes, a tangential cameo of a popular conservative cartoonist and even a porn star. "You couldn't make this story up, it's so crazy," said David Bear, an attorney for a Greenberg political rival whom the now-former Seminole County tax collector is accused of falsely smearing as a pedophile two years ago.

"Ultimately, it's about abuse of power and how the Republican Party lost its way with guys like this," Bear said. "As one of the few remaining Never Trump Republicans, nothing could make me happier than seeing Matt

Gaetz and his kind being taken down. They're the embodiment of Trumpism."

Thirty-something scions of wealthy families, Gaetz and Greenberg were elected to their respective offices during the first Trump wave that swept Florida in 2016 and became close friends because of their shared interest in brash populist politics, cryptocurrencies and attractive young women.

The Gaetz-Greenberg relationship wasn't one of equals, according to mutual friends, who say the tax collector looked up to the congressman. A former state legislator, Gaetz was a regular fixture on Fox who had the president's ear. Greenberg introduced him to a handful of young women he met on SeekingArrangement, a dating website that connects attractive women with so-called sugar daddies, friends claimed. Greenberg regularly trolled the site for dates.

Joel idolized Matt," said one mutual friend, who declined to be named. "And since they both loved beautiful women and Joel seemed to have endless access to them, it was definitely an additional incentive for Matt to stick around. Also, Joel is one of the funnest people you can hang out with."

The two shared more than one

girlfriend, according to interviews with eight friends and associates who know the two men. Gaetz described Greenberg as a "wingman" to some acquaintances, and even promoted him as a potential congressional candidate. Now some suspect Greenberg might be cooperating with prosecutors to build a case against Gaetz.

Greenberg's lawyer declined to comment.

Less than a year after winning office, the indictment says, Greenberg engaged in a sexual relationship with a minor and, using his special access to a federal ID system as tax collector, "obtained, disclosed, transferred, and used personal information of individuals ... including individuals with whom [he] was engaged in 'sugar daddy' relationships."

Greenberg also created fake driver's licenses featuring his face but the personal information of others - including a man with a Puerto Rico driver's license - that he used "to facilitate his efforts to engage in commercial sex acts," the indictment says. In Florida, people can surrender defunct or out-of-state licenses to tax collectors who have the power to issue new IDs. The old IDs are supposed to be destroyed.

Gaetz has not been charged with any crimes or named in an



indictment but has acknowledged he's the subject of a federal investigation into whether he had improper involvement with a 17-year-old. "I have never paid for sex," Gaetz said via text message. "I haven't had sex with a seventeen year old since I was seventeen." At one point, Gaetz and Greenberg reportedly made an unexpected after-hours appearance in surveillance video of one of the tax collector's offices where the two were spotted in the area where IDs are kept. The incident was reported to the feds by a source. "I have never been involved in whatever Greenberg was doing with IDs," Gaetz told POLITICO. "Once I temporarily lost my wallet and asked if I could go to his office and get a lawful replacement. This is what tax collectors do. I later found my wallet and didn't need this service."

Though a Northwest Florida

congressman, Gaetz had a busy travel and personal schedule that often brought him through the Orlando area where Greenberg lived. He did frequent TV hits from the Fox 35 studio in Orlando, one friend noted, and would sometimes double date with Greenberg and women in their 20s. Gaetz, 38, is now engaged and says he is monogamous. Greenberg is 34 and married.

The friendship between the two men began to crash and burn as Greenberg became mired in a host of corruption scandals detailed by the hometown Orlando Sentinel and then by a federal grand jury, which returned the first indictment against him in June 2020 concerning a pedophilia smear against one of his GOP challengers. Greenberg resigned June 24, the day after his arrest, two months before the primary. During his arrest, federal agents found him in possession of other people's IDs, leading to a second superseding indictment Aug.

## ***How 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' will boost agricultural productivity: Experts discuss at WEF summit***

In a bid to boost agricultural productivity, several countries across the world are implementing Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies and digital solutions for smallholder farmers.

Speaking at the Global Technology Governance Summit organised by the World Economic Forum, Jayesh Ranjan, Telangana principal secretary (Industries and Commerce), said the state was using 4IR technologies to double farmers' income.

"30% of the state's annual Budget is spent on agriculture and there are 25 pilot [projects] from intelligent crop sowing to a



data marketplace, across the whole value chain," he said.

"They are providing good outcomes at every part of the value chain, from sowing crops to harvesting. It's an important national priority to double the farmers' income," Jayesh Ranjan

said.

The virtual event was moderated by India Today TV's executive editor Shiv Aroor.

Policy adviser to the Bangladesh government's flagship digital transformation programme a2i, Anir Chowdhury,

said there were now an unprecedented set of actors in agriculture -- farmers, researchers and tech startups.

"41% of Bangladesh's total workforce is in agriculture, but most are independent, they are less educated, and many illiterate, so we need to overcome barriers to introduce 4IR technology," Anir Chowdhury said. Susanna Hasenoehrl, Director, Asia, Yara Asia Pte Ltd, said financial incentives might not be enough and farmers should be empowered with knowledge. "There are farmers without smartphones, yet digitally connected and can become more productive and sustainable," she said.



# Biden's border crisis - here are lessons he can learn from Trump's immigration example

It took less than three months for the Biden administration to create the biggest border crisis in decades.

Illegal crossings at our southern border are on track to hit their highest level in 20 years. The number of unaccompanied children crossing the border jumped by more than 80% between February and March. Border patrol is overwhelmed and exhausted, yet every day the situation gets worse. This crisis did not happen by accident. It is the result of bad policy decisions and a naïve approach to our southern neighbors.

Most of this wave of illegal immigrants is coming from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. They cross through Mexico to reach our border. It's not that the governments of those countries are anti-American. In fact, at least in Guatemala and Honduras, the governments are very friendly to us.

Rather, there is a disastrous combination of poverty, gang violence, and drug and human trafficking that puts heavy pressure on those governments to sometimes do less than they can to stop the migration of their people. American leadership is needed to get those countries to do the right thing.

At the United Nations, I knew that standing up to America's enemies is a daily requirement. But I also knew that it's critically important to let our friends know what we expect of them. Too often our allies fail to support U.S. interests as much as they should. They take us for granted and don't take the steps we need them to take. President Donald Trump clearly understood this. He was blunt with the countries most responsible for illegal immigration. He told them what America's expectations were - namely, that they get migration under control within their borders, so it never reached our border. He was equally blunt about the consequences if they didn't.

I made the same point when I traveled to Guatemala and Honduras as U.N. ambassador. I brought it up with my fellow ambassadors at U.N. headquarters too. Our point was your countries are our partners, and we expect more from you to get this crisis under control.

Such honesty is key to real leadership. It shows respect to the

American people since it advances our interests. It shows respect to America's partners since it tells them what they need to hear. That's why Trump was able to reach historic immigration agreements with Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. When you make your expectations clear, you get results.

President Joe Biden has gone in a very different direction. In the eyes of the left, everything Donald Trump did has to be wrong and must be reversed. In their view, Trump doesn't even get the benefit of a broken clock that's right twice a day. When it comes to immigration policy, this Biden zeal to erase all Trump policies has led to immediate disastrous results. Since his first day in office, Biden has rolled back even the most effective of Trump immigration policies. He suspended deportations and stopped the "remain in

Mexico" policy that prevented asylum seekers from staying in the U.S. while their applications are processed. By repealing these policies, Biden has sent a message to Mexico and Central America: America's borders are wide open. Biden recently put Vice President Kamala Harris in charge of the administration's response to the immigration surge. That sends a message too. Harris once encouraged a 7,000-person migrant caravan to come to America and compared Immigration and Customs Enforcement to the KKK. Just last month, she laughed when asked if she would travel to the southern border. With Harris on the job, illegal immigrants know the Biden administration isn't serious about stopping them. Biden's policy reversals also tell our partners in Mexico and Central America that they don't need to do anything to get this crisis



under control. These countries are not anti-American, like Venezuela or Cuba. They want good relations with the U.S., but their current inaction should be expected. Simple human nature says that when you don't ask someone to do something, they won't do it. Our president has to demand that they step up. Right now, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris should be demanding that Cen-

tral American countries do their part to stop illegal immigration. Joe Biden's lack of leadership has created this crisis. Kamala Harris's liberal agenda won't fix it. It's too much to expect them to give Donald Trump any credit, but this isn't about credit. It's about stopping a disaster on our border. Toughening up with our southern neighbors would go a long way. It did until about two months ago.

## Param Bir Singh: From chasing underworld dons to fighting a home minister

Param Bir Singh, a 1988-batch IPS officer, is in the limelight after making sensational allegations of corruption and extortion against former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh.

On Tuesday, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recorded his statement in which he once again accused Anil Deshmukh of asking police officers to collect Rs 100 crore per month for him through extortion.

Param Bir Singh first levelled these allegations on March 20 in a letter addressed to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Anil Deshmukh has rubbished these charges and threatened to file a defamation suit against him.

On Monday, the Bombay High Court ordered a CBI probe against Anil Deshmukh. Following the order, he stepped down as home minister. A day later, he moved the Supreme Court, but on Thursday, the top court upheld the high court order.

Meanwhile, Param Bir Singh's allegations have been supported by suspended Mumbai Police officer Sachin Vaze who in a letter to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) claimed he was called by Anil Deshmukh to his house and asked to collect money by extorting businesses in Mumbai.

Sachin Vaze, currently arrested in the Antilia bomb scare case, claimed he refused to follow Anil Deshmukh's instructions and later informed Param Bir Singh about it. Singh

was then his boss and Mumbai Police Commissioner. Fighting the underworld Param

ters.

Officers who served in that period say Param

Bir Singh, through his special squads, was able to gun down several members of the Chhota Rajan gang.

Param Bir Singh was later transferred and given responsibility of anti-Naxal operations in Maharashtra.

Chasing drug lords in Thane

In 2017, when Param Bir Singh was the Thane Police Commissioner, the local crime branch led by Pradeep Sharma, arrested Iqbal Kaskar, Dawood Ibrahim's brother, for allegedly threatening a city-based builder and

extorting money.

Arresting Dawood's brother was a big achievement for the police and an indication of the underworld's diminished influence over Mumbai and Thane.

During his tenure as Thane Police Commissioner, Param Bir Singh initiated crackdowns on the drug mafia, and in one such operation, the police busted a Rs 2,000 crore drug syndicate of drug lord Vicky Goswami.

The case was of such gravity that America's Federal Bureau of Investigation and DEA came to Thane and started monitoring it. With help from Param Bir Singh, Vicky Goswami was arrested and deported to the US by the FBI and DEA where he was lodged in jail.

Former actress Mamta Kulkarni, Goswami's rumoured wife, was made an accused and has been absconding from India since then.



Bir Singh was a deputy commissioner of police (DCP) in Mumbai in the 1990s when the city was virtually in the control of the underworld.

Dons and gangsters like Dawood Ibrahim, Arun Gawli and Rajendra Nikalje alias Chhota Rajan were active in the city, and were a big headache for the police. As a DCP, Param Bir Singh formed two special squads with police sharpshooters in it and tasked them to eliminate members of the noted gangs. Encounter specialists such as Vijay Salaskar and Praful Bhosale were directly working under Param Bir Singh. He managed to limit activities of the underworld, and during his tenure, the police were able to kill sever underworld gangsters.

Param Bir Singh also cracked down upon the Arun Gawli gang, which resulted in several gang members being killed in encoun-



# Classified US military war game set to take place as concerns about threats posed by China and Russia increase



The "enemies" will have fictional names, but when hundreds of US military personnel around the globe log on to their computers later this summer for a highly classified war game, it will be clear what a major focus of the scenarios will be -- how the US should respond to aggressive action and unexpected moves by China and Russia.

Several defense officials tell CNN that the war game is a top priority for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mark Milley, who will lead the exercise. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will be briefed as it plays out.

The war game is designed to equip the US military's top leaders to deal with a fictional global crisis erupting on multiple fronts and players will have to deal with constantly changing scenarios and compete for military assets like aircraft carriers and bombers.

They will take place at a crucial time for the Pentagon just months into Joe Biden's presidency.

The military budget is being set and major decisions on troop levels and priorities are being made so it's hoped the war game will help prepare the military to face the challenges of the next few years.

War games are always sensitive and outcomes are closely guarded because they can reveal shortfalls in US military plans and operations. One former defense official confirmed that in a recent exercise gaming out a conflict against major adversaries like Russia and China, "we found the Blue Team, the US and allies, kept losing."

The scenarios covered in the game this summer will reflect real life possibilities. Those could include major cyber attacks, a Russian advance in the Baltics, further militarization of the Arctic by Moscow or China flexing its muscles in the South China Sea or even invading Taiwan.

Arctic exercises

And preparations aren't just virtual. This week, the US and Canada have been carrying out military exercises, in tough conditions where temperatures can plunge to -20 Fahrenheit, to make clear they are ready to push back against Russian military advances in the resource rich Arctic.

Russia has put advanced missiles in the region to protect its bases there and is directly challenging the US. In 2020 more Russian aircraft flew near US airspace off Alaska than at any time since the end of the Cold War, according to the North American Aerospace Defense Command with multiple flights of heavy bombers, anti-submarine aircraft, and intelligence collection planes.

For NORAD, the US and Canadian command overseeing the exercise, a key priority is "being able to track and then defeat" potential Russian military activity in the Arctic, Canadian NORAD Region Commander, Major-General Eric Kenny, told CNN.

Concerns about Russian and Chinese activity are increasing and there are no signs of tensions abating since Biden took office.

"Russia and China military modernization creates some

serious potential operational challenges for the US," Eric Edelman, a former defense undersecretary for policy and expert on military planning, told CNN.

Both nations are expanding their ability to operate in wider areas in Europe and Asia meaning the Pentagon could be forced to send US forces thousands of miles away. "Russia and China are playing a home game, we are playing an away game," Edelman said. At the same time the rhetoric from the Biden administration is heating up. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken called out Russia for "reckless and adversarial actions" at a NATO meeting in Brussels this week and observed that Moscow has "built up a forces, large scale exercises and acts of intimidation, in the Baltic and Black Sea."

And on China, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks pulled no punches in a speech earlier this month. "Beijing has demonstrated increased military competence and a willingness to take risks, and it has adopted a more coercive and aggressive approach," she said before adding that Beijing's actions "constitute a threat to regional peace and stability, and to the rules-based international order on which our security and prosperity and those of our allies depend."

Blunt warnings

There is no indication the tough words are tamping down Russian President Vladimir Putin and China President Xi Jinping's plans to strengthen

their militaries to ensure they are capable of challenging the US and its allies. Austin, in the coming weeks, "will focus on deterrence" improvements to counter adversaries, a senior defense official told CNN.

Top commanders are increasingly blunt about both countries, especially on nuclear modernization.

Russia is upgrading bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine launched ballistic missiles and warning systems, "in short, its entire strategic force structure," wrote Admiral Charles Richard, head of the US Strategic Command in a recent article in the Proceedings of the US Naval Institute journal. Moscow is also building hypersonic weapons that travel more than five times the speed of sound, and nuclear-powered torpedoes, capable of reaching US shores quickly.

Richard warned that China is about to become a nation with a full nuclear triad, with an inventory of nuclear capable missiles, submarines and soon a long-range bomber.

"While the PRC has maintained a 'No First Use' policy since the 1960s-containing it will never use a nuclear weapon first-its buildup of advanced capabilities should give us pause. This policy could change in the blink of an eye. Beijing is pursuing capabilities and operating in a manner inconsistent with a minimum deterrent strategy, giving it a full range of options, including limited use and a first-strike capability," he wrote.

The US military is doing substantive planning for the challenge from Russia and

China, with billions of dollars of spending planned on modernization in both the nuclear and non-nuclear arena if its wins Congressional approval.

The US is also looking to send a clear message to Beijing amid concerns about Taiwan as China has increased aircraft and shipping activity near the island. "Taiwan is clearly one of their ambitions," Admiral Philip Davidson, head of the Indo Pacific Command, told Congress earlier this month. "The threat is manifest during this decade, in fact, in the next six years." Admiral John Aquilino, who has tapped to replace Davidson told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday, "My opinion is this problem is much closer to us," adding that the US needs to field weapons and capabilities to deter China "in the near term and with urgency."

In response to Russian advances in eastern Europe, the US and NATO allies are increasing their own presence. But it's not enough, warns David Ochmanek, a senior RAND Corporation analyst and former deputy assistant secretary of defense for force development. "The US and its allies do not have sufficient combat power," he told CNN. The reality he says is "within 48 to 60 hours Russian forces could be on outskirts of a Baltic capital," once it prepositions forces.

US military experts say this underlines why war games like the upcoming summer exercise are so important to ensure the military can practice and plan ahead before a crisis hits.



# Yellen calls for global minimum corporate tax rate in first major address as Treasury secretary

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen called for a global minimum corporate tax rate on Monday, a pitch that comes as the Biden administration begins to sell its roughly \$2 trillion infrastructure and jobs proposal that would raise US corporate taxes to fund the massive plan.

"We're working with G20 nations to agree to a global minimum corporate tax rate that can stop the race to the bottom. Together, we can use global minimum tax to make sure that the global economy thrives, based on a more level playing field in the taxation of multinational corporations and spurs innovation, growth and prosperity," Yellen said in a

speech to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

"Competitiveness is about more than how U.S.-headquartered companies fare against other companies in global merger and acquisition bids," she said during the remarks, which represented her first major address as Treasury secretary.

"It's about making sure that governments have stable tax systems that raise sufficient revenue to invest in essential public goods and respond to crises, and that all citizens fairly share the burden of financing government."

President Joe Biden's infrastructure proposal, called the American Jobs Plan, would

increase the minimum tax on US corporations to 21% and calculate it on a country-by-country basis to deter companies from sheltering profits in international tax havens. The plan would also raise the corporate income tax rate to 28%, up from 21%. The rate had been as high as 35% before former President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans cut taxes in 2017. Yellen had previously called for a global minimum corporate tax rate, including during her confirmation process earlier this year, when she told a Senate panel that if confirmed, she would work "with our allies on a global tax regime that protects American competitiveness while ensuring



corporations pay their fair share." The issue has been discussed in recent years by members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, including in 2019, when some finance ministers discussed a

potential plan that, among other things, would ensure that multinational companies pay a minimum level of tax, thereby discouraging them from shifting profits to countries with lower levels of taxation. The plan, however, never came to fruition.

## Rapper will.i.am is selling a smart mask for \$299



Rapper will.i.am wants to make face masks a high-end, high-tech statement. The Black Eyed Peas member announced this week he is

teaming up with Honeywell to launch XUPERMASK, a \$299 mask with a ton of bells and whistles. In addition to dual three-speed fans and HEPA filters, a

type of mechanical air filter, it features Bluetooth connectivity, LED day glow lights, noise canceling audio and microphone capabilities, seven hours of battery life and a magnetic earbud docking system. It also comes with adjustable straps. The XUPERMASK was designed by will.i.am, Honeywell and Jose Fernandez, the designer behind Elon Musk's SpaceX suits.

Over the years, will.i.am has added a handful of tech titles to his resume. He's invested in Tesla and Beats Electronics, and

became a director of innovation for Intel. And his company, i.am+, which is focused on "wearable products," has acquired a handful of tech products, such as smart home company Wink and machine learning startup Sensiya.

His new role as a mask designer comes as some states have started lifting mandatory mask mandates amid the rise of Covid-19 vaccinations in the US. Still, experts say Americans won't be setting masks aside anytime soon. "SARS happened in Japan and Southeast Asia, and they got

over it, and they still wear masks," will.i.am told the New York Times. The XUPERMASK comes with a carry case, three months of HEPA filters, different-sized ear tips and a charging cable. The XUPERMASK has not yet been FDA cleared or approved but has been authorized by the FDA for emergency use by the general public and by healthcare professionals. The mask will drop on April 8 on its website, Xupermask.com.

## This little-known Japanese fruit now has a cult following

When Jerry Callahan had his first bite of a Sumo Citrus fruit about nine years ago, he knew he'd tried something special. "This is going to go crazy," he thought.

As the group vice president of produce and floral at the grocery store chain Albertsons, Callahan is essentially a produce trend-spotter by trade - and he's eaten a lot of fruit. But he described Sumo Citrus as unique. "The eating experience, there's just nothing like it," he said.

The fruit may appear unappealing at first: It looks like a small, wrinkly orange with a knob akin to the top knot worn by the Sumo wrestlers for which it's named. But it's actually a hybrid of navel oranges, pomelos and mandarins and tastes like an extra-sweet mandarin. It peels easily, thanks

in part to that knobby handle, and doesn't make your fingers too sticky.

But Sumo Citrus didn't go crazy in the United States, at least not right away. In the years immediately after Callahan took that first bite, the fruit's popularity grew slowly. There wasn't much of the fruit to go around, anyway - AC Brands, the company behind Sumo Citrus, started selling its produce here in 2011 and increased its crop over time. But as more hit stores, more sold. And then once production hit a critical mass, Callahan's prediction started to come true. Now, once you start paying attention, it may feel like the Sumo Citrus is everywhere.

That could be because over the past two years, AC Brands - confident in both its relationship

with retailers and in the size of its crop - invested in a major marketing push to place Sumo in front of the right consumers. It has built (and built off) buzz from Instagram influencers, and placed splashy magazine ads and targeted billboards to attract consumers willing to shell out up to \$4 per pound of fruit. Over the past year, consumers spent nearly \$62 million on Sumo Citrus fruits, according to Nielsen, still a small sliver of the \$2.1 billion mandarin market.

To make sure people try the product - and back up that price - AC Brands has been spreading the Sumo Citrus gospel. In its branding, it nods to the fruit's heritage and to how it's grown (painstakingly, carefully, with attention paid to each fruit). The short selling season that could



be a drawback has also been used as an upside, helping the company to build buzz. Before the fruit hits the shelves for a period from January to April and again during a brief window in the fall, the brand can generate hype, and then encourage shoppers not to miss their chance to get it. US sales have jumped around 35% each year since March 2018,

according to Nielsen data. "When you walk in our stores, in a lot of cases, you're going to see them right at the front door with a great big display," Callahan said. "Because we know the customers are hungry for them, and they want them."

But fruit marketing can be a fickle business. People who love Sumo Citrus today might find a new fruit to love tomorrow.





# Looking to Buy/Sell?

We know the difference between Home & House

## Honesty, Integrity & Experience



Specializing in Investment & Income Producing Real Estate

# Nlight Real Estate

## Tel: 516 NLIGHT8



**Sharanjit Singh Thind**  
Real Estate Broker/Notary Public



180 Broadway, PH 3A, Hicksville NY 11801

Email: [homes@nlightrealestate.com](mailto:homes@nlightrealestate.com)

[www.nlightrealestate.com](http://www.nlightrealestate.com)







ALEXANDRE SCHNEIDER/GETTY IMAGES

## One in three Covid survivors suffers 'brain disease,' study finds

A major study published Tuesday suggests as many as one in three people infected with Covid-19 are left with longer term mental health or neurological symptoms.

Researchers found that 34% of coronavirus survivors received a diagnosis for a neurological or psychological condition within six months of infection, according to the research published in the journal *Lancet Psychiatry*.

The most common diagnosis was anxiety, found in 17% of those treated for Covid-19, followed by mood disorders, found in 14% of patients, CNN's Ryan Prior writes.

The results help light the way for how health care systems ought to continue helping Covid-19 survivors, the scientists said.

"Our results indicate that brain diseases and psychiatric disorders are more common after Covid-19 than after flu or other respiratory infections, even when patients are matched for other risk factors," said Maxime Taquet, an academic clinical fellow in psychiatry at the University of Oxford, and a co-author of the new report.

"We now need to see what happens beyond six months." While the neurological effects are more severe in hospitalized patients, they are still common in those who were only treated in an outpatient setting, according to the study.

The research is the largest of its kind and involved the electronic health records of more than 236,000 Covid-19 patients, mostly in the US.

The findings provide a sweeping view of the long-term burden the virus will have on those it struck. Other, smaller studies have pointed to the same conclusion. Research in February followed 381 patients treated for Covid-19 at a hospital in Rome, Italy and found that 30% of them experienced post-traumatic stress disorder after recovery.

**YOU ASKED. WE ANSWERED.** Q. Why are cases rising among young people in the US?

A. The disproportionate spike in Covid-19 infection in young people is probably due to a combination of factors, says CNN Medical Analyst Dr. Leana Wen. These include the fact that older age groups are increasingly protected from the virus through vaccination, the circulation of the more transmissible B.1.1.7 variant and the fact that younger people are more mobile than their older counterparts.

"The B.1.1.7 variant spreads through the respiratory route, just like the wild-type, or common, strains, so please continue to wear masks, keep physical distancing, and avoid indoor gatherings with people who are not in your household," Wen added. "Try to hold off on gathering with people indoors

until after you're vaccinated. Once you're vaccinated, you can see other fully vaccinated people indoors, but until then, please see people outdoors, with physical distancing."

Send your questions here. Are you a health care worker fighting Covid-19? Message us on WhatsApp about the challenges you're facing: +1 347-322-0415.

**WHAT'S IMPORTANT TODAY** Biden moves deadline for all US adults to be eligible for Covid vaccine to April 19

US President Joe Biden has moved up the deadline for states to make all American adults eligible for a Covid-19 shot by almost two weeks.

Biden announced Tuesday that every adult will qualify for vaccination by April 19. His original deadline was May 1.

The move comes as the US inoculation rollout continues to gather steam. Nearly 169 million Covid-19 vaccine doses have been administered in the country, according to data published Tuesday by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Out of those doses, more than 150 million were reported administered within 75 days of Biden taking office, putting the White House on track to reach its goal of 200 million doses dispensed by day 100 of Biden's presidency. Speaking at the White House Tuesday, the

President stressed caution and said the country must keep up its efforts to crush the pandemic. "We have to ramp up a whole of government approach that rallies the whole country and puts us on a war footing to truly beat this virus," he said.

"And that's what we've been doing, getting enough vaccine supply, mobilizing more vaccinators, creating more places to get vaccinated, and we're now administering an average of 3 million shots per day, over 20 million shots a week."

Oxford pauses AstraZeneca pediatric trial pending UK regulator review

The University of Oxford has paused a pediatric trial of its vaccine with AstraZeneca pending a review of rare blood clot cases in adults by the UK medicines regulator, a university spokesperson told CNN Tuesday. The spokesperson said the trial had not raised any safety concerns, but would be paused while Britain's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) reviews rare cases of people who suffer blood clots while at the same time having low levels of blood platelets. "Parents and children should continue to attend all scheduled visits and can contact the trial sites if they have any questions," the spokesperson added.

Last week the MHRA said at least 30 people in Britain had experienced rare types of blood clots after receiving the shot, out of a total of 15.8 million people who were given at least one dose by March 21.

The regulator warned it was too early to know whether the vaccine itself triggered the clots.

Brazil records its deadliest day of the pandemic so far  
Brazil recorded its deadliest day of the pandemic so far Tuesday, reporting more than 4,000 deaths in a single day according to its health ministry.

The country saw at least 4,195 new Covid-19 deaths over the past 24 hours -- the first time the nation has seen an increase in deaths above the 4,000 mark.

Brazil is facing a brutal and out-of-control wave of the virus, as a Covid-19 variant known as P.1. continues to rip through the country. There are signs of collapse at every level of the health care system as staff struggle to care for patients while dealing with a critical lack of space and supplies.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro spoke to Russian leader Vladimir Putin Tuesday and expressed interest in acquiring Russia's Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine, adding that first they need to "solve some obstacles" to get the shot approved for use.





NASA/GODDARD/UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

# NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission flies by asteroid Bennu one final time

A NASA spacecraft will bid farewell to its asteroid companion of the last few years.

The OSIRIS-REx spacecraft is conducting a final flyby of the asteroid Bennu on Wednesday.

The spacecraft made history when it briefly touched down on the asteroid on October 20, 2020, and collecting a hefty 2-ounce sample from the surface.

The sample, safely tucked inside the spacecraft, will be returned to Earth in 2023.

The OSIRIS-REx mission, formally known as the Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security, Regolith Explorer, first arrived at the asteroid in December 2018 and has been orbiting it ever since.

During Wednesday's flyby, the spacecraft will get one final close-up of Bennu, capturing images of the asteroid's surface from just 2.3 miles away. The images should reveal the aftermath of the sample collection event in October, which was a messy affair.

The asteroid's surface was disturbed when OSIRIS-REx's sampling head sank 1.6 feet down into the surface of the asteroid. It fired a charge containing nitrogen gas to disturb surface material to make sample collection a little easier. The thrusters on the spacecraft also launched material in the air as the spacecraft



NASA/GODDARD/UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

backed away from the asteroid after collecting the sample.

The gravity on the asteroid is weak, so rocks and dust were launched and scattered throughout the process.

Images captured by the spacecraft Wednesday will show scientists just how much the sample collection event altered the surface of the asteroid. The spacecraft will spend nearly six hours imaging Bennu, which will allow its cameras to see the asteroid complete a full rotation.

The route of this flyby is familiar for OSIRIS-REx, which conducted a similar one while searching for a landing site during surveys in 2019. Those images from 2019 will be used with the new images to create before and after comparisons.

During the flyby, OSIRIS-REx's

instruments will collect data, allowing the mission team a chance to assess them after the tools were coated in dust during the collection event. The spacecraft may go on an extended mission after dropping off Bennu's sample at Earth in September 2023, so this evaluation can help teams make that determination.

Days after the flyby, all of the images and data will be sent back to the mission teams so they can analyze the changes to Bennu and evaluate the spacecraft's instruments.

OSIRIS-REx will hang out in the area around Bennu until May 10, then it will begin a two-year and 200-million-mile journey back to Earth.

"Leaving Bennu's vicinity in May puts us in the 'sweet spot,' when the departure maneuver will consume the least amount of the spacecraft's

onboard fuel," said Michael Moreau, OSIRIS-REx deputy project manager at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, in a statement.

"Nevertheless, with over 593 miles per hour (265 meters per second) of velocity change, this will be the largest propulsive maneuver conducted by OSIRIS-REx since the approach to Bennu in October 2018."

The sample from the asteroid could shed more light on the formation of the solar system and how elements like water may have been delivered to early Earth by impacts from asteroids.

Once OSIRIS-REx approaches Earth in 2023, it will jettison the capsule containing the sample, which will shoot through Earth's atmosphere and parachute down into the Utah desert. A team will be ready to retrieve the sample and transfer it to an aircraft hangar that will serve as a temporary clean room. The sample will then be whisked away to labs that are currently under construction at Johnson Space Center in Houston.

"OSIRIS-REx has already provided incredible science," said Lori Glaze, NASA's director of planetary science, in a statement. "We're really excited the mission is planning one more observation flyby of asteroid Bennu to provide new information about how the asteroid responded to (the Touch-and-Go Sample Collection event) and to render a proper farewell."



# Mushrooms are having a moment



They're popping up in papads, jams and cakes; as health boosts in bread and coffee; and in urban gardens

"People are realising that mushrooms are a real superfood," says Anuradha Srivastava, a food technologist at the Indian Council of Agricultural

Research - Directorate of Mushroom Research (ICAR-DMR) in Himachal Pradesh. "They contain no sugar, so they're ideal for diabetics. They're good for those with high blood pressure or cholesterol and they contain many of the trace nutrients that our bodies need."

At the government-run ICAR-DMR, innovations have led to a versatile mushroom powder that is being used to make a multigrain mushroom bread, biscuits and papads. Their mushroom pickles are also now widely available across the country and on e-commerce



platforms. The R&D team is now working on a mushroom spread, murabba, and a mushroom bhujia.

Brands like Urban Platter have a range of mushroom powders to choose from. Wholesalers like The Mushroom Co have branched out into the quirky as well. "We make a coffee mix infused with cordyceps mushroom extract, known to be a mild aphrodisiac and widely used for its medicinal and strengthening effects," says founder Rohaan Gawde. As

chefs return to local, season produce, mushrooms are becoming a favourite ingredient because of their ability to absorb other flavours," says Sarah Edwards, a recipe developer who runs Copper & Cloves in Bengaluru. "They're also easy to cook, with a subtle nutty flavour that complements sauces, savoury dishes and certain desserts." Their fleshy texture and high-protein content make them a go-to meat substitute.

# The good kind of shots

*Ever done shots that are good for health? Try out these nutrient-packed drinks that can be made at home*

Can a shot a day keep the doctor away? It can help, if you're taking the right kinds of shots - wellness boosts packed with antioxidants, minerals, vitamins and nutrients. The most popular are ginger shots, but you can also shoot turmeric, cinnamon or apple cider vinegar. Some have anti-inflammatory properties, others help strengthen your bones. And they can all be made at home. Here's how.

## GINGER SHOTS

Take a 1-inch piece of fresh ginger root, grind and strain it to extract about 1 tsp of concentrated juice. Add lemon or orange juice, turmeric, pepper and honey to taste.

"Ginger contains gingerol, a substance that aids in digestion, and can help treat many forms of nausea, especially morning sickness in pregnant women," says Bhakti Samant, chief dietician at

Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai.

## CINNAMON SHOTS

Soak a cinnamon stick in water, add a bit of honey, and sip (ideally, don't down this in one go; it's absorbed better in small quantities). "Cinnamon influences the manner in which sugar is metabolised, helping to cut fat accumulation," says Samant. This shot can help ease menstrual cramps, adds Seema Singh, chief

clinical nutritionist at Fortis Hospital, Delhi.

## TURMERIC SHOTS

The curcumin in turmeric is a very strong anti-oxidant. "This makes turmeric shots a great anti-inflammatory. It helps ease joint pains, and boosts immunity," says Singh. Mix 1 tsp

haldi in a cup of coconut water; add ginger, honey and lemon to taste. A pinch of freshly ground black pepper will help the body absorb the curcumin better.

## CHIA SHOTS

"Chia is rich in Omega 3 fatty acids. They are a source of antioxidants, which are believed to have cardiac, anti-ageing and anti-carcinogenic characteristics," says Samant.

Soak 1 tsp chia seeds in water for at least 10 minutes. Down like a shot; it's so filling, you can have it in place of a snack.

## APPLE CIDER VINEGAR SHOTS

Popularly known as ACV, apple cider vinegar is an alkaline, probiotic-rich ingredient known to reduce muscle pain, headaches, and boost digestion.

For an ACV shot, mix 1 tsp of apple cider vinegar in 100ml of water and add ice cubes. Restrict to one shot a day.





## *The Big Bull movie review:*

# *Abhishek Bachchan film makes messiah out of criminal, is a daunting watch*

**The Big Bull movie review: Director Kookie Gulati makes a very weird decision to turn Abhishek Bachchan's money-looting, maniacally laughing stock broker Hemant Shah into a messiah of the masses.**

Imagine a SparkNotes version of any of Shakespeare's works, say Othello. Now imagine the SparkNotes editor deciding to make Iago the good guy, the voice of true benevolence, who out of the purity of his purpose, helps Othello rid himself of his wife. Director Kookie Gulati's *The Big Bull* is that weird little SparkNotes version of stockbroker and bad boy millionaire Harshad Mehta's story. We already know who Shakespeare is in this allegory. Artistic liberties allow Kookie to tell his story however he wants. Renaming his 'protagonist' Hemant Shah, the news publication tracking his every move 'India Times', and a cement company 'NCC' means Kookie has more freedom than Scam 1992 director Hansal Mehta could afford. However, he has used this power to a disappointing, almost shameful effect. Hemant Shah, played by a chubby Abhishek Bachchan,

has been made into a messiah of the masses, but only at the very end. For most of the film's duration, Kookie emphasises Hemant's devious ways, hammered home by Abhishek's unprovoked, maniacal laughter at three separate instances. That's three more than there should ever have been.

Hemant is a Gujarati man in Mumbai who speaks next to no Gujarati. He lives a middle-class life with his brother (Sohum Shah) and mother (Supriya Pathak). First to clear his brother's debt, then to impress his girlfriend's father, Hemant figures out ways to sink his feet into the world of stocks and shares.

Warnings and criticisms come aplenty but Hemant is high on the charm of quick cash. Insider trading, a faulty banking system and corrupt officials help him reach the top of the totem pole. The fall from it is just as quick. However, the film's allegiances change drastically when Hemant is finally to be held accountable

for his deeds. His crimes are forgiven, and the destruction he left behind, ignored. The last half-an-hour gets downright unbearable with even his critics crowning him the 'one and only Big Bull', crediting him for bringing in an economic boom in the country.

There is no mention of those who were destroyed by his failed 'tips', and how he so greedily filled his own pockets from the money he stole from an already suffering country. Hemant's intentions were never national welfare, but getting rich quick enough to secure a pretty wife, getting into the big leagues, and drinking expensive scotch with the finance bros.

*The Big Bull* can't escape from under the long shadow cast by last year's *Scam 1992: The Harsahd Mehta Story*. Try as hard as one might, Hansal Mehta's career-defining show always plays in the back of your mind with its lack of romantic song sequences, rap music



blowing in your ears, and zero shots of Pratik Gandhi laughing hysterically in his lair.

But even without the added pressure of having to compete with its much hotter elder sister, *The Big Bull* fails to tell a cohesive story. Often times, Kookie himself seems to depend on the audience having watched the show already. Hemant, having had enough of journalist Mira's (Ileana D'Cruz) incessant criticism, decides to publish an ad in newspapers, with the message 'Hemant Shah is a liar'. While *Scam 1992* devoted an entire episode to his stunt, *The Big Bull* assumes you would already know what was written under the headline and why it had the impact that it did. You can't have it both ways, Kookie.

Abhishek and his Disney villain laugh are definitely not going to be award season favourites this year. And Ileana's two strands of whitener fluid hair is perhaps the laziest time-leap makeup I have ever seen. Sohumi, instead of being Hemant's conscience, is annoying at first as the naysaying brother and later as the nervous little Peter Pettigrew-type. The performances are nothing to write home about, but then, nothing in this film is. There are some fights we just can't win. Even though it should never have been a competition between two filmmakers and their works, disappointment hits far worse when the difference is so drastic. We need to lock up this bull now.

## *Joji movie review:*

# *Top-rate crime thriller headlined by a terrific Fahadh Faasil*



**Joji beautifully explores the dynamics of a family torn apart by greed and power. It is aided by Syam Pushkaran's solid writing and Fahadh Faasil's excellent performance.**

Joji

Director: Dileesh Pothan

Cast: Fahadh Faasil, Baburaj, Shammi Thilakan and Sunny PN

*Joji*, which is the third direct-OTT release for Fahadh Faasil in a span of six months, marks the third time collaboration for the star with director Dileesh Pothan and writer Syam Pushkaran. With each outing, the combo has only got stronger and managed to deliver work that

will stand the test of time.

In *Joji*, a top-rate crime thriller that examines the fall of a family, Dileep and Pushkaran join hands to explore the concept of greed and how it pushes someone to the edge until he loses it. Based on William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the film follows the events in the Kuttappan family after an unfortunate incident.

Fahadh plays Joji, the youngest son of the Kuttappan family and he has big

aspirations. However, his father feels he's nothing but a loser. The two other sons are also controlled by their father and it's a family powered by domineering patriarchy. But when the father suffers a stroke and is half-paralyzed, each member of the family has his/her own reason to celebrate. At the same time, the sons also feel that they will lose everything if their father recovers and survives. Joji comes up with a plan and pulls off the perfect crime but what follows snowballs into something messier. The film, aided by Syam Pushkaran's solid writing, beautifully explores the dynamics of a family torn apart by greed and power. Even though based on *Macbeth*, the story feels

highly relatable, and the characters are hard to judge. *Joji* works effectively as a slow-burning psychological drama as much as it's about a crime and the events that follow. It's more of a psychological drama because you're left to wonder what's cooking in Joji's mind after he commits the first crime.

The slow buildup to the crime is strongly complemented by the haunting score of Justin Varghese and the breathtaking visuals of Shyju Khalid. After committing the first crime, Joji wakes up the next morning and goes for a run and he reaches the top of a nearby mountain. When he stands at the tip of the mountain and looks down upon his house nearby, the visual is both beautiful and

chilling.

In what's easily one of his juiciest performances in recent times, Fahadh breathes life into *Joji* - a sly, sadistic character with absolutely no remorse. It's amazing how each of his collaborations with Dileesh and Syam has only resulted in a performance that's hard to forget. As *Joji*, Fahadh is unbelievably good, bringing in a very sinister presence with his performance.

The supporting cast is equally good, especially Unnimaya Prasad as Bincy, the daughter-in-law of the house. Her character is a modern-day version of lady *Macbeth*, and she's equally terrifying with a calm presence.



## Deepika Padukone's 'proudest husband in the world' Ranveer Singh says she is 'born for greatness'

Ranveer Singh has written a note for his wife, Deepika Padukone, on her newly launched website. In his note, Ranveer mentioned how Deepika is made for 'greatness'. Deepika is the most amazing person I've met in my life. And I'm not just saying this because she's my wife. Deepika nurtures a universe within herself: of love, compassion, kindness, intelligence, beauty, grace and empathy. These qualities make her a true and authentic artiste- she's one of the finest actors in the world. She's got inner strength, resilience, grit and an iron-will. A woman so righteous and full of virtue, that she commands respect. I sometimes stop and admire her, aware that she is a special soul, born for greatness. I am the proudest husband in the world," he wrote. Filmmakers Kabir Khan and Farah Khan, and fashion designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee, also wrote testimonials for her. Farah wrote, "There was an innate dignity and poise that I saw in her, that I haven't seen in too many girls that age. 13 years later,



these 2 very qualities, remain intact. We also often speak about her evolution as an actor and her craft, but what I truly admire about her, is how she has managed to keep her head above it all! I love her, I am proud of her and she will always be my baby." Deepika made her Bollywood debut with Farah's Om Shanti Om. On her website, Deepika is showcasing her work, her new YouTube channel, her photoshoots, magazine covers and also her mental health organisation, The Live Laugh Love Foundation. Deepika has an impressive line-up of projects in the pipeline, including 83, Baiju Bawra, Fighter, Sanki, Pathan, and Indian adaptation of Nancy Meyers's 2015 hit Hollywood film The Intern. She has almost finished shooting for Shakun Batra's upcoming drama with Ananya Panday and Siddhant Chaturvedi.

## Priyanka Chopra confesses her love for Sridevi and her 'giant, gorgeous eyes'

ctor Priyanka Chopra has confessed her love for Sridevi. Speaking to a US magazine about her favourite beauty icon, Priyanka revealed that she considers the late actor as hers. Priyanka said she was a fan of Sridevi's expressive acting and her beautiful eyes. Sridevi died in 2018. Speaking to InStyle magazine, Priyanka said, "She had giant, gorgeous eyes and was such an expressive actor. She was very experimental with her fashion and her beauty. She changed her looks and tried new things with all of her movies." In remembrance of Sridevi after her death three years ago, Priyanka had written an article for Time magazine, revisiting her memories of the late actor. She wrote that she was 'immobilised'

when she heard of Sridevi's death. "She left us too soon. My last memory of her is a red-carpet moment last December. In the frenzy of flashbulbs and whirring

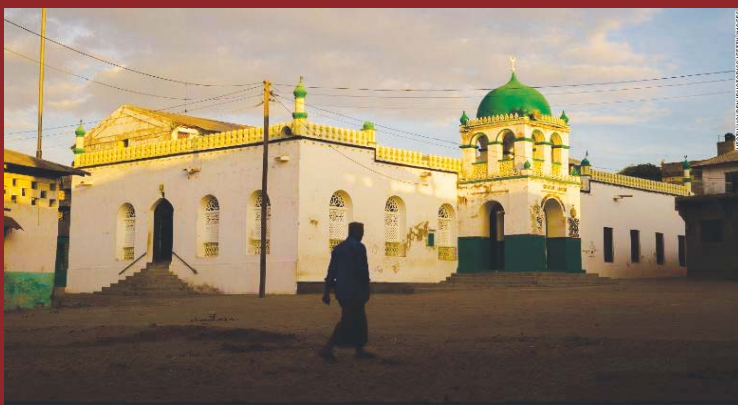


cameras, she pulled me into a tight hug and spoke lovingly and excitedly about her two daughters, Janhvi and Khushi. Her family was her life. She left me feeling warm and fuzzy, and with a promise to

meet again," Priyanka wrote in the article. Priyanka is currently in the UK where she is shooting for her upcoming Amazon Prime series, Citadel. The show is produced by Russo Brothers and also stars Richard Madden of Game of Thrones and Bodyguard fame. On Friday, Priyanka took to Instagram to share a picture from the makeup chair. "I always find my light. #glamchair #setlife #citadel #cleanskinfromwithin," she wrote. Priyanka was last seen in back to back Netflix films The White Tiger and We Can Be Heroes. Her upcoming projects also include romantic drama Text For You, Matrix 4 with Keanu Reeves, a dance reality show with husband Nick Jonas and more.



## Jay-Z wore a T-shirt depicting a famous mosque. Its clerics aren't happy



The designer of a T-shirt worn by Jay-Z, featuring a historic Kenyan mosque, has apologized to clerics who criticized the use of its image. Jay-Z was spotted wearing the T-shirt showing Lamu's Riyadha Mosque on March 30, as he came out of a restaurant in Santa Monica, California.

Images were uploaded to Instagram by both the T-shirt designer Zeddie Loky, who is Kenyan, and the clothing brand, blkbud genes. On April 3, the Riyadha Mosque posted a letter to Loky on its Facebook page, saying the management committee and worshipers were "disturbed and actually feel insulted" by the photos of Jay-Z wearing the T-shirt, which features a green image of the mosque on a white background, with the word "Lamu" printed above it. "Rest assured, we neither

consider it an honor nor a privilege for the Historical Mosque and its Founder Habib Swaleh," the letter reads. "When wearers of these T-shirts end up in bars, clubs and at all sorts of sacrilegious joints, it is certainly an affront to the spiritual respect and dignity towards all those who revere the Mosque, its Founder and the General Muslim community within and outside Lamu." The letter called on Loky to "show respect for the Mosque by 'removing our Mosque's Portrait.'" Loky then apologized to the

mosque in a letter seen by CNN. The designer, who is also CEO of blkbud genes, specified that only 20 of the T-shirts have been produced and those who own one have been asked to respect the mosque "by not wearing it in bars nor clubs if they happen to decide to wear it." Riyadha Mosque confirmed to CNN that it had received Loky's apology. Clothing brand blkbud genes is "a scientific design company on a mission to educate people around the world about history, nature and current affairs," according its website.



## Janhvi Kapoor shares swimsuit pics from Maldives vacation, fans say these pictures are blessing my eyes'

Actor Janhvi Kapoor, who is back to the beach island for yet another vacation, has treated fans to a gorgeous picture of herself posing in a blue monokini in Maldives. Janhvi's pics also gave a glimpse of the sunset. Janhvi can be seen looking back at the camera, smiling, as she poses in an iridescent monokini in one of the images. A few other pics capture the actor's beauty, alongside the awe-inspiring nature around her --the serene blue water and the beautiful sunset sky. She captioned the post as, "Iridescent" and added a rainbow emoji.

Janhvi's Roohi co-star Varun Sharma, among more than nine lakh fans, liked the post. Many of her fans took to the comment section to adore the pics and left heart and heart-shaped eyes emojis on the post.

One wrote, "These pictures are blessing my eyes," and added a fire emoji. Another fan commented, "You killing me baby."

Last Sunday, Janhvi had shared pictures showcasing her outing in New York City with sister Khushi. She posted a few images with Khushi. The sisters posed together on a dining

table while enjoying their meal. A picture also showed a picturesque view of a sunny day featuring the skyscraper buildings in NYC and a clouded sky.

Janhvi was most recently seen in Roohi, produced by Dinesh Vijan and Mrighdeep Singh Lamba. The film marked the first-ever collaboration of Rajkummar Rao and Janhvi. The horror-comedy also became the first film to hit theatres after the government allowed cinema halls nationwide to operate at full capacity from February 1 with Covid-19 safety protocols put in place.



## Catherine Zeta-Jones, 51, reveals what she cuts out of her diet to stay as slender as she was 30 years ago: 'I only eat real food because I have to'

Catherine Zeta-Jones is careful with her diet to look as good as she did 30 years ago when she began her career.

The 51-year-old actress - who has Dylan, 20, and Carys, 17, with her husband Michael Douglas - said that she does not indulge in sweets as she 'only eats real food' because she 'has to' in order to keep her figure. And the Zorro star added it is her 'dream' to gorge on cakes and sweets when she gets 'really old.'

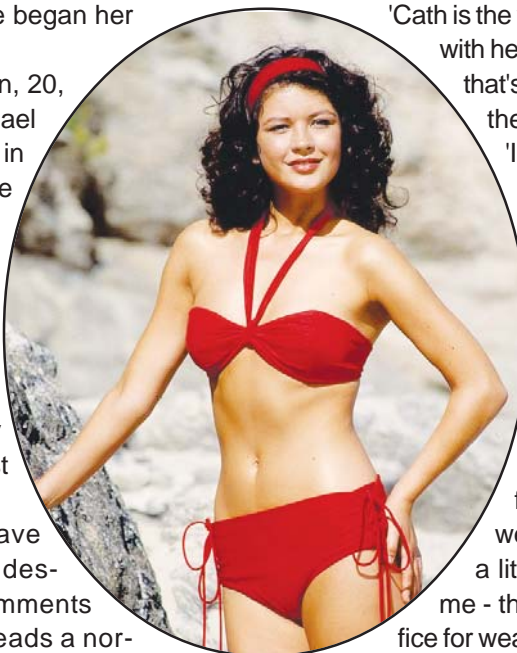
Speaking to the Wall Street Journal, she said: 'When I get really old I'm going to start taking a lot of vitamins because I only want to be able to eat dessert for the rest of my life.'

'I only actually eat real food because I have to right now. My dream is to only eat desserts, ever. It's a goal.' Catherine's comments come after she told New Beauty she leads a normal and 'very private' life despite her fame, and is known as 'just Cath' at home. She explained: 'I'm not always Catherine

Zeta-Jones. Most of the time, I'm just Cath.

'Cath is the woman who is curled up on the couch with her family. Not everyone knows her, and that's OK. I'm a very private person,' added the cover girl.

'I want to be a private person and I like to have a private life. I'm just not that person you're going to see posting my bathroom breaks and photos with my husband in the hot tub on social media.' Catherine - who grew up in Swansea, Wales - also believes she still has the same personality as when she was a cheeky schoolgirl who was often in trouble for breaking the school's rules on wearing makeup. She said: 'There's still a little bit of that boarding-school girl in me - the girl who got called down to the office for wearing too much makeup.' The versatile star is now playing Dr Vivian Capshaw on the TV series Prodigal Son. Her costar is Michael Sheen.



## Janhvi Kapoor shares swimsuit pics from Maldives vacation, fans say these pictures are 'blessing my eyes'

Actor Janhvi Kapoor, who is in the Maldives on vacation, has treated fans to pictures of herself posing in a blue monokini.

Janhvi's pics also gave a glimpse of the sunset. Janhvi can be seen looking back at the camera, smiling, as she poses in a swimsuit in one of the images.

She captioned the post as, "Iridescent" and added a rainbow emoji. Janhvi's Roohi co-star Varun Sharma, among more than nine lakh fans, liked the post. Many of her fans took to the comments section to and left heart

emojis on the post. One wrote, "These pictures are blessing my eyes," and added a fire emoji. Another fan commented, "You killing me baby."



Last Sunday, Janhvi had shared pictures of her outing in New York City with sister Khushi. She posted a few

images with Khushi. The sisters posed together on a dining table while enjoying their meal. Janhvi was most recently seen in Roohi, produced by Dinesh Vijan and Mrighdeep Singh Lamba. The film marked the first-ever collaboration of Rajkummar Rao and Janhvi. The horror-comedy also became the first Hindi film to hit theatres

after the government allowed cinema halls nationwide to operate at full capacity from February 1 with Covid-19 safety protocols put in place.

## Swara Bhasker: I want a bikini-fit body this year



After Holi in Delhi, Swara Bhasker, who has been shooting for her new film in the capital, will be in Goa for her birthday. The actor, who loves celebrating birthday and gets excited for not just hers but her friends and family too, will be in on shoot, in Goa. "I like shooting on my birthdays. There is nothing more fulfilling and satisfying to be working, especially after last year as it reminds one of all I one has to gratitude for," says Bhasker, who turns 33 on April 9. The actor has donated diapers at an NGO that takes care of abandoned little girls on her birthday as she was quite moved by their plight after reading about some cases and stories in the media. "I came across some really sad stories of abandonment of girls in Uttar Pradesh while I was shooting there, so I went to Budaun, met the people working in the NGO and heard first-hand about abandoned babies.

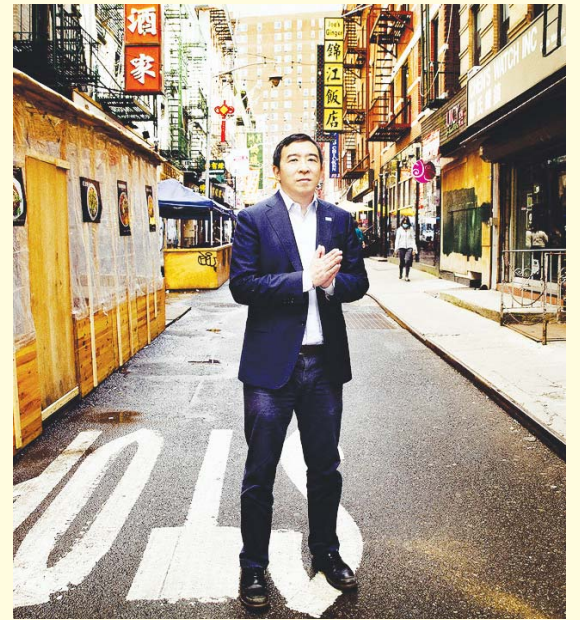


# India a world leader in deployment of renewable energy: US envoy John Kerry



**Story on  
Pages 30**

## Andrew Yang's Asian American Superpower



(SAI Bureau)- When I met Andrew Yang for lunch in front of Shanghai 21, a popular restaurant in the crook of Mott Street in Manhattan's Chinatown, he seemed visibly nervous under his "Yang for New York" mask.

(Contd on page 30)

## Netflix and Amazon gave daring Indian filmmakers hope. Now that's turning to fear



(SAI Bureau)- Screenwriter and director Ruchi Narain struggled for decades to find steady work in the Indian film industry. Even with two major, critically acclaimed films under her belt - "Kal: Yesterday and Tomorrow," a thriller she wrote and directed, and "Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi," a political drama that won Bollywood's equivalent of an Academy Award - the work just wouldn't come. "I struggled a lot because I am an outsider and a woman," Narain told CNN Business. "I was meeting people every week but it all went nowhere." That changed when Netflix (NFLX) arrived in India in 2016.

(Contd on page 30)

## China capable of launching cyber-attacks against India, says CDS Gen Rawat

(SAI Bureau)- Chief of delivering a talk on Shaping the Armed defence staff (CDS) General Bipin Forces to Meet Likely Current and Rawat on Wednesday said China was Future Challenges. Vivekananda ahead of India in technology, and it was capable of launching cyber-attacks against India. He said the biggest gap between the two countries was in the cyber domain and it was being addressed in a serious manner. working to ensure that "the downtime "We know China is capable of and the effect of a cyber-attack" did launching cyber-attacks on us. And not last long. that it (China) can disrupt a large "We should be able to overcome cyber-amount of our systems," Rawat said attacks and continue with our systems in response to a question after



(Contd on page 28)

## Why China's space program could overtake NASA



(SAI Bureau)- China has a good chance of becoming the dominant space power in the 21st century, and it's not just looking to copy NASA on the way to the top. Instead, the country is paying close attention to what innovative US companies like SpaceX are doing as well. To get ahead in space, communism is learning from capitalism.

(Contd on page 28)