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Australia moves to check visa hopping by international students

(Sai Bureau)-The Australian government is cracking down on visa hopping by international students and will tighten student visa application rules starting July 1. Certain temporary visa holders, including those on Temporary Graduate, Visitor, and Maritime Crew visas, will no longer be able to apply for a Student visa while in Australia. This will affect thousands of Indian students in Australia. Australia aims to end visa hopping, where international students stay in Australia on temporary visas indefinitely. Australia has become a popular destination for Indian students pursuing higher education and vocational skills. India's High Commission in Canberra reported that India continues to be the second-largest source country for international student enrolments in Australia. This crackdown by the Australian government is to ensure that only genuine students receive visas, supporting the country's economic growth. These changes, part of the government's new Migration Strategy which was released on 11



December 2023, aim to close loopholes and end "visa hopping", where former international students stay in Australia on temporary visas indefinitely. Affected visa subclasses include the Temporary Graduate visa, Visitor visa, Electronic Travel Authority visa, Medical Treatment visa, eVisitor visa, Transit visa, Diplomatic Temporary visa, Temporary Work visa (International Relations), and Domestic Worker (Temporary) visa.

Record 1,40,000 student visas to Indians last year, number likely to cross this year: US Embassy

(Sai Bureau)-After issuing a record 1,40,000 student visas last year, the US consular team in India is all geared up to meet the expected rise in number of applications from Indian students in 2024, with a senior official at the embassy here saying that the projected total number this year will be "similar or in excess" in comparison to last year.

The US Mission in India on Thursday held its eighth annual Student Visa Day countrywide with consular officers from New Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai interviewing Indian student visa applicants. At the US Embassy in Delhi, a long queue of students was seen since morning.

American universities attract a large number of Indian students, and last year, the US consular team in India issued over 1,40,000 student visas—higher than for any other country setting a record for the third year in a row.

Syed Mujtaba Andrabi, acting Consul

General at US Embassy in New Delhi, in an interaction with PTI at the embassy, said, "by the end of the day, we should have interviewed approximately 4,000 students." "It (student visas) is one of our top priorities.



Academic exchange between the two countries is one of the top priorities of this administration, and our Mission here. Last year, we issued a record number of student visas, numbering 1,40,000, which has been a record...And, we will continue to focus on this area, as we go forward during this year," Andrabi told PTI.

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Why Jammu is experiencing rise in terrorist attacks

Since June 9, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed four terrorist attacks, including the targeting of a bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi. All these attacks have happened in Jammu, which highlights the shift in focus of terrorists from Kashmir.

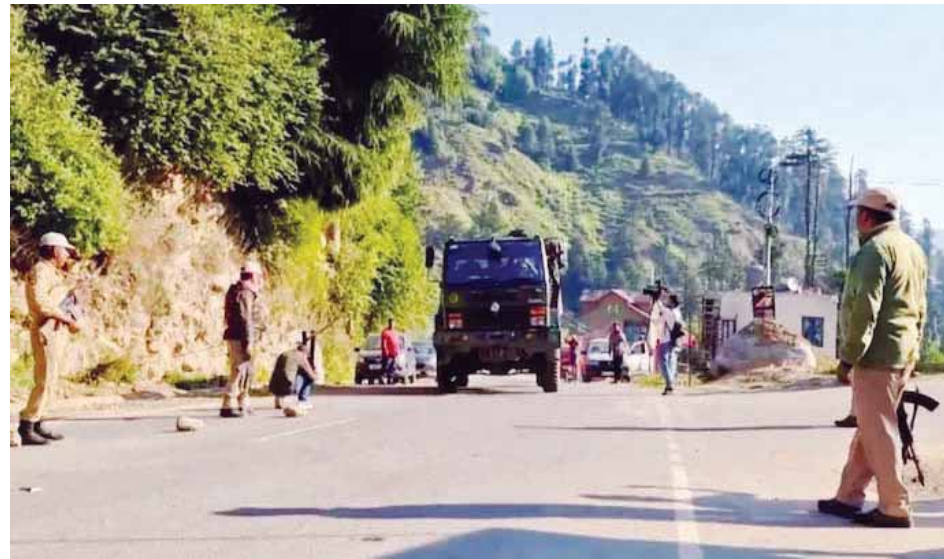
(News Agency)-Since June 9, the day the new government at the Centre took oath, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed four terrorist attacks, including the targeting of a bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi. All these attacks have happened in Jammu, which highlights the shift in focus of terrorists from Kashmir. The increasing concern is that Pakistan-based terrorists are now targeting both security forces and innocent civilians. On June 9, a Lashkar-E-Taiba module carried out a terror attack on a civilian bus, resulting in nine deaths and 41 injuries. The bus, carrying Hindu pilgrims from the Shiv Khori temple to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra, veered into a deep gorge in Reasi district under indiscriminate fire.

Officials believe that further escalation is imminent in both Jammu and Kashmir.

According to RR Swain, the Director General of Police (DGP) of Jammu and Kashmir, around 60 to 70 terrorists are active on launch pads across the Line of Control (LoC).

WHY FOCUS ON JAMMU?

After the abrogation of Article 370, the strategy of terror groups based in Pakistan shifted focus from the Kashmir Valley, where security forces maintain a firm grip. For the past 2-3 years, terrorists have intermittently struck in Jammu, which has seen a surge in violence, particularly in



2023 with 43 terror attacks and 20 so far in 2024. The terror attacks are also being seen as a move to deter holding assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, which would be the first after Article 370 was struck down on August 5, 2019.

JAMMU'S TERRAIN OFFERS CHALLENGES

The Jammu region's vast and complex terrain has been exploited by Pakistan-based terror organisations to send armed terrorists across the International Border (IB) and LoC, occasionally using tunnels. Drones have further complicated the situation, enabling terrorists to enter as

civilians and collect weapons from hideouts with assistance from local guides.

Despite significant successes by the Jammu and Kashmir Police and security forces, the Jammu sector remains a challenging region. Lashkar and Jaish modules have been difficult to track due to their avoidance of mobile phones and reliance on self-sufficiency with minimal local support. This has prompted security forces to revise their Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The police in Rajouri Poonch have established checkpoints and deployed personnel, even in jungles where no one ventures. A top officer, speaking

anonymously, recounted a recent encounter where a small police team in civilian clothes stumbled upon a terror module in the forested area of Poonch-Rajouri. A brief exchange of fire ensued, but the terrorists fled.

A top source in the border region told India Today TV that heavy infiltration has begun ahead of the monsoon season. Typically, terrorists wait for monsoon flooding to disrupt border monitoring systems like concertina wire and infrared lights. Sometimes, animals like Nilgai are used as red herrings. Sources note that identifying terrorists initially is challenging because, unlike civilians, police have accountability. However, the message to terrorists is clear: they can expect sudden encounters even in previously off-limits forested areas. Nakas are now being set up in various zones, and security forces are considering camps deep inside jungles. Efforts to strengthen local defences include establishing a physical network of sources in each village and reviving the Village Defence Committee. In a recent incident in Kathua, a Special Police Officer (SPO) reportedly helped neutralise a terrorist. However, not all efforts have been successful. Jahangir Saroori, a 59-year-old "A++" category terrorist commander of Hizbul Mujahideen operating in the Kishtwar region, remains at large.

PM in Italy for G7 Summit, to hold bilateral with Meloni, likely to meet Pope



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday (local time) arrived in Italy's Apulia to attend the outreach session of the G7 Summit and is expected to meet several leaders on the sidelines of the event on Friday. This is the Prime Minister's first foreign trip after being sworn

in for a record third term.

"Looking forward to engaging in productive discussions with world leaders. Together, we aim to address global challenges and foster international cooperation for a brighter future," he tweeted. Before departing for Italy, PM Modi said he was

"glad" that his first foreign visit in his third consecutive term as Prime Minister was to the European nation for the G7 Summit. PM MODI AT G7 SUMMIT: WHAT ALL TO EXPECT:

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, in a video message from Brindisi airport, said that PM Modi will be addressing the outreach session of the G7 Summit.

"The Prime Minister of India has arrived at Brindisi Airport in Italy to participate in the G7 Summit. Tomorrow (Friday) is a packed day for him. We have several bilateral meetings with world leaders lined up. He will also be addressing the outreach session of the G7 Summit," he said.

Ahead of his departure, PM Modi emphasised that India will focus on artificial intelligence, energy, Africa, and the Mediterranean during the summit's outreach session. He also stated that issues crucial to the Global South will be discussed. India hosted the G20 Summit in Delhi last September, which was also attended by the world leaders gathering at the Apulia meet being held under the Italian presidency. Italian Prime Minister

Giorgia Meloni will welcome Modi as the President of the Council of Ministers of Italy on Friday.

As the current Chair of the G7, Italy is hosting the gathering of the bloc of seven major advanced economies, including Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the US, along with the European Union. Italy extended an invitation to India to attend the summit as an outreach country. This is PM Modi's fifth consecutive participation in the G7 summit, with India having attended ten previous summits.

During the summit, PM Modi is scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. PM Modi is likely to meet US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the summit, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said. The Russia-Ukraine conflict is set to dominate the agenda as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived for the discussions on Thursday. While India has reiterated its stance on "dialogue and diplomacy" as the best approach, Sunak is leading calls for "decisive" efforts to support Ukraine "whatever it takes".



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Passengers sleep in front of toilets in Chhattisgarh Express. Railways reacts to video

(News Agency)-The Indian Railways has responded to a video showing passengers sleeping in front of the toilets in a coach of Chhattisgarh Express. Journalist Sachin Gupta shared a 27-second clip of the scenario that has gone viral with over 106.5k views so far, causing immense outrage in the comments section of the post on June 13.

There was no space to walk outside the coach as passengers were seen sleeping not just in front of the toilets but in the corridor as well. The situation was so dire that a man was also



recorded sitting in the tiny space between two compartments. "This picture is of Chhattisgarh Express (train no 18237). Seat, floor, gate, gallery, bathroom...wherever

people found a place, they occupied it," reads the caption of the post on X, translated from Hindi to English. Railway Seva, the official account for support to

passengers, said in their response to the video that the concerned authorities were notified. The official accounts of Divisional Railway Manager, Agra and Divisional Railway Manager, Raipur were also tagged in their post so that the matter could be investigated further. Since early 2024, videos featuring ticketless passengers overcrowding trains have been doing the rounds of the internet.

In April, a man posted an angry complaint as he shared a video of ticketless passengers sitting on the floor of an overcrowded sleeper

coach of the Suhaildev Superfast Express. There was no Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) in the vicinity even as the train was about to reach Lucknow, he claimed in his post.

During his journey on the Brahmaputra Mail in April, a man made a makeshift hammock using a bedsheet so that he could get at least some space in the overcrowded general coach.

Earlier this week, a video showing ticketless passengers occupying a coach in the Vande Bharat Express also left social media users furious.

Rain relief likely in Delhi today, but heatwave to linger as monsoon stalls



(News Agency)-As parts of north India continue to grapple with a severe heatwave, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted some relief for Delhi on Friday, with a possibility of thunderstorms and light rain or drizzle accompanying gusty winds.

However, the maximum temperature in the national capital is still expected to reach 44 degrees Celsius.

On Thursday, Delhi and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar

experienced scorching temperatures, with Buxar in Bihar recording the highest in the country at 47.2 degrees Celsius. This is nearly 9 degrees Celsius above the normal maximum temperature for the season. The Safdarjung Observatory, Delhi's official weather station, recorded a maximum temperature of 44.8 degrees Celsius, 4.9 degrees above normal. The Najafgarh weather station recorded an even higher temperature of 45.1 degrees Celsius.

The slow progress of the southwest Monsoon has been blamed for the extended heatwave. The IMD reports a 4 per cent deficit in cumulative Monsoon rainfall across the country for the first 12 days of the season. The situation is particularly grim in northwest India, which has received 53 per cent less than normal rainfall.

In contrast, southern India received 60 per cent more rainfall than usual during the June 1-12 period.

However, there is a glimmer of hope. The weather department forecast conditions will become favourable for the further advancement of the Monsoon towards the end of the week, around June 19. This could bring much-needed relief from the searing temperatures in north India.

The monsoon is expected to arrive in Delhi by the end of the month, around June 27.

6 killed after truck rams tractor while trying to overtake it in Andhra Pradesh



(News Agency)-Six people were killed in an early morning accident on Friday when a van rammed a container truck while attempting to overtake a tractor carrying logs in Andhra Pradesh's Krishna district, police said.

According to eyewitnesses, the truck collided with the tractor and overturned near Seethanapalli, killing five people on the spot while another succumbed to injuries while being rushed to a hospital, Machilipatnam DSP Subhani said, adding that police were investigating the cause of the accident. Five people suffered injuries and were rushed to

nearby hospitals for treatment where their condition was critical. The accident caused a massive traffic jam on the route, stretching for over two kilometres. Police and local authorities rushed to the spot and initiated a rescue operation to help the people involved in the accident. The six people who died were not identified yet, police said.

"An Ashok Leyland truck rammed a tractor carrying wooden logs while trying to overtake it. Five people died on the spot while another died en route to the hospital. Further details are awaited," DSP Subhani said.

Those who became arrogant stopped at 241 by Lord Ram: RSS leader's dig at BJP

(News Agency)-The BJP faced criticism from its ideological mentor as RSS leader Indresh Kumar attributed the ruling party's lacklustre performance in the recent Lok Sabha elections to "arrogance."

Speaking at an event at Kanota near Jaipur on Thursday, Indresh Kumar said, "Those who did bhakti of Lord Ram gradually

became arrogant. That party was declared the biggest party but were stopped at 241 by Lord Ram due to arrogance." The comment appeared to be directed at the BJP, which won 240 seats in the Lok Sabha polls but failed to cross the majority mark. It was also the party's worst showing since 2014. Kumar also targeted the opposition INDIA bloc, labelling them as "anti-



Ram." Without mentioning the opposition alliance by name, he said, "And those who had no faith in Ram, they together were stopped at 234. God's justice is true and enjoyable." The INDIA bloc secured 234 seats in the Lok Sabha election. The RSS leader's comments come days after RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat preached the importance of

humility in public service. Bhagwat said, "A true sevak maintains dignity. He follows the decorum while working. He does not have the arrogance to say 'I did this work'. Only that person can be called a true sevak." Bhagwat also stressed the need for modesty and goodwill towards everyone, citing the principles of non-violence and truth.

7 myths about Congress have been busted by the 2024 election results

There is a long way to go for the Congress in this unlimited overs Test match of politics. But 99 not out is not a bad score on a bad pitch in the face of body-line bowlers, compromised umpires, and hostile commentators.

You may have seen this on social media last week: a chap who secured 85 percent is downcast and the one with 45 percent is jubilant. The real joke here is that this is not a joke. Unwittingly, the die-hard BJP supporters who drew consolation by sharing this were making a very deep point about politics — it's all relative. What matters is not where you are located, but how that point fits into a trend line.

The Congress' final tally of 99 seats may not look like a great score compared to the BJP's 240. Yes, it is still the Congress' third lowest tally. But in politics, numbers do not tell the real story. The relevant political fact is that it is the second best bounce-back achieved by the Congress, next only to the turnaround of 1980. For the last two elections, the Congress was stuck at a morale-breaking level of just 44 and 52 seats. Worse, 32 out of its 52 seats in the 2019 election came from just three states: Kerala, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu. In none of the three states was the BJP its main rival. In Tamil Nadu, it was a junior partner to the DMK. This time, the real target behind the BJP's bluster of '400 paar' was to push the Congress further down and thus decimate the only other party with a national footprint, a rival ideology and a potential leader. There was a talk of the Congress slipping below 40 seats and turning into a South Indian National Congress. The Congress defied all the odds to survive and nearly doubled its tally. End of the day, it looks like a party in ascendancy. That's what makes it such an amazing turnaround.

The Congress has made all-round gains. The number of Hindi heartland seats from Haryana and Bihar has gone up from a meagre five to 23. In its former strongholds, the INC has almost swept its share of Maharashtra's seats and not allowed the BJP to open its account in Punjab. By winning both the seats in the troubled Manipur, acing the contest in Nagaland and the Garo Hills in Meghalaya, it has regained a sizable footprint in the Northeast. From being the weakest link of the Opposition chain, it has planted its feet in this tug-of-war. The real story lies in the vote share. In overall terms, the Congress' share of national votes has increased by 1.7 percentage points (pp), healthy but not spectacular. But that is a misleading figure, as the Congress contested 93 fewer seats this time. If we focus more appropriately on vote shares in the constituencies contested, the Congress has gone up by



a whopping 9.8 percentage points from its vote share in 2019. Compare this to the BJP, which dropped 1.6 pp votes in the seats it contested. Except Kerala, Odisha, and Punjab, the Congress has registered positive swing in votes in all the major states. To be sure, much of the Congress' rise in vote share comes from states where it contested as a junior or equal partner of the INDIA bloc. As Table 1 and Table 2 show, Congress gained here 23 percentage points per seat contested. Its gains were much more modest, just 3 percentage points, in the seats where the Congress contested on its own or was the dominant partner of the INDIA coalition.

Breaking seven myths

The 21-month-long momentous journey of the Congress that began with the Bharat Jodo Yatra has busted a few myths by which the grand old party had enveloped itself:

Myth 1: Congress can never recover once pushed to the third place in a state: This has been busted by the Congress' victory in the 2023 Telangana assembly elections after being pushed to the third place (in terms of seats) in 2019 Lok Sabha. The gains were replicated in the recent Lok Sabha elections.

Myth 2: Congress cannot take on the BJP in a one-on-one contest in Lok Sabha elections, especially in the Hindi heartland. In 2019, there were 190 such seats where the top two slots were occupied by the BJP and the Congress. The Congress won just 15 of those. This time, the Congress took 62 out of 215 such constituencies. It managed to bring down the BJP's margin of victory in these seats by half. The associated myth that the Congress always ends up with a negative premium in national elections in the Hindi heartland was also broken in Rajasthan and Haryana, where the Congress improved upon its assembly election performance.

had been steadily gaining at its expense for the last two decades and encroached upon the social base of the JJP in Haryana, disproves this.

Myth 4: Congress cannot withstand Operation Lotus: In simultaneous assembly bypolls, the same Himachal electorate that favoured the BJP for the Lok Sabha rejected half of the MLAs who had defected to the BJP.

Myth 5: Congress is a burden on its alliance partners, with lower strike rate. That used to be the case, but Table 3 shows that the Congress disproved it this time, not just in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, but in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir, where it may not have matched the senior partner in seats but did so on contested vote share. The only exception was Jharkhand, where the INC was in fact the senior partner fighting more seats than the JMM.



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Across the states, the Congress has

Modi In Apulia: India Can Be The Bridge Between G7 And The Rest

At a time when a Russian nuclear submarine remains docked in Cuba merely 90 miles south of Florida, the G-7 leaders have gathered in Italy for the 50th annual summit of the grouping of one of the world's richest Western democracies. As the US-Russia tensions reach nearer to the American coast, Italy's Presidency of the G-7 has attempted to signal to the world that these geopolitical contestations cannot be reduced to a 'west versus rest' narrative.

The Symbolism Of Apulia

The Italians engaged in symbolism by hosting the summit in Apulia, a region in the southern part of Italy that is historically known to be a bridge between Eastern and Western cultures. The target audience for this signalling remains in the nations from the broader Global South, seen as non-Western states, as the G-7 shows that it is ready to deepen collaboration with developing states on matters of development, food security, energy security and climate change. To galvanise this West-Rest collaboration, Italy has invited 15 guest leaders, of which six are members of the G-20 and five are African nations.

The African nations attending the G-7 remain fundamental to Italy's priority of solving the problem of energy supplies in Europe by connecting the energy transmission infrastructure of Europe and Africa through Italy.

The six guests from the G-20 include India, Argentina, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey. Apart from Argentina, where there is a substantial population of Italian-origin expats, other G-20 invitees hold key strategic and security implications for the G-7. Turkey remains the only NATO member in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia holds a key stake in the Israel-Hamas conflict. India, Brazil and South Africa fall under the G-7's strategic calculus as they remain key representatives of the Global South and are either recent holders of the G-20 Presidency or are the next in line for it. Rather than only acting as a connecting interface between the G-7 and the G-20, these three nations hold a deeper significance for the G-7 as they remain the three democratic states that form the core BRICS grouping along the adversarial Russia and China.

Voice Of The Global South

India remains central to the G-7's calculus towards the Global South as seen from its regular presence at the group's summits as a guest since 2019. The G-7 is sensitive to the fact that it needs the global south giants like India on board, not only to increase the efficacy of their sanctions regime on Russia but to mechanise a global governance

architecture that truly bridges the West with the rest.

India's rising stature as a key player negotiating for the Global South while upholding the rules-based order makes it a natural ally of an evolved G-7 that places its policy weight towards being more egalitarian. Prime Minister Modi's visit to the Apulia Summit gains importance as India will continue to voice the concerns of the developing and emerging economies before the industrialised G-7. Though India's stance towards Russia will be dictated by its own strategic interests, PM Modi's choice of Apulia as his first foreign visit after a domestic re-election signals that India holds entrenched interests in its partnership with the G-7. In offering policy congruence towards the G-7, India complied with the Oil Price Cap on Russian oil while strategically balancing its domestic oil demand.

One key area of friction between the G-7 and India's interest came to the fore in the 12th round of sanctions against Russia, when the G-7 nations imposed an import ban on Russian-origin diamonds, hurting India's domestic diamond export industry that uses Russian diamonds as raw material. It is expected that the Indian presence at Apulia will be instrumental in arriving at a common understanding with the G-7, leading to a resolution of this issue.

As Apulia prioritises the global south, it remains to be seen whether the outcome of the summit is truly beneficial for the developing and emerging economies that remain high on Italy's agenda. There is a possibility of security issues maintaining primacy in agenda and action as the summit closely follows the decision of the US President and NATO members to allow Ukraine to use their weapons for undertaking limited military attacks on Russian territory. It is also the first meeting of the G-7 leaders after China encircled Taiwan in a show of strength directed towards the West and Taiwan's domestic political leadership demanding the island's recognition as a democracy. Another issue that is bound to play intra-G-7 is finalising the modalities of a \$50 billion loan to Ukraine, secured by Russia's assets frozen by the US and Europe.

While the G-7 contests Russia and China, India at Apulia will participate as a partner democracy that holds commonality of values but is confident enough to look out for its own interests by lending a voice to its domestic population and that of the broader global south.

**By : Harsh V. Pant,
Anagad Singh Brar**

Is the answer to inflation... deflation?

We are all feeling the effects of stubborn and persistent inflation. When the current administration tells us inflation is coming down, we must remind ourselves that only means already high prices are going up slower. When a few large pizzas, some salads, and garlic knots cost you \$100, you begin to realize just how expensive life is getting for Americans.

So, is there any chance that prices will ever come down? The one thing, good or bad, that could make that happen is the D word: Deflation.

What Is Deflation?

Deflation, characterized by a general decline in prices for goods and services, is a stark contrast to inflation. While inflation erodes purchasing power, deflation increases it. However, deflation can signal severe economic distress and widespread economic stagnation. Understanding how deflation can occur in the United States involves a combination of economic factors, policies and external influences.

Key Drivers of Deflation... It's Me, I'm The Problem?

Decreased Consumer Demand: When consumers and businesses expect prices to fall, they may delay purchases and investments. This reduced demand can lead to an oversupply of goods and services, forcing prices downward. As Taylor Swift says, "It's me, I'm the problem." Perhaps the answer is we, as Americans, need to be spending less than we do today.

Technological Advancements: Technological progress can enhance productivity and reduce production costs, so perhaps rapid AI growth could solve our inflation problem.

Monetary Policy: Are the Fed's current policies too tight? Should they be raising interest rates even though it's not what Americans want right now?

Tightening rates even further might be the solution in part to solving the inflation issue.

Debt Deflation: High levels of debt can lead to deflation if consumers and businesses focus on paying down debt rather than spending or investing. With all of this consumer debt – \$1.1 trillion of credit card alone – it could actually help with deflation if it accelerates even faster although some families will suffer greatly.

Global Economic Conditions: Deflationary pressures can also be imported through international trade. A global slowdown or recession can reduce demand for U.S. exports, while cheaper imports can lead to domestic price declines. The Great Depression of the 1930s is a classic example of deflation in the United States. During this period, the country experienced severe deflation, with prices falling by nearly 30%. The deflationary spiral was driven by a combination of high debt levels, bank failures and a collapse in consumer confidence. More recently, Japan's "Lost Decade" in the 1990s serves as a cautionary tale of how prolonged deflation can stifle economic growth.

None of this sounds good for America, but it may sober people into realizing that prices may remain exactly where they are for a long time, with no chance of coming down.

Potential Pathways to Deflation

Post-Pandemic Economic Shifts: The COVID-19 pandemic led to unprecedented government spending and monetary easing to support the economy. As these supports are withdrawn — meaning the government stops spending money — the potential for reduced consumer and business spending could emerge, especially if confidence in economic recovery wanes.



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Narendra Modi and the Art of Politics: Why BJP Remains in Firm Control

By: Sanbeer Singh Ranhotra

On June 4, India was harked back to the era of coalitions – or so we thought. By June 10, which is when the Cabinet portfolios were distributed, two trends became clear. First, Narendra Modi and the BJP remain firmly in control of the new government at the Centre. Second, the BJP consciously chose to retain many of its sitting ministers in the Cabinet and also took home the lion's share of portfolios that were up for grabs.

The reactions to these were also divided on two lines. First, the pro-BJP camp realised that their fear of losing the 'edge' in government was premature. Second, the anti-BJP camp realised that BJP's partners – TDP and the JD(U) – were not going to bat on behalf of the Opposition while in government. As a result, much of their initial euphoria over the results dissipated as soon as the ministerial allocations were revealed, since it became clear that not much was going to change.

Since 2014, the Modi government



has carved an image of being decisive and unapologetic about not just its policy decisions, but also its ideology. Its supporters grew fond of the idea of one party dominating the Central government for the larger good of the nation. For a developing country like ours, a strong and stable government is an absolute necessity. This is not the time for coalition politics to damp down the Centre's ability to take big decisions and reform the country. Be that as it may, the verdict of

June 4 was not as decisive as either the BJP or its supporters had hoped it would be.

That brings me to the anti-BJP camp and the INDIA bloc. After the results, this camp was convinced that the ground had slipped from under PM Modi's feet and that he would now be entirely beholden to the likes of Nitish Kumar and Chandrababu Naidu. Their distinguished history of flip-flops convinced many that the "NDA sarkar" would mostly be operating on borrowed time.

The INDIA bloc was convinced that this would translate into them taking hold of the reins of power sooner rather than later. Even today, Narendra Modi is not considered a legitimate prime minister by this alliance, which is evident from the fact that the top Opposition leaders have not congratulated him for taking oath for a record third time – a feat which so far was Jawaharlal Nehru's alone. As the list of Union Council of Ministers was announced, much of the INDIA bloc's bluster fell flat on its face as the BJP retained all the consequential portfolios. The "big 4" ministries, namely home, defence, finance and external affairs continue to be held by the BJP. In fact, there is no change in the composition of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) whatsoever. Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nirmala Sitharaman and Dr S Jaishankar were all members of the CCS even in Modi 2.0. They continue to be members of the CCS in Modi 3.0 as well.

All that talk of BJP's alliance partners demanding at least two

of the top four portfolios, apart from Amit Shah's ouster from government, turned out to be just that – unfounded gossip. In fact, there was speculation that Modi would even have to make Nitish Kumar the deputy prime minister. As is evident now, both Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar are satisfied with what they have been given. Do not be surprised if the BJP also gets a Speaker of its choice in the Lok Sabha, despite the TDP wanting the same for itself. Let us now turn our attention to Babu and Kumar. It does not take a genius to figure out that both these leaders are in the fag-end of their political careers. One could argue that the stakes for them are much higher. Nitish Kumar faces incredible anti-incumbency in Bihar, and is hoping that the Centre's financial package for the state will help him revive the JD(U)'s dwindling fortunes. If Nitish Kumar is to run a successful government for the remainder of his tenure, he needs Prime Minister Modi and the Central government on his side.

Why Amit Shah, more than PM Modi, needs to worry about RSS chief Bhagwat's message

By D.K. SINGH

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is upset with its former pracharaks and swayamsevak in the government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah couldn't have missed the message in RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's ruminations on Monday – about true sevaks and arrogance, return of gun culture in Manipur, the need to treat the Opposition as pratipaksh – those representing the other viewpoint – and not adversaries, and so on.

The ruling party saw it coming, claim Sangh insiders. Reason? A desperate attempt to keep Bhagwat's speech out of news headlines. If you listen to them, there is a grand conspiracy theory. The RSS sarsanghchalak's speech was pre-scheduled Monday evening and the timing had been announced much in advance. Yet, the announcement of the portfolios of newly sworn-in ministers hit the headlines just



before Bhagwat started speaking. As if to deny him the headlines. So much about conspiracy theories. If I were to stretch it a little, the BJP leaders might have been bracing themselves for a blowback since the day party president JP Nadda suggested that the BJP didn't need the RSS any more.

BJP insiders would have us believe that the media is making too much of the RSS chief flagging concerns about the nation's challenges as PM Modi takes a fresh guard for the

third innings. They are, however, forgetting how the same RSS sarsanghchalak battled for the Modi government in his 2023 Vijayadashami speech last October. Having dwelt at length over so many good things that happened in India during the Modi-led government, Bhagwat saw the hands of "outside forces" in what was happening in Manipur. He mentioned how home minister Shah had spent three days in Manipur. "Which foreign powers may be interested in taking advantage... Despite there being

a strong government in the country, on whose strength and instigation has this violence continued? Why did this violence erupt and continue even though there was a state government that wanted to maintain peace?" Bhagwat had said in October. Change in contents, tone, tenor

On Monday, Bhagwat had different questions: "Manipur has been waiting for peace for a year... Who will pay attention to this? The situation in Manipur will have to be considered with priority. There is a need to get over election rhetoric and focus on problems facing the nation."

You can't miss the change in contents, tone and tenor. Much has changed since October. If Bhagwat's Dussehra speech was about praising the Modi-led government and slamming 'foreign powers', cultural Marxists and wokes, Monday's address was an attempt to hold up a mirror to

Modi-Shah.

So, what has changed since last October? Conversations in hardcore Modi fan circles tend to get cynical. They see in Bhagwat's not-so-veiled criticism a reflection of Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz's 'Ketman'; the Sangh might have applauded him under compulsion but held a different opinion about him. They don't specify Ketman but what they say suggests as much. That's because the former RSS pracharak outgrew the Sangh. Now that he has suffered a setback in the election, the Sangh is getting back at him. It's far from the truth. Yes, it has always had issues with personality cults. The Sangh believes in the collective 'we', not 'I'. But it's also true that it is proud of its former pracharak, Modi. He has been instrumental in the RSS's phenomenal rise as an organisation in terms of reach, expansion and clout as well as in realising ideological goals.

Chandrababu Naidu logs in for the 4th time. Will the programming be different?

By TS Sudhir

In 1989, J Jayalalithaa walked out of the Tamil Nadu assembly with disheveled hair, a torn saree and tears in her eyes. She had accused the DMK legislators of assaulting her and vowed not to return to the House till her political rivals who were in power under M Karunanidhi as chief minister were defeated. She kept her promise triumphantly in 1991 when she was voted to power. History has repeated itself in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. In November 2021, Chandrababu Naidu was humiliated by MLAs of the then ruling party, the YSRCP, inside the assembly. Naidu claimed they had made personal remarks about his wife Bhuvaneshwari and broke down at a news conference. He compared the assembly to the 'Kaurava Sabha' and vowed not to attend it till 2024. Naidu has now returned triumphantly back to the treasury benches while most of those who insulted him on that day, have been dumped by the voters.

The difference between 2024 and his earlier innings as chief minister however, is that Naidu has never received such a massive mandate where over 93 percent of the House is part of the ruling NDA combined. So much so that YS Jagan Mohan Reddy with just 11 legislators in his camp won't even get the status of the Leader of the Opposition as a political party should have at least 10 per cent of total strength of the House which in the case of Andhra Pradesh would be 18. While the overwhelming support is a certain feel good factor for any politician, it also puts on Naidu's 74-year-old shoulders an onerous responsibility. A lot has been promised both in terms of welfare agenda and development of the state. Having seen the nature of the 2019 and the 2024 verdicts — when the TDP and the YSRCP were rejected outright respectively — Naidu knows the Andhra voter is a demanding one. He expects nothing less than a blockbuster performance which is why Naidu 4.0 needs a different Naidu, not a re-run of the same script.

'Chandrababu Naidu Returns' is a sequel but as a first step, Naidu has taken care to bring in freshness to the cast. He has included several young legislators in his Cabinet instead of repeating the faces that have been part of several TDP regimes in the past. While he

would have to walk the extra mile to pacify seniors like Kanna Laxminarayana, G Butchaiah Choudhary, Konathala Ramakrishna, Somireddy Chandramohan

Reddy, Ayyanna Patrudu who would have reason to feel miffed at the exclusion from the cabinet, as many 9 debutant ministers will bring in a freshness to governance in the state. Repeating the same

faces would have given a sense of deja vu. The transition was expected as the 2024 verdict has empowered Naidu to shift gears within the party to keep it ready for the succession plan to kick in

within the TDP. The seniors would have found it difficult taking orders from Lokesh in case the baton is passed on within this term itself. Two, Naidu has chosen to embrace

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The Guardian view on Modi's election disappointment: the winner is democracy in India

Nemesis has followed swift on the heels of Narendra Modi's hubris. He is set to be the first Indian prime minister to serve a third term since its first, Jawaharlal Nehru. Yet rarely has an election victory looked more like defeat.

He boasted that he would win a third full majority in the world's largest democracy – suggesting his party would win as many as 400 seats – and said he had been sent by God. Instead of a coronation, he got a rebuke. Far from winning a landslide, his Bharatiya Janata party's seats fell from 303 to 240, leaving him reliant on political allies. The BJP had made a major push in the south and managed to take a seat in Kerala. But Mr Modi's vote slumped in his own constituency of Varanasi, in the north. Indian electors have humbled the strongman. It was entirely deserved. The aggressive Hindu



majoritarianism he has pursued, to the detriment of India's 200 million Muslims, became increasingly shrill Islamophobia on the campaign trail. His government has cracked down on civil society and opponents have faced corruption investigations. The opposition Congress party said its bank accounts were frozen. Fawning mainstream media effectively campaigned for the BJP instead of covering it.

"India's democratic decline shows how democracies die today ... through the fully legal

harassment of the opposition, intimidation of media and centralisation of executive power," wrote one democracy scholar, Dr Maya Tudor, last year.

Now Mr Modi must rely upon a deal with Chandrababu Naidu of the Telugu Desam party and Nitish Kumar of Janata Dal (United). Both are known for their horse-trading rather than their political principles. They will want to limit the power of his right-hand man, Amit Shah. Taking the home ministry from him

would be one way to do this. Mr Modi also faces a reinvigorated opposition. The Congress-led alliance, known as INDIA, defied expectations by taking 232 seats – a reward for persistence and its ability to pull together.

Strikingly, there are some signs that the Hindu chauvinism Mr Modi rode to power may be reaching its limits. The BJP was defeated in Faizabad, where the prime minister inaugurated a grand temple on the site in Ayodhya where a Hindu mob once demolished a 16th-century mosque. Reporters who visited the area and other parts of Uttar Pradesh ahead of election day found poorer voters complaining that Mr Modi's focus on such issues was doing nothing to address basic needs. Despite his expansion of welfare programmes, many feel left behind. The headline GDP figure and new highways may impress, and billionaires like Gautam Adani and Mukesh

Ambani have prospered, but wealth has not trickled down. Huge numbers of young people are unemployed, and inequality is both flagrant and increasing. The reproach from voters might encourage the BJP to steer the economy towards a somewhat fairer and more sustainable course, for its own sake. What it indisputably offers is an opportunity to halt the democratic erosion. It is possible that Mr Modi will now seek to intensify his authoritarianism; an election under fairer conditions would surely have proved still more damning. But without a supermajority he cannot push through constitutional changes, as many feared he might. With his air of invincibility punctured, politicians, business people, officials and broadcasters may be somewhat less eager to dance to his tune.

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Four years since Galwan Valley clash, how new manoeuvres deepen India-China border logjam

Besides refusing to budge from its entrenched position on the border dispute, China has intensified its psychological warfare, prompting counter military and economic strategies by India

By Pradip R. Sagar

Four years since the heated clash between Indian and Chinese soldiers in the icy heights of Ladakh's Galwan Valley, relations between the two neighbours remain tense, with the border stalemate yet to find complete resolution despite a series of military and diplomatic engagements. All eyes are on how the Narendra Modi government, in its third term, handles the tricky situation, especially since China shows no willingness to budge from its entrenched position on the issue.

Military experts believe that trust was the biggest casualty of the Galwan clash, something that had taken decades to regain after the 1962 war with China. Since that clash in the summer of 2020, India and China have held at least 20 rounds of military talks and 13 rounds of foreign office-led discussions.

These negotiations have yielded some results, such as disengagement at five friction points: the Pangong Tso's north and south banks, patrolling points 15 and 17A at the Gogra-Hot Springs area, and Galwan. However, the stand-offs in critical areas, including the Depsang Plains and Demchok in eastern Ladakh, remain unresolved. While Beijing side has repeatedly called for 'normalisation' of ties beyond the border dispute, New Delhi remains firm on achieving the pre-April 2020 status quo ante.

But instead of thinning troop deployment to reduce tensions, routine satellite images confirm that China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has strengthened itself in other areas in the eastern sector (Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim) and the middle sector (Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh). The Indian Army has done mirror deployments to counter any belligerence by the Chinese side. It is suspected that by amassing artillery and armoured elements, the PLA wants to dominate the entire Himalayan terrain, from Shaksgam Pass to Arunachal Pradesh.

Galwan clash and its aftermath

The Galwan incident of June 15, 2020, described as a physical clash that did not involve the use of firearms, resulted in India losing 20 soldiers, including a colonel. Although China has acknowledged only four casualties, it is estimated that as many as 40 PLA personnel died in the clash. The confrontation was the deadliest since the 1962 war and marked a significant deterioration in China-India ties,



leading to profound shifts in the geopolitical and strategic calculus of both nations and with far-reaching implications on bilateral ties, regional stability and global geopolitics.

Military posturing

Historically, China-India ties have been fraught with tension, rooted in a longstanding border dispute. The 3,488 km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de facto border between the two nations, has witnessed unprecedented levels of troop deployment, almost comparable to that on the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan. Rivers, lakes and snowcapped mountains along the LAC create situations where soldiers from both sides come face to face at many points, sparking confrontations. In response to China's aggressive posturing, India ramped up infrastructure development and increased deployment across the northern, central and eastern sectors. India deployed over 70,000 soldiers, close to 100 armoured tanks, and nearly 330 BMP infantry combat vehicles, along with radar systems, artillery guns and other weapon systems in eastern Ladakh. China, on the other hand, deployed roughly 20,000 PLA soldiers over the 250-mile front in Aksai Chin area along the LAC. Beijing has rapidly reinforced its military infrastructure with new roads, bunkers and helipads, and deployed additional troops and advanced weaponry. The areas of focus include the strategically important eastern Ladakh, Pangong lake and Depsang Plains. The PLA has demanded the creation of an enlarged buffer zone in the Depsang Plains, adding to the

existing territorial disputes.

Psychological warfare

After the Galwan clash, the PLA intensified its psychological warfare tactics against India. These strategies included propaganda campaigns through state media, increased cyberattacks and espionage, aggressive posturing along the border, social media manipulation and stern diplomatic messaging. These tactics aimed to undermine Indian morale, create disruptions and exert pressure on Indian forces and decision-makers.

In response, India undertook several strategic measures to bolster its defences. This included a significant increase in defence spending, expedited procurement of advanced weaponry and enhanced surveillance capabilities. India also sought to strengthen alliances with other regional powers, notably through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with the United States, Japan and Australia, signifying a shift towards a more assertive and self-reliant defence strategy.

Diplomatic and economic shifts

The post-Galwan period has been marked by cautious engagement between India and China. Multiple rounds of military and diplomatic talks have been held to de-escalate tensions, but progress has been slow and contentious. The trust deficit has widened, complicating efforts for a lasting resolution.

The Galwan incident has also impacted international geopolitics, drawing attention to the Indo-Pacific region as a critical

arena for great power competition. The US-India strategic partnership has deepened, encompassing areas such as defence cooperation, intelligence sharing and joint military exercises. Additionally, the European Union and other global players have shown increased interest in Indo-Pacific stability, recognising the broader implications of China-India tensions for global trade and security.

Economic nationalism, technological self-reliance

Economically, the post-Galwan period has seen India adopt measures to reduce dependence on Chinese imports and promoting self-reliance through the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. This shift towards economic nationalism has led to the diversification of supply chains and greater emphasis on domestic manufacturing. Restrictions on Chinese apps and telecom gear, alongside a drive for homegrown alternatives, demonstrate India's strategy to protect its digital sovereignty and address security concerns. In summary, the Galwan clash has had a lasting impact on China-India relations, prompting both countries to adopt assertive military and economic strategies while navigating complex diplomatic engagements. The unresolved tensions underscore the challenges in achieving lasting peace and stability along the LAC besides broader implications for regional and global geopolitics.

Modi 3.0 Should Be Committed To Bold Reforms



By Bibek Debroy, Aditya Sinha

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has formed the government again, marking the first coalition at the union level in a decade. Unlike the coalition politics of pre-2014, infamous for policy paralysis, corruption, and inflation, this administration promises a different trajectory.

Before 2014, coalition governments in India were synonymous with inefficiency and scandal. The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) era (2004-2014) saw numerous high-profile scams, such as the 2G spectrum and coal allocation scandals, which eroded public trust and led to significant economic mismanagement. Policy paralysis was rampant, with crucial reforms stalling due to the constant need for political appeasement within the coalition framework. In contrast, since 2014, the NDA has demonstrated decisive governance, focusing on economic reforms and transparency. Initiatives like Make in India, Digital India, and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) have revitalised the economy, improved investor confidence and streamlined regulatory frameworks.

As the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leads this new coalition government, India must sustain its growth momentum through continued reforms. The government should be committed to bold reforms and process improvements, ensuring that the inefficiencies of past coalition politics are not repeated. A few areas where the new government should focus on are as follows.

Capital Expenditure

First, the new government must prioritise capital expenditure, as it has proven to be a more effective driver of economic growth than revenue expenditure. Previous

budgets have highlighted the significant multiplier effect of capital expenditure (estimated at 2.45) compared to revenue expenditure (0.99). Investment in infrastructure, such as railways, national highways, ports, and waterways, should be at the forefront of this strategy. These sectors not only stimulate economic activity but also ensure long-term developmental gains. The focus should be on projects that the Union government can implement directly, avoiding centrally sponsored schemes that often face delays due to coordination issues with state governments.

A clear, long-term fiscal management path

is crucial. The government should articulate an explicit counter-cyclical fiscal policy that balances expansionary measures in downturns with contractionary measures in booms. This approach minimises distortions and promotes stability in tax rates. While expansionary policies are more politically palatable, contractionary measures are equally essential to manage economic cycles effectively. The emphasis should be on capital expenditure to navigate economic fluctuations, given that revenue expenditure tends to be inflexible. Ensuring transparency and consistency in these policies will build confidence and

predictability in the fiscal environment. Managing Demand

However, the recent analysis by EAC-PM members Sajjid Chinoy and Neelkanth Mishra has flagged that demand, especially rural demand, is a concern. Public investment alone cannot sustain economic growth indefinitely; the private sector must step up. While real estate investment has surged, corporate capital expenditure lags due to insufficient demand visibility. This is evident in stagnant capacity utilisation rates, single-digit nominal sales growth, and weak core inflation.

Countercyclical fiscal and monetary policies are constrained, making it crucial for the union government to boost demand through private consumption and exports. Consumption, growing at just 4.2% over five years, has been hampered by a dichotomous labour market and declining real per-capita consumption. A consumption revival, alongside broadening export contributions, is key.

Employment growth, lagging behind demographic changes, needs focus, with many recent jobs in agriculture and a shift toward capital-intensive manufacturing. To make labour more attractive, comprehensive policies are required, from improving education, health, and skills to supporting labour-intensive industries. This should be complemented with the implementation of the four new labour codes. Apart from this, there will be a need to shift the focus from deficit indicators to debt indicators as they provide a more comprehensive measure of fiscal health. The debt-to-GDP ratio offers a clearer picture of fiscal sustainability, reflecting the cumulative impact of fiscal policies.

Gaza peace plan US wins key support at Security Council

THE US has requested the UN Security Council to support its proposed Gaza peace deal, signalling a concerted effort to end the ongoing hostilities. President Biden's plan, unveiled on May 31, outlines a process that begins with Hamas returning all remaining Israeli hostages, followed by Israel's eventual withdrawal from Gaza. This plan, however, faces a web of diplomatic challenges. Neither Israel nor Hamas has fully endorsed the proposal, reflecting the deep-rooted mistrust and conflicting objectives that have prolonged the conflict. The Biden administration's consideration of a separate deal with Hamas, bypassing Israel, underscores the complexity of the situation. This approach, while controversial, highlights a pragmatic shift towards diplomacy over military action, as the US no longer views Hamas as a military threat to Israel. The draft resolution emphasises a ceasefire contingent on ongoing negotiations,

with Qatar and Egypt playing crucial roles in sustaining these talks. On Monday, the UN Security Council adopted the plan after Russia chose not to block it, marking a diplomatic victory for Washington. Pressure is mounting on Israeli PM Benjamin

Netanyahu, who faces domestic dissent, most notably with the resignation of former defence chief Benny Gantz from the emergency war cabinet over Netanyahu's handling of the war. Demonstrations by the families of hostages have amplified the demand for a diplomatic resolution.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's regional tour aims to garner support for the peace deal and

address humanitarian concerns, such as reopening the Rafah border crossing to aid Gaza. Blinken's mission reflects the broader strategic objective of securing regional stability and alleviating the humanitarian crisis. The US proposal's success depends on it navigating the intricate political landscape and securing the commitment of both Israel and Hamas.



Will Coalition Rule Affect India's 'Independent' Foreign Policy?

By Syed Zubair Ahmed

Retaining Dr. S. Jaishankar as foreign minister clearly signals continuity in India's foreign policy goals under Modi 3.0. But could Prime Minister Narendra Modi's success in the foreign policy arena perish at the altar of coalition politics?

Collective wisdom suggests that despite a reduced mandate, India's foreign policy pursuit under Modi 3.0 is unlikely to be affected. There is unanimity among politicians and pundits that the Modi government's mantra of 'strategic consensus' and pursuit of multilateralism will continue to drive India towards becoming a global force as well as the world's third-largest economy (after the US and China) by 2027. The general consensus appears to be that Modi's foreign policy has already catapulted India onto the global stage. His actions have so far reflected a nuanced approach to maintaining an independent foreign policy that is in India's national interest. India may not yet be a great power, but is an emerging great power, as American political scientist John Mearsheimer recently suggested. In Modi's third term, India will certainly strive to go beyond an emerging great power status. If the new reality of a coalition government is unlikely to undermine Modi's foreign policy goals, will it be smooth sailing for him from now onwards?

The Challenges To Continue

During Modi's last term, India had faced all kinds of pressure to become a formal US ally. But he commendably dodged President Joe Biden's charm offensive. Biden extended Modi a state visit, laced with a hero's welcome at the White House. It was one of the best moments of Modi's long political career, but instead of treating it as a personal triumph (remember he was denied entry by the US for years following the Gujarat violence in 2002?), he saw it as a recognition for a rising India.

The Modi-Jaishankar partnership has stood firm on avoiding strict alliances with any major power. Instead, the duo has tried to balance relations among competing global powers, which can be observed in India's interactions with the US, Russia and China, as well as its balancing act between Israel and Middle Eastern countries.

In the coming years, the challenges are going to become even bigger for the Modi government because the rise of China and a resurgent Russia are expected to continue to undermine the US-dominated liberal global order. The war in Ukraine has dragged on with no end in sight, and it is thus that the US is desperate to bring powers like India into its orbit of influence. If India were to become a formal US ally, it



would be a huge shot in the arm for President Biden.

On the other hand, it's obvious that President Putin would not like to lose an old, trusted friend in India, which relies heavily on him for its defence and energy needs.

Will India Become A Formal US Ally Under Modi 3.0?

Many academics, policymakers and analysts in the US continue to forcefully argue that becoming a formal US ally is more beneficial for India and that it'll help it achieve its goal of becoming a great global power. Many in India also believe it's in the country's national interest to join hands with the most powerful country

on the planet. So, if it is indeed in India's national interest, why not? After all, India and the US are already part of the Quad grouping, along with Japan and Australia. No doubt the argument in favour of an India-US alliance is very powerful and loaded with benefits. India is faced with China's growing economic and military ambitions. So, could Modi feel compelled to enter a comprehensive agreement with the US and get more rewarding economic cooperation and an umbrella security protection against any future Chinese aggression? Given the recent incidents of border skirmishes and the fact that China is an immediate neighbour, India faces a bigger security threat from China than any

other of its neighbours. Therefore, ostensibly, it makes sense to come under the US security cover.

The supporters of such an argument say that India needs investments, technology, and semiconductor chips for its industries. It also needs advanced weapons for its military. They believe the US can also help India become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Most of all, they say that both countries share democratic values. They say if India were to become a US ally, it stands to gain much more from the alliance than the US does.

Many also argue the alliance could be on the lines of NATO. The security relationship between the US and the European Union is anchored in NATO, established in 1949 to protect Europe against the Communist Soviet Union. This military alliance not only ensures the defence of Europe but also fosters a close political relationship between the US and EU member states.

In return, the EU countries support US positions in global affairs. That's why the EU supported the American invasion of Iraq and they supported Israel without questioning much of its action in Gaza. In effect, many EU member countries have to exercise with caution their independent foreign policy, especially over an issue in which the US has a strategic interest. They have to toe the American line.

India-Pak impasse

Both nations should strive to reduce trust deficit

SHORTLY after assuming charge as Foreign Minister for a second term, S Jaishankar said with reference to Pakistan that India would want to find a solution to the years-old cross-border terrorism. 'That cannot be the policy of a good neighbour,'

he added. His statement comes on the heels of the messages posted on X by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and ex-PM Nawaz Sharif, congratulating PM Narendra Modi on his re-election. While Shehbaz confined himself to a terse sentence, Nawaz expansively appealed for replacing hate with hope and seizing the opportunity to shape

the destiny of the two billion people of South Asia. Modi was equally terse in thanking Shehbaz and no less eloquent in reminding Nawaz that the people of India had always stood for peace, security and progressive ideas.

The exchange of messages is significant as India-Pakistan ties have been in deep freeze since the Pulwama terror attack and

the retaliatory Balakot airstrikes of February 2019. The situation worsened after India revoked Article 370 of the Constitution and bifurcated Jammu and Kashmir in August that year, even as the hopes raised by the opening of the Kartarpur corridor were snuffed

out soon. However, some positive signs have been visible of late. Alluding to the 25-year-old Kargil War, Nawaz admitted last month that Pakistan had violated the Lahore Declaration in 1999. Interestingly, during their Lok Sabha election campaign, some BJP candidates promised the resumption of India-Pakistan trade via the Attari-Wagah crossing. Amid backdoor diplomatic efforts, India has been asserting that

terrorism and talks cannot go together. But as last week's Reasi attack has shown, it's an onerous task for Pakistan's military-controlled political leadership to turn off the terror tap overnight. Both New Delhi and Islamabad need to take a step forward, even if it's tentative to start with. This will help in reducing the trust deficit and bringing the two neighbours to the talks table.



Modi 3.0 and Mohan Bhagwat's Speech

By: Pavan K Varma

While the BJP is claiming that the national elections are a victory, enabling Narendra Modi to become the Prime Minister for a historic third time, and the Opposition is triumphant over its increased numbers and the fact that the BJP could not win a simple majority, a far cry from the clarion call of 400 paar, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has finally broken his silence. What he said is of seminal importance, for all political parties, but in particular for the BJP.

Bhagwat speaks rarely, but when he does, he has a purpose. This is because the RSS, as the ideological mentor for the idea of Hindutva, and the alumni for BJP leaders, thinks long-term, beyond the expediency of short-term political gains. Modi's impressive two-term absolute majorities were, from its point of view, positive. It helped in providing political heft to the RSS ideology. But this does not mean that the RSS will become perennially mute due to the dominance of one BJP leader, even if he is still, by far, the most popular leader in India.

The latest elections have shown that Modi's appeal is diminishing, and his brand has lost some of its sheen. The shrillness of the Hindu-Muslim narrative has become fatiguing, distasteful and



repetitive. Indians do not have a Jihadi mindset. They do not want the endemic instability created by mindless bigotry and hatred.

It is in this context that Bhagwat has spoken. The RSS is aware that for PM Modi, the challenge now is to show the ability to run a coalition government. During his years as the chief minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014 and as the prime minister from 2014 to 2024 with an absolute majority, he has not had the opportunity to run a mili-juli sarkar. Instinctively, he is a leader who seeks complete control over the government, a tendency evident in the new cabinet's portfolio allocation.

The BJP's strategic dominance across key sectors has been reaffirmed, while allies have largely been accommodated with minor

portfolios. Some allies have been excluded entirely, and others are dissatisfied with the number of cabinet positions offered. Nitish Kumar is notorious for his fickle loyalties, and Naidu will see everything from the prism of what is being done for Andhra Pradesh. These are challenges which the coalition will have to negotiate. It is significant too that there is not a single representation in the government, from India's largest minority, the Muslims, a situation starkly in contrast to the principle of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas. Mohan Bhagwat's pointed and relevant message has to be seen in this overall context. He emphasised that we must "respect diversity, live together, and respect others too." He advised Indians to "embrace

goodwill to all", and work towards consensus (sehmati). In the specific context of religion, he said: "We need to reflect on the teachings of Prophet Mohammad and Jesus Christ. Over time distortions have emerged. We must forget these distortions and treat the sons of our country as brothers." (Emphasis mine).

Nor did he mince words on some issues the current government has unpardonably ignored. One of these is the continuing violence in Manipur for over a year, despite which the BJP chief minister has been retained, and the PM has not had the time to visit the strife-torn state even once. The RSS chief bluntly said that this is unacceptable, and that a solution must be found in Manipur on a priority basis. Bhagwat also commented on the ahankar or ego and arrogance that besets leaders. Of course, this can be interpreted as a generic statement relevant to all leaders, but I think his intended target was clear. In the elections, Modi had become both the sole mascot and the ubiquitous face of the BJP, to the extent that the party was almost 'invisibilised'. Even the BJP manifesto was called 'Modi Ki Guarantee'. Many BJP stalwarts were treated shabbily, the cadre appeared to be demoralised, and

seat allocations were done—as some allege—at the will of the 'high command'.

In a particularly telling sentence, therefore, Bhagwat said: "Jo karm karta hai, par karm mein lipt nahin hota, usmein ahankar nahi hota, wahi sevak kehlane ka adhikari hota hai" (Only he who practices karma, but does so selflessly without an ego, deserves to be called a true sevak). Even on the inauguration of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, Bhagwat in his speech, without triumphalism, was emphasising the need to carry all Indians along, and shed hatred. He cited a stanza from Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas on what are the defining characteristics of Ram Rajya: "Sab nara karahin paraspar priti" (all will have mutual respect for each other).

It is significant that in the latest edition of the RSS publication, Organiser, RSS intellectual Ratan Sharda asks the revealing question: Was it lethargy, overconfidence, or a sense of comfort that "aayega toh Modi hi, abki baar 400+"? Sharda further commented that "the idea that Modiji is fighting on all 543 seats has a limited value. The idea became self-defeating when candidates were changed, imposed at the cost of local leaders, and defectors were given more importance.

Terrorised by Law, Hunted by Mobs: The Plight of Pakistani Minorities

Written By: Arun Anand

There is a common template of violence against minorities in Pakistan. The members of the Muslim community publicly accuse their immediate neighbours, with whom they have strained relations, of committing blasphemy. This is followed by an attack by a Muslim mob, leading to widespread destruction of property and loss of life. Such incidents are common in Pakistan. They also reflect the harsh reality endured by religious minorities in the country.

Time and again, these communities fall victim to mob violence, triggered by unfounded allegations from members of the Muslim community, often arising from trivial personal disputes.



This recurring pattern of violence against minorities was recently witnessed in the Sargodha district of Pakistan's Punjab province.

On May 25, a violent Muslim mob targeted the home of Nazir Masih, a Christian in his seventies, and his son, Sultan Masih, situated in the Mujahid colony of Sargodha district. The

assault followed an accusation that Nazir Masih had desecrated the Quran by burning its pages. This accusation was levelled by their neighbour, Ayub Gondal, known for his affiliation with the fundamentalist political party Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP). The TLP, with its backing from the state and mainstream

political circles, has a long history of perpetrating attacks to intimidate and persecute the country's religious and sectarian minorities.

According to a fact-finding report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Gondal's accusation stemmed from a confrontation between his children and Sultan Masih, who resides in a neighbouring house adjacent to Nazir Masih's. Although law enforcement agencies intervened to rescue the two families, Christian residents claimed that the Punjab police intentionally abandoned the septuagenarian, allowing the TLP-led mob to seek "retribution." Nazir Masih passed away in a hospital on the

intervening night of June 2-3. Over time, Pakistan has gained notoriety as one of the most perilous environments for religious minorities, including Hindus, Ahmadis, and Christians, among others. State institutions have consistently supported fundamentalist groups like the TLP, which repeatedly perpetrate violence against minority communities, relegating them to the fringes of the country's socio-political landscape. Consequently, these minorities have endured repeated acts of violence, such as targeted assassinations, lynching, mob violence, forced conversions, sexual violence against women and girls, and desecration of places of worship and cemeteries.

Why Modi's Third Victory Is Unique Not Only In India But Also Globally

By Akhilesh Sharma

Narendra Modi is going to take oath as the Prime Minister of India for the third time on Sunday. This is an extraordinary event not only in India but in global democracy. He has not only equalled the record of the first Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, but, as per a study, PM Modi is the only leader in the broader democratic world, post-World War II, who has been elected for a third consecutive term after completing the full tenure of each previous term and with a consistent vote share (this can be considered a mark of his popularity) in each election.

First, let's talk about India. Till now, Nehru had been the only Prime Minister in India who got public confidence for the third consecutive time. Now, Narendra Modi is the second Prime Minister who has achieved this feat. But there is a big difference between the victory of Nehru and Modi. That is, while Nehru's vote percentage decreased, Modi's vote percentage remained almost intact.

Nehru won elections three times in a row in 1952, 1957 and 1962. Their vote percentage and seats increased in 1957 compared to 1952. In 1952, Nehru got 45% of the votes and 364 seats out of 489 Lok Sabha seats. In the next elections in 1957, Nehru won 47.8% votes and 371 seats out of 494. But after this, in the elections held in 1962, he won 44.7% votes and 361 seats out of 520 Lok Sabha seats. That is, in 1962, not only did their seats decrease but the vote percentage was also less than the votes received in 1952. At the same time, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the vote percentage received by BJP and NDA has remained intact. While in 2014 the NDA got 38.5% and the BJP 31.3% votes, in 2019 it increased to 44.9% and 37.7%, respectively. In this year's elections, the NDA got 43.82% votes and the BJP got 36.6% votes. In 2014, out of 543 Lok Sabha seats, the NDA got 336 seats and the BJP got 282 seats. In 2019, this increased to 353 for the NDA and 303 for the BJP. In this election, the NDA has got 293 seats and the BJP has got 240.

Narendra Modi's victory is also the biggest victory of any Indian leader since 1962. Meanwhile, in



1984, Congress under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi got 49.1% votes and 414 out of 541 seats in the Lok Sabha. But it was the elections held immediately after the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi where the sympathy wave benefited the Congress. In comparison, Narendra Modi is the only one on the agenda of good governance and development who has gained the trust of the public for the third consecutive time.

An International Record
Narendra Modi's third consecutive victory is also an extraordinary record on the international stage. PM Narendra Modi is the only leader in the broader democratic world, post World War II, who has been elected for a third consecutive term, after completing the full tenure of

each previous term and with a consistent vote share in each election.

Russia, North Korea, Iran, Iraq may call themselves democracies, but if we leave them aside and talk about Western Europe, Japan, North America (except Cuba), South America (only a few countries), South Africa, Israel and South Korea, then PM Modi's victory has a different place among global leaders after the Second World War.

Country-Wise Analysis

There are very few leaders in the democratic world who have had the opportunity to win three or more consecutive elections after the Second World War. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt won four

consecutive elections in 1932, 1936, 1940 and 1944. But all his victories were before World War II.

In Canada, Pierre Trudeau won three consecutive elections in 1968, 1972 and 1974. But he could not complete his second term. Trudeau won again in 1980. His son Justin Trudeau has also won the elections three times in a row in 2015, 2019 and 2021. But for the second time, his government could not complete its tenure.

Shinzo Abe won three consecutive elections in Japan. He achieved success in 2012, 2014 and 2017. Before this, he was also the Prime Minister in 2006-07. But none of his governments could complete their tenure.

Felipe González won four elections in Spain, in 1982, 1986, 1989 and 1993. But his vote percentage kept falling in every election.

In Britain, Margaret Thatcher won the elections three times in a row in 1979, 1983 and 1987. But none of his governments could complete their tenure and their vote percentage kept falling in every election.

Similarly, Tony Blair also won the elections in Britain three consecutive times in 1997, 2001

and 2005. But like Thatcher, none of his governments could complete their tenure and their vote percentages kept decreasing in every election.

Tage Fritjof Erlander won seven elections in Sweden. He won in 1948, 1952, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1964 and 1968. In the third one in 1956, his vote percentage dropped and was the lowest. However, it increased in subsequent elections and reached around 50% in 1968.

Jens Stoltenberg won three elections in Norway, in 2005, 2009 and 2013. But in the third election, his vote percentage dropped and was the lowest in the last two elections.

In Norway, Einar Gerhardsen won elections in 1945, 1949, 1957 and 1961, although there were breaks in between. In 1953, he did not lead the election as Prime Minister, hence he could not make the record of winning the elections three or more consecutive times.

In Australia, Robert Menzies won seven elections in 1949, 1951, 1954, 1955, 1958, 1961 and 1963. In between, he was also the Prime Minister in 1939-1941. But his first government could not complete its term and its vote percentage also dropped.

‘One Nation, One Agenda’: India's Collective Path to Progress

By: Sumit Kaushik & Arunansh B Goswami

In the wake of the 2024 Indian general elections, the political landscape has seen a notable shift. This new political equilibrium brings opportunities, particularly in the realm of development—a critical area that transcends political affiliations. The Indian populace is more vocal than ever about its demand for tangible developmental progress. Now is the time to shine the spotlight on new development-led initiatives and policies.

The post-2024 election period presents a unique opportunity for India's political class to rise above partisan politics and prioritise the nation's development. The people's clear message is that they seek progress and tangible improvements in their quality of life, irrespective of which party is in power. Both the ruling and Opposition coalitions must heed this call, ensuring that



development-led initiatives remain at the core of their governance strategies. As India navigates this new political landscape, the focus on development will not only sustain the political entities involved but will also propel the nation towards a more prosperous and equitable future. At the heart of the political mandate is the undeniable need for grassroots development. Both coalitions understand that

to sustain their political viability and prove their worth to the populace, they must focus on concrete development at the ground level. With the advent of Modi 3.0 and the strengthened NDA coalition, India is poised to embark on a transformative journey under the unifying banner of "one nation, one agenda: development." This renewed mandate signals a robust commitment to propelling the nation towards unprecedented growth and modernisation. The

focus on development transcends political divides, aiming to uplift every segment of society and bridge regional disparities. By prioritising infrastructure, digital innovation, and social welfare, the government will create a cohesive and prosperous India, where progress is not just a goal but a shared reality for all citizens. In this era of unified vision, development will be the cornerstone that defines the nation's path forward, fostering economic resilience and global competitiveness. NDA's focus will likely be on highlighting gaps in governance and presenting a unified front on issues that matter to the common man, such as employment generation, infrastructure projects, healthcare improvements, educational reforms, grassroots development, environment, and economic policies aimed at uplifting the rural and urban poor.

Petrodollar Dusk, Petroyuan Dawn: What Investors Need To Know

While most investors were trying to gauge the Federal Reserve's next moves in light of recent bank failures last week, something interesting happened in Moscow.

During a three-day state visit, Chinese President Xi Jinping held friendly talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in a show of unity, as both countries increasingly seek to position themselves as leaders of what they call a "multipolar world order," one that challenges U.S.-centric alliances and agreements.

Among those agreements is the petrodollar, which has been in place for over 50 years.

In case you're wondering, "petrodollars" are not a real currency. They're simply dollars being used to trade oil. Early in the 1970s, the U.S. government provided economic aid to Saudi Arabia, its chief oil-producing rival, in exchange for assurances that Riyadh would price its crude exports exclusively in the U.S. dollar. In 1975, other members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) followed suit, and the petrodollar was born. This had the immediate effect of strengthening the U.S. dollar. Since countries around the world had to have dollars on hand in order to buy oil (and other key commodities such as gold, also priced in dollars), the greenback became the world's reserve currency, a status formerly enjoyed by the British

pound, French franc and Dutch guilder. All things must come to an end, however. We may be witnessing the end of the petrodollar as more and more countries, including China and Russia, are agreeing



to make settlements in currencies other than the U.S. dollar. This could have wide-ranging implications on not just a macro scale but also investment portfolios.

Dawn For The Petroyuan?

Putin couldn't have been more explicit. During Xi's state visit, he named the Chinese yuan as his favored currency to conduct trade in. Ever since Western sanctions were levied on the Eastern

European country for its invasion of Ukraine early last year, Russia has increasingly depended on its southern neighbor to buy the oil other countries won't touch. In just the first two months of

2023, China's imports from Russia totaled \$9.3 billion, exceeding full-year 2022 imports in dollar terms. In February alone, China imported over 2 million barrels of Russian crude, a new record high. Except that now, the yuan is presumably being used to make these settlements.

As Zoltar Pozsar, New York-based economist and investment research director at Credit Suisse, put it recently: "That's

dusk for the petrodollar... and dawn for the petroyuan."

U.S. Dollar Still The World's Reserve Currency, But Its Dominance Is Slipping
Before you dismiss Pozsar's comment as an exaggeration, consider that other major OPEC nations and BRICS members (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are either accepting yuan already or strongly considering it. Russia, Iran and Venezuela account for about 40% of the world's proven oilfields, and the three sell their oil in exchange for yuan. Turkey, Argentina, Indonesia and heavyweight oil producer Saudi Arabia have all applied for admittance into BRICS, while Egypt became a new member this week.

What this suggests is that the yuan's role as a reserve currency will continue to strengthen, signifying a broader shift in the global power balance and potentially giving China a bigger hand with which to shape economic policies that affect us all.

To be clear, the U.S. dollar remains the world's top reserve currency for now, though its share of global central banks' official holdings has slipped in the past 20 years, from 72% in 2001 to just under 60% today. By contrast, the yuan's share of official holdings has more than doubled since 2016. The Chinese currency accounted for about 2.8% of reserves as of September 2022. **Russia Diversifying Away From The Dollar By Loading Up On Gold**

It's not all about the yuan, of course. Gold has also increased as a foreign reserve, especially among emerging economies that seek to diversify away from the dollar.

Last week, Russia announced that its bullion holdings jumped by approximately 1 million ounces over the past 12 months as its central bank loaded up on gold in the face of Western sanctions. The bank reported having nearly 75 million ounces at the end of February 2023, up from about 74 million a year earlier.

Long-Term Implications For Investors

The implications of the dollar potentially losing its status as the global reserve are numerous. Obviously, there may be currency risks, and a decrease in demand for U.S. Treasury bonds could result in rising interest rates. I would expect to see massive swings in commodity prices, especially oil prices, which could be an opportunity if you can stomach the volatility. Gold would look exceptionally attractive, I think. A significant decrease in the relative value of the dollar would be supportive of the gold price, and I would be surprised not to see new highs. It's for reasons like these that I always recommend a 10% weighting in gold, with 5% in physical bullion and the other 5% in high-quality gold mining equities. Be sure to rebalance at least on an annual basis.

Saudi Arabia ends 80-year petrodollar deal with US for multi-currency sales

Saudi Arabia has decided not to renew its 80-year petrodollar deal with the United States, which expired on Sunday, June 9, as per media reports.

This agreement, originally signed on June 8, 1974, had been a key part of US global economic influence.

The deal set up joint commissions for economic cooperation and Saudi Arabia's military needs. Back then, American officials hoped it would encourage Saudi Arabia to produce more oil and strengthen economic ties with Arab countries. By choosing

not to extend this contract, Saudi Arabia can now sell oil and other goods using different currencies, such as the Chinese RMB, Euros, Yen, and Yuan, instead of only US dollars. There's also talk of exploring digital currencies like Bitcoin for transactions. This decision marks a significant move away from the petrodollar system established in 1972 when the US stopped linking its currency directly to gold.

It's expected to accelerate the global trend of using currencies other than the US dollar in international trade.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia has joined Project mBridge, a



collaborative effort exploring a digital currency platform shared among central banks and commercial banks. This project aims to facilitate instant cross-border payments and foreign-exchange transactions using distributed ledger technology.

Project mBridge began in 2021 and

involves several prominent central banks and institutions worldwide. It recently reached the stage of Minimum Viable Product (MVP), inviting private-sector firms to propose innovations and use cases to further develop the platform. This move by Saudi Arabia marks the beginning of a major shift in global economic dynamics, though its full implications on international trade and finance remain to be seen.

Saudi Arabia ends 80-year petrodollar deal with US

On January 17, the Saudi minister of finance, Mohammed Al-Jadaan, announced that the Saudi state is open to selling oil in currencies other than the dollar. "There are no issues with discussing how we settle our trade arrangements, whether it is in the US dollar, whether it is the euro, whether it is the Saudi riyal," Al-Jadaan told Bloomberg TV.

If the Saudi regime does indeed embrace substantial trade in currencies other than the dollar as part of its oil-export business, this would signal a shift away from the dollar as the dominant currency in global oil payments. Or measured another way, this would signal the end of the so-called petrodollar.

But how large of a shift is this? With the increasingly frequent Saudi comments about trading in nondollar currencies, we've also seen an increasing number of pundits announcing the "collapse" of the dollar or the imminent implosion of the dollar's currently outsized global power.

Will a shift away from the dollar in the global oil trade really lead to a big relative decline in the dollar? Probably and eventually. But a number of other dominoes would need to fall first, most especially the domino we call "Eurodollars."

On the other hand, it would be foolish to simply dismiss the potential end of the Saudi preference for the dollar with hand-waving. The end of the petrodollar would indeed weaken the dollar, even if this would not be a mortal blow in itself. Moreover, it is especially foolhardy to ignore the status of the petrodollar because that status also has geopolitical implications. Saudi comments on the dollar signal that the Saudis no longer consider its alliance with the United States to be as important as it has been since the 1970s. What's not an immediate economic problem for the US regime or the dollar may nonetheless be an immediate geopolitical problem.

In context, probably the best way to look at the potential end of the petrodollar is to see it as one piece of the dollar-based portion of the global economy. Since the 1950s, the dollar has experienced an immense amount of support in terms of global trade and investment and in terms of dollar reserves held by foreigners. This has greatly propped up demand for US debt and for dollars, and this has had enormous disinflationary effects in the domestic US economy. That is, newly created dollars are soaked up by foreigners who both want and need dollars to pay off dollar-denominated debt and to pad bank reserves. But if global dollar dominance truly is in decline, we could potentially expect both higher domestic price inflation and higher interest rates than what Americans have become accustomed to over the past thirty years. In other words, as the dollar

declines, the US regime will no longer be able to monetize debt and heap up immense new deficits without fear of high price inflation or falling Treasury prices. The end of the petrodollar is not a reason to panic right now, but it is the latest sign that the US regime's power via the dollar is being reined in.

What Is the Petrodollar?

The petrodollar is the result of US efforts to secure access to Middle Eastern oil while also lessening the slide of the dollar in the early 1970s.

By 1974, the US dollar was in a precarious position. In 1971, thanks to profligate spending on both war and domestic welfare programs, the United States could no longer maintain a set global price for gold in line with the Bretton Woods system established in 1944. The value of the dollar in relation to gold fell as the supply of dollars increased as a byproduct of growing deficit spending. Foreign governments and investors began to lose faith in the dollar.

In response to these developments, Richard Nixon announced that the US would abandon the Bretton Woods system. The dollar began to float against other currencies. Not surprisingly, this devaluation did not restore confidence in the dollar. Moreover, the US had made no effort to rein in deficit spending. So the US needed to continue to find ways to sell government debt without driving up interest rates. That is, the US needed more buyers for its debt. Motivation for a fix grew even more after 1973, when the first oil shock further exacerbated the deficit-fueled price inflation Americans were enduring.

But by 1974, the enormous flood of dollars from the US into Saudi Arabia, the top oil exporter, suggested a solution. Nixon secured an agreement in which the US would buy oil from Saudi Arabia and provide the kingdom military aid and equipment as well. In return, the Saudis would use their dollars to purchase US Treasuries and help finance US budget deficits.

From a public finance point of view, this appeared to be a win-win. The Saudis would receive protection from geopolitical enemies, and the US would get a new place to unload large amounts of government debt. Moreover, the Saudis could park their dollars in relatively safe and reliable investments in the United States. This became known as "petrodollar recycling." By spending on oil, the US was creating new demand for US debt and US dollars. As time went on, thanks to Saudi Arabia's dominance in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the dollar's dominance was extended to OPEC overall, which meant that the dollar became the preferred currency for oil purchases worldwide.

This petrodollar arrangement proved to be especially important in the 1970s and

1980s, when Saudi Arabia and the OPEC countries controlled more of the oil trade than they do now. It also closely tied US interests to Saudi interests, ensuring US enmity toward the kingdom's traditional rivals, such as Iran.

The Petrodollar Is a Type of Eurodollar

In terms of its economic role, however, the petrodollar has always just been a type of Eurodollar.

What is a Eurodollar? According to Robert Murphy:

The term Eurodollar actually refers to any US dollar-denominated deposit held at a financial institution outside of the United States, or even a USD deposit held by a foreign bank within the US. It thus has nothing to do with the euro currency, and is not restricted to dollars held in Europe; they are dollar deposits that are not subject to the same regulations as US dollars held by American banks, nor are they guaranteed by FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) protection (and hence they tend to earn a higher rate of return).

The trade in Eurodollars is huge, although it's difficult to quantify exactly how huge. One estimate puts Eurodollar assets at around \$12 trillion. For context, we can consider that all assets in US banks total about \$22 trillion. Or put another way, "offshore dollar banking now amounts to about half of the US total." So, the Eurodollar economy is very large, and this "dollar zone" is also a key component of many of the world's leading economies, given that half or more of the world economy lies in that zone.

In contrast, in 2020, the petrodollar trade amounted to less than \$3.5 trillion annually. That's not insignificant, of course, but even a sizable reduction in this amount will not on its own cause global demand for the dollar (relative to other currencies) to collapse. With so many trillions in dollar-denominated loans floating around the global economy, the petrodollar remains only a piece of a larger pie.

Nevertheless, we could also conclude that the end of the petrodollar is part of a larger and important trend away from the dollar. The relative size of the Eurodollar market has decreased since 2008, dropping from a peak of 87 percent of the size of the US banking system to under 60 percent. Meanwhile, the share of US dollars in the reserves of foreign central banks has fallen, dropping from 71 percent twenty years ago to 60 percent today. This is a twenty-five year low. Russia, China, and India all have shown interest in freeing the global economy from the dollar.

Even if this trend continues, demand for the dollar will most certainly not disappear next week or next month, or next year. There is still a hoard of trillions of dollars' worth of dollar-denominated debt in the global economy, and—for now, at least—that means continuing demand for dollars. Moreover, the dollar remains one of the safest currencies to keep on hand, given that the central banks in Japan, Europe, the United Kingdom and China, are hardly embracing "hard money." Given that the US economy remains enormous, and US Treasuries remain at least as safe as other regimes' bonds, foreigners will still keep a lot of dollars on hand to buy American assets. This is also true because—in spite of the myth that "America doesn't make anything anymore"—foreigners also buy US products and services.

This certainly doesn't mean everything is just fine for the dollar, though. A movement away from the dollar—even in slow motion—will mean a rising cost of living for Americans. With fewer foreigners holding on to dollars, the US regime's current runaway monetary inflation will create more domestic price inflation. In other words, movement away from the dollar will mean the US regime must engage in less monetization of the nation's debt if it wishes to avoid runaway inflation. It also likely will lead to a need to pay higher interest rates on US government bonds, and that will mean a need for more taxpayer money to service the debt. It will mean that it will become more difficult for the US regime to finance every new war, program, and pet project that Washington can think up.

The Geopolitics of the Petrodollar

The more obvious short-term effects of the move away from the petrodollar will be in geopolitics rather than in the currency order. In addition to signaling that it is no longer wedded to the dollar, Saudi Arabia has also recently announced its openness toward Russia and a willingness to join the Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) nations. This shift in strategic interests for Saudi Arabia potentially poses an immediate threat to US strategic interests, in that the US regime has become accustomed to dominating the entire Persian Gulf region through the US's Saudi ties. A Saudi turn away from the petrodollar will magnify this shift. That will be enough to further threaten the American standard of living, but not enough in itself to end the dollar. After all, the pound sterling did not cease to exist after its own fall from its vaunted position as the preferred global reserve currency. But it did become far less powerful. The dollar is headed in the same direction.

Modi is going to spend next few months showing he is a man of action, and in control

The battle of narratives continues. As far as the Bharatiya Janata Party is concerned, the Lok Sabha election results were an endorsement of Narendra Modi's two terms in office.

For the Opposition, the results represented a moral defeat for the BJP. After two terms in office with overall majorities, extravagant claims about returning to power with over 400 seats and dreams of a forever future, the BJP was denied a majority by the voters. It had to depend on allies to take office. Surprised by the electoral reverses — or so I would imply — as well as the alacrity with which the world's media treated the results as a rebuke to both authoritarian governance and the government's ostensible desire to remake India in a new image, Prime Minister Modi has worked to re-assert his moral authority. To keep the idea of victory and therefore, of continuity, alive he has dropped whatever plans he may have had of a different kind of cabinet and re-appointed the same senior ministers. Determined to quash the speculation that he would have to give key portfolios to his allies, and consult his NDA partners each time he had to take a major decision, he has denied the allies senior posts.

What's Modi's immediate agenda?

It is too early to say whether Modi has successfully reclaimed the initiative or reset the narrative. But a few things seem clear. He will spend the next few months demonstrating that he is a man of action, who is firmly in charge. New schemes will be announced. There will be a conscious attempt to win over those on the margins of society who voted against him. The still largely cooperative media will be told to highlight his foreign visits to emphasise his importance as a global statesman. He will be mostly successful in doing all this because his critics misunderstand what the BJP's new allies want or what their limitations are.

For instance, Chandrababu Naidu does not want a big stake in how the central government is run. He has one priority: Andhra Pradesh, his own state. As long as that is taken care of — financial aid, special status perhaps, grants, big central projects — he will not do anything to destabilise this government. Yes, he probably wants a Telugu Desam Party speaker in the Lok Sabha but even if he doesn't get that, it may not be a deal-breaker.

I have no doubt that this government will

meet all his demands for Andhra. Naidu will be able to present himself to his people as the man who rescued the state from its current financial problems (which he blames on former Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy) and built a glorious new capital at Amaravati.

Nitish Kumar is unlikely to create too many hurdles for the government. His many flip-flops have turned him into a sort of revolving man whose political credibility has ebbed away. He was lucky that his party did relatively well in Bihar in alliance with the BJP but he really has nowhere else to go. He will have difficulty getting Tejashvi Yadav or his other current opponents to accept him as chief minister and his best hope for the next assembly election in Bihar is to stick with the NDA. So, the view that Modi will have to check every decision with intransigent allies is misplaced. But yes, there are two important qualifications.

The first is the situation in Maharashtra. Even if you don't morally judge the BJP's love for breaking parties, there is no doubt that the party, in purely practical terms, has been too clever by half in Maharashtra. It filed ED cases against opponents and then forgot all about the cases once the accused persons joined the BJP.

The decision to split the Shiv Sena has actually led to an increase in public

sympathy for Uddhav Thackeray. The BJP believed that Uddhav's Shiv Sena was now dead. In fact, as the results show, it is still very much in the running. Rumblings from Mumbai over the last week suggest that there is unhappiness even in the breakaway BJP-aligned Shiv Sena over cabinet berths. There's a feeling that, though it performed respectably in the Lok Sabha elections, it is still not regarded by the BJP as a serious ally, worthy of respect.

The obvious comparison is with the breakaway Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) faction that won just one seat, much less than the Sharad Pawar-led original. It was offered a ministership anyway, which it turned down on the grounds that it was not a Cabinet berth. Both the NCP-Ajit Pawar faction and the Shinde Shiv Sena will face pressure from members who will threaten to go home to their mother parties. Certainly, the BJP's decision to split the NCP and to forget about the cases filed against Ajit Pawar now seems like an act of extreme foolishness.

None of this would matter too much except that Maharashtra has an assembly election in a few months. If the trends shown in the Lok Sabha election persist, then the BJP alliance will lose.

If that does happen, Modi will look even less invincible. Having lost Uttar Pradesh,

the BJP cannot afford to be humiliated in another populous state. Even Haryana, which admittedly, is not such a populous state, will prove to be a problem for the BJP if the Lok Sabha trends hold.

All of this will undermine the prime minister's shows of strength, which are based, in essence, on the perception that he is incredibly popular all over India. A couple of major defeats in assembly elections is all it would take for the BJP to seem less like the strongman in the NDA. Choice between bulldozer and Vajpayee There is a second factor that the BJP will have to confront in the months ahead. What kind of government does Modi really want to run? During the election campaign, the BJP gave the impression that it would use its third term to make fundamental changes: a uniform civil code, one nation-one election and so on. The tone of the prime minister's campaign speeches with their talk of mangalsutra, buffaloes, infiltrators and people who have more children, suggested that a new age of Hindutva was about to be ushered in, symbolised by the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

If this is still the agenda, then the BJP is in trouble. The allies will not interfere in day-to-day governance. But they will not support an overt sectarian agenda or an attempt to transform the India they grew up in.

Eight Defendants Charged With Multi-Million Dollar Health Care Fraud Scheme

Defendants Allegedly Billed Medicaid for Ambulette Services to Medical Appointments That Were Not Performed, Including Claims for Individuals Who Were Deceased Earlier today, at the federal courthouse in Central Islip, an indictment was unsealed charging Noman Ahmed, Adnan Arshad, Rehman Diwan, Jessica Hendrickson, Jose Marte, Mohammed Saleem, Faisal Shamsi and Waqas Shamsi with conspiracy to commit health care fraud, health care fraud, conspiracy to defraud the United States and pay health care kickbacks, paying health care kickbacks, and money laundering. The defendants allegedly offered and paid health care kickbacks and submitted fraudulent claims to Medicaid for ambulette services to medical appointments that were not performed, or the costs were artificially inflated. The defendants were arrested today and all but Marte will be arraigned this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Arlene R. Lindsay. Marte will be arraigned tomorrow.

Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Naomi Gruchacz, Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG), Thomas M. Fattorusso, Special Agent-in-Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal

Investigation, New York, (IRS-CI), and Raymond A. Tierney, Suffolk County District Attorney, announced the arrests and charges. "As alleged, the defendants abused the trust placed in them by Medicaid by falsely and brazenly treating this essential program like a piggy bank for their own enrichment," stated United States Attorney Peace. "Their transportation scam ended today with law enforcement providing the defendants a free ride to the courthouse to face serious criminal charges. My Office will prosecute health care providers who steal from taxpayer-funded programs intended to help those in need."

Mr. Peace also thanked the Office of the New York State Comptroller and the New York Attorney General's Office, Medicaid Fraud Control Unit for their assistance in the case. "HHS-OIG will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to ensure that individuals are held accountable if they attempt to exploit federal health care programs for their own greed," stated HHS-OIG Special Agent-in-Charge Gruchacz. "It is alleged in this case that the defendants offered illegal kickbacks and billed Medicaid improperly for millions of dollars, which can affect the availability of funds and services for others and drive up the cost of taxpayer-funded health care."

Glad that first visit in third term is to Italy for G7 summit: PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday departed for Italy to attend the annual summit of G7 advanced economies. Before departing for Italy, the PM said he was glad that his first visit in the third consecutive term was to Italy for the G7 summit.

"At the invitation of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, I am travelling to (the) Apulia region in Italy to participate in the G7 Outreach Summit on 14 June 2024. I am glad that my first visit in the third consecutive term is to Italy for the G7 summit...", a statement released from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) read. At the G7 summit, India's focus would

be on artificial intelligence, energy, Africa, and the Mediterranean region, the statement said. PM Modi's participation in the G7 summit would also provide an opportunity to follow up on the outcomes of the G20 summit held under India's presidency last year, the statement further added. PM Modi will have a bilateral meeting with Italian Prime Minister Meloni. "Prime Minister Meloni's two visits to India last year were instrumental in infusing momentum and depth in our bilateral agenda," he said. "We remain committed to consolidating the India-Italy strategic partnership, and bolstering cooperation in the Indo-Pacific

and the Mediterranean regions," PM Modi said. The G-7 summit, to be held in the luxury resort of Borgo Egnazia in Italy's Apulia region from June 13 to 15, is likely to be dominated by the raging war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza. Apart from PM Modi, US President Joe Biden, his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau are among the top leaders attending the summit. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is also scheduled for a session on the Russian invasion of his country.

Damp Squib: Is This the Most Boring T20 World Cup Ever?

A T20 cricket match is a three-hour affair. The race to become the champions in this short format by winning the 2024 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup is taking place in the United States and the West Indies. The format's viewer-friendliness notwithstanding, a handful of cricket lovers, who have been watching these matches without a break, might find it difficult to come across others doing the same. Social media activity before and after these matches has been much less than one might have expected — except during an obvious exception, the India-Pakistan match, which India won.

The T20 World Cup began soon after the Indian Premier League, the world's most lucrative T20 league. The cash-rich league, which witnessed the participation of ten franchises, had a total of 74 matches played between March 22 and May 26. Having started on June 2, the T20 World Cup will end with the finals on June 29. Twenty nations have qualified for the present edition compared to 16 in the 2022 edition, because of which the tournament has ten more matches than the 45 matches played in 2022. How easy is it to watch 129 T20 matches in the IPL and the T20 World Cup in a short period of three months? One must not be surprised even if the hardcore T20 fan complains that it has been a tiring experience.

Rivals USA and Canada played the first match of the tournament. Ranked 17th in the ICC rankings, the USA scored 197 for 5 from 17.4 overs to surpass 23rd-ranked Canada's 194/5 with consummate ease. The match between the two smaller teams

offered good entertainment to the average T20 fan, a seeker of high-intensity, high-scoring contests between the bat and the ball. However, it was not a sign of things that followed.

The number of low-scoring matches must have surprised many viewers, regardless of whether they are watching them live or reading scorecards online to keep themselves updated. Oman scored 109, and Namibia responded with the same score for the loss of six wickets before winning the match in a Super Over finish. Sri Lanka were all out for 77, and South Africa responded with 80/4 with almost four overs left for a six-wicket win. Papua New Guinea collapsed for 77 against Uganda, and the latter scored 78/7 for a three-wicket win. Afghanistan managed 159/6 against New Zealand, which offered zero resistance and crumbled for 75 in an 84-run victory for the former. India walked all over Ireland to register an eight-wicket win with 46 balls left after the latter were all out for 96. Interestingly, the Men in Blue have played three matches against Ireland, Pakistan and the United States. Their highest score is 119 all out against Pakistan in a significant six-run win. But then, except in the India-Pakistan match in which India batted first and could have put up more runs on the board, the national team did not have to chase down big targets anyway.

Can such low-scoring T20 matches please the average fan of the format? They usually don't, as long as the viewer's national team—or a personal favourite—does not cruise to an easy win against an opposition that fails to set a challenging

target. Uganda have been guilty of two shockingly low scores: 58 all out in response to Afghanistan's 183/5 in a 125-run loss and an even lower 39 all out against the West Indies in a 134-run loss. In a format where viewers expect runs in plenty—the sight of the ball sailing out of the ground for mammoth sixes has matchless appeal—the in-form Australia has been the only team to produce a 200-plus score. The Men in Yellow put up 201/7 against England, whose response of 165/6 was good enough in the context of the entire tournament but not this particular match. They lost by 36 runs. One 200-plus score after 26 matches in an era, when matches seem most exciting when the batsmen are on a rampage, is not something many might have imagined. The Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York with a capacity of 34,000, the highest among all the stadiums in the US and the West Indies where these matches are being played, has proved to be a graveyard for batsmen. The drop-in pitches prepared in Adelaide and transported to the New York stadium have surprised batsmen because of their unpredictability. There is an awkward bounce, and many deliveries have been kept low, deceiving batsmen and making scoring difficult. Although lower scores have been made elsewhere, the pitches in New York have evidently favoured the bowlers, forcing the batsmen to be circumspect. That has reduced the possibility of scoring quick runs, at least in the slog overs, manifold. Although the USA has performed

remarkably so far, beating Pakistan and Canada and fighting hard against India, cricket isn't popular in the country. The game is so unfamiliar to the average American that pop star Jennifer Lopez confused 'cricket' for 'croquet' in the British comedy show, The Graham Norton Show. The in-form West Indies, also co-hosts of the tournament, are performing at the right time. Of course, the West Indies teams from the past have played some of the best cricket in the history of the game.

Sports lovers in the sub-region of North America are passionate about the game, but their counterparts in the United States who aren't from cricket-playing nations mostly have little or no understanding of what cricket is and how it is played. So, will the interest in the tournament pick up in the US as the tournament progresses? That is possible if non-cricket sports lovers want to see how their national team plays — should it reach the more competitive Super Eights round.

A similar thing should happen in India when the Men in Blue face much more competition in the Super Eights round. More viewers will start following the tournament closely from June 19, the day of the first Super Eights match and the beginning of a crucial phase for the home team as well as other qualifiers. Until then, the tournament will not generate much excitement — with most T20 cricket lovers choosing to skip the majority of the matches because of IPL fatigue, the possibility of low scores, or inappropriate telecast timings of 50 per cent of the matches in India.

The Dirty Dozen: The Story Of India's 12 Biggest Corporate Defaulters

Japan's Kongo Gumi Co Limited, which specialised in constructing Buddhist temples, is considered the world's longest-running family business. It was established in 578 AD, at a time when the Golden Age of the Guptas was nearing its end in India, the Mayan civilisation was still flourishing in parts of Central America, and the erstwhile Roman empire had started disintegrating. Kongo Gumi had an independent run for 1,429 years. In 2006, the company filed for bankruptcy, unable to repay its debts. It subsequently was taken over by the Takamatsu Construction Group and continues to operate as a subsidiary. India's IBC

The Kongo Gumi episode epitomises the double-edged nature of the insolvency and bankruptcy process. A company's inability to pay back its debts would eventually lead to closure of the business, and asset forfeiture. At the same time, if handled adeptly, a business could continue its run, albeit with a different promoter, or group of shareholders. India's

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which was enacted in May 2016, was a spirited response on similar lines to tackle the twin balance sheet syndrome that impacted the economy, engulfing both the banking and the corporate sectors. Over-leveraged businesses were finding it hard to pay the interest due on outstanding debt. Banks were saddled with non-performing assets, impacting their profitability, and constraining fresh lending. To break the logjam, IBC, with the full backing of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Central government, took on the top 12 biggest corporate defaulters. The catchy title given by seasoned business journalist N. Sundaresha Subramanian to these 'bad boys', The Dirty Dozen, may appear a misnomer. Unlike the characters in the iconic Hollywood movie, there is nothing heroic about this bunch. Their actions and deeds that landed themselves and the lending ecosystem in such a mess largely stemmed from corporate greed,

corruption, political influence peddling, and a bit of plain bad luck. In hindsight, many captains of Corporate India would not be proud of the conduct of some of their peers in creating the distressed assets scenario.

The 'Big Twelve' Cases

The inability - in some cases bordering on incompetence - of the lending institutions to adhere to even rudimentary financial checks and balances while ever-greening loan books exposed the weakness of the regulatory environment. Over the last eight years of its operations, the IBC has 'brought about a shift in debtor-creditor relationships, leading to ownership changes in many large companies', points out Dr M.S. Sahoo, former chairperson of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India, in the Foreword. "Some of the 'Big Twelve' managed to recover convincingly, others had to be liquidated, and a few are still in the middle of the process," he adds. Their resolutions tested the guardrails of

the Code, setting the tone for the bankruptcy regime's operational success. A recent study by IIM-Ahmedabad finds that post-resolution, the companies have witnessed substantial improvement in their financial performance and governance practices. Subramanian puts the spotlight on how individual business groups and their promoters landed up in this infamous club. He chronicles the travails of the Code in each of the 'Big Twelve' cases in finding the resolution. In some instances, the journey becomes more important than the destination.

'We Were Financing The Promoter'

The book is divided into three sections. The first part gives a political-economic context to India's burgeoning stressed asset scenario in the early 2000s, which snowballed into a banking and financial crisis post-2008 following the global financial meltdown. The helplessness of the bankers in mitigating the fallout of portent financial crises is well-captured in the following scenario.

Rigging in Pak, but fair polls in India: Pakistani Senator highlights contrast

Pakistani Senator Shibli Faraz praised India for holding free and fair elections, while he lashed out at the electoral system in Pakistan that saw blatant rigging. He said a flawed election, like the one Pakistan has seen, makes the Islamic Republic hollow.'

(News Agency)-Shibli Faraz, the Leader of Opposition in the Pakistani Senate (upper house), praised the efficient electoral process of India and criticised his own country for not being able to conduct a transparent election to ensure a peaceful power transition.

"Elections have just been conducted there [in India]. More than 800 million have voted. There were thousands of polling stations. Even for a person living in a remote area, a polling station was set up. The election lasted for a month and was conducted using EVMs. Not a single voice has been raised that the election was rigged. We want to progress in the same way," Shibli Faraz said during a parliamentary session in Islamabad. Faraz, a member of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, held multiple portfolios in the erstwhile Imran Khan-led government. He also expressed his frustration over the numerous disputes in Pakistan's elections, where losing



candidates refused to accept defeat.

Faraz held the poor electoral culture in Pakistan responsible for making the political system "hollow". He also asked why Pakistan cannot conduct such a free and fair election.

"This is because of the vested interests of all parties, including the Muslim League, and the MQM," he said.

The statement by the Pakistani senator comes after the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) secured a

victory in the Lok Sabha elections.

To contrast, the February election in Pakistan followed widespread chaos in the Islamic Republic. The elections, in which the PTI was barred from contesting, were marred by allegations of fraud, snatching of nomination papers, arbitrary arrests of candidates and supporters, rejection of nomination papers, and disruption of campaign events.

Pakistan's Election Commission received as many as 1,300 complaints. Poll officials did not announce the results of several seats even days after counting began.

Observers, like the United Nations and Human Rights Watch, also pointed to what appeared to be pre-poll rigging before the elections in Pakistan.

The military's role and preference for Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League, over Imran Khan, further concretised accusations of interference and a compromised election.

India rejects 'unwarranted' Kashmir reference in China-Pakistan joint statement



(News Agency)-India strongly rejected mentions of Jammu and Kashmir in a recent joint statement by China and Pakistan, asserting that the Union Territory and Ladakh are integral parts of India.

India on Thursday stoutly rejected "unwarranted" references to Jammu and Kashmir in the latest joint statement by

China and Pakistan and asserted that the Union Territory and Ladakh "have been, are and will always remain" its integral parts.

The joint statement was issued in Beijing on June 7 following talks between Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese Premier Li Qiang. "We have noted unwarranted references to the

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir in the joint statement between China and Pakistan of June 7. We categorically reject such references," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "Our position on the issue is consistent and well-known to the concerned parties. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the Union Territory of Ladakh have been, are and will always remain integral and inalienable parts of India," he said. Jaiswal was responding to a media query on the joint statement.

"No other country has the locus standi to comment on the same," Jaiswal said. The MEA spokesperson also took strong note of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that featured in the joint statement.

"The same joint statement also mentions activities and projects under the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), some of which are in India's sovereign territory under forcible and illegal occupation by Pakistan," he said. "We resolutely oppose and reject any moves by other countries to reinforce or legitimise Pakistan's illegal occupation of these territories, impinging on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity," Jaiswal said.

South Florida at risk of 'life-threatening' floods as torrential rain continues

(News Agency)-More torrential downpours deluged South Florida on Thursday, adding to more than a foot (30 cm) of rain that fell on parts of the state this week and leading forecasters to issue flood watches or warnings for an area where 8 million people reside. Some areas, including portions of Broward and Miami-Dade counties, were at risk of "life-threatening flooding," as water built up on roadways and lapped up against thresholds of homes, the National Weather Service said. A few spots have reported up to 18-to-25 inches (46-to-63.5 cm) of rain since Monday, said Bob Oravec, a forecaster with the service's Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland. North Miami Beach was near the top of the list for rainfall on Thursday with 20.4 inches of rain since Monday, said Oravec, while Big Cypress National Preserve in the Everglades was awash with about 25 inches.

In Hallandale Beach, which has been inundated by 19.3 inches of precipitation, resident Luis Garcia Infante said he had never experienced such a deluge in his 13 years of living in the community in south Broward County.

"There's been rain, heavy rain, but never, never like this", Infante said. "This is extreme."

Amazon tribe hooked to porn due to Starlink? This is what Elon Musk has to say

Elon Musk has responded to the New York Times article that claimed that internet provided by his Starlink, a satellite-based internet company, had changed the behavioural patterns of a tribe living in seclusion in the Amazon rainforests of Brazil. The article had also claimed that some young people of Marubo tribe had begun to watch pornographic content, play videogames and overuse social media. Media outlets across the world published articles discussing how Musk's Starlink led the tribe to pornography. Marubo tribe and its access of Starlink internet and its impact began to be discussed worldwide.

"It was disrespectful & unkind of The New York Times to say that about the tribe," Elon Musk, the Tesla co-founder, wrote on X. Musk also owns Starlink. Musk's post came after



the New York Times wrote a second article on June 11, titled: 'No, a Remote Amazon Tribe Did Not Get Addicted to Porn.' The article tried to argue that media outlets latched on to the porn part of its piece and that the NYT report was based on the allegations by a tribal

leader. "The Marubo people are not addicted to pornography. There was no hint of this in the forest, and there was no suggestion of it in The New York Times's article," read the article. "Instead, the article mentioned a complaint from one Marubo leader that some Marubo

minors had shared pornography in WhatsApp group chats. This was especially concerning, he said, because Marubo culture frowns upon even kissing in public". Many of the sites that distort this detail are news aggregators, meaning their business model is largely

designed around repackaging the reporting of other news organisations, with often sensationalist headlines to sell ads. Because these sites also link to the original reporting, they are generally legally protected, even if they misrepresent the material," the updated piece added.

"These claims are unfounded, untrue and reflect a prejudiced ideological current that disrespects our autonomy and identity," Enoque Marubo, the Marubo leader, said in a video posted on Instagram.

Musk has posted a screenshot of this clarification article on his X handle. He also shared how the former article was false, but it has been corrected, and the publication has apologised and accepted Starlink's contribution to healthcare, education, business and communication.

Family of 6, including 3 children, shot dead at home in south Mexico

Julio Pérez, the mayor of the Chiapas town of Pantelho, said the killings happened there Friday, and called it "a massacre."



A family of six, including three children, were killed Friday by gunmen in the southern Mexico border state of Chiapas in a town marred by militia violence. Julio Pérez, the mayor of the Chiapas town of Pantelho, said the killings happened there Friday, and called it "a massacre." Two warring militia groups suspected of being backed by drug cartels have been battling for control of the town.

It was the latest in a string of mass killings in which hitmen have wiped out entire families in Mexico. On Sunday, gunmen burst into a home in the north-central state of Guanajuato and killed four women and two children.

Both Chiapas, which shares a border with Guatemala, and Guanajuato have been hit by bloody gang turf battles in recent years.

Local media reported that the gunmen entered the home in the city of Leon in Guanajuato looking for a male member of the family. When they found out he had already fled, they killed the women and children.

The Guanajuato killings have drawn special attention because surveillance camera footage showed five National Guard officers entering the home five minutes before the killings took place. They left the home carrying a large black plastic bag just before the killers arrived. On Friday, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said five officers of the quasi-military National Guard had been detained for breaches of military discipline, and were in the custody of the Defense Department, but he refused to give more details on the case.

US Supreme Court strikes down Donald Trump-era ban on bump stocks for firearms

The Supreme Court on Friday struck down a Trump-era ban on bump stocks, a gun accessory that allows semi-automatic weapons to fire rapidly like machine guns and was used in the deadliest mass shooting in modern US history.

The high court found 6-3 the Trump administration did not follow federal law when it reversed course and banned bump stocks after a gunman in Las Vegas attacked a country music festival with assault rifles in 2017. He fired more than 1,000 rounds in the crowd in 11 minutes, leaving 60 people dead and injuring hundreds more.

A Texas gun shop owner challenged the ban, arguing the Justice Department wrongly classified the accessories as illegal machine guns. The Biden administration said that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives made the right choice for the accessories that can allow weapons to fire at a rate of hundreds of rounds a minute.

It marked the latest gun case to come before the high court, where a conservative supermajority handed down a

landmark decision expanding gun rights in 2022 and is also weighing another gun case challenging a federal law intended to keep guns away from people under domestic violence restraining orders.

The arguments in the bump stock case, though, were more about whether the ATF had overstepped its authority than the Second Amendment.

Justices from the court's liberal wing suggested it was "common sense" that anything capable of unleashing a "torrent of bullets" was a machine gun under federal law. Conservative justices, though, raised questions about why Congress had not acted to ban bump stocks, as well as the effects of the ATF changing its mind a decade after declaring the accessories legal. The high court took up the case after a split among lower courts over bump stocks, which were invented in the early 2000s. Under Republican President George W. Bush and Democrat Barack Obama, the ATF decided that bump stocks didn't transform semi-automatic weapons into machine guns.

From the bright lights of Tokyo to the picturesque seaside hub of Kagoshima, the best sights to behold in Japan

IF YOU ARE thinking about a holiday to Japan it is likely Tokyo is already at the top of your list. But look past the vibrant and bustling capital and you'll find the country is filled with lesser-known — but no less impressive — places waiting to be discovered.

The picturesque seaside city of Kagoshima, for example, located south-west of Tokyo on the island of Kyushu, with its mild climate, palm tree-lined streets and its own awe-inspiring volcano, is the perfect place for a more relaxed getaway.

While the natural beauty and lush coastal scenery might feel world's away from Tokyo's busy streets, it is just a two hour flight from Tokyo, making it the perfect second stop on your Japanese adventure. So after you've experienced the art, culture and traditional charm of the capital, day and night, why not take in the sights of Kagoshima region — and enjoy even more of what Japan has to offer.

Here are the favourite spots in both cities that are a must for any itinerary...

TOKYO

SUMIDA HOKUSAI MUSEUM

The Sumida Hokusai Museum is dedicated to celebrated 18th century artist and traditional ukiyo-e painter Katsushika Hokusai, commonly known as Hokusai. Born in around 1760 just a stone's throw from where the museum now sits, Hokusai is best known for his stunning Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji series, featuring the internationally renowned The Great Wave off Kanagawa.

In addition to showcasing Hokusai's works, the museum, opened in 2016, hosts exhibitions that explore the relationship between Hokusai and the Sumida City where he spent much of his life.

SKY BUS TOKYO

As the sun goes down, Tokyo's lights come on, and it's time to explore the city by night.

Join the open-deck sky bus night course, taking in must-see landmarks including the illuminated Tokyo Tower and Rainbow Bridge. The tour also includes approximately an hour-long stop at Aqua City shopping centre, giving passengers time to grab a bite, indulge in some shopping and snap a photo with Tokyo's own Statue of Liberty.

The double-decker tour offers a whirlwind tour of the city in approximately two hours — making it the perfect choice for tourists with an action packed itinerary.

KAGOSHIMA

SAKURAJIMA

Rising 1,117m above sea level, the Sakurajima volcano looms large over the seaside city of Kagoshima. Sakurajima was an island until 1914 when a major eruption produced enough lava to fill the strait that once separated it from the mainland, transforming it into a peninsula.

Although it's now home to some 4,600 people, Sakurajima remains one of Japan's most active volcanoes and has small

eruptions several times a day, making it a must for visitors who want to experience the awesome power of nature. There are also observation points, natural hot springs and a walking trail around the foot of the volcano

that cuts through volcanic rock left over from the 1914 eruption.

Before you leave, be sure to sample the Sakurajima Mandarin Oranges and the Sakurajima daikon — world's largest variety of radish. Crunchy!

A view of the illuminated Tokyo Tower and Rainbow Bridge in the Japanese capital



A TALE OF TWO CITIES



A visitor taking a sand bath at Saraku in Kagoshima



Chirin Island is connected to Kyushu and can be crossed on foot at low tide



The Sumida Hokusai Museum in Tokyo

SAND BATH HALL

If a day at the spa is your idea of heaven then take time to unwind at Sand Bath Hall, or Saraku, on the shore south of Kagoshima. Visitors don a yukata, or kimono, before lying down in a hollow in the sand warmed by natural hot spring water. The sound of the lapping waves adds to the feeling of deep relaxation as the sand begins to slowly warm the skin.

Afterwards visitors can rinse off in the shower before rounding off the experience with a dip in the ocean, or hot spring bath. The sand bath improves blood flow. So no wonder the Sand Bath Hall has become such a major destination for tourists and locals — it's the perfect end to the perfect holiday!

CHIRIN ISLAND

Known as the 'island of mystery', Chirin Island, or Chiringashima, is yet another natural wonder of the Kagoshima.

The island, which remains uninhabited, is connected to Kyushu by a sandbar that takes 20 minutes to cross on foot.

Adding to the sense of intrigue, the sandbar only emerges when the tide is at its lowest point (at most four times a day), and only during certain months of the year: between March and October.

If you're unable to visit the island in person, then why not drive up Mount Uomi-dake and to take in the breathtaking view of Chirin Island and Kinko Bay instead.

Tata Memorial Hospital doctors try to decode cancer-pregnancy

Pregnancy-related cancers or PACs are diagnosed either during pregnancies or one year after delivery. However, as the condition remains poorly understood, caregivers often recommend abortion.

Dr. Ashwini Bhalerao Gandhi, a gynaecologist at PD Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre in Mahim called the study a much-needed initiative to understand this subset of patients. "With late marriages, women are getting pregnant late. Often there is a dilemma among doctors to decide a course of action when pregnant women are diagnosed with cancer, so we do need standardised guidelines."

Goregaon-based software engineer Shikha Khandelwal was diagnosed with stage-three breast cancer in the sixth month of her first pregnancy. Months before she was diagnosed, she noticed a lump, but her gynaecologist dismissed it as hormonal changes.

Khandelwal is among a rising number of Indian women getting diagnosed with pregnancy-associated cancers, or PACs. These cancers are diagnosed either during pregnancies or one year after delivery. However, as the condition remains poorly understood, caregivers often recommend abortion.

Now, for the first time, doctors at Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH) in Parel are trying to understand PACs, and are collecting data so that they can set treatment guidelines.

The doctors are focussing on pregnancy-associated breast cancer, which is most common among Indian women.

Dr Jyoti Bajpai, a professor of medical oncology at the hospital and her colleagues have started a registry and a study to record the incidence of PACs. In two months, the hospital plans to launch a national registry.

"We know nearly a third of Indian women are diagnosed with

breast cancer in their thirties, and the now simultaneous trend of late pregnancies has resulted in more women getting diagnosed with the disease during their pregnancies," Dr Bajpai said. "It is a known fact that late pregnancies are risk factors for cancers, while early pregnancies are protective," she added.

Internationally, pregnancy-associated breast cancer accounts for approximately 2% of primary breast cancer patients. So far, 80 women were been enrolled in the registry, and Dr Bajpai and her team are treating them based on international guidelines set by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network. "While the focus is to cure the mother, we pay equal attention to save the pregnancies," said Dr Shylashree TS, professor, gynaecology,



TMH, who is co-leading the study. The Goregaon-based software engineer, Khandelwal, is a part of the registry. Since her diagnosis in 2016, she took treatment at the Tata Memorial Hospital, where she underwent chemotherapy and radiotherapy, and eventually had a normal delivery. "I was reluctant to start treatment before delivery as this was my first child. But after doctors assured me it was safe, I went ahead," she said. Doctors

said chemotherapy can be safely administered after the second trimester but radiotherapy and hormone therapy should be given only after delivery.

As a part of their study, the doctors will also follow up on the long-term health of the child after delivery. "For now, most babies of women who underwent chemotherapy are fine. For six women, we had to terminate pregnancies as they were metastatic," Dr Bajpai added.

Decreased deep sleep may signal Alzheimer's disease: Study

The brain changes that lead to Alzheimer's, a disease that affects an estimated 5.7 million Americans, start slowly and silently.

and thinking," Lucey said.

The brain changes that lead to Alzheimer's, a disease that affects an estimated 5.7 million Americans, start slowly and silently.

Up to two decades before the characteristic symptoms of memory loss and confusion appear, amyloid beta protein begins to collect into plaques in the brain. Tangles of tau appear later, followed by atrophy of key brain areas. Only then do people start showing unmistakable signs of cognitive decline.

The challenge is finding people on track to develop Alzheimer's before such brain changes undermine their ability to think clearly. For that, sleep may be a handy marker.

To better understand the link between sleep and Alzheimer's

After controlling for factors such as sex, age and movements while sleeping, the researchers found that decreased slow-wave sleep coincided with higher levels of tau in the brain and a higher tau-to-amyloid ratio in the cerebrospinal fluid. "The key is that it wasn't the total amount of sleep that was linked to tau, it was the slow-wave sleep, which reflects quality of sleep," Lucey said. "The people with increased tau pathology were actually sleeping more at night and napping more in the day, but they weren't getting as good quality sleep," he said.

disease, Lucey, along with David Holtzman, a professor at Washington University, and colleagues studied 119 people 60 years of age or older.

Most -- 80 per cent -- were cognitively normal, and the remaining were very mildly impaired.

The researchers monitored the participants' sleep at home over the course of a normal week.

Participants were given a portable EEG monitor that

strapped to their foreheads to measure their brain waves as they slept, as well as a wristwatch-like sensor that tracks body movement.

They also kept sleep logs, where they made note of both nighttime sleep sessions and daytime napping. Each participant produced at least two nights of data; some had as many as six. The researchers also measured levels of amyloid beta and tau in the brain and in the cerebrospinal fluid that bathes the brain and spinal cord.



Older people who get less deep sleep have higher levels of the brain protein tau, a sign of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease, according to a study. Slow-wave sleep is the deep sleep people need to consolidate memories and wake up feeling refreshed, said researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine in the US.

The findings, published in the journal Science Translational Medicine, suggest that poor-quality sleep in later life could be a red flag for deteriorating brain health.

"What's interesting is that we saw this inverse relationship between decreased slow-wave sleep and more tau protein in people who were either cognitively normal or very mildly impaired, meaning that reduced slow-wave activity may be a marker for the transition between normal and impaired," said Brendan Lucey, an assistant professor at the Washington University.

"Measuring how people sleep may be a non-invasive way to screen for Alzheimer's disease before or just as people begin to develop problems with memory

Diljit Dosanjh on playing a Punjab cop in 'Jatt & Juliet 3': 'They have a very sweet style'

Punjabi singer and actor Diljit Dosanjh, who was present at the trailer launch of his upcoming film 'Jatt & Juliet 3', opened up about playing a cop in the movie and shared how the attitude and style of Punjab Police is very different, saying he has tried to copy as much as he can.

At the trailer launch, Diljit wore a brown coat, matching trousers, and a white shirt. He was accompanied by his co-star Neeru Bajwa and other team members.

Talking about his role as a police officer, Diljit said: "The attitude of the Punjab Police is very different from others. Just as the Maharashtra police have their own attitude and style. Similarly, the Punjab Police has an altogether different style. So, we have seen that a lot in our childhood, like you are going on a scooter, you see Punjab Police every day."

"They have a very sweet, witty humour, and style. We cannot copy each and everything, but we tried to copy as much as we can," said Diljit, who is known for his work in movies like 'Honsla Rakh', and 'Mukhtiar Chadha' among others.



Kriti Kharbanda marks 15 years in cinema, shares heartfelt message, unheard story

Actress Kriti Kharbanda, who is known for 'Shaadi Mein Zaroor Aana', 'Karwaan', 'Housefull 4' and others, has completed 15 years in cinema. On Wednesday, the actress took to her Instagram and penned a long note looking back at her journey.

She also shared an interesting story from the time when her Kannada film 'Googly' released. The actress, who made her debut with the Telugu film 'Boni' in 2009, began her note as she wrote: "I've spent the last 15 years, pretty much the majority of my life, being an actor. What started out as a hobby, as a way to pay the bills and being recognised slowly grew into a passion! A passion that I didn't even know existed inside of me."

She shared that during her journey, she grew as a human being and as an actor. Her deeper understanding of the business along the way brought more fascination with regard to the film industry for her.

He further mentioned: "Today as I mark 15 years of being an actor, I want to share a story with you. I used to run a boutique with my mum since my teenage years. We used to shop, design and spend a lot of time picking up fabrics and what not. So a few days after the release of my Kannada movie, 'Googly' we were out in a mall." When the actress entered the store everything was fine. As she exited she realised there were hundreds of people outside the store.

"I looked up and noticed people standing around the aisle and staring down at me. I didn't quite



understand what was happening till the crowd started chanting 'doctree doctree'. I couldn't believe my ears and my eyes! I was so overwhelmed, that I held my dad's arm and said, 'parking main chalo pa, we need to leave'. That was the day I realised the power of cinema and our industry. I went from being a teenager, to an actor and eventually into a star all so quickly, I was afraid to blink. Soon after this, life changed," she continued.

In these 15 years, the actress has worked with some of the biggest stars of Indian cinema like Pawan Kalyan, Yash and others. She made her foray into Bollywood with 'Raaz: The Reboot'.

The actress shared: "Today I want to take this opportunity to thank me. The younger, naive, trusting, passionate, brave me. I'm here because of her today, because she could have given up. I know she wanted to when things got hard, but she didn't. She kept going. And I want to thank me for today. I'm so proud of the person I've become and I wouldn't change a thing about me." "A big thank you to everyone who's been a part of this incredible journey. My family, my siblings, my husband and my friends, but most of all, the people who offered me work and believed in my talent, and the fans who kept me going with their love for me. Thank you for trusting me with entertaining you. Thank you for watching my movies and thank you for believing in me. Lots of love #kritikharbanda #15yearsofkritikharbanda", she concluded.

Neeru Bajwa on 'rockstar' Diljit Dosanjh: 'He has put us up there in the world'

Actress Neeru Bajwa got emotional and showered praise on her 'Jatt & Juliet 3' co-star Diljit Dosanjh, sharing how he has elevated the status of us (Punjabis) globally and contributed significantly to every generation, particularly the youth who have faced racism.

Neeru was present alongside Diljit and other cast members for the trailer launch of 'Jatt & Juliet 3'. She looked elegant in a satin Barbie pink crop top, matching trousers, and a blazer.

Reflecting on Diljit's proud representation of Punjab on the global stage, Neeru shared: "It's a wonderful feeling. Like every other Punjabi, I adore this man (Diljit), and I am immensely proud of him. The film is magical."

Referring to Diljit's recent show named 'Diluminati North America Tour', the 'Naughty Jatts' fame actress added: "Working with Diljit at this stage, seeing what he has done, and what he is doing for all of us, in the world he has put us up there. What he has done for every generation, kids who have faced racism... I went to his show, and what I felt there I can't tell you what feeling it was."

"Seeing him (Diljit) grow, I get emotional. You are our rockstar," added Neeru.

The movie stars Diljit as Fateh and Neeru as Pooja. It also features Jasmin Bajwa, Rana Ranbir, BN Sharma, Nasir Chinyoti, Akram Udas, Hardip Gill, Mohini Toor, and Sukh Pindiala.

Written and directed by Jagdeep Sidhu, the film is produced by Balvinder Singh, Dinesh Auluck, Gunbir Singh Sidhu, Manmord Singh Sidhu, and Diljit Dosanjh.

It is set to be released on June 28.



Sonam Bajwa hopes Ammy Virk and she can 'create something like SRK-Kajol'

Actress Sonam Bajwa, who has shared the screen space with singer and actor Ammy Virk in several Punjabi movies, has opened up on their onscreen chemistry, sharing how she wishes their 'jodi' could create magic like Bollywood's iconic pair — Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol. Sonam, who is all geared up for the release of the upcoming cross-cultural movie 'Kudi Haryane Val Di', starring Ammy, shared insights into her role, and the 'freshness' the two actors bring on screen every time they team up together. Talking to VOICE, Sonam, who has starred with Ammy in movies like 'Puaada', 'Nikka Zaildar' shared: "Many things depend on the stories. If the story and the characters are different, you will automatically bring freshness. If you see SRK and Kajol, they have done so many movies together. And I don't think the audience would ever react to why SRK and Kajol are back again. In fact people wait for them to come together." She said that her pairing up with Ammy is much behind them (SRK-Kajol).

"I wish we could create something like them. Unhone jitna kia hai, uska zara sa bhi ham log karenge, to ham log bahut lucky honge," said the 'Muklawar' fame actress. She said that people love their (Sonam Bajwa and Ammy Virk) 'jodi'. "There is excitement also among our fans," she said.

Sonam shared that they think about content and story and automatically the freshness is there in the film.



"Just like this film, we have worked in other films too. However, we haven't done anything like this what we have done in 'Kudi Haryane Val Di'," the actress shared.

She said it's natural that if the characters are different, the actors will do things differently.

On having any inhibitions in portraying a de-glam look of a Haryanvi Jaatni, the actress told VOICE that there are no inhibitions and that she is proud of the way the girls of our country look.

"If I talk about the outfit — suit is worn in Punjab and in Haryana too. So we took inspiration from a girl who actually lives in Haryana, and this is how she dresses up, and we just tried to take that from her," the actress said.

She said that she has done a lot of films where she has essayed a de-glamorised look and such characters have their own beauty.

"I love wearing suits. I really enjoy doing such characters because your focus on your look, hairstyle, and makeup gets removed. Ye sab aapke dhyaan me nahi rehta hai. I am very proud that I played such characters," the actress said.

She stressed that she absolutely has no inhibitions and no thought. "Girls who wear suits have their own beauty. Wo bahut sundar lagti hain. Mujhe bahut maza aata hai aise kirdaar karke. As far as language is concerned, there was a bit of nervousness. But beyond that, there are no inhibitions at all."

Hina Khan reveals how she put together a distinctive look for her 'Namacool' character



Actress Hina Khan, who is winning praise for her latest streaming show 'Namacool', has shared that she and her character in the show share a mutual love for fashion.

In fact, the actress said that she would like to take some credit for putting together the look of her character.

Set in Lucknow, the series follows the life of two best friends, Mayank and Piyush, as they embark on their college journey, filled with aspirations, mishaps, mystery, and life lessons.

Hina essays the role of Rubiya in the show. She said that she relates to Rubiya's love for dressing up the most.

The actress said, "I would give myself some credit for putting her look together. The rose in her hair was something I suggested as I felt it would give a very distinct touch to her look. So, undoubtedly, both Hina and Rubiya share a mutual love for fashion."

Hina also elaborated on Rubiya's distinctive style, saying: "The sarees and salwars are definitely the highlight of her look. They were all very carefully chosen, with lots of thought put into making the character look the way she does. The idea was to make Rubiya one of the prettiest faces in the college, and props to the entire team for making it happen."

The series also stars Abhinav Sharma, Aaron Kaul, Abhishek Bajaj, Anushka Kaushik, Faisal Malik, and Aadil Khan in pivotal roles.

'Namacool' streams on Amazon miniTV.

Pilates allows 'foodie' Sherleen Dutt to stay fit and eat what she loves



Actress Sherleen Dutt is a self-confessed foodie, but she doesn't let that get in her way in maintaining her physique. Sherleen, who is making her Bollywood debut with 'Koi Jaaye Toh Le Aaye', said: "As a big-time foodie, I don't believe in restrictive diets. Instead, I focus on a balanced approach. I enjoy all my favorite foods but in moderation. And I ensure my meals are rich in proteins, healthy fats, and fibers, and include plenty of vegetables and fruits."

Hansika Motwani amps up her oomph quotient in bomber jacket, matching ruffled skirt



Actress Hansika Motwani set major chic fashion goals for her fans on Tuesday, as she sported a bomber jacket, matching ruffled skirt, and an embellished crop top for a photoshoot. Taking to Instagram, Hansika, who is known for her role in 'Aap Kaa Surroor', shared a string of pictures from her latest photoshoot with her 6.5 million followers.

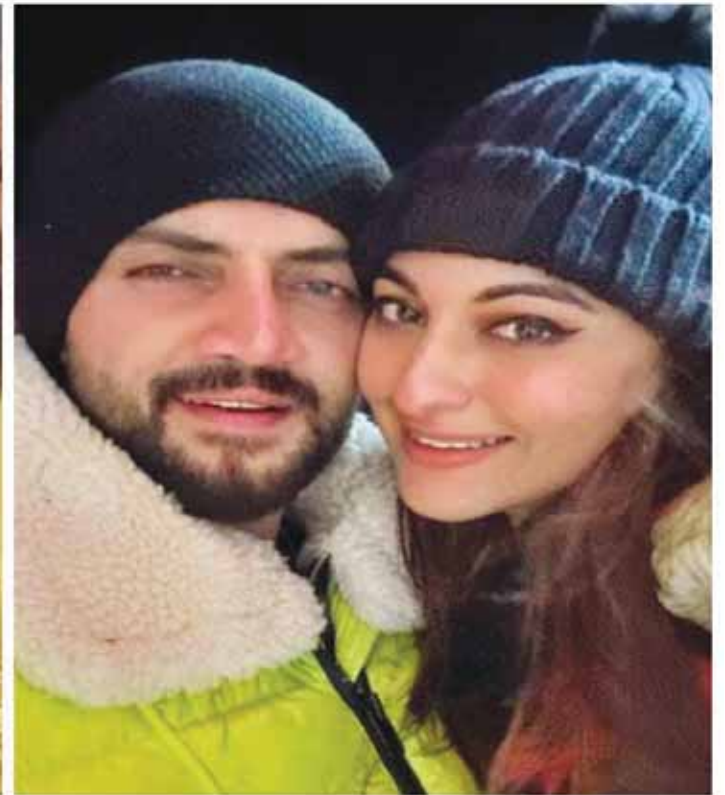
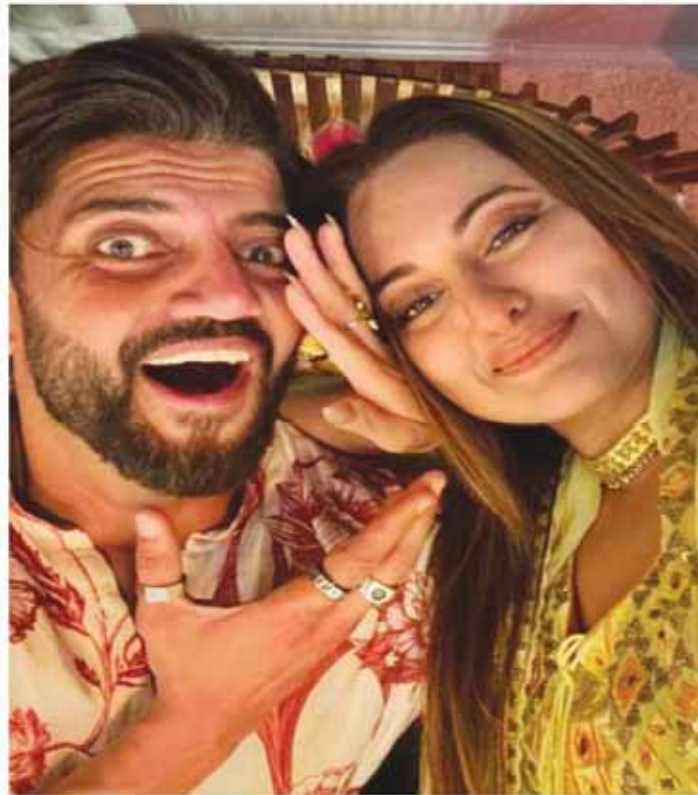
In the pictures, she could be seen donning an outfit by designer Nikita Wadhwa Mhaisalkar — a black and white stroke print ruffled skirt, paired with a matching bomber jacket, and a contrasting coral crop top. Her look is completed with metallic gold embellishments.

For makeup, Hansika opted for matte coral pink lips, winged eyeliner, and heavily blushed cheeks. She tied her hair in a high ponytail and accessorised the look with a gold and white pearl choker necklace, and matching rings.

Sonakshi-Zaheer wedding: June 23 reception to follow registration of marriage

Bollywood actress Sonakshi Sinha is all set to get married to beau Zaheer Iqbal. The couple will have a registered court marriage on June 23. As per media reports, the invitations have been sent on the couple's behalf to their dear ones. However, the invitation doesn't detail any elaborate wedding ceremony. There's going to be just a celebration of their union as per the itinerary.

Earlier, it was revealed that the dress code for the wedding is formal and festive with the celebrations happening at Bastian – At The Top restaurant in the Dadar area of Mumbai. The couple has been reported living together for a year. They reportedly met at a party hosted by Bollywood superstar Salman Khan, and soon hit it off with growing companionship and chemistry. Both Sonakshi and Zaheer started their journey in cinema with Salman Khan Productions.



Rihanna flaunts neck-pieces by Sabyasachi, Manish Malhotra

It was a moment to highlight for Indian designers Sabyasachi Mukherjee and Manish Malhotra as singer-songwriter Rihanna wore neck-pieces designed by both of them at a fashion event for her brand Fenty Hair in Los Angeles. However, a whiff of controversy filled the air as Manish concealed Sabyasachi's design by cropping out his long necklace from the picture as he used only his choker necklace in the image, giving the impression that Rihanna exclusively wore his design. However, Sabyasachi's brand used the entire picture of Rihanna showing both



his and Manish's designs. Many Netizens slammed Manish for unfairly hogging the entire credit.

The 'Love The Way You Lie' hitmaker donned an oversized zipper jacket, skirt, and camisole in the shade of ruby. She accessorised her look with a three-drop rubellite necklace from Sabyasachi and a choker necklace by Manish Malhotra.

While Sabyasachi's necklace was made with tourmaline crystals with brilliant cut diamonds, Manish's design was crafted in 18K gold and custom-cut rubies encrusted in diamonds.

B-Town celebrities congratulate Varun, Natasha as they welcome baby daughter

After Bollywood star Varun Dhawan announced the arrival of his baby girl on social media, congratulatory messages started pouring in from friends, including Arjun Kapoor, Samantha Ruth Prabhu, and Priyanka Chopra Jonas.

Varun shared the news on Instagram, posting an e-card featuring a picture of his beagle Joey holding a placard that read: "Welcome Lil' Sis... June 3, 2024."

The actor captioned the post: "Our girl is here. Thank you all for the good wishes for the mama and the baby."

Friends from the industry took to the comments section to congratulate the actor.

Samantha, who will share the screen with Varun in the Indian adaptation of 'Citadel', called it the "best news."

The actress wrote: "The bestest news, congratulations to both of you."

Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who starred in



the Russo Brothers' thriller series 'Citadel', wrote: "Congratulations woohoo."

Filmmaker Karan Johar wrote: "My baby had a baby girl!!!! I am over the moooooooooon!!!! Congratulations to the proud mama and papa!!! Love you Natasha and Varun."

Actress Rakul Preet Singh said: "Congratulationssssssss... so much love for three of you."

Kareena Kapoor Khan: "God bless all of you... wonderful news."

Actress Dia Mirza expressed her excitement, saying: "Yayyyyy, congratulations."

Abhishek Bachchan wrote: "What wonderful news. Congratulations."

Actresses Esha Gupta and Nushratt Bharuccha simply wrote: "Congratulations."

Varun's 'Dishoom' co-star, Parineeti Chopra, wrote: "Congratss!!"

Bhumi Pednekar reveals her 'Daldal' character is a super achiever, glass-ceiling breaker

Actress Bhumi Pednekar, who will be seen in the web series 'Daldal', has opened up about her character in the show.

In 'Daldal', the actress will portray the challenging role of a cop.

Bhumi described her character as a super achiever and a glass-ceiling breaker who rewrites the rules in a male-dominated world.

The actress said: " 'Daldal' is a project that encapsulates all these qualities of being a woman. Rita is a super achiever, a glass-ceiling breaker, and a rewriter of rules in a man's world. She is ambitious, ferociously passionate about her job, and leads from the front. These are the kinds of women I idolise, and I'm thrilled to headline a series like this on a global streaming platform like Prime Video that will help me show the strength and resilience of Indian women to the world."

Bhumi called 'Daldal' one of her most special projects for many reasons.

She has started shooting for the project

and said that it's one of her most challenging roles ever, without a shadow of a doubt.

Bhumi shared that it has been a very exciting year for her as an actress. Earlier, her streaming film 'Bhakshak' garnered a great response not only in India but also globally.

The actress further mentioned, "If you look at my filmography, I have been fortunate enough to have found projects that help me portray strong, independent women who are sheer forces of nature. 'Dum Laga Ke Haisha', 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha', 'Shubh Mangal Saavdhan', 'Lust Stories', 'Bala', 'Badhaai Do', 'Saand Ki Aankh', 'Sonchiriya', 'Bhakshak' are films that reflect what I think when it comes to portraying Indian women on screen."

"I want people to remember and celebrate our women because women play a huge hand in shaping society and they have every right to follow their dreams, passion, and ambition. We are truly unstoppable," she added.

Shilpa Saklani opens up on playing 'fierce, unstoppable businesswoman' in 'Parineetii'

Actress Shilpa Saklani, who has joined the cast of 'Parineetii' shared insights into her role of Ambika Devi Singhania, calling her a fierce, unstoppable woman, saying her arrival

"In Parineet (Anchal Sahu), she sees a kindred spirit — a woman wronged by a betrayal yet refusing to be crushed. Ambika's arrival is a game-changer for Parineet. She becomes a

mentor, helping Parineet exact vengeance against Neeti. She arms Parineet with the tools to reclaim her rightful place and make those who wronged her pay," added Shilpa. The show is about to take a leap and revolves around the journey of Sanju (Ankur Verma), Parineet (Anchal Sahu), and Neeti (Tanvi Dogra). In the current storyline, the cunning Neeti has committed the ultimate betrayal — killing

is a game-changer for the show.

The 'Bigg Boss 7' fame Shilpa said: "I am thrilled to breathe life into such an amazing character in 'Parineetii'. I am playing the role of a fierce, unstoppable woman — Ambika. She is a successful businesswoman who commands respect. She's a true force, with an unshakable sense of justice and determination to protect those she deems worthy."

Parineet and usurping her place in Sanju's life, becoming the mistress of the Bajwa household, and treating Sanju's family with callous disdain. Meanwhile, Sanju is left devastated, struggling to cope with Parineet's supposed death and the upheaval in his once-peaceful existence. Amidst the deceit and heartbreak, an unexpected ally emerges— Ambika, a formidable businesswoman with a liking for righting wrongs.



Tesla shareholders back \$56 billion pay package, says CEO Elon Musk

Tesla CEO Elon Musk said that the shareholders are voting in favour of his disputed \$56 billion pay package and to relocate the electric vehicle manufacturer's legal home to Texas, in a social media post on Wednesday, adding that passage was by wide margins.

"Both Tesla shareholder resolutions are currently passing by wide margins. Thanks for your support," said Musk on X. A vote in favour strengthens the electric carmaker's position in a Delaware court, where a judge voided the 2018 compensation package, the largest in US corporate history at that time, citing the board was "beholden" to Musk, reported news agency Reuters. This outcome represents a victory for Musk and the board, who have risked their credibility to secure shareholder approval, despite opposition from major investors such as Glass Lewis and Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS). The results will be announced at a meeting at Tesla's Texas headquarters on Thursday. A source aware of the preliminary vote count told Reuters that the 'yes' result was achieved with the support of both major institutional investors and retail investors.

However, shareholders have the option to change their votes until the start of the annual meeting. Tesla shareholders also



voted on other proposals, including relocating the company's legal headquarters from Delaware to Texas, and the re-election of two board members: Kimbal Musk, Elon Musk's brother, and James Murdoch. Some investors saw the vote on Musk's compensation as a measure of their trust in his leadership. While Musk has been the driving force behind Tesla and is credited with much of its success, the company has recently experienced a slowdown in sales and profits.

The board said that Musk, the world's richest person, deserved the pay package because he achieved all the ambitious targets related to market value, revenue, and profitability.

They further said that the package is necessary to keep Musk focused on Tesla, even though a Delaware judge pointed out that the 2018 pay plan did not ensure Musk would dedicate a huge amount of time to the company. Musk has indicated that he might develop AI and robotics products outside of Tesla if he doesn't secure enough voting control, which hinges on the approval of the 2018 pay package. Some large shareholders, including Norway's sovereign wealth fund and California's two largest pension funds,

have declared their opposition to the compensation, calling it excessive.

Tesla has been actively seeking support for Musk's pay package, especially from retail investors, who form an important part of its ownership base but often do not vote. Company executives have posted messages on social media, highlighting Musk's importance to Tesla's success. Tesla has also run social media advertisements, and Musk has promised a personal tour of Tesla's Texas factory to some shareholders who vote.

Previously, a Delaware judge rejected the same package, describing it as an "unfathomable sum" granted by a board with close personal and financial ties to Musk.

The board organised the shareholder vote to strengthen its appeal against the ruling, which criticised the board for not fully informing shareholders before approving the 2018 pay package.

Musk may have to wait months or years for his pay package to be restored as the appeals process moves through Delaware's Supreme Court.

Tesla could also face additional litigation from some shareholders. Recently, one shareholder filed a lawsuit challenging the upcoming vote on Musk's pay package and the change of domicile.

Jio Platforms gets approval to launch satellite internet in India

Reliance Industries' Jio Platforms, in partnership with Luxembourg's SES, has received the green light from India's space regulator to operate satellites for high-speed internet, reported news agency Reuters.

According to a government official, three

still required before the service can begin.

The approval comes as an important development in the race to offer satellite communication services, where companies like Amazon and Elon Musk's Starlink are also seeking permission.

IN-SPACe Chairman Pawan Goenka told Reuters that Inmarsat and others have also received nods to operate satellites, highlighting the growing interest in the satellite broadband market.

Deloitte forecasts strong growth for India's satellite broadband market, estimating a 36% annual increase over the next five years, with revenues

expected to reach Rs 1.9 billion by 2030.

Globally, the competition to connect rural areas via satellite internet has picked up pace. Amazon's Kuiper initiative, with a planned \$10 billion investment, and SpaceX's Starlink, already operational, are key players in this space.

Recently, Starlink also received preliminary approval from Sri Lanka to offer its services there.



approvals were granted to Orbit Connect India, a venture set to deliver the internet via satellite.

These clearances, issued by the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) in April and June, allow Orbit Connect to position satellites above India.

However, further approvals from the Department of Telecommunications are

Adani Group's Ambuja Cements acquires Panna Cement for Rs 10,422 crore

Adani Group-owned Ambuja Cements has announced the acquisition of Panna Cement Industries Ltd (PCIL) for Rs 10,422 crore.

The deal was signed on Thursday and includes the purchase of 100% shares of PCIL from its current owners, P

Mr. P. Pratap Reddy and family. The acquisition will be fully funded through internal accruals," said the exchange filing. Ambuja Cements will fund this acquisition entirely through internal

accruals, as per the filing. Ajay Kapur, CEO and Whole Time Director of Ambuja Cements, called this

deal a significant milestone in the company's growth.

"By acquiring PCIL, Ambuja is poised to expand its market presence in south India and reinforce its position as a pan-India leader in the cement industry,"



Pratap Reddy and family, as per a company filing to the exchanges. "Ambuja Cement, the cement and building material company of Adani Cement and part of the diversified Adani Group, today announced the signing of a binding agreement for the acquisition of Panna Cement Industries Ltd (PCIL) at an enterprise value of Rs. 10,422 crore. Ambuja will acquire 100% shares of PCIL from its existing promoter group,

said Kapur. PCIL has a total cement production capacity of 14 million tonnes per annum (MTPA), with 10 MTPA currently operational. The remaining 4 MTPA capacity is under construction at Krishnapatnam (2 MTPA) and Jodhpur (2 MTPA), expected to be completed in the next 6 to 12 months. Approximately 90% of PCIL's cement capacity is equipped with railway sidings, which helps in efficient transportation.

Your guide to repairing a broken friendship

Some friendships are so special that even after substantial time passes since things turned sour, you may find yourself thinking about that special friend on good and bad days.

By Medha Chawla

Breakups hurt. But they pierce your heart even deeper when it is a breakup from a close friend.

Friendships, like every relationship, can have rifts and eventually fall apart. Maybe your friend started dating your ex, you found out about their plans to settle abroad only after they landed there, or perhaps you refused to let them attend a special event for an XYZ reason that hurt them badly. We've all been there - hurt feelings, misunderstandings, or just the drift of time creating rifts. When these cherished connections fray, they can bring along feelings of loneliness, guilt, and bitterness. But some friendships are so special that even after substantial time passes since things turned sour, you may find yourself thinking about that special friend. On good and bad days, that person crosses your mind, and you imagine sharing slices of life with them again. Have a person on your mind as you read this? Chances are, you'd like to give that friendship another chance and welcome



that friend back into your life. Repairing broken friendships, however, can be a bit tricky. But the good news is that it is not impossible.

Are they worth it?

First and foremost, it is important to know if the friendship is worth repairing. Mansi Poddar, a trauma-informed psychotherapist, suggests asking yourself a set of questions: 'Do you miss them?' 'Did good times outweigh bad ones?' 'Do they make you a better person?'

"If the friendship was positive and fulfilling, and the cause of the break wasn't too severe, it might be worth trying to repair," Poddar adds.

Relationship counsellor Ruchi Ruuh shares some additional questions that will help you understand if the friend you want to mend ways with is worth it or not:

Reflect on the positive aspects of the friendship and what they mean to you. Ask yourself if this small glitch is worth forgiving.

Determine if the issues that caused the rift are resolvable. Does this conflict shake your core values as a person?

Is your friend willing to put in the effort to mend the relationship? A friendship is worth mending if both people are committed to making it work.

What is the pleasure vs pain ratio here? Evaluate how the

friendship affects your mental and emotional well-being. Does this friendship cause more stress and negativity? If yes, then it is not worth the repair. Let's be honest here, not all friendships deserve to be saved.

Make the first move

In your mind, be clear about your role in the conflict and the key causes. Before you approach your friend to mend things, it is important to take accountability for your own actions and not to blame it all on them. Otherwise, things can go from sour to sourer. So, make the first move. You can try reaching out to them with a warm text or a call. If you don't get any positive response instantly, give it some time. Check in again after a week or 10 days probably. Express your true desire to mend the friendship. Apologise genuinely, and own your mistakes instead of justifying your actions.

"Offer a genuine apology for your part in the conflict without justifying your actions. Listen to their perspective and keep an open heart for forgiveness," says

Ruuh.

"Express your feelings with 'I' statements and avoid blaming language," says Poddar. Instead of focusing entirely on expressing your feelings, listen actively as well. "Acknowledge their feelings and try to understand their point of view," adds Poddar.

Rebuilding trust takes time. So, respect your friend's boundaries. Show your care through actions. Leave a hearty message if they just got promoted at work.

Ask them to join you in things like a yoga session or manicure session. Go slow. Know that it will take time for things to get better. Don't expect overnight miracles.

"Understand relationships change slightly after conflicts and don't expect them to suddenly let go of the residue, the trust once broken will take time and effort to rebuild. Talking about honest boundaries can help you manage expectations," says Ruuh.

A few things to keep in mind As you embark on the journey of repairing a friendship, you need to be aware of a few things:

No room for complacency along LAC

Lt Gen Pradeep Bali (retd)

THERE are a number of pressing issues warranting the attention of the new government. Among these, the requirements and concerns of the armed forces merit top priority as these directly affect national security. Enhanced financial outlay for capability development, implementing structural reorganisation at the macro level and a review of the recruitment systems need to be addressed in a committed and decisive manner. Our major adversary on the northern borders is continuing with its duplicitous stance. China's new Ambassador to India Xu Feihong (appointed after a gap of 18 months), after presenting his credentials on May 31, called for joint efforts to "enhance political mutual trust, manage differences properly, and advance mutual beneficial cooperation so as to bring China-India relations forward along the right track". However, the situation on the borders, especially in

eastern Ladakh, remains tense, with no significant forward movement even after 21 rounds of high-level military talks held so far.



Along with the enhanced deployment of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops and significant construction of military infrastructure, recent satellite imagery has indicated the largest deployment of Chinese J-20 stealth fighter jets — its most advanced

— at a dual-use military and civilian airport in Shigatse, the second largest city in the Tibet Autonomous Region which is less

than 150 km from the Line of Actual Control, opposite Sikkim.

For India, the acquisition of major platforms like the third aircraft carrier, new-generation submarines and fighter jets is essential for building capabilities which enable credible deterrence against China.

However, what is even more important is the present situation on the LAC, and this translates into current intent. While China will keep voicing platitudes about the need for friendly bilateral relations, the ground elements of the PLA will continue to look for positions of strength and advantage along the LAC. For the Indian Army, the focus will thus remain on enhancing intelligence and surveillance capabilities with an increasing number of military satellites and accelerating the process of acquiring state-of-the-art weapons and equipment. These include battlefield transparency systems, unmanned combat aerial vehicles and latest night vision capabilities, even imported ones as Atmanirbharta will take its time. All this costs money and an enhancement of the 'status quoist' defence budget. On February 1, the Finance Minister presented the Interim Budget for 2024-25, which had an allocation of Rs 6,21,541

crore for the Ministry of Defence (MoD), a 4.72 per cent increase over the defence budget for 2023-24. However, compared to the revised allocation for last year, it was a marginal fall in real terms. As a percentage of government expenditure, this was just 13 per cent, continuing a multi-year trend of falling defence outlay, representing 1.89 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Interestingly, the bulk of the allotment for capital acquisitions, Rs 1.72 lakh crore — 27.67 per cent of the total defence budget — will be taken away by committed liabilities. The finance ministry is getting ready to present the full Budget for 2024-25 next month. One key change would be in the accounting of the more-than-expected RBI dividend of Rs 2.11 trillion for the Central Government. As a result, some of the extra receipts would be used for pre-payment of debt and to further reduce the fiscal deficit.

Left-‘Liberals’ And The Demonisation of Donald Trump

By: Ravi Shanker Kapoor

Former US president Donald Trump’s conviction in the hush money case, which has delighted Leftists all over the world, underlines a disturbing fact: even though the ideologies they believed in, communism and socialism, were globally discredited more than three decades ago, their influence continues to date. The success of Alvin Bragg, the radical Leftist politician and Manhattan Attorney, against Trump proves that.

Consider this: a billionaire former US president, who seems to be on a comeback trail, has been convicted for a ‘crime’ that has no victims. By no stretch of imagination can his action of paying hush money, even if he did that, to a pornstar can be called an offence serious enough to attract four years of imprisonment. The only person who should be worried about a man’s dealing with a pornstar could be his wife, but that is beside the point. The Leftists running the ruling Democratic Party in the US are keen to somehow keep Trump away from office—by hook or by crook. Ends justify means; hence the travesty of justice called Trump conviction. Leftists



hate Trump because he loves America. He wants to make it great again by checking illegal immigration, cracking down on crime, boosting re-industrialisation, galvanising the economy, restarting conventional oil production, and upholding free speech. The Left cannot stand this. It wants to promote their dubious and dangerous doctrines like the critical race and legal theories, transgenderism, DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion), controls on economy and free speech, open borders, systemic racism, and defunding the police.

So, the Democratic Party and President Joe Biden, under Left influence, are promoting policies that ignore or downplay the real issues like high inflation, growing violence by radical groups (as evident from the recent unrest on university campuses), continuous flow of illegal immigrants, and soaring crime rates, especially in Democrat-run states. If this is not accidental; this is the result of bad karma. Like many other Democrat politicians, Bragg is notoriously soft on crime and criminals. He was not just zealous in prosecuting Trump for what was

at worst a financial misdemeanor; the DA was equally insistent two years ago in imprisoning a convenience store employee for killing an ex-convict in self-defence.

Jose Alba, 61, was charged with second-degree murder in the killing of Austin Simon, 35, despite the video clip clearly showing the six-foot Simon shoving and attacking Alba. “The video in this case speaks for itself: Mr. Alba was simply doing his job when he was aggressively cornered by a much younger and bigger man,” Alice Fontier, a spokeswoman

for Alba’s attorney, told the media. Thankfully, the judge dismissed the murder charge, but Alba still had to spend time in prison.

All this because he had the temerity to ask Simon’s girlfriend to pay for the items she had taken from the store. She came back with Simon and, during the scuffle in which he died, she also stabbed Alba. But, typically, Bragg refused to prosecute her for the stabbing.

Bragg also ensured that a felony robbery charge against the violent criminal Christian Hall was reduced, resulting in his release in January 2022. A month later, he was arrested again after he assaulted a city sanitation worker in the same neighborhood.

The pro-criminal approach of Bragg—and of other politicians—is predicated upon critical legal theory. A counter-Enlightenment theory, it is predicated upon the dogma that jurisprudence in the US and other democracies operates in a sanitized universe that doesn’t take social biases into account. Leftists contaminate the conventionally accepted jurisprudence with the toxicity of social justice, and deliver critical legal theory.

Putin’s exclusion from Normandy commemoration shows history is manipulated to serve power

By PRAVEEN SWAMI

Time is going slowly again,” an officer wrote in his diary 80 years ago this month, on the eve of the great battle that would tear the guts out of Nazi Germany. “The days drag on endlessly.” There were no letters from home, and he worried an argument was brewing with his wife. “I can be very tolerant,” he reflected phlegmatically, “because we’ll soon be in battle, and I’ll forget everything”. Then, just days after the landings on Normandy, the soldier disappeared from history—one of eight million Soviets who fell on the Eastern Front.

European and American leaders gathered last week to mark the 80th anniversary of the Allied landings of 1944, when 150,000 soldiers from the United States, Britain, Canada, and France began the long, bloody march that would lead them to Berlin. The



solemn commemoration of what came to be known as ‘The Longest Day’ is a useful prism to examine how power shapes and manipulates historical memory. There was a notable omission from the guest list: President Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation were excluded from the commemoration because of the war in Ukraine. Instead, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended, to illustrate “how the

landings resonate with the just struggle that the Ukrainian nation is waging today”. “Freedom is worth it, democracy is worth it, America is worth it, the world is worth it,” US President Joseph Biden said in a speech valorising the sacrifices of soldiers in both wars. Liberal-democratic values, though, didn’t drive the soldiers who destroyed Nazi Germany. Even as Allied troops fought their way off the beaches in Normandy, 1.5 million Soviet troops

launched a massive assault on the Third Reich’s Army Group Centre, destroying 28 of its 34 divisions before arriving at the gates of Berlin. “German armed forces’ losses to war’s end numbered 13,488,000 men, 75 percent of the mobilised forces and 46 percent of the 1939 male population of Germany,” the historian David Glantz recorded. “Of these, almost 9,000,000 fell in the East. The stark inscription, ‘Died in the East,’ that is carved on countless thousands of headstones in scores of German cemeteries bears mute witness to the carnage.” The country which, more than any other, sacrificed to win the Second World War is now excluded from the telling of its story—providing an education into the abuse of history to serve power. The politics of Normandy “Formal ceremonies should be

avoided,” General Dwight Eisenhower ordered in a terse message to Allied troops in Europe on the first anniversary of the Normandy landings. Nazi Germany had surrendered a month earlier, but soldiers continued to fight and die in the Pacific theatre. Five years passed before a formal celebration was organised, historian Kate Delaney noted, involving a local bugle corps, two local girls who laid wreaths on the beaches, while bombers flew overhead firing rockets and dropping flowers. Even as the commemoration took place, the war in Korea had begun, pitting the leaders of the anti-Nazi alliance against each other. In 1952, Lieutenant-General Matthew Ridgway, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe and a D-Day veteran warned of the rise of “a new and more fearful totalitarianism.”

Who heads Modi 3.0 ministries with big-bang budgets

By Sushim Mukul

The Modi 3.0 government has been sworn in, and key ministers have taken charge. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi accommodates NDA partners, here's a look at which ministers head the ministries with big-bang budgetary allocations.

Following the allocation of ministries to the 72 ministers to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders and the alliance partners of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, one thing looks certain is that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has embraced continuity. The ministries with the largest budgetary allocations are with the BJP ministers.

While the Modi 3.0 Cabinet has retained the key portfolios of Home, Defence, Finance and External affairs, it has not ceded much space to its alliance partners higher up in the Narendra Modi Cabinet. The allocation of 'big' and 'important' ministries provides insight into the Prime Minister's strategic vision and priorities for the coming term. So, it will be interesting to see which minister in the Modi 3.0 has got the big ministries that get the lion's share of the budgetary allocation.

LARGEST ALLOCATION FOR RAJNATH'S DEFENCE MINISTRY

The Ministry of Defence, which saw the highest budgetary allocation in the Interim Budget 2024-2025, has remained with senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh. The ministry responsible for overseeing the country's military operations, procurement, and infrastructure development was allocated Rs 5.25 lakh crore in the 2024-25 Interim Budget.

The ministry headed by Rajnath Singh in the previous government, saw a 15% increase over the previous year, as the Modi government prioritised bolstering national security in the face of emerging neighbouring and global threats. The lion's share allocated to the Ministry of Defence should be seen as a reaction to India's crucial geopolitical standing in the Indo-Pacific, the recent stand-off with the Chinese People's Liberation Army and the constant security threat from Pakistan.

GADKARI'S HIGHWAYS GETS SECOND-BIGGEST CHUNK

The ministry that gets the second-highest allocation, the



Road Transport and Highways portfolios, went to the tall BJP leader from Maharashtra, Nitin Gadkari.

He held the same portfolio in the last two Narendra Modi Cabinets (2014-2019 and 2019-2024) too. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways was allocated a sum of Rs 2.78 lakh crore for the year 2024, a 12% increase over the previous year, in the Interim Budget presented by Nirmala Sitharaman, the finance minister. The ministry focusing on developing national highways, constructing new roads, and improving existing infrastructure to enhance connectivity and reduce congestion, garnered praises for the fast and efficient work it did under Gadkari.

During his tenure of more than nine years, the Indian highway network expanded by 59%. In the third spot, the Ministry of Railways, which was allocated Rs 2.55 lakh crore in the last Interim Budget, BJP's Ashwini Vaishnav has retained the portfolio.

The Ministry of Railways aims to upgrade railway infrastructure, introduce new trains and services, and enhance passenger amenities. It saw a 10% budget increase in the last Interim Budget.

Vaishnav, who has held the ministry since 2021, has undertaken the introduction of the new line of trains, including the Vande Bharats and Namo Bharats.

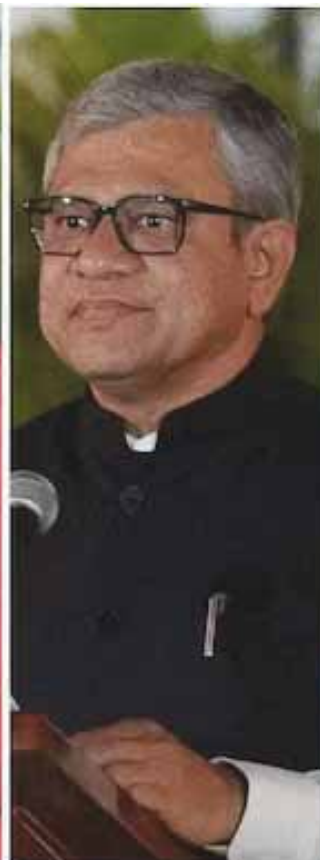
JOSHI'S CONSUMER AFFAIRS,



PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION FOURTH

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution ensures food security and manages public distribution systems, has been given to BJP leader Pralhad Joshi.

With an annual budget of Rs 2.13 lakh crore, this ministry saw an 8% increase over the previous



year in the last Interim Budget.

The ministry is also instrumental in ensuring the distribution of subsidised and free food grains to the poor.

AMIT SHAH'S HOME AFFAIRS AMONG TOP FIVE IN ALLOCATION

The Ministry of Home Affairs, the most important cabinet berth after the Prime Minister, was allotted to Amit Shah, who has held the



position since 2019.

The ministry tasked with maintaining internal security, managing law and order, and overseeing border control was allotted Rs 2.03 lakh crore in the last Interim Budget, a 9% increase from last year.

CHEMICAL, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRIES Central Ministries,

Long-delayed justice

Punjab ex-cops jailed for 1993 staged killing

IN a significant verdict on Friday, a CBI court in Mohali sentenced former Punjab Police

brutality in Punjab, highlights the systemic lapses that had plagued the state. Extrajudicial

While the others were released, Gulshan was kept in illegal custody for a month before being killed in a staged encounter. His body was cremated as 'unclaimed', a common practice then to cover up extrajudicial killings. The case, initially overlooked, was taken up by the CBI in 1995 on the Supreme Court's directive, culminating in the conviction nearly three decades later.

The law has at last been catching up with rogue cops. In September 2023, three ex-officers received the life sentence for the 1992 fake encounter killing of three youths. A year before that, a retired sub-inspector was sentenced to 10 years in another fake encounter of 1992. These cases reveal a pattern of grave misconduct and long-overdue comeuppance.



DIG Dilbagh Singh to seven years of rigorous imprisonment and ex-DSP Gurbachan Singh to life imprisonment for their roles in the 1993 fake encounter killing of Gulshan Kumar, a fruit vendor. This case, a chilling reminder of the dark days of unbridled police



killings, illegal detentions and staged encounters had become distressingly common. The details of this case are harrowing. On June 22, 1993, Gulshan, along with his father and brothers, was abducted by a police team led by Dilbagh and Gurbachan.