

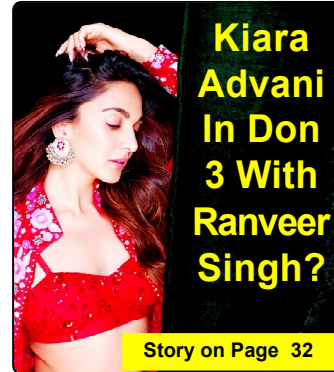


The South Asian



# INSIDER

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## HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

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Toll rises to 67 as flames spread, homes reduced to ashes



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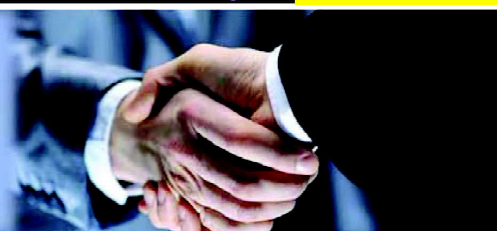


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# What is the significance of Independence day in India

The republic of India gained its independence from the rule of the British on 15 August 1947. Since then every year, 15th August is celebrated as the Independence Day in India to commemorate its freedom from the 200-year-old British government. For India, 15th August is a day of her re-birth, a new start. At the midnight of 15 August 1947, the British rulers handed the country back to its Indian leaders, ending a remarkable struggle that lasted years. It was 15 August 1947, the historic date, on which sovereign India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru unfolded the tricolour flag of the nation on the glorious Red Fort. The day is significant in the history of India as bringing an end to the British colonial rule in India.

## History of 15th August

In 1757, after the British victory in the Battle of Plassey, the rule of East India Company started in India. By 1858, the British Crown had assumed control over India. The situation after World War I was marked with suppressive and exploitative laws by the British. This led to revolutionary calls for independence, and sparked the phase of non-violent and non-cooperation movements followed by the civil disobedience movement.

The enduring leader and a national symbol for all these movements was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi- the Father of the Nation. The next decades were marked with constant struggles between the Indians and the British for freedom. Many movements and acts were carried out by the Indian National Congress, freedom fighters and the people of India.

In the year 1946, the Labour government, the exchequer of Britain thought of ending their rule over India because of their exhaustion of capital post the

World War II. The British government announced, during the early 1947, that they intend to transfer power to the Indians by the month of June 1948. This approaching independence could not decrease the Hindu-Muslim violence in Bengal and Punjab. This led to Louis Mountbatten, the then Viceroy of India to propose the power hand-over date, owing to the fact that the unprepared British army could not cope with the increased violence in the country. In the month of June in 1947, the prominent Indian leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,

Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Abul Kalam Azad, Master Tara Singh and B. R. Ambedkar agreed for a partition of India along religious outline. Millions of people belonging to different religious groups tramped

across the newly drawn border to find places to reside. This took away around 250,000 to 500,000 lives. Finally, at midnight of 15 August 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru proclaimed India's independence by reading out his famous speech known as "Tryst with destiny". During this speech, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said "Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we will redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes, but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. We

end today a period of ill fortune, and India discovers herself again."

Independence day Celebrations in India

Every year, India's Independence Day is celebrated on this day by all the proud Indians. 15th August is observed as a national holiday throughout the country.

Trough



local

governments conduct the ceremony of flag hoisting all over India, the venue of main celebration is the Red Fort in the capital city New Delhi in India. The celebration starts every year with the unfurling of the tricoloured national flag by the Prime Minister of the nation, followed by a televised speech. The speech generally reflects the present condition of the nation along with the achievements in the previous year and the future development plans. A tribute is even paid by the Prime Minister to freedom fighters of India by declaring the day as a national holiday. Post the flag-hoisting ceremony, patriotic programs by children from schools based in different states is one of the main attractions. In northern and

central cities of India, kite flying is celebrated as an event associated with the Independence Day. People symbolise their patriotism towards the country with the use of national flags of different sizes. They decorate their cloths, cars, household, etc. with the tricolour flag. The Indians in various parts of the world also celebrate the Independence Day with parades and pageants. Several cities in the United States have declared 15 August as 'India Day'.

Almost every school, college, university and government organization hoist the national flag on 15 August. Nowadays, many housing complexes, clubs, societies, group of friends, etc. even observe the flag-hoisting ceremony within their premises with ease, joy and honesty. This just shows the togetherness of Indians, who never forget to pay a tribute to their ancestors who sacrificed their life for the betterment of the country.

## Nehru's Speech on Independence Day

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, was a man, who could influence the masses with his oration. He was an immensely learned man and could feel the pulse of the masses. Nehru's Message to the Nation on the Independence Day was delivered on the brink of midnight of the 14th of August, 1947 Independence Day Speech by Jawahar Lal Nehru. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, was a man, who could influence the masses with his oration. He

was an immensely learned man and could feel the pulse of the masses. Nehru's message to the nation on the Independence Day was delivered on the brink of midnight of the 14 August 1947. The speech focussed on various topics related to India and the freedom that she had achieved from the shackles of British colonial rule. The speech also encouraged and inspired the countrymen to wake from the long slumber and take steps for the upliftment and development of India.

Jawaharlal Nehru's independence speech aimed at motivating the general masses at building a new India. The speech aimed at boosting the people for working harder and with real zeal and enthusiasm to make India the numero uno nation in the world. There were certain social evils that were dominant in the Indian society in the form of illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, poor health conditions and many more in pre-independent India. The message propagated for the eradication of these social evils and to make India a prospering nation. The message of the first Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, also requested the people of the country to actively participate in the process of nation-building. He also urged the people to have and show confidence in the national leaders of the country, who were bestowed with the duty of carrying the nation forward. The concept of equality was also emphasized in the independence speech made by Jawaharlal Nehru. The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, also finds reference in the speech made by Nehru.



# A very special day for all of us -it's India's Independence Day!

As India celebrates its 76th Independence Day on August 15, we are once again reminded of the Urdu patriotic song, "Better than the entire world, is our Hindustan (India). We are its nightingales, and it (is) our garden abode." In 1947, India achieved freedom from the British colonial rulers after a long struggle. Independence Day is an occasion to commemorate and remember the sacrifice of freedom fighters who fought for our country's independence. Several institutions and iconic buildings across the country are illuminated in the colours of the national flag on this day. The night before India got its independence, our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru delivered a historic speech titled 'Tryst With Destiny'. Many US lawmakers, led by Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna and Congressman Michael Waltz will participate in the Red Fort address of PM Modi on India's Independence Day. They will meet with business, tech, government and Bollywood leaders.

India fought against British rule for around 200 years and finally proclaimed independence from the centuries-long dominance on August 15, 1947. Following this, India became the largest democratic country in the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is popular for carrying unique headgear and attire on Independence Day, will hoist the National Flag from the historic Red Fort and will address the nation afterward. As part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) initiative, the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign is scheduled to take place nationwide from August 13 to 15. The campaign aims to inspire individuals to proudly display the national flag at their residences. You may have seen the movie, "Gandhi," but you may not know the real story.

Indian Independence Day, on August 15, reminds us of the long, hard-fought battle for liberation against British domination championed by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Despite the expansive British Empire on which it was said, "the sun never sets," ragtag groups of liberation fighters and brilliant strategists soundly defeated the British with strong, tactical mobilizing and the persistence that comes from centuries of oppression. Join in the celebration of what Nehru called India's "Tryst with Destiny." On 15th August 1947, the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru lifted the Indian flag above the Lahori Gate in Delhi. In some ways this became a custom and on each subsequent Indian Independence Day, the sitting Prime Minister raised the country's flag and gave an address to the nation. Indian Independence Day 2023 will be observed throughout India with parades, flag hoisting events and cultural setups. The Red Fort in Delhi becomes the centre of attention in days leading up to the Independence Day

celebrations. Jawaharlal Nehru delivered his famous 'Tryst With Destiny' speech from the ramparts of the iconic Red Fort. Since then, it has become a tradition.

The Red Fort, also known as 'Lal Quila,' stands as a symbol of India's fight for freedom. Its historical significance ranges from being a witness to numerous battles and sacrifices to becoming an emblem of strength. This remarkable edifice has observed some of the most momentous chapters in India's journey towards independence. The British Empire's rule started in India in 1757, followed by the English East India Company gaining control over the entire country by winning the Battle of Plassey.

The Indian independence movement began during World War I and it was led by renowned leader Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi staunchly advocated a noncooperation, nonviolent method of protest, after which the civil disobedience movement took place. After relentlessly long campaigns for independence, India's struggle paid off. Britain had weakened after the two world wars and began thinking of ending its rule in India. In 1947, the British government declared the transfer of all powers to India by June 1948, but continuing tensions and violence between Muslims and Hindus led to a consensus for the partition of India into two separate states.

To deal with this, the British government proposed on June 3, 1947, that any constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly of India will not be applicable to parts of the country that refuse to accept it. On the same day, a plan for partition was put into action by Lord Mountbatten — the then viceroy of India. Mountbatten's plan was agreed to by both the Congress and the Muslim League.

As new borders were drawn and the world map changed forever, between 300,000 and 500,000 people died on both sides. On August 15, 1947, at midnight, India gained independence and was concluded by the iconic speech by Jawaharlal Nehru, "Tryst with destiny." The great British rule over India came to an end with the powers transferred to the newly independent entities Pakistan and India. Lord Mountbatten became the first governor-general of the new Dominion of India and Jawaharlal Nehru became the first prime minister of Independent India. The Constituent Assembly that was set up in 1946 became the Parliament of Indian Dominion.

India is the world's most populous country as of June 2023; and from the time of its independence in 1947, the world's most populous democracy. U.S.-India relations entered a new chapter as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joe Biden announced a slew of technology and defense deals when PM Modi visited the US recently. The warmer relationship could generate even more deals in the future as the two parties collaborate more.



**Sharanjit Singh Thind**  
Publisher  
The South Asian Insider

## 10 important facts about India's national flag:



- 1) The first Indian national flag was hoisted on August 7, 1906, at Parsee Bagan Square in Kolkata. The flag had three major colors namely red, yellow, and green.
- 2) In 1931, a landmark resolution was passed adopting a tricolor flag as our national flag. This flag, the forerunner of the present one, was saffron, white and green with Mahatma Gandhi's spinning wheel at the center.
- 3) With a few modifications, Ashoka chakra from the lion capital of emperor Ashoka, the Indian Tiranga was officially adopted on July 22, 1947. It was first hoisted on August 15, 1947.
- 4) Earlier, Indian citizens were not allowed to hoist the National Flag except on selected occasions. This changed after a decade-long legal battle by industrialist Naveen Jindal culminated in the landmark Supreme Court judgment of January 23, 2004.
- 5) In 2004, the top court declared that the right to fly the National Flag freely with respect and dignity is a fundamental right of an Indian citizen within the meaning of Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution of India.
- 6) In 1904, India's first national flag was designed by Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda.
- 7) Rabindranath Tagore composed the 'Bharoto Bhagyo Bidhata' song in 1911, which was later renamed 'Jan Gan Man'.
- 8) In India, only one location produces the national flag, according to media reports.
- 9) Tiranga or Tricolor has three colors which include saffron on the top signifying strength and courage of the country. White in the center embodies peace and truth. The green color at the bottom shows the fertility, growth, and auspiciousness of the land.





## Celebrating a golden independence: India's rise to glory

**By Susmita Ghosh**

76 years before, when the clock struck 12, between the 14th and 15th of August, India became a free country. It earned independence from the United Kingdom after spending almost 200 years under the control of foreign colonizers. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister hoisted the national flag from the Red Fort for the first time and addressed the nation with his famous "Tryst with Destiny" speech.

It has been a tradition since. Every year on 15th August, after hoisting the Tricolour in Red Fort, the incumbent Prime Minister preaches to the nation. Unbeknownst to many of us, India retained the title "Dominion of India" even after liberation. The British Monarch King George VI remained the head of state until The Constitution of India came into effect on 26th January 1950, following which India became "The Republic of India" on a global level.

This year, the Republic of India, celebrates its 77th Independence Day, revering the 76th year of hard-earned freedom. From a human perspective, 76 years sounds like a lot of time but if we glance into it from a

developmental standpoint, and look at the bigger picture, we'll realize that India is a fairly young nation. Within a matter of years, it has proved itself as one of the fastest-growing markets in the global economy.

If we compare India's recently acquired autonomy to other advanced nations, we will find that India is hundreds of years late, in terms of achieving freedom from colonizers. India and Pakistan got their

independence in a difference of a mere 24 hours but India has left Pakistan behind in terms of development, and

rapidly shot itself into a higher level of overall economic growth. It has also played an influential role in global politics, most famously when it impacted the Bangladesh Liberation War. It has successfully launched itself as the most developed

South Asian country.

According to many experts, India actually has the potential to be one of the major global superpowers in a not-too-distant future. It is the second-largest producer of food worldwide. India has gambled and won by thoroughly investing its time and resources in a very advanced, scientific educational system. Due to this, India has a large group of young professionals with high-scale efficiency,

knowledge, and skills to take over various important positions worldwide. The country focused on extensive training of its young generation in the English language, which enhanced the youth's capability to climb the success ladder on a global level. The ever-evolving IT industry of India is inimitable and one of the strongest in the world. Almost 35 million Indians live and work abroad. Wait, there's more. In the UK and the US, Indians are the highest-earning ethnic group. All these factors have contributed massively to the rapid and steady economic growth of our country. This year, after India's much-celebrated Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation from The Red Fort, let's celebrate our rich history and exquisite cultural heritage. Let's take pride in our blood-soaked struggle for freedom, let's take pride in our capability to lead the world of science and technology. This year, when we sing Jana Gana Mana, let's remember our martyrs, let's remember 200 years of servitude. This year, let's be proud of our independence, let's be proud of our TIRANGA flying high.







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August 15, 2023

Sharanjit Singh Thind  
Publisher  
The South Asian Insider

Dear Sharanjit Singh Thind

**Ranju**, who got a national “forever” Diwali Stamp, joins me in wishing India, Indian-Americans, friends of a secular and democratic India and your readers: Happy India’s Independence day!

From **Pandit Nehru**’s hopeful “*tryst with destiny*” celebration in 1947 to **PM Narendra Modi**’s bold *Washington Declaration of “Indivisibility,”* on June 9, 2016 between India and United States, India’s tryst has succeeded in full measure. But PM Modi’s September 15<sup>th</sup> 2022 declaration in Samarkand - that “today is not an era for war” - was only superseded by his latest July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2023 Washington II Declaration: a “Limitless Partnership” between India and the United States, and between Indians and Americans. It is this latest Partnership between the United States and India that is the culmination of every Indian-America’s Dream: *E Pluribus Unum* to now also mean two Sovereigns with one soul!

Feel free to read an Op-Ed I wrote to memorialize Modi at the UN and in the USA:  
<https://www.america-times.com/modi-brings-era-of-peace-to-un-and-enters-a-limitless-marriage-in-wash-dc/>

While our *Constitution* is largely India’s Constitution, thanks to Columbia Law graduate **Dr. Ambedkar**, it is PM Modi who in July 2023 during his State Visit acted as a loving, playful and adoring Son-in-Law of these United States. I suspect that **Benjamin Franklin** relishes this marriage as long overdue since the Boston Tea Party starred Indian Tea.

Again, we wish 1.4 Billion Indians: Happy Independence Day India!

Sincerely,

Ravi Batra



# Scottish Sikh BBC former presenter arrested for alleged sexual offences

**Former BBC presenter, Hardeep Singh Kohli, has been arrested and charged by Scotland Police over alleged non-recent sexual offences after previously being investigated for sexual harassment allegations in 2020, resulting in a termination of his ties with the public broadcaster.**

(Sai Buearu)-A Scottish Sikh former BBC presenter, comedian and food writer who was under investigation over sexual harassment allegations was arrested and charged by the police in Scotland on Wednesday. Hardeep Singh Kohli, 54, has been arrested over alleged offences that are "non-recent", Police Scotland said without giving any further details. The force has submitted its report to the Procurator Fiscal, the independent public prosecution office of the devolved region. "A 54-year-old man has been arrested and charged in connection with allegations of non-recent sexual offences," a Police Scotland spokesperson said. "He has been released on an undertaking to appear in court at a later date. A report of the circumstances has been submitted to the



Procurator Fiscal," the spokesperson said. The development comes after the force confirmed last month it was investigating allegations published by 'The

undervalued" and the public broadcaster had cut ties with the food writer and reality show contestant at the time. Previously in 2009, Kohli was suspended from working on the BBC magazine programme 'The One Show' after admitting "overstepping the mark" in his conduct towards a young female researcher. He has not responded to the latest allegations and with charges being filed, reporting restrictions on details will now be in place.

## Canadian college revokes admission offer of 500 international students, including Indians

(Sai Buearu)-Around 500 international students are left in limbo after Northern College in Ontario revoked their admission offers for the coming academic year, CBC News reported. According to the school, over issuing of visa by the Canadian authorities to foreign students caused this problem. According to the report, some of the students had already landed in India while other like Ashley, who is from India, had already paid her registration fees and booked her flight from Punjab to Toronto, costing her over \$2,200.

"It was very heartbreaking for me... It was not a normal process for us as international students who have used all the savings that we have had," Ashley, who quit her job in India to study in Canada, told CBC News. She had secured admission in Scarborough's Pures College of Technology, an affiliate of Northern College, to study healthcare administration, and had found herself a place to live in the Greater Toronto Area. Her admission acceptance letter came in February this year. "I don't know how to cope with this. I am in depression... I just want to have a valid solution for my situation," she said. In an emailed statement to CBC, Pures College said it was "ready, willing and able to accept all international students who received letters of admission", but its affiliate, Northern College, decided against doing so. Pures said that as a private college in a partnership with a public college, it is not the final decision-making authority in the admissions process. CBC News cited David Francis, director of strategic initiatives for Northern College, as saying that it's the responsibility of Northern College to estimate how many visas will be approved ahead of each semester.

## Florida Woman Charged With Defrauding SNAP Recipients

(Sai Buearu)-Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Jocelyn E. Strauber, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the unsealing of an Indictment today charging GUYATREE SINGH with engaging in a years-long scheme to defraud at least approximately 120 low-income residents of New York City out of tens of thousands of dollars of their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP") benefits. SINGH was arrested yesterday and will be presented today in the Southern District of Florida. The case has been assigned to U.S. District Court Judge Jed S.

Rakoff. DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said: "The SNAP program provides food support to low-income New Yorkers. This defendant posed as a New York State employee to deceive more than a hundred SNAP recipients and gain access to their accounts, defrauding the recipients of about \$50,000 in benefits, as charged in the Indictment. I thank HRA for referring the matter to DOI, and the Office of the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York for their partnership in thwarting such predatory schemes." According to the allegations contained in the Indictment:[1]

From at least in or about April 2019 through at least May 2023, SINGH

engaged in a scheme to defraud at least approximately 120 SNAP recipients living in the Southern District of New York - a majority of whom appear to be elderly - of their SNAP benefits. In total, SINGH defrauded the victims out of at least approximately \$49,754.52 in benefits.

SNAP provides low-income individuals with electronic benefits that can be used like cash to purchase food. People eligible for SNAP benefits are given an electronic benefits transfer ("EBT") card, which looks like a debit card and gives a person access to his or her SNAP benefits, allowing the SNAP recipient to buy groceries and other items at participating stores.

## Justice Department Files Sexual Harassment Lawsuit Against Georgia-Based Rental Property Owners and Manager

(Sai Buearu)-The Justice Department announced today that it has filed a Fair Housing Act lawsuit against Iraj Shambayati and several other defendants alleging that Shambayati sexually harassed and retaliated against female tenants at residential properties he has owned or managed.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia, alleges that since at least 2008, Shambayati has made repeated and unwelcome sexual comments and advances to female tenants, inappropriately touched their bodies without their permission, entered their homes without their permission or knowledge, requested sexual acts from them, offered them rental benefits in exchange for sex and took retaliatory

actions against female tenants who rejected his sexual advances. The complaint also alleges that his son Daniel Shambayati, Akbar Keshavarz, 1511 Rosewood LLC and IDHD Properties LLC are vicariously liable for Iraj Shambayati's discriminatory conduct, because he acted as their agent when he sexually harassed tenants at properties in which they had an ownership interest.

"Landlords and other housing providers who abuse their positions by sexually harassing tenants violate the Fair Housing Act," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "This lawsuit sends the message that the Justice Department will take concrete action to stop this illegal conduct."

"Tenants have a right to fair treatment -

and it's the law," said U.S. Attorney Jill E. Steinberg for the Southern District of Georgia. "We will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment or abuse."

The lawsuit seeks monetary damages to compensate persons harmed by the alleged harassment, civil penalties to vindicate the public interest and a court order barring future discrimination.

Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of sexual harassment or other types of housing discrimination at rental dwellings managed by Iraj Shambayati, or who have other information that may be relevant to this case, can contact the Justice Department's housing discrimination tip line at 1-833-591-0291. Select 1 for English, and select option number 2, then option number 02 to leave a message.





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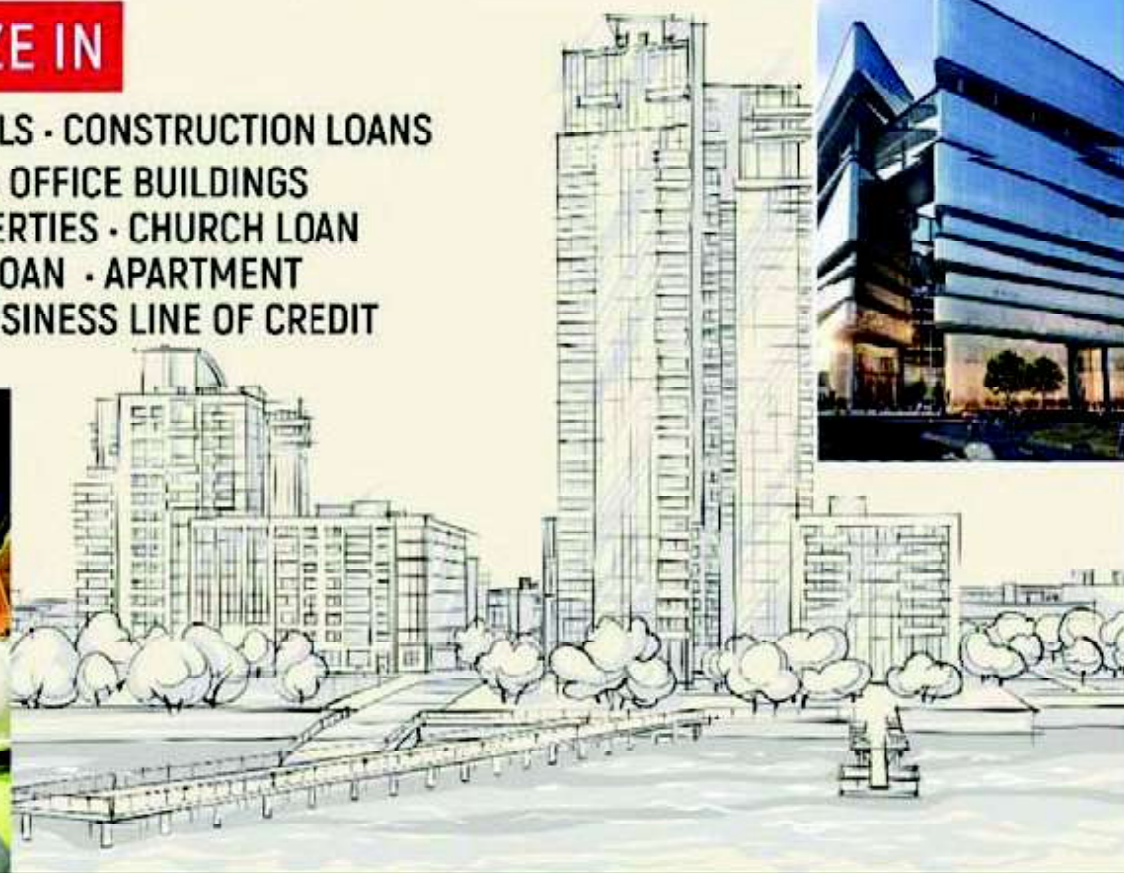
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# Calcutta High Court judge reverses 'remove shivling' order as official recording verdict faints

**An official of the Calcutta High Court fainted while registering a verdict announced by a judge. On seeing him faint, the judge, who had ordered the removal of a shivling present on a piece of disputed land, took his judgment back and said the court would not interfere in the matter.**

(News Agency)-It was a regular day in the Calcutta High Court. Two sets of lawyers were arguing on behalf of their clients in a land dispute case. After hearing the arguments, the judge pronounced his verdict. Justice Joy Sengupta ruled that a shivling installed on a disputed piece of land must be removed. What happened afterwards left everyone stunned.

The court's assistant registrar lost his consciousness while registering Justice Sengupta's verdict. Seeing this, the judge surprisingly went back on his judgment, instead saying that the high court would not interfere in the matter. The judge asked the petitioners to approach a lower court.

What was this land dispute?

The dispute over a piece of land between Govind Mandal and Sudeep Pal of Khidirpur in West Bengal's Murshidabad



district has been ongoing for a considerable period.

In May last year, the matter heated up with both parties resorting to violence against each other. It is alleged that following the skirmish, Govind Mandal had

placed a shivling on the contested land overnight. Sudeep Pal reported the matter to the police, hoping they would intervene. However, following the police's inaction, he lodged a case in the Calcutta High Court.

During the court proceedings, Sudeep Pal's lawyer argued that Govind Mandal had illegally placed the shivling on the disputed piece of land, and that the matter called for the court's intervention due to the lack of action from the police.

In response, Govind Mandal's lawyer, Mrityunjay Chattopadhyay, insisted that his client hadn't positioned the shivling on the land and that the religious symbol had naturally emerged from the ground.

After hearing the arguments, Justice Sengupta pronounced his verdict ordering the removal of the shivling on the disputed piece of land. As the assistant registrar was registering the verdict, he suddenly fainted, leading to a commotion.

Justice Sengupta later changed his ruling, stating the court wouldn't meddle in the matter and that the case should be processed through the lower court in the form of a civil lawsuit.

## BJP wants to do a Rahul Gandhi with Raghav Chadha: AAP on forgery charges

(News Agency)-The BJP government wants to end AAP leader Raghav Chadha's Rajya Sabha membership just like they did with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, party MP Sanjay Singh said on Thursday. His statement came after the

"No signatures are required, no signatures are taken, no signatures are submitted," the Rajya Sabha MP said. He showed the parliamentary bulletin and said no complaints against him have no mention of forgery and fake signatures.

Committee withdraw their names. There is no compulsion," Raghav Chadha said.

The AAP MP said the party will respond to the technical part in front of the privilege committee.

A select committee was proposed by Raghav Chadha in the Upper House on Monday to examine the Delhi Services Bill. Four MPs, Sasmit Patra (Biju Janata Dal), S Phangnon Konyak (BJP), M Thambidurai (AIADMK) and Narhari Amin (BJP), have alleged that Raghav Chadha included their names in the proposed Select Committee without their consent.

Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh on Monday announced a probe into the complaints of at least four MPs that their names were included in a proposed select committee without their consent. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday referred to the privileges committee a matter pertaining to complaints of breach of privilege of MPs by Chadha for naming them in a house panel without their consent.



BJP accused Raghav Chadha of forging the signatures of five MPs in a motion related to the Delhi Services Bill in the Rajya Sabha. Raghav Chadha who was also present challenged the BJP to show papers that have forged signatures as alleged by it. He said he will approach the Committee of Privileges and court against BJP LS members who levelled false allegations of forgery against him.

"Because I spoke strongly against the Delhi Services Bill, the charges were leveled against me. Propaganda against me was run. They have a problem because a 34-year-old member dared them," he said. "According to the rule book, the signature of the proposed name is not required by the committee," he said. "Those members who don't wish to be part of the Standing

## On sick leave, drunk Goa top cop molests woman at pub, probe ordered



(News Agency)-An inquiry was initiated against Goa Deputy Inspector General (DIG) after he allegedly misbehaved with a woman at a pub in Baga town in the state. Identified as A Koan, the DIG earlier held important positions with the Delhi Police. The incident happened on Monday night.

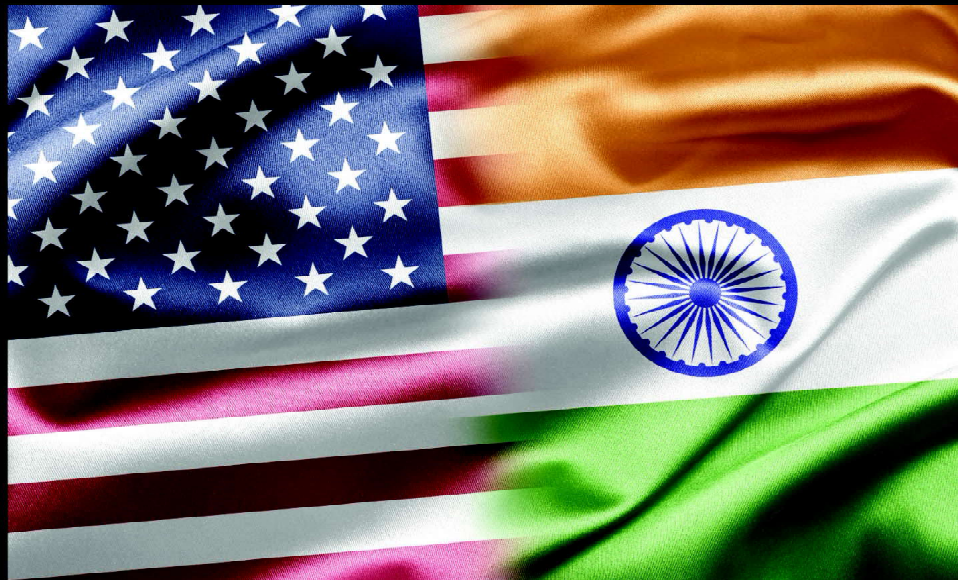
According to sources, Koan was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident. He reportedly entered into an altercation with a woman and misbehaved with her at the club, associated with a prominent politician in the state.

Videos of the incident, which have now gone viral on social media, showed the DIG and the woman engaged in a scuffle.

A commotion was reported after the woman slapped the cop. Investigations into the case revealed that the DIG was on medical leave at the time of the incident.

Taking note of the incident, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant assured strict action against the officer.

The matter was also taken up in the Goa Legislative Assembly, wherein demands for the cop's suspension were raised.



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## BRICS: Expansion Plan, Possible De-Dollarisation and Exploring New Currency

The 15th BRICS Summit is scheduled to take place in Johannesburg, South Africa from August 22-24, 2023. This will be the first in-person summit to be held after four years, the last three having been held under the Chairmanship of Russia, India and China in virtual format on account of the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to dealing with issues like climate change, promoting multilateralism, fighting terrorism and confronting other global challenges, the BRICS leaders will deliberate upon expanding membership of the grouping and de-dollarisation of the global economy by possibly floating a BRICS currency.

### EVOLUTION OF THE BRICS

In 2001, Goldman Sachs banker Jim O'Neill created the acronym 'BRIC' to refer to Brazil, Russia, India, and China—countries he predicted would soon have a significant impact on the global economy. The Group transformed into a political grouping in 2009 when leaders of the four countries held their first summit at Yekaterinburg in Russia. South Africa joined a year later.

BRICS has a combined area of 39,746,220 sq. km and an estimated total population of about 3.21 billion. This accounts for about 26.7 per cent of the world's land surface and 41.5 per cent of the global population. Brazil, Russia, India, and China are among the world's ten largest countries by population, area, and GDP (PPP). All five states are members of the G20, with a combined GDP (PPP) of around US \$56.65 trillion (32.5 per cent of global GDP PPP). Last year, the combined economic output of the five BRICS members, measured in purchasing power parity, for the first time exceeded that of the US-led G7.

It is a measure of importance that the five countries attach to this organization that summits have been held every year without a break since they commenced in 2009. No leader has ever missed any summit. This is in sharp contrast to summits of some other groupings like the IBSA, the intergovernmental grouping of three democratic developing countries viz. India, Brazil and South Africa, all of which are members of BRICS, who have held only six summits since they first started meeting in 2006 i.e. over a period of 17 years. Their last summit was held in South Africa in 2017.

### ENLARGEMENT OF BRICS

As BRICS approaches its next summit, the grouping is experiencing an unprecedented disagreement over enlargement. The outcome will be a test of BRICS identity in the face of rising Chinese influence. Despite the many tensions among them, BRICS members have more in common than analysts often appreciate. First, all BRICS members see the emergence of multipolarity as both inevitable and generally desirable and identify the bloc as a means to play a more active role in shaping the

post-Western global order. Second, the BRICS grouping provides privileged access to China. Brazil and South Africa in particular, which had only limited ties to Beijing prior to the group's founding, have benefited from BRICS as they adapt to a changing world in which China's influence is growing. Finally, being a member of the BRICS confers considerable prestige, status, and legitimacy for Brazil, Russia, and South Africa, who for years have stagnated economically and are now anything but emerging powers. The growing East-West confrontation in recent years, particularly between the US and China, on trade and technology issues, and between the West and Russia on account of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has energised China and Russia to expand the BRICS grouping and move it in a pronouncedly anti-Western corner. This is not to India's liking.

Around 20 countries are now seeking membership in the group. Some of these include Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Argentina, Mexico, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Iran, Venezuela, Syria, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Bahrain and a few more. Membership of Iran, Syria, Venezuela and some others could steer the grouping towards an unmistakable anti-Western stance.

With the change in government in Brazil, the leadership of President Lula is keen to strengthen ties with Russia and China. South Africa is beholden to China for having admitted it to the grouping in 2010 when it did not strictly meet the criteria of a large area, GDP, population etc.

India is not keen to rush headlong into an expansion of the grouping as this is designed to increase China's influence. At the 14th Summit in China last year, the leaders decided: "We support promoting discussions among BRICS members on expansion process. We stress the need to clarify the guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedures for this expansion process on the basis of full consultation and consensus." India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, after the Cape Town meeting of the BRICS foreign ministers in early June, 2023 said that the "expansion of the BRICS bloc is still a work in progress." India's External Affairs Ministry reiterated its stand on August 4, 2023, that BRICS should be expanded through "full consultation and consensus" among members of the bloc. India might be able to delay the membership of the aspirants by a year or two in discussions but it would not be able to fend them off permanently. Another quandary for India is that many of the aspiring nations like Egypt, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kazakhstan etc.

Written By: Ashok Sajjanhar

## The Blue State Migrant Crisis

New York City and Massachusetts shout for immigration help and work authorizations from a failing D.C.

The press mostly ignores the migrant crisis these days, but don't tell New York City Mayor Eric Adams that it's over. He's shouting at the top of his lungs as the city expects to receive its 100,000th migrant shipped from the Mexican border this month. The mayor held a press conference Wednesday to describe the migrant strain on the city's budget, and ask Washington for more money. New York spent \$1.45 billion on shelter services for migrants in fiscal 2023, and in June it approved \$2.9 billion to fund new arrivals in 2024. But two months later it already knows that won't be enough.

"Our new estimates have us spending nearly \$5 billion on this crisis in the current fiscal year," Mr. Adams said. That tops the combined cost of the city's sanitation, parks and fire departments.

The city based its initial cost projections on the rate of migrants arriving between last year and this spring. That missed the hundreds of thousands of migrants who delayed their arrival until after the end of Title 42, a border enforcement policy that the federal government suspended in May. Thousands of them are making their way to the Big Apple.

The biggest source of growing costs is the share of asylum seekers still in the city's shelter—more than 57,000. "We spend an average of \$383 per night to provide shelter, food, medical care and social services," Mr. Adams said of the cost per family. That's \$9.8 million a day across the shelter population.

The bulk of the blame goes to the Biden Administration for all but waving through hundreds of thousands of migrants into the U.S. if they claim asylum. Blame also goes to a 1996 federal law that mandates a five-month

waiting period before asylum seekers can apply for work permits, leaving them no productive options when they arrive. Single adults who can live on low-paid, off-books work cycle quickly through the shelter system, according to the city. But among families with children, no access to jobs keeps more than 80% in shelters beyond the first month.

This has produced spectacles like last week's at the makeshift shelter at the Roosevelt Hotel in midtown Manhattan near Grand Central Terminal. The hotel reached capacity, and hundreds of migrants spent days and nights sleeping on sidewalks in the center of the business district. The city is debating new shelters in parks or on Randalls island in the East River, but those will be expensive and take valuable space from recreation for young people.

"I've heard it directly from the asylum seekers I have spoken to: They want to work," Mayor Adams said Wednesday. "They do not have the authorization to work, so we have to provide shelter." Congress and the Biden Administration could change the law, but on immigration Washington is dysfunctional.

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey this week also declared a state of emergency amid a surge of migrant arrivals. She denounced "a federal crisis of inaction" and asked for faster work authorizations.

The political stunt of claiming to be "sanctuary" cities and states that Democrats pulled during the Trump years isn't fun anymore. They're learning how Texas and Florida feel. If they want relief, they'll have to start putting more pressure on the Biden Administration by being honest about its immigration failures.

Courtesy Wall Street Journal



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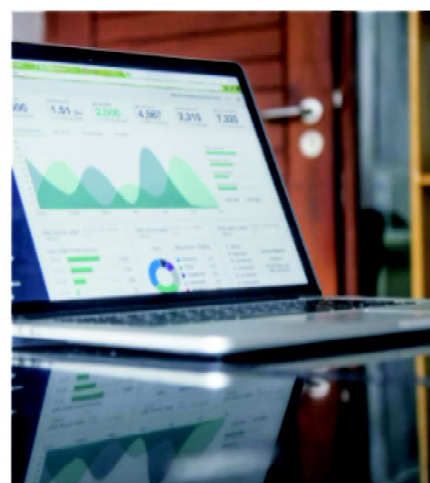
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# When Freedom of Speech Becomes a Refuge for the Sellout: What NYT Investigation Reveals

By: Monica Verma

Governance is a difficult job, more so because of the penetration of technology. On one hand, it is a boon because it eliminates the middlemen and helps benefits reach directly from the government to the beneficiaries. But it has also evolved as a tool of propaganda and misinformation, the cost of which could be sometimes very high. India has become a victim of toolkits and propaganda campaigns many times in the last few years - anti-CAA riots, vaccine hesitancy campaigns during the Covid pandemic, and farm protests - are a few examples of the same. Even as a section of Indians themselves try to derail the country's progress for their own parochial political interests, such propaganda attempts become a national security challenge when an external power is also involved.

A shocking revelation in the same regard has come from The New York Times this week. As per an investigation by the American daily, a tech-



millionaire of Sri Lankan-Cuban origin, Neville Roy Singham, has been funding many Indian websites including NewsClick to adopt an editorial line that is sympathetic towards Chinese national interest. In a brutal indictment of his actions, NYT points out that Singham is a man who is very close to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and is part of its influence operations across the world. The report goes on to assert that as per the corporate documents filed in India, Singham's network funded the NewsClick website, which in return "sprinkled its coverage with

Chinese Government talking points".

Anyone who has followed the work of NewsClick on issues such as the Rafale acquisition, the handling of the Covid pandemic by India, farm protests and most recently on India's attempt to build its strategic manufacturing sector, would agree that its reports are laced with unsubstantiated hyperboles and a naked attempt to push China-sponsored narrative.

For a sample, just revisit their stand on the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme and India's efforts to become a

manufacturing hub. In one of their reports, they dismissed PLI as a freebie scheme which is a bane for a democracy like India. Ironically, PLI is a form of subsidy to incentivise domestic production in key sectors, a necessity to tackle the rising trade deficit with China. But it is no one's guess why NewsClick and the journalists who work with that organisation are bashing the same subsidy which China has doled out on a massive basis to power its own industrialisation story.

Interestingly, even before NYT had published this report, the Indian government was the first to take cognisance of their malicious activities. In the year 2021, the Enforcement Directorate of India successfully traced a money trail between Singham's network and NewsClick leading to a spate of raids on their Indian premises. At that time, NewsClick had played a victim card of attack on their 'freedom of speech'. It had set the entire ball rolling with many leading journalists coming out in their support and even the Editor's Guild of India, which has garnered a controversial reputation due to

its selective actions coming out in their defence, by releasing a letter of condemnation. Today, when The New York Times, a foreign publication known for its staunch anti-India coverage has also indicted NewsClick, none of them have spoken on it.

The key takeaway from the NewsClick saga is that 'freedom of speech' has become a convenient refuge for the sellouts. A similar toolkit was on display during IT raids on the BBC that had evaded taxes as a part of its operations in the country. A rising India has become a point of irritation for many global actors, whether it is China or the propagandistic outlets in the West. In order to harm India's national interest and to sabotage its national security, they have found many guns on hire. Such individuals are IINOs or what I call "Indian in Name Only". They masquerade as journalists who are doing 'critical journalism' and 'speaking truth to power' but in reality, as shown by the NYT report, they are just doing the bidding for their masters.

## Climate change is a threat to the planet: We must address it

By Sen. Bernie Sanders

Obviously, climate change is not real. I've heard, you've heard, "expert" after "expert" telling us for years how climate change is a "fraud."

We've heard from our friends at the oil companies who made \$196 billion in profits last year that the evidence for it is "inconclusive." We've listened to politicians and pundits explain how proponents of climate change are engaged in "fake news," are part of a "woke conspiracy" or pushing "cult-like" propaganda.

We've also heard that, perhaps, if the planet is warming it is part of some kind of natural occurrence which has nothing to do with human activity and the burning of fossil fuel.

What more can be said? Climate change is not real. Or, if it is, it has nothing to do with carbon emissions - and there is nothing we can do about it. If this is what you believe I would respectfully

disagree and I would urge you to get on the phone and call friends and family around the country to hear about what their communities are experiencing. I would also suggest that you check out (reliable) websites and take a look at what's going on in virtually every part of the world. If you do, here's what you'll find.

The last eight years have been the eight hottest on record. This year is on track to be the hottest year in recorded history, and this past July was the hottest month in recorded history. Twenty-one of the

30 hottest days on record occurred this past month.

Across the United States, July broke more than 3,200 daily temperature records. Miami experienced its seven hottest days. Flagstaff, Arizona, and Brownsville, Texas, experienced their eight hottest days. At least 26 cities broke or tied their

previous daily temperature records three or more times. Death Valley experienced the highest midnight temperature ever recorded on Earth.

Austin, San Antonio, Little Rock, Baton Rouge, Anaheim, Rapid



City, Santa Fe, St. Paul, Corpus Christi, Sioux Falls, Fort Lauderdale, Reno, Helena, Grand Junction, Salt Lake City, San Juan, Tampa, Orlando, Fort Worth, Carson City, Portland - all of these cities experienced their highest temperatures on record. It wasn't just daily records. Phoenix recently experienced 31

days in a row at or above 110 degrees. El Paso experienced 44 days in a row at or above 100 degrees. Miami experienced a record 46 days at or above 100 degrees. Austin experienced a record 11 days at or above 105 degrees.

Waco experienced a record 44 days at or above 100 degrees. Las Vegas experienced its hottest two weeks on record. And it's not just the United States. Dozens of locations in China experienced record-high temperatures last month, including the country's all-

time temperature record of 126 degrees. Rome, Cannes, Palermo, Tunis, Algiers, Tirana, Figueres - all of these cities across Europe and North Africa experienced their hottest days on record.

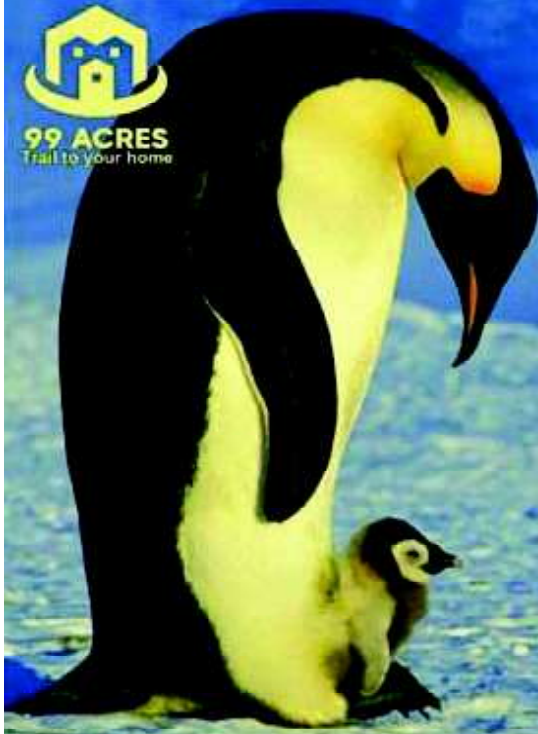
Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador - all saw multiple temperature records broken.

Parts of the Middle East exceeded 150 degrees - near the most intense heat that the human body can survive. It's winter right now in South America, but that hasn't stopped temperatures from exceeding 100 degrees in some places.

And it's not just that temperatures have been soaring on land. Our oceans have never been warmer. Right now, 44% of the world's oceans are experiencing a marine heat wave. The Mediterranean Sea is experiencing its hottest temperatures on record, more than 9 degrees hotter than average in some places. South of Miami, waters reached 101 degrees. You're supposed to find temperatures like that in a hot tub, not the ocean.

OK, so it's hot. But how do we know this heat is so unusual? Couldn't this just be part of a natural cycle going back millions of years? Is there really a link between extreme heat and human activity?





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# Unmasking Article 370:

## How Top Elites Exploited the Economic System

By: Emaad Makhdoomi

Article 370, often upheld as a shield for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, concealed a darker reality of exploitation. The stark instance of this manipulation is evident in the intriguing saga of Nedous Hotel's lease extension in March 1988. The original lease had lapsed in June 1980, yet the state government boldly extended it retrospectively for an astonishing 95 years from the very point of expiry, at an almost annual rate of Rs 52,000, destined to double during the lease's final decade.

However, the true gravity of this scheme emerges when delving into the shadowy subleasing arrangement. Enter the Indian Tobacco company which runs a chain of hotels under the name of Welcomgroup making an entrance with a staggering annual rent of Rs 14 lakh, set to progressively swell to an astonishing Rs 30 lakh during the lease's concluding years.

As the Welcomgroup's rental payments to the lessee mount, surpassing Rs 19 crore, the state's revenue is unjustly augmented by a mere Rs 80 lakh in rent over the same timeframe. This audacious manipulation takes place over a prime land, an area that, if impartially put up for auction or distributed through competitive tenders, could have potentially poured substantial crores into the state coffers.

The unvarnished reality is stark - Article 370's protective façade was cynically transformed into a sanctuary for opportunistic profiteers, leaving the common people overshadowed in the wake of an exploitative masquerade. This instance vividly illustrates how selective business groups and

environment from irreparable harm. The grip of undisclosed funds would have slackened, severing the shadowy connections that bind the ruling class with business magnates. Foreign capital injection would have surged, injecting vitality into local employment prospects.



families focused on wealth accumulation and influence peddling exploited Article 370 to devastatingly plunder the state's economic and ecological well-being.

Had commercial property assignments followed transparent auction procedures or been subject to open competitive bids accessible to all citizens, a plethora of advantages would have cascaded into Jammu and Kashmir. The middlemen wouldn't have monopolized invaluable land assets, sparing the region's

The societal fabric would have flourished into a realm of openness, accelerating the wheels of progress.

While the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act, of 1976, extended its reach across the Indian expanse, it curiously skirted around Jammu and Kashmir. This omission, seemingly to shield the entrenched interests of the ruling elite, remains conspicuously unrelated to the concept of J&K's distinctive status.

Through monopolizing coveted

lands and speculative dealings, substantial unrecorded wealth was accumulated. This unchecked spree would have been curtailed by extending the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act, of 1976. Nonetheless, vested interests ensured that this safeguard against excesses never took root.

Over the past couple of years, the leadership under L-G Manoj Sinha's administration in Jammu and Kashmir has taken resolute legal measures against influential figures who audaciously seized State/Kah-Charai land. Kah-Charai signifies a form of levy for utilizing designated plots of land meant for grazing purposes.

A senior official within the J&K administration, speaking on condition of anonymity, revealed that as of February 2023, an impressive 637 kanals and 7 Marla's of state land, brazenly occupied by 109 well-connected individuals, have been rightfully reclaimed. Additionally, a noteworthy 1093 kanals/18 Marla's of Kah-Charai land, illicitly held by at least 95 parties, have been restored. These lands had been illicitly seized by politicians, their kin, business magnates, and government officials, among others, and cynically repurposed for diverse commercial endeavours including shopping complexes, hotels, Apple orchards, walnut orchards,

agricultural ventures, and more. Certain specific prominent figures among these crony capitalists and influential entities once stood on the opposing side of integration. Prior to 2019, they actively bolstered the secessionist cause by endorsing shutdowns and supporting their endeavours, including participating in meetings and contributing funds for terrorist-separatist activities.

Today, these same cronies manipulate a duplicitous discourse within New Delhi and J&K, clamouring for immunity from legal consequences for their land grabs, deceitfully invoking their supposed role in upholding the idea of India during tumultuous periods. This tactic is nothing but a shrewd ruse to deceive the Indian state. Concurrently, they clandestinely propagate a fake global narrative that paints India as an oppressor of Kashmiris, unjustly wresting their lands and assets. Remarkably, not a single vulnerable common citizen of Jammu & Kashmir was ensnared in the net of the anti-encroachment campaign. Amidst these schemes, the administration's resolute commitment to reestablishing justice and integrity stands out brilliantly. The steps taken stand as evidence of an unwavering resolve to uphold legal principles and correct historical injustices.

# Why Republicans are turning against aid to Ukraine

By Adam Kinzinger

After two months of grueling combat, Ukraine's counteroffensive in its war against Russia is finally showing some signs of progress. The Ukrainians are slowly retaking territory lost when Russia invaded in February 2022, and last week a waterborne drone attack crippled an important Russian warship. Now, a majority of Americans - and a more sizable number of Republicans - want to abandon the fight, according to a new CNN poll conducted by SSRS. It's a bad idea that's gathering steam at the worst moment and marks a low point for the party of Reagan.

In the CNN poll published Friday, 55% of all respondents said that Congress should stop authorizing new military aid for Kyiv. Worse, from my perspective, is the shameful fact that Republicans are far more likely to favor an end to aid than Democrats.

The survey found that 71% of Republicans told pollsters Congress should stop sending more assistance. Among Democrats, 62% favor more funding for Ukraine.

From where I stand, the poll's



findings reveal that many in my party would turn their backs on friends who are risking their lives in a fight for democracy. They would do so just when Ukrainians are beginning to push the Russians out of the areas they occupied early in the war. Little could be more demoralizing for an army and a country that has fought so valiantly for nearly 18 months and depends on US aid.

Two factors seem to be at play here. The first is the slow progress Ukraine is making on the battlefield. Hopes that Kyiv's summer counteroffensive would see its forces taking back huge swaths of territory have crashed against the reality of Russian

fortifications. Instead of "shock and awe," we're seeing the trench warfare of World War I.

The second factor driving Republican sentiment could be called "the Trump effect." Now campaigning to return to the White House, the former president so dominates the party's consciousness that his doubts about Ukraine aid have had an enormous effect on Republicans as a whole.

Before Donald Trump, Republicans were not the type to abandon a fight for a strategic partner's democracy, handing a potential victory to Russian President Vladimir Putin. We were the warriors of the Cold War who

brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union.

With Trump, who has embraced Putin, some Republicans are learning to let go of America's role as the bulwark of democracy and freedom. These Republicans are choosing, instead, the tragic isolationism of those who opposed joining the fight against Hitler. Back then, radio priest Charles Coughlin had a powerful voice among do-nothings. Today, they find comfort on Fox News.

Trump has framed his position in a way that is typical of his petty approach to policy. He said he would threaten to halt war funding to get documents from the federal investigation into the business dealings of President Joe Biden's son, Hunter. The US should "refuse to authorize a single additional shipment of our depleted weapons stockpiles," Trump said last month, until "the FBI, DOJ and IRS hand over" evidence in congressional Republicans' Biden family investigation. He also has said the US should prioritize school safety over Ukraine aid.

The idea that, somehow, school safety and Hunter Biden should have anything to do with helping Ukraine is, on the surface, absurd.

But in making these statements, the former president pressed on two hot-button issues that would make his followers take notice.

From my conservative Republican point of view, I find it remarkable that, as the CNN poll shows, Democrats are standing firmly behind Ukraine. It reflects a longer-term trend of the left becoming more comfortable with America's military. In 2022, Dominic Tierney, a political science professor at Swarthmore College, noted in *The Atlantic* that during the Trump administration, Democrats adopted a more favorable view of the military because it stood with the rule of law and tradition. Tierney's argument is speculative, but I tend to agree with him.

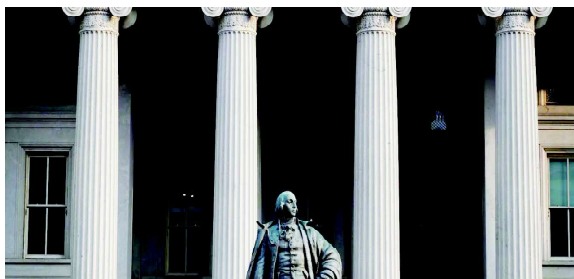
Certainly, the CNN poll suggests a measurable level of Democratic support for military solutions to geopolitical crises.

As a former member of Congress who focused on US obligations abroad, and an Air National Guard pilot who served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, I have seen how America helps stabilize the world in a way isolationists don't appreciate.

*The US has always made good on its debt. There's no reason to think that will change*

By Mark Zandi

There's a lot to worry about when it comes to our own personal finances and the nation's, but the Fitch Rating downgrade of US debt from AAA, the highest rating, to AA+, one notch lower, isn't one of them. Investors use these ratings to help decide which bonds to buy and at what interest rate. The higher the rating, the more likely the investor can trust that principal and interest payments will arrive on time. And since bond interest rates reflect the risk of default, the lower the risk, the lower the interest rate. Ratings provide a relative ranking of creditworthiness. That is, if a country's bonds have a better rating than another, then it is less likely to miss its payments to bond investors. With Fitch's downgrade of US Treasury bonds, those bonds are now rated below the debt of a rather lengthy list of developed countries, including those in the European Union,



which still have AAA ratings. This runs counter to what global investors think. Ask them whose bonds they would rather own if things are going off the rails in the global economy or even here in the US, and they will say those of the US Treasury. That's what happened when the Covid-19 pandemic struck - nervous global investors rushed to the safety of US Treasury bonds, and with good reason, as the US dollar is the global reserve currency. That is, other nations hold

trillions of dollars in US Treasury bonds just in case something goes wrong and they need cash in a pinch. It is ironic that these bonds are being rated below those of other nations. The US government effectively stands behind its finances. It backstops the nation's too-big-to-fail banks and other financial institutions that are the bedrock of the US financial system upon which the global system depends. Indeed, global investors use the interest rate on US Treasury bonds to determine the interest rate on other countries' bonds. Fundamental to a government's ability to pay its debt is the strength

of its economy, which is the source of the tax revenues used to make those payments. Indeed, in justifying its downgrade of Treasury debt, Fitch led with "the expected fiscal deterioration over the next three years," which rests in part on the agency's increasingly unlikely forecast of a US recession beginning in the next few months. More importantly, while all economies have a business cycle, there is no developed economy in the world that is more dynamic with better long-term growth prospects than the US, which is exceptional in fostering entrepreneurship, innovation and the technologies that power the entire global economy.

Of course, our fractured politics are a worry, as they have compromised the government's budget process. Consider the recent battle over increasing the Treasury debt limit and looming prospects for a government

shutdown later this year. These so-called governance issues are central to Fitch's decision to downgrade the nation's debt.

But none of this is new. The knock-down-drag-out political disputes over the government's finances date back to Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. And we've had numerous debt limit dramas and government shutdowns over the decades. Each time, lawmakers have come to terms before doing irreparable economic damage. Even the unseemly political theater over the debt limit earlier this year was pretty benign as far as such shows go. There was no meaningful long-term fallout on the economy.

Despite our vexed politics, lawmakers are getting things done. Consider the unprecedented policy response to the pandemic and the legislation passed since President Joe Biden took office.





# A day of legal action in Trump imbroglio previews a chaotic 2024 election year

**By Stephen Collinson**

A whirl of developments in a quartet of cases in four separate cities encapsulate the vast legal quagmire swamping Donald Trump and threatening to overwhelm the entire 2024 presidential campaign.

But Monday's hectic lawyering was just a tame preview of next year when the ex-president and current Republican front-runner may be constantly shuttling between courtroom criminal trials and the campaign trail.

A day of legal intrigue brought revelations, judgments, disputes and filings in cases related to Trump's bid to overturn the 2020 election, the classified documents case, efforts to thwart Joe Biden's win in Georgia, and even in a defamation case dating back to Trump's personal behavior toward women in the 1990s.

It's already almost impossible for voters who may be asked to decide whether Trump is fit for a return to the Oval Office - or at least to carry the GOP banner into the election - to keep pace with all the competing legal twists and the scale of his plight.

A confusing fog in which all the cases blend together could work to the former president's advantage as he seeks a White House comeback while proclaiming he's a victim of political persecution by the Biden administration.

But the deeper his legal mire gets, Trump's rivals for the GOP nomination are getting braver in suggesting that his fight against becoming a convicted felon could be a general election liability. Trump's dominance in the GOP primary has been boosted from his criminal indictments to date. But the sheer volume of cases unfolding alongside his campaign

is increasingly daunting.

Even after three indictments, investigations into Trump drive forward

In Washington, Trump's lawyers just beat a deadline to file a brief in a dispute over the handling of evidence ahead of a trial in the election subversion case, and accused the government of seeking to muzzle his voice as he runs for a new White House



term.

In another glimpse into the breadth of special counsel Jack Smith's investigation that could prove troubling to the ex-president, CNN exclusively reported that Trump ally Bernie Kerik, the former New York City police commissioner, met Smith's investigators for an interview on Monday. The discussion focused on what Trump's former attorney and Kerik's associate, Rudy Giuliani - otherwise known as Co-Conspirator 1 - did to try to convince the former president he actually won the 2020 election. The question will be a key one when the case finally comes to trial.

Trump's tough day in the courts had opened with a judge in Manhattan throwing out his defamation counter suit against E. Jean Carroll, which he did in stark language that recalled the ex-president's loss in an earlier

civil trial in which the jury found he sexually abused the writer.

Then, in a surprise move in West Palm Beach, Florida, the Trump-appointed judge who will oversee his classified documents trial asked lawyers for co-defendant Walt Nauta to comment on the legality of prosecutors using a Washington grand jury to keep investigating. The fact the probe is still active despite several indictments is hardly a good sign for Trump. And Judge Aileen Cannon's move revived debate over whether she was favoring the ex-president's team following criticism of her earlier handling of a dispute over documents taken from Trump's home in an FBI



search.

There were also new signs in Atlanta that indictments could be imminent in a probe into efforts to steal Biden's election win in the key state, as it emerged that ex-Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan, a Republican and CNN political contributor, has been subpoenaed to testify to a grand jury.

All of this frenzied activity unfolding on one day represents just a snapshot of the complex legal morass now surrounding Trump. It's just a taste of the enormous strain the ex-president is about to feel as he campaigns for a return to the Oval Office. The crush of cases will also impose increasing financial demands. Already, Trump's leadership PAC has been diverting cash raised from small-dollar donors to pay legal fees for the former president and associates that might instead have gone toward the 2024

campaign.

In several of the cases on Monday, there were signs of the extraordinary complications inherent in prosecuting a former president and the front-runner for the Republican nomination. Judges, for instance, are faced with decisions that would normally go unnoticed by the public in the court system but that will now attract a glaring media and political spotlight.

And while Monday was notable for a head-spinning sequence of legal maneuvering, it did not even encompass all of the pending cases against Trump. He is also due to go on trial in March - in the middle of the GOP primary season - in a case arising from a hush money payment to an adult film star. As with his other indictments, Trump has pleaded not guilty.

For all his capacity to operate in the eye of converging storms of scandal and controversy, Trump's mood is becoming increasingly agitated. In recent days he has attacked Smith, the Justice Department, the judge in the election subversion case, former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell, and even the US national women's soccer team after they crashed out of the World Cup on penalties.

Fear for witnesses over Trump's rhetoric

One of Trump's most incendiary posts on his Truth Social network was at the center of one of Monday's legal dramas - wrangling between Smith's prosecutors and Trump's lawyers over the handling of evidence at the center of the forthcoming trial.

Prosecutors cited Trump writing on his Truth Social network on Friday, "If you go after me, I'm coming after you!" in a filing that requested strict rules on how he could use evidence that will be turned over to the defense as part of the pre-trial discovery process. Trump's lawyers had asked for an extension to Monday's deadline, but Judge Tanya Chutkan refused,

in a fresh sign of her possible willingness to schedule a swift trial, which the ex-president wants to delay until after the 2024 election.

In its brief, the defense proposed narrower rules than those sought by prosecutors. Spats over discovery aren't unusual early in a trial process. But Trump's filing added insight into how his team will approach a case in which he has pleaded not guilty.

"In a trial about First Amendment rights, the government seeks to restrict First Amendment rights," the attorneys said in the court filing.

When it comes to Smith's indictment, Trump's lawyers are arguing that he was within his rights to claim the election was stolen. Smith's strategy is, however, apparently designed to avoid a First Amendment trap, and alleges that the criminal activity occurred not in what Trump said, but in actions like the ex-president's pressure on local officials over the election and on former Vice President Mike Pence to delay its certification.

The Trump team's filing went on to claim that the case was in itself an example of political victimization of their client, underscoring the fusion between his courtroom defense and his presidential campaign.

"Worse, it does so against its administration's primary political opponent, during an election season in which the administration, prominent party members, and media allies have campaigned on the indictment and proliferated its false allegations," the filing said.

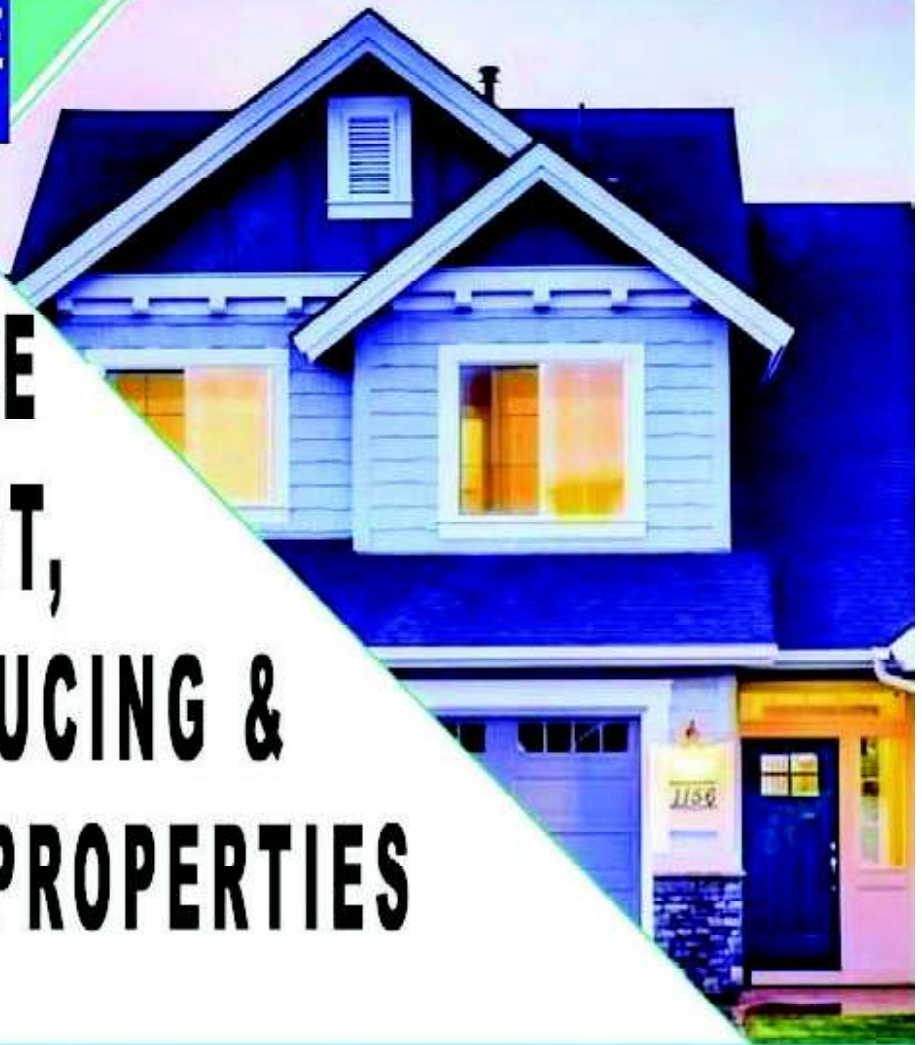
In a Monday night order, Chutkan signaled she would hold a hearing this week on the dispute and told the parties to come up with, by 3 p.m. Tuesday, two options for when such a hearing could be held this week.

Any prolonged debate over the terms of the pre-discovery process - let alone the many other expected pre-trial motions - will play into the hands of the defense.

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# Is The Judiciary Getting Weaponised?

By: Dr G Shreekumar Menon

This is an age of planned weaponisation of institutions, organisations, universities, merchandise, food products, population, freedom, human rights, family, love affairs, drugs and even the judiciary. The weaponisation of the judiciary is causing strange upheavals and circumstances, that are profoundly and astoundingly affecting judicial interpretations, opinions, verdicts and decisions that are binding on anything and everything in nations that follow democracy as the pattern of government. A small number of judges, sitting solely or as a duo or trio, decide what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, what is lawful and unlawful, and what is permissible and impermissible. By impacting the minds of these judges, decisions can be extracted that can change the destiny of an entire nation, consisting of several hundred million, relatively easily.

For the right kind of price, there are lawyers who can deviously argue, debate and confound judges into upholding that the rights of terrorists, agitators, arsonists, rapists, anti-nationals, drug traffickers, human traffickers, secessionists, religion converters and illegal



refugees are more paramount than the cares of a sundered nation. Privileged offenders can unbuckle and unshackle themselves from uncomfortable judgements of high courts and lower courts with just a midnight knock. Fancy-priced midnight-knock specialist lawyers can make any judgement go topsy-turvy, stay its operation indefinitely or even send it back to the lower courts. The journey up and down the stretch covering the hierarchy of courts would take more time than a journey to Pluto! Right here is the point at which millions of affected people, having no axe to grind, no influence to canvass and lobby, no money to hire fancy-priced midnight-knock lawyers, and no ulterior motives, find

themselves flummoxed indefinitely.

The success of a democracy depends on its judiciary but not vice versa. If the judiciary can be overwhelmed or influenced by vested interests, anti-nationals, foreign-supported NGOs and foreign religious fundamentalists, the government of the day can be crippled into inaction and restrained indefinitely from proceeding and implementing any progressive reforms and changes. A simple judicial intervention can indefinitely delay, abort, twist, or jettison any scheme, program, or reform initiative of the government.

A slew of new tactics, strategies and techniques are being used by agitators in functioning democracies in

Asia, Europe and America to compel judicial intervention, for acting as a cost-effective barrier, against the government of the day. There is no need for hyper-expensive military intervention by foreign countries, no need even to finance terrorists, insurgents and revolutionaries. A simple antithetical verdict, running into a few pages, will put any nation into the doldrums for decades. Countries having a dictatorship form of government like China, or monarchies in West Asia, do not see any kind of impediments, either judicial or non-judicial in enforcing new initiatives, development agendas, or employing regressive measures on detractors. Tourists who go to Dubai are floored like Alice in Wonderland, at the fast-paced myriad changes taking place there, and blame the Central and state governments of India, as being incompetent. Bureaucrats and police are blamed on an everyday basis for being corrupt and unfit. But these critics forget that in countries like China, Dubai and other West Asian countries, the government does not have to face any judicial barricade whatsoever. What is decided by the government gets done

immediately.

In democracies, what is decided by the government can be effectively debarred, by just a handful of judges, maybe just two, three or a maximum of five in number. The simple strategy, therefore, for foreign intelligence agencies is to weaken the judiciary of any nation, so that it can be effectively controlled in order to fast-track ambitious agendas of nations, desiring global control, promoting their religion and culture by displacing existing religions and cultures.

Weaponise by weakening the judiciary, for it is the central switchboard of any democratic nation. Invisible counsellors spread across NGOs, universities, journalists in print and visual media, social media, political outfits, radical groups, religious conversion groups, and propagandists, will be induced and enticed to spread rumours, claims, and disputes, based on imaginary fears and fiction. Foreign-funded riots, demonstrations, agitations, and roadblocks, will be frequently unleashed by unseen and intangible forces. The judiciary will be invoked on an everyday basis for every conceivable reason or imagined misgivings.

## From Mymensingh to Nuh: Understanding Anatomy of Hindu-Muslim Riots

By: Arun Anand

The recent violence in Muslim-dominated Nuh in Haryana left several people dead, property worth crores damaged and a deeply scarred local Hindu community. It is unfortunate that a section of media, social media and certain political leaders are trying to peddle false narratives. The violence in Nuh started following a peaceful religious procession of Hindus that was pre-scheduled to go from a certain route. The procession was attacked and soon violence spread. This is an unfortunate and condemnable incident. Many such incidents have happened in the past also. If we want to keep a check on such incidents, one has to understand the anatomy of Hindu-Muslim riots in India. What we are witnessing today is an evolution of a toolkit of rioting that evolved over a period of at



least 100 years. Let us take a look at some of the Hindu-Muslim riots in the past.

**PRE-INDEPENDENCE RIOTS**  
Mymensingh Riots (1906-1907)  
The riots in Mymensingh (now in Bangladesh) started on April 21, 1906, and continued for several months. These riots began when some Swadeshi volunteers tried to stop some Muslim

shopkeepers from selling foreign products at a fair in Jamalpur city. The Muslim shopkeepers attacked the volunteers who were primarily Hindus. Soon, communal violence spread to other parts of the district. Sumit Sarkar mentions in 'The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908' (pp 459), "Once started, the iconoclasm, of

course, gathered a momentum of its own and Muslims started smashing Kalibaris (temples of goddess Kali) and destroying family idols."

"Attacks were recorded on the huts of washermen, weavers, milkmen, fishermen, carpenters, potters, cobblers and other lower caste Hindus... Both official and non-official records cite instances of attacks on Hindu women. Rioters broke into homes and took away young widows, and women hid themselves in jungles for days to escape assaults. The honour of woman constituted the most sacrosanct feature of Hindu social ideology and violation thereof thus implied the total destruction of a Hindu's honour," The Dacca riots broke out when Muslims objected to an age-old

tradition of playing music in a Janmashtami (celebration of the birth of Lord Krishna) procession. They wanted the music to be stopped when the procession was passing in front of any mosque in the city. During the Dacca riots, Muslim crowds specifically targeted Sahas who were the leading traders in the town and Basaks who played an instrumental role in organising the Janmashtami procession. Their houses were attacked in a planned manner. During the Dacca riots too, several Hindu temples and idols were desecrated and Hindus from all strata were targeted.

**Dacca Riots (1941)**  
These riots, which started on March 14, 1941, are also called 'Holi riots' as the violence had erupted as a reaction to Holi celebrations at a market of Hindu artisans known as Sankharibazar.



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# India-China Relations and the Problem of Unprincipled Pragmatists

By: Kanwal Sibal

China has shown the ability to sustain a certain narrative even as it acts contrary to it. It is unfazed by evident contradictions as, internally, no one will openly expose such inconsistencies because of tight control over opinion. Their academics will, in fact, parrot the official arguments justifying the rationale of China's positions. China's inconsistencies are seen as consistent responses to changing conduct or policies of other countries. They, themselves, supposedly, never deviate from their policies; they respond to deviations by others in defence.

We see this starkly in relation to India. China readily signs agreements and equally readily violates them in letter and spirit in the course of time. It agreed in 1996 to define the LAC to avoid recurrent incidents of perceived violations by either side. In 2003 they walked out of the process when I was Foreign Secretary and Wang Yi, then Vice-Minister, was my interlocutor.

In 2005, we agreed on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question, which the Chinese violated in laying claim to Tawang, despite the clause that the interests of "settled populations in the border areas" will be considered. The 1993 and 1996 Peace and Tranquility Agreements and the 2013 Border Defence Cooperation Agreement were blatantly violated by their aggression in Ladakh in 2020. The mechanism of Special Representatives set up in 2003 to settle the boundary question on a political basis has become effectively defunct, though it continues to exist formally.

The latest in China's false narrative building is the Chinese readout of the meeting between NSA Ajit Doval and Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Johannesburg BRICS NSAs meeting. It claims that President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached an important consensus at the G20 meeting in Bali last year on stabilising bilateral relations,



enhancing strategic mutual trust, and promoting the return of bilateral relations to the track of healthy and stable development at an early date. While our spokesperson had then said that there was only an exchange of courtesies between the two leaders at Bali and nothing more, we now admit that the two leaders had some exchange during dinner on the need to stabilise our bilateral relations. This means very little in substantive terms. India and China have diplomatic ties, their militaries are talking to each other, the Defence Ministers of the two countries have met and discussed the tensions on the border. Foreign Minister Jaishankar has met his Chinese counterpart several times. His message has been consistent, namely, that as long as the situation on the border remains abnormal, the ties between the two countries cannot be normal.

The fact also is that Modi and Xi have met several times, with two informal summits, in China (Xian) and in India (Mamallapuram). Too much should not be read into a brief exchange at Bali on "stabilising relations". Modi's intention would have been to encourage Xi to take steps to prevent the ties from deteriorating further in view of an increasingly unstable regional and global situation. "Stabilising relations" could mean from our side a host of things: resolving remaining

friction points post Galwan, dealing with the outstanding Depsang and Demchok issues, adhering to the provisions of the 1993, 1996 and 2013 border agreements, delineating the LAC, and so on.

For the Chinese side to talk of a "consensus" reached between the two leaders to stabilise relations is disingenuous as they have continued to take steps before and since Bali to destabilise relations and deepen the trust deficit between the two sides. No progress has made on remaining friction points post the Galwan aggression by the Chinese, the last rounds of military and diplomatic level talks have produced no forward movement, the Chinese are continuing to expand their military infrastructure in Tibet, a second bridge is being built on Pangong Tso lake, and their forces have not moved back to peacetime locations.

In December 2022, it was reported that China had built a new road just across Yangtse in the Tawang sector. In April 2023, China released a third set of 11 names in Chinese, Tibetan and pinyin characters for sites in Arunachal Pradesh, as part of efforts to re-emphasise Beijing's claim over the Indian state. In May 2023, it was reported that China had been building border defence villages adjacent to Uttarakhand, about 11 kilometres away from the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In

July 2023, China provocatively reverted to its 2005 practice when it issued stapled visas to Indian athletes from Arunachal Pradesh travelling to China to participate in the University Games, eliciting a strong protest from India which has reserved its right to suitably respond.

The Indian read-out of the Doval-Wang Yi meeting in fact repudiates the Chinese claim on any "consensus" at Bali. It specifically mentions the erosion of strategic trust and the public and political basis of the relationship and emphasises the importance of continuing efforts to fully resolve the situation and restore peace and tranquility in the border areas to remove impediments to normalcy in bilateral relations.

In this, Doval was recalling the joint statement when Xi Jinping visited India in 2014 which said that "Peace and tranquility on the India-China border areas was recognised as an important guarantor for the development and continued growth of bilateral relations". This was repeated when Modi visited China in 2015, with both sides also agreeing that "Pending a final resolution of the boundary question, the two sides commit to implementing the existing agreements and continue to make efforts to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas".

China's readout of the Doval-Wang Yi meeting also said that

"that the two sides should adhere to the strategic judgement of the leaders" that "they do not pose a threat to each other, and they are each other's development opportunities". With 50,000 troops on each side still confronting each other in the Himalayas, with China developing more airfields in Tibet and deploying advanced missiles, and India too positioning its assets to counter the Chinese threat, any talk of the two countries not posing a threat to each other is empty rhetoric. On top of this, China's long-standing policy of building Pakistan as a strategic threat to India, of seeking to erode our influence and interests in Nepal and Sri Lanka, and its maritime objectives in the Indian Ocean are serious threats to our security. India's support for the Indo-Pacific concept and its Quad membership are a response to this Chinese expansionism.

The Chinese readout seems to be hark

ing back to the past when we ceded enormous political ground to China. In April 2005, we signed the 'Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity' with China. To have accepted China as a strategic partner with all the outstanding bilateral and geopolitical issues with it was a strategic misstep. In 2006, during President Hu Jintao's visit the joint statement talks of bright prospects for common development and says that the two countries are not rivals or competitors but are partners for mutual benefit, and that there is enough space for them to grow together.

In 2013, during Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang's visit to India we again declared that both "countries view each other as partners for mutual benefit and not as rivals or competitors". Worse, we agreed that the "two sides are committed to taking a positive view of and support each other's friendship with other countries", endorsing implicitly China's relations with Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives, for instance, though we may have had in mind China's concerns about our growing ties with the US, though this was hardly a balanced bargain.





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# A passenger used a boarding pass found in the trash. CLEAR escorted them through airport security.

Two new security incidents involving CLEAR ratchet up concern from lawmakers about the company's processes.

(News Agency)- CLEAR, which allows airline passengers to pay to be whisked through airport security checkpoints, is under increasing scrutiny from lawmakers following two previously unreported security incidents - including one where someone was able to go through security using a boarding pass they'd fished out of the trash.

In both incidents, a CLEAR employee escorted passengers through TSA security checkpoints who had not displayed any ID, and who were not enrolled in CLEAR's identity-vetting service, according to a congressional aide granted anonymity to discuss TSA briefings with lawmakers. (Once past that step, passengers must still go through TSA baggage screening.) The aide said TSA has briefed lawmakers on both incidents, which happened in January and March of this year.

Lawmakers say these two incidents - along with another in July 2022 where a passenger successfully used CLEAR's service with another person's identity - raise fresh questions about the company's security processes. They're calling for changes in the way TSA handles CLEAR passengers.

Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, the top Democrat on the House committee that oversees the Homeland



Security Department, blasted what he called CLEAR's "lax security controls." "After being briefed that there have been multiple security breaches over the past year due to CLEAR's lax security controls, it is apparent that the company puts its bottom line ahead of the security of our aviation system," Thompson said in a statement to POLITICO. "Each passing day the homeland is at greater risk until TSA acts to completely close these security vulnerabilities that it was alerted to last year. We cannot afford any additional

delay."

CLEAR spokesperson Annabel Walsh said for the company "security is job one and we have a zero tolerance policy."

In the case of the two newly revealed incidents this year, Walsh said they are "isolated" and "had nothing to do with our biometric system and were the result of an ambassador not following our strict protocols after which we took immediate action," she added.

CLEAR fired the employees responsible for the lapses and their managers, along

with requiring all employees to be retrained on CLEAR's verification process, the company said.

Still, Thompson and Senate appropriators have called for TSA to begin requiring all CLEAR passengers to present their IDs to a TSA agent. That could impact CLEAR's business of charging \$189 a year so pre-screened passengers can use an eye or fingerprint scan, or both, before being escorted to the front of the security line by a CLEAR employee. This allows people to avoid having an ID scanned before being directed to baggage screening.

In both of the newly reported cases, the passengers were able to go through the security checkpoint "because of CLEAR's lack of oversight," the aide said.

One incident was discovered because the passenger noticed their boarding pass was for a different airport. In the other, a person who did not have a ticket was able to use a discarded boarding pass to enter security through the CLEAR lane. Neither successfully boarded an aircraft, the aide said.

In the previously reported July incident last year, a passenger successfully used another person's identity in Alabama to apply for CLEAR's service, which he used to board a plane.

## China, Philippines' dispute over grounded warship heats up

Tensions have soared between China and Philippines over the South China Sea under Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, with Manila pivoting back to the United States, which supports the Southeast Asian nation in its maritime disputes with China.

(News Agency)- China again asked the Philippines to tow away a grounded warship - a World War Two-era vessel now used as a military outpost - from a disputed shoal on Tuesday, after Manila rejected Beijing's earlier demand.

Tensions have soared between the two neighbours over the South China Sea under Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, with Manila pivoting back to the United States, which supports the Southeast Asian nation in its maritime disputes with China.

China's embassy in Manila criticised Washington for "gathering" its allies to continue "hyping up" the South China Sea issue and the boat incident.

"South China Sea is not a 'safari park' for countries outside the region to make mischief and sow discord," the embassy said in a statement on Tuesday.

The Second Thomas Shoal, which lies within the Philippines exclusive economic zone, is home to a handful of troops living aboard the former warship Sierra Madre. Manila deliberately grounded the vessel in 1999 to reinforce its sovereignty claims.

Manila has repeatedly accused the Chinese coastguard of blocking resupply missions to its troops there, as it did on Aug. 5 when it sprayed a Philippine vessel with a water cannon. China maintains the Philippines'



occupation of the shoal is illegal. The Philippine military described the Chinese coastguard's actions on Saturday as "excessive and offensive". China said the incident was a "warning" and that it has exercised "rational restraint" at all times. China's defence ministry on Tuesday urged Manila to stop all "provocative" actions, and vowed to continue taking necessary measures to safeguard sovereignty and maritime rights.

CONTROL

Security experts say China's actions around the atoll point to one thing - Beijing wants to take control of Second Thomas Shoal, also known in China as Renai Reef, and Ayungin in Manila.

"We must reestablish sea control around the shoal

because if we don't control it, our resupply is vulnerable to their coercive tactics," said Rommel Ong, a maritime security expert and retired vice commander of the Philippine Navy. China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, which overlaps with the exclusive economic zones of Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei, Taiwan and the Philippines. Both Ong and Collin Koh, a security fellow at Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, believe China would think twice about using outright force to occupy the shoal lest it triggers a 1951 U.S.-Philippines mutual defence treaty. "There's probably no question about whether China has the means to up the ante here, but more about its willingness over those political risks," said Koh. Jonathan Malaya, assistant director general of the Philippines National Security Council, urged China "not to escalate matters" and put lives at risk. Japan and France, through their embassies in Manila, have expressed concern over China's recent actions and repeated their support for a 2016 arbitral ruling that invalidated Beijing's expansive South China Sea claims. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with Philippines Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro on Tuesday to discuss the alliance between the two countries, the Pentagon said.



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# 'The Modi Decade':

## How India Has Powered On To Set The Agenda For Global Discourse

Every Independence Day is a milestone for collective reflection on India's growth trajectory. Ahead of India's 77th Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic prognosis that India will become the third-largest economy during Modi 3.0 goes beyond hollow pre-electoral rhetoric, as his economic optimism is substantiated by most recent data points that converge on this assumption.

India before 2014 was a follower and not a leader, a nation that was compelled to conform to the writ of advanced economies. At the culminating point of the Modi-led government's tenure, India is dominating agenda-setting for global peace, climate transition and economic development almost on par with the United States of America.

When economies expand and prosper, the world listens, as sellers listen to buyers. This is because it confers upon buyers greater purchasing power to spend on development and defence procurement from developed nations.

India's enhanced economic power is because of its remarkable post-Covid rebound that has sustained into 2023, and can be gauged through multiple objective prisms: The above four pointers are not about cherry-picking data to endorse preconceived assumptions. Instead, they state multiple factors that are powering India to dominate global discourse during what I term 'The Modi Decade'. To paraphrase a famous economist, "India's golden period is now", and not in some distant future. In the likely event of a

stable political outcome in 2024, a stable regime in India favourably impacts domestic and international business and investment sentiments, as also portends positive geopolitical calibrations for the future of regional stability in the Asian continent and in the Western world. The IMF's World Economic Outlook Database projects that India will overtake Japan and Germany by 2026-27. However, while a consistent average GDP growth rate of 6 per cent ensures that India retains the tag of remaining the 'fastest-growing economy', in order to achieve higher living standards and inclusive growth, we will also need to work towards boosting per capita GDP and per capita

productivity. Such an outcome is only possible through greater provisions for higher skilling and churning out job-ready youth. Currently, only 45 per cent of India's graduate jobseekers are equipped with relevant technical skills to meet industry 4.0 fast-changing needs. How did India under Modi ascend to global pole position? This is because India has undergone a tectonic socioeconomic makeover during the Modi years, attributed to structural reforms and predictable policies. The progressive transition of India's demographic profile is due to increased economic intensity over the decade, despite the de-growth during the two years due to Covid. As a result, the poor have become less poor; the rich have become richer, thereby creating more jobs

and paying higher taxes; while middle-class household incomes have surged to between Rs 6 lakh and Rs 18 lakh annually. This is in sharp contrast to factors deterrent to global growth due to the West experiencing the highest levels of historic inflation and interest rates. Besides, the developed nations have been de-globalising, and "growing warmer, older and more politically fraught with geopolitical variables." Of the 27 countries tracked by Morgan Stanley, India has been upgraded to the topmost rating among Asian Emerging Markets. Rating upgrades usually presage positive MNC sentiments, as FPIs and FDIs begin to accord higher weightage when considering geographical expansion.

The trending upturn of the Indian economy is due to measures set

in motion during Modi 1.0, like the formalisation of the economy via GST; the new bankruptcy code leading to faster debt recovery and resolution, coupled with a sharp decline in corporate leverage and competitive taxation rates for setting up new industries, which have had a positive impact on industrial acceleration.

A separate report by S&P Global also echoes similar economic projections of India growing at 6.7 per cent annually between 2024 to 2031, thereby portending a sustained upwards growth cycle. S&P estimates India's GDP is expected to double to \$6.7 trillion from the current \$3.4 trillion, while per capita income is expected to rise to \$4,500 from the current \$2,500. During India's ongoing G20 presidency, as also during Prime Minister Modi's visit to the US in June, India's newfound assertiveness has repeatedly flagged the need to reform multilateral development banks (MDBs). In order to address the challenges of the 21st century, Modi has stressed the need for MDBs to allocate higher financial resources to developing countries for climate transition and global public goods; allow for greater leniency in debt resolution and relief to poorer economies, and also championed the cause for higher development funding for the Global South.

Most multilateral meetings are confined to idealistic and long-term goal setting without setting definitive timelines, so they morph into mere talk-shops. In contrast, under India's G20 presidency, the focus is on outcome-driven agendas to review progress more frequently in critical areas.

By: Bindu Dalmia

## Billionaire Charlie Ergen merging Dish and EchoStar to expand mobile and satellite telecom empire

Billionaire Charlie Ergen is consolidating his telecommunications empire, merging his satellite and broadband services companies Dish Network and EchoStar in an all-stock deal. "This is a strategically and financially compelling combination that is all about growth and building a long-term sustainable business," Ergen, chairman of both Dish and EchoStar, said in a statement. As of Monday's close, EchoStar had a nearly \$2 billion market value, while Dish's market value was just above \$4 billion, according to FactSet. The deal reunites two businesses that have been separate for about

15 years, after Ergen spun EchoStar out of Dish in 2008. Founded in 1980, EchoStar sold satellite dishes before launching its own subscription satellite service in 1995. Since the spinoff, Dish has acquired assets from EchoStar, including its broadcast satellite service, while EchoStar has focused on satellite communications, such as its Hughes subsidiary's consumer internet service. The merger will exchange 2.85 shares of Dish common stock for each share of EchoStar stock, a 12.9% premium for EchoStar shareholders as of the July 5 trading close. The companies

noted that was "the last full trading day prior to media speculation regarding a potential transaction," with Semafor reporting July 6 that a potential combination was under consideration.

EchoStar CEO Hamid Akhavan will serve as CEO of the combined company. Erik Carlson, the current CEO of Dish, will leave the company after the transaction closes.

Ergen and Akhavan will join CNBC's David Faber at 10:15 a.m. ET for an exclusive interview. Dish - which owns Boost Mobile, Ting, Republic Wireless and Gen Mobile - is looking to expand

beyond satellite TV into the mobile telecom market, with its Dish Wireless business. As part of Tuesday's merger announcement, Dish said its 5G network now covers more than 70% of the U.S. Dish has also expanded into streaming TV services, through its Sling TV subsidiary. EchoStar - which launched its most powerful satellite yet, JUPITER 3, last month - also reported second-quarter results Tuesday. The company reported net income of \$9.1 million and revenue of \$453.1 million for the quarter, marking year-over-year declines of 13% and 9%, respectively.

# The New York City mayor is having his Aaron Judge year after all. And it's not good.

(Sai Buearu)- New York City Mayor Eric Adams dubbed 2022 his "rookie year" after a bumpy first 12 months in office. He promised 2023 would be his "Aaron Judge year." "I'm trying to knock it out of the park," Adams, a Democrat, said in January. But Adams - not unlike the Yankees captain, who was sidelined by a toe injury in June and July - has struggled all summer. There is a law enforcement investigation into a former member of his administration. There's a looming federal takeover of city jails. The City Council overrode his veto of affordable housing bills. And now migrants are sleeping on sidewalks in Manhattan as a crisis over their arrivals grows worse. The nonstop hits call into question Adams' depiction of himself as a strong executive who is running the nation's largest city competently after years of mismanagement. And if the problems continue to spiral, Adams could have what every New York City leader fears most - a one-

term mayoralty.

"It has been a difficult couple of months," Basil Smikle, the former executive director of the New York State Democratic Party, said in a phone interview. "He needs some victories. He really needs some ways to change the conversation." A high-ranking Adams administration official put it more bluntly. "Horrible," said the official about the mayor's recent troubles. The official was granted anonymity to speak candidly about the boss. Being mayor of New York is a notoriously hard job - there's a reason why so many of Adams' predecessors, from Rudy Giuliani to Bill de Blasio, have failed to win higher office. But this summer has been brutal.

Adams has faced a career worth of drama since mid-June:

"Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg charged donors to Adams' mayoral campaign - including a former NYPD colleague - in a straw donor

scheme. Neither the mayor nor any of his campaign employees have been implicated in the case, but one of his closest advisers was recently named in court papers for organizing a fundraiser with the retired police inspector.

"A grand jury convened by Bragg also indicted Eric Ulrich, Adams' former buildings commissioner, with corruption-related charges, The New York Times first reported. Ulrich told investigators that Adams tipped him off that prosecutors were gathering evidence, The Daily News reported. Adams has denied having any advanced knowledge of the probe.

"In yet another court case, a judge moved to put the city's notoriously dangerous jails into federal receivership, saying her confidence in the administration had been "shaken" by officials' failure to report violent incidents and a recent death on Rikers Island.

"Also in July, the City Council overrode a mayoral veto of

a package of bills expanding access to housing vouchers for the homeless. Adams had argued it would cost too much and divert resources from the neediest cases.

"And Adams seemed to struggle more than ever to provide shelter to asylum-seekers arriving in New York. Whether it's a tactic to get President Joe Biden's attention, or difficulty managing resources, the migrant crisis has escalated to a near breaking point this summer, with newcomers sleeping outside a midtown Manhattan intake center last week.

One of Adams' plans to mitigate the shelter shortage - handing out flyers at the U.S.-Mexico border warning asylum-seekers not to come to New York because it's so expensive - seemed both half-serious and antithetical to the city's storied history as a beacon for immigrants.

Perhaps the plan didn't get full

vetting as the administration's communications director and chief counsel left their jobs this summer. Amidst their departure, The Times published a particularly embarrassing story about an Adams staffer rubbing coffee grounds on a photo of a murdered police officer to make it seem older and to cover for a fib the mayor had told.

"They're nervous they're getting less swagger," said one Democratic political consultant who has talked with members of Adams' inner circle. "They're struggling to focus," the consultant said, explaining that the administration had prioritized public safety and quality of life concerns but must now address the unexpected asylum issue.

"They're a little bit off kilter," the consultant said.

City Hall spokesperson Fabien Levy said the idea that Adams was having a bad summer was no more than inside baseball.

## Second phase of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra from Gujarat to Meghalaya: Congress

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Tuesday said that after the overwhelming response to the first phase of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, now the second phase from Gujarat to Meghalaya has been planned. He added that Maharashtra Congress leaders will take out a march at the same time in the state. Patole said as preparations for the yatra in Maharashtra, 48 party observers have been appointed for each Lok Sabha seat in the state. These observers will submit a report about the ground situation within six days, after which a core committee meeting will take place on August 16. According to Patole, he will lead the yatra in East Vidarbha, Varsha

Gaikwad will lead it in Mumbai, Vijay Wadetiwar in West Vidarbha, Balasaheb Thorat in North Maharashtra, Ashok Chavan in Marathwada and Prithviraj Chavan in West Maharashtra. Afterwards, all the leaders will go to Konkan together. Patole said a yatra bus would be taken out after the padyatra. This comes a day after the Gujarat Congress said it invited Rahul Gandhi to start the second phase of his yatra from the state. "We have extended an invitation to Rahul Gandhi to start the second phase of Bharat Jodo Yatra from Gujarat, which is the land of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel. The second phase should begin from the state," Gujarat Leader of Opposition Amit Chavda was quoted as saying by news

agency PTI.

He added that the second phase of the yatra is likely to cover states from the East to the West this time after the first one covered states between the South and the North of India.

The first phase of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra began in September 2022 from Tamil Nadu's Kanyakumari and came to a close in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar on January 30. The padyatra covered 12 states and two Union Territories.

Two months after the yatra came to an end, Rahul Gandhi was convicted in the defamation case over his 'Modi' surname remark and sentenced to two years in jail. He was also disqualified as a Lok Sabha MP following his conviction. However, the Supreme Court

put a stay on his conviction last week and he was reinstated as a Lok Sabha MP on Monday. Meanwhile, the BJP called Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo yatra a failure and said Maharashtra Congress is headed for the same fate. "Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo yatra was a failure. After the yatra passed, MLAs from those states left the party. Does the Maharashtra Congress leader want to follow the same example? Congress is carrying out padyatra because they have no connection with people. Adding to this, they are focusing on Kokan region where Uddhav Thackeray's party has some presence. It's clear Mahavikas Aghadi is only existing on paper," said Madhav Bhandari, vice president of Maharashtra BJP.

## Maui, Hawaii wildfires: Toll rises to 67 as flames spread, homes reduced to ashes

The death toll in Maui rose to 67 on Friday as officials confirmed another 12 fatalities from a massive blaze that turned large swaths of a centuries-old town into a hellscape of ashen rubble.

Maui County officials said in an online statement that firefighters continued to battle the blaze, which was not yet fully contained. Meanwhile, residents of Lahaina were being allowed to return home for the first time to assess the damage.

Associated Press journalists witnessed the devastation, with nearly every building flattened to debris on Front Street, the heart of the Maui community and the economic hub of the island. The roosters known to roam Hawaii streets meandered through the ashes of what was left, including an eerie traffic jam of the charred remains of dozens of cars that

didn't make it out of the inferno.

Incinerated cars crushed by downed telephone poles. Charred elevator shafts standing as testaments to the burned-down apartment buildings they once served. Pools filled with charcoal-colored water. Trampolines and children's scooters mangled by the extreme heat. "It hit so quick, it was incredible," Lahaina resident Kyle Scharnhorst said as he surveyed his apartment complex's damage in the morning. "It was like a war zone." The wildfires are the state's deadliest natural disaster in decades, surpassing a 1960 tsunami that killed 61 people. An even deadlier tsunami in 1946, which killed more than 150 on the Big Island, prompted the development of the territory-wide emergency system that includes sirens, which are sounded

monthly to test their readiness. But many fire survivors said in interviews that they didn't hear any sirens or receive a warning that gave them enough time to prepare, realizing they were in danger only when they saw flames or heard explosions nearby. "There was no warning. There was absolutely none. Nobody came around. We didn't see a fire truck or anybody," said Lynn Robinson, who lost her home in the fire.

Hawaii emergency management records show no indication that warning sirens sounded before people had to run for their lives. Instead, officials sent alerts to mobile phones, televisions and radio stations — but widespread power and cellular outages may have limited their reach.

Gov. Josh Green warned that the death toll would likely rise as search and rescue

operations continue. He also said that Lahaina residents would be allowed to return Friday to check on their property and that people would be able to get out, too, to get water and access other services. Authorities set a curfew from 10 p.m. until 6 a.m. Saturday. "The recovery's going to be extraordinarily complicated, but we do want people to get back to their homes and just do what they can to assess safely, because it's pretty dangerous," Green told Hawaii News Now.

Officials warned residents in Kula and Lahaina who have running water that it may be contaminated and that they should not drink it and take only short, lukewarm showers "in a well-ventilated room" to avoid exposure to possible chemical vapors.



# New York cannabis dispensary openings halted by court order



**The order is the latest blow to New York's ambitious effort to ensure that people harmed by marijuana enforcement are able to reap the financial benefits of legalization.**

(News Agency)- No new weed shops will be able to open in New York, after a judge blocked cannabis regulators from moving forward with retail licensing on Monday.

The order is the latest blow to New York's ambitious effort to ensure that people harmed by marijuana enforcement are able to reap the financial benefits of legalization.

The ruling sides with a group of service-disabled veterans, who filed a lawsuit last week, arguing that a priority licensing program for entrepreneurs impacted by marijuana enforcement was unconstitutional.

The court is blocking the state's cannabis regulatory agencies from issuing new licenses and from granting operational

approval to those who are already licensed and working toward opening up dispensaries.

New York Supreme Court Justice Kevin Bryant ruled that without a court order blocking the cannabis licensing program, it appears "that there is genuine urgency and that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result" if the licensing program moves forward, his order read. The background: New York cannabis regulators attempted to roll out their recreational marijuana market with a bold licensing program that prioritized the first dispensary licenses for certain entrepreneurs with past cannabis convictions or immediate family members with past convictions.

Nonprofits that serve formerly incarcerated

populations are also eligible for these licenses.

For entrepreneurs with past convictions, the state designed a program that would pair them with real estate and capital. But that program has faltered, with fewer than 20 storefronts open for business almost 2½ years after the state first legalized marijuana. A thriving illicit market, with hundreds of unlicensed shops, has sprung up in the meantime.

The wait has angered entrepreneurs like the veterans bringing this lawsuit, who are also supposed to receive priority licensing under the 2021 legalization law. That law defines "social and economic equity applicants" as people from communities disproportionately impacted by cannabis enforcement, minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses and service-disabled veterans. More context: A trade group made similar arguments in a lawsuit filed in March, arguing that prioritizing entrepreneurs with cannabis convictions amounted to overreach by the agencies. Meanwhile, the agencies are facing a lawsuit from hemp beverage businesses challenging their emergency hemp rules. A spokesperson for the Office of Cannabis Management did not immediately return a request for comment, but said after the

lawsuit was filed that the agency does not comment on pending litigation.

The impact: Entrepreneurs like Osbert Orduña won't be able to move forward with opening their dispensaries if the court continues to block the program. Orduña is part of a team that won a license reserved for justice-impacted entrepreneurs and is also a service-disabled veteran.

His business, which is already doing deliveries, is in the process of starting construction on a storefront in Queens, which won't be able to open up shop under the court order.

In other cannabis markets with social equity programs like Illinois and Michigan, "special interest groups have found ways to pit one social equity group against the other," Orduña said in an interview. "Divide and conquer." Service-disabled veterans who have won early retail licenses like Orduña as well as those who have processing or cultivation licenses are "going to suffer" because of the court order, he said. What's next: A hearing in the case is scheduled for Aug. 11 at 10 a.m. at the Ulster County Supreme Courthouse in Kingston, N.Y. Parties in the case have an Aug. 9, 5 p.m. deadline to upload filings before the hearing.

## China assures Russia it remains 'impartial' on Ukraine war after attending Saudi peace talks

(News Agency)- China's top diplomat Wang Yi told his Russian counterpart that Beijing remains "impartial" on the war in Ukraine, a day after a Chinese delegation participated in international talks on ending the conflict that included Kyiv, but not Moscow.

In a call Monday, Wang stressed to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov that China and Russia are "trustworthy and reliable good friends and partners."

"On the Ukraine crisis, China will uphold an independent and impartial position, sound an objective and rational voice, actively promote peace talks, and strive to seek a political solution on any international multilateral occasion," Wang said, according to a readout of the call released by China's Foreign Ministry.

The call followed two-day talks hosted by Saudi Arabia, where around 40 nations including key Ukraine allies the United States, Britain and Germany, as well as India and a number of Middle Eastern



nations, met to discuss the resolution of the conflict, nearly 18 months since Moscow's invasion began. The group agreed on the importance of international dialogue to find "common ground that will pave the way for peace," according to official Saudi media. Lavrov "appreciates and welcomes the constructive role played

by China" toward a political resolution of the "Ukraine crisis," China's Foreign Ministry said in their readout of Monday's call.

A role for China in peace-making? Ahead of the talks in Jeddah, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called China's participation "a super breakthrough and a historic victory."

Ukraine and its Western allies have long expressed hope that China and its leader Xi Jinping, a self-described friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin, could play a role in pushing Moscow toward peace. Both Xi and Putin see the other as a critical partner in reshaping what they see as an American-led world order hostile to their aims. China has continued to bolster its economic, diplomatic, and security ties with Russia, despite Putin's invasion of Ukraine, which Beijing has never condemned. It did not send a delegation to previous international talks in Denmark in June, despite attempting to position itself as a potential peace broker on the conflict in recent months. China's participation in the Jeddah talks comes as the country has strengthened its ties with Saudi Arabia, and has been ramping up efforts to rekindle its relationship with key economic partners in Europe amid economic woes and ongoing friction with Washington.

# Doctor Convicted for COVID-19 Health Care Fraud Scheme

(News Agency)-A federal jury in Baltimore convicted a Maryland doctor today for submitting over \$15 million in false and fraudulent claims to Medicare and a commercial insurer for patients who received COVID-19 tests at his testing sites.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Ron Eifenbein, 49, of Arnold, was an owner and the medical director of Drs ERgent Care LLC, dba First Call Medical Center and Chesapeake ERgent Care. Drs ERgent Care operated multiple drive-through COVID-19 testing sites in Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties. Eifenbein instructed the employees of Drs ERgent Care that, in addition to billing for COVID-19 tests, the employees were to bill for high-level evaluation and management visits. In reality, these visits were not provided to patients as

represented. Rather, Eifenbein instructed his employees that the patients were "there for one reason only - to be tested," that it was "simple and straightforward," and that the providers were "not there to solve complex medical issues."

Eifenbein ordered these high-level visits to be billed for all patients, including those who were asymptomatic, who were getting tested for COVID-19 for their employment requirements, and who were being tested for COVID-19 so that they could travel. Eifenbein, through Drs ERgent Care, caused the submission of millions of dollars in claims to Medicare and a commercial insurer for tens of thousands of high-level visits that were not provided as represented and were ineligible for reimbursement.

The jury convicted Eifenbein of five counts of health care fraud. He is scheduled to be sentenced on

Nov. 7 and faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison on each count. Eifenbein is the first doctor convicted at trial by the Justice Department for health care fraud in billing for office visits in connection with patients seeking COVID-19 tests. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; U.S. Attorney Erik L. Barron for the District of Maryland; Special Agent in Charge Maureen Dixon of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG); Special Agent in Charge Christopher Dillard of the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, Defense

Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), Mid-Atlantic Field Office; Special Agent in Charge Thomas Sobocinski of the FBI Baltimore Field Office; and Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations Conrad J. Quarles of the Office of Personnel Management Office of the Inspector General (OPM-OIG) made the announcement. The HHS-OIG, DCIS, FBI, and OPM-OIG investigated the case. Trial Attorney D. Keith Clouser of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew P. Phelps for the District of Maryland are prosecuting the case.

The Fraud Section leads the Criminal Division's efforts to combat health care fraud through the Health Care Fraud Strike Force Program. Since March 2007, this program, comprised of 15 strike forces operating in 25 federal districts, has charged

more than 5,000 defendants who collectively have billed the Medicare program for more than \$24 billion. In addition, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, working in conjunction with the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services, are taking steps to hold providers accountable for their involvement in health care fraud schemes. More information can be found at [www.justice.gov/criminal-fraud/health-care-fraud-unit](http://www.justice.gov/criminal-fraud/health-care-fraud-unit).

In the past three years, the Health Care Fraud Strike Force has rooted out health care fraud related to the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, 53 defendants have been charged in nationwide COVID-19 Health Care Fraud Enforcement Actions for causing over \$784 million in loss associated with the pandemic, including this case.

## Foreign National Charged for Visa Fraud Scheme

(News Agency)-An indictment charging an Israeli national with leading a visa fraud scheme to facilitate the illegal entry and employment of noncitizens in the United States was unsealed today in the Eastern District of Virginia.

According to court documents, Shai Cohen, 39, allegedly organized, led, and worked with others to recruit and facilitate the illegal entry of Israeli citizens into the United States under false pretenses. Cohen and his co-conspirators allegedly assisted noncitizens in fraudulently obtaining B-1/B-2 tourist/visitor visas by misrepresenting the true purpose of their travel to the United States, which was illegal employment. Cohen and his co-conspirators are alleged to have then assisted the noncitizens with travel to the United States. Upon arrival, the noncitizens were employed at various kiosks owned and operated by Cohen in malls in Virginia and Maryland. The noncitizens who engaged in illegal employment were allegedly primarily compensated for their work by under-the-table cash payments or the transfer of money to stored value payment cards, rather than through a legitimate payroll system. Cohen also allegedly provided housing and transportation for the noncitizens to and from work in the United States. Cohen was arrested in Israel pursuant to a U.S. request for his

extradition. In August, he was extradited to the Eastern District of Virginia.

Cohen is charged with conspiracy to defraud and commit offenses against the United States; bringing aliens to the United States for financial gain; encouraging and inducing aliens to unlawfully come to, enter, and reside in the United States for financial gain; harboring illegal aliens; and money laundering conspiracy. If convicted, he faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison.

Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; U.S. Attorney Jessica D. Aber for the Eastern District of Virginia; Special Agent in Charge Derek W. Gordon of the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Washington Field Office; and Acting Special Agent in Charge Troy W. Springer of the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), National Capital Region made the announcement. The HSI Washington Field Office and DOL-OIG are investigating the case.

Trial Attorney Clayton O'Connor of the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Raizza Ty for the Eastern District of Virginia are prosecuting the case. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs worked with the government of Israel to secure the arrest and extradition of Cohen.

## Two Charged In Drug-Related Shooting On Bronx Street That Hit An 11-Month-Old Baby In The Face

(News Agency)-Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Christie M. Curtis, the Acting Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and Edward A. Caban, the Commissioner of the New York City Police Department ("NYPD"), announced the unsealing today of an indictment charging AHMED ALTOREI, a/k/a "AK," and SAMUEL BAUTISTA, a/k/a "Sammy," with distributing narcotics and carrying firearms in connection with a drug trafficking operation based on the Grand Concourse and East 198th Street in the Bronx, New York. In connection with those crimes, ALTOREI and BAUTISTA were involved in a street shooting on January 19, 2022, that targeted a rival drug dealer but resulted in an 11-month-old baby being shot in the face. ALTOREI was arrested yesterday evening and BAUTISTA was arrested earlier today in an operation conducted by the FBI and NYPD, and both are expected to be presented before U.S. Magistrate Judge Gabriel W. Gorenstein later this afternoon. The case is assigned to Chief U.S. District Judge Laura Taylor Swain. FBI Acting Assistant Director in Charge Christie M. Curtis said: "As alleged, the defendants possessed firearms as part of a narcotics trafficking operation that directly led to the shooting of an 11-month-old infant. This is yet another unfortunate example of an innocent

bystander being harmed as a result of drugs and guns. The FBI is committed to making our communities safer by removing violent drug traffickers from the streets." NYPD Commissioner Edward A. Caban said: "Today's indictment again proves that violence on our streets will not stand. The men and women of the NYPD will remain relentless in holding accountable anyone who allegedly dares to carry and indiscriminately shoot an illegal gun in New York City. I thank and commend all of our investigators and everyone at the office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District whose dedication to justice and public safety is reflected in these charges."

As alleged in the Indictment:[1] ALTOREI and BAUTISTA are charged for their involvement in a conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute both cocaine and crack cocaine from at least in or about May 2018 through at least in or about August 2023 and for carrying firearms in connection with the same, some of which were brandished and discharged, including the firearm that shot the infant on January 19, 2022. ALTOREI, 36, and BAUTISTA, 30, both of the Bronx, New York, are each charged with one count of narcotics conspiracy, which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison and a maximum sentence of life in prison; one count of using or carrying firearms during and



# Tucker Carlson could see Rebekah Mercer, Peter Thiel invest in his media company

Former Fox News host Tucker Carlson could see two of the wealthiest GOP business megadonors, Rebekah Mercer and Peter Thiel, invest in his new media company, according to people familiar with the matter. Mercer has spoken with Carlson since his April departure from Fox News about possibly investing in his as yet unnamed media company, sources told CNBC. Thiel has hinted to allies that he could invest in the venture after hearing from Carlson's side, these people added.

It was unclear Monday whether Thiel or Mercer had officially moved ahead with a financing plan, and their spokespeople did not respond to multiple requests for comment over several weeks, including outreach on Monday. A spokesman for Carlson did not return a request for comment. But both of them have privately expressed interest in helping Carlson, said numerous sources, who were granted anonymity to discuss private conversations.

The move by Carlson and his team to cultivate potential investors like Mercer



and Thiel signals that the former Fox News host's new project could be on the brink of gaining financial support from some of the nation's most recognized conservative megadonors.

The news of Mercer's and Thiel's interest in Carlson comes as the TV host and his longtime business partner Neil Patel are reportedly looking to raise hundreds of millions of dollars to fund the company.

Any business between Carlson and Mercer could be part of a larger financing

effort led by investment firm 1789 Capital, which is already planning an eight-figure investment into the former Fox News host's media venture.

Mercer is listed on the corporate database PitchBook as an "executive officer" at 1789 Capital and has already reportedly invested into a 1789 Capital fund worth \$150 million.

Fox and Carlson officially parted ways in April, days after the network reached a more than \$700 million settlement with Dominion Voting Systems in its

defamation lawsuit. Fox refused to say why Carlson was leaving, save for a statement in which Fox thanked him "for his service to the network."

Shortly after leaving Fox, Carlson began hosting an episodic show on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

The new media venture would create full-length versions of Carlson's X episodes, The Wall Street Journal reported, built around a subscription model for revenue.

A recent episode featured Carlson interviewing Devon Archer, a former business associate of President Joe Biden's son, Hunter Biden. Archer also testified before a House committee in late July, part of a Republican probe into Hunter Biden's business dealings.

Mercer and Thiel have for years been separate investors in a diverse array of conservative startups.

Mercer was an investor in Breitbart News, which was founded by the late conservative commentator Andrew Breitbart, and the now shuttered right-wing social media site, Parler. Carlson co-founded The Daily Caller, a conservative news site.

## Air India rebranding: Maharaja set for a makeover



Air India's current logo, which features a red swan adorned with the distinctive orange Konark Chakra, is set to undergo a transformation.

Tata Group-owned Air India is gearing up for a change in its livery colors and logo. The unveiling of the new branding is anticipated to take place at an event scheduled for August 10.

The airline's current logo, which features a red swan adorned with the distinctive orange Konark Chakra, is set to undergo a transformation, reflecting the evolving identity of the airline under its new ownership.

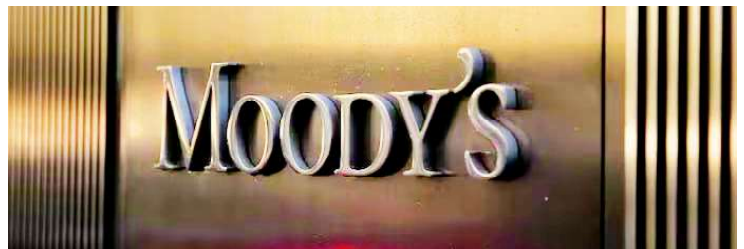
The term "livery" encompasses an array of elements such as symbols, insignia, colors, and identifiers that are intrinsically linked to an airline's brand. This transformation follows Tata Sons' complete acquisition of Air India in

January 2022. Through its fully owned subsidiary, Talace Private Limited, Tata Sons acquired a 100 percent stake in the airline.

Subsequently, it was announced that Air India and Vistara, another subsidiary of Tata Sons, would be merged to create a more unified entity. This merger is projected to be completed by March 2024, with Singapore Airlines holding a 25 percent stake in the amalgamated entity.

Furthermore, plans include the merger of Air India Express and Air Asia India, forming a single low-cost carrier airline. The rebranding initiative gained momentum when Tata Group engaged London-based brand and design consultancy company Futurebrands in December 2022 to spearhead the rebranding process for Air India.

## Moody's downgrades US banks, warns of possible cuts to others



Moody's cut the ratings of 10 banks by one notch and placed six banking giants, including Bank of New York Mellon, US Bancorp, State Street and Truist Financial on review for potential downgrades.

Moody's cut credit ratings of several small to mid-sized U.S. banks on Monday and said it may downgrade some of the nation's biggest lenders, warning that the sector's credit strength will likely be tested by funding risks and weaker profitability.

Moody's cut the ratings of 10 banks by one notch and placed six banking giants, including Bank of New York Mellon, US Bancorp, State Street and Truist Financial on review for potential downgrades.

"Many banks' second-quarter results showed growing profitability pressures that will reduce their ability to generate internal capital," Moody's said in a note.

"This comes as a mild U.S. recession is on the horizon for early 2024 and asset quality looks set to decline, with particular risks in some banks' commercial real estate (CRE) portfolios."

Moody's said elevated CRE exposures are a key risk due to high interest rates, declines in office demand as a result of remote work, and a reduction in the availability of CRE credit.

The agency also changed its outlook to negative for eleven major lenders, including Capital One, Citizens Financial and Fifth Third Bancorp.

The collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank earlier this year sparked a crisis of confidence in the U.S. banking sector, leading to a run on deposits at a host of regional banks despite authorities launching emergency measures to shore up confidence.

# Air pollution can cause antibiotic resistance to rise, finds study



**Air pollution is a significant contributor to the rise in antibiotic resistance, impacting the health of individuals globally, according to a study.**

Air pollution can cause a dangerous rise in antibiotic resistance, affecting the health of every individual worldwide, according to a global study. Moreover, the study, published in the Lancet Planetary Health journal, reveals that this connection has grown stronger over time, as increases in air pollution coincide with alarming surges in antibiotic resistance.

The researchers, hailing from both China and the UK, found that their analysis is the first to suggest the impact of air pollution on antibiotic resistance on a global scale.

Antibiotic resistance, a silent pandemic threatening our well-being, is rapidly expanding its lethal reach. The evidence suggests that particulate matter PM2.5, harbouring antibiotic-resistant bacteria and genes, can be transmitted between environments and inhaled by unsuspecting humans.

Air pollution inflicts long-term suffering, leading to chronic afflictions such as heart disease, asthma, and lung cancer, ultimately shortening life expectancy. The immediate repercussions of exposure to high pollution levels manifest as coughing, wheezing, and asthma

attacks, prompting a surge in hospital and general practitioner visits worldwide. Lead author Professor Hong Chen of Zhejiang University in China said, "The study not only will it reduce the harmful effects of poor air quality, it could also play a major role in combatting the rise and spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria."

The main drivers are still the misuse and overuse of antibiotics, which are used to treat infections. But the study suggests the problem is being worsened by rising levels of air pollution. Curtailing air pollution could serve as a potent

weapon against antibiotic resistance, say the researchers.

Hospitals, farms, and sewage-treatment facilities have been identified as potential sources, emitting and dispersing antibiotic-resistant particles through the air, spanning vast distances.

Until now, the influence of PM2.5 air pollution, composed of particles 30 times smaller than a human hair, on global antibiotic resistance remained largely enigmatic.

Startlingly, data indicates that a staggering 7.3 billion people worldwide are directly exposed to hazardous average annual PM2.5 levels.

The authors used data for 116 countries from 2000 to 2018, sources that included the World Health Organization, European Environment Agency and the World Bank.

Their findings confirm that antibiotic resistance escalates with PM2.5 levels, with every 10 per cent increase in air pollution ushering in a 1.1 per cent surge in antibiotic resistance.

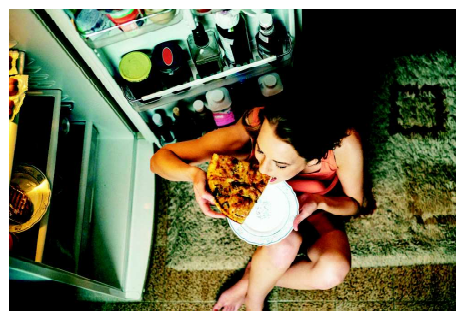
## Late-night snacks taste good: Here's what it does to your body

**Late-night snacking could disrupt sleep cycles, increase the risk of obesity and cause gastrointestinal discomfort.**

Late-night snacking seems to be quite a common phenomenon, especially for those who suffer from an erratic work-life schedule. Moreover, indulging in late-night snacks can spark curiosity about how they impact our bodies. There are several ways in which having a late-night snack, mostly consisting of high carbohydrates and unhealthy fats, could impact not just our circadian rhythms but our sleep cycle as well.

However, have you ever wondered what late-night snacking does to your body? Late-night snacking refers to the act of consuming food or beverages after dinner or shortly before bedtime. These cravings can be quite stubborn and can stem from various reasons, including hunger, habit, boredom, stress, or simply a desire to unwind before sleep. Nonetheless, the quality, quantity, and timing of your evening snacks can greatly impact your overall health.

But eating snacks like potato chips or pizza and other similar food items could negatively impact your



body.

A study conducted by researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital found that eating late at night may increase one's likelihood of developing obesity as it increases hunger, burns fewer calories and changes fat tissue. According to a 2021 article in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, late-night snacking could lead to gastrointestinal discomfort during sleep, such

as indigestion, heartburn and acid reflux.

"Eating foods that take a lot of effort to digest, like high-fat foods or heavy meals, could cause you to wake up frequently throughout the night," dietitian Kelsey Kunik told EatingWell.

Late-night snacking, surprisingly, can offer certain health benefits too. For instance, it can serve as an opportunity to provide your body with essential nutrients that may have been missed during the day. Opt for nourishing and minimally processed foods like Greek yoghurt with berries, whole-grain crackers with hummus, or a small portion of mixed nuts to satiate hunger and supply your body with vital vitamins and minerals.

If you lead an active lifestyle, consuming high-protein foods before bed can also support your body's rest and recovery.

Opt for snacks that contain tryptophan-rich foods like nuts or seeds, as they can facilitate the production of sleep-regulating neurotransmitters such as serotonin and melatonin.



# Pakistan's ex-PM Imran Khan goes from high office to high-security prison after sentencing

(News Agency)- Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan awoke Sunday as an inmate in a high-security prison after a court handed him a three-year sentence for corruption, a development that could end his future in politics.

The court ruled Saturday that national cricketer Khan, who was ousted in a no-confidence vote in April 2022 but remains the country's leading opposition figure, had concealed assets after selling state gifts.

The prison sentence could bar him from politics under a law that prohibits anyone with a criminal conviction from holding or running for public office. He could also lose the chairmanship of the party he founded, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, or PTI.

Khan was arrested Saturday at his home in the eastern city of Lahore and taken to prison. Government figures on Saturday welcomed Khan's arrest and conviction, with the Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari describing it as "comeuppance" for the opposition leader.

Critics say efforts to put him behind bars



are politically motivated and have intensified ahead of elections due to be held later this year.

They argue that Khan's popularity and a large support base, combined with his ability to mobilize massive crowds, pose a threat to the ruling coalition and its backers in Pakistan's powerful military that has been the final arbiter of the country's politics since independence from Britain in 1947.

It's the second time this year that Khan has been detained, joining other former

Pakistani prime ministers who have been arrested and seen military interventions throughout the country's political history. But his current stay at the Attock prison is a far cry from his custodial conditions in May, when he was taken to a well-appointed guesthouse on a police compound in Islamabad under a Supreme Court order. He was then allowed visitors and meetings with party colleagues.

Attock, in eastern Punjab province, is notorious for its harsh conditions and its

inmates include convicted militants. Khan's jail term started Saturday, but it was not immediately clear if he will spend the three-year sentence in Attock.

Authorities have further tightened security around the prison, which already has armed guards in watchtowers, by erecting barriers and blocking roads to keep people away. They have also instructed locals not to allow media onto their roofs to stop photographs and videos from leaking.

PTI lawyer Shoaib Shaheen told The Associated Press that police at the prison refused entry to a legal team who went to see Khan. He said the party would file an appeal as there were "plenty of loopholes in the verdict."

In May, Khan's arrest on corruption charges caused a wave of violent protests that swept the country. Days later, Pakistan's Supreme Court ordered his release, saying his arrest was illegal.

Khan's calls for mass protests have so far failed to gain traction among his supporters with police making far fewer arrests than they did in May as people mostly stayed off the streets.

## Pakistan to privatise loss-making national airline



(News Agency)- Pakistan plans to privatise its loss-making national carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIAa.PSX), the government said on Monday, as the country also seeks to outsource its airport operations in line with an IMF deal.

The privatisation decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee of Privatisation chaired by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar.

The committee "after deliberation decided to include Pakistan International Airlines Co. Ltd in the list of active privatisation projects of the ongoing privatisation programme, following an amendment in the law by the Parliament," a finance ministry statement said.

The committee also backed the hiring of a financial adviser to process the transaction of Roosevelt Hotel, New York, an asset of the PIA investment

Limited, it added.

Pakistan hopes to resume PIA flights to Britain in the next three months after services were suspended following a fake pilot scandal.

The PIA flights to Europe and the UK have been suspended since 2020 after the European Union's Aviation Safety Agency revoked the national carrier's authorisation to fly to the bloc following the pilot licence scandal.

The privatisation of a state-owned enterprise, the PIA, which has accumulated hundreds of billions of rupee in losses and arrears, comes after Pakistan agreed to fiscal discipline plans with the International Monetary Fund. Pakistan secured a \$3 billion IMF bailout in June.

Reporting by Asif Shahzad in Islamabad and Baranjot Kaur in Bengaluru Editing by David Goodman, Mark Potter and Alistair Bell

## Bangladesh to tone down 'draconian' digital security law



(News Agency)- Law minister says the law will be replaced with another legislation which will remove the sections that were allegedly misused.

Bangladesh says it will tone down its "draconian" Digital Security Act (DSA) and replace it with a new legislation, the Cyber Security Act of 2023.

In a news conference on Monday, Law Minister Anisul Huq said the proposed new law is likely to retain many of the existing provisions of DSA but will remove the sections which had the scope to be "misused". Huq's announcement came hours after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina earlier on Monday chaired a cabinet meeting where the government took the decision to tone down the law. Enacted in 2018, DSA has long been termed by rights activists as a "black Act" for its misuse by the government to suppress dissent and freedom of speech. As

demands to repeal the law grew, the United Nations human rights chief Volker Turk in April asked Dhaka to "impose an immediate moratorium" on its use and "to reform comprehensively its provisions to bring them in line with the requirements of international human rights law". Minister Huq said the government led by Hasina has paid heed to the call and decided to amend DSA. "But we of course need some rules and regulation for our growing digital presence and cyber space. Hence we can't function without any law. That is why we are going to have this new Cyber Security Act," he said. Huq said the new law will be a "modernised" version of DSA and will not have provisions which can be "misused" by anyone. He said the new law will include "monetary penalties" instead of "imprisonments" for journalists in defamation cases.



# Kiara Advani In Don 3 With Ranveer Singh?

## Rumours Spark After She Visits Ritesh Sidhwani's Office

Could Kiara Advani play Roma in Don 3? Rumours of Kiara possibly replacing Priyanka Chopra as the new Roma sparked after she was spotted making her way to Don producer Ritesh Sidhwani's office on Tuesday.

Her visit came just a few hours after Farhan Akhtar announced that he is returning with Don but sans Shah Rukh Khan. The filmmaker confirmed that there will be a new Don actor and his name will be unveiled soon. There are rumours doing the rounds that Ranveer Singh might be the new Don.

On Tuesday evening, Kiara greeted the paparazzi gathered outside Ritesh Sidhwani's office. The actress looked like a vision in white, wearing a pair of white pants and a matching top. She was seen having a quick conversation with Ritesh before she left the office. Watch the video below:



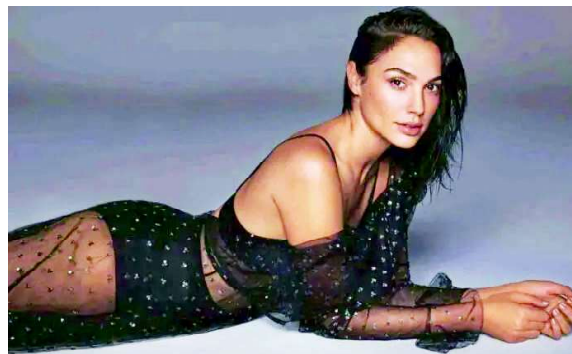
On Tuesday morning, Farhan left Don fans in shock after he teased that a new era of Don is in the making. After fans began chanting 'No SRK No Don', the filmmaker issued a statement teasing the new actor and urged

fans to shower him with love just like they gave SRK their love. "The time has now come to take the legacy of Don forward and joining us in this new interpretation will be an actor whose talent and versatility I have long admired. We hope that you will show him the love you have so

graciously and generously shown to Mr Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan. A new era of Don begins in 2025. Watch this space," Farhan wrote.

A source told Pinkvilla that Farhan will be introducing the new Don, speculated to be Ranveer Singh, this week. A teaser will be released announcing his new role and it will be attached with Gadar 2.

# Gal Gadot calls 'Heart of Stone' co-star Alia Bhatt 'grounded but fun'



Gal Gadot recently spoke to IndiaToday.in about collaborating with Bollywood star Alia Bhatt. The duo will share screen space in Netflix's upcoming actioner Heart of Stone.

Alia Bhatt makes her much-awaited Hollywood debut with Netflix film 'Heart of Stone'. The actress will be seen alongside Gal Gadot in the spy thriller. In an

exclusive chat with IndiaToday.in, Gal was all praise for Alia and shared that she and her have a lot in common.

**GAL GADOT ON ALIA BHATT**

Gal Gadot spoke about Alia Bhatt and said, "Alia and I share a lot in common. She has a strong centre. She doesn't take herself too seriously, she is grounded but fun. She is smart and dedicated,

and sweet and kind." Hearing her praise, Alia went 'aww.'

Given that both Alia Bhatt and Gal Gadot are producer-actors, when asked to debunk a myth people usually have about female producers, Gal said, "I have a good one. People always talk about women being diva on sets. I have never worked with a female diva, ever in my life. I worked with divas, none of them were women." Alia added, "I get that all the time. If I get ready early, people are like how you got ready so fast. People usually co-relate vanity with women, and I want to change that." Promptly adding to it, Gal told Alia, "Now you are a mother, you are on schedule, you want to get the work done and go back and be a mother." Also starring Jamie Dornan, 'Heart of Stone' will drop on Netflix on August 11, 2023.





## Tamannaah Bhatia on age difference with 'Jailer' co-star Rajinikanth: Why are you...

**Tamannaah Bhatia recently talked about the age difference between her and Rajinikanth. The actress will be seen opposite the legendary actor in the upcoming film 'Jailer'.**



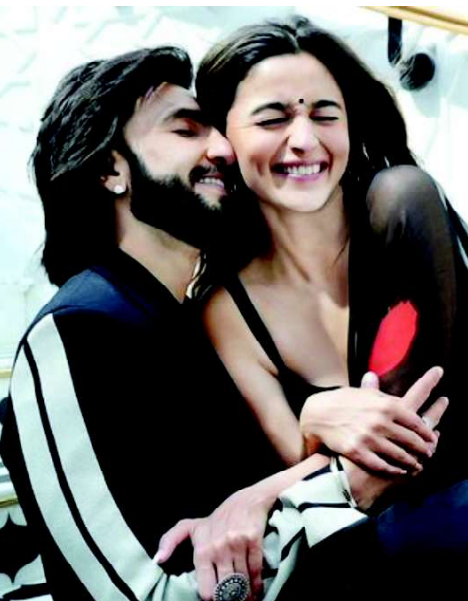
Tamannaah Bhatia is receiving accolades for her impressive dance moves in the song 'Kaavaalaa' from her upcoming film 'Jailer', where she stars alongside Thalaiva Rajinikanth. During the launch of the song 'Tu Aa Dilbara' from the same movie, the actress discussed the age differences between her and the legendary actor. Other than this, Bhatia even shared her experience of working with the ensemble cast.

**TAMANNAAH ON HER AGE**

**DIFFERENCE WITH RAJINIKANTH** Tamannaah recently talked about her age difference with her 'Jailer' co-star, Rajinikanth. The actress, aged 33, will be seen opposite Rajinikanth, who is 72 years old, in Jailer. Additionally, she will also feature alongside 67-year-old superstar Chiranjeevi in Bhola Shankar. When asked about the age difference, the actress responded, "Why are you even looking at the age difference? You have to look at two characters that are being played on the screen, that's it. If I've to talk about

age, then I will look at Tom Cruise's stunts even at the age of 60, and I would like to do saucy dance numbers at that age too."

Zoom quoted a source who stated, "She has the freedom to make her choices and plan her career accordingly. She has worked with the two biggest stars of Telugu and Tamil movies-Chiranjeevi and Rajinikanth respectively- because working with them gives her more mileage and popularity in comparison to working with young heroes.



## Alia-Ranveer film crosses Rs 100 crore

Director Karan Johar's 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani' starring Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh has surpassed Rs 100 crore in India. The film continues its dream run.

Karan Johar's directorial comeback flick, 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani', is a winner at the box office. The film achieved yet another milestone on Sunday, August 6. Yesterday, the romantic drama witnessed a

jump in collection and managed to surpass Rs 100 crore (nett) at the domestic box office. The Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh-starrer is all set to continue its dream run further.'

**ROCKY AUR RANI...' CROSSES RS 100 CRORE IN INDIA**

'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani' released in theatres on July 28 amid massive fanfare. The film is doing great business at the box office. The Karan Johar-directorial

venture opened to positive responses. On Day 10, the film is estimated to have earned Rs 13.50 crore in India. The second Sunday is proving proved to be an eventful day for the team. This takes the 10-day total collection to Rs 105.08 crore nett in India. It is said that the film registered an occupancy of 46.07 per cent on August 6. At this rate, 'Rocky Aur Rani...' will have a solid run for the next couple of weeks.

# Brazil's Lula pushes end to deforestation, stumbles on fossil fuels

**Summit will be a major political and diplomatic test for the Brazilian leader.**

BY LOUISE GUILLOT

Under pressure from the EU to rein in deforestation or face trade restrictions, Amazon countries must figure out how to bring prosperity to the region without destroying the forest. And that's proving difficult.

At a two-day summit starting Tuesday, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is looking to corral countries to speed up efforts to stop deforestation and decide on a common strategy to save the rainforest.

But it's likely to be an uphill climb, with countries disagreeing on whether they should commit to a zero deforestation goal and on whether oil and gas drilling should be banned in the region.

The summit comes as the EU is rolling out new rules to ban commodities' imports driving deforestation abroad and is asking countries to police their supply chains against environmental and human rights violations. That's increasing pressure on the Amazon region - and particularly on Brazil, one of the largest exporters of agri-food products to the EU and home to 60 percent of the rainforest - to commit to ambitious action at this week's meet-up. Colombian President Gustavo Petro has argued that phasing out fossil fuels is



essential for the forest's protection. "Even if we get deforestation under control, the Amazon faces dire threats if global heating continues to climb," he wrote in an op-ed last month, adding that "to avoid the point of no return, we need an ambitious transnational policy to phase out fossil fuels."

But Lula isn't pushing to phase out fossil fuels domestically, highlighting a tension between conservation efforts and ensuring economies stay on track.

The Brazilian leader told local media ahead of the summit he wants to "keep dreaming" about drilling in the region. His

comments come as Brazilian oil major Petrobras is looking to open new fields near the mouth of the Amazon River despite receiving a negative opinion from the national institute for the environment. If fossil fuels are kept underground, Amazon countries will need alternative activities to keep their economies afloat. Observers have suggested using this week's summit as a way to promote greener farming and sustainable forest management, as well as discuss potential schemes to pay farmers and indigenous people to help protect the forest.

"The bioeconomy is the key to unlocking the region's economic potential while preserving its ecological heritage and, as such, needs to be at the center of any sustainable and inclusive development plan for the Amazon," said Vanessa Pérez, global economics director at the World Resources Institute.

Indigenous groups are also watching the summit closely, and want their contribution to climate protection, as well as their rights and territorial claims recognized by country leaders.

"It is not possible to plan the future of the Amazon without indigenous peoples, without guaranteeing our territorial rights," said Ângela Kaxuyana, political adviser at the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon. High stakes The outcome of the summit is a major political and diplomatic test for Lula, who has pledged to achieve zero deforestation in the Amazon.

Since taking office last year, Lula has stepped up efforts to crack down on illegal miners, protect indigenous groups and boost conservation efforts in the Amazon, with the government reporting a 66 percent drop in the rate of deforestation in July compared to the same month last year.

## As Pakistan's political roller coaster continues, what next for Imran Khan?

By Hamid Mir

What is the future of Imran Khan after his second arrest in the last three months? Will he get relief from the superior courts of Pakistan? Will he be able to contest the next general election? Is this the end of Imran Khan's politics? These are some important questions being debated inside and outside Pakistan since his arrest on August 5.

For me, Imran Khan is not important. I think the Constitution of Pakistan is more important than an individual and the Constitution is facing more challenges than Imran Khan.

Imran Khan is not the first Prime Minister to be arrested in Pakistan. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy was arrested under treason charges in 1962 by General Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was arrested by General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977 under murder charges, Benazir Bhutto was arrested many times and convicted under corruption charges in 1999 when Nawaz Sharif was the prime Minister. Nawaz Sharif and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi were arrested in 2018 when Imran Khan was Prime

Minister.

Why is the Constitution more important than Imran Khan? The Constitution of Pakistan is completing its 50th year on August 14, 2023. If the Constitution of Pakistan survives, Imran Khan may also survive and if it is violated again, then his political survival is very difficult.

What is the connection between the survival of Imran Khan with the survival of the Constitution? The National Assembly of Pakistan is completing its tenure this week. New elections within three months are the constitutional requirement. If there is a general election by November this year, Imran Khan will not be allowed to contest the election because, after his conviction by a lower court over corruption charges, he was disqualified for holding any public office.

The verdict of a district court of Islamabad was challenged in Islamabad High Court and in the Supreme Court on Tuesday. The Supreme Court admitted the petition. I spoke to some lawyers of Imran Khan. One was hopeful for relief, the other was not. The problem is that if Imran Khan gets relief

from the Supreme Court in this case, there are more than 180 cases pending in many civilian courts, and then, finally, a military court is also waiting for him. The new caretaker government will try its best to stop Khan from contesting a new election. I think if he will not be allowed to take part in the upcoming election, even then he can survive politically.

Take the example of Nawaz Sharif. He became the prime minister three times. Every time, he was thrown out of the government without completing his term. He was disqualified by the Supreme Court on a petition from Imran Khan in 2017. Disqualification was not enough. Nawaz Sharif was involved in many other cases and, finally, he was arrested just weeks before the 2018 election. Many people from his party were forced to join the party of Imran Khan. Everyone knew before the 2018 election that Imran Khan was the favourite of the military establishment. In fact, Imran Khan was imposed on the people of Pakistan through a rigged election. One day, Maryam Nawaz, daughter of Nawaz Sharif, went to see her

father in jail. She was arrested in front of her father. Imran Khan tried his best to torture Nawaz Sharif in jail. He was not allowed to speak to his sick wife Kulsoom Nawaz on the phone.

Hours before his wife's death, he pleaded with jail authorities to let him speak to her on the phone. Kulsoom Nawaz died the same day and her husband was informed in jail many hours after her death. Shehbaz Sharif and many other political opponents were also arrested upon Imran Khan's wish. Nawaz Sharif survived despite conviction and disqualification. He threw out Imran Khan through a no-confidence motion in the Parliament by making an alliance with Asif Ali Zardari. His younger brother became the Prime Minister in 2022. It was actually Nawaz Sharif who decided to appoint General Asim Munir as the new Army Chief while sitting outside Pakistan. Shehbaz Sharif is now claiming that Nawaz Sharif will become the Prime Minister for the fourth time. If Nawaz Sharif can survive despite convictions and disqualifications, then Imran Khan can also survive.





# They bought a ghost village in Italy then left it to crumble

**Silvia Marchetti, CNN**

With more and more dwindling Italian towns offering up neglected homes at bargain prices, snapping up an abandoned house in the country has become increasingly popular in recent years.

The Sicilian town of Sambuca di Sicilia has apparently become something of an Italian "Little America" after attracting headlines when it began selling off dwellings for little over a dollar back in 2019.

However, a group of Italians originally from the forsaken village of San Severino di Centola, located in the Province of Salerno, Campania, decided to go one step further by buying an entire hamlet. Back in 2008, Silverio D'Angelo joined forces with eight others, who live across Italy, to purchase all of the neglected homes in the medieval district of the village, which has been pretty much abandoned since the last residents left in the 1970's.

**Strong attachment**

The retired banker says that he and the others began knocking at the doors of the heirs of past owners to convince them to sell after becoming concerned that the ghost village would fall prey to unscrupulous investors who may have wanted to radically change its structure. "We were driven by a visceral love for this place, by passion for our roots and ancestors," says D'Angelo, a native born in the newer section of the village, connected to the old hamlet, which was built further downhill when locals started fleeing the old hamlet in the 1800's due to harsh winters, difficult roads and tough life conditions.

"We have a strong attachment to this

land, our hearts belong here. But it was quite a reckless move. You need a lot of patience, and money, to bring a whole place like this back to life."

Around 350 or so people live in the newer section of San Severino di Centola, which is about a 15 minute walk away from the abandoned area..

D'Angelo explains that he and the others acquired around 60 old stone dwellings 15 years ago and "each have a property stake."

They have no grand plans to turn the hamlet, which is surrounded by pristine ragged hills, forests and streams, into a lavish resort or holiday retreat spot with residences, but simply want to help preserve the village's original beauty by breathing new life into its decaying houses and monuments.

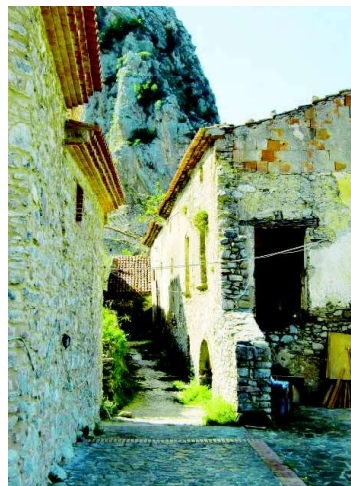
"It breaks my heart to see the ghost hamlet fall to pieces and into oblivion, and that just a tiny part of it has been restyled," D'Angelo tells CNN. "We want to make it entirely accessible and safe for visitors."

While he'd rather not disclose how much the group paid for the ghost hamlet, D'Angelo describes it as an "ambitious rescue mission."

"We did not want the old village to fall into the wrong hands, which would have destroyed its very nature," he adds. "So even if crumbly, we decided it was better we bought it to take off the market, without necessarily doing anything with it."

San Severino di Centola is one of roughly 6,000 abandoned ghost hamlets or villages dotted around Italy that have been left deserted due to natural disasters or migration.

Often set in breathtakingly beautiful



spots, Italians call them "sleeping beauties," as many feel that they are simply waiting to be "awoken," or revived by determined rescuers, be they investors, or in the case of San Severino di Centola, locals with a nostalgic family connection.

PR consultant Monica Gillocchi, the daughter of a San Severino di Centola resident, and another of the ghost village's "rescuers," says it's been a crazy adventure.

Gillocchi, who works in Rome, frequently returns to the village, and says she never gets tired of the feeling of walking up to San Severino, describing it as a "place of the heart and mind."

"There are many people from the town or children of local natives who, like me, are born or live elsewhere but who every year return to San Severino and go up ngoppa u' paese vecchio ('on the back of the ancient village') to find their origins and imagine what the life of their parents,

uncles or grandparents could be like in the past," Gillocchi tells CNN.

"The attachment to the place is so strong for all the inhabitants (living in the new town) and those who have moved to other places for work, but whose heart belongs here."

"The old village looks like an old sage that protects the new one below and begs for a new life. It's like traveling back in time to the rediscovery of one's roots."

So far, the only parts of San Severino di Centola that have been restyled, with public funds, are the imposing castle, the path leading up to it, and the little piazza, where painting exhibitions, poetry labs, concerts and real-life nativity scenes are staged at Christmas.

According to D'Angelo, he and the others have been sitting on their investment for years, mainly due to a lack of resources and bureaucracy issues.

**Day trip destination**

"We haven't really done much," he admits.

"We keep hoping the local town hall steps in to complete the renovation.

"For now, we're happy to own and protect the ghost place as it is but wouldn't mind finding eco-conscious investors willing to carry out an environmentally friendly restyle."

Situated south of Naples in the pristine Cilento National Park, San Severino di Centola straddles two reddish rocky spurs suspended above a deep chasm. Perched above the Mingardo river and the so-called "devil's throat" canyon, a single unpaved path leads from the new town to the old abandoned district, once inhabited by farmer and shepherd families.

The old houses based on the rocky crest were difficult to access, so the remaining inhabitants of the village began to move further downhill as the others left.

Wild goats are frequently spotted among the ruins, along with parts of an abandoned old railway covered in moss. The medieval village is made of different historical layers of collapsing pieces of architecture dating back to the Longobards, believed to be among the first settlers, and the Normans.

Once a defensive settlement built to control the entire coast, it's now an ideal day trip destination for holiday makers staying on Cilento's buzzing coast, and comes alive on weekends and during summer time.

**Preserving the past**

"The ghost hamlet, even though it is mostly private, is open year round with free entry and each year draws some 50,000 tourists, mostly in summer when they come seeking coolness to escape the hot beaches," says D'Angelo.

The popular coastal towns of Marina di Camerota and Palinuro are located nearby, as is the wine-growing region of Basilicata.

During the festive season, a nativity scene featuring actors and animals stretches across the tiny alleys, along with food stalls serving homemade breads, local goat cheeses and wines.



# A Simple Law Is Doing the Impossible. It's Making the Online Porn Industry Retreat.

Pornhub has pulled out of multiple states rather than comply with age-verification laws.

By MARC NOVICOFF

On June 15, 2022, a freshman legislator in Louisiana's House of Representatives accomplished something no other lawmaker or activist in the country could claim: She passed a law that is changing the online porn industry.

If you think this was the result of a bitter culture war battle, think again.

"Pornography is creating a public health crisis and having a corroding influence on minors," asserts the bill that state Rep. Laurie Schlegel introduced. Almost no one in the capitol in Baton Rouge disputes the statement; the bill sailed through the Louisiana House 96-1 and the State Senate 34-0. The bill holds pornography websites liable unless the websites "perform reasonable age verification methods" - in short, requiring users to show government ID to prove they are 18 or older. Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards, no fan of the legislature's Republican supermajority, signed the bill about a week after it arrived on his desk. "I promise you he has no qualms about vetoing our bills," Schlegel told me. In fact, earlier this summer, the governor had unsuccessfully vetoed a bill banning puberty blockers, hormone therapy and elective surgery for minors, calling it "so blatantly defective on so many levels." Though the first of its kind, Louisiana's age-verification bill was not the last. Nearly identical bills have passed in six other states - Arkansas, Montana, Mississippi, Utah, Virginia and Texas - by similarly lopsided margins. In Utah and Arkansas, the bills passed unanimously. The laws were passed by overwhelming margins in legislatures



controlled by both parties and signed into law by Democratic and Republican governors alike. In just over a year, age-verification laws have become perhaps the most bipartisan policy in the country, and they are creating havoc in a porn industry that many had considered all but impossible to actually regulate. Unlike past efforts to curb online porn that had simply declared the sites a danger to public health, these laws are not symbolic. And they are having real effects on how the massive online porn industry does business. Pornhub, the YouTube of pornography, gets more global users than Amazon or Netflix. In 2019, the last year Pornhub released its data, the site was visited 42 billion times, or 115 million times each day. Lawsuits have been filed by the porn industry's trade association, the Free Speech Coalition, against Utah and Louisiana, but in the meantime, porn companies have had no choice but to comply with the laws. According to Ethical Capital Partners, the private equity company that owns Pornhub, traffic in Louisiana has dropped 80 percent.

In the other three states where the laws have been in effect for months - Utah, Mississippi, and Virginia - Pornhub did something even more unprecedented: It simply stopped operating. Users in these states who attempt to

visit the site are greeted with a safe-for-work video of Cherie DeVille (a porn star), clothed, explaining the site's decision to pull out of the state.

As the video instructs, some angry porn users have called their legislators, but that has not dimmed the joy of lawmakers. According to Utah state Sen. Todd Weiler, the chief sponsor of Utah's bill, many of his colleagues are celebrating the improbable and unexpected retreat of the pornography behemoth. Weiler said his colleagues "think it's hilarious" and have been "high-fiving" each other in boyish triumph.

These bills didn't originate from some evangelical PAC or conservative think tank. Their actual origin was, ironically, The Howard Stern Show.

It was December 2021 and Schlegel was on her "daily news scroll" through Apple News when she saw an article describing popstar Billie Eilish's appearance on the infamous shock jock's show. Eilish told Stern, "I used to watch a lot of porn, to be honest. I started watching porn when I was like 11. ... I think it really destroyed my brain and I feel incredibly devastated that I was exposed to so much porn."

Schlegel, 46, had only been sworn in as a state representative six months earlier, after winning a bitter, low-turnout special election by 217 votes

against an opponent with a famous name in New Orleans politics. He sent out a mailer saying that sending a social worker like Schlegel to the state house would be like pouring money down the drain. She compared him to a faceless mannequin in response. Schlegel isn't a social worker. She's a sex addiction therapist. "That's my specialty," she told me, proudly. It's even in her X bio. Already aware of the problem of childhood exposure to pornography due to her work, the Eilish interview inspired Schlegel to act. "I just thought how courageous it was. ... It just sort of re-emphasized to me what a problem this is, especially for our children."

But how would Schlegel, a freshman representative, convince her colleagues to take on an industry that seemed too big to curtail? She needed an expert to persuade the legislature, she figured, and she had just the person in mind: Gail Dines, whose anti-porn research and activism had been on Schlegel's radar for years. Schlegel first discovered her work through a 2015 TEDx talk entitled "Growing Up in a Pornified Culture."

Dines is a self-described radical feminist, sociologist and anti-porn crusader from Manchester, England who has lived in the United States for 37 years. It's a strange coupling, between an

anti-abortion Louisiana Republican and a professor who says her radical feminism "encompasses many socialist feminist principles." But they know that.

"It's not a marriage. Let's be very clear on this," Dines told me. Though they share the same goal of diverting kids from porn, they don't necessarily see it as part of the same larger project. For Dines, "This is about doing the right thing when it comes to controlling capitalism that's out of control."

Dines is not subtle about the ills of pornography and hypersexualization. When her speaking tour stopped at my high school in 2017, she told my junior class, "I bet you, every woman here, all of you female students, could come up here right now, and you could do the 'fuck me' look," referring to the Victoria's Secret model displayed on the projector behind her. About a minute later, she told us, somewhat forlornly, "Men who rape are not deviants. They are over-conformists."

Partly because of the things she said, partly because of how she was saying them (she shushed us repeatedly), and partly because we were 16- and 17-year-old boys, neither I nor any of my friends took Dines all that seriously. She seemed completely out of touch. By the time we were 14 (and many of us younger), we had started watching porn on the internet. Regularly. We had favorite porn stars and we argued over their merits just the way we talked about professional football players we had on our fantasy football teams. To us, it didn't seem weird that we had seen videos of strangers having rough sex before we had our first kiss. But it was precisely our blasé attitude that alarmed Dines and others who have detailed the many ills that childhood exposure to porn may have wrought, including record numbers of young men having erectile dysfunction. Others have disagreed, disputing the causal link to porn, while not disputing the absurd rise in sexually dysfunctional young men.





## Twitter aka X is now paying users, it may make the world nastier

**Social media, and particularly platforms like Twitter and YouTube, thrive on content that panders to our baser instincts. Now, Elon Musk-owned Twitter aka X, will incentivise its users to go viral by paying them money.**

**By Javed Anwer**

There is an often-repeated line on social media. People say it again and again, attributing it to American writer Mark Twain. The line is: "A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes." And it is beautiful in its irony. Because it is a popular lie travelling around the world. Mark Twain did not say anything like this. No one knows with surety who said this or if at all, anyone said it. Instead, it is possible that the line is a simplification of a sentence that Jonathan Swift wrote in 1710. That sentence was, "Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it." Irrespective, there is no denying the popularity of this quote. It befits the time of misinformation and rumour-mongering that we live in, and we all repeat it like a mantra every second day on social media. So, let me borrow this line and add to it: "A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes, and as it travels, it makes some hefty money."

If you go to Twitter - now called X as ordained by Elon Musk - today, you will invariably come across some popular X users posting screenshots of their earnings. This is because X is now paying users if they:

1. Subscribe to X Premium (earlier called Twitter Blue)
  2. Opt in to receive payments
  3. Have at least 15 million impressions on their tweets in the last three months
- The earnings are substantial for some, not so much for the rest. But highly popular X users do have a chance to earn around Rs 50,000 to Rs 80,000 per month solely from whatever they say and share on X aka Twitter.

Anyone with good sense and a bit of intelligence will see how problematic the whole preposition is. The payment for popularity on social media is a direct incentive to push information, narrative, rumours - in other words, content - that will travel halfway around the world before

someone gets a chance to shoot it down. This is not new, though. People far more intelligent than me, including people like Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and Sundar Pichai who run tech platforms, know it well. They know that the most addictive and viral content on their platforms is also most likely something that panders to our basest instincts and negative emotions.



Outrage spreads far and wide on Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. Lies are more entertaining. Anger gives more engagement. This is the reason why conspiracy theories are super popular on YouTube. Or why half of the discussion in family and residence society WhatsApp groups is around information that is baseless and outrageously wrong.

In his slim - but in my opinion, his best - novel *The Fall*, Albert Camus talks about truth and lies. One day, the unnamed narrator feels disgusted with the life he is living and decides to mend his ways. But the result is not to his liking. "Undoubtedly, I was in the realm of truth; but truth, dear friend, is utterly tedious." Untruth, on the other hand, is a beautiful dusk that enhances everything," he says.

This is something we see play out on social

media every day. It is well understood by now that social media platforms bring out the worst in us. We are more inclined to believe lies, more interested in hearing people foaming at their mouths, more likely to share content that is a cheap shot at confirming some bias, or other that we hold. Example: A popular Twitter user, on Tuesday, shared that Twitter is sending him

example: Monu Manesar. Monu, before he was in the news for his alleged involvement in the murder of two men earlier this year, routinely uploaded his videos on YouTube. He, despite his videos showing signs of harassment that he meted out to people in the name of saving cows, was deemed by YouTube worthy of a Gold Button and was given an entry into the company's video monetisation programme.

Even when Monu became a suspect in the murder of two men, Google and YouTube did not kick him out of their platform. It is only now with Monu again in the news after the violence in Nuh that YouTube has deleted his account.

Just the way YouTube has become a platform filled with "content creators" pushing their outrage-filled narratives, which, by the way, are mostly built on lies and misinformation, Twitter is set to become a global platform for pushing the content that would play to the gallery.

With Elon Musk's plan to pay its users, these users now have a greater incentive to push for information that is sensational and will go viral. Combined with the fact that Twitter is going easy on those who tweet nasty - recently Musk reinstated the account of a right-wing propagandist who shared child porn photos on his timeline - and the risk is that users will start concocting stories or amplifying emotions that may not be true but will garner more eyeballs. It was already happening. Just that, now there is an active incentive to spread that video of a man slapping someone, even if the video is staged. Or to cry wolf, like the Aesop's boy did, even if there is no basis or substance in the crying. But unlike the boy who suffered - the moral of the story was: lies would not be rewarded. The Boys running errand on social media will now get money. In other words, with its monetisation programme, X aka Twitter is about to give lies travelling halfway around the world a cool pair of shiny wings. They will fly faster than before.

a little over Rs 2 lakh as Twitter earnings for the last three odd months. His most viral tweet in recent days with over 6 million impressions is his snide - "The Avg IQ of the country went up after her departure" - at an Indian student studying in Canada. Another of his tweets that has raked up impressions - over a million - is a video of an altercation with a man and girl in a residential society in Noida.

It would be amiss to single out anyone here. Because it is not about what this user or that user is sharing and saying on social media and YouTube. It is about the tech platforms and how they enable hate, bigotry, racism, rumour-mongering, misinformation and outright nastiness in our day-to-day conversations.

In particular, YouTube, and now X aka Twitter, are egregiously bad at this. Another

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