



The South Asian



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\$1

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Are Kylie and Timothee still together?



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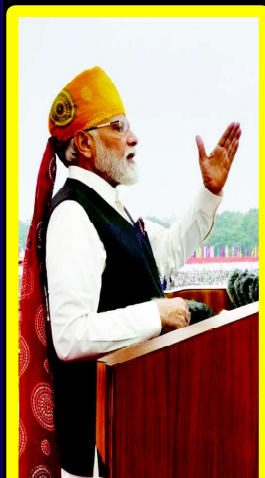
## World's Deadliest Wildfires

What caused deadliest US blazes in more than 100 years?



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Modi says India's economy will be among the top three in the world within five years



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## 7-Year Jail or Lifer

Govt Gives Teeth to Sedition 2.0 Under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill



(Sai Bureau)-Even as the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Bill, 2023 is being vetted by the Parliament's standing committee, debates and deliberations continue over the proposed section of the bill, specifically Section 150, which will replace Section 124A of IPC, known as sedition.

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Box Office Collection Day 6: Is There Anything Sunny Deol's "Typhoon, Tsunami, Hurricane" Can't Do?



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# Celebration of 77th Independence Day of India



The 77th Independence Day of India was celebrated in Washington D.C. with a flag-hoisting ceremony on 15 August, 2023 at India House. The ceremony was attended by a number of Indians, Diaspora members, students and friends of India.

2. Ambassador of India H.E. Taranjit Singh Sandhu paid floral tributes at the Mahatma Gandhi memorial in Washington D.C. Following this, Ambassador unfurled the tricolor at India House, which was followed by singing of the National Anthem. The Address by the Hon'ble Rashtrapati on the eve of India's 77th Independence Day was played during the ceremony.

3. In his remarks, Ambassador noted that this year's celebrations are special, as the commemorations of 75 years of Independence being marked as the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' culminate, and the country continues her march into the Amrit Kaal- the journey into the next quarter century, towards 100 years of independence. This year also marks India's G20 presidency; guided by ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', the country has worked to promote global good and has infused new energy into the international development agenda.



## Independence Day Message



2023 – Another year to respect the heroes, to celebrate freedom and stand for harmony. Let's assure to make our country proud while celebrating the 76th Independence Day.

In the hustle and bustle of our work lives, every so often, time confines us to rejoice the important events that united us as a nation.

One such meaningful occasion is India's Independence Day, a day that marks the end of British colonial rule and the birth of a free and independent India.

This day serves as a time to tribute the sacrifices of our freedom fighters and reflect on the value of unity, diversity and patriotism.

Let's feel proud to be a part of our glorious nation and educate the next generation about the struggles and hoist the tricolour high. We honour the past, celebrate the present, and embrace the future – all in the name of freedom.

Happy Independence Day!

Vande Mataram

Jai Hind! Jai Bharat!

**Jagdish Sewhani**  
President

The American India Public Affairs Committee



Hempstead Town Supervisor Don Clavin and the Hempstead Town Board celebrated August 15th India Independence Day and Raised Indian Flag In the honor of 76th Anniversary of India.

Photo courtesy: Zahid Syed Facebook



India Independence Day Flag Hoisting was held at by Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino and other Town Board official's.

Harry Malhotra Facebook





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## 'Diversity, Indian dream': Lawmaker reveals what PM Modi told US delegation

**After his meeting with PM Modi, US Congressman Ro Khanna said the Indian leader deeply believes in the Indian dream and considers diversity the core element of his vision.**

(Sai Buearu)-A high-level US delegation, including Congressman Ro Khanna, recently met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and foreign minister S Jaishankar, in a bid to strengthen the strategic and cultural partnership between the two nations in the 21st century. Congressman Khanna described the trip as an "extraordinary success".

Upon meeting the delegation, Prime Minister Modi took to X (formerly Twitter) and said, "Glad to receive a Congressional delegation from US, including co-chairs of India Caucus in the House of Representatives, Rep. @RoKhanna and Rep. @michaelgwaltz. Strong bipartisan support from the US Congress is instrumental in further elevating India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership."

External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar's post on X highlighted the expectations and aspirations of the people of India that he shared with the delegation: "A good interaction with US Congressional delegation today. Glad they could join as we celebrated #IndependenceDay. Discussed the transformation underway in India, especially its outcomes of better



governance. Shared our aspirations and expectations for Amritkaal. Also exchanged views on our advancing bilateral partnership. Shared perspectives on the global situation and our collaboration on multilateral, regional and global issues."

Co-chair of the India caucus, Congressman Michael Waltz, posted, "HUGE opportunities for American companies & agriculture in the US-India partnership!"

Among the crucial matters discussed was the General Electric (GE) jet engine deal, which Khanna believes is central to jumpstart the relationship between the two countries. "The GE deal is a transformational one and passing it can build confidence on the

vision of India as a strategic defence partner," said Khanna. He highlighted the challenge faced due to export control regimes, acknowledging that while there were improvements, it is still tough for Indian companies to navigate the process.

Khanna's meeting with PM Modi was marked by mutual respect and enthusiasm. Along with expressing his gratitude to Modi for his time, Khanna spoke about how the Indian leader deeply believes in the "Indian dream" - the rise and economic empowerment of India. Modi was keen to hear about Khanna's experience as an Indian-American, and the two discussed the need for diversity, which Modi believes is a core

element of his vision for India.

Ro Khanna said, "He deeply believes in the Indian dream. He is most focused on the rise of India, economic empowerment of India, the respect that India may have. He was curious to hear my own story as an Indian American." Number of us talked about India needs to be diverse and he said diversity is the core element of his vision. He said that he brought it up in his speech on August 15 and that there is place for everyone, every faith, every sect, every diverse background."

The meeting with Jaishankar was equally significant, lasting close to two hours, and covering a range of subjects - from defence and economic

partnerships to technology. Talks also turned towards India's historical ties with Russia, its relationship with China and the commitment towards ensuring no violence targeted towards any religious sect. On the issue of Haryana and Manipur violence Khanna said Jaishankar conveyed to the delegation that violence has no place in India. "Number of us in the delegation said that we need to make sure that there is no religious violence, that diversity is celebrated and that we should have a pluralistic democracy. Jaishankar said that pluralism is at the heart of his vision for India. He said that the violence is painful and that it has no place in India and there is every effort to ensure that there isn't going to be violence or hatred targeted towards any religious sect," said the US lawmaker. The US delegation also attended the Independence Day event on August 15, with Khanna observing the emphasis on the 'Indian dream' and the need to acknowledge and respect minority rights. As Khanna put it, it was noticed by people and greatly appreciated by Indian political leaders.

## Chandrayaan-3 Vikram Lander completes deboosting, one step away from landing

(SaiBuearu)- The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) successfully completed the deboosting maneuver with the Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander at 4 pm bring it in a much tighter, and closer orbit around the Moon. Isro said that the health of the Vikram lander is normal.

This critical step brings the spacecraft closer to its planned soft landing on the Moon's south polar region, scheduled for August 23. The Vikram lander, named after Dr. Vikram A Sarabhai, the father of the Indian space program, was launched into space by the LVM3 rocket from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on July 14. It entered lunar orbit on August 5 and successfully separated from its propulsion module on August 17. The deboosting process was a crucial maneuver that involved slowing down the spacecraft to position itself in an orbit where the farthest point (Apolune) is 157 km. The Indian space agency will again conduct a deboosting maneuver on Sunday at 8:00 pm. This strategic positioning

serves as the starting point for the anticipated soft landing attempt on the Moon's south polar region.

Meanwhile, the propulsion module will remain in its current orbit, collecting valuable research data over the course of potentially months or even years. The scientific payload, Spectro-polarimetry of Habitable Planet Earth (SHAPE), onboard the propulsion module, will conduct a spectroscopic study of the Earth's atmosphere and measure the variations in polarisation from the clouds on Earth. Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-up mission to Chandrayaan-2 that aims to land a spacecraft on the moon and deploy a rover to explore the lunar surface. The rover will collect data on the composition and geology of the moon, providing scientists with invaluable insights into the history and evolution of our nearest celestial neighbor. This mission marks a significant advancement in India's space exploration endeavors, placing the nation alongside the likes of the US, Russia, and China who have successfully carried out missions to the Moon.



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**GANESH VISARJAN**  
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Sept 24<sup>th</sup> 2023, 6:00 pm  
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## Heavy rains trigger landslides, block highway in Manipur, 500 trucks stranded



(News Agency)- Heavy rains triggered massive landslides in Manipur's Noney district, blocking the Imphal-Silchar highway due to which at least 500 goods vehicles are stranded, officials said on Thursday.

The landslides happened on the National Highway 37 between Irang and Awangkhum part 2, Khongsang and Awangkhum, and Rangkhui village on Wednesday, they said.

Work is underway to clear the road, and re-start movement of traffic, officials said. Incessant rains over the last few days triggered the landslides, they said.

At least 500 goods vehicles are stranded in different parts of the highway due to

the landslides, they added.

In June last year, a massive landslide hit a railway construction site in the district, killing at least 61 people. The landslide happened at Tupul railway yard construction site of the Jiribam-Imphal railway line on June 30.

The supply of essential items is feared to be affected due to the landslides in the violence-hit state, where road blockades, which went on for days, affected the movement of goods vehicles, crippling daily lives.

Ethnic clashes broke out in the state in May, and have been continuing for more than three months, leading to the deaths of over 160 people.

## Andhra Pradesh: Another leopard captured on Tirumala walkway, second in a week

(News Agency)- A week after a 6-year-old girl was killed in a leopard attack on the Tirumala walkway in Andhra Pradesh, forest officials captured a second leopard from the area on Thursday morning.

According to sources, the female leopard was trapped in a cage at the same spot where another leopard was trapped three days ago. They said cages were set up at three different spots, including Mokali Mitta, Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple, and at the 35th turn atop the hill. A forest department official said the leopard was trapped in a cage that was set up at the Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple in Tirupati. He said the authorities had trapped three leopards in 50 days. Tirupati Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Satish Reddy said, "We found two leopards within a 500 m radius of the Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple in a week and it was the third capture in 50 days."

He said they had moved another

trapped leopard to the Sri Venkateswara Zoological Park in Tirupati three days ago, adding that trap cameras had been set up for leopards.

He said the leopard got trapped in the cage at 2 am and was being moved to the SV Zoo.

The senior forest official said



veterinarians were checking if there was any human flesh in the freshly captured leopard's stomach.

He said the forest department will take a call on whether to keep it in the zoo or release it into the forest.

"We have set up around 320 cameras to track leopards. Trap cameras have also been set up on the Srivari Mettu path (the shortest way to reach Tirumala on foot)," he said.

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f t y i



# 'Want to live with dignity,' Muslims in Haryana tell US Congressman Ro Khanna

**US Congressman Ro Khanna, who was leading a bipartisan delegation to Delhi, met violence-affected Muslims from Haryana, who explained to him what happened in Nuh and Gurugram. "We love India, and we want to live with dignity," the group told Khanna.**

(News Agency)-US Congressman Ro Khanna met violence-affected Muslims from Haryana, Umar Khalid's father, Tushar Gandhi and a group from Manipur on Wednesday. During the meeting, the group narrated what happened to them and said those who protested had to pay a price with their homes being destroyed, sources told India Today.

Commenting on his meeting with violence-affected Muslims, Khanna told India Today, "One of the first things they said to me was that they love India and lived here for generations. They just want to be able to live in India with dignity and respect. In many cases, they have that experience with ordinary society, but they wanted to share their perspective because of their love for India. It was important for me too to hear from the people on the ground. I always do that back home in my constituency."

The US Congressman was leading a bipartisan delegation to Delhi to participate in the Independence Day celebration on August 15. The delegation also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar at Hyderabad



House in New Delhi.

The Indian-American lawmaker held separate meetings with three groups of people where sources said, "they had a frank conversation, shedding light on the tough situations faced by the Indian citizens who are living under fear and insecurity." Tweeting about his meeting with Ro Khanna, Tushar Gandhi wrote, "I met with US Congressman @RoKhanna in Mumbai. I briefed him about the situation in India, the nation's plunge into an abyss of hate, divisiveness and violence. He, I



believe, wanted to meet the great grandson of Mahatma Gandhi who he says is his inspiration."

Gandhi added, "I was warned that Ro oscillates. I discovered a sincere man and a shrewd politician. No better, no worse. I told him, like in 1930 what Bapu asked humankind, secular liberal inclusive India asks for world sympathy in battle of right against might today. And that we looked at people like him for it. Ro met with the PM and Union Ministers. They thwarted his meeting with Rahul Gandhi, but he

met Umer Khalid's father and representatives from violence ravaged Manipur." While appreciating Ro Khanna for meeting these diverse groups and finding out for himself about the situation in India, Tushar Gandhi also asked Khanna to stand up to the right wing elements in America as well.

"Now I hope he will support our cause and stand up to the Hindu right wing in the US and not go soft on them. @RoKhanna we count on you keep showing the same courage you showed in Delhi," wrote Gandhi.

## RO KHANNA MEETS KUKIS

Members of the Kuki tribe from Manipur were more vocal about their problems and wanted their voices to be heard. They spoke of their uprooted condition in a place where they don't have the majority. They are vulnerable and often taken advantage of. Hence, they made an appeal for help and for to be given a voice that would support their cause. "They feel vulnerable and they wanted to make sure that they have some voice. They are outnumbered. They don't have the same representation in the state or in the parliament.

## 81 dead in rain fury in Himachal, Uttarakhand, flash floods in Punjab, rescue efforts on



(News Agency)-Incessant rains and landslides killed 81 people in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand as operations continued to rescue the injured and pull out bodies from debris due to house collapses in several places. The weather office has predicted isolated but heavy rainfall in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand in the next few days. **HIMACHAL RAIN FURY: DEATH TOLL CLIMBS TO 71** The death toll in rain-battered Himachal Pradesh rose to 71 on Wednesday with more bodies being recovered. "At least 71

people have died in the past three days and 13 are still missing. A total of 57 bodies have been recovered since Sunday night," Principal Secretary (Revenue) Onkar Chand Sharma said, reported news agency PTI. Heavy rains have lashed the hill state since Sunday, triggering landslides in several districts, including Shimla, where three areas- Summer Hill, Fagli and Krishna Nagar are badly hit by landslips. According to the state emergency operation centre, in total, 214 people have died in rain-related incidents in the state since the

**At least 81 people were killed in rain-related incidents in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Several houses collapsed in many places due to incessant downpours.**

onset of monsoon on June 24, while 38 are still missing.

"Rescue operations are going on in Summer Hill and Krishna Nagar areas. A body was recovered from Summer Hill site," Shimla Deputy Commissioner Aditya Negi told PTI.

He said so far 13 bodies have been recovered from Summer Hill, five from Fagli and two from Krishna Nagar. Some bodies are still feared buried in the debris of the Shiva temple at Summer Hill that collapsed on Monday.

About 15 houses in Krishna Nagar have been vacated and the families shifted to safer places, fearing landslides due to incessant rains.

### RESCUE EFFORTS ON

1,731 people have been rescued from flood-affected areas of Indora and Fatehpur sub-divisions of Kangra district in the last 24 hours, said Deputy

Commissioner Nipun Jindal on Wednesday.

The operation to evacuate people from flood-affected areas is going on with the assistance of Air Force helicopters, Army personnel, and NDRF, Jindal said. Himachal Pradesh has already received 742 mm of rainfall in 54 days of monsoon this year against the season's average of 730 mm it recorded between June 1 and September 30, a weather official said. The rainfall recorded in the state this July broke all records for the month in the last 50 years, Shimla Meteorological Centre Director Surinder Paul told PTI. **UTTARAKHAND TOLL CLIMBS TO 10**

Four bodies, including those of a couple and their son, were recovered from the debris at a resort in Uttarakhand's Lakshman Jhula that was hit by a landslide following heavy rain on Monday.

Two bodies were retrieved late on Tuesday and two others on Wednesday, the SSP Office in Pauri said.

The death toll in rain-related incidents in Uttarakhand has risen to 10 with the recovery of these four bodies. Traffic continued to remain disrupted with the Pauri-Kotdwar-Dugadda national highway blocked by landslide debris at Amsaur. A stretch of the Rishikesh-Badrinath national highway was washed away near Pipalkoti Bharenpani, the state's disaster control room said.

Efforts are underway to reopen the roads, it said.

### FLASH FLOODS IN PUNJAB

Punjab is facing fresh flooding with many areas of Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur and Rupnagar districts submerged following the release of excess water from the Pong and the Bhakra dams.



# Naveen Patnaik's shoutout to chef Vikas Khanna as Konark wheel replica graces Times Square

**Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik had a personal message for celebrity chef Vikas Khanna after he brought a huge replica of the Konark Sun Temple wheel to Times Square, New York**

(News Agency)-In the bustling heart of New York City, a piece of Odisha's rich cultural heritage found its place. On India's 77th Independence Day, celebrated Michelin star chef and entrepreneur Vikas Khanna unveiled a grand replica of the iconic Konark wheel in Times Square.

This caught the attention of none other than the state's Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, who took to X (formerly Twitter) to express his admiration and gratitude. "Congratulate entrepreneur and celebrity chef Vikas Khanna on unveiling a replica of Konark Temple wheel at Times Square, New York on the occasion of India's 77th Independence Day. Thank Mr Khanna for showcasing Odisha's timeless sculpture before the world and appreciate the artists for the splendid craftsmanship," Naveen Patnaik posted. The Konark wheel, a symbol of Odisha's rich cultural heritage, is part of the Sun Temple in Konark. The temple features



24 wheels, each representing a month of the year, and the eight spokes of each wheel signify the eight divisions of the day.

Khanna unveiled the especially made Chakra Sculpture as members of the Indian community turned out in large numbers to participate in Independence



Day festivities at Times Square. After working to bring the Chakra sculpture to New York City for nearly five years, Khanna said it's a "dream come true" and an emotional moment for him to have the sculpture unveiled at Times Square on the occasion of India's Independence Day.

The Indo-American Arts Council (IAAC), in collaboration with The Consulate General of India in New York and The City of New York, held the Inauguration Ceremony of The Indian Independence Exhibition, showcasing "the awe-inspiring Chakra Sculpture, a symbol of India's rich cultural heritage and shared values between the two nations."

The sculpture will later be moved to Khanna's upcoming restaurant in New York City.

"For the diaspora, for the younger generations, they will get a reference of seeing something from India - so pure and majestic at the same time," he said. Born in Amritsar, Vikas Khanna has made a name for himself in the culinary world. He climbed the ladder of success through sheer hard work and determination, earning a Michelin Star for his restaurant Junoon in 2010. The 51-year-old is also a judge on MasterChef India.

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## After Stir Over AP Dhillon's 'Tricolour Shoes', PKEs Claim Punjabi Singer 'Supports Khalistan Agenda'

(News Agency)- Pro-Khalistan entities have claimed that Canada-based Punjabi singer AP Dhillon is a Khalistan supporter, based on his choice of footwear that recently caused a stir ahead of Independence Day. In a video message shared on social media on Friday, Sikhs For Justice chief Gurpatwant Singh Pannu said Dhillon supports the Khalistani agenda and then talks about how the Indian flag was burned in Amritsar on August 15.

Pannu, a 'designated' terrorist heading an organisation declared unlawful for allegedly fuelling pro-Khalistan sentiment in India, shared photos of Dhillon wearing "Tricolour shoes". The photos are from the singer's social media, where he is promoting his new track With You featuring actress Banita Sandhu.

According to intelligence agencies, it is also possible that pro-Khalistan entities are trying to defame the singer, who is in India to promote the song. Since Dhillon is based out of Canada, agencies are tracking developments related to these claims.

Officials said these claims will be probed as

earlier, too, Punjabi singers have been involved in Khalistan-related controversies while some of them have also been questioned by the NIA in a terror case linked to gangsters in Punjab. In terms of leadership, however, not much is left of pro-

Khalistan groups and Pannu is the only leader running an "anti-India" campaign. Dhillon was recently slammed for wearing footwear in the colours of the Indian flag after he posted a video promoting his latest song on his official Instagram handle. The shoes he was sporting left the internet

miffed and some pointed out that they bore a resemblance to the Tricolour. Many accused the singer of disrespecting the national flag with one internet user wondering whether his choice, right before Independence Day, was a deliberate act while another was simply appalled at his actions. With You is a romantic track with a music video featuring exotic locations and a couple on a romantic excursion. The lyrics have been written by Shinda Kahlon, who frequently collaborates with Dhillon. The singer is currently in India for his upcoming docuseries titled AP Dhillon: First of a Kind.



## 21 Indian students sent back by USA immigration



(News Agency)- In a shocking development, as many as 21 Indian students were sent back by the USA Immigration department over complaints about the lack of necessary documents. As per reports, these 21 Indian students failed to answer the questions related to their stay in the USA, the academics at their universities and their financial resources. This is why they were sent back by the USA immigration. Once the student is sent back by the immigration department, he/she will not be able to travel to the USA for another 5 years. This comes as a big shock to the students who are now looking to travel to the USA for higher studies. The immigration department has started to take affirmative action on the new international students.

## Kerala government blames Rahul Gandhi for not standing against Centre

(News Agency)- Kerala submitted to her. It appears that the Finance Minister K N Balagopal on Friday slammed Rahul Gandhi and UDF MPs share the BJP's interest in trying to impose economic sanctions Congress-led United Democratic Front on Kerala, the minister alleged.

(UDF) MPs for playing "petty politics" and not cooperating with the state government over the financial issue. Balagopal even attacked the Centre for reducing the state's tax share and borrowing limit and said that despite the financial crisis being faced by the state, the LDF government has assured assistance in all sectors and expects to spend around Rs 19,000 crore during Onam season. "Centre is trying to impose economic sanctions on Kerala and the bitter part is the UDF MPs from the state are playing petty politics. Important leaders like Rahul Gandhi are not acting in the interest of the people of Kerala," Balagopal said.

The minister further alleged that Congress-led UDF MPs had agreed to stand united on the financial issues being faced by the state, but none of them agreed to meet Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and sign the memorandum to be



Balagopal said that on the income side, Kerala's situation is improving but there is a sharp decline in financial assistance provided by the Centre. "Generally, there is a balance between the divisive pool and division between the centre and the state. But this time there is an 80 percent cut in the Centre's grant. Earlier, Kerala was getting around 45 per cent from the Union government and 55 per cent from the state, which is an all-India average, but the Centre has reduced its share to less than 30 per cent now," Kerala finance minister said.

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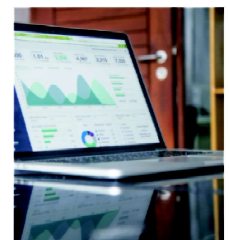
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## Trump's Legal Mess And American Democracy

These are surreal times in the US. Even as the political system is gearing up for next year's Presidential elections, the legal drama being played out in various courtrooms is shaping the political dynamic more potently than political debates. In fact, politics has been subsumed by the legal issues surrounding key political actors, most importantly, former US President Donald Trump. He will be turning himself in to police in the state of Georgia, where he is likely to be booked at the Fulton County Jail in Atlanta before being arraigned at the courthouse. Along with 18 others, Trump was indicted earlier this week for alleged attempts to overturn his 2020 election loss in the state.

While this is only the latest one, Trump has been criminally indicted in three other cases, including in a federal investigation into efforts to overturn the result of the 2020 presidential election, his alleged mishandling of classified material after he left the White House, and paying hush-money to the adult film star Stormy Daniels before the 2016 election. In any other time and for any other politician, any of this would have been the end of the political road. But such are vagaries of American politics today that Trump seems to be using these as badges of honour. In his usual acerbic style, Trump has decided to hold a "major news conference" next week to present an "irrefutable report" on voter fraud from three years ago.

And this is not the only drama in town. US President Joe Biden's son, Hunter Biden's shenanigans in the courtroom have not been any less riveting. He has been under federal investigation since 2019 and recently, after a plea deal on tax and gun charges against him collapsed, a special counsel was appointed by the Justice Department to look into his case, with a jury trial looking imminent. Where President Biden has predictably stood by his son, the Republicans have gone after Hunter Biden, focusing on his business interests in China and Ukraine. In fact, only after it emerged that then President Trump had pressured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate Hunter's dealings with the Ukrainian natural gas company, Burisma Holdings (where Hunter served on the board) did the entire process of Trump's first impeachment start in 2019 for soliciting foreign interference in the 2020 presidential election.

All the sleaze, corruption and political brinkmanship evident in these episodes is usually associated with Third world countries with weak institutions and personalized politics. Washington is usually at the forefront of advising such nations on how to conduct their domestic affairs. But today the shoe is in the other foot. The US looks like a pale replica of

its glorious past as a democracy. It is unable to set its own house in order and its credibility across the world is being challenged with autocracies like China and Russia trying to make a case for the superiority of their own models of political governance. It is laughable, but that's what it has come down to in the age of Trump and Hunter Biden.

Trump continues to see his support rise among grassroots Republicans. The more indictments he receives, the stronger the resolve of his supporters to send him back to the White House. There is an alternative reality that shapes the worldview of Trump supporters where their own nation's institutions are seen as corrupt and partial. Personalities tower over institutions, something that America's founding fathers tried so hard to avoid in the way they framed the constitution. The Republican nomination process has already begun and monthly debates among the party's nominees are starting next week. Trump remains far ahead of everyone else with his campaign donations overflowing and his supporters being the loudest. As his trials begin later this year, he will have to manage his court appearances with his campaign for the Republican nomination. Trump's supporters believe in his assessment that the legal cases against him are aimed at preventing him from another White House run. Their strong conviction in this argument is reflective of how deep goes the social and political polarization in the US. So deep that huge constituencies are willing to bet on the worst intentions of others. Due to the support for Trump in the Republican primaries, instead of taking on the ex-President, his Republican opponents have been forced to criticize the weaponisation of the American legal process.

This breakdown of the social order in the US is now firmly embedded in its politics. Trump is just one manifestation of that reality. His campaign may or may not succeed but the challenges for American democracy will continue. For many of his supporters, the question is whether they continue to support Trump politically, knowing well that Biden had defeated him last time in swing states. The primary campaign is different from the national one and most Republican voters will have to take it into account as well.

But Trump knows how to play to the gallery. Courtrooms will be his stage. The more media time he gets, the better it is for him to rally his base. His Republican opponents remain unimpressive so far, failing to make a mark. Trump's actions, in the court and outside, will continue to dominate the election cycle, helping him in easily entering the Presidential contest. What this does to American democracy is, of course, another matter.

By Harsh V. Pant

## Can Lab-Grown Meat Satisfy India's Growing Food Needs?

The US Department of Agriculture's recent decision to approve the sale and distribution of cultured meat, produced by Good Meat and Upside Foods, has led to renewed global interest in the food technology.

This makes the US the second country in the world, behind Singapore, to have the products available for sale.

But cultured meat is not only being produced in California. There is also a fledgling industry in India.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India is currently reviewing the cultured food sector and may consider granting the regulatory approval for such products to be sold in India.

Cultured meat, also known as lab-grown meat and by various other names, represents a groundbreaking development in the food industry.

It involves cultivating animal cells in controlled environments while eliminating the need for traditional livestock farming and slaughter. Stem cells derived from animal sources are artificially kept alive in bioreactors, grown to a certain abundance, and then harvested and customised for human consumption.

With more than eight billion people living on the planet, a number expected to increase to nine billion people by 2040, demand for meat and other sources of protein will continue to increase. Ensuring sufficient food supply will remain a challenge. These pressures are likely to be particularly acute in South Asia and Southeast Asia where countries are facing massive population pressures distributed over a smaller land mass than equivalent population increases in Global North countries.

In 2022 a report from India indicated that among a population of 1.4 billion, only 16.6 percent of men and 29.4 percent of women between the ages 15 and 49

exclusively followed a vegetarian diet. Solutions will have to be found in the next few years as currently available food resources are diminishing fast.

To meet the surging demand, cultured meat is expected to offer a viable solution that is economical, slaughter-free, environmentally sustainable and safe, although the technology has yet to be applied and proven at scale.

Traditional livestock farming, a booming sector in India, poses environmental challenges like deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions and high water consumption. Cultured meat offers the potential to bolster food security by providing a consistent and dependable nutrition source independent of weather conditions or land availability.

India's cultured meat industry, however, faces some unique challenges in getting off the ground. The production of cultured meat requires advanced technological infrastructure.

Developing the proof-of-the-concept at the lab level is one thing but sustaining a large scale production, treatment and distribution of cultured meat remains a critical challenge. Cultured meat production is significantly more expensive than conventional methods of meat production due to the costs of the growth medium, scaffolding material and technological support. It also necessitates strict safety and nutritional assessments and fair market practices, including clear labeling and traceability of cell sources.

Fetal bovine serum, a costly ingredient in the culture medium, is one of the main contributors to higher expenses. Finding alternatives to fetal bovine serum could significantly bring the cost of cultured meat down, and this technology is already being developed in India.

By Pawan K. Dhar

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# The new Trump charges are shocking. But his White House odds won't change

By Lloyd Green

On Monday night, a grand jury in Fulton county, Georgia, delivered a 41-count, 98-page felony indictment. Donald Trump and the names of 18 co-defendants litter its pages. Prosecutors allege that Trump, Rudy Giuliani, Mark Meadows, John Eastman, Sidney Powell and a passel of lackeys illegally interfered with the 2020 election and violated Georgia's anti-racketeering statute.

Trump helmed a "criminal enterprise", the indictment alleges. He now stands in the shoes of a purported mob boss. Said differently, the likely 2024 Republican presidential nominee personifies the spirit of Tony Soprano.

In hindsight, the so-called "perfect" phone call was anything but that. His request that Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's secretary of state, "find 11,780 votes" has returned to haunt him. "On or about the 2nd day of January 2021, DONALD JOHN TRUMP and MARK RANDALL MEADOWS committed the felony offense of SOLICITATION OF VIOLATION OF OATH BY PUBLIC OFFICER," Count 1 of the indictment contends. The duo had unlawfully solicited



Raffensperger "to engage in conduct constituting the felony offense of Violation of Oath by Public Officer ...."

Meanwhile, Giuliani, a former federal prosecutor turned Trump consigliere, allegedly peddled lie after lie to state legislators. According to the indictment, Giuliani repeatedly "made false statements concerning fraud in the November 3, 2020, presidential election". In June 2021, a New York court suspended his law license. Facing a raft of investigations, he seeks to sell his Manhattan apartment for \$6.5m.

The 45th president's rhetorical attacks on witnesses, prosecutors and the court pose a potential legal headache here.

Earlier in the day, Trump trashed Geoff Duncan, Georgia's Republican former lieutenant governor, who was among the last witnesses to testify before the grand jury. Georgia law authorizes bail only where the defendant poses "no significant risk of intimidating witnesses or otherwise obstructing the administration of justice".

"Trump was the worst candidate ever, in the history of our party," Duncan remarked as he left Monday night. "We are going to have to pivot from there." Maybe, but not before the 2024 election. Georgia joins Michigan in charging Republican activists in connection with efforts to allegedly subvert the 2020 election. Last month, Dana

Nessel, Michigan's Democratic attorney general, announced the indictment of 16 Republicans who she said falsely stated that they were Michigan's "duly elected and qualified electors" for president and vice president.

The message of the insurrection lives. On Saturday, Representative Matt Gaetz of Florida told Trump and Iowa Republicans that "only through force do we make any change..." Days earlier, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene laughed about the idea of executing her political rivals. Last week, the FBI fatally shot an armed Utah man who had threatened Joe Biden. Violence lurks.

Seven in 10 Republicans view the Biden presidency as seriously tainted or illegitimate. That perception will further solidify. Merrick Garland, the US attorney general, recently announced that a special counsel would investigate Hunter Biden, the president's wayward son. Garland had expanded the remit of David Weiss, the Trump-appointed US attorney in charge of the prosecution of Hunter Biden.

At the same time, a filing by the US Department of Justice revealed that the government and

the younger Biden's legal team had reached an impasse. Practically speaking, the likelihood of both Trump and Hunter standing trial is no longer speculative.

For Biden and the Democrats this is a "Houston, we have a problem" moment. Given Hunter's apparent attraction to drugs, guns, money and sex, his trial would possess the trappings of a circus and soap opera, complete with a readily digestible narrative. But it doesn't end there. A trial stands to shine a spotlight on Biden Inc and the ways that the president's family seems to have cashed in on the Biden name during Joe Biden's time in public life. Beyond that, and equally worrisome for Democrats, is the possibility that the trial might amplify the president's silence, if not acquiescence or more, in his family's financial endeavors.

On the one hand, Biden as a senator was among the poorer members of the august body. "I entered as one of the poorest men in Congress, left one of the poorest men in government - in Congress and as vice president," he said during a 2020 debate. On the other hand, Biden managed to live well, or at least well enough.

# Modi's 10 Years And The Quest For 2047

By Bibek Debroy and Aditya Sinha

Every year on the 15th of August, millions of Indians tune in to hear the Prime Minister's Independence Day speech from the Red Fort. This tradition, started in 1947, transcends mere ritual and stands as a symbol of India's national unity. In 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hoisted the National Flag for the 77th Independence Day, matching the record of his predecessor, Dr Manmohan Singh, by hoisting the Tricolour for the tenth consecutive time. Considering 2023 is the final year of Narendra Modi's second term as the Prime Minister of India from 2019-2024, the speech held significant importance. He outlined his government's achievements, emphasizing on how the government has "reformed, performed, and transformed" India. Additionally, he introduced the template for the "Amrit Kaal," a strategic plan aiming to position India as a



developed nation by 2047.

This year's speech by Prime Minister Modi resonated with a renewed spirit of unity and development. In a heartfelt acknowledgment, he emphasized that India stands with the people of Manipur, underlining the importance of national solidarity. By highlighting the triple pillars of "Demography, Democracy, and Diversity," he showcased India's unique strengths that will guide our nation's growth trajectory. The mention of the Fisheries and Ayush ministries underscored the

holistic approach to development, catering to sectors often left on the margins. Drawing inspiration from the ancient Indian philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which translates to "the world is one family," PM Modi reinstated India's role on the global stage. However, the call to combat the "three evils" - Corruption, Dynasty, and Appeasement - was a clarion call, urging every Indian to rally against the perennial challenges hampering our nation's true potential. Through this speech, India was reminded of its

inherent strengths, its global responsibilities, and the battles it still needs to fight at home.

Further, the Prime Minister's emphasis on the youth's transformative role echoes the observations made by eminent sociologist Anthony Giddens, who posited that youth are the harbingers of societal transformation. Giddens' scholarship suggests that the dynamism and adaptability of young minds often propel societies into new paradigms of thought and action. Recognizing the accomplishments of the Indian youth in diverse domains, Prime Minister aligns himself with this perspective. He acknowledged the dispersion of innovation and progress beyond metropolitan areas into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, signalling the permeation of developmental ethos across the India.

As the Prime Minister celebrates the endeavors of young technocrats and sportspersons emerging from the most modest

backgrounds, he resonates with Giddens' idea that change often stems from the most unexpected quarters. The youth's endeavors, ranging from satellite development to revolutionary technological solutions, epitomize their innate curiosity and quest for excellence. By placing unwavering trust in the youth's potential and reassuring them of the nation's capability to furnish infinite opportunities, the Prime Minister is not just lauding their present achievements but also envisioning a future sculpted by their ingenuity and drive. In doing so, he reiterates the scholarly consensus that youth are not just passive inheritors of the present but the proactive shapers of the future. India's trinity of demography, democracy, and diversity is pivotal for its ambition to be a developed nation by 2047. The country boasts a youthful majority, presenting a valuable demographic advantage poised to boost economic growth through innovation and entrepreneurship.





# INDIA Alliance - Split Wide Open?

By Bharti Mishra Nath

Just two meetings old, the opposition INDIA alliance is in a state of flux. Parties who joined forces to take on the BJP-led NDA in next year's national election are struggling to speak the same language.

After a meeting yesterday by Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, a party leader claimed that the Congress would contest all seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which rules Delhi, said if the Congress had already decided to contest on its own, then there was no point attending the next 'INDIA' meeting scheduled in Mumbai on August 31-September 1.

As the Congress disowned its leader's comments, both parties took a step back.

Delhi minister and AAP leader Gopal Rai clarified: "Congress party specified that statements

of some of its leaders were individual remarks. I think some patience is required at present and that there will be a way forward by the next meeting of the INDIA alliance to be held in Mumbai."

Given their history in Delhi, it is difficult to believe AAP will part with even one seat for the Congress.

The Congress's vote share was abysmal in the 2019 parliamentary election. Even if AAP agrees to accommodate the Congress, it will likely leave one, at best two seats. It is quite another matter that AAP may not win even a single Lok Sabha seat in Delhi. Despite its Delhi polls sweep, AAP scored a duck in the Lok Sabha election.

However, as INDIA allies, AAP and Congress can have a productive win-win seat-sharing in Punjab, which sends 13 seats to Lok Sabha. Probably, they

could also consider collaborating in Haryana.

Even as it spars with AAP over Delhi, the Congress is "concerned" over Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Sharad Pawar's meetings with nephew Ajit Pawar, who recently rebelled and joined hands with the BJP.

The Congress is pressing for clarification from Sharad Pawar on his meetings with his estranged nephew, now the Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra after his coup. Sharad Pawar insists that these are family meetings, and that he will stay with the INDIA alliance and any collaboration with the BJP.

But the Ajit Pawar faction is persistent. As Sharad Pawar went to Beed for a rally today, banners urging him to "bless" his nephew welcomed him to the city.

Sharad Pawar's team calls it a family affair. That defence can only go so far.

Political analyst Javed M Ansari says these are minor wrinkles. "The AAP and Congress's misunderstandings have been blown out of proportion. It is simply posturing and bargaining for more seats. In Maharashtra, I don't believe that Sharad Pawar will do a somersault and join the BJP or his nephew. If he had to join hands with the BJP, nobody could have stopped him," Mr Ansari said.

That is hardly any consolation for the INDIA alliance or the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) comprising the NCP, Congress, and the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) in Maharashtra. Sharad Pawar's moves are making his allies nervous.

When the INDIA alliance meets in Mumbai later this month, the Congress is waiting to raise with Sharad Pawar his regular meetings with Ajit Pawar. Sources say the Congress has come to entertain serious doubts about the NCP. They have questions even for NCP leader Supriya Sule (Sharad Pawar's daughter), who has firmly denied any emerging deal with the BJP. The friction within the Maharashtra opposition, just days before the third INDIA outing in Mumbai, is potentially disastrous for the Congress and the opposition bloc.

In the east, the feud within the Congress-Left-TIPRA Motha alliance could impact its fight against the BJP in assembly by-

elections on September 5.

Former Congress chief of Tripura, Birajit Sinha, is vocal about discontent in the party after the Left unilaterally announced its candidates for two seats - Boxanagar and Dhanpur - without consulting allies. "This is a test of the management skills of the Congress, Left, and all the other constituents of the INDIA alliance. These are different political parties and each of them wants the best for themselves. So, these issues will be there. It's not uncommon for parties to jostle for seats just a day two prior to elections," says Javed Ansari.

The Congress-Left alliance has meaning and substance only in Bengal and Tripura. In Bengal, they fought as allies in 2019, so striking an acceptable deal should not be an insurmountable problem. In Tripura, the two seats can be shared 50:50. Both parties will bargain for the best possible deals. In Kerala, the Left and the Congress will fight separately and there is no question of them even considering seat-sharing talks. We might see more posturing and vacillations in the run-up to the 2024 election. Preliminary disagreements may boomerang for the alliance closer to the elections.

INDIA needs a mature leader and a solid narrative that is common, and not inimical, to the parties in the alliance, if it has to survive until these elections and beyond.

As of now, the catalyst seems to be missing.







**By Dr. Shailendra Srivastava**

As India approaches its 76th Independence Day, exploring the historic trajectory of its police force becomes crucial. From its origins during the Sepoy Mutiny as a tool of colonial dominance, the police have undergone a remarkable metamorphosis over the span of several decades.

#### Evolution of Indian Police

The origin of the Indian police can be traced back to the aftermath of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny under the colonial rule. Designed to serve the interests of the British administration, the police force emerged with the enactment of the Indian Police Act of 1861. This centralization of power often distanced law enforcement from the public, breeding mistrust. Throughout the colonial era, the police were a tool of suppressing dissent and asserting control.

#### The Fraser Commission

The Fraser Commission, officially known as the Police Commission of 1902-1903, was appointed by the British colonial government to review and recommend reforms to the police administration in India. It was led by Sir Andrew Fraser and David Bayley.

The commission's recommendations included improvements in police organization, training, recruitment, and a police commissioner system in major

cities like Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. The objective was to enhance police efficiency, professionalism, and accountability, though areas with rural, agrarian populations retained the district police system. Regrettably, the remnants of colonial-era policing, like the archaic Indian Police Act of 1861, continue to influence the police force even after 76 years of independence. Post-Independence Reforms and Challenges

After India's independence in 1947, there was dedicated effort to revamp the police force for greater efficiency. Various police commissions and committees were instituted to address issues like professionalism, accountability, and community-oriented policing. Yet the vestiges of colonial-era practices, epitomized by the Indian Police Act of 1861, persist, straining police-public relations and eroding trust.

#### Challenges in Modern Times

In the modern era, the Indian police face multifaceted challenges related to a wide range of issues. These challenges include tackling communal unrest, addressing left-wing extremism, combatting human trafficking networks, countering various forms of terrorism, and managing cross-border threats. The increasing use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) adds

another layer of complexity to the security landscape.

The proliferation of technology has introduced new dimensions to criminal activities. The surge in cybercrimes poses a distinctive menace, as criminals leverage technology and anonymity to outpace traditional law enforcement efforts. This digital realm encompasses a range of crimes, from financial fraud and data breaches to online harassment and identity theft. The police force must continually adapt to this evolving landscape to effectively combat these digital threats.

Artificial intelligence (AI) further compounds the complexities faced by law enforcement agencies. The rapid advancement of AI technology has the potential of revolutionising crime and law enforcement tactics. Criminals could exploit AI algorithms for sophisticated planning and execution of crimes, making them harder to predict and prevent. This necessitates specialized training and resources to develop AI expertise within the police force, and enabling them to stay ahead of emerging threats.

As urbanization accelerates and societies become more interconnected, challenges like managing public events and maintaining crowd control

during large gatherings also gain prominence. Also, the need to address environmental crimes, such as illegal wildlife trade and pollution, poses new hurdles for law enforcement agencies.

In this ever-changing landscape, the Indian police force must continually adapt, evolve, and innovate to effectively address these emerging challenges and ensure the safety and security of citizens.

#### The Imperative of Political and Democratic Oversight

While police autonomy has merits, a balanced approach intertwining political and democratic oversight is vital. Unfettered police autonomy risks imbalances and reduced government accountability. Politicians, closer to the public, have a nuanced understanding of citizens' concerns and policing. Democratic oversight ensures law enforcement serves the public's best interests while maintaining impartiality and accountability.

#### Revisiting and Implementing Recommendations

In recent years, retired Indian Police Service officers approached the Supreme Court to champion police reform, emphasising accountability and autonomy. However, the inclusion of the Union Public Service Commission in selecting police chiefs, though well-intentioned, introduced

complexities. Policing, governed by the Indian Constitution, is state jurisdiction, necessitating active engagement with democratically elected governments. The need to revisit the 2006 recommendations and their effective implementation looms large. Fresh insights must be placed before the Supreme Court for an evaluation of policing advancements, particularly reshaping the police's public image.

#### Priceless

As India celebrates its 76th Independence Day, the Indian police force's journey stands testament to the dynamic evolution of law enforcement. To forge a modern and efficient police force, historical suggestions should be reviewed, outdated laws modernized, and cooperation nurtured among political leadership, law enforcement agencies, and the public. Embracing technology, reinforcing accountability, and strengthening police-community relations will empower the Indian police to address modern challenges. Honouring history while embracing reform is pivotal in crafting a police force dedicated to the public good and upholding democratic ideals in a shifting global context. Besides, treating victims and the public with empathy and respect comes with a priceless tag - building trust, safety, and a harmonious society.



# Modi Government Bats on Front Foot to Combat Rising Inflation in India

By: Sanbeer Singh Ranhotra

Inflation is a global concern and quite a big one at that. The world economy has taken a series of hits over the past three years. Inflation is hardly a problem exclusive to India. In fact, India is one of the last countries in the world to finally feel the pressure of rising prices. While several developed countries saw their economies getting battered, India remained insulated from any sort of cost-of-living crisis.

**GLOBAL ECONOMIC PRESSURE CATCHES UP WITH INDIA?**

When the world economy reels under pressure, it is imperative for an emerging major economy like India to take a few hits too. The ongoing war in Ukraine pushed the global economy to the brink. The biggest economies of the world - both American and European - struggled to deal with unprecedented inflation rates. Such was the situation that the historic inflation rates plunged entire countries into cost-of-living crises.

India did not face any such ordeal. From the very outset, India pragmatically chose to defeat energy inflation by purchasing Russian crude oil - a trend which is still continuing. Yet, inflation is now rising and Indians are finally shilling out more bucks at retail stores, mostly for food items. Vegetables are the driving force behind rising inflation. Even among vegetables, tomatoes are proving to be the real culprits. Here are some staggering numbers.

Tomato prices saw a 234 per cent month-on-month increase in July. Meanwhile, onion prices have risen by about 11.7 per cent year on year. The price of cereals, including rice, has risen by 13 per cent. Cumulatively, India's annual retail inflation in July rose to its highest in 15 months. Retail inflation stood at 4.9 per cent in June, but in July, it jumped to 7.4 per cent. The figures breached the upper end of the RBI's inflation band of 2 to 6 per cent for the first time in five months.

So, the signs have been ominous. India is indeed in the thick of an inflation spike. Thankfully, the government has been proactive on



this front and has taken a series of steps to combat inflation. WHAT THE MODI GOVT IS DOING TO COMBAT INFLATION Solving a problem begins with acknowledging that the problem exists. That is what Prime Minister Narendra Modi did on Independence Day. He said India is trying its best to control inflation and that there have been "some

the monsoon arrived, in March and April, temperatures across the country rose. As a result, farmers had to deal with the menace of pests attacking their crops. This led to many growers abandoning their crops, especially tomatoes. This caused supply stress which only became apparent over the past two months, pushing prices to

supplies.

**RBI NOT JUMPING THE GUN YET**

Around the world, the Central banks of various countries were rather immediate in rolling out interest rate hikes to curb inflation. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) though, is waiting. The RBI is unlikely to raise interest rates unless headline inflation breaches the 6 per cent mark for two consecutive quarters. That's a pragmatic approach to take because the last thing India wants right now is high-interest rates slowing economic growth, even if the end goal is curbing inflation.

Commercial banks in India are flush with cash. To combat inflation, it is crucial for any country to reduce liquidity in the system. And the RBI is doing so without hiking interest rates. It has directed all banks to maintain an incremental Cash Reserve Ratio (ICRR) of 10 per cent. CRR refers to the proportion of assets that banks need to keep as deposits with the RBI. The RBI says this move will remove Rs 1 lakh crore of excess liquidity from the system.

**WHAT'S AT STAKE?**

A lot. If there is one thing the Indian electorate despises, it is inflation. Price hikes have traditionally put off Indian voters almost always, and entire governments have regretted not acting in time to bring inflation in check. The Modi government faces a crucial year ahead. First,

several states will go to polls later this year. Early next year, Modi is seeking a third term as Prime Minister and has made it very clear that he will be back.

This means the BJP-led government wants all hands on deck. Nothing can be left to chance. The coming elections are too crucial for the BJP to lose due to price rises. The world sees India as a bright spot in an otherwise dark economic horizon.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) says the Indian economy will grow at 6.1 per cent in the next fiscal. But inflation could play spoilsport. If inflation goes out of hand, the RBI will have no choice but to raise interest rates.

That will inevitably take a toll on India's GDP growth rate. India is marching towards its goal of becoming a \$5 trillion economy soon. PM Modi has committed to making India the world's third-largest economy in his third term. Needless to say, the government knows that the threat of inflation cannot be taken lightly.

It would be premature to sound gloomy and despondent just yet. There were short-lived factors that contributed to price hikes this year. Those factors have more or less been dealt with. This is why India banned rice exports while it made little to no sense to many. In fact, the Modi government placed a ban on wheat exports last year itself. This shows that the Centre has been keeping a watch on any and all inflationary trends, and has acted swiftly wherever it saw a red flag. Had it not, perhaps the inflation numbers would have been scarier. India is also contemplating purchasing wheat from Russia to boost domestic supplies which would, in turn, bring prices down. As I said, it's all hands on deck.

While the latest inflation numbers are startling, they do not necessarily reflect a macroeconomic trend of the Indian economy being under stress. Call these numbers seasonal, because they are expected to stabilise soon enough. Having said that, as Prime Minister Modi said, this is not a time for complacency. Inflation is still a big challenge and needs to be dealt with head-on.



successes" so far. He added that this is not a time for complacency. The highlight was this statement by the Prime Minister: "I have to take more steps in this direction to minimise the burden of inflation on my countrymen. And we will continue to take that step. My efforts will continue."

Let's first understand what's driving this inflation spike. Sure, vegetable and cereal price hikes are a factor. But what has caused their prices to rise? You see, supplies are under stress due to erratic weather. With the onset of the monsoon season, much of North India has had to put up with severe flooding. Even before

the sky.

Indians can expect a drop in tomato prices soon, as the Kharif tomato produce makes its way into markets. Since tomatoes are not the only cause of concern, the government has taken a series of steps to bring inflation into check. This includes its decision to import tur dal, apart from banning the exports of all non-basmati rice. Parallely, the Modi government has also decided to release 50 lakh metric tonnes of wheat and 25 lakh metric tonnes of rice through e-auctions under the Open Market Sale Scheme. Also, India is set to cut wheat import tax to boost



# RBI Caught Between Tomatoes and Cookies

By Andy Mukherjee

Food prices in India are sending confusing signals - cookies are becoming more affordable, but meals are turning more expensive. While the former may be a more permanent indicator of commodity inflation, could the central bank really afford to ignore the latter as transient?

The cost of a home-cooked vegetarian lunch or dinner in the world's most-populous nation jumped by 28% in just one month, largely because of tomatoes. In New Delhi's Azadpur, one of Asia's biggest perishables markets, prices have shot up 17-fold since the end of May.

Most other commodities, though, are taking a breather after last year's surge. The scorching inflation that followed Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine has eased. Wheat in the wholesale market is 8% softer than at the start of this year, while palm oil has crashed 30% from a year earlier. Laminates and corrugated boxes have become a lot cheaper, too. That's bringing in more competition into packaged food, with smaller players turning aggressive on pricing.



Demand is weak, particularly in rural areas. And yet, most Indian consumer staples firms' profitability is on the mend. Last year, they had to resort to shrinking pack sizes. Now, they can afford to stuff more commodities into them.

That may be the biggest priority for the likes of Britannia Industries Ltd. The country's No. 1 maker of bakery products sold 9% more of its bread, Good Day cookies, JimJam biscuits and Winkin' Cow milkshakes last quarter just to hold on to volumes that were flat from a year earlier, according to Jefferies. "Near-term focus is on driving volume growth, which will improve going forward, partly as grammage increases starts to flow through," the brokerage's analysts wrote this week.

All this is complicating the

Reserve Bank of India's task. On Thursday, the monetary authority kept its policy unchanged. While that was expected, the key question is about its stance in the months ahead. After having raised interest rates by 250 basis points to 6.5%, should the central bank take its cue from packaged food and start preparing the market for cuts next year? Or should it remain hawkish, lest runaway vegetable prices lead to a fresh surge in inflation expectations? I would argue that the RBI should delay a rate cut, and perhaps even slip in one more increase to bring its full-year inflation forecast, which it revised higher to 5.4% on Thursday, closer to its target of 4%.

Typically, vegetable price shocks in India dissipate in four to six months, a good reason for the

RBI to ignore the tomato fever. But the problem is that potato and onion prices are also starting to firm up. Uneven monsoon rains, thanks to the return of the El Niño weather pattern, are the main culprit. Then there's climate change, which, as my colleague David Fickling has argued, is choking India's food security. The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has acted preemptively by banning some overseas rice shipments from India, a decision that has played a big role in pushing Asia's benchmark grain price to a 15-year high; restrictions on sugar exports may be up next. New Delhi may also reduce or scrap a 40% import duty to keep the domestic wheat market well supplied. But because of vegetables, the food inflation genie appears to be already out of the bottle.

A meal of rice, roti, dal, veggies, salad and yoghurt, whose prices are computed every month by CRISIL, an affiliate of S&P Global Inc., shot up to 33.7 rupees (41 US cents) in July. Compared with June, that's an extra food budget of almost 2,000 rupees a month for a family of four, a significant burden for a single-income family

earning the pre-pandemic median wage of 10,000 rupees. Modi would be wary of wading into next year's general elections with opposition parties making an issue of high inflation.

There are other reasons to stick with higher-for-longer interest rates. It's quite possible that last quarter's relatively subdued 5.2% core inflation - after 17 straight months of 6%-plus readings - is not fully capturing the 11%-22% escalation in rents across Indian cities, according to HSBC Holdings Plc economists. Besides, while China's consumer prices are now falling, investors don't seem to believe this bout of deflation will last or have a major impact on cooling inflation globally.

The US Federal Reserve may still push through another rate increase at its next meeting in September. That would further squeeze the India-US interest rate gap, already at a record low after the Fed's July hike.

So far this year, the local currency has held steady - investors have been optimistic on India's growth and the RBI has mopped up the dollars coming into the local stock market to rebuild the reserves that got depleted last year.

## The Importance Of Banning Polygamy In India

By Bibek Debroy and Aditya Sinha

Following the Law Commission's call for public input on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and the subsequent mention by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a considerable amount of commentary has been generated on the topic. Some have endorsed the UCC citing equality and gender justice. Others have criticized it saying it won't take into account the country's diverse socio-cultural realities. In this column, we delve into the contentious matter of polygamy, a practice that is problematic. Polygamy, a custom entrenched in certain cultural and religious practices, can lead to serious repercussions in terms of gender equity and justice. A retired High Court Judge-led Panel in Assam has recently recommended Assam government to ban polygamy. Subsequently, the media reports suggest that Assam is planning to bring in a law banning polygamy this financial year.

Traditionally, polygamy has been prevalent in India. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, outlawed this practice for Hindus. Ditto for Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists through their respective personal laws. It is also forbidden under the Special Marriage Act, 1954, which enables inter-religious marriages. However, polygamy is permissible for Muslims under the Shariat Protection Act. Also, polygynous marriages are common in many tribal communities.

As a result, there have been cases of people converting

to Islam to remarry without the legal dissolution of their first marriage. The Supreme Court declared such conversions solely for the purpose of a second marriage as invalid in the 1994 Sarla Mudgal verdict.

The verdict was reiterated in the case of Lily Thomas v. Union of India. These judgements have aimed to prevent the misuse of religious freedom to circumvent laws against polygamy, emphasizing that the legal dissolution of the first marriage is necessary prior to conversion and remarriage.

However, this approach presents complex social and legal challenges. It is the second wife and children born from such marriages that bear the brunt of this injustice. It becomes difficult for them to exercise their rights to maintenance and inheritance.

Thus, such conversions for remarriage tend to create legal ambiguities and can lead to social and familial strife.

In March 2023, however, a bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala was requested by Ashwini Upadhyay to hear cases on the constitutionality of polygamy and nikah halala. To which, the Chief Justice responded: "I will consider it. At an appropriate stage, I will constitute a Constitution bench". The court's decision to reexamine the validity of polygamy can be seen as part of its broader commitment to promoting gender equality and protecting the rights of women.

Polygamy has been subject to feminist criticism due to its implications for gender inequality and the subjugation of women. Feminist scholars argue that polygamy perpetuates patriarchal power structures. At the same time, it also reinforces the unequal treatment of women within marriage and the family. Some scholars contend that polygamy allows men to have multiple wives, while women are limited to one husband, resulting in a power imbalance and the unequal distribution of resources. This power imbalance is exacerbated by societal norms. Such norms often burden women with more family responsibilities than men, even when they seek work outside the home.

A study from Emory University noted increased levels of violence toward women and children in polygamous relationships, and that abuse can come from both husbands and co-wives. As India strives for social harmony and unity amidst its diverse religious and cultural practices, it is crucial to promote practices that uphold the principles of equality and justice. Polygamy, particularly when it's associated with religious conversion solely for the purpose of a second marriage. There is also a need to highlight the economic dependency of women on their husbands, which can lead to vulnerability, exploitation, and fear of divorce. The multiple wives often are solely economically dependent on their husbands. As a result, this limits their autonomy and agency within the marriage.



# Modi's Boundaries And Sixers At Opposition's Expense

By Sanjay Singh

It was a rare no-confidence motion, in which the mover of the motion, the Congress, walked out with its allies in the middle of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's response to the three-day debate.

Everybody knew numbers were never the issue. However, a motion defeated by a voice vote, with no one in the opposition ranks to ask for an actual vote, was another rarity.

Since the Modi government's stability was never in question, the only issue was who - the BJP-led NDA or the 26-party INDIA born out of demise of UPA - uses this occasion best to its advantage. Which coalition effectively rips apart allegations from their rivals, constructs a compelling narrative for the welfare of people and nation building, and provides substantial talking points that extend beyond rhetoric and gives political workers, supporters and sympathisers a message to take to the people ahead of the 2024 parliamentary election.

The reinstatement of Rahul Gandhi's membership of the Lok Sabha on July 7, just a day before the debate on his party sponsored no-confidence motion, had enthused secularists and left-liberals.



In the wider world, there was much anticipation, though for a different reason. It was a given that Rahul Gandhi's speech and PM Modi's reply were going to be most-watched. The Congress's support system was at fever pitch, declaring, "Now the tiger will roar". Since the stated objective of the no-confidence motion by the opposition was Manipur, Home Minister Amit Shah's intervention too was closely watched.

What Biju Janata Dal (a party neither aligned to the ruling NDA nor the opposition INDIA) MP Pinaki Mishra said on the first day of the debate was noteworthy: "I have always believed that the Congress party is adept at snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. They are also very adept at cutting off their nose to spite

their face. They know that every time the PM has got up to speak on the floor of this House, he has pushed the Congress party through the shredder... This defies common sense, logic, political sense..."

The Congress and its allies are flinging varied accusations at the government, including that PM Modi started speaking on Manipur only an hour into his speech. They also claim that Modi appeared to be "nervous and panicked". Those who watched the proceedings can easily judge such claims on merits. The opposition came least prepared for the debate. The Congress's strategy was, in fact, more cohesive and surcharged on the Delhi Services Bill debate, in support of their newfound ally

Arvind Kejriwal.

Rahul Gandhi's sound and fury was misdirected. Saying that he began his Bharat Jodo Yatra with "ahankar" (arrogance) and as a "Bhedia" (jackal) who turned into a "Chinti" (ant) was inevitably fodder for his rivals.

Labeling Modi as Ravan, once again dragging Adani into the debate, using words (not mentioning because expunged from proceedings) on Bharat Mata and a flying kiss while exiting the House redirected the Congress's focus toward damage control rather than amplifying what he said.

He provided enough ammo to BJP leaders to launch an attack on him, his party and his alliance.

When Modi took the floor, he picked up right where he had left off during the no confidence debate in July 2018 and the concluding session of the previous Lok Sabha in early 2019. He expressed gratitude to the opposition for proving his five-year-old prophesy right and giving him the opportunity to speak on a range of issues on this platform, an opportunity he wouldn't have got otherwise. If that wasn't enough, he urged them to prepare better for a no confidence motion in 2028, implying that he would

be in the closing months of his third term then. The sarcasm was unmissable, but it's also a fact that he was served this opportunity on a platter.

PM Modi used words, phrases, and easy sentences in his characteristic style, which resonates with the hinterland. He made his audience laugh at the expense of his rivals, prompted them to reflect on the achievements of his government and the follies of his political rivals. He came down hard on appeasement, dynastic politics and the corrupt practices of the INDIA alliance, calling it the GHAMANDIA (arrogant) alliance of parties who, in their attempt to use the country's name, "only ended up breaking it by putting dots after each letter".

He went on to describe how every opposition attack - like the no-trust move - was actually lucky for him and how his number increased in the 2019 election. He predicted even better numbers in 2024. The PM's statement also tackled criticism over the economy, from Rahul Gandhi and Raghuram Rajan in particular. Where they predicted the doom of the Indian banking sector, it fared better than western nations, which faced a banking crisis.

## The Clock Is Running Out On North India's Next Big Crisis

By Kurinji Selvaraj

To curb stubble burning during the winter months, India and its states will need to act swiftly this year. The unprecedented rain in northern India in early July damaged freshly sown paddy and delayed sowing in states such as Punjab and Haryana. Nationally, over 16 per cent less area was covered under paddy as of the first week of July 2023 compared to the corresponding period last year. Delayed sowing only means a shorter window to manage and manage crop residue in already time-pressed states like Punjab, where farmers cultivate wheat immediately after paddy harvesting. This perceived crop loss at the start of the Kharif season will likely impact farmers' intent to invest in zero-burn crop residue management (CRM) later in the year. India recently revised its CRM



guidelines to facilitate timely residue management. But can it bring down farm fires in Kharif 2023?

Since 2018, India's CRM scheme has largely focused on subsidising in-situ machines to tackle paddy stubble in the field itself, like the Super Seeder. While a few central policies have encouraged the use of crop biomass as fuel for industrial boilers, bio-CNG production and co-firing in coal-fired power plants,

they have seen little progress in the last five years due to the underdeveloped supply chain ecosystems and massive costs involved in biomass collection. This year, for the first time, there has been a shift in preference towards ex-situ methods under the CRM scheme, which involve treating farm waste off-site for energy production. The big plan is to establish biomass supply chain systems under the bilateral agreement between industries

using biomass and farmer groups. The centre and state governments will jointly provide financial support of 65 per cent for machinery and equipment to farmer groups, and the remaining 25 per cent and 10 per cent will be contributed by the industry and farmer groups, respectively. This renewed interest in ex-situ methods opens up an opportunity for India's northwestern states to achieve twin benefits - reduce carbon and air pollutant emissions and develop alternatives for fossil fuels.

Here are four strategies for northwestern states to align their action plan with the CRM guidelines quickly and achieve zero stubble burning.

First, states should publish a database of industrial end-users and their annual crop biomass demand. According to the CEEW's estimates, delivering one tonne of biomass bale from the farm to an end-user site

located 15-30 km away costs ? 1,500-2,500, and this cost increases with distance. Decentralised sourcing of biomass within a radius of 5-10 km of the end-user site can considerably reduce interim storage and transportation costs. Access to a periodically updated state-wise database can help optimise biomass storage and logistics. Given that operationalising the supply chain would take nearly 3-6 months, such an information repository can facilitate interested farm groups in identifying and initiating partnerships with industries. Besides, this will allow state actors to prioritise in-situ machines like the Super Seeder in areas where there is a deficit in potential biomass end-users. Second, institute a state-level committee to regulate the prices of crop residue-based products.



# World's Deadliest Wildfires

The U.S. wildfire in which almost 100 people have died in Hawaii is among the deadliest of the 21st century.

Here's a look at some previous deadly wildfires globally:

Australia in 2009

In "Black Saturday" in Australia's Victoria state, 173 people were killed, in Australia's worst bushfire on February 7, 2009.

Whole towns and more than 2,000 homes were destroyed.

Greece in 2007 and 2018

In Greece's worst-ever fire disaster, 103 people died when wildfires swept through homes and vehicles in the coastal town

of Mati near Athens in July 2018, leaving only charred remains.

Most of the victims were trapped by the flames as they sat in traffic jams while trying to flee. Others drowned while trying to escape by sea.

In 2007, a 12-day inferno starting in late August killed at least 67 people and destroyed 800 homes across the southern Peloponnese peninsula.

The flames engulfed most of the region's olive groves. The Aegean island of Evia was also badly affected.

In all 77 people died that summer due to the fires.

Algeria in 2021 and 2022

More than 90 people, including 33 soldiers, were killed in dozens of wildfires in Algeria in August 2021.

The government blamed arsonists and a blistering heatwave for the blazes, but experts also criticized authorities for failing to prepare for the annual wildfire season.

In August 2022, massive blazes killed 37 people over several days in northeastern El Tarf province, near the border with Tunisia.

More than 10,000 hectares (25,000 acres) went up in smoke in El Kala National Park, a UNESCO-listed heritage spot famous for its rich marine, dune,

lake and forest ecosystems.

U.S. in 2018

On November 8, 2018, at dawn, California's deadliest modern fire broke out in the town of Paradise, some 240 kilometers (149 miles) to the north of San Francisco, killing 85 people over more than two weeks. Known as the Camp Fire, it burned more than 62,000 hectares (153,000 acres) of land and reduced more than 18,800 buildings to ashes.

An investigation found that high tension electricity wires sparked the fire. The Camp Fire is likely the deadliest fire in the continental United States for a century; the

Cloquet Fire in 1918 in the northern state of Minnesota killed around 1,000 people.

Portugal in 2017

The deadliest wildfires in Portuguese history broke out in the central Leiria region during a heatwave in June 2017 and burned through hills covered with pine and eucalyptus trees for five days.

Many of the 63 people who died became trapped in their cars while trying to escape. In October, a new series of deadly fires broke out in northern Portugal, killing another 45 people as well as four in neighboring Spain. Those fires were chiefly blamed on arsonists.

## Hawaii wildfires: What caused deadliest US blazes in more than 100 years?

The governor of Hawaii has warned that the death toll from massive wildfires in the US archipelago state is expected to mount considerably in the coming days as rescuers continue to search through scorched neighbourhoods on the island of Maui.

Emergency crews are working under hazardous conditions, officials said, after the deadliest wildfires in the United States in more than a century first broke out last week.

Thousands of survivors have been displaced by the blazes, the worst of which destroyed much of the historic town of Lahaina, and people across Maui have put out desperate pleas for information about missing loved ones.

Here is what we know about what caused the fires, the breadth of the destruction and what comes next:

How did the fires start?

The exact cause of the blazes has not been determined. But with much of the world seeing record-breaking temperatures during a global climate crisis, wildfires have become more frequent and more difficult to contain.

The National Weather Service had issued warnings for the Hawaiian islands due to dry weather and high winds linked to Hurricane Dora, which was passing through the area. Both are often catalysts for wildfires. While most wildfires are started by human activity, natural causes - including lightning and volcanoes - can also spark

blazes.

Governor Josh Green said the state was experiencing dry conditions due to climate change and, with a major storm passing south of the state, multiple blazes began to spread quickly and uncontrollably in what he called a "fire hurricane".

"That's what a fire hurricane is going to look like in the era of

CBS News.

Deanne Criswell, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), told reporters that the search effort is challenging due to partially standing structures, high temperatures and "hot spots" of isolated fires.

Firefighters are still battling flare-ups, officials said, with the

resident Vilma Reed, 63, told the AFP news agency.

Sirens stationed around the island never sounded, residents have said, and widespread power and mobile service outages hampered other forms of alerts.

As the wind-propelled blazes rapidly advanced, people were forced to abandon their homes and vehicles to seek safety. Some

even dove into the Pacific Ocean to try to escape the flames.

H a w a i i Congresswoman Jill Tokuda told CNN that officials had been taken by surprise by the tragedy. "We underestimated the lethality, the quickness of fire," she said.

Green said he has ordered a

Todd James, an official with the American Red Cross, said the organisation has also been helping connect residents with housing resources. "It could go on for a long while," James told Al Jazeera of the housing issue.

"We will work with both our partners - our governmental partners, our nonprofit partners and most importantly with the families themselves - to help them find what the next step from the shelter is."

What has President Biden said? President Joe Biden has pledged to make resources available for Hawaii, including temporary and long-term housing, direct assistance and help to locate missing people.

"As residents of Hawaii mourn the loss of life and devastation taking place across their beautiful home, we mourn with them. Like I've said, not only our prayers are with those impacted - but every asset we have will be available to them," Biden wrote in a social media post on Monday.

How does this compare to other US wildfires?

The Maui blaze is the deadliest US wildfire since 1918 when northern Minnesota's Cloquet Fire, which raged for more than four days, killed 453 people, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

The deadliest wildfire in US history, Wisconsin's Peshtigo fire in 1871, killed 1,152 people. Hawaii's fires also constitute the most lethal disaster to hit the islands since a tsunami that killed 61 people in 1960, a year after Hawaii became a US state.



global warming, and so we have to all do - right now, right now -

what we can to stop global warming and reverse it," he told MSNBC on Sunday.

How many people have been killed?

Officials have so far confirmed the deaths of 96 people, but they said that figure will rise.

Green said on Monday that search teams working with cadaver dogs will need more time to survey burned-out homes and vehicles in the hard-hit town of Lahaina.

"They will find 10 to 20 people per day probably until they finish. And it's probably going to take 10 days. It's impossible to guess, really," the governor told

largest fire in Lahaina mostly contained.

"We want to make sure that we're doing this as quickly as possible but that we do it in a way that's methodical and appropriate and culturally sensitive to make sure that we are going to be able to account for everybody," Criswell said.

Did people receive a warning?

Hawaii has a large network of sirens designed to alert residents about natural disasters and human-caused events, but many people on Maui have reported that they did not receive any warnings as the fires quickly approached. "You know when we found that there was a fire? When it was across the street from us,"

"comprehensive" review of the state's response. He also said the fast-spreading blazes destroyed telecommunication towers.

FEMA's Criswell referred questions about the issue to state officials. "As an emergency management and first responders' community, we always want to look at the lessons learned so we can improve," she said.

Where are survivors staying?

FEMA and aid groups have opened emergency shelters for thousands of people who have been displaced by the blazes. Criswell also said FEMA has activated a programme to move evacuated people from shelters to hotels.



# Global Wildfires Surge: A Comprehensive Analysis Through ESA's World Fire Atlas

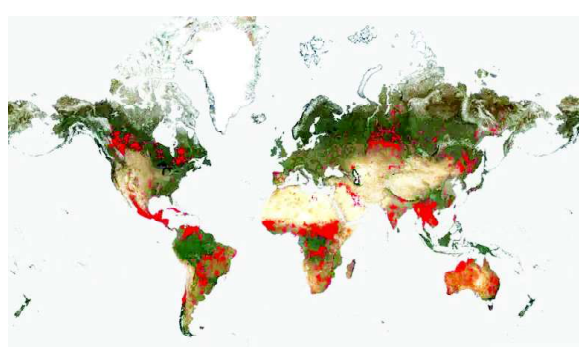
Devastating wildfires in multiple countries have prompted ESA's reopening of the World Fire Atlas, providing detailed insights and tools to monitor and manage fires globally, with Canada facing its worst wildfire season on record. In recent weeks, devastating wildfires have spread in Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Algeria, Tunisia, and Canada, causing human casualties, as well as massive environmental and economic damage.

While wildfires are a natural part of many ecosystems, scientists have warned that they are becoming more frequent and more widespread. In response, an upgraded version of ESA's World Fire Atlas is now available providing a detailed analysis of wildfires across the globe.

**Wildfires and Global Trends**  
Rising global temperatures and the increased frequency of extreme weather events have led to a surge in the number of wildfires rapidly consuming extensive areas of vegetation and forested lands. Countries like

Greece and Italy have already experienced the devastating impact of large-scale blazes.

The European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) has reported that, as of July 29, 2023, more than 234,516 hectares of



land across the European Union have already been burned this year alone. The situation calls for urgent attention and effective measures to combat the growing danger posed by these wildfires. ESA's World Fire Atlas In light of the severe wildfires, ESA has reopened its World Fire Atlas

which offers an insight into the distribution of individual fires taking place at both a national and global scale.

Through its interactive dashboard, users can compare the frequency of fires between countries as well

as analyze the evolution of fires taking place over time. The atlas originally opened in 2019, where it supported both European civil protection agencies and firefighters.

The dashboard uses night-time data from the Sea and Land Surface Temperature Radiometer

(SLSTR) on board the Copernicus Sentinel-3A satellite. Working like a thermometer in the sky, the sensor measures thermal infrared radiation to take the temperature of Earth's land surfaces which is used to detect the fires.

Even if the atlas cannot pick up all fires because of satellite overpass constraints and cloud coverage, it is statistically representative from one month to the other and from one year to the other. Data from the Copernicus Sentinel-3B satellite will be added in December 2023. Historical Data and Canadian Wildfires

Over the previous seven years, data from the World Fire Atlas show a substantial number of fires detected in Portugal, Italy, Greece, France and Spain with the highest number of fires reached in Portugal in August 2016 and October 2017.

Data, which is in terms of 'pixels', show that there were 11 598 fire pixels in Canada during the first seven months of 2023. This is a 705% increase compared to the

average number of fire pixels detected over the same period (from January 1 to July 31) of the previous six years (from 2017 to 2022).

Canada is currently battling the country's worst wildfire season on record, with more than 10 million hectares of land burned, which is said to increase in the coming weeks.

**Conclusion: ESA's Commitment**  
ESA's Olivier Arino said, "The relaunch of the World Fire Atlas presents a valuable opportunity for authorities, researchers, and organizations to enhance their understanding of fire occurrences worldwide. By utilizing this comprehensive resource, they can devise more effective strategies for fire prevention and management on a global scale."

"The ongoing commitment of ESA, Copernicus, and the EU to continuously provide this valuable resource reinforces the importance of leveraging space technology to address critical environmental challenges."

## Modi says India's economy will be among the top three in the world within five years

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India's economy will be among the top three in the world within five years, as he marked 76 years of independence from British rule on Tuesday.

Wearing a flowing, multi-colored turban, Modi addressed the country from New Delhi's 17th century Mughal-era Red Fort, saying his government had lifted over 130 million people out of poverty and that India's growing prosperity was an opportunity for the world.

"When poverty decreases in a country, the power of the middle class increases considerably," he said. "In the next five years, I promise India will be among the top three economies in the world."

His statement comes after reports last year from S&P Global and Morgan Stanley forecast that India's economy

would overtake Japan and Germany's to become the world's third largest by 2030. They said India's economic boom will be driven by offshoring, investment in manufacturing, growing digital infrastructure and energy transition. India's \$3.5 trillion economy surpassed the United Kingdom's last year to become the fifth largest. Modi said he was confident that when India marks 100 years of independence in 2047, it will do so as a developed nation. The government forecasts India to grow by 6-6.5% this fiscal year, putting it among the world's fastest-growing large economies.

But despite steady economic growth, the Modi government has struggled to quash unemployment concerns and is under pressure to generate enough jobs, especially as it faces a general election in

2024, which Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party is favored to win.

The unemployment rate has grown over the last year, reaching 8% last month, according to the Center for Monitoring the Indian Economy.

Modi did not address these concerns in his speech, instead lauding India's journey over the decades.

"We are lucky to have demography, democracy and diversity," he said, after noting that India was now the most populous country in the world according to some estimates. The Indian government is yet to release official population data, and its last census is from 2011.

Modi highlighted India's rise on the global stage and said a new world order was emerging after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"India is becoming the voice of

the global South. We are bringing the promise of stability to the world," he said, adding that all eyes would be on India as it hosts the G-20 Summit in New Delhi next month.

The prime minister also reiterated calls for peace in the northeastern state of Manipur, where a near civil war has raged for months and killed over 150 people. He said the country stands with the people of Manipur and that resolution can only be achieved through peace.

Since clashes between two dominant ethnic groups erupted in early May, residents in Manipur have protested against the state government, ruled by Modi's party, and called for the firing of its chief minister.

Over 50,000 people have fled the state, where violence has persisted despite a heavy army presence. Armed mobs

have torched buildings, massacred civilians and looted weapons from state armories. But for three months, the strongman leader was largely silent on the conflict in Manipur. His role, or lack thereof, sparked a no-confidence motion against his government in Parliament. Modi defeated the motion last week, after appealing for peace in Manipur for the first time since the conflict began.

India celebrates its Independence Day a day after its neighbor Pakistan. The two separate states came into existence as a result of the bloody partition of British India in 1947. The process sparked some of the worst communal violence the world has seen and left hundreds of thousands dead. It triggered one of the largest human migrations in history and some 12 million people fled their homes.



# 7-Year Jail or Lifer: Govt Gives Teeth to Sedition 2.0 Under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill

Serving and retired police officers, who studied the structure of the proposed sections in the BNS, say sections 145 and 150 look like old wine in a new bottle and are primarily based on the existing structure of the sedition law. Experts call the proposed section 150 for the "acts endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India" as "Sedition 2.0".

Union home minister Amit Shah, while presenting the proposed BNS in Parliament, said sedition would be repealed. But a detailed analysis of the proposed sections reveal that the name has been changed, not the structure. Sedition has always been associated with monarchy or with the crown and it was introduced by the British.

Explaining the proposed section 145 and 150 of BNS, a senior officer serving in home ministry said hatred, contempt, and disaffection against the government was an offence under the British rule. In fact, the new bill has tightened the noose for those who even have the intention of waging war against the government.

With the implementation of this rule, even if anyone conspires, or collects arms and ammunition will have to face severe punishment. "For example, if A is preparing to wage war against the government and B is aware of it or conceals the information, knowing that it will help A, he will have to face severe action," the senior officer added. The official also said even if any gesture, speech, or text does not incite violence but excites or even attempts to excite, then also it will attract offences against the state.

## RESERVATIONS REGARDING THE NEW LAW

There are diverse views among the IPS officers about the proposed sections.

The precise difference between section 124 A of IPC and proposed section 150 of BNS would be about the articulation of the section and how it is more stringent than before.

The proposed section will give less discretion to the judiciary to dismiss a case, said a senior IPS officer of the DG rank.

"Desirability is a crucial element in this. In policy that is the most important. Desirability must be drawn to serve the purpose for various stakeholders. Judiciary cannot be prime mover in this since these provisions are meant to protect the national security;



the only standard one can apply is reasonable freedom that upholds individual's rights without breaching security," he said.

"Here, the state is important, more so, in the view of impending vulnerabilities - inside and outside, with ever increasing ingenuity in design and modus operandi of the adversaries - added and abetted by a host of foreign states," the senior officer explained saying that the funding, logistics and actors all have been made punishable whether acting from or of the country. Also, President and Governors have been

safeguarded.

## WHY DOES 'ENDANGERING SOVEREIGNTY' LOOK LIKE SEDITION 2.0?

According to the IPC, section 124A or sedition says, "Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs,

or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law in India, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine. "By the expression disaffection means "disloyalty and all feelings of enmity".

In the proposed BMS, in place of a section 124A, there are several sections for "waging war against the government of

India". Section 145 is for "waging, or attempting to wage war, or abetting waging of war, against the Government of India" according to the section, "Whoever wages war against the Government of India, or attempts to wage such war, or abets the waging of such war, shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine."

The proposed section 150 of BMS says, "Whoever, purposely or knowingly, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or by electronic communication or by use of financial mean,

or otherwise, excites or attempts to excite, secession or armed rebellion or subversive activities, or encourages feelings of separatist activities or endangers sovereignty or unity and integrity of India; or indulges in or commits any such act shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment which may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine."

## SEDITION SLAMMED BY SUPREME COURT

The data published by the National Crime Record Bureau last year stated that 242 cases

of sedition were lodged between 2019 and 2021.

The act has been heavily criticised by all quarters - legal, political and social. In July, 2022, a three-judge division bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice NV Ramana, put the sedition law on hold and urged the Centre and state governments to refrain from lodging FIRs under Section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code until the Centre re-examines its provisions.

Justice Ramana further said the persons, who were languishing in jail in pending sedition cases, could approach the courts and seek bail while the British-era law was under re-consideration.

The court observed that the "rigors of Section 124A of IPC was not in tune with the current social milieu" and was intended for a time when India was under the colonial regime. This Court is cognizant of the security, interests and integrity of the state on one hand, and the civil liberties of citizens on the other. There is a requirement to balance both sets of considerations, which is a difficult exercise," the judgment read.

Commenting on the proposed law, another senior government officer said, "Even though the name has been changed, the provisions have become more stringent. This is to ensure that no one even thinks of waging war against the government."

## Gadar 2 Box Office Collection Day 6: Is There Anything Sunny Deol's "Typhoon, Tsunami, Hurricane" Can't Do?

Sunny Deol's *Gadar 2* has been making trade analysts look for new adjectives to describe its power-packed performance at the domestic box office. Bollywood trade analyst Taran Adarsh in his recent tweet used the words, "TYPHOON - TSUNAMI - HURRICANE" to define its performance. The movie crossed ? 200 crore mark on Independence Day, making "history" as the highest I-Day grosser so far. On August 16, the day after national holiday, *Gadar 2* retained its double-digit income and minted ? 32.37

crore at the box office. The movie released on August 11. After six days, the total earnings of the movie stand at ? 261.35 crore. "TYPHOON - TSUNAMI - HURRICANE, that's the power of #Gadar2 at the #BO... Yet another ? 30 cr+ day [working day] ... UNSHAKABLE and UNAFFECTED, especially in \*mass pockets\*... Fri 40.10 cr, Sat 43.08 cr, Sun 51.70 cr, Mon 38.70 cr, Tue 55.40 cr, Wed 32.37 cr. Total: ? 261.35 cr. #India biz," tweeted Taran Adarsh.

Take a look at his tweet here: Sunny Deol, the OG Tara Singh, couldn't contain his happiness as

the movie has been smashing records at the box office. After the movie entered the ? 200 crore club, Sunny Deol shared a few pictures of himself, taken inside from a flight. Referring to the colour on his shirt and punning on the word "blue", Sunny Deol wrote in the caption, "The blue eyed boy! Basking in the #Gadar2 Sun!" Despite creating waves at the box office, *Gadar 2* released to average reviews. Film critic Saibal Chatterjee, in his review of NDTV, gave the film 2 stars out of 5 and he wrote, "Gadar 2 is strictly for three categories of people: Sunny Deol

fans, those that miss the unbridled excesses of Bollywood of yore, and those that believe that "hate thy neighbour" is an axiom worth cheering for in a movie theatre. The film has enough to please them all - and then some." Directed by Anil Sharma, *Gadar 2* is the sequel to the 2001 hit *Gadar*. In the sequel Sunny Deol, Ameesha Patel and Utkarsh Sharma have reprised their roles of Tara Singh, Sakeena and Jeete, respectively. The film released in theatres on Friday. It is clashing with Akshay Kumar's *OMG 2* at the box office.



# Pakistan's caretaker PM Kakar assures US of 'free and fair election process'

Pakistan is likely to have general elections in the coming months with the National Assembly's term ending on August 12.

(News Agency) - Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has assured the US of "a free and fair election process" in the country, days after the little-known politician from Balochistan province assumed office. Pakistan is likely to have general elections in the coming months with the National Assembly's term ending on August 12.

Taking to X, formerly Twitter, on late Wednesday, Kakar said, "The interim government will be assiduously working to facilitate a free and fair election process in Pakistan according to the Constitution." His tweet came in response to a congratulatory tweet by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken after Kakar, a first-time Senator, was appointed as Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister on August 12.

Congratulating Kakar for becoming Pakistan's interim prime minister, Blinken tweeted, "As Pakistan prepares for free and fair elections, in accordance with its constitution and the rights to



freedom of speech and assembly, we will continue to advance our shared commitment to economic prosperity." Kakar in his response also said Pakistan places importance on its partnership with the US and deeply values the shared commitment to economic prosperity, democracy and stability in the region. Blinken has recently been quite active in commenting on the developments in

Pakistan. Previously also he issued a statement after cash-strapped Pakistan managed to secure a standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"We stand by the Pakistani people during these hard times and welcome the International Monetary Fund's approval of a program to support Pakistan. We urge Pakistan to continue working with @IMFNews toward macroeconomic reforms and sustainable economic recovery," Blinken tweeted after the Washington-based global lender agreed to give a USD 3 billion bailout to Pakistan on June 29. Earlier this week, the US said it would work with the interim administration led by Kakar and his team as they prepare to hold elections in Pakistan.

"We are aware that the Pakistan National Assembly and government have been dissolved and note the announcement of Senator Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, and he has been named the caretaker prime minister, and we look

forward to working with the interim prime minister and his team as they prepare to hold elections," State Department's principal deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said.

"We, of course, will continue to partner with Pakistan on areas of mutual interest, including our interest on Pakistan's economic stability, prosperity, and security, and the conduct of free and fair elections and the respect for democracy and the rule of law," Patel said on Tuesday.

Former prime minister Imran Khan, who is currently serving a three-year jail term in a corruption case, has been alleging the US of hatching a conspiracy to topple his government.

Khan was ousted from power in April last year after losing a no-confidence vote in his leadership. He alleged that the US targeted him because of his independent foreign policy decisions on Russia, China and Afghanistan. The US has repeatedly dismissed his allegations.

## Targeted Christians found shelter with Muslims during Pakistan rampage

(News Agency) - Pastor Javed Bhatti was roused from his sleep by the mosque's loudspeaker -- not the usual Islamic call to prayer, but a thundering call to protest against alleged blasphemy by Christians. Instinctively, he gathered his family and ran to the street, where fellow Christians

Pakistan, where vigilante mobs have killed people accused of insulting Islam or the Prophet Muhammad.

Christians make up around two per cent of the population and occupy one of the lowest rungs in Pakistani society. More than 5,000 live in the Christian quarter in Jaranwala, most of them sanitary

workers on meagre wages who occupy cramped homes shared by up to 18 relatives.

As panic spread across the neighbourhood, Muslims also rushed to the streets to warn and shelter their neighbours.

"The crowd came from outside (this area), but the local Muslims here helped us and tried to save us," Pastor Bhatti said.

Tariq Rasool, in the same narrow street as Bhatti, said Muslims had quickly pinned Koranic verses on the doors of Christian homes in the hope they would be spared the violence.

"Two women were running. I opened the door of my house for them and let them inside. They were very worried but I consoled them," the 58-year-old Muslim told AFP.

## China says latest border talks with India held in 'candid, pragmatic atmosphere'

(News Agency) - China on Wednesday said the latest round of the border talks with India was held in a "candid and pragmatic atmosphere" and the two sides had a "positive, constructive and in-depth discussion" on the resolution of the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control in the Western Sector.

The 19th round of China-India Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on the Indian side from August 13 to 14.

A joint press release issued after the two-day talks did not indicate any immediate breakthrough in the disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points. "China commends the progress made through the meeting. In a candid and pragmatic atmosphere, the two sides had a positive, constructive and in-depth discussion on the resolution of the remaining issues along the LAC in the Western Sector," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday in response to a question by the official media here.

"In line with the guidance provided by the leadership, they exchanged views in an open and forward-looking manner," Wang



said.

The two sides agreed to resolve the remaining issues in an expeditious manner and maintain the momentum of dialogue and negotiations through military and diplomatic channels. In the interim, the two sides agreed to maintain the peace and tranquility on the ground in the border areas, the spokesperson said.

The talks were held days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Johannesburg next week to attend a summit of BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) where he is set to come face-to-face with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.



were already spilling from their homes into narrow alleyways.

"Some were running barefoot and some fled in rickshaws. There was chaos everywhere," he told AFP on Thursday, a day after hundreds of Muslim men rampaged through the streets, burning homes and churches.

"The children were shouting, 'Run, run, the clerics are coming! They will attack us'," his sister Naila Bhatti added. Blasphemy is a flashpoint issue in



## Saudi Arabia executes American citizen convicted of killing his father



(News Agency) -Saudi Arabia on Wednesday executed an American citizen who had been convicted of killing his father.

The Interior Ministry identified the executed man as Bishoy Sharif Naji Naseef and said he beat and then strangled his Egyptian father to death. It also said Naseef used narcotics, mutilated his father's body after his slaying and attempted to kill another person before his arrest.

The statement did not identify how Naseef was executed. However, Saudi Arabia typically beheads those sentenced to death.

A lawyer for Naseef could not be immediately identified. It wasn't known if Naseef had a home address in the United States.

The statement did not identify how Naseef

was executed. However, Saudi Arabia typically beheads those sentenced to death. A lawyer for Naseef could not be immediately identified. It wasn't known if Naseef had a home address in the United States. Vedant Patel, a spokesperson for the U.S. State Department, said that American diplomats visited Naseef in July and that he hadn't been identified as being wrongfully detained prior to his execution. Saudi Arabia ranks among the world's top executioners behind China and Iran in 2022, according to statistics from Amnesty International. Though executions slowed during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, they've surged in recent years.

In March 2022, the kingdom executed 81 people on the same day, the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom in its modern history.

## Massive wildfire moving closer to capital of Canada's Northwest Territories

(News Agency) -With over 1,000 active wildfires burning across Canada, a massive wildfire inches closer to the capital of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife. 230 of the 1,000 wildfires are in the Northwest Territories.

A huge wildfire in northern Canada is creeping closer to the capital of the Northwest Territories and could reach the outskirts of Yellowknife by the weekend unless rain comes, the territorial government said on Wednesday.

Canada is enduring its worst-ever wildfire season with more than 1,000 active fires burning across the country, including 230 in the Northwest Territories.

Thousands of residents of the sparsely-populated territory have been forced to evacuate from smaller communities and the hamlet of Enterprise near the Alberta border was almost entirely destroyed by a blaze that swept through on Sunday.

Northwest Territories Premier Caroline Cochrane said some Yellowknife residents were preemptively leaving the city but urged people to remain calm and warned that highways could close suddenly because of the fire risk. "I've never seen so many vehicles leaving town," Cochrane said. "There's all

kinds of rumors out there, but be ready and evacuate if necessary. Be calm. Do not panic."

Yellowknife has a population of around 20,000 people and lies 250 miles (400 kilometers) south of the Arctic circle.

NWT Fire said the 163,000 hectare (402,781 acres) wildfire is currently 17 kilometres from Yellowknife and would likely reach Highway 3, the only



highway connecting the city to the rest of Canada, on Thursday. Some areas along the highway have already been ordered to evacuate.

"There is risk to the City of Yellowknife. Our team, alongside the City of Yellowknife, are doing everything possible to slow the growth of this fire and protect the community," NWT Fire said. The Northwest Territories declared a state of emergency late Tuesday and the Canadian military has been mobilized to help tackle the blazes and airlift some residents to safety.

## First major jihadi attack since coup kills 17, wounds dozens in Niger

**Insurgents killed 17 soldiers and wounded nearly 24 in the first major attack in half a year against the army in Niger.**

(News Agency) -Insurgents killed 17 soldiers and wounded nearly 24 in the first major attack in half a year against the army in Niger, where Western powers fear a coup by the elite presidential guard last month is weakening a rare ally against jihadi violence in West Africa's Sahel region. Niger was one of the last democratic countries in the region south of the Sahara and France and the U.S. have about 2,500 military personnel there who were training Niger's forces. France also conducted joint operations with its former colony, but since the coup, Paris and Washington have suspended military operations, giving the jihadis more breathing room. A military detachment was attacked Tuesday afternoon as it moved between the villages of Boni and Torodi in the Tillaberi region, the Ministry of Defense said on state television Tuesday. The wounded were evacuated to the capital, Niamey. It was the first major attack against Niger's army in six months, a worrying sign of possible escalation, said Wassim Nasr, a



journalist and senior research fellow at the Soufan Center, a think tank. "What we are witnessing today is both jihadi warring factions, the Islamic State group and (al-Qaida affiliate Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin), marking their territory because of the security void caused by the coup. This definitely should be seen in the context of the ongoing war between the two groups," he said. Neighboring

countries are threatening military action against the coup, whose supporters said Wednesday that they would register volunteers to fight and help with other needs so the junta has a list in case it needs to call on people. One organizer, Amsarou Bako, claimed that the junta is not involved in finding volunteers to defend the coup, although it is aware of the initiative.

It's not clear how real the possibility of regional conflict is.

Many Bazoum supporters have been silenced or gone into hiding, and rallies to support the president are quickly shut down by police. Several ministers and politicians from deposed President Mohamed Bazoum's regime have been detained since the coup, with human-rights groups unable to access them.

The West African regional bloc, ECOWAS, says it has activated a "standby force" to restore order in Niger. Bako, one of the founders, told The Associated Press on Tuesday that a recruitment drive will launch Saturday in Niamey as well as in cities where invasion forces might enter, such as near the borders with Nigeria and Benin, two countries that have said they would participate in an intervention. Regional tensions are deepening as the standoff between Niger and ECOWAS shows no signs of defusing, despite signals from both sides that they are open to resolving the crisis peacefully.



# Over 60 dead in migrant boat sinking off Cape Verde: UN agency

**Sixty-three people are thought to have died, while the 38 survivors included four children aged 12 to 16.**

(News Agency) - More than 60 people are believed to have died after a migrant boat from Senegal was found off West Africa's Cape Verde islands, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said Wednesday.

Sixty-three people are thought to have died, while the 38 survivors included four children aged 12 to 16, IOM spokeswoman Safa Msehli told AFP.

The long wooden fishing vessel, known as a pirogue, was spotted Monday in the Atlantic Ocean about 150 nautical miles (277 kilometres) from the Cape Verdean island of Sal, police said.

The Cape Verde archipelago lies about 600 kilometres (350 miles) off the coast on the maritime migration route to the Spanish Canary Islands -- a gateway to the European Union.

Emergency services recovered the remains of seven people, Msehli told AFP, while another 56 people are believed to be missing.

"Generally, when people are reported missing following a shipwreck, they are



presumed dead," she said.

The boat left the Senegalese fishing village of Fasse Boye on July 10 with 101 people on board, Senegal's foreign ministry said on Tuesday, citing survivors. Apart from one person from Guinea-Bissau, they were all Senegalese.

The authorities have not, for the moment, said what happened to the boat once it set off.

But Abdou Karim Sarr, an officer with the local fisherman's association the CLPA, told AFP: "Those missing are all dead."

**Dangerous route**

Moda Samb, a local elected official from Fasse Boye, said nearly all those on the boat had grown up in this fishing community.

"One of the survivors who had his father on the telephone told him that the others

were dead," he said. Other families were still waiting to hear if their children were among the survivors, he added.

The authorities in Cape Verde said they had mobilised the necessary resources to care for the survivors, seven of whom had to be hospitalised after reaching Sal on Tuesday.

Senegal's foreign ministry said it would be working to repatriate its citizens as soon as possible.

Senegal has already dealt with several similar tragedies in recent years.

Cape Verde lies on one of the maritime migration routes used by thousands of Africans fleeing poverty and war towards Europe.

Many of them aim to reach the Spanish Canary Islands, one of the most dangerous routes, often travelling in the pirogue boats which are vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather.

Around 90 migrants from Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone had to be rescued in the seas off Cape Verde in January this year.

## Tennessee hostage situation ends with brothers killed, 4 officers, victim wounded

**The brothers, Brandon Green and Leonard Green, barricaded themselves into an apartment with the hostage, spurring several hours of negotiations with police.**

(News Agency) - A hostage situation at a Tennessee apartment complex erupted into gunfire early Wednesday when police entered the residence after an hours-long standoff, leaving two brothers barricaded inside dead and wounding four officers and the hostage, authorities said.

The episode began Tuesday afternoon when the Clarksville Police Department executed arrest warrants at the apartment complex on aggravated burglary charges for the two brothers, according to preliminary information provided by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. It did



not say specifically whose gunfire hit those who were injured or killed.

The brothers, 31-year-old Brandon Green and 33-year-old Leonard Green, then barricaded themselves into an apartment with the hostage, spurring several hours of negotiations with Clarksville police, the TBI statement said.

At least one of the brothers fired several

shots at officers during the episode, the Clarksville Police Department said via Facebook.

The bureau said the situation escalated when officers entered the apartment and gunfire broke out shortly after 12:30 a.m., which is when the Green brothers were killed. The four officers' wounds were not considered life-threatening.

The TBI statement didn't identify the hostage or provide details on the severity of their wounds.

The bureau is investigating the shooting, which is standard in cases where police use deadly force. The findings will be shared with a prosecutor to decide whether the use of force was consistent with state law.



# Are Kylie and Timothee still together?

Reports describe their romance as 'low-key' & 'chill'

Kylie Jenner, the 26-year-old entrepreneur, socialite, and Timothee Chalamet, the 27-year-old actor, are keeping things light and breezy in their relationship, reports reveal. While both stars are swamped with work commitments, they manage to find moments to spend together. A source close to the duo told ET, "Kylie and Timothée are still seeing each other when they can. Kylie's busy with work and traveling a



lot, but they make time for each other when it works and both like each other." The source further emphasizes their low-key approach, stating, "They're keeping things low-key and chill for now, but get along great and have fun together." Although their romance is the talk of the town, neither Kylie nor

Timothee has addressed it publicly, and they haven't made any official appearances together. In May, Kylie was spotted at Timothee's Beverly Hills home, and they even joined a family

gathering alongside Kendall Jenner and Timothee's sister, Pauline Chalamet.

Sources suggest that Kylie is enjoying this relationship, which is notably different from her past experiences. The insider shares, "It's new and exciting for Kylie, and she's having a lot of fun." Despite their connection, it's clear

that Kylie's focus remains on her role as a mother to her children, Stormi and Aire. Meanwhile, Kylie's relationship with her ex, Travis Scott, appears to be respectful and centered around their shared

responsibility of co-parenting their kids. The source states, "Kylie and Travis are co-parenting well. They've both been doing their own things and doing their best to respect one another." It's evident

that their children's well-being is a top priority for both.

Despite the whirlwind of fame around them, Kylie and Timothee seem to be taking things slow. The rumors of the couple dating started in April when a source revealed that they were enjoying each other's company.



## Priyanka Chopra is no longer part of her New York restaurant Sona, fans wonder 'why'

Maneesh said Priyanka was the creative force behind the restaurant and told People, "We're grateful for her partnership and support. While she will no longer be involved as a creative partner moving forward, she remains in the Sona family and we are excited for our respective new chapters ahead."

The representative said in a statement, "Bringing Sona to life will invariably be a proud and significant moment in her career. Stepping away from Sona allows her to broaden these ambitions on a more global scale, and she's excited about the possibilities that await."

Fans react with disappointment. As the news was shared on Priyanka's most popular fan page on Instagram, several asked "why" in the comments section. A fan commented, "Aww man I am so bummed!! I wanted to celebrate my 40th birthday there. I hope she's okay. This was a dream of hers." Another said, "Oh no Nick named that restaurant." One more commented in disappointment, "I hope she's okay because this restaurant was her dream." A fan also wrote, "Beautiful restaurant and she and Nick inspired it so much, but they must have

new business adventures planned. Would love to see them create one in LA." "So it means she is planning something huge," wrote another.

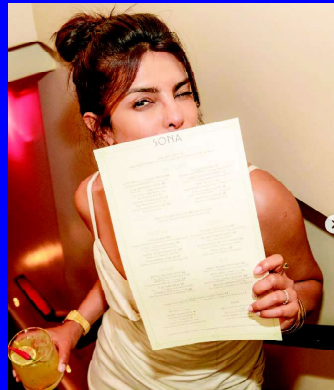
Priyanka Chopra's other work commitments. Priyanka also has a luxury homeware brand, Sona Home. She also has a haircare brand Anomaly and a film production company Purple Pebble

Pictures.

Priyanka was earlier stationed in London where she was shooting for her next Hollywood film Heads of State. She is now back in the US and turned biggest cheerleader for her husband Nick Jonas as he kicked off his tour at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, New York on Monday. She attended the show along with daughter Malti.

Priyanka also has the second season of her show

Citadel in the lineup. She had signed Farhan Akhtar's Jee Le Zaraa as well but has been rumoured to have quit the project. There is however no official confirmation on the same and producer Reema Kagti has hinted that the film will go on floors with the "same cast". It would also star Katrina Kaif and Alia Bhatt.





# AP Dhillon First Of A Kind screening

Salman Khan, Ranveer Singh pose with singer

AP Dhillon: First Of A Kind screening was held last night, August 16. It was attended by many stars, including Salman Khan and Ranveer Singh.

AP Dhillon has now got his own new docu-series about his life titled 'AP Dhillon: First of a Kind'. It is set to release on August 18. Helmed by Jay Ahmed, the four-part series offers an intimate look into Dhillon's journey from a small village in Punjab to becoming a global music sensation, exploring his struggles, motivations, and success. AP Dhillon hosted the screening of his upcoming Prime Video India docuseries in Mumbai last night, August 16. The event was a star-studded affair with many big names from the entertainment industry in attendance.

**SALMAN, RANVEER AND CELEBS AT SCREENING**

The guest list at the screening of 'AP Dhillon: First of a Kind' included popular names like Ranveer Singh, Salman Khan, Orhan Awatramani, Mrunal Thakur, Harry Sandhu, Badshah, MC STAN, and others. Dhillon was also spotted with his

rumoured girlfriend, Banita Sandhu, going for an after-party. Malaika Arora was also clicked there.

AP Dhillon looked dapper in a tie-dye printed pattern suit in black, neon pink, and grey shades. He posed with Ranveer Singh and Salman Khan for the paparazzi.

Produced by PASSION Pictures in association with Wildsheep Content and Run-Up Records, 'AP Dhillon: First of a Kind' is helmed by Jay Ahmed. It will be streaming from August 18 on Prime Video. Through exclusive access, the series follows AP Dhillon's remarkable journey from Gurdaspur, a small village in the Punjab, to the mountains of British Columbia, Canada, where he has become a renowned global music sensation.

Through a combination of Dhillon's personal accounts and interviews with his close-knit circle of family and friends, this series offers a genuine insight into Dhillon's life, motivations, and journey, taking the viewers deep into Dhillon's world, following him on a global expedition, both on and off the stage.



## Kimberley Garner flaunts her toned physique in a beige bikini



She regularly updates fans on her jet-setting lifestyle. And Kimberley Garner looked sensational in a beige bikini as she soaked up the sun in Capri, Italy on Thursday. The swimwear designer, 32, wowed in the skimpy two-piece that highlighted her toned abs and legs as she took an outdoor shower.

Kimberley sported a bronzed tan while working her best angles for the camera as her mother Geraldine took some snaps of her. The former Made In Chelsea star put on a sultry display as she later stripped down to a red bikini. Kimberley, who previously dated her MIC co-star Richard Dinan, first found fame on E4 reality series and has made a name for herself as a swimsuit brand entrepreneur. The model has been documenting her relaxing holiday with her family and boyfriend to her 534K Instagram followers. Kimberley revealed that she was off on holiday as she hopped into a helicopter. She shared a snap of herself getting into her transport wearing grey leggings and flashed her torso in a white sports bra. Despite now enjoying success as a

swimwear designer, Kimberley has previously revealed how she used to pretend to be an intern when she first started the business because nobody took her seriously.

However, the property heiress insisted she's more than just the face of her line Kimberley London and is involved with every aspect of creating her sell-out swimwear range. She told MailOnline: 'I think people sometimes think that I'm only the face, but I am responsible for every bit of the business.' 'I was 18 when I started my first company - I came up with an idea, stayed up for days learning how to register the company and teaching myself. It became very successful overnight.' She continued: 'However, as I was only 18, no one ever imagined it was mine. I was a young blonde girl with a soft voice. 'No one would take me seriously or realise it was my company. So, I pretended to be the Intern! 'I handled all the meetings, phone calls, and emails for the company. When it became a success, I put all the revenues into starting Kimberley London.'







## Rashmika Mandanna joins Dhanush in upcoming feature film

Actor Rashmika Mandanna has been roped in to star alongside Dhanush in National Award-winning filmmaker Sekhar Kammula next directorial venture. The film, which marks Dhanush's 51st feature project, was officially announced last month on the actor's birthday. Suniel Narang and Puskur Ram Mohan Rao will be producing the film via Sree Venkateswara Cinemas LLP in association with Amigos Creations Pvt Ltd. "Rashmika Mandanna comes on

board to play the female lead in the movie. This will be Rashmika's first association with Dhanush, Sekhar Kammula, and Sree Venkateswara Cinemas LLP," the makers said in a press note.

The details of the other cast and

technical crew will be announced soon. Rashmika made her Hindi film debut earlier this year with Netflix movie "Mission Majnu". Her upcoming movies include "Animal" with Ranbir Kapoor and "Pushpa 2: The Rule" alongside Allu Arjun.

## Britney Spears is thinking of buying horses amid reports of divorce with Sam Asghari: 'So many options...'

Britney Spears has seemingly commented on the reports of her and husband Sam Asghari splitting after a year of



marriage. She shared a picture of herself sitting on a horse on the beach and talked about planning to buy a horse but being unable to choose from "so many options". TMZ reports Sam has filed for divorce with Britney. Also read: Sam Asghari divorces Britney Spears and threatens to release embarrassing information if... Sharing the picture on Instagram soon after reports of her divorce surfaced online, Britney wrote, "Buying a horse soon!!! So many options it's kinda hard!!! A horse called Sophie and another called Roar??? I can't make up my mind!!! Should I join the camaraderie and put a pink cowboy hat on??? Either way I think I found my sweet spot with Roar!!!" Sam Asghari on divorce with Britney Spears

According to a TMZ report, Sam Asghari has said that he is ending marriage with Britney over 'irreconcilable differences'. Britney reportedly made him sign a prenuptial agreement which maintains her assets as separate property. The court documents state, "[Sam] has yet to determine the full nature and extent of the separate property assets and obligations of each party. There are various items of community and quasi-community assets and debts, the full nature and extent of which are unknown to [Sam] at this time." The couple had celebrated their first wedding anniversary in June. Sam had shared a wedding picture with Britney and captioned it on his Instagram Stories, "Happy 1 year to me & my better half." Sharing a video montage of their wedding pictures, he wrote, "One year married to the woman of my dreams."

## SRK credits Gauri after her post on daughter Suhana, quips 'but dimple is mine'

After Gauri Khan, Shah Rukh Khan has also shared a glimpse of Suhana Khan's speech from Koel Puri's book launch. The star kid delivered a speech at the launch of 'The Archies' co-star, Koel Puri Rinchet's debut novel, 'Clearly Invisible In Paris'. Now, Shah Rukh Khan also praised his daughter, calling her 'articulate' but joked that the dimple is his! SHAH RUKH KHAN IS A PROUD FATHER, THANKS TO SUHANA KHAN Suhana Khan is being praised for how well she articulated herself as a speaker at the launch of Koel Puri Rinchet's debut novel, 'Clearly Invisible In Paris', on August 11. She has made her father proud and the proof is the actor's recent tweet.

Taking to the social media platform, the superstar praised



his daughter Suhana. He wrote, "Yeah the circle of life is closing in for us with our babies helping us complete it. You've done so well with the three of them! Educated them, taught them dignity & desire to share love! Suhana is so articulate but the dimple is mine!!(sic)" Earlier, SRK's wife and Suhana's mother, Gauri had mentioned

how their daughter's appearance at the book launch completed their circle of life. She had written, "The first event I ever attended with @iamsrk was a book launch! and now watching Suhana speak at another such event has made me feel like life has come full circle!!(sic)"

SUHANNA KHAN AT KOEL PURI'S BOOK LAUNCH

Suhana Khan was a special guest at Koel Puri Rinchet's book launch, 'Clearly Invisible in Paris'. She said, "I think what I loved about this book is that the writing is accessible yet, it is full of contradictory characters that are flawed yet relatable. What resonated with me the most is that at the heart of it, it is about friendship and I am happy to be surrounded by friends that hold my hands during tough times and good times. What I believe is that friendship defies logic."

Suhana's remarkable public speaking skills, her appreciation for Koel's novel, and her strong bond with friends and co-workers were celebrated at the event, making it a special and significant milestone for her.

# Fitness during younger days reduces cancer risk in old age

**Staying fit in your younger years can significantly lower the risk of developing various types of cancer later in life. A study found that good cardio-respiratory fitness was associated with a reduced risk of cancer in multiple organ systems.**

Staying fit in your earlier years can significantly lower the risk of developing various types of cancer later in life, a recent study suggested.

While earlier research suggests that physical activity can prevent certain types of cancer, the new study, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, examined the link between aerobic fitness and the risk of subsequently being diagnosed with 18 different types of cancer.

The analyses are based on data from 1,078,000 men who underwent military conscription in Sweden between 1968 and 2005, with an average age of 18 years. The study showed that proper fitness at the time of conscription was followed by a lower risk of developing cancer of the head and neck, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, liver, colon, rectum, kidney, and lungs.

The research revealed that individuals with good cardio-respiratory fitness had



a remarkable 42 per cent reduced risk of lung cancer, 40 per cent reduced risk of liver cancer, and 39 per cent reduced risk of oesophageal cancer.

However, the study did uncover a slight increase in the risk of prostate and skin cancers among those with higher cardio-respiratory fitness, potentially

due to factors such as increased screening for prostate cancer and greater exposure to sunlight.

The lead researcher expressed surprise at the strong connections between fitness and cancers affecting various organ systems, particularly those in the gastrointestinal tract.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this study did not consider the impact of diet, alcohol, and smoking on cancer risk.

Despite this limitation, the results are compelling and highlight the need to promote interventions aimed at improving cardio-respiratory fitness among young individuals during their school and university years.

Moreover, the study found that aerobic activities, such as running, cycling, and swimming, may be more closely linked to cancer risk reduction compared to resistance training.

Ultimately, the benefits of exercise extend beyond cancer prevention, encompassing emotional well-being and the prevention of cardiovascular disease.

The researcher emphasized that any level of physical activity is better than none and that it is never too late to start reaping the health benefits of fitness.

## Wake up! Oversleeping on weekends could affect your heart's health

**Lack of sleep during the week cannot be compensated by sleeping in on weekends, as per a study. Even just five hours of sleep per night negatively impacts heart health.**

If we believe that we can make up for a lack of sleep during the week by indulging in a weekend slumber, you're solely mistaken.

A recent study by Penn State scientists, published in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*, unearthed a startling revelation - depriving ourselves of adequate sleep, with a mere five hours per night, wreaks havoc on our cardiovascular health. Our heart rate and blood pressure, two vital markers of our well-being, deteriorate under such conditions. In fact, attempting to compensate for lost sleep during the weekends is insufficient to return these measures to normal. According to Anne-Marie Chang, associate professor of biobehavioural health and co-author of the study, only 65 per cent of adults in the United States regularly attain the recommended seven hours of slumber per night.

"Our research reveals a potential mechanism for this longitudinal relationship, where enough successive hits to your cardiovascular health while you're young could make your heart more prone to cardiovascular disease in the



future," said Dr Chang.

To explore the effects of sleep patterns on our cardiovascular health, the team enlisted 15 healthy men aged between 20 and 35 for an intensive 11-day inpatient sleep study. For the first three nights, the participants were allowed to sleep up to 10 hours per night to achieve

a baseline sleep level. For the next five nights, the participants' sleep was restricted to five hours per night, followed by two recovery nights, in which they were again allowed to sleep up to 10 hours per night.

To evaluate the effects of this sleep regime on cardiovascular health, the

researchers measured the participants' resting heart rates and blood pressure every two hours during the day.

It was found that heart rate increased by nearly one beat per minute (BPM) with each successive day of the study.

"Both heart rate and systolic blood pressure increased with each successive day and did not return to baseline levels by the end of the recovery period," lead author David Reichenberger said.

He added, "So, despite having the additional opportunity to rest, by the end of the weekend of the study, their cardiovascular systems still had not recovered."

Dr Chang noted that longer periods of sleep recovery may be necessary to recover from multiple, consecutive nights of sleep loss.

"Sleep is a biological process, but it's also a behavioural one and one that we often have a lot of control over. Not only does sleep affect our cardiovascular health, but it also affects our weight, our mental health, our ability to focus and our ability to maintain healthy relationships with others, among many other things," said Dr Chang.



# Sensex, Nifty open lower amid global uncertainty; IRFC falls 4%

At 9:15 am, the Nifty 50 index dipped by 0.14 per cent to 19,436.30, and the S&P BSE Sensex edged down 0.15 per cent to 65,439.50.

Benchmark stock market indices started the trading session in the red due to global uncertainty on Thursday, following the downward trend in Asian markets due to concerns about China's economic health and Wall Street's apprehension about interest rates.

At 9:15 am, the Nifty 50 index dipped by 0.14 per cent to 19,436.30, and the S&P BSE Sensex edged down 0.15 per cent to 65,439.50. Broader market indices were mixed, as volatility continued to remain high.

None of the sectoral indices have managed to see any major gains, with all heavyweights such as Nifty Bank, Nifty IT and Nifty Financial Services lingering in negative territory.

The top five gainers on the Nifty 50 were Adani Ports, Titan, Tata Steel, Axis Bank and Dr Reddy's. On the other hand, the top drags in early trade were LTIM, ITC, Power Grid



Corporation, Cipla and Nestle.

Among individual stocks, Adani Group shares such as Adani Ports, Adani Power, Adani Enterprises to name a few were trading in positive territory. This after US boutique investment firm GQG Partners, which had earlier

invested in multiple Adani Group companies, picked up 8.1 per cent stake in Adani Powers.

Meanwhile, shares of IRFC tanked over 4 per cent in early trade after reports suggested that the government is considering a stake

sale in the PSU via an offer-for-sale (OFS).

Om Mehra, research analyst at Choice Broking, said, "The recent market sessions have showcased a commendable display of tenacity as bulls manage to counteract initial downward gaps and secure positive closes."

"The forthcoming scenario suggests a cautious outlook as Asian indices brace for potential declines due to the ripple effects of hawkish sentiments from the U.S. Federal Reserve," he added. "While the Nifty's fate hinges on maintaining support above the critical level of 19,234 and achieving a higher close beyond 16,625, the IT sector's robustness remains a highlight, bolstered by the continuous depreciation of the Indian Rupee. In order to capitalise on new opportunities, cautious and smart positioning will be crucial."

## Concord Biotech IPO stock market listing tomorrow: Check latest GMP, key details



The initial public offering (IPO) of Concord Biotech will list on the stock markets, the Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange, on August 18. The public offering of the R&D-driven biopharma company received a strong reception, having been oversubscribed nearly 25 times on the final day of the bidding.

Today, the shares of the company will be credited to the account of eligible bidders, based on the basis of allotment that was finalised on August 11.

As the shares of the company get ready to be listed on the stock markets, the grey market or the unlisted market indicates a

positive listing for the company. According to topsharebrokers.com, Concord Biotech's grey market premium (GMP) stood at Rs 122, indicating that the shares of the company will get listed at Rs 863, marking an almost 16.5 per cent premium over the issue price of Rs 741.

With the IPO, the company aims to raise Rs 1,550.59 crore through an offer for sale (OFS) issue. It may be noted that numerous brokerages, including Motilal Oswal, SBI Securities, Ventura Securities, LKP Research, Reliance Securities, Choice Broking, Hensex Securities, Hem Securities, and SMC Capital, have endorsed a "subscribe" rating.

## Yudiz Solutions lists at 12% premium over IPO price at Rs 185



The stock was listed on the National Stock Exchange's Emerge platform at Rs 185, a 12 per cent premium to its issue price of Rs 165.

Yudiz Solutions, a blockchain, AI, and gaming-focused enterprise solutions technology company, had a subdued market debut on Thursday after its initial public offering (IPO).

The stock was listed on the National Stock Exchange's Emerge platform at Rs 185, a 12 per cent premium to its issue price of Rs 165, marking the first blockchain-based company to debut on Indian bourses. During the subscription period from August 4 to August 8, Yudiz Solutions raised Rs 44.84 crore by selling 27,17,600 fresh equity shares in the price range of

Rs 162 to Rs 165 per share.

Established in 2012, Yudiz Solutions offers a spectrum of services encompassing mobile and web development, game development, blockchain, AR/VR, UI/UX, and IoT solutions by integrating cutting-edge technologies. The company's diverse clientele for web development spans North America, Europe, and Asia, with well-known clients including Akasa Air, MPL, Zydus, RR Kabel, IRM Energy, and SportsBuzz. Namolia Financial Services acts as the book-running lead manager, with PLS Capital and Longview Research & Advisory serving as advisors to the issue. Mas Services has been appointed as the registrar for the IPO.





## PM Modi's I-Day Speech Lauds India's Rise, Has a Vision for the Future

**Monica Verma**

Since 2014, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the mandate to rule India after 30 years, Independence Day speeches have assumed a new charm. The mornings of BJP supporters as well as detractors begin with catching the speech of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on television sets and mobile screens across the country. But his speeches aren't the usual stuff that leaders churn out on such occasions. Those who are following India's global trajectory would agree that these speeches are laced with talking points, cues and signposts of what to expect in the subsequent decades. It was from the same platform of Red Fort on India's Independence Day in 2021 that PM Modi laid out the vision for 'Amritkaal'. For the uninitiated, Amritkaal refers to the 25-year period in the run-up to 2047, when India will celebrate its 100th anniversary of independence from the British. According to PM Modi, this period is crucial for India because its achievements in this tenure will pave the way for the country to become a major power in the new global order. In the recent years, making India a major power by 2047 has become a goal for the country's economic as well as foreign policy. PM Modi once again reiterated this vision from the podium while delivering his 10th Independence Day speech from the Red Fort today. This was PM Modi's last speech of the second tenure before he faces the elections in 2024. Naturally, his speech was expected to be an exercise in politicking and he didn't disappoint one bit. In his usual style, he named corruption, dynastic politics and appeasement as the enemies of India's development. It was no co-incidence that all three are characteristics of the

Congress's school of governance. But to judge his speech as just a political exercise would be unfair. He used the speech to make points about India's rise. As a geopolitical watcher and someone who is interested in India's foreign policy, Modi's reference to India's image in a new world order and his ideas about country's civilisational resurgence were unmissable. While drawing attention to India's demographic dividend, its status as home to one of the youngest populations in the world, its position as the fifth largest economy all set to become the third largest and its rising export basket, PM Modi spoke about how the foundations being laid in the past decade right up to 2047 have the potential to lift India from a position of irrelevance to an international system-shaping ability in the future.

For him, India's past was tragic. India has a 1,000-year-old history of invasions, but the next 1,000 years are going to be about its resurgence and civilisational awakening. Civilisational awakening is a theme that PM Modi has often invoked, right from his campaigns to his almost 10-year tenure as the PM. He is the first PM to be born in free India and it also shows in his imagination of India as a civilisational state. Unlike the previous leaders who looked at nation building in the European style, following in the footsteps of the colonial masters who had just left, the idea of India as a civilisational state solves multiple dilemmas of getting many identities under one common idea of India.

India's 5,000-year old civilisation presents a template and home for each identity. It provides a glue for various religions, languages and ideologies to co-exist. PM Modi also uses the same template to secure good relations with multiple power centres across the world. Today, India's

diplomacy is characterised by its civilisational outreach to both Iran and Israel alike.

While making the case for India to reclaim its civilisational greatness, PM Modi also alluded to the changing global order and

India's role in it. His comparison of the post Covid-19 world order to the end of the Second World War was also interesting. The end of the Second World War had led to creation of key global institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank. Despite all the talk of a liberal international order, the Bretton Woods consensus was mostly scripted by the West. India, as a newly independent country, hardly had a say in the post-war architecture, but with its rise, the injustice meted out to India has become visible.

Still, India is not a revisionist state. Its vision of the global order is harmonious and it can be a key partner of the West in the face of China's rise. However, as often repeated by PM Modi and his ministers at various world fora, India needs to be admitted as a full-fledged member of this club. No points for guessing that it totally includes the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) permanent seat.

Interestingly, despite power play and a proactive engagement with power politics, PM Modi has positioned India as the voice of the global south. His words today at Red Fort, calling India the 'Vishwamitra' or 'Friend of the World', were exemplary. It is a powerful gesture to allay the world's anxieties regarding India's rise. India's civilisational history is a testament that it will be the most welcoming and accepting power centre.

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# Red Fort Speech:

## Modi Admits to Challenges Ahead, But Still Shows Supreme Confidence in Seizing the Moment for India



By: Sreemoy Talukdar

Around the time that prime minister Narendra Modi rose to the ramparts of Red Fort to deliver his 10th Independence Day address, India's 77th, three unrelated, coincidental moves were afoot that capture the gamut of India's moment in the world.

One, India and the UAE started settling bilateral trade in their local currencies, the MoU for which was signed last month. The move is a baby step towards internationalizing the Indian currency (INR).

Second, in the ongoing FIDE chess World Cup in Baku, for the first time in history four Indians, including three teenagers - Vidit Gujrathi, Gukesh D, Arjun Erigaisi and R Praggnanandha - have stormed into the quarterfinal stage, guaranteeing one Indian presence in the semifinals.

Third, last Friday, Union home minister Amit Shah brought three bills in the Parliament, introducing a much-needed reform of the Indian criminal justice system by doing away with the British-era Indian Penal Code and replacing it with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha bill, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill - indicating not just a transformation into modernity but also firm steps towards decoloniality.

These three disparate incidents are symptomatic of the rise of a nation that is finally recognizing its potential and is poised to meet its destiny, and the address on Monday by the prime minister dwelled on both the inevitability of India's rise, and the pitfalls that lies in its wake - delivered by a leader who realizes that history has thrust him into the cusp of a momentous transition.

The achievements of the youngsters in Azerbaijan, or the step towards internationalization of INR are a prognosis of India's capabilities that are hidden, waiting to be tapped. The unleashing of that potential, however, is incumbent on rightful use of human resources, laborious

nation-building and mitigating the birth pangs that must accompany such a momentous exercise. India, for instance, has one of the world's youngest working-age population, but this demographic dividend cannot be allowed to fritter away. This urgency was evident in the prime minister's speech when he said, "today, we have demography, democracy and diversity - this trinity has the power to realise the dreams of the nation... What we do in this era, the steps we take, and the decisions we take one after the other will last for the next 1000 years and is going to determine the country's direction. "The youth who writes the fate of India... the sons and daughters of my country... I'd like to tell them that hardly anyone has had the fortune that you have received. And so, we don't want to lose it."

A sense of this urgency, that India cannot let this moment pass, pervades Modi's address throughout. For India to achieve its destiny of becoming a developed nation by 2047 (Vikshit Bharat), the next 25 years is crucial, and according to the prime minister, the young demography must be complemented with a sense of unity in purpose and deeds.

"For the coming 25 years, we should follow only one mantra, this should be the pinnacle of our national character - the message of unity. India's unity gives us strength, be it north, be it south, be it east, be it west, be it village, be it city, be it man, be it woman; (If) we want to see a developed India in 2047 then we have to live the mantra of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.

Modi placed India's strengths away from big cities such as Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi into the Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, recalling that when he visited Bali for the G-20 Summit, world leaders were eager to know about the success of the Digital India Programme, and he used to "tell them that the wonders India has done are not limited to Delhi, Mumbai or Chennai; even the youth of my Tier-2, Tier-3 cities are involved in the wonders India is doing,"

producing sports icons, scientists, making satellites, "inspiring millions of children to take up the path of science and technology."

This is a vote of supreme confidence in the future of India that other countries can only dream of. The happy coincidence of a rising economy, young demography, strong leadership and favourable geopolitical currents have offered India a chance to chape the world's future, and prime minister indicated that India won't let the chance drop.

He compared India's opportunity to shape the world's future in a post-Covid world with the tectonic realignment post-Second World War, stressing that "today India's exports are increasing rapidly and are based on different parameters. The experts are saying that now India is not going to stop. Any rating agency of the world would be making India proud.

"I can clearly see that after Corona (sic), a new world order, a new global order, a new geopolitical equation is progressing very fast. All interpretations of the geopolitical equation are changing, definitions are changing. Today, my 140 crore countrymen, your ability to shape the changing world is visible. You are standing at a turning point. And the way India has taken the country forward during the Corona period, the world has seen our potential.

"Today India is becoming the voice of the Global South. India's prosperity and heritage is becoming an opportunity for the world today. Now the ball is in our court, we should not let the opportunity go."

An essential feature of India's rise is chipping away at the continued legacies of colonialism. Just as a new set of penal codes, in sync with Indian culture and ethos, have been introduced throwing 19th century British-era laws into the dustbin of history, similarly, the decolonisation agenda stands firmly as the centrepiece of Modi's definition of a rising India.

"The country," he said on Monday, "which has come out of the mentality of slavery, is moving forward today with a new self-confidence. The nation is working wholeheartedly to prove the new resolutions. My mother India which was once a powerhouse of energy, but was buried in a pile of ashes, that Mother India has been awakened once again by the efforts, consciousness and energy of 140 crore countrymen.

"Maa Bharti has awakened and I can clearly see friends, this is the period we have experienced in the last 9-10 years. A new attraction, a new faith, a new hope has arisen all over the world towards the consciousness of India, towards the potential of India, and the world is seeing this beam of light that has risen from India as a light for itself."

The prime minister presented a detailed account with relevant statistics of the job that his government has done since 2014, which he termed "a compelling story of change", specifying how his government has given Rs 100 lakh crore to the states in nine years, up from Rs 30 lakh crore, Rs 4 lakh crore spent on building houses for the poor, Rs 3 lakh crore towards development of local bodies, among others. He said the result "of all these efforts is that in my first five-year term, 13.5 crore of my fellow poor brothers and sisters have broken free from the chains of poverty and entered the new middle class."

Linking the upliftment of the poor to nation's progress, Modi said, "When poverty reduces in the country, the power of the middle-class section of the country increases manifold. And I assure you that in the coming five years, Modi guarantees that the country will be among the top three world economies.... When the purchasing power of the poor increases, the power of the middle class to carry out business grows too. When the purchasing power of the villages increases, the financial system of the town and city runs at a faster pace."

# I lied about my age on Tinder to date a younger man. Now I regret it

By Shanti Nelson

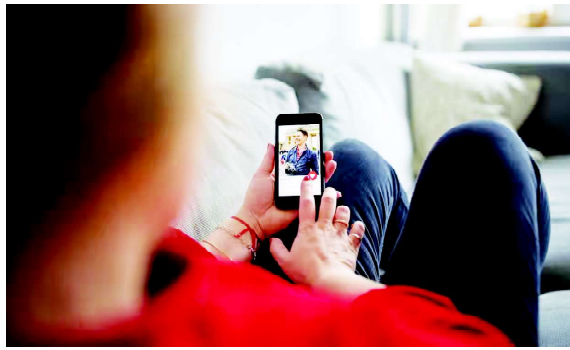
I lied about my age on Tinder and now I'm menopausal, spooning an unsuspecting millennial while he sleeps.

"Everyone over 50 lies about their age on dating apps, plus you don't look 53." I never should have listened to Helen. We're best friends and I love her, but we're polar opposites.

"You deserve a little action, Shanti; you've been through a lot." She was right, but pretending to be 42, what the hell was I thinking? I wasn't.

I was way over the legal limit when I signed up for Tinder, buzzed on cheap rosé and expensive cheese, and high on the idea of meeting someone. I blame Helen - she lured me in with her blissful dating stories of tapas and Spanish wine, seaside bungalows and sunset hikes. Ugh. Whatever golden dating algorithm she fell into should be cast in bronze and preserved in a museum.

Mine, on the other hand, was an unfortunate spectacle of basement dwellers and commitment-phobes. Fur-clad unicyclists at Burning Man and swollen gym devotees in muscle tees, posing with Vegas showgirls and freshly caught marlin. What horny "genius" sent out the memo that dead fish are a selling point? And don't even



get me started on bathroom selfies. Gross.

I was seconds away from deleting Tinder when his profile appeared like a phoenix rising from my dating cesspool: "Josh. Single, San Francisco. Chef. 38."

Now, three months into our newly minted morning routine - sex, tea, toast, shower, coffee - we're post-sex and pre-toast on a lazy Sunday morning when - bam! - the honeymoon phase hits an iceberg.

"You haven't had your period since we met. What's up with that?"

Uh oh.

Radio silence.

I roll over and play dead, contemplating how to distract him, either with more sex or more toast. He loves both.

"You don't think you're preg ..."

I've managed to shield his millennial eyes from the

underbelly of my hormonal shift - plucking the dark web of unwanted hair behind locked doors, and cleverly diverting any conversation that might reveal my age with foreplay or craft beer. I can explain away the night-sweating because it's summer and "I should go to Ikea for a lighter comforter, but I get claustrophobic and too distracted by the smell of cinnamon buns to shop."

He's wide awake and going zero to 60. Full Sherlock.

"More toast?" I pull out the big guns.

He's unresponsive; I've lost him. I can feel his wheels churning while he compiles the evidence - no period, bloated belly, tired, robust appetite.

He has no idea how not pregnant I am.

Dammit. He's glazed over, slowly drifting off into a dreamy

wonderland of "Am I a daddy now?" as I burrow deeper into his armpit hair, trapped. Trapped in bed between a cup of lukewarm coffee and a lie I'm not ready to admit, not yet anyway. We've only just started and I'm too blissed-out, floating on a loopy cloud of sex, caffeine and pillow talk. Plus, he's so young he doesn't even snore yet.

Truth be told, this Tinder lie is exhausting, even more than all the sex we're having. If it wasn't for Helen's dating intervention, I'd be curled up in bed with my cat, binge-watching *Virgin River* on my iPad with a mug of pinot noir and a bag of stale cheese puffs. What's so wrong with that? need to break the news before he rattles off his favorite baby names. Just rip off the Band-Aid, Shanti. This kind of high anxiety is sure to induce a major hot flash and it's hard to maintain a poker face when I'm beet-red and sweating. Oh God, the sweating. Sure, he'll probably dump me, but on the upside, a new season of *Virgin River* just dropped, not to mention the Costco-sized bag of cheese puffs I have hidden under the bed. My cat will be apathetic, but that's to be expected, he's a cat. Well, it was fun while it lasted.

Heart racing and palms clammy, I blurt it out, "I'm 52!" "What?" Josh asks.

"I'm 52 years old, Josh. There, I said it. 52."

He still looks confused. Of course he is. I just dropped a grenade from Crazy Town.

Aren't you 53?"

What the?!

"You were born in 1969, right? That would make you 53."

Great, now he thinks I'm a liar AND bad at math.

Josh knew my age all along. "Duh, Shanti, Google."

"And you still thought I was pregnant, at 53?"

"Menopause wasn't on my radar, plus I figured you'd confess when you were ready."

Having never dated anyone my age, he had no experience with menopause symptoms.

Lucky bastard, I barely have a clue what to expect myself from day to day.

In the end we part ways amicably, "consciously uncoupling" and still friends (with occasional benefits), until Josh gets a job and moves to LA.

For three months he went along with my ridiculous charade. He never had an issue with my age, I did. It was my insecurity, my self-doubt, and my shame around my ageing body. What was I so afraid of? That he would see the real me in all my midlife glory, and run? He was already seeing the real me (sans chin hair), and he liked it - a lot.

## Breaking Down The Proposed Reforms In Indian Criminal Laws

By Bharti Mishra Nath

The Centre introduced three new bills in Lok Sabha on August 11 to revamp India's criminal justice system enacted by the British in 1860. There were recurring demands for overhauling the entire criminal justice system as it was archaic and not in tune with contemporary times.

The three bills, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023, the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023 and the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, 2023 will replace the Indian Penal Code, 1860; the Indian Evidence Act, 1972 and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. The bills have been formulated with the aim of bringing a paradigm shift to ensure speedy justice, integrity of evidence for higher conviction and lower pendency. The bills have been referred to the Parliamentary

Standing Committee for further deliberations and the report may be tabled in the next session of Parliament.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) repeals 22 provisions of IPC, proposes changes to 175 existing provisions and introduces nine new sections. It contains total 356 provisions.

The Bharatiya Sakshya Bill (BSB) repeals five existing provisions of the Evidence Act, proposes changes to 23 provisions and introduces one new provision. It contains 170 sections in total. The proposed bill permits witnesses, accused, experts and victims to appear via electronic means.

It also gives electronic evidence the same legal value as documents.

The Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) repeals nine

provisions of the CrPC, proposes changes to 107 provisions and introduces nine new provisions. The bill contains a total of 533 sections.

The legal fraternity at large has been taken by surprise by the introduction of these new statutes. There are mixed views but one common refrain is that outdated laws of colonial era cannot be practised in the modern times when the natures of crime, psychology of criminals and technology have changed drastically.

"The proposal is a welcome move given the stagnancy in some of the criminal laws. Provisions like 'zero FIR' and 'Deemed sanction' will expedite trials. While the courts have been progressive in dealing with socio-economic-cultural aspects of crime, the executive and legislature needed

to catch-up. World and society have transformed over the last few decades. Now with these proposals, the much-needed changes finally seem to be getting attention of the executive," says Rajiv Singh, advocate, Patna High Court.

The hallmark of the statutes is that it will bring the much-required changes to the criminal justice system and ensure delivery of justice within a maximum period of three years. New offences such as organised crime, terrorism offences, endangering sovereignty, mob lynching, sexual intercourse by deceitful means and false promise to marry, which were absent in the Indian Penal Code, have been introduced in the proposed statute. The new bill envisages stricter punishment for crimes against women and children, aims to decongest jails

by releasing convicts who have served half their sentences and fixes the accountability of police officers for arrests. Timebound trials, the introduction of summary trials for petty crimes as well as community service, the provision for recording the statement of a victim of sexual violence at her house by a woman magistrate are among highpoints of the bills.

"The amendments with respect to major acts were much-awaited. One of the key highlights of the bill which impressed me is the provision of video-graphing at the time of raids and during the process of investigation. This will reduce the number of false cases being registered against innocent persons. The amendment in the Evidence Act with respect to electronic evidence is also a welcome change.





# Pakistan's Security Nightmare:

## The Twin Taliban Threat

By: Hasmat Vajdani & Amit Kumar

The heightened attacks by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) against the Pakistani government following the Taliban's assumption of power in Afghanistan are in the limelight. Empirical data from the Islamabad Research Center reveals a significant surge of 51 per cent in attacks within Pakistan since the Taliban's rise to power, thereby underscoring TTP's mounting challenge to the state's authority. Originating in 2007, TTP's primary aim has been to establish territorial autonomy in Pakistan's tribal areas and enforce Sharia law nationwide, with its influence predominantly concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Last month's suicide attack in Islamabad is a notable manifestation of TTP's ability to strategically target the heart of the capital, showcasing its tactical sophistication. Over the past two decades, Pakistan has strategically supported the Afghan Taliban and mistakenly anticipated reciprocated government backing upon their ascent to power. Another flawed assumption by the Pakistani government was the prospect of cooperation between the Afghan Taliban and TTP. Contrary to expectations, the Afghan Taliban facilitated dialogues between the Pakistani government and TTP, moderated by Sirajuddin Haqqani, which ultimately failed to yield desired results. Consequently, the relationship between the Taliban and Pakistan became unexpectedly strained, with the Taliban non-compliant with Pakistan's post-power demands. Rather than being isolated, TTP garnered significant strength through Taliban support, enabling large-scale attacks within Pakistan. This investigation scrutinizes the Afghan Taliban's reluctance to suppress TTP,

despite the repercussions of strained relations with Pakistan, while also highlighting the Pakistani military's shortcomings in countering TTP's activities. Through five key axes, this study explores the interconnections between TTP and Afghan Taliban and the factors contributing to the Pakistani Army's lack of effective cooperative operations against the TTP. By engaging with these intricate dynamics, this analysis contributes to a nuanced understanding of the evolving political landscape in the region.

### A SENSE OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

In the aftermath of the Taliban's overthrow of the Afghan government in 2021, various Islamist groups, notably Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, gained significant empowerment. Drawing inspiration from the protracted guerrilla warfare waged by the Afghan Taliban against American and NATO forces, the TTP has adopted a similar strategy in its conflict with the Pakistani government.

Comprising predominantly of students from religious schools, TTP fighters perceive their struggle against the Pakistani government as a sacred endeavour. Witnessing the establishment of a Sharia-based system by their ideological brethren in Afghanistan, they have been emboldened to envision a second iteration of the Taliban regime within Pakistan. This heightened self-confidence has fueled the TTP's determination to wage a prolonged war of attrition against the Pakistani government. The TTP's leadership has openly declared its readiness to engage in protracted hostilities, asserting its possession of ample ammunition, weapons, and human resources to sustain such a conflict for

decades.

### GEOSTRATEGIC LOCATION

Afghanistan and Pakistan share an extensive border spanning over 1600 miles, characterised by rugged mountainous terrain, making it challenging to control migration flows. This porous border has emerged as a strategic advantage for the TTP. Following attacks, TTP forces can conveniently seek refuge by crossing into Afghanistan, where they have successfully adopted military tactics similar to those employed by the Afghan Taliban. In the wake of the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan, many clashes between Pakistan Rangers and Taliban forces have been recorded in various border regions, indicating heightened tension and mutual mistrust between both sides.

The Pakistani authorities assert that the Afghan Taliban has provided a haven for the TTP, with the latter's leadership reportedly residing in Afghanistan. This has posed formidable challenges for the Pakistan Army in their efforts to suppress TTP bases across the border. Conversely, the TTP has refrained from establishing specific bases within Pakistan, opting instead for agile "fight and flight" tactics. Previously, Islamabad's military strategists believed that facilitating the ascent of an Islamist government in Kabul, sympathetic to Islamabad and in opposition to New Delhi, would secure Pakistan's strategic depth in Afghanistan.

However, the current reality reveals a reversal of fortunes, wherein the TTP has transformed this strategic depth into a formidable strategic obstacle against the government of Pakistan,

leveraging it to its advantage.

### ACCESS TO MODERN WEAPONS

The TTP's capacity to confront and challenge Pakistan's national security has been significantly bolstered by its acquisition of modern and advanced weaponry abandoned by American and NATO forces in Afghanistan. The Taliban facilitated the transfer of these weapons to the TTP, which are readily accessible through the black market in Afghanistan. The TTP leadership recently affirmed on CNN that they possess a substantial arsenal of weaponry and ammunition to sustain their resistance against the Pakistani government for decades.

Pakistani media reports indicate that TTP fighters have procured cutting-edge M4 and M16 service weapons, night vision and American sniper equipment. These sophisticated armaments were originally provided to the former commandos of the Afghan Army by the United States. These weapons are wielded by the TTP fighters in their confrontation with the Pakistani military. Despite Pakistan's Army being one of the largest and most formidable in the region, both in quantity and quality, the TTP's possession of modern weaponry has exposed vulnerabilities within the armed forces. While the Pakistan Army boasts formidable training and possesses nuclear capabilities, the guerrilla warfare tactics adopted by the TTP, coupled with the deployment of advanced NATO-provided weaponry, pose significant risks to the Army's security and operational effectiveness. This confluence of factors accentuates the potential for dangerous repercussions on Pakistan's military and overall security landscape.

### DEOBANDI ISLAM

The inception of the Deobandi Religious School (madrasa) stemmed from a reactionary response to British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, wherein it exhorted Muslims to undertake jihad and rise against British rule. The Deobandi school is characterised by enmity towards the West and its allies, embodying elements of jihadism and xenophobia, thus unifying the religious ideology followed by the Afghan Taliban and the TTP. However, it is noteworthy that Indian Deobandis hold distinct perspectives compared to their Pakistani counterparts.

During the commencement of the Afghan Jihad, Deobandi teachings were interwoven with Wahhabism, giving rise to a blend of these two ideologies adhered to by the Taliban and TTP. Notably, both groups embrace this amalgamation as a foundational doctrine.

Beyond the student population of Deobandi schools, the TTP's middle and lower ranks encompass individuals with divergent backgrounds. Among these ranks, one can find arms and drug smugglers, fugitives from the law, and those who reject government authority. Akin to the Afghan Taliban, the TTP has employed a similar recruitment strategy over the past two decades, attracting jihadists and criminals into their ranks.





# Decoding Sri Lanka's Important Role in India's Neighbourhood First Policy

By: Sheen Kachroo

Back in 2020, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed that Sri Lanka will always be a priority under its Neighbourhood First Policy. Not garrulous, but through action as well, India aided Sri Lanka since the Covid pandemic in various ways - financial aid, line of credit, and diverting 270,000 metric tonnes of diesel and petrol - to name a few. It was at the invitation of PM Modi when the President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe, visited India on July 21, 2023.

The visit by Sri Lankan President witnessed a diverse set of engagements, ranging from connectivity that includes air, maritime, energy, power, trade, economic, financial, and people to people. Further, five MOUs were signed ranging from animal husbandry and renewable energy to UPI application acceptance and solar power projects. But why Sri Lanka plays an important role in India's Neighbourhood First Policy? Let's decode this. India's Neighbourhood First Policy aims to improve its relationship with immediate neighbours. India and Sri Lanka's relationship is not new but has remained in place for more than 2,500 years. Not just economically, but both sides have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic interactions.

Sri Lanka as a priority is not a new addition to India's foreign policy. The bilateral relations between the two range from the highest political level to growing

India became independent, colonisers understood the "strategic importance" of the region.

Britain recognised Sri Lanka's

military standpoint. India, for own its security in terms of Indian Ocean strategy and partner networking for forming an Indian Ocean Rim Community, cannot expect a hostile Sri Lanka.

It is paramount to the Indian Navy because while switching naval fleets from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea and vice versa, the ships pass via Sri Lanka. China's investment in the Port of Colombo and the Port of Hambantota has become a red

August 2012. On the refugee camps, over 108 camps were established in Tamil Nadu and 54 in Odisha. Since then, India has provided Rs 1,226 crore for the relief and accommodation of refugees from July 1983 to March 31, 2022.

The civil war not only resulted in the death of Sri Lankan soldiers but Indian Peacekeeping Soldiers also sacrificed their lives. India and Sri Lanka inked a pact in 1987 to put an end to the civil conflict. The main goal of the agreement was to put an end to the conflict between the Sri Lankan militants and the militant Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The civil war in Sri Lanka put India's interests and integrity in danger. There were two possible explanations for this hazard. First, it would have been a significant threat to India's security if other nations had attempted to control Sri Lanka. Second, the fundamental goal of the LTTE was to create a Tamil state that would have included all Tamils, which constituted a challenge to India's integrity. India started two operations in the country, Operation Pawan and Operation Poomalai. Thus, it is evident that situations in Sri Lanka have a direct impact on India that have geopolitical, financial, economic, and security challenges for our country.



trade and investment to cooperation in the fields of development to education, culture and defence, as well as a broad understanding of major issues of geopolitical interest. Although China's influence on Sri Lanka and its projects seems competitive for India, the relations have stood the test. Last year when Lanka's economy went into a tailspin, it was India who came first and supported the growth of the country. Apart from years of bilateral relations, Sri Lanka's positioning in the South Asian region is strategic. Even before

strategic importance for the security of both British India and the Indian Ocean, and they built a strong naval base on the island's eastern coast at Trincomalee. Further, this island republic is situated between the main shipping lanes connecting Europe with East Asia and the oil tanker routes connecting the Gulf oil-producing nations with China, Japan, and other Pacific nations.

Since the United States transfers naval strength from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf over the same sea channels, it is significant from a

flag for both the US and Indian naval fleets. Apart from the geopolitical level, any political turmoil can pose a security challenge for India. For instance, during the economic crisis, many Sri Lankan Tamils illegally migrated to Tamil Nadu and other southern states of India.

Here, it is important to note that in the three-decade civil war in Sri Lanka, India also bore the brunt. The Ministry of Home Affairs in the 2021-22 annual report informed that 3,04,269 Sri Lankan refugees migrated to India. The data was collected for the duration from July 1983 to



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