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Harris distances herself from furore over Biden 'garbage' comment



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US fighter jets were ready to attack Iran, the plan to launch missiles if...



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Rajnath's strategic US visit aims to fast-track jet engine delivery amid rough patch in diplomatic ties

(Sai Bureau)-At a time of global geopolitical tumult, defence minister Rajnath Singh, who is also the highest-ranking cabinet minister in the Narendra Modi government, will be visiting the United States from August 23 to 27. While Singh's visit will help cement India-US defence relations further, it will also lay the ground for Prime Minister Modi's highly anticipated visit to New York on September 22 to attend the UN's Summit of the Future.

Incidentally, while Singh is travelling to the US, Modi is embarking on a much-awaited state visit to Poland and subsequently to war-torn Ukraine.

"The visit [of Rajnath Singh] comes in the backdrop of the growing momentum in India-US relations and defence engagements at multiple levels. The visit is expected to further deepen and broaden the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," the ministry of defence (MoD) said in an official statement. Singh will also chair a high-level roundtable meeting with the US defence industry on ongoing and future defence collaborations.

India-US ties are going through a rough patch after Washington asked New



Delhi to come clear on an alleged conspiracy to eliminate Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, an American-Canadian citizen, on US soil. Moreover, Modi's visit to Moscow in July has not gone down well with Washington. The US has expressed unease in the past over India's ongoing ties with Russia, particularly its purchase of Russian oil and defence equipment. However, the US also understands India's need to maintain its relationship with Russia, given New Delhi's dependence on Russian defence supplies and its desire to avoid any

adverse impact on strategic calculations, especially in the context of China. While the US is heading for presidential elections later this year, the key focus of Singh's visit would be to expedite an off-the-shelf supply of GE-F404 jet engines that power India's homegrown Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mark-1A fighter. During the visit, discussions are likely to cover pending deals, such as for MQ-9B Predator drones, which are critical for India's surveillance capabilities, besides joint research initiatives and

defence technology transfers under the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). The delivery of GE-F404 engines is particularly significant as delays have affected the production schedule of the Tejas fighter jet, central to the modernisation plans of the Indian Air Force (IAF). Singh's visit is expected to push the deal forward, ensuring that India's homegrown fighter jet programme, which relies heavily on the US, stays on track. The Tejas Mark-1 and Mark-1A variants are powered by the off-the-shelf GE-F404 engines purchased from the US. The IAF, in the recent past, has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the current pace of the LCA Mark-1A programme. The first aircraft from the existing order was scheduled for delivery by March 31, 2024. However, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has faced repeated delays, with delivery now projected for November 2024. GE Aerospace, manufacturer of the F404 jet engines, has cited supply chain issues as the main reason for the delay in supplying the engines to India. The F404 series engines are required to produce the 83 Tejas Mark-1A jets ordered by MoD under a contract worth Rs 48,000 crore signed in February 2021.

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Kamala Harris's husband shares their love story: 'Met on a blind date in 2013'

(Sai Bureau)-Kamala Harris' husband Douglas Emhoff shared his love story and recalled how he met his wife on a blind date in 2013 and left an awkward voice message for her which she plays for him every year on their wedding anniversary.

Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff took to the stage at the Democratic National Convention here on Tuesday night with this deeply personal story to drum up support for Harris, who is of Indian and African heritage. He said he loved working as a lawyer, became a dad to son Cole and daughter Ella, got a divorce and then "something unexpected happened" -- he was set up on a blind date with Harris. "In 2013, I walked into a contentious client meeting. We worked through the issue and, by the end of the meeting, the now happy client offered to set me up on a blind date--which is how I ended up with Kamala Harris's phone number," he said.

Emhoff, 59, said he left a long and awkward first voicemail which Harris, also 59, now plays for him every year on their anniversary. "For generations, people have debated when to call the person you're being set up with, and never in history has anyone suggested 8:30 am. And yet, that's



when I dialled," he said. "I got Kamala's voicemail, and I just started rambling."

"I remember trying to grab the words out of the air and put them back in my mouth. After what seemed like far too many minutes, I hung up. By the way, Kamala saved that voicemail, and she makes me listen to it every anniversary. That message wasn't the only unusual thing about that day," he said, drawing laughs and cheers from the Democratic Party supporters.

"Kamala, who normally would have been working hard at the office, just happened to be waiting at her apartment for a

contractor to do some work on her kitchen. I was eating at my desk, which was not a regular occurrence for a busy lawyer like me who appreciates a good business lunch," Emhoff said.

"That's when she called me back. We talked for an hour. We laughed. You know that laugh. I love that laugh. Maybe that counted as our first date. Or, maybe it was that Saturday, when I picked her up and told her "Buckle up-I'm a really bad driver", he said. He called his wife a "joyful warrior" and a loving co-parent to his kids. Emhoff, a Los Angeles attorney

who took leave from his firm when Harris became vice president, has two now-grown children from his first marriage. He said Harris, who has no biological children of her own, has put their family first, no matter how demanding her job gets.

Those of you who belong to blended families know things can be a little complicated. But as soon as they started calling her 'Momala,' I knew we were going to be OK," said Emhoff.

"Kamala is a joyful warrior," he said. "It's doing for her country what she has always done for the people she loves. Her passion will benefit all of us when she's our president." This Thursday, as Harris

accepts the party's nomination for president, will be their 10th wedding anniversary, he noted, adding that means he's "about to hear the most embarrassing voicemail of my life once again". "Kamala was exactly the right person for me at an important moment in my life. And at this moment in our nation's history, she is exactly the right president," he said. Emhoff, who was raised in a Jewish family in New Jersey, said that Harris comes to synagogue with him on holidays and he goes to church with her on other occasions.

Hulk Hogan jokes about Kamala Harris's Indian heritage, says 'body slam' her



(Sai Bureau)-Hulk Hogan, a legendary WWE wrestler and supporter of former President Donald Trump, joked about US Vice President and Democratic Presidential candidate Kamala Harris and her Indian heritage. He even joked about body-slaming her and referred to his signature wrestling move during an event at the Thirsty Cowboy bar in Ohio, US. Hogan was promoting his new beer at the time. Kamala Harris, 59, is an Indian-American politician. During his promotional event for the new beer on Monday, Hogan made several controversial statements, including, "Want me to body slam somebody? You want me to body slam Kamala Harris?" and "Is Kamala a

chameleon? Is she Indian?" reported the New York Post. He also referred to his signature wrestling move and asked his fans, "You want me to drop the leg on Kamala?"

This incident follows Hogan's fervent speech in support of Trump, 77, at the Republican National Convention just a month ago. During the event in Milwaukee, Hogan dramatically ripped off his shirt to reveal a Trump-Vance tank top while delivering an intense onstage speech. Hogan even said that his remarks would likely stir up a lot of backlash, but then he quipped, "That was not me. That was the beer talking," according to the Daily Mail.



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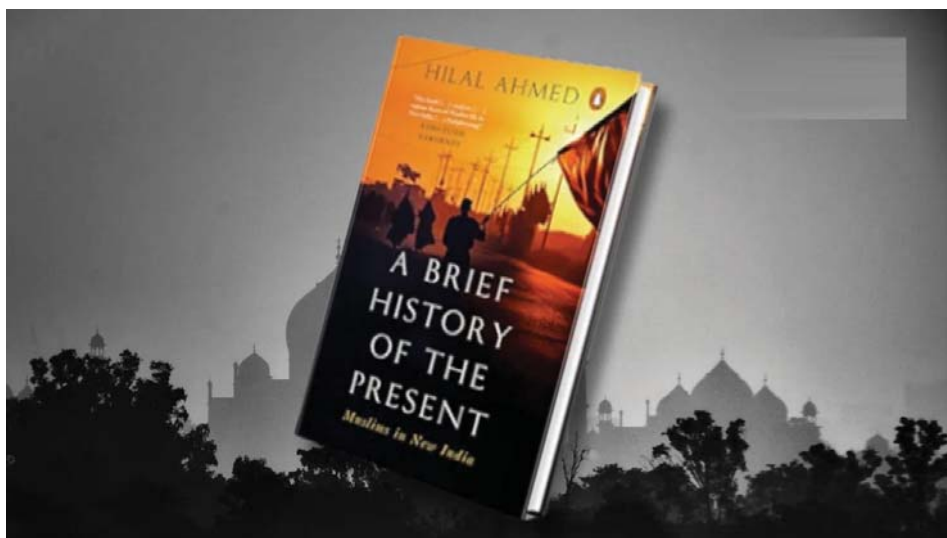
Perceptions About Muslims In New India

By Mayank Mishra, Marya Shakil

We, the reviewers, have faced this observation often enough over the years. Implicit in this statement is an assumption about what constitutes a 'Bihari'. He (mostly 'he' and rarely 'she') has to be wild, uneducated, ill-mannered, least likely to be law-abiding, in constant pursuit of shortcuts, and forever wedded to the idea of jugaad.

While the observation might come as a compliment, it distresses us nonetheless. Being born and brought up in Bihar during a time of great political and social transformation, we rarely came across any fellow Bihari who fit this assumed definition. Yet, the assumption has persisted for years, in Delhi and elsewhere in India.

Having interacted with countless Biharis, we know - to use Hilal Ahmed's distinction between discursive and substantive aspects of an identity - that a whole host of factors contribute to the making of a Bihari. An imagined discourse is an additional burden for every Bihari to deal with. The factors contributing to the making of a Bihari include caste, religion, region, educational background, place of residence, and many others.



Who Are Indian Muslims?

The same assumption versus reality rule applies when describing a group of nearly 20 crore people known as Indian Muslims. Hilal Ahmed writes, "History of the present is perhaps a provocative title, especially when it is employed in relation to Muslims of India. It is a well-known fact that Islam is the second-largest Indian religion, and Muslims constitute almost 14% of the country's population. This 'community of believers' is highly diversified-they are divided on caste, class, region, and even sub-religious lines." Yet, as he further notes, "Their classification as a religious minority in

purely statistical terms, the description of medieval Indian history as Islamic rule, and the media debates around Islamic jihad and terrorism produce a simple and undifferentiated image of a homogeneous Muslim community." Members of the community are perceived to have identical views on all issues under the sun, are seen as voting strategically, and are associated with multiple imagined jihads. And the list goes on.

Muslim 'Politophobia'

When such widespread diversity is glossed over and assumptions are made based on stray events - fuelled by a heavy dose of "global anti-Islamism" and

"anti-Muslim communalism in the Indian context" - you have a situation that Hilal Ahmed describes as 'Muslim politicophobia'. This leads to political engagement with the community being shunned, accusations such as population jihad (got to know this for the first time while reading the book) being levelled against them, and their representation in various fora being discouraged.

Increased religiosity in recent years, with public displays of aspects of religion that were previously confined to the private domain, has further complicated the situation on the ground.

No Different From Other Groups

Despite these challenges, members of the community, the author argues, continue to take part in political processes to secure tangible benefits as stakeholders. "They behave like consumers/clients and respond to the welfare packages offered by political parties," he writes. And in this sense, Muslims are no different from other social groups. What are the ways then to fight this Muslim politicophobia? Is it all doom and gloom as far as Muslim issues are concerned in contemporary India? We couldn't agree more with the author's conclusion.

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Hair: Brown	Weight: 165 pounds
Height: 5'9"	Occupation: Employee of donut shop
Sex: Male	Nationality: Indian

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The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$250,000 for information leading to the arrest of Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel.

REMARKS

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

CAUTION

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

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Iran knows a real war against Israel would be costly. It's smarter to carry on anti-US tirade

The Israel-Hamas war has been going

EVEN as India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy has suffered a huge blow with the meltdown of the Sheikh Hasina regime in Bangladesh, there is a need to go back to SAARC and its South As



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Modi's Ukraine Trip Is Why The World Shouldn't Compare India And China

By Harsh V. Pant

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Poland and Ukraine this week. Both visits are historic in their own ways: for Poland, this will be the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 45 years, while for Ukraine, Modi's will be the first-ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister. Where Modi has talked about India and Poland's "mutual commitment to democracy and pluralism" reinforcing the bilateral relationship, he has expressed "hope for an early return of peace and stability" in Ukraine.

Often, China and India are put in the same bracket when it comes to their response to the Ukraine war. But Modi's visit to the country, which follows his much-controversial trip to Russia last month, is why the world shouldn't compare them.

India Is More Than Just A Mediator In Europe
Modi's visit to Russia last month raised a lot of eyebrows as it was also his first visit abroad in his third term. There is now talk of India becoming a potential peacemaker in the Russia-Ukraine war. But that is missing the woods for the trees. Modi will be in Ukraine to underline that New Delhi's

position on the war remains consistent. Despite close ties with Russia and its decision not to publicly call out Russia as an aggressor, New Delhi has always maintained that the sanctity of territorial integrity and sovereignty remains inviolable in international affairs, and that dialogue



and diplomacy is the only way to a sustainable outcome.

Unlike China, Modi publicly told Putin during his visit to Moscow that this was not the era of war, and expressed pain at the death of children after a lethal strike by Russia on Kyiv's main hospital for children. At that time, Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelenskyy had denounced Modi for visiting Russia, calling the trip a "devastating blow to peace efforts". But New Delhi has continued to maintain its ties with both Moscow and Kyiv throughout the course of the war over the last two and a half years, steadfast in its belief that both sides should be engaged if a lasting solution is to be found.

A Renewed Vision For Europe
Europe is facing a moment of reckoning with growing internal challenges, a widening regional divide, a war that shows no signs of ending, a rising China, calls for isolationism in the US, and a fracturing of the post-Cold War security arrangement. The end of the Ukraine war will perhaps lay the foundations of a new security order in Europe, but that end is nowhere in sight as both sides search for favourable leverage at the negotiating table. It is at this critical juncture that Europe has started looking at India as a key partner. And New Delhi has reciprocated. India now views Europe as central to its developmental and strategic priorities.

This is borne by the extraordinary diplomatic investment the Modi government has made in imparting momentum to its ties with Europe. What has been an evolving feature of this outreach is India's attempts to engage with different sub-regions of Europe, allowing New Delhi to focus on their core strengths. It is Central Europe that is now the focus, with Modi visiting Austria last month followed by Poland and Ukraine now. The region has developed its own unique voice on European matters, and especially after the Russian invasion, it has been critical in shaping the larger European response to regional and global issues.

Why Poland Matters To New Delhi
As for Modi's visit to Poland, it is among the fastest-growing economies in Europe and has been vocal about its strategic aspirations to see Europe emerge as a key geopolitical actor on the global stage. Warsaw's role will also be critical in shaping the European security architecture once the embers of war in Ukraine cool down. Its location makes it a hub of connectivity across Europe, and India enjoys a lot of goodwill.

Hindu Massacres in Bangladesh: An Ongoing Genocide That Is Rarely Discussed

By: Monidipa Bose Dey

After ex-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled from Bangladesh on August 5, 2024, there has been specific targeting of Hindus in Bangladesh, which includes widespread looting of Hindu houses and shops, vandalism of temples,



lynching and killings of Hindu men, and abductions and rapes of Hindu women. X (formerly Twitter) is replete with videos showing Hindu homes in villages being burned down and their livestock killed. There have also been reports of hospitals, including government facilities, refusing treatment to Hindu patients. These incidents of Islamic atrocities against Bangladeshi Hindus and other minorities have drawn international condemnation, asking for the attacks to stop.

While the global community is expressing shock at the recent events in Bangladesh, such acts of barbarism are not new to the country. The communal riots during the 1947 Partition and the 1971 atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army and Razakar-Ansar Bahini against Hindus should have been documented in world history under a chapter titled 'Hindu Genocide.' Unfortunately, discussions on these atrocities and the ongoing genocide of Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh remain a taboo subject among Western academicians. However, it is heartening to see that many Hindus are now awakening from their deep slumber and demanding the establishment of a 'Hindu Genocide Day,' similar to

Holocaust Day for the Jews. Below are brief details of some of the brutal massacres perpetrated by Islamists, the Pakistan Army, and their allies—the Ansar Bahini and the Razakars—on Bangladeshi Hindus after Partition and during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. The Razakars were an East Pakistani paramilitary force formed by the Pakistan Army during the 1971 war, and the Ansar Bahini, like the Razakars, were allies of the Pakistani Army.

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Rapes won't stop until our culture separates women from family honour

By Ananya Bhattacharya

Every Raksha Bandhan, a brother tells his sister that he will protect her. But from whom? From someone else's brother? Why can't all brothers tell their sisters that they will not be the reason that someone else's sister is unsafe? A letter from listener Utsukraat to the Aaj Tak Radio podcast Teen Taal this week is an eye-opener. It is the week that India is protesting against a rape-murder in the East, even as mobs bring life to a standstill raising their voice against molestation of two kids in the West. It is the week that the North celebrated Raksha Bandhan, and all the country sat still to reminisce 77 years of independence.

Next week, the cruel machinery of news will roll on over. Then there will be another rape, another molestation, another death, another set of headlines, more protests, more calls for resignation, more answers asked of the ones in power. But there will be no talk of the problem. Rape is not just a policing problem. Rape is a family, community, and culture problem. Think the Mahabharat, where Draupadi had to battle the besmirching of her honour, and summon Lord Krishna to 'save' her. The Kauravas died a grisly death. Justice is poetic in our epics. Out here in real life, life isn't as rosy. Justice is often denied.



More often, delayed. An organised gangrape racket in Ajmer takes 32 years to reach a verdict. There are only protests. So, when we're done with all our #NotAllMen sermons on Twitter, maybe we should go back to raising our boys right.

"Why can't all brothers tell their sisters that they will not be the reason that someone else's sister is unsafe?"

At home in India, girls and boys are not brought up the same way. It's not a problem that's new, nor will it be cured overnight. But perhaps we can talk about it. Identifying and acknowledging the gaps

is the first step to fixing a problem. No police force can save women from being raped by men till the family treats women as second-class citizens. Worse is the notion that a woman is the family's honour. That she has to be 'protected'.


Take a blood-boiling bit from Leslee Udwin's banned documentary, India's Daughter (2015).

"She should not be put out on the street, just like food. The 'lady', on the other hand, we can say the 'girl' or the 'woman', are more precious than a gem, than a diamond. It is up to you how you want to keep the diamond in your hand. If you put

the diamond on the street, certainly the dog will take it out. You can't stop it," says defence lawyer ML Sharma about the 2012 gangrape victim, and about women in general. While it is alright to be aghast at Sharmaji ka Beta's thoughts, it is precisely how most betas, Sharmaji's or others' in this country, think of women. That women are 'precious'. They are like 'diamonds', they are 'Lakshmi', they are material, and they are divine, they are everything but human. They are idolised and spoken of like something unattainable; which is why rapists like Mukesh Singh say that a woman roaming around late at night 'needs to be taught a lesson'. Rape is a lesson too.

Till the time our culture identifies a woman with its honour, while leaving our men loose, no force on Earth, no law or cops, can stop rapes from happening. Let's talk families. A National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) in 2022 said that nearly 1 in 3 women have suffered some form of spousal abuse. Another alarming statistic said that 50% of all children in India have endured sexual abuse before turning 18 - more often than not at the hands of family members or individuals known to them. Most of these cases go unreported because of how inherently closed our family units are.

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How the spate of crumbling bridges in Bihar raises serious questions

By Amitabh Sachdeva

The deteriorating infrastructure in Bihar has long been a subject of concern, but even within this context, the Aguwani-Sultanganj bridge stands out as a glaring example of repeated failures. On August 17, when a section of pylon 9 collapsed into the Ganga river, it marked a new low in the state's ongoing saga of collapsing bridges.

It was the third time a portion of the under-construction bridge had collapsed. In April 2022, a 162.5-metre stretch of the bridge's extra-dosed span had plunged into the river. Again, in June 2023, a 550-metre segment of the bridge, spanning pylons 9 to 13, crumbled into the Ganga. The Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Ltd (BRPNL) has sought to downplay the latest collapse, noting that the fallen portion was part of a leftover section of pylon 9, which was slated for demolition. The demolition had been ordered following an investigation into the June 2023 collapse, which identified a technical defect.

The recent rise in water levels of the river then caused this segment to be washed away. The financial impact of this collapse may be minimal, given that the segment was already marked for dismantling, but



the implications for Bihar's reputation are severe as the incident has dealt a significant blow to the state's credibility in infrastructure management. The Aguwani-Sultanganj bridge was not merely another construction project; it was intended to be a flagship initiative for Bihar, envisioned by chief minister Nitish Kumar as a marvel of modern engineering. This four-lane road bridge was designed to span the Ganga, connecting Sultanganj with Aguwani Ghat in Khagaria district. Majestically positioned over the picturesque river, the cable-stayed bridge is meant to serve as a vital link between the Kosi region in the north—

comprising the districts of Khagaria, Saharsa, Madhepura and Supaul—and the southern districts of Bhagalpur, Munger and Jamui, as well as the adjacent Jharkhand districts of Deoghar and Godda. The contract for this ambitious project was signed in November 2014, with S.P. Singla Construction Pvt. Ltd emerging as the lowest bidder. The total project cost was estimated at Rs 1,710.8 crore, with the bridge itself accounting for Rs 859 crore, while the remaining funds were allocated for land acquisition. The bridge was originally scheduled for completion by November 2019. However, five years past

its deadline, in August 2024, the project remains a 'bridge to nowhere,' a testament to the delays, mismanagement and challenges that have plagued its construction.

The ongoing problems with the Aguwani-Sultanganj bridge highlight the broader issues of infrastructure development in Bihar and raise serious questions about the state's ability to fulfil its promises. The repeated collapses have not only resulted in financial losses but have also severely damaged the credibility of the state's administration and its capacity to execute critical infrastructure projects. In a region where reliable infrastructure is essential for economic development and connectivity, the failure of such a high-profile project is nothing short of catastrophic.

Since Nitish assumed office as chief minister in November 2005, Bihar has constructed over 6,200 bridges, both large and small, symbolising a significant leap forward in infrastructure. However, recent events have revealed that a section of engineers and their supervisors seems to have neglected the maintenance of these bridges, moving on after the completion of construction.

Trinamool vs Trinamool on whether top cop should be probed in Kolkata rape case

Senior Trinamool Congress leader Kunal Ghosh called out fellow party leader Sukhendu Sekhar Ray for demanding the questioning of Kolkata Commissioner of Police in connection with the rape and murder of a trainee doctor.

Ray, a Rajya Sabha MP, demanded strict probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which took over the probe into the rape and murder case from the Kolkata

stages. While the police claimed they did everything that was expected of them, the Calcutta High Court transferred the probe to the CBI, citing no significant progress in the police investigation.

Besides the Commissioner, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray also referred to Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of state-run RG Kar Medical and College and Hospital, who had resigned from the post two days after the

trainee doctor's body was found on August 9. Ghosh is currently being probed by the CBI. On Ray's comment, Kunal Ghosh said, "I also demand justice in RG Kar case. But strongly oppose this demand regarding CP. After got information He has tried his best.



Police."CBI must act fairly. Custodial interrogation of ex-Principal and Police Commissioner is a must to know who and why floated suicide story. Why wall of hall demolished, who patronised Roy to be so powerful. Why sniffer dog used after 3 days. Hundreds of such questions. Make them speak," Ray said in the tweet. Ray's remark came as Kolkata's Commissioner of Police Vineet Goyal faces criticism over the police's handling of the case in its nascent

Personally CP was doing his job and investigation was in a positive focus. This kind of post is unfortunate, that too from my senior leader (sic)."The role of the city police and the hospital administration was criticised amid huge uproar over the brutal rape and murder of a 31-year-old trainee doctor. The victim's family alleged that the first call they received about their daughter's death mentioned that she had died by suicide.

There are also allegations that the



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Will J&K Turn The Trend And Deliver a Clear Mandate This Election?

By Amitabh Tiwari

With the election dates announced for Jammu & Kashmir, frantic political activity has begun in the state. This will be the first election after the abrogation of special status.

The founder of the J&K Apni Party has joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), while there are unconfirmed reports of Ghulam Nabi Azad making a gharwapsi to the Congress.

Can the opposition form a united bloc against the BJP, or will the National Conference (NC) and Congress at least continue with their Lok Sabha alliance in the state elections? Or, will all the four main parties go it alone? The answer to this question will determine the course of these elections. In the last three polls in the state, no party secured a simple majority of its own. In 2002, the Congress and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) joined hands post-poll to form a government. In 2008, the Congress backed the National Conference in a post-poll arrangement. In 2014, the PDP and the BJP came together to provide a government for the people of J&K.

Multi-Cornered Battles



Quadrangular contests have made it tricky for any party to cross the halfway mark. The structure of the assembly is such that it makes it difficult for any party to win. Pre-delimitation, the Kashmir valley had 46, Jammu 37, and Ladakh four seats.

In Kashmir, which has a Muslim majority, the main contest is between the two regional parties: the Mufti family's PDP and the Abdullah family's NC. In Jammu, which has a Hindu majority, the main contest is between the two national parties, the Congress and the BJP.

Post-delimitation, the total assembly seats have increased from 87 to 90, with Kashmir having 47 (+1) and Jammu 43 seats (+6). The proportion of seats in Hindu-dominated Jammu has increased from 42.5% to 47.8% post-delimitation.

In the 2014 Vidhan Sabha elections, the PDP had won 28 seats with a 23% vote share, the NC got 15 with 21% votes, the BJP 25 with 23% votes, and the Congress won 12 with 18% votes.

While the BJP almost doubled its vote share, the PDP gained 8% and the NC

lost 2%. The BJP and the PDP gained largely at the expense of others (independents and smaller parties). While the BJP won 25 of the 37 seats on offer in Jammu, the PDP won 25 of the 46 seats in the Valley.

The BJP withdrew support from the government in June 2018. In the 2019 general elections, the NC and BJP won three seats each, with the former sweeping Kashmir and the latter winning in Jammu and Ladakh.

In August 2019, the Central government revoked the special status of Jammu & Kashmir. Parties in the Kashmir Valley, including the NC, PDP, and a few others, soon formed the Gupkar Alliance in response, demanding the restoration of Article 370.

The Recent Lok Sabha Elections

In the recently concluded general elections, the NC won two seats, the BJP got two, and an Independent candidate won one seat. Both ex-chief ministers Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah lost the elections. The PDP's influence declined in the Lok Sabha as it couldn't win any seat and recorded just 8.5% vote share.

Bangladesh Must Ensure Safety Of Minorities

By Rajiv Tuli, Prashant Barthwal

Bangladesh, formerly known as East Pakistan, gained independence in 1971. Since its inception, the country has been a centre of religious and cultural diversity. However, in recent decades, the situation for religious minorities, particularly Hindus, has become increasingly alarming. The persistent political instability in

Awami League and the BNP has severely affected the governance system. Both parties, once in power, have suppressed opposition and favoured their supporters. The military has seized power several times, further disrupting the democratic process. Currently, the Awami League government has adopted a repressive stance toward the opposition, whose

leaders have been jailed, with media freedom being curtailed and allegations of electoral manipulation. These actions undermine the core principles of democracy, signalling a collapse of democratic values when the ruling party suppresses opposition and weakens constitutional institutions.

The attacks on Hindus have significant implications. Ethnic cleansing refers to the persecution, through imprisonment, expulsion, killing, or rape, of an ethnic minority by a local majority to achieve ethnic homogeneity. This process systematically removes a group of people from a specific area through violence and forced migration. At the time of independence, Hindus comprised about 22% of the population, but this has now decreased to less than 8% (Avishek Biswas & Deep Halder, *Being Hindu In Bangladesh: The Untold Story*, 2023, pp. 112-14).



Bangladesh has exacerbated these problems. The power struggle between the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has repeatedly driven the country towards anarchy, directly impacting minority communities. The influence of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Bangladesh has grown, often targeting Hindus and other religious minorities. Despite economic development, significant economic inequality persists. Bangladesh's democracy has been in crisis for a long time. The intense rivalry between the

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COUNCIL

As Kamala Harris stays away from press meets, questions shadow her campaign

Seema Sirohi

The question is how long can Kamala Harris run on the "vibe", the "joy", and dance away the blues without addressing the many policy elephants in the room?

Things have gone exceedingly well for Kamala Harris thus far. She is dashing through the country on Air Force 2, addressing large crowds and jolting the Democrats awake from their slumber. The coverage in the mainstream press has been fawning. And free.

But the free ride is beginning to rankle those who see themselves as the arbiters between the people and the politicians. The media rapture might be over. Harris is under increasing pressure from media stars, editorial boards, and sundry opinion makers to grant interviews and answer questions.

Enough with all the positive coverage, the fourth estate wants the real deal. Was the mainstream/liberal press embarrassed into raising the question since the conservative/right-wing channels have repeatedly contrasted Harris's absence with Donald Trump's presence in the mediascape, whether for a rambling press conference or friendly encounters with Fox News anchors? Harris's reluctance to find time to meet the

press has become an issue and could potentially become a problem.

Access denied could become anger multiplied.



Here's a warning from The Washington Post editorial board: "If she hopes to prevail, Ms. Harris needs to present her ideas. The media and public have legitimate questions, and she should face them. This is a political necessity — Mr. Trump is already turning her avoidance of the media into an attack line."

That is indeed true. Trump has claimed Harris is afraid of press conferences because

she is "not smart enough" to do one. Others say she is too smart to do one. Trump's media blitz, Harris's silence

To drive the point home, Trump held a long,

Sunday talk shows in rapid succession.

The Harris campaign's response to all the hullabaloo about press interviews: Why spoil a good thing? As the saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Media scrutiny, potential gaffes, and policy disputes will only complicate matters. She has equalised the race for the most part.

The Harris honeymoon with the people — minus the press — is making the Republicans nervous and Trump angrier. Deep down in their hearts, they know it's not fear of the press, but a political strategy deployed by Harris. And she will likely follow it until she can't. As John Stoehr, editor of The Editorial Board, a politics newsletter for "normal people," said on X, "ælook how well she's doing as a result" of avoiding the media. The question is how long can Harris run on the "vibe", the "joy", and dance away the blues without addressing the many policy elephants in the room? After three weeks of gushing coverage, she is now inviting more questions about her platform. But wait. There is no platform or manifesto — yet — on her campaign website, only bios, photos, and buttons to donate large and small amounts.

Trump, Musk, And The Importance Of 'Exaggeration' In Storytelling

By Nishtha Gautam

Why harp on the facts, it's the exaggerations that makes a tale interesting!" A favourite aunt once exclaimed when I tried to fact-check a funny family story she was narrating to a huge, giggling audience two decades ago. Each member of my clan cheered her on and it was the start of a delightful evening. Donald Trump's



tuned into the live broadcast. This number is an exaggeration, too.

A Risk Worth Taking

But why does Trump exaggerate all the time despite a bevy of fact-checkers waiting to give each syllable uttered by him a hang-draw-quarter treatment? Political storytelling is assessed under different rubrics than literary texts. Is this a risk worth taking? The answer is a resounding yes. Trump capitalises on narcissism when he indulges in making outlandish claims. To understand this link better, let's look at what the experts have to say about narcissism. "For the narcissistically involved person, there

interview with Elon Musk sent me back in time as I waded through the conversation. Both Trump and Musk know the importance of exaggerations in any narrative. The Indic epic poets knew it. Herodotus knew it. And so did Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. Trump's exaggerations, ably supported by his interviewer, made for a good story for his supporters. All 60 million of them he thought were

is only one reality: that of his own thought processes, feelings and needs. The world outside is not experienced or perceived objectively, i.e., as existing in its own terms, conditions and needs," Erich Fromm proposed in the 1950s. Fromm also posited that narcissists have a stronger sense of entitlement. This lays bare the reasons behind Trump's constant resort to exaggerations.

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Indian doctor in US records thousands of nude videos of kids, women, arrested

A 40-year-old Indian doctor, Oumair Aejaz, is being held on a \$2-million bond for multiple sex crimes, including recording thousands of nude images and videos of children and women over six years. He allegedly used hidden cameras at hospitals and his home.

A 40-year-old Indian doctor in the US is being held on a \$2-million bond after being charged with 10 counts of multiple sex crimes, including recording thousands of nude images and videos of children and women for at least the past six years. Police discovered over 13,000 videos on a single hard drive and seized 15 external devices during their investigation. Oumair Aejaz, who specialises in internal medicine, moved to the US in 2011 on a work visa from India. He completed his residency at Sinai Grace Hospital in Michigan. He then moved to Dawson, Alabama. Aejaz returned to Oakland County in Michigan to continue practice in internal medicine in 2018. Aejaz's work history includes employment at Henry Ford Macomb Hospital in Clinton Township and Ascension Genesys Hospital in Grand Blanc, Michigan.

He was most recently contracted as a physician, working at various hospitals. Aejaz was arrested on August 8 after allegedly placing hidden cameras in bathrooms, changing areas, hospital rooms, and even in his own home.

These cameras reportedly captured disturbing footage of children as young as two years old and women who were either unconscious or asleep, all in varying states of undress, reported Fox News. Authorities also believe Aejaz may have uploaded some of the illicit videos to cloud storage.

LAW ENFORCEMENT ALERTED BY AEJAZ'S WIFE
The case came to light when Aejaz's wife provided law enforcement with concerning materials, prompting the

Oakland County Sheriff's Office to execute several search warrants at his Rochester Hills home in Michigan.

Before this, Aejaz had no known criminal history.

On August 13, Aejaz was

formally charged with one count of child sexually abusive activity, four counts of capturing images of unclothed persons, and five counts of using a computer to commit a crime.

Oakland County Sheriff Mike

Bouchard stated that the magnitude of Aejaz's offences is so vast that it could take months to fully investigate the extent of his crimes.

"The victimisation is so broad and the perversion so great, we're just beginning to wrap

our arms around it," Bouchard said. He compared the scale of Aejaz's criminal activities to those of Larry Nasser, the former sports doctor convicted of sexually abusing numerous young women, according to Fox News.

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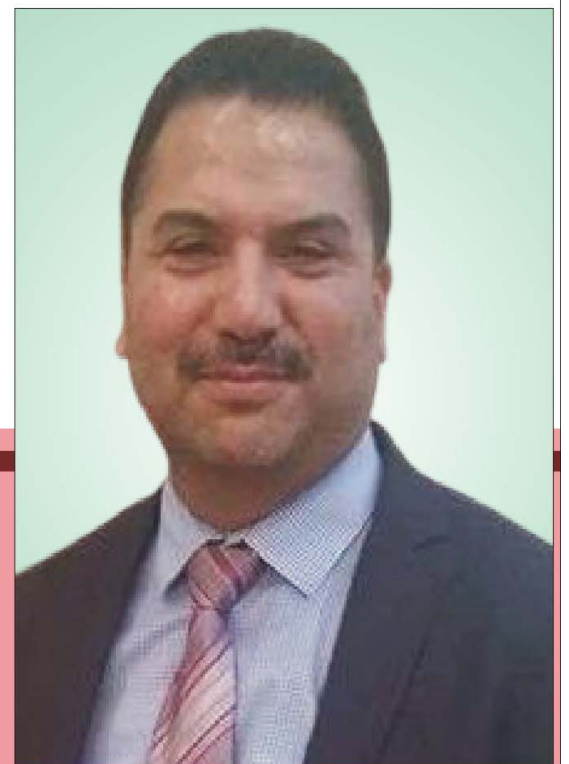
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Indian Americans Cheer Kamala Harris, But Can She Shift Their Votes?

Six days from the White House election, the Democratic candidate Kamala Harris has been trying to move past an uproar sparked by President Joe Biden appearing to refer to Trump supporters as "garbage". The vice-president told reporters when asked about Tuesday's remark by her boss that she would "strongly disagree with any criticism of people based on who they vote for". As his comment drew backlash, Biden posted on X, formerly Twitter, that it was directed at a comic who made a controversial joke at a Donald Trump rally, not

tens of millions of Americans. Trump, the Republican candidate, seized on the furore by getting into a garbage truck as he campaigned in Wisconsin, saying: "Biden should be ashamed of himself." During a fundraising Zoom call with a Latino voters' group on Tuesday evening, Biden was initially quoted as saying: "The only garbage I see floating out there is his [Trump's] supporters." The White House released a transcript saying that the president was only referring to one supporter - a stand-up comedian who called Puerto Rico "a floating island of garbage" during a

routine at a Trump rally in New York City on Sunday. Asked about Biden's remarks before flying from near Washington DC to campaign in swing states, Harris noted that Biden had already sought to "clarify his comments". "But let me be clear," she added. "I strongly disagree with any criticism of people based on who they vote for." In response to a question from the BBC, she said that if she won next Tuesday's election she would be "a president for all Americans, including those that don't vote for me". Harris sought to turn focus back to her rival, Trump, saying that US voters were

deciding whether they want to "attempt to unify and break through this era of divisiveness". The controversy over Biden's remarks made headlines in an unwelcome distraction for the Harris campaign as she delivered her final pitch to voters in Washington DC. At the spot from which Trump spoke shortly before a riot by his supporters at the US Capitol on 6 January 2021, she urged Americans on Tuesday night to "turn the page on the drama and the conflict" in US politics. Back at the White House aides were still trying to draw a line under the "garbage" controversy on Wednesday.

US fighter jets were ready to attack Iran, the plan to launch missiles

New Delhi: Israel launched a big airstrike on Iran on Saturday, 26 October. More than 100 fighter jets were used in it, which targeted military targets in many areas of Iran, including the capital Tehran.

Giving information about the attack, the Israeli army said on Saturday that its attack was successful, and all the aircraft returned safely after carrying out the operation.

After the attack, the US said that it had information but was not involved in the strikes. However, now a piece of new information has emerged about America's involvement in the above-mentioned airstrikes.

The plan to save Israeli pilots

Israel's Army Radio reported



on Sunday, October 27 that American fighter jets were fully prepared in case of any emergency of Israeli pilots during Operation Days of Repentance.

"If the operation did not succeed, Israel and the United

States had made a plan to evacuate the pilots," the radio said.

Israel had its own plan

The report stressed that although the USA did not take part in the attack, a fleet of US

Central Command was ready to intervene if necessary. It also said that the Israeli Air Force (IAF) had prepared an independent plan for pilot rescue without relying on US support.

US warns Iran

The US has openly justified the Israeli attack on Iran. US President Joe Biden said on Saturday that the Jewish state only targeted military targets. Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin warned Tehran not to respond to the attack.

Biden said he hoped the attacks would be "an end." He said the Israeli military did not appear to have targeted anything other than "military targets."

At the same time, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant that Iran should not "make the mistake of responding to Israeli attacks."

Austin said Israeli strikes "must put an end to this skirmish." He talked about opportunities to use diplomacy to reduce tension in the region.

U.S. repatriated 1,100 Indians in 2023-24 for trying to enter illegally

The United States has repatriated 1,100 Indians over the past year for trying to enter the U.S. illegally, said a senior official from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The official added there has been a "steady increase" in the number of Indians in recent years who have been repatriated from the United States. Briefing journalists on Tuesday (October 29, 2024) Royce Murray, assistant secretary for Border and Immigration Policy at the DHS, said she travelled to India last



week to witness the flight that flew illegal immigrants back to India.

"Let me start by saying that in fiscal year 2024, which just concluded at the end of September, the United States repatriated over 1,100 Indian nationals. That has been part of a steady increase in removals from the United States of Indian nationals over the past few years," said Ms. Murray in her remarks at the briefing.

The remarks from the official came days after the DHS flew a "large-frame charter removal flight" on October 22 to repatriate Indian nationals "who did not establish legal basis to remain in the United States."

Malaysian PM on Zakir Naik's extradition: Open to any evidence from India



(News Agency)-In an exclusive interview with India Today, Anwar Ibrahim spoke on the extradition of Zakir Naik, the Rohingya migrant issue as well as Kashmir. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has said that he was "open to any evidence" from India regarding its request for the extradition of controversial Islamic preacher Zakir Naik. In an exclusive interview with India Today, Anwar Ibrahim, however, stressed that Naik hadn't said anything controversial against India in Malaysia. "As long as Zakir Naik does not create problems or threatens security, we will let

this matter rest. But we are open to any evidence that India gives to extradite him under law," Ibrahim, who is visiting India for the first time after becoming PM in 2022, said. The Malaysian PM said External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had raised the extradition issue of Zakir Naik during their meeting. Zakir Naik, who was born in Mumbai, fled India in 2016 amid charges of spreading hatred and money laundering. The Islamic preacher was granted permanent residency in Malaysia by the previous Mahathir Mohamed government, much to India's dismay. His Islamic Research

Foundation (IRF) has been banned in India. ON KASHMIR, ROHINGYAMIGRANTS The Malaysian PM refused to wade into the Kashmir issue, saying it was a "purely domestic issue" of India. "We have not taken an open position on Kashmir. We need peace and security, and we need to reduce tensions," he said. The remark comes after tensions soared between the two nations following former Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamed's criticism over India's move to scrap Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). However, Anwar Ibrahim expressed concern over the well-being of religious and ethnic minorities in India. "Like India has the right to question Malaysia, so do we on concerns over religious and ethnic minorities," he said. The Malaysian premier, who held a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, invited him to the ASEAN Summit next year in Kuala Lumpur. PM Modi has accepted the invitation. During the meeting, India and Malaysia elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and signed eight agreements.

Pakistan man charged with cybercrime linked to riots in Britain

LAHORE (News Agency)- Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has charged a local man with cybercrime offences for spreading fake online information which fuelled riots in Britain, it said in a statement on Wednesday. The riots began after false information circulated online wrongly blaming an Islamist migrant for the killing of three young girls in a knife attack in the northern English town of Southport in late July. Farhan Asif, who ran a web publication, was arrested in eastern Pakistani city of Lahore, a statement from the FIA said. It said Asif posted an article on his X social media account which said that the attacker was a Muslim immigrant, and also shared pictures of the killings. Having picked up the fake content from another X account, he was found to be involved in "disseminating the information using his own Twitter (X) account Channel3NOnews with the intent to glorify the incident about the arrest of a Muslim Asylum seeker by police in the stabbing incident in Southport, England and created a sense of fear, panic, insecurity," the FIA said. The FIA said that it had been established that the account that spread the fake news belonged to Asif, who has also admitted to having passed on the fake information to a foreign publication as well.

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Street battle over, Khaleda Zia, son use film, cartoon in battle of perception

(News Agency)-With the dramatic departure of Bangladesh's PM Sheikh Hasina, the top spot is up for grabs. And so is the title of 'mother.' Hasina, fondly hailed as the 'mother of humanity', has left both the political throne and the maternal mantle vacant, inviting another 'mother' to step in and fill the void. Hasina's rival, Begum Khaleda Zia, the supremo of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), seems poised to reclaim both, the top spot and that of the 'mother'. Not as mother of humanity, but mother of democracy. As many say, timing is everything in the art of a comeback. The BNP is expected to leverage the political vacuum, following the anti-quota wave that resulted in Sheikh Hasina's ouster.

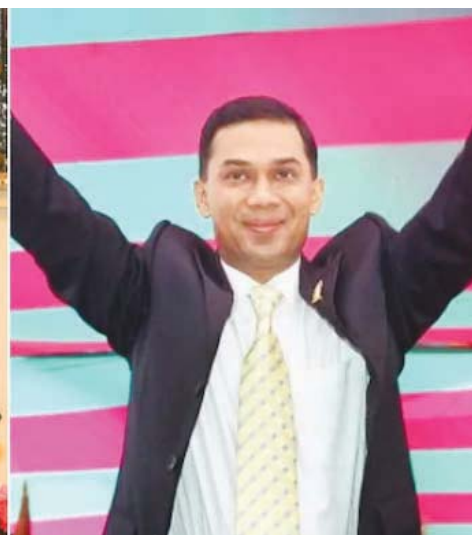
CINEMATIC CROWNING OF KHALEDA ZIA AS MOTHER OF DEMOCRACY

However, with Khaleda's deteriorating health and advancing age, returning to the Prime Minister's seat might be a distant dream. Yet, being labelled as the 'Mother of Democracy' appears more attainable. A film titled 'Mother of Democracy' is on cards and filmmaker MK Zaman is set to direct the film. With the former PM's permission secured, the script finalised, and the title officially registered, pre-



production is now in full swing, reports Dhaka-based Daily Star.

It will showcase Khaleda Zia's life, and her contributions to democracy in Bangladesh. The film is expected to portray Khaleda Zia as a champion of democratic principles and a strong leader who has faced numerous challenges throughout her political career. "People need to watch this film to understand and learn about the true democracy in Bangladesh," filmmaker MK Zaman told Kaler Kantho, another local newspaper. This cinematic tribute is seen as part of a



broader effort to project Khaleda Zia's party, the BNP, and her son, Tarique Rahman, as symbols of democracy in the country facing political instability and chaos. This after Hasina's 15-year authoritarian rule. With Khaleda Zia turning 79 and possibly stepping back, her son Tarique Rahman is poised to become the new face of the BNP, if and when the military-backed interim government conducts elections to the Jatiya Sangsad. TARIQUE RAHMAN WELCOMES CARTOONS AS EXPRESSION

With the 'mother' spot sorted, her son and

BNP's acting chair, Tarique Rahman, is at it too. Having deposed Hasina, "the autocratic PM", 56-year-old Tarique Rahman is all in for upholding freedom of expression.

Days ago, he shared a cartoon of him on social media by cartoonist Mehedi Haque and expressed his satisfaction with the restored freedom after Hasina's expulsion on August 5.

"I am deeply gratified that the freedom to draw political cartoons has been restored in Bangladesh," Rahman wrote on his X on August 11.

He did not let the opportunity go to slam Hasina and her 15-year rule. "It clearly highlights the difference between a fascist regime and a democratic party. I'm certain that if this cartoonist had drawn something about Hasina, Joy, or Mujib, they would have faced jail time," added Rahman on the X post. London where he has been in exile since 2008. Since then, the acting BNP chairperson has used video calls and online meetings to coordinate party functioning and mobilise people to support them. Before being exiled in London, Rahman was locked up by the Sheikh Hasina administration after being convicted in a handful of cases.

Sheikh Hasina's extended stay in India raises diplomatic challenges amid uncertainty

(News Agency)-Sheikh Hasina, the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, has been in India since August 5, seeking refuge amid escalating violence and threats to her life in Bangladesh. After spending a fortnight in India, Hasina's situation remains precarious as she continues to seek asylum in the UK or

extradition. Despite this, experts note that Bangladesh has yet to make a formal extradition request, and even if one is made, India is not obligated to comply. India faces a delicate situation, navigating the balance between international diplomatic relations and the humanitarian aspects of Hasina's stay.



The timeline of her stay in India remains uncertain, leaving many questions unanswered regarding the future of Indo-Bangladesh relations. In a speech in Dhaka, BNP General Secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir called for the extradition of ousted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Bangladesh, demanding that she face trial. Addressing India directly, he stated, "It is

another European country, but so far, no nation has granted her clearance.

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar earlier confirmed in Parliament that Sheikh Hasina is currently in India and required assistance. However, her prolonged stay poses potential diplomatic complications for India, especially as Bangladesh has begun to press for her

our call to you that you should hand her over to the Government of Bangladesh in a legal way. The people of this country have given the decision for her trial, let her face the trial".

According to reports, Mirza Fakhrul also accused Sheikh Hasina of orchestrating plots from her stay in India to undermine the ongoing revolution in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh unrest hits hospitality sector, majority hotels see empty rooms

(News Agency)-The recent anti-government protests that rocked Bangladesh for over a month have hit the hospitality sector hard in the capital Dhaka with the majority of rooms at several luxury and economy hotels here going empty in the aftermath of the unrest.

Dhaka is both the political and

"The situation is now a bit better, but still far from normal in our sector as the majority of the rooms are still empty. While a certain section of business travellers are still coming, after the unrest in the country, the number of guests occupying rooms has dramatically shrunk," a senior manager in the sales department of a luxury hotel told PTI on the condition of anonymity. This five-star hotel, operating under the current brand name for a year-and-a-half, is located in a towering building near the Gulshan enclave — an affluent area which also houses several diplomatic missions of foreign countries in Bangladesh.



financial capital of Bangladesh and home to several landmark commercial properties managed by international hotel chains which cater largely to business travellers. PTI spoke to front office employees, managers and restaurant staff at some of the luxury chains as well as economy hotels located in plush areas, and they all painted a sombre picture of the current condition of the hospitality sector in Dhaka.

"We have 150 rooms of different categories — standard, premium, junior suite and executive suite. Currently, about 35 rooms are occupied. The numbers are slowly increasing," the senior manager said.

He recalled the situation in the area on August 4-5 when the unrest had reached its peak, leading to the ouster of embattled Bangladeshi leader Sheikh Hasina as the prime minister, plunging the country into a state of crisis.

Barack Obama warns of 'dangerous' Trump return: We have seen that movie before



(News Agency)-Former US President Barack Obama and former First Lady Michelle Obama trained their guns on Donald Trump for his divisive rhetoric before offering their unwavering support to Democratic nominee Kamala Harris for the November presidential elections. In a powerful speech at the Democratic National Convention, Obama said Trump was a "danger" to the country while underscoring that the United States cannot afford another four years of "chaos under his leadership".

"Donald Trump sees power as nothing more than a means to his ends. We have seen that movie before, and we all know that the sequel is usually worse," Obama said.

Obama, who received a rockstar welcome at the Chicago convention, asserted that Trump was "afraid of losing to Harris" and accused him of spreading conspiracy theories. He also left the crowd in splits

with his hand gesture to assert that Trump had a "weird obsession with crowd sizes" "Who will fight for me? Who's thinking about my future? About my children's future? About our future together?" Obama said while noting, "One thing is for certain, Donald Trump is not losing sleep over that question."

Referring to the former President, Obama said the 78-year-old billionaire has not stopped "whining about his problems" since he rode down his "golden escalator" nine years ago. "The other day, I heard someone compare Trump to the neighbour who keeps running his leaf blower outside your window every minute of every day," Obama, one of the most powerful voices in the Democratic Party, said.

"Now, from a neighbour, that's exhausting. From a president, that's just dangerous," he said. "We do not need four more years of bluster and bumbling and chaos," the former President said before signing off.

Police raid Andrew Tate's home in Romania as new allegations emerge involving minors

(News Agency)-Masked police officers in Romania carried out fresh raids early Wednesday at the home of divisive internet influencer Andrew Tate, who is awaiting trial on charges of human trafficking, rape and forming a criminal gang to sexually exploit women. Romania's anti-organized crime agency, DIICOT, said it was searching four homes in Bucharest and nearby Ilfov county, investigating allegations of human trafficking, the trafficking of minors, sexual intercourse with a minor, influencing statements and money laundering. The agency added that hearings will later be held at its headquarters. Tate's spokesperson, Mateea Petrescu, said in response to the raids that

"although the charges in the search warrant are not yet fully clarified, they include suspicions of human trafficking and money laundering" and added that his legal team is present. Petrescu did not address the allegations involving minors. Dozens of police officers and forensic personnel were scouring Tate's large property on the edge of the capital Bucharest. "During the entire criminal process, the investigated persons benefit from the procedural rights and guarantees provided by the Code of Criminal Procedure, as well as the presumption of innocence," DIICOT noted in its statement. The 37-year-old Andrew Tate and his brother Tristan, 36, both former kickboxers and dual British-U.S. citizens who have amassed millions of social media

followers, were arrested in 2022 near Bucharest along with two Romanian women. Romanian prosecutors formally indicted all four last year. They have denied the allegations.

Petrescu said late Wednesday that the Tate brothers have been detained for 24 hours, which is the maximum DIICOT can hold them without a judge approving a request



by prosecutors for a longer period. "As of yet, no proposal has been submitted by the prosecution," she said. As the brothers were ushered from their home into a police van outside, Andrew Tate complained to reporters that the case was progressing too slowly. "What I've done wrong, who knows," he claimed. Andrew Tate is known for expressing misogynistic views online and has amassed 9.9 million followers on the social media platform X, and has repeatedly claimed that prosecutors have no evidence against him and that there is a political conspiracy to silence him. He was previously banned from various social media platforms for misogynistic views and hate speech.

Three Cambria Heights men charged after terrifying home invasion and hostage situation in Douglaston early Saturday morning: DA

(News Agency)-Three Cambria Heights men have been criminally charged in connection to a terrifying home invasion in Douglaston during the early morning hours of Saturday, Aug. 17, in which they allegedly held eight people, including three children, hostage during a robbery. Brandon Dash, 39, and his brother Ryan Dash, 34, of 218th Street, and Jone Smith, 47, also known as Conrad Harrington, of Cambria Heights, were arraigned in Queens Criminal Court on Sunday evening on a 24-count complaint charging them with kidnapping, burglary, assault, endangering the welfare of a child and other related crimes.

According to the charges, between 2:15 and 3:18 a.m. on Saturday, the three defendants entered a bedroom of a home on 247th Street in Douglaston and awakened the owners at gunpoint. The homeowners were sleeping in the room with their one-year-old child. The masked men allegedly physically restrained the

occupants of the home and demanded to know the location of any cash in the house. One of the men allegedly brandished a handgun, while the other two carried hammers.



One woman and an infant escaped the house, and a 911 call was placed to the NYPD. The defendants allegedly took in excess of \$10,000 in cash from the homeowners while police from the 111th Precinct in Bayside and the 109th Precinct in Flushing responded to the

scene and set up a perimeter in the area between Marathon Parkway, Cullman Avenue and the Grand Central Parkway. The Emergency Service Unit provided support, and while the NYPD aviation unit

was grounded due to low visibility, drones were deployed, according to NYPD Deputy Commissioner of Operations Kaz Daughtry. Responding officers determined that three defendants, as well as four adult hostages and two children, remained inside the house.

The drones showed the three defendants as they tried to escape through the kitchen window, and police moved in, arresting the three men after an extensive manhunt in the vicinity of the house. Two of the hostages were taken to a local hospital for treatment of minor injuries after one was punched in the face and another was hit with a hammer, police said. The

remaining hostages were freed, and the stolen money was recovered after the arrests, according to the charges.

"As alleged, these three defendants held a family of eight people, including children, as hostages while displaying a gun and two hammers," Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said. "These victims showed incredible courage during a home invasion in which a mother escaped with her youngest child and called 911."

The three defendants were arraigned before Queens Criminal Court Judge Maria Gonzalez, who ordered the Dash brothers and Smith remanded into custody without parole with their next court appearance scheduled for Aug. 22. If convicted, the defendants face a maximum of 25 years in prison.

"These defendants not only threatened the family but also destroyed the family's sense of safety in their own home," Katz said.

Blinken ends latest Mideast visit without a cease-fire, warning 'time is of the essence'

(News Agency)- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken ended his ninth visit to the Middle East since the war in Gaza began without securing any major breakthrough for a cease-fire deal, warning on Tuesday that "time is of the essence" even as Hamas and Israel signaled that challenges remain.

After meetings in fellow mediating countries Egypt and Qatar, Blinken said that because Israel has accepted a proposal to bridge gaps with the militant group, the focus turns to doing everything possible to "get Hamas on board" and ensure both sides agree to key details on implementation.

"Our message is simple. It's clear and it's urgent," he told reporters before leaving Qatar. "We need to get a cease-fire and hostage agreement over the finish line, and we need to do it now. Time is of the essence."

There has been added urgency after the recent targeted killings of militant leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah in Iran and Lebanon, both attributed to Israel, and vows of retaliation that have sparked fears of a wider regional war. Few details have been released about the so-called bridging proposal put forth by the U.S., Egypt and Qatar. Blinken said it is "very clear on the schedule and the locations of (Israeli military) withdrawals from Gaza." Hamas



earlier Tuesday called the latest proposal a reversal of what it had agreed to, accusing the U.S. of acquiescing to new conditions from Israel. There was no immediate U.S. response to that.

Blinken's comments on ending his latest Israel-Hamas peace mission were notably bare of the optimism that Biden administration officials expressed going into his trip, and earlier.

The upbeat tone through much of the spring and summer — with U.S. officials at times describing a cease-fire and hostage deal as nearer than ever — reflected necessary

messaging, at least in part, said Jonathan Panikoff, director of the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Middle East Program. "If they don't project optimism then it won't create ... even the potential for sufficient momentum to keep things going," Panikoff said.

Americans have little alternative to continuing to push Israel and Hamas to agree to a negotiated end to fighting, but it's fundamentally about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, who helped mastermind the Oct. 7 attacks, Panikoff

said. And they are "the two people that have been, frankly, most skeptical from the beginning" about making peace.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, met with right-wing groups of families of fallen soldiers and hostages in Gaza. The groups, which oppose a cease-fire deal, said he told them Israel will not abandon two strategic corridors in Gaza whose control has been an obstacle in the talks. Netanyahu's office did not comment on their account.

A senior U.S. official rejected as "totally untrue" that Netanyahu had told Blinken that Israel would never leave the Philadelphia and Netzarim corridors. Such statements are "not constructive to getting a cease-fire deal across the finish line," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss Blinken's private diplomatic talks. Blinken's meetings in Egypt, which borders Gaza, and in Qatar, which hosts some Hamas leaders in exile, came a day after he met Netanyahu. Wide gaps appeared to remain between Israel and Hamas, though angry statements often serve as pressure tactics during negotiations. Both men have seen their political standing improve at home, as Israelis turn their attention from the war in Gaza to a threatened wider conflict with Iran and Hezbollah, and as Hamas further consolidates Sinwar's leadership of the group.

Trump campaigns to 'make America safe again' as Democratic convention zeroes in on his felony record

(News Agency)- Former President Donald Trump pledged Tuesday to "Make America Safe Again" while campaigning in Michigan as the Democrats who gathered in Chicago to nominate Kamala Harris branded him a career criminal.

As part of a battleground campaign swing designed to counter the Democratic National Convention, Trump stood alongside sheriff's deputies in the city of Howell and labeled Harris, a former San Francisco district attorney and California attorney general, as the "ringleader" of a "Marxist attack on law enforcement" across the country. "Kamala Harris will deliver crime, chaos, destruction and death," Trump said in one of many generalizations about an America under Harris. "You'll see levels of crime that you've never seen before. ... I will deliver law, order, safety and peace."

Trump has sought in recent weeks to blunt the enthusiasm that Harris has attracted since President Joe Biden ended his reelection campaign and endorsed her. That has involved both dark predictions about what electing Harris would mean for



the country and efforts by Trump's advisers to set up events where he can try to draw specific policy contrasts. On Tuesday in Michigan, the subject was crime and public safety.

"Our policemen and women have the backs of law-abiding citizens every day," Trump said. "When we go back to the White House, you're going to see support the likes of which you haven't seen, certainly in four years." In excerpts released before his speech, Trump's campaign also said he would call for the death penalty for child rapists and child traffickers; he did not

mention that during his remarks.

A campaign official who was not authorized to speak publicly said after Trump's appearance that the former president will make those additional formal policy announcements after the Democratic convention, when the campaign expects they can get more attention. Trump's event Tuesday was his latest billed as focused on a specific issue. But on these occasions, Trump has spent considerable time attacking Harris personally and taking shots at Biden, and the same was true after their appearances Monday at the

Democratic convention.

"I watched last night in amazement as they tried to pretend everything was great," Trump said, singling out inflation and the U.S.-Mexico border as topics Democrats glossed over. "We have a fool as president," he said of Biden.

Trump presented a bleak portrait of life in the U.S. and the threat of a Harris presidency, though he was short on specifics and heavy on hyperbole.

"It's just insane," Trump said. "You can't walk across the street to get a loaf of bread. You get shot, you get mugged, you get raped, you get whatever it may be. And you've seen it, and I've seen it, and it's time for a change."

Trump making such claims, surrounded by supportive law enforcement officers, stood in stark contrast to the Democrats' convention. Speaker after speaker found ways Monday night in Chicago to remind Americans that Trump is the first former president ever convicted of felony crimes, has been found civilly liable for sexual assault, and still faces multiple indictments, including for his efforts to overturn his 2020 defeat to Biden.

Does an Indian diet need fibre supplements?

An array of research-backed benefits of a high-fibre diet has also led wellness companies to add another product to their shelves – fibre supplements. But do Indians need these supplements?

Dietary fibre – you need it for a healthy gut, maintaining weight, controlling blood sugar levels, keeping the heart healthy, and keeping constipation woes at bay. Found in legumes, whole grains, and a variety of fruits and vegetables, fibre is an essential part of a balanced diet.

It is basically a type of carbohydrate that our digestive system cannot break down. It keeps us full for longer as it slows the movement of food in the digestive tract and also slows down the quick absorption of sugar and hence reduces blood sugar spikes. Another important thing that fibre does is bulk up the stool and help it pass through the intestines more easily, reducing constipation. An array of research-backed benefits of a high-fibre diet has also led wellness companies to add another product to their shelves – fibre supplements. Available in the forms of powder, husks, and tablets, these supplements claim to boost the daily fibre consumption that might be compromised owing to several reasons like traditional diets and the craze for processed foods. According to ICMR's Dietary Guidelines, almost 40 per cent of a day's food should be vegetables (30 per cent)

and fruits (10 per cent). However, in eastern regions like West Bengal and Odisha, low-fibre foods such as rice and seafood dominate the traditional diet. It's no surprise that this region leads the market for Isabgol (psyllium husk), a type of dietary fibre commonly used to relieve constipation, according to an IMARC report - much like its dominance in the Gelusil market.

"In arid regions like Rajasthan, the limited variety of fresh produce can reduce fibre intake from fruits and vegetables. Diets in these areas may rely more on grains and legumes, which can affect fibre content depending on how they are prepared. In contrast, tropical regions like Kerala have a rich variety of fruits, vegetables, and legumes, leading to higher fibre intake. However, the predominant use of rice may lower fibre intake from grains," says Dr Rohini Patil, MBBS, nutritionist and founder of Nutracy Lifestyle, Pune.

She adds, however, that it can all be sorted with a mindful approach to meal planning. In May 2023, a study supported by the Protein Foods and Nutrition Development Association of India (PFNDAI) revealed that 69 per cent of Indians consume less



fibre than their recommended daily allowance. "Low fibre intake can lead to elevated cholesterol levels, digestive issues, and a higher risk of chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. To support overall health, it's crucial to incorporate more fibre-rich foods into the diet, such as fresh fruits, legumes, and whole grains," says Parmeet Kaur, Head Dietician, Marengo Asia Hospitals, Gurugram. But, does an Indian diet need fibre supplements?

With a variety of local foods available across the country, diet and nutrition experts say that an Indian diet high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and

legumes usually provides enough fibre. But it can go wrong if one doesn't follow the concept of a balanced diet or heavily relies on processed foods.

"A trend towards processed foods due to modern lifestyle changes has decreased the consumption of natural fibre," says Parmeet Kaur.

Lovneet Batra, a Delhi-based nutritionist, believes that Indian diets across all regions are rich in fibre as they contain whole grains and vegetables, but it is the urban Indian diets that require fibre supplements. "They (urban Indian diets) often lack vegetables, fruits, and whole grains," says Batra.

Eyeing that doughnut? What our food cravings indicate

Finding the underlying reasons for cravings is essential to strike a healthy relationship with food



An intense and unavoidable desire for a specific food is something we all can relate to. There are days when we just want to have a plate full of French fries or doughnuts or a large tub of ice-cream. This despite being fully aware that we are giving in to our cravings and nothing else.

Cravings can be a complex interplay of nutrient deficiencies, environmental factors, emotional needs and specific triggers, but not always limited to these factors. We all have a unique relationship with food, and different reasons can trigger our cravings. Sometimes it's around specific tastes, such as sweet or savoury, and at other

times it's from emotions, environmental changes and stress. Cravings vary among women, men and children due to differences in hormonal fluctuations, psychological factors and lifestyle habits. "Every craving indicates a body response, and addressing it involves understanding what the body might be lacking or what emotional needs might be unmet," says Miten Kakaiya, fitness coach and founder of Miten Says Fitness, an online fitness coaching platform. By understanding what your cravings are indicating, you can address the underlying health issues and improve your overall wellbeing. Cravings

can be common but their intensity and frequency different due to individual relationships with food. "Women crave more for sweets and carbs, men for savoury and protein-rich foods, and children for sweet and salty foods," explains Kakaiya. Cravings such as for chocolates, salty chips, sugary drinks or even red meat are mostly associated with nutritional deficiencies of some minerals or vitamins. Then, food often becomes a comfort factor, connected to feelings of happiness, sadness and anxiety. "Chocolates are high in magnesium, and craving for it could indicate a deficiency in this mineral. The desire for salty food items, such as chips and wafers, might indicate a possible sodium or chloride deficiency. The need for these electrolytes can increase after sweating heavily or dehydration," observes Kakaiya. Sometimes when you crave for just a fruit juice or even a piece of cake, it could be for the sugar in it. Sugar cravings have been linked to the need for quick

energy or deficiency in chromium, tryptophan or serotonin. At times, the weather triggers cravings, such as for warm soups or fritters in winter or for a refreshing drink in summer.

It's important to address food cravings and find healthier alternatives; once you start understanding the root cause, it gets easy to find solutions. The key is to start by journaling your cravings and taking out time to understand what could have triggered it.

Following a balanced and nutritional diet, by including more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, lentils, nuts and seeds, staying hydrated by drinking at least 8-10 glasses of water daily, eating at regular intervals and not skipping meals, and limiting exposure to unhealthy food could be some possible answers to cravings. Avoiding stocking up on tempting snacks can control impulsive eating while being mindful of portion sizes can help resist the temptation to indulge in unhealthy foods.

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Piyush Goyal warns e-commerce boom may turn India into 'nation of couch potatoes'

Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal, expressed his concerns about the rapid growth of e-commerce and online shopping in India, warning that it could transform the country into 'a nation of couch potatoes.'

"We will land up becoming a country of couch potatoes, watching OTT and having food at home every day," said Piyush Goyal. He also said the growth of e-commerce should be seen as a "matter of concern" rather than a source of pride. Speaking at an event on Wednesday, where a report on the 'Net Impact of E-Commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' was released, Goyal highlighted the potential social disruptions that could arise from the booming e-commerce sector.

"Are we going to cause huge, social disruption with this massive growth of e-commerce? I don't see it as a matter of pride that half our market may become part of the e-commerce network 10 years from



now; it is a matter of concern," Goyal said.

He mentioned the need for a well-considered approach to the role of e-commerce in India and acknowledged that while e-commerce has a place in the economy, its impact should be carefully managed.

"E-commerce has a role, but we have to think carefully about what that role is and how it can be more organised," Goyal said.

The Union Minister also expressed concerns about the pricing strategies adopted by some e-commerce firms, asking, "Is

predatory pricing policy good for the country?"

Goyal pointed out that e-commerce is particularly affecting small retailers who rely on high-value, high-margin products to survive. He warned that the rapid growth of e-commerce could eat into the business of these small retailers, potentially driving them out of the market.

While acknowledging that e-commerce is here to stay, Goyal highlighted the importance of assessing its broader impact on the economy.

He said that only a small portion of

the population currently uses online platforms to buy essentials like food and groceries, suggesting that the sector does not dominate every aspect of retail.

Goyal's concerns extend to the 100 million small retailers across India who serve the market. He highlighted the rapid growth rate of 27% per year in the e-commerce sector, warning that this could lead to significant disruptions for these small businesses. In this context, he expressed his support for the offline retail sector. The minister also questioned the excitement surrounding Amazon's announcement of a billion-dollar investment in India. He urged a closer examination of what such investments actually mean for the Indian economy. "When Amazon says we are going to invest a billion dollars in India and we celebrate, we forget the underlying story that this billion dollars is not coming for any great service or investment to support the Indian economy," he said.

Goyal pointed out that Amazon reported a billion-dollar loss on its balance sheet that year, suggesting that such losses might be linked to predatory pricing practices.

He questioned the sustainability of such business models, asking, "If you make Rs 6,000 crore loss a year, doesn't it sound like predatory pricing to you? They are, after all, an e-commerce platform, and they are not legally allowed to do B2C. However, the reality is all of you buy on these platforms. How are they doing it? Should it not be a matter of concern for us?"

Goyal also expressed concern over the decline of small mobile stores, which have been outcompeted by larger retailers.

"How many mobile stores do you see now on the corner? And how many were there 10 years ago? Where are those mobile stores? Will only Apple or the large retail sell mobile phones and their accessories?" he asked, highlighting the challenges faced by small retailers in the current market environment.

Starbucks' new CEO won't relocate, will fly 1,600 km on private jet daily to work

Starbucks' new CEO Brian Niccol will be making an exceptional daily commute to his new office. Niccol, who lives in California, will travel 1,600 kilometres every day to Starbucks' headquarters in Seattle.

According to his employment agreement, Niccol will use a corporate jet for this daily journey. Despite the distance, he is expected to work from Starbucks' Seattle office at least three days a week, in line with the company's hybrid work policy, which has been in effect since 2023. Niccol, aged 50, will receive an annual base salary of \$1.6 million. Additionally, he is eligible for a cash bonus ranging from \$3.6 million to \$7.2 million, depending on his performance. He will also have the opportunity to earn up to \$23 million



in annual equity awards. This commuting arrangement is not new for Niccol. When he was CEO of Chipotle in 2018, he arranged a similar deal. Chipotle, which was headquartered in Colorado, moved its headquarters to California just three months after Niccol took on the role. A Starbucks spokesperson said, "Brian's primary office and a majority of his time will be spent in our Seattle Support Center or out visiting partners

and customers in our stores, roasteries, roasting facilities and offices around the world. His schedule will exceed the hybrid work guidelines and workplace expectations we have for all partners."

Such flexible work terms are often negotiated by high-ranking executives who have significant negotiating power.

For instance, Hillary Super, the CEO of Rihanna's lingerie brand Fenty x Savage, was granted a similar arrangement, allowing her to work from New York City instead of Victoria's Secret's headquarters near Columbus, Ohio.

However, not all CEOs have such leeway. Amazon's Andy Jassy and JPMorgan Chase's Jamie Dimon are actively advocating for a return to in-office work.

The reasons behind Niccol's unique arrangement are linked to Starbucks' recent performance. Sales in the company's largest markets, the US and China, have declined this year under the leadership of current CEO Laxman Narasimhan. Niccol's appointment comes with high expectations, given his impressive track record of revitalising companies. Under his leadership at Chipotle, the company's stock reportedly increased by 773%.

'We handle India's common man's money': Ola CEO after IPO success

Ola CEO Bhavish Aggarwal acknowledged the weight of responsibility that comes with managing public funds, especially after the company's recent IPO success. Speaking at the Business Today India@100 event, Aggarwal highlighted the importance of



being cautious with the money entrusted to them by the common people of India.

"We are handling India's common man's money," he said, highlighting that this new phase brings added scrutiny and requires a careful balance between immediate results and long-term strategies. He mentioned that the expectations of the public market have made him more aware of the need to ensure that Ola's decisions provide lasting value.

At the event, where the topic was "The Rise of AI: Will India Board the Bus?", Aggarwal shared insights into his journey with the company and its future plans.

He reflected on Ola's evolution from a ride-hailing service to a diverse group of companies. He referred to Ola Cabs as his "pehla pyaar" (first love), showing his deep emotional connection to the business.

During a conversation with Sourav Majumdar, Editor of Business Today, and Aayush Ailawadi,

Technology Editor at Business Today, Aggarwal discussed how the various arms of Ola will work together to achieve their broader goals. He pointed out that Ola has transformed from just a ride-hailing service to a group of companies, each with a distinct vision. Despite his strong attachment to Ola Cabs, he explained that the business's natural growth led to new ventures like Ola Electric, which aims to position India as a leader in the global electric vehicle (EV) industry.

The Taliban's three years in power and what lies ahead

By Vanda Felbab-Brown

Three years on, the Taliban regime remains firmly in power. Its supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, has strengthened and centralized his rule by creating parallel institutions while formulating policies from his tightly-knit Kandahar office. The regime has become more exclusionary, privileging southern Pashtun Talibs. Despite massive economic challenges, including more than 90% of Afghans struggling with poverty and increasing food insecurity, the regime is not at immediate risk of an economic implosion.

Afghanistan's neighbors, as well as China and Russia, are intensifying their engagement with the Taliban regime. But Pakistan remains frustrated with the Taliban's meager actions against the terrorist group Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has bases in eastern Afghanistan. Despite the Taliban's grave violations of human rights and women's rights, U.S. interests in Afghanistan—including counterterrorism—are for now best



served by maintaining a low-level equilibrium in engagement with the regime.

The Taliban's power and its structures

The Taliban leadership includes dogmatic ideologues such as Haibatullah, as well as relative pragmatists who are more restrained in their desire to implement extreme versions of Sharia and interested in engagement with the West. Yet the pragmatists have failed to moderate the amir's policies and have pulled back from challenging him.

Haibatullah is supported by a praetorian guard of powerful military commanders from Helmand and Kandahar, such as Abdul Qayyum Zakir. To counter rival leaders, such as Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mohammad Yaqub, Haibatullah has appointed his loyalists as deputy bosses across the regime's ministries and agencies.

The Taliban regime refuses to integrate into its structures Afghan warlords, politicians, and most other individuals associated with the defeated Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It has removed from

office or demoted several non-Pashtun Taliban commanders. To monitor local actors, placate demands for inclusivity in policy decisions, and preserve its adroitness in resolving local disputes, the regime has established local religious ulama councils.

Human rights, such as freedom of expression, have been drastically weakened, with opposition actors and protesters arrested. In its gender apartheid—from the ban on girls' education beyond primary school to restrictions on women's travel and work—Haibatullah's dogma stands out, even among various authoritarian Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries. But Haibatullah is impervious to criticism from Afghan and other Islamic religious scholars, other Taliban leaders, and other countries.

Yet underneath, the implementation of his edicts, such as restrictions on women in public spaces, girls' education, and public executions, has been slow-walked, as local communities and Taliban officials

dislike many of Haibatullah's policies.

The regime's economic viability The shocks of Western sanctions, a profound liquidity crisis, and the collapse of Afghanistan's economic system linked to the Western war machine produced a staggering contraction of Afghan GDP between 2021 and 2023 by 20%-30%. The economy has stabilized but is stagnating. At least 23 million Afghans, over half of the population, need humanitarian support, even as international aid has declined precipitously because of competing global needs, Western distaste for the Taliban's repression, and Russia's and China's lack of interest in providing humanitarian assistance. The Taliban's effectiveness in reducing the immense corruption that characterized the republic boosted tax and revenue income. In 2023, Afghanistan benefited from brisk regional trade, including coal exports to Pakistan and exports of minerals across the region, amounting to \$1.9 billion in Afghan exports. But in 2024, exports shrank substantially.

PM Modi's Independence Day Speech: A Missed Opportunity to Regain Lost Ground?

By: Pavan K Varma

Since August 15, 1947, when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru addressed a newly independent nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort, it has become an annual tradition for every prime minister to follow. The entire nation eagerly awaits the PM's address, and for decades, the



speech has been broadcast live across the country. There is no prescribed format for the PM's speech. It can touch on any issue, any theme, and engage with the people on any subject or subjects, depending on the PM's choice. Nor is there a time limit for his speech. For the period that the PM is speaking, the nation is a captive audience, awaiting his or her message to the nation, as a guide, leader and mentor. Many prime ministers of different political parties have addressed the nation on this auspicious day.

Not all have been great speakers. Some, like Deve Gowda from the south, struggled with Hindi; others, such as Dr Manmohan Singh, were giant intellectuals but not mass leaders, and their speeches did not ignite the audience. Indira Gandhi spoke simple Hindi, or Hindustani, and held the attention of her audience. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, one of the greatest orators the country has seen, spoke extempore and effortlessly. Narendra Modi is also a very gifted speaker. His natural eloquence and richness of Hindi vocabulary have been great assets to him as a political leader. He also has an acute sense of knowing the pulse of the people, of responding to their emotional senses, and generally using language as a tool to shape public opinion. Why then was his speech at this year's

Independence Day from the Red Fort so lacklustre? Firstly, in my opinion, it was too long. He spoke for 98 minutes, the longest speech ever given by a PM from the Red Fort. A speech of this length begins to lose impact as the attention spans of the audience are shorter. The sultry, humid and hot weather did not help either. With live TV coverage of the event, the nation could see the audience growing restless—not only among the common people but also among the VIPs.



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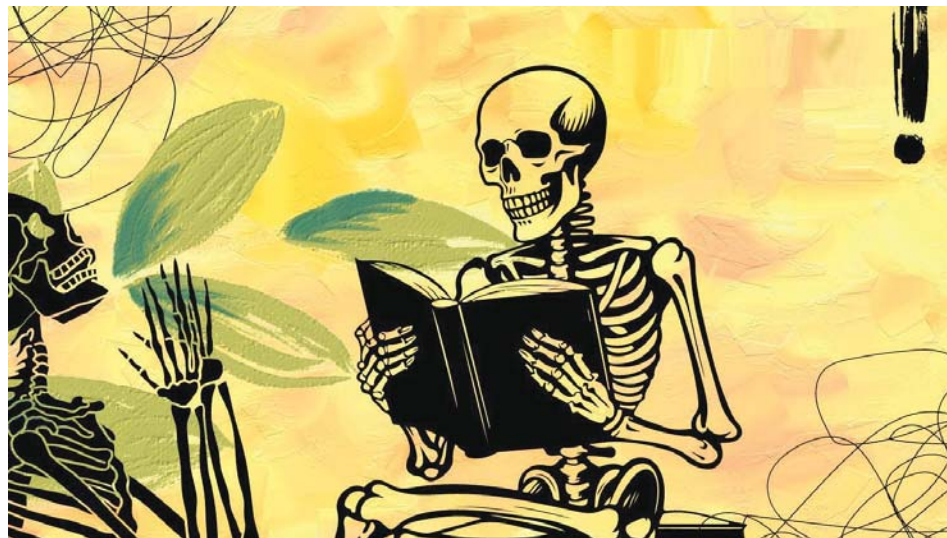
Four Reasons Reading Drives Us Mad - And Why We Still Keep At It

By Rohan Banerjee

To many, reading is a paragon of hobbies. If you take the wide spectrum of leisure activities that humans devote much of their lives to pursue, reading sits snugly in the Goldilocks zone: the sweet spot that defines the perfect avocation. Consider the evidence: an interest in philately, numismatics, or collecting trinkets of any kind really, marks you out as someone who spends their weekends caressing their collection albums and murmuring, 'My precious...'. Opting for a more energetic brand of recreation - like cycling or running, for instance - signals to society that if anyone makes the mistake of approaching you, they will hear about your training regimen in insufferable detail.

Congratulations, You Are A 'Sophisticate' Now

On the other hand, reading - as a hobby - offers a number of benefits. You can win any debate so long as you preface your argument with the words, 'Well, I know that's what you heard on a podcast but I read in a book...'. When your friends are raving about a new movie, you can declare with a sniff, 'To be perfectly honest, the book is



much better...'. Surrounding yourself with books can earn you the admiration of your peers. You don't even need to have read them - merely possessing a well-stocked bookcase can make you a sophisticate (ask any interior designer). In these times of snappy reels, clickbait headlines, and dwindling attention spans, book readers are revered as 'Zen masters' who can ignore the lure of doomscrolling and immerse themselves in the textual world. It is no wonder then that so many parents hope

their children grow up to be readers, or that countless adults strive to adopt reading as a hobby. Yet, you rarely hear anyone talking about the undiagnosed emotional damage caused by books - anyone who has read *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara will know what I mean - and the pernicious effects of reading in general. It is about time someone acted to remedy this grave oversight.

That Perpetual Despair...

Allowing yourself to be consumed by a love

for books can harm you, broadly speaking, in four significant ways. To begin with, it can cause you to be assailed by a sense of despair, a feeling of crushing hopelessness every time you enter a bookshop. As you browse the shelves and stack volumes in the crook of your arm, you realise you will never get around to reading all the books that call out to you. Some are able to make peace with this doleful reality.

Others, those of a more defiant disposition, refuse to be cowed. They redouble their efforts, but since reading capacity is constrained by physical limits, these efforts end up being channelled solely towards the acquisition of books. The Japanese have an elegant word to describe this condition: *tsundoku*. It means a penchant for stockpiling books with the genuine intention to read them all - subject only to the minor requirement of first attaining immortality. If you are also afflicted with this malady, do not be disheartened. Karl Lagerfeld is said to have owned over 3,00,000 books. At least, things are not as grim for you (I hope).

Enter the expansive world of Indian cinema

By Sharmi Adhikary

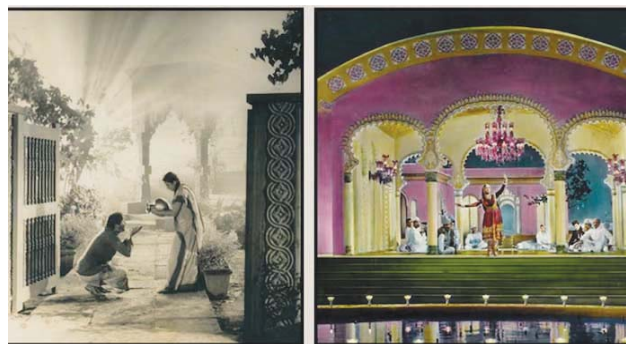
Imagine walking into a large hall to discover memorabilia, photographs, posters, booklets, polaroids, paintings, merchandise and diverse physical as well as pictorial depictions representing Indian cinema right from the silent era to contemporary times that denotes the evolution of movies in this

preserving and transforming over 400,000 unique objects of the Indian and Asian fine and popular arts and craft, and the world cinemas, into a uniquely integrated knowledge base for India Studies.

Tuli's wider vision behind this showcase is of helping to create the first three-year undergraduate programme curricula for India

Studies. "Cinema as a knowledge base has been traditionally confined to the realms of film and cultural studies, but also holds untapped potential as a vast pedagogical resource beyond its conventional boundaries," says Tuli, adding: "This exhibition underscores the cultural, intellectual and

emotional journey of India, which cinema reveals, with an unparalleled power to capture minds, command attention and forge connections, uniting entertainment, art and education like few other cultural disciplines." However comprehensive an exhibition, it can only capture a minor fraction of its subject, in this case, the vast world of Indian cinema. Hence, the main objective, as per the master curator, is to capture the essence, its unique cinematic energy, its historical context, and most importantly the high aesthetic and intellectual standard of the art objects which make a film and its impact.



country. The interesting aspect becomes the documentation that no one even thought about maybe. It is to shed light on the famous, the not-so-known and even the forgotten aspects of Indian cinema that The Tuli Research Centre for India Studies (TRIS) is presenting a visionary exhibition, titled 'The World's Greatest Mela—Respecting India's Cinematic Heritage', curated by TRIS founder and president Neville Tuli. The show, on at the Visual Arts Gallery and Open Palm Court at New Delhi's India Habitat Centre till August 25, encapsulates three decades of Tuli's dedication to researching, archiving,

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