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Why Donald Trump chose J.D. Vance to be his running mate.



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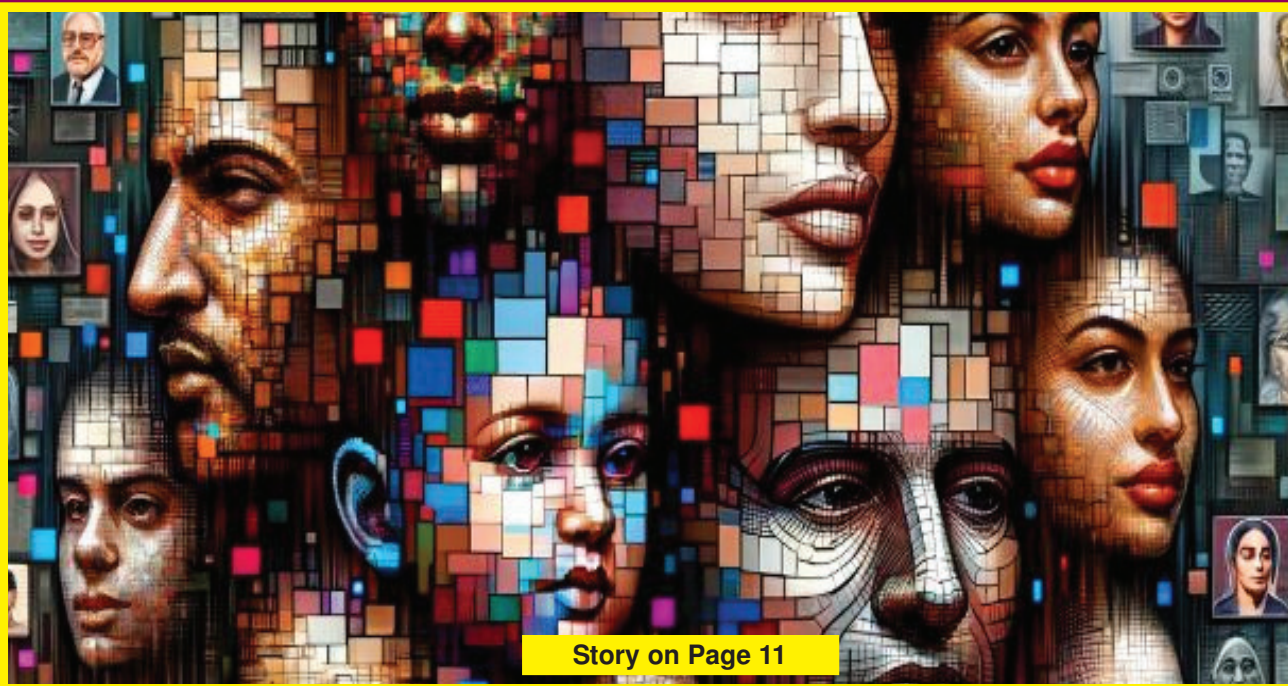
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From Misinformation To Fraud, The Alarming Rise Of Deepfakes In India



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Interpol arrests 300 people in a global crackdown on West African crime groups



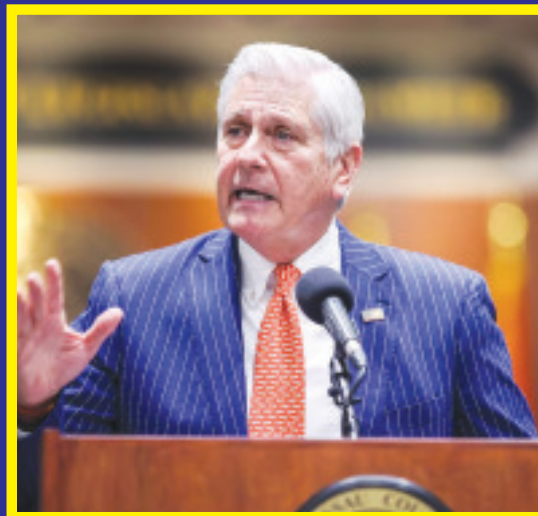
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Sen. Bob Menendez found guilty on all counts, including acting as foreign agent, in federal corruption trial

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Sikh Republican Harmeet Dhillon flamed for 'Ardas' at party meet: 'Blasphemous'



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UK busts gang of British-Indians over drugs, money laundering after 2-year probe



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Navy Rescues 9 Crew Including 8 Indians After Oil Tanker Capsized Off Oman

Out of the nine members, eight are Indians and one is from Sri Lanka.



The entire crew of MT Falcon Prestige, a Comoros-flagged oil tanker capsized 25 nautical miles southeast of Ras Madrakah near the port town of Duqm in Oman. Three Sri Lankan nationals were among the 16 crew members. The operations are being conducted in challenging weather conditions as the area is experiencing rough seas and strong winds. Navy's Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft P8I is also assisting in the search for survivors.



The port of Duqm is located on Oman's southwest coast, close to the Sultanate's major oil and gas mining projects, including a major oil refinery that forms part of Duqm's vast industrial zone, Oman's biggest single economic project. The oil tanker was headed for the Yemeni port city of Aden, according to shipping website marinetraffic.com. The capsized oil tanker transmitted a distress call around 10 pm on July 15 off the coast of Oman, sources said. The Indian Embassy said it is in constant touch with the Omani authorities and the search and rescue (SAR) operation is being coordinated by the Oman Maritime Security Centre and the Indian Navy is conducting operations in the region.

(Sai Bureau)-Indian Navy's warship INS Teg has rescued nine crew members out of 16, who went missing after an oil tanker capsized off the coast of Oman. The navy warship has been deployed for Search and Rescue

assistance for the capsized oil tanker. Out of the nine members, eight are Indians and one is from Sri Lanka.

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Biden held 'tense' call with group of House Democrats over concerns he can't win

(Sai Bureau)-On Saturday, roughly an hour before the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump -- President Joe Biden was in the midst of a heated phone call with moderate House Democrats.

The Zoom call, according to multiple sources, did not go well for the president. The call was between the New Democrat Coalition, which includes a mix of nearly 100 moderate and some progressive-adjacent members, and President Biden, and focused mostly on members' concerns about Biden's ability to win the election. One House Democrat on the call told ABC News that Biden was not prepared for questions, that he gave "rambling responses" without answering questions, and downplayed their concerns. Members were largely dismayed with Biden's presentation, lack of a strategy, and preparation for anticipated questions, according to sources.

He was also late to the call by about 30 minutes, per sources. The call turned personal during what was described as a "tense" exchange with Colorado Democrat Rep. Jason Crow, per multiple sources. Crow questioned Biden's mental fitness



and if his age is a "national security risk." The president was "defensive" in his responses, sources say.

A member described to ABC News the exchange was "hard to watch" and detailed how Crow referenced voters' concerns about Biden being "at the helm when they go to sleep at night."

The conversation became personal when Biden mentioned Crow's Bronze Star and attempted to bring up his son Beau, the

member said. Two sources described Biden's exchange with the former Army Ranger as "incoherent" and "unintelligible."

One member suggested to ABC News that members on the call were left "aghast" after this particular exchange - with members shaking their heads, some with their hands on their faces in apparent shock.

One member confirmed to ABC News the

accuracy of the following comments from Biden aimed towards Crow:

"You saw what happened recently in terms of the meeting we had with NATO. I put NATO together," Biden said.

"Name me a foreign leader who thinks I'm not the most effective leader in the world on foreign policy. Tell me! Tell me who the hell that is! Tell me who put NATO back together!" he said.

"Tell me who enlarged NATO, tell me who did the Pacific basin! Tell me who did something that you've never done with your Bronze Star like my son --- and I'm proud of your leadership, but guess what, what's happening, we've got Korea and Japan working together, I put AUKUS together, anyway!" he said.

"Things are in chaos, and I'm bringing some order to it. And again, find me a world leader who's an ally of ours who doesn't think I'm the most respected person they've ever—" he said.

Biden also called on members of Congress to do a "better job" of promoting his successes, implying their lack of support was somehow the reason for his eroding electoral standing, according to a source.

Who is Usha Vance, the Indian American lawyer married to JD Vance?

Many Republicans have welcomed Usha Vance, the Indian American wife of vice-presidential nominee JD Vance, as a symbol of generational change and growing diversity in the party ranks.

Usha, 38, a corporate lawyer who used to be a registered Democrat, is the

watercolour artist. She is the daughter of Krish and Lakshmi Chilukuri, who hail from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh and later settled in California. Krish is an engineer and university lecturer; Lakshmi a biologist and college provost. They are part of a tight-knit community of Indian American academics in suburban San

Diego. Usha recalled in a recent Fox News interview: "I did grow up in a religious household, my parents are Hindu, and I think that was one of the things that made them such good parents, that make them really very good people." Even as a child, Usha seemed a stranger to self-doubt. In a 2022 profile in the New York Times, Vikram Rao, a family friend who works in Silicon Valley, was quoted as saying: "By age five or six, she had



daughter of Indian immigrants and a practicing Hindu.

Danny Willis, 25, chair of Delaware Young Republicans, said: "With this ticket, with the show of diversity in what would be the second gentleman and second lady of the United States, I'm extremely proud to be a Hispanic male and a Republican."

Usha has a very different story to tell from the last Republican second lady, Karen Pence, a white grandmother and devout Christian from Indiana who was an elementary school teacher and

assumed a leadership role. She decided which board games we were going to play and what the rules were going to be. She was never mean or unkind, but she was the boss."

The same Times article noted that, between 2007 and 2010, "Usha posted 65 'read' books to her Goodreads account, including novels by Zadie Smith, Jonathan Safran Foer and Vladimir Nabokov, as well as nonfiction by Nina Burleigh and Nicholas Kristof. Then her account went dormant for six years."



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Biden is clearly in poor health. We deserve an honest and transparent report

Despite media claims, Biden doesn't appear to have Parkinson's Disease. Presidential fitness is a serious matter, and we in the media are not doing the American public any favors by speculating about what is going on with President Biden, just as the White House is not doing us any favors by obfuscating the truth.

We do know that he currently has COVID-19, with mild upper respiratory symptoms so far and his chances of a severe course markedly reduced since he is taking Paxlovid. On the other hand, recurrent COVID does increase your risk of post-COVID problems, including worsening cognition.

Speaking of cognition, I don't believe that Biden is suffering from Parkinson's disease, despite the media swirl of accusations and the fact that Dr. Kevin Cannard, a movement disorders specialist from Walter Reed Medical Center, has visited the White House at least eight times over the past year.

First of all, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, the White House physician, has denied the president has Parkinson's disease in two yearly physical summary official letters as well as a recent update. There is no reason to believe a licensed physician would lie on an official medical document.

So, what is the president suffering from? There are many possibilities. Plus, many neurologists I have spoken to who have observed the president on numerous videos and prolonged speeches have seen no sign of characteristic Parkinsonian features including shuffling gait, cogwheel rigidity of the upper extremities, tremors, etc. Granted, videos are no replacement for an in-person examination, even in the era of telemedicine.

So, what is the president suffering from? There are many possibilities. The public is right to be alarmed when it sees these lapses, with the inability to follow a line of thought, to speak clearly, accompanied by periods of disorientation and confusion.

And the president did undergo a now outdated surgical repair of two brain aneurysms in 1988, and he did sustain a brain bleed at the time which can be associated with long-term cognitive impairment. But I think another explanation for his apparent neurological issues could be his longtime atrial fibrillation for which he takes blood thinners.

Multiple studies have now shown that patients with atrial fibrillation (irregularly irregular heart rhythm) are

at markedly increased risk of cognitive impairment and dementia. Associated risks include inadequate brain perfusion, small silent strokes, tiny hemorrhages and "watershed" areas of the outside of the brain (known as white matter) which studies show can get too little oxygen in cases of permanent atrial fibrillation. Problems with insufficient blood flow to the white matter of the brain have been shown to cause cognitive problems.

Periods of rigidity and a stiffened gait, as the president has shown, can also be due to vascular dementia or too much fluid on the brain (Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus). Is this what the president is suffering from? We simply don't know.

Every neurologist I know would immediately perform an MRI of the brain (with diffusion) or a CT scan if an MRI is not doable because of aneurysm clips – on someone with Biden's obvious symptoms and medical history to look for small cumulative areas of injury. An MRI might help a neurologist to make a definitive diagnosis.

A 10–15-minute cognitive test such as the Montreal test, which examines recall, recognition, and judgment, would be helpful if the president scored low. But we also must keep in mind that cognitive problems tend to wax and wane and full-scale neuropsychological testing by an independent expert would likely reveal more.

So, what is the president suffering from? There are many possibilities. The public is right to be alarmed when it sees these lapses, with the inability to follow a line of thought, to speak clearly, accompanied by periods of disorientation and confusion.

Whenever there is a sudden health concern on the part of a prominent leader, the media fills with speculation. Terms like Parkinson's Disease and cognitive testing are being thrown around by journalists and pundits who have never used them before and really have no idea what they mean. This isn't fair to the White House, to the president, and it isn't fair to the public. What we need instead is an honest and transparent and up-to-date report from the White House physician not just in terms of the president's current COVID, but also the impact of his underlying health problems. Whether or not President Biden ends up dropping out of the race for health reasons or not, in the meantime, some transparency would be very refreshing.

(By Dr. Marc Siegel Fox News)

Pooja Khedkar: Bureaucratic Dysfunction and the Job Charade

By Susmita Ghosh

The trainee IAS officer, Pooja Khedkar, accused of abusing her position and potentially fabricating her qualifications, has ignited a national debate. While uncovering the truth behind these allegations holds paramount importance, the Khedkar case forces us to confront a far more pervasive issue: the deep disorder within the Indian bureaucracy and the country's persistent job crisis.

The disgrace surrounding Khedkar stems from a public perception of a bureaucratic elite, out of touch with the realities faced by ordinary citizens. Here's a young officer, entrusted with significant power, allegedly exercising it for personal gain instead of serving the public good. This fuels a narrative of a broken system, a system that hoards opportunities for the privileged few while millions struggle to find even basic employment.

However, reducing the conversation to a single case does a disservice to the larger picture. India grapples with a monumental unemployment crisis. Millions of young people yearn for the stability and purpose offered by government jobs. The coveted IAS exam represents a golden ticket – a chance to contribute to society and build a respectable career. Khedkar's alleged actions, if true, not only betray this public trust but also cast a long shadow over the countless honest aspirants who dedicate years

to cracking the infamously difficult exam.

The focus, therefore, should shift towards ensuring a fair and transparent selection process for the civil services. Vigorous verification mechanisms to scrutinize claims and stricter penalties for fraud are crucial. We need a system that rewards genuine merit and firm dedication, not privilege or manipulation of the system.

Furthermore, the Khedkar case underscores the urgency of addressing the broader job crisis. Expanding opportunities in both public and private sectors is essential. Skilling initiatives focused on in-demand fields, coupled with improved access to quality education, can empower individuals to find fulfilling careers. The government must act with urgency to bridge the gap between the skills employers seek and the skills the workforce possesses.

The Khedkar case, for all its negativity, presents an opportunity for contemplation. We need a bureaucracy that reflects the aspirations of a young India: efficient, accountable, and demonstrably committed to serving the people. Instead of dwelling solely on her actions, let's leverage this incident as a catalyst for building a more robust and equitable system, one that creates genuine opportunities for all, not just the privileged few.



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Trump's shooting: America's future must be set by voters, not the gun

The attempted assassination of Donald Trump, which injured the former president at a rally for his re-election campaign and killed a spectator, marks a shocking and frightening moment. Political violence is neither a new development nor an aberration for the US. Though thankfully Mr Trump survived, four American presidents have been murdered, along with candidates and holders of lower offices. Many more have faced serious threats to their lives.

Sometimes such attempts are the work of an individual, such as John Hinckley Jr, who shot and injured Ronald Reagan while mentally ill, or of a small group bent on a particular aim. Sometimes, as with Abraham Lincoln's murder, they speak to the roiling currents within American politics.

Much remains unknown about the gunman, 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, who



was shot and killed by a Secret Service sniper. Records show he was a registered Republican, but had given a small sum to a progressive action committee in 2021. Yet at a time of such rancour and division, many on both left and right already see Saturday's shooting as part of a wider tide of violence and political hatred. The term "civil war" began trending on social media after the shooting.

Mr Trump urged people to "stand

united, and show our true character as Americans ... not allowing evil to win". His political opponents were also swift in denouncing this appalling act of violence, with Joe Biden describing the attack as "sick". Many places around the world are seeing growing political violence and tolerance of such acts. A small but significant and persistent minority support violence either for or against Mr Trump, research has found. The

director of the centre that carried out that research, the Chicago Project on Security and Threats, has called the US a "tinderbox". Many more Americans have weapons, thanks to surging gun sales in recent years; disinformation is rampant; and the internet also makes it easier for people with ill intent to organise.

Conspiracy theories are already swirling, on both left and right. The image of a bloodied Mr Trump, fist raised in defiance, in front of the stars and stripes will surely harden the conviction of supporters that he is a martyr, persecuted politically, legally and now physically for trying to make America great again. Steve Scalise, the Republican House majority leader – himself seriously wounded in 2017 by an anti-Republican gunman with a history of aggression and violence – was swift to accuse Democrats of "incendiary rhetoric" that was "fuelling ludicrous hysteria that Donald

Trump winning re-election would be the end of democracy in America". True incitement cannot be tolerated. Violence must be condemned – as Mr Trump himself failed to do when he joked about the brutal attack on Nancy Pelosi's husband Paul and said it was "common sense" that rioters who stormed the Capitol chanting for the hanging of his vice-president, Mike Pence, were angry.

There must also be care that extreme acts by a minority are not used to silence legitimate criticism. There is very good reason to believe that Mr Trump is a threat to American democracy; there is no justification whatsoever to the belief that he should be stopped through violence. Politicians of all stripes must be more careful than ever in their choice of language. It is up to the American public too to make this grim moment mark a turning point for the better, not a slide into something still worse.

Defying Death And Standing Tall: The Moment That Redefined Trump

By: Shubhangi Sharma

Several brilliant images were captured during the assassination attempt on Trump. But two of them stand out. Both pictures were taken just moments from each other. In the first picture, Trump is delivering a speech at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, with no knowledge that a bullet with his name on it is headed towards him. Moments later, the second picture – a defiant, bleeding Trump standing tall, fist up in the air with the American flag waving behind him. This is the moment that has single-handedly redefined Trump in the eyes of the world. Whether it is luck or divine intervention as Trump's followers put it, this incident changes everything here on out about the 2024 presidential race.

Now, the US is no stranger to assassination attempts, failed or otherwise, on its Presidents and presidential candidates. From Abraham Lincoln and John F Kennedy, to Ronald Reagan who



survived a bullet that ruptured his lung, Trump is the ninth US President to face an assassination attempt.

What could have been a tragic end to the fiery election campaign of the former US president is now a moment etched in history – because Donald Trump had not only survived the assassination attempt, with the bullet grazing his ear just millimetres close to killing him, but he stood back up bravely,

pumped his fist in the air and with blood dripping down his face, yelled 'fight' at his supporters. When he did this, the chaos on the ground paused and his supporters let out a cheer so loud, it is sure to give the Democrats many, many sleepless nights ahead. Both pictures capture instantaneous change in perception – one captures the Donald Trump of yesterday – one who was mired in indictments and

petty politics and the other shows the Donald Trump of today and possibly, the future – a leader who refused to run off the stage after surviving gunfire, an attempt on his life, and instead addressed the crowd, riling them up with confidence. And what else could they ask for? Their leader had not just survived, but he was fearless, defiant and angry. Could he have looked more presidential in that form? Even for his biggest critics, Trump could not have handled it better. This was straight out of a Hollywood movie.

Now, this single moment, captured perfectly on camera, has put Trump on a pedestal. To his supporters, he is a true hero. His credentials proven by his brave conduct. To his enemies, he's a bigger threat than ever. And to the fence-sitters, he has earned respect and possibly even their vote. Before this incident, Trump's approval rating of 47 per cent was just a point ahead of Biden's 46 per cent

as per the ABC News poll. But that is likely to change now. Take a look at this – Polymarket, a political prediction platform, shows that following the attempt on his life, Trump's chances of winning have surged by 8 per cent, reaching an all-time high of 70 per cent.

The shooter was eliminated immediately after he fired a few shots and we are yet to know his exact motivation. But it is an undeniable fact that opposition to Trump in American media had hit a boiling point – trials against him in court seemed unfair to many – depicting him as a criminal on charges related to firstly, paying off Stormy Daniels, a pornstar he allegedly crossed paths with. Then the charges related to mishandling of classified documents when he was President and thirdly, the allegation that he attempted to overturn the election result in the light of the events of January 6, 2021.

The American republic is crumbling before us – and Democrats must share

By Owen Jones

Has the US entered its late Soviet phase? The country is a gerontocracy led by ailing leaders and with a crisis of confidence in its dominant ideology; it is a flailing superpower suffering foreign humiliation (not least in Afghanistan); and its economic system struggles to meet the needs of many of its people. The similarities are a little uncanny.

There are, of course, clear differences too. The US is a democracy, albeit one severely compromised by wealthy vested interests and concerted rightwing efforts to weaken voting rights, and it is a racially diverse union of states, rather than an unstable federation of nations. But, crucially, if Joe Biden is a Leonid Brezhnev or one of his two short-lived elderly successors, then Donald Trump is no Mikhail Gorbachev: he is more of an American Vladimir Putin. The attempted assassination of Trump marks a further descent into the darkness. Earlier this year, a poll found that more than a third of Americans believe civil war in their lifetime is likely, with another 13% opting for "very likely". In 2021, a leading Canadian political scientist and scholar of violent conflict warned that the weakening of US democratic institutions over decades could lead to the

whole system's collapse by 2025, leading to extreme violent instability and a rightwing tyranny prevailing by 2030. A decade ago, such prophecies would have seemed outlandish, deranged

be becoming the norm, not besieged exceptions. Sure, the arrival of George W Bush, the horror of 9/11 and the killing fields of Iraq were traumatic for progressive Americans,



even. Now only the foolishly complacent would dismiss them as lying outside the realms of plausibility.

The liberal order is imploding. But just a quarter of a century ago, under Bill Clinton's presidency, many considered it bulletproof. The US was drunk on its recent cold war triumph, and the political and economic order it extolled was described as the final stage of human development by Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History*? The image of an at-ease, amiable US was projected to the world in cultural exports ranging from *Friends* to *The West Wing*, or as humanity's benign protector in Independence Day. Globally, liberal democracies appeared to

bookended by the most severe crisis of capitalism since the Great Depression. But Barack Obama seemed to wash those sins away. He was the first black president, telegenic and with a confident charm: central casting could not have produced a more ideal candidate for the sensibilities of the liberal American. Yet nine decades after the publication of *It Can't Happen Here*, Sinclair Lewis's dystopian novel about a fictional fascist dictator seizing power in the US, the scenario it imagines seems less far-fetched than at any other point in the 250-year existence of the American republic. Then, Lewis looked to Nazi Germany as a warning: his wife was the journalist Dorothy

Thompson, who had interviewed Adolf Hitler and subsequently been expelled by his regime. Today, the authoritarian model can be observed in Viktor Orbán's Hungary. Fidesz was a centre-right party that became radicalised in power, and since then has deployed anti-migrant hysteria to build support, demonised opponents as unpatriotic foreign puppets, rigged the media in its favour and trashed judicial independence, building what Orbán describes as an "illiberal democracy". It is a trajectory perhaps most strikingly pioneered by Putin: you keep the trappings of democracy, with the substance gradually rotted away. Shortly before the assassination attempt, Trump hosted Orbán – who has endorsed the Republican presidential nominee – at Mar-a-Lago.

Democratic culture in the US is stronger and more embedded than in Hungary. But Trump is even more demagogic than Orbán, with a more extreme and motivated grassroots base. Furthermore, he is more vengeful and radicalised than ever – the relative moderates in his entourage have left in horror at his plans for the presidency. The supreme court has a conservative majority, and a Trump presidential victory could easily be accompanied by Republican victory in both houses of Congress, meaning precious few checks and

balances. Trump has floated cancelling the US constitution and jailing his political opponents, and his promise only to be a dictator on "day one" (and not after) is hardly reassuring.

Trump's return to the White House is likely to be met with a response on the streets. Any such protests could be used as a pretext to impose authoritarian measures, perhaps even martial law. Trump reportedly told the top US military leader to shoot Black Lives Matter protesters in 2020. You can see how it could spiral. We don't yet know the motive of Trump's suspected shooter, but the episode will be used by Republicans to shut down scrutiny of Trump and the danger he poses to the republic on the grounds that it is inciting further violence against him. This is despite the fact that the vast majority of extremist violence in the US is perpetrated by rightwing elements. How did it all go wrong? The truth is the US system has long been dysfunctional, with Democratic elites partly to blame. When Trump came to power, the real average wage had about the same purchasing power as it did four decades earlier. Most gains had been accrued by top earners. Such stagnation breeds pessimism, ripe for demagogic exploitation.

Donald Trump's Appeal is Soaring and Liberals Can Do Nothing About It

By: Biswadeep Ghosh

The 2024 United States presidential election is set to take place on November 5, 2024. However, political observers worldwide are following the events unfolding in that nation with greater interest after a seminal moment in the context of the upcoming elections: the assassination attempt on Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump during a campaign speech in Pennsylvania. Video clips have captured those defining moments after a bullet pierced Trump's upper right ear. They show Trump with blood on his face raising his fist and saying 'fight' thrice while Secret Service agents are escorting him away from the stage. These clips and photos with Trump's raised fist and the American flag in the background won't be erased from

the nation's memory soon. Perhaps, ever.

Will the unfortunate incident benefit Trump in political terms? It certainly will, although many Trump haters will point out that much else will happen between now and November, which is four months away. The other question they will inevitably raise is: why did Thomas Matthew Crooks, a 20-year-old home aide, attempt to assassinate Trump by using an AR-style 556 rifle that was reportedly

his father's? Crooks is dead. The limited information about the man with no apparent motive is that he was a registered Republican who, ironically, donated \$15 to

ActBlue, the Democratic-allied organisation. A good student during his school days, it has been reported that he was a loner who was regularly bullied back



then. He was noticed for his preference for hunting outfits in school, and he chose to wear a Demolition Ranch T-shirt on the day of the attempt. Demolition Ranch is a YouTube channel for

gun lovers with over 11 million subscribers. As investigations to get to the bottom of the matter continue, it is sufficiently obvious that establishing his motive will be nowhere near as easy as, say, doing the same in the case of John Hinckley Jr., who attempted to assassinate former President Ronald Reagan in 1981 because he wanted to impress actress Jodie Foster! (Incidentally, Hinckley Jr., who was unconditionally released in 2022, plays the guitar and sings songs on his YouTube channel. Such bizarre things can only happen in the USA).

It does seem that Crooks was a politically confused man, who felt

he was out of place in society. He reportedly wanted to join the school rifle team but failed. However, his choice of a Demolition Ranch T-shirt indicates his interest in firearms. Is it possible that Crooks tried to end Trump's life after listening to the shrill cries of Trump's hostile Democrat critics, both famous and not famous, who have been baying for his blood? Without a shade of doubt, it certainly is. US Senator James David Vance of Ohio, nominated as Trump's running mate, stated in his X post, "Today (the day of the attempt) is not just some isolated incident. The central premise of the Biden campaign is that President Donald Trump is an authoritarian fascist who must be stopped at all costs."

The Trump shooting is a reminder: we live in a grim new era of political violence

By Moira Donegan

The apparent assassination attempt on Donald Trump, evidently carried out by a lone shooter at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, killed one spectator and severely injured several others. The shooter is also dead. The former president himself suffered a minor injury to his right ear, and has been discharged from hospital. While little is known so far about the shooter and his motivations, the incident was a grim reminder of the new era of intensified political violence in which we are living. There has long been violence in American politics. The Democratic congresswoman Gabby Giffords was injured in a mass shooting at a constituent event in Arizona in 2011; President Reagan survived an assassination attempt in 1981, carried out by a stalker of the actor Jodie Foster. Black Americans have faced violent oppression when attempting to exercise the franchise, which for decades was kept a white-only privilege throughout much of the country not only through the cold calculation of law but through the bloody use of force. Trump's own authoritarian politics have been accompanied by bigotry, virulent political tribalism, and a willingness to allow his preferences to be enforced and his enemies punished through physical violence. His rallies, for instance, have been sites of violence since his first campaign for the presidency in 2016, when supporters would frequently attack protesters and members of the media.

Trump supporters have long taken it upon themselves to enact vigilante political violence against his enemies. In 2018, a Florida-based Trump supporter, Cesar Sayoc, conducted a terror campaign in which he mailed bombs to critics of President Trump, including Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John Brennan, Robert De Niro, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Joe Biden. And in 2022, a deranged Trump supporter, David DePape, broke into then House speaker Nancy Pelosi's San Francisco home and beat her husband, Paul Pelosi, in the head with a hammer.

Trump's enthusiasm for a brutish and at times outright violent politics of domination appears to be infectious, and has spawned

imitators throughout the Republican party: in 2018, then representative Greg Gianforte, of Montana, was charged with assault in the midst of his congressional reelection campaign after body-slaming a reporter, a move that Trump praised. "Any guy who can do

a body slam, he is my type!" Trump said. (Gianforte pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor assault charge, and has since become Montana's governor.) All that is not including the January 6 attack on the Capitol, in which an angry, violent mob of Trump supporters stormed Congress in an attempt

to overturn the results of the 2020 election – where they threatened to kidnap and attack members of congress and chanted that they would hang Trump's own vice-president Mike Pence.

Trump's influence – and, at times, his express direction – has

arguably made political violence more central, more frequent, and more bloody a force in American politics. What has changed now, with this shooting at a Trump rally, is only that it seems to have been the first time that this kind of violence has been directed at him.

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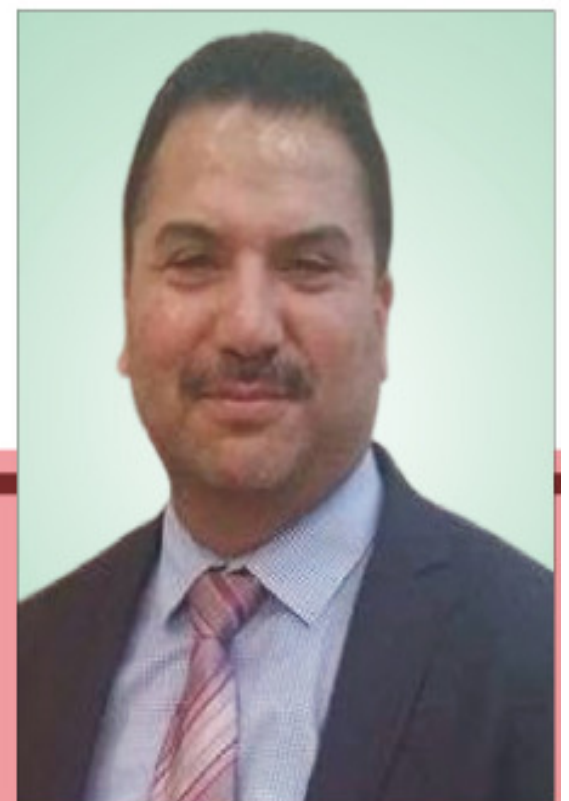
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Unfortunately, gun violence – against Trump or anyone else – is all too American

By Rebecca Solnit

"Political violence is unacceptable and has no place in this country," said Arizona's governor, Katie Hobbs, and "political violence has absolutely no place in this country," insisted California congresswoman Barbara Lee, while President Joe Biden stated, "There's no place for this kind of violence in America."

"As one whose family has been the victim of political violence, I know firsthand that political violence of any kind has no place in our society," affirmed Nancy Pelosi, referencing the attacker who broke into her home in 2022 to kidnap her and, in her absence, seriously injured her husband. "There is no place for political violence in this country, period," said Governor Gretchen Whitmer, who was the target of a kidnapping plot by far-right militiamen in 2020 who intended to make her the centerpiece of a show trial.

Dozens of others reached for versions of this "no place in America" declaration, and I wondered if "no place" meant something like when Jesus was born in a stable because, according to the Gospel of Luke, "there was no place for them in the inn." That is, the United States is full of overflowing violence of many kinds and afflicted with many enthusiasts for violence and the weapons with



which it is most often fatally inflicted. All this came in the wake of an event in Pennsylvania in which the ear of an elderly man was grazed by a bullet fired by a young man with a semi-automatic weapon. One bystander died of a bullet to the head and two others were seriously injured. Later that night four people were killed in a nightclub in Birmingham, Alabama, and nine others wounded by another gunman. Four more people were killed in a home in Holly Springs, Mississippi, in yet another shooting Sunday, and three people were shot in

Charleston, South Carolina, non-fatally. None of them were running for president, so these other stories weren't major news.


You could drop in dozens of local news stories of shootings like that any weekend in this country over the past decade years, if it wasn't the kind of week in which the carnage was so immense it became a major news story, as when an 18-year-old gunman murdered 19 elementary-school children and two teachers in Uvalde,

Texas, in May of 2022, while heavily armed police stood by. Every day, on average, 327 Americans are shot and 117 die of the injuries, according to one gun-control-advocacy site.

On Wednesday a white policeman shot and killed a Black shoplifter reportedly suffering from mental health issues in Charlotte, North Carolina. The United States is drenched in violence, riddled with violence, rotten with violence. There is room for violence in this country founded on slavery and the genocide and dispossession of Native Americans. There has always been epidemic violence against women in this country. But a lot of recent violence has been cultivated as an asset for rightwing politicians and a cash crop for gun manufacturers.

The day the Black shoplifter died, I spoke at a campaign launch for a first time San Francisco candidate. So did the activist Cleve Jones, who talked about Harvey Milk. In the late 1970s Jones was a young intern for and friend of Milk, the out gay politician whose election to San Francisco's board of supervisors was a watershed moment in queer history.

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Did Donald Trump just win the election?

By Arwa Mahdawi

You've almost certainly seen the pictures by now. You've probably seen them a hundred times. A fist in the air, blood dripping from his ear, an American flag above him, a defiant expression on his face. Trump quickly jumping up from an assassination attempt at a Pennsylvania rally and appearing to mouth the words: "Fight! Fight! Fight!" If you fed "all-American tough guy president" into an AI image generator, it wouldn't spit out anything half as powerful. Obviously, there's nothing remotely positive about a terrible act of political violence that left an innocent bystander and the shooter dead. But in terms of optics for Trump's presidential campaign? Well, as Trump himself told the New York Post on Sunday: "A lot of people say it's the most iconic photo they've ever seen." He added: "They're right and I didn't die. Usually you have to die to have an iconic picture."

There's still a lot we don't know about what happened on Saturday. We know who the suspected shooter is – the FBI has identified him as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks – but we don't know why he did it. Crooks was a registered Republican but records show that when he was 17 he made a \$15 donation to ActBlue, a political action committee that raises money for Democratic politicians. With the information we have right now, it's hard to paint Crook as an extreme leftwinger.



That won't stop Republicans, though, who are already blaming Joe Biden and the Democrats for the shooting. Again, there's still a lot we don't know about what exactly happened, but the one thing we can definitely say is that Trump's allies will wring every possible drop of political capital out of the shooting.

"This was an assassination attempt aided and abetted by the radical Left and corporate media incessantly calling Trump a threat to democracy, fascists, or worse," Senator Tim Scott tweeted on Saturday, for example.

"The central premise of the Biden campaign is that President Donald Trump is an authoritarian fascist who must be stopped at all costs," the Ohio senator JD Vance similarly tweeted. "That rhetoric

led directly to President Trump's attempted assassination." Vance is right on the first point. The central premise of Biden's campaign is that Trump is an existential threat to democracy. That phrase has been repeated again and again. "There is one existential threat: it's Donald Trump," Biden said at a fundraiser in February. "Trump poses an existential threat to abortion rights in Pennsylvania," the Democratic US representative Mary Gay Scanlon said at a press conference in April. The Democratic congressman Gregory Meeks called Trump an "existential threat to democracy" this month on MSNBC.

All of that is still true. But now that there's been a dramatic threat to Trump's very existence, that talking point loses its

potency. Every time a Democrat raises it, Republicans can claim they are putting Trump's life at risk again. Expect that phrase to start fizzling out. The assassination attempt on Trump has made it a lot harder for Democrats to emphasize how dangerous his policies would be. Instead they'll spend the next couple of weeks talking about civility and denouncing violence. (And, of course, violence of any type should always be roundly condemned. It's just a shame the same politicians denouncing political violence right now have no problem raining hell down on kids in Gaza. Violence, it seems, is only condemned when it affects certain people.) Another big Democratic talking point is January 6. Biden has been blistering about Trump's election "big lie" that incited the breach of the Capitol by a "violent mob" of Trump supporters. Biden has asked people to recall the violent scenes and reflect on how "democracy was attacked" that day. Again, all that remains true, but that particular narrative also loses its potency when Trump has been attacked; when the democratic process has been attacked. If January 6 is mentioned again, Republicans can simply point their fingers at Democrats and accuse them of inciting violence on 13 July. While the Democrats' key talking points have been weakened, Trump's characterization of himself as a brave martyr has been strengthened.

Why West's Frustration Over Modi's Russia Visit Makes No Sense

By Kanwal Sibal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Russia shortly after assuming office has drawn criticism in the West, particularly within foreign policy and media circles. Some voices in India also argue that Russia is now a declining power increasingly aligned with and reliant on China. They, therefore, suggest that India should opt decisively for a stronger partnership with the West.

There is no reason for these critics in the West to throw tantrums over Modi's visit. This visit follows logically from the position India has taken on preserving its long-standing ties with Russia, notwithstanding Western pressures to dilute them in the wake of the latter's military intervention in Ukraine. The resumption of summit-level contacts with Russia, interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's pre-occupation in the Ukraine conflict, was important,



and a delay would have been interpreted as a cooling-off of ties. The G7 Summit Modi, despite his preoccupations at home following the general elections that produced unexpected results for him and his party, decided to attend the G7 summit as a priority as it provided an occasion to interact with key Western partners and confidently signal a continuity in foreign policy in his third term. He followed this up with a visit to Russia, again on a priority basis, as it was important to resume

the tradition of summit-level dialogue between the two countries, especially as the international landscape has become more alarming with the emergence of a new Cold War-like divisive atmosphere, which is also impacting India-Russia bilateral exchanges and the Global South in general.

That the West has felt frustrated by India's "neutrality" on the Ukraine conflict is a reality. This frustration has bubbled over with Modi's visit to Russia to the point of diplomatic, intellectual and

geopolitical pettiness. Modi's embrace of Putin has elicited much disparagement, even though it is well-known that this is Modi's signature greeting style. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's outburst has been particularly intemperate. He has chided Modi as the leader of the world's largest democracy for hugging a bloody criminal in Moscow and has ludicrously claimed that this had inflicted a devastating blow to peace efforts in Ukraine. This is ironic in view of the position he and his Western supporters have taken against any dialogue with Putin, of demonising him, and believing that peace will come only with an upper hand on the battlefield.

Zelenskyy's Own Position Zelenskyy forgot that Modi had embraced him too at the G7 summit, even though the two have not had a history of close personal contacts that Modi has had with Putin. More pertinently, by postponing elections, banning

the opposition and imposing censorship, Zelenskyy's democratic credentials and that of Ukraine have been widely called into question. Russia, too, describes his regime as a criminal one, but that did not deter Modi from embracing Zelenskyy.

Some media commentators in India have also questioned the diplomatic wisdom of embracing Putin, especially in light of the bombing of a children's hospital in Kyiv during his visit to Moscow (though the facts surrounding this incident are disputed). They seem to forget that had Modi not done so, it would have sparked widespread speculation about the significance of such a snub, potentially risking the atmosphere of the visit and the warmth of personal relations with Putin. The purpose of the visit was to underscore India's commitment to its ties with Russia, which would have been undermined.

Why Indians Must Be Realistic About The Rise Of Indian-Origin Leaders Abroad

By Syed Zubair Ahmed

Donald Trump's defiant act of pumping his fist in the air, moments after his brush with death, could potentially sink President Joe Biden's chances of victory in the November election. Democrats may disagree, but it has certainly relegated Biden's age concerns to the background. At least for now. The 81-year-old President's mental and physical fitness issue is bound to resurface in the coming days and weeks, leading up to the Democratic Party Convention on August 19-22 in Chicago, when the party candidate will officially be announced.

If Biden, who has remained defiant so far, decides to withdraw from the race, a prominent alternative being considered is Vice-President Kamala Harris.

Harris and Her Indian Heritage
Harris, half Indian by heritage, has a familial connection to Thulasendrapuram in Tamil Nadu. Her family from her mother's side come from there. Her appointment in 2020 was celebrated with fireworks and prayers in India, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi calling it a "historic occasion" and expressing his eagerness to



work with her to strengthen India-US relations.

Despite the initial excitement, it is clear that the strengthening of India-US relations under Biden's administration has been driven by the President's initiatives rather than Harris's Indian heritage. While Harris often speaks about her Indian roots, her policies and actions are primarily shaped by the strategic interests of the United States, not India.

The Political Strategy of Indian-Origin Politicians

A few Indian-origin politicians in the US, such as Nikki Haley and Bobby Jindal, tend to downplay their Indian heritage to appeal to broader voter bases, which can be seen as a political strategy. In the UK, Indian-origin

politicians like Priti Patel and Suella Braverman, despite their immigrant backgrounds, have adopted strict anti-immigrant stances, aligning with conservative values to secure support within their parties. Rishi Sunak's appointment as the UK Prime Minister in 2022 sparked significant excitement among Indians. I met jubilant members of the Indian community in Southampton, Sunak's hometown, who felt immense pride. However, their enthusiasm later dampened as they realised that Sunak's policies were driven by the priorities of the UK, not his Indian heritage. He turned out to be just another politician who was co-opted by the establishment, they felt.

Symbolism vs. Substance

The celebrations over Indian-origin politicians achieving high office in Western countries often overlook the reality that these leaders primarily serve the interests of their respective countries. For instance, Sunak's policies were guided by national interests rather than ethnic connections, as evidenced by the stalled Free Trade Agreement (FTA) talks between the UK and India.

Similar cases include Antonio Costa and Leo Varadkar, former Prime Ministers of Portugal and Ireland, respectively, whose political actions did not necessarily favour India. Costa, with Goan roots, and Varadkar, with Maharashtrian heritage, focused on their countries' priorities, not their ancestral ties. For the Indian diaspora, the rise of leaders like Sunak, Harris, Costa, and Varadkar is a source of inspiration and pride, demonstrating that individuals of Indian descent can achieve the highest political offices in foreign lands. However, the tangible benefits for the diaspora are limited. For example, the Indian community in Southampton has become divided over whether Sunak's

premiership has provided any real advantages.

Starmer's Cabinet And Lack Of Diversity

In the recent UK elections, a record 26 MPs of Indian origin were elected, with 19 from Labour, including 12 Sikhs and six female Sikh MPs. Despite this representation, the Indian community was disappointed that only one half-Indian MP received a senior ministerial position in Prime Minister Keir Starmer's cabinet. This cabinet appears predominantly white, a stark contrast to Boris Johnson's diverse 2019 cabinet.

The Biden administration has appointed around 130 Indian-Americans to key positions, reflecting the growing influence and integration of Indian-Americans in US politics. While these appointments are a source of pride and potentially facilitate stronger India-US relations, the primary allegiance of these officials is to the US.

The Indian diaspora is indeed an influential group in many countries, which can be leveraged to India's advantage. That explains why diaspora outreach is one of PM Modi's key foreign policy priorities.

Of Trump, Guns and Democracy: The US Has No Right to Preach to the World

By: Sanbeer Singh Ranhotra

WHY THE US IS IN NO POSITION TO LECTURE THE WORLD ON DEMOCRACY

Who is safe in the United States of America? Certainly not school children. People going about their day-to-day lives are not safe either. They can find themselves at the receiving end of a gun, whether they are in shopping malls, public gatherings and celebrations, or even places of worship. The shocking assassination attempt on Donald Trump has once again brought to the fore the crisis staring the United States in the eye. With guns and ammunition available as easily as candy, going on a killing spree in America is, frankly, a child's play. That is what the world witnessed with 20-year-old Thomas Mathew Crooks climbing up a roof near Donald Trump's rally venue in



Pennsylvania and subsequently taking his shot at the former president with relative ease. What does that prove? That even presidents are not safe in the United States. To date, seven American presidents have either been assassinated or survived an attempt on their life. Interestingly, six of these presidents were Republicans. That brings me to a larger point. Should a country which can keep neither its

children nor presidents safe have the moral authority to preach democracy to the world? The answer is as clear as day. The US has lost all rights to go about lecturing the developing world about how their democracies should function. This is not a right the US has lost recently, in fact, it never really had the right to begin with. It was simply a luxury that Washington accorded itself, on the back of its economic and

military might as well as its control over global institutions. Now that its own society is being torn at the seams, the need for America to embark on inward soul-searching has never been greater. Perhaps if the US spent less time focusing on the state of democracy around the world and acted diligently to fix its own system, it would not have become a butt of jokes globally. There is no denying that the US has become a shadow of its former self in recent years – a trend which has only been catalysed by a president who the world knows is in rapid cognitive decline. The political atmosphere of the United States has been vitiated beyond measure. There are no longer rivals in American politics. Instead, there are only enemies. This is why when news of Trump being shot at first

emerged, a sea of Democrat supporters and liberals were quick to label the incident as "staged". Many even joked about how it was unfortunate that the shooter missed, or that Trump slightly tilted his head, thereby saving his own life. This is the same crowd that has for years likened Trump to Hitler and other dictators, while accusing his supporters of taking America down the path of fascism. The worst part is that the top leaders of the Democratic party are guilty of engaging in such reckless and alarmist rhetoric. When influential leaders begin actively fanning such alarmist rhetoric, it hardly comes as a surprise that a hot-blooded man takes matters into his own hands, as Thomas Mathew Crooks did by attempting to kill Donald Trump in broad daylight.

India to have deepfake regulations



Indian celebrities are increasingly targeted by deepfake content.

The Indian government plans to introduce regulations to monitor deepfake technology.

Social media companies in Indian are warned to watch user postings to control the spread of deepfake content.

Deepfake technology continues to get better, especially with generative AI making it easier for anyone today. Prior to deepfake technology, bad actors would need to spend hours or days designing images and videos, editing them multiple times to get the desired results. Today, they just need to key in a few prompts or make a few edits with a deepfake application and they can get practically impeccable results in minutes. While the improvements in deepfake technology have been revolutionary, there will always be those who use the technology for the wrong reasons.

Deepfake technology is becoming a growing nuisance not just for businesses and famous people around the world but also for any individual who has a picture of themselves online. All the bad actors need to do is to get an image of an individual and prompt the deepfake application to generate a different version of that image. With deepfake applications available for free or at a very low price, practically everyone is able to access the technology for the wrong reasons. One of the most common uses of deepfakes today is creating content based on famous individuals to make statements or do things that they never said or did. Improvements in AI have also made some deepfake applications capable of mimicking voices to say different things. Last year, Europol published a report on the criminal use of deepfake technology, alongside the challenges faced by law enforcement in detecting and preventing the nefarious use of deepfakes. The report highlighted deepfakes' potential use in serious crimes such as CEO fraud, evidence tampering, and the production of non-consensual pornography. Advances in AI and the public availability

of large image and video databases mean that the volume and quality of deepfake content are increasing, which is facilitating crimes that harness deepfake technology.

Deepfake technology in India

With a population of 1.4 billion, India is not only the second largest country in the world but also the country with the second highest number of mobile phones. By the end of 2023, India is estimated to have over a billion smartphone users.

While this is positive news in terms of digital inclusion, the problem is this also raises the possibility of these devices being used for the wrong reasons – such as spreading news and content that is not accurate.

Misinformation and disinformation remain a big problem in India. Over the years, unverified news and rumors on social media and messaging services in India have resulted in huge problems, especially among the various communities in the country.

Now with deepfake technology capable of generating content easily, there are concerns that it may be used to create content that could incite anger and unhappiness among the different communities in the country.

At the same time, deepfake content in India is being used by companies to advertise their products. According to reports, several advertisements and sponsored posts on social media have been found to contain deepfakes of Indian personalities such as Shah Rukh Khan, Virat Kohli and Akshay Kumar. While Khan is seen in a deepfake video for a game called Aviator, Kohli's deepfake is in a video promoting a betting game.

Another example of deepfake content that has been going viral in India features an actress changing their outfit. Business Today India reported that the

video, which has been circulating on major social media platforms like Facebook, X and YouTube, is not of an actress but of a social media influencer. The new video comes amid growing concerns around deepfake content after a video of another popular actress went viral in India.

India to regulate deepfake technology Given the increase in deepfake content in India, the government has announced plans to control the spread of deepfakes on social media platforms. India's Union Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw stated that the government will come up with a "clear, actionable plan" to tackle deepfakes and misinformation.

According to a report by Indian Express, the decision was made after the minister chaired a meeting with social media platforms, AI companies and industry bodies. He said that the plan will have four key pillars which will be the detection of deepfakes, their prevention by removing or reducing their virality, strengthening reporting mechanisms, and spreading awareness about the technology.

Reuters reported that India's deputy IT minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar, in a closed-door meeting, warned social media firms including Facebook and YouTube to repeatedly remind users that local laws prohibit them from posting deepfakes and content that spreads obscenity or misinformation.

The Deputy Minister said many companies had not updated their usage terms despite 2022 rules that prohibit content "harmful" to children, obscene or that "impersonates another person." Chandrasekhar said the companies must raise awareness of the rules by reminding users every time they log in that they cannot post such content, or by issuing reminders.

Meanwhile, Kumar Ritesh, founder and

CEO of Cyfirma commented that regulations to guard against the misuse of deepfake technology are highly uneven and vary widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

"We do expect the Indian government to cover a few key areas such as enacting laws specifically targeting the creation, distribution, or malicious use of deepfake content and imposing penalties for those who engage in illegal activities involving deepfakes. We see the government putting in place guidelines for online platforms and social media sites to detect and remove deepfake content to help curb its spread. This would require the government to work with tech companies to implement and enforce such regulations," said Ritesh.

Ritesh also pointed out that the government could invest in public awareness campaigns to educate people about the existence and potential dangers of deepfake technology. This includes informing individuals about how to identify and report suspicious content.

With the new regulations, Ritesh believes research and development funding that supports research into deepfake detection and prevention methods can be crucial. The government can allocate funds for the development of technologies that can identify and mitigate the impact of deepfakes.

"We hope there will be broader international collaboration as deepfake threats often go beyond borders. Governments can work collaboratively on an international level to share information, and best practices, and coordinate efforts to address the global challenges posed by deepfake technology. And India, with its vast technology talents, is posed to lead this initiative," added Ritesh.

HERE HE COMES

Donald Trump's long and winding road to a 3rd presidential nomination at RNC. Trump urges unity after assassination attempt while proposing sweeping populist agenda in RNC finale

New York (By Sharanjit Singh) Donald Trump's political career started with a ride down a Trump Tower escalator in 2015. His extraordinary political career reached a peak on Saturday night at his campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, with the image of him defiantly pumping his fist, blood streaming down his face from his injured ear after surviving an assassination attempt. Donald Trump, somber and bandaged, accepted the GOP presidential nomination on Thursday at the Republican National Convention in a speech that described in detail the assassination attempt that could have ended his life just five days earlier before laying out a sweeping populist agenda, particularly on immigration. The 78-year-old former president, known best for his bombast and aggressive rhetoric, began his acceptance speech with a softer and deeply personal message that drew directly from his brush with death. Moment by moment, the crowd listening in silence, Trump described standing onstage in Butler, Pennsylvania, with his head turned to look at a chart on display when he felt something hit his ear. He raised his hand to his head and saw immediately that it was covered in blood. "If I had not moved my head at that very last instant, the assassin's bullet would have perfectly hit its mark," Trump said. "And I would not be here tonight. We would not be together." Trump's address, the longest convention speech in modern history at just under 93 minutes, marked the climax and conclusion of a massive four-day Republican pep rally that drew thousands of conservative activists and elected officials to swing-state Wisconsin as voters weigh an election that

currently features two deeply unpopular candidates. Sensing political opportunity in the wake of his near-death experience, the often bombastic Republican leader embraced a new tone he hopes will help generate even more momentum in an election that appears to be shifting in his favor. "The discord and division in our society must be healed. We must heal it quickly. As Americans, we are bound together by a single fate and a shared destiny. We rise together. Or we fall apart," Trump said, wearing a large white bandage on his right ear, as he has all week, to cover a wound he sustained in the Saturday shooting. "I am running to be president for all of America, not half of America, because there is no victory in winning for half of America." While he spoke in a gentler tone than at his usual rallies, Trump also outlined an agenda led by what he promises would be the largest deportation operation in U.S. history. He repeatedly accused people crossing the U.S.-Mexico border illegally of staging an "invasion." Additionally, he teased new tariffs on trade and an "America first" foreign policy. Trump also falsely suggested Democrats had cheated during the 2020 election he lost — despite a raft of federal and state investigations proving there was no systemic fraud — and suggested "we must not criminalize dissent or demonize political disagreement," even as he has long called for prosecutions of his opponents. He did not mention abortion rights, an issue that has bedeviled Republicans ever since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a federally guaranteed right to abortion two years ago. Trump nominated three of the six justices who overturned

Roe v. Wade. Trump at his rallies often takes credit for Roe being overturned and argues states should have the right to institute their own abortion laws. Nor did he mention the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in which Trump supporters tried to stop the certification of his loss to Democrat Joe Biden. Trump has long referred to the people jailed for the riot as "hostages." Indeed, Trump barely mentioned Biden, often referring only to the "current administration." "It was Donald Trump who destroyed our economy, ripped away rights, and failed middle class families," said Jen O'Malley Dillon, the Biden campaign chair, in a statement after the speech. "Now he pursues the presidency with an even more extreme vision for where he wants to take this country." The RNC ends at an uncertain moment in the race. With less than four months to go in the contest, major changes in the race are possible, if not likely. Trump's appearance came as Biden, the 81-year-old Democratic incumbent, clings to his party's presumptive nomination in the face of unrelenting pressure from key congressional allies, donors and even former President Barack Obama, who fear he may be unable to win reelection after his disastrous debate. Long pressed by allies to campaign more vigorously, Biden is instead in isolation at his beach home in Delaware after having been diagnosed with COVID-19. Hours before the balloons were scheduled to rain down on Trump and his family inside the convention hall, Biden deputy

campaign manager Quentin Fulks appeared nearby in Milwaukee and insisted over and over that Biden would not step aside. "I do not want to be rude, but I don't know how many more times I can answer that," Fulks told reporters. "There are no plans being made to replace Biden on the ballot." **Strength on the program** Thursday's RNC program seemed designed to project strength and masculinity in an implicit rebuke of Biden. Ultimate Fighting Championship President Dana White called Trump "a real American bad ass." Kid Rock performed a song with the chorus, "Fight, fight!," echoing the word Trump mouthed on stage in Pennsylvania as Secret Service agents surrounded him. And wrestling icon Hulk Hogan described the former president as "an American hero." Hogan drew a raucous response when, standing on the main stage, he ripped off his shirt to reveal a red "Make America Great Again" shirt. As an entertainer, I try to stay out of politics," Hogan said as he briefly broke character. "I can no longer stay silent." Like many speakers during the convention, former Fox News host Tucker Carlson suggested that recent events were divinely inspired and that he wondered "if something bigger is going on." "I think it changed him," Carlson said of the shooting, praising Trump for not lashing out in anger afterward. "He did his best to bring the country together," Carlson added. "This is the most responsible, unifying behavior from a leader I've ever seen." Former first lady Melania Trump and Ivanka Trump, the president's elder daughter

and former senior adviser, joined Trump in the convention hall ahead of his speech, making their first appearances there. Neither woman spoke. At nearly 93 minutes, the former president's speech eclipsed the 74 minutes for which he spoke eight years ago, according to the American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Republicans leave their convention united The convention has showcased a Republican Party reshaped by Trump since he shocked the GOP establishment and won over the party's grassroots on his way to the party's 2016 nomination. Rivals Trump has vanquished — including Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas and Marco Rubio of Florida, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis — put aside their past criticisms and gave him their unqualified support. Even his vice presidential pick, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, Trump's choice to carry his movement into the next generation, was once a fierce critic who suggested in a private message since made public that Trump could be "America's Hitler." Security was a major focus in Milwaukee in the wake of Trump's near-assassination. But after nearly four full days, there were no serious incidents inside the convention hall or the large security perimeter that surrounded it. The Secret Service, backed by hundreds of law enforcement officers from across the nation, had a large and visible presence. And during Trump's appearances each night, he was surrounded by a wall of protective agents wherever he went. Meanwhile, Trump and his campaign have not released information about his injury or the treatment he received. The former president on Thursday described his story of surviving the attack — and vowed he would not talk about it again. "I'm not supposed to be here tonight," Trump told the packed convention hall. The crowd of thousands, which was listening in silence, shouted back, "Yes, you are."

From Misinformation To Fraud, The Alarming Rise Of Deepfakes In India

(Sai Bureau)- What do actors Amitabh Bachchan, Anushka Sharma and Shilpa Shetty, cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, National Stock Exchange (NSE) MD and CEO Ashishkumar Chauhan, and Indian industrialists Ratan Tata and Mukesh Ambani have in common? They've all been targets of deepfake videos that used their personas to peddle weight loss drugs and medication for diabetes, and promote fraudulent money-making schemes on social media.

Rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have ushered in a new era of technological disruption, with deepfakes emerging as a particularly concerning challenge for India's information integrity and public discourse.

Political Misinformation

In the buildup to the recent Lok Sabha

elections, significant numbers of people in India had already been targeted by audio and audio-visual deepfakes, although these were mainly attempts to scam them in various ways. Around the Lok Sabha elections, there were also initial fears that political deepfakes could be used to try to influence voters.

These fears were only justified when the election campaign got underway. Fake clips showing Bollywood actors Aamir Khan and Ranveer Singh criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi were circulated widely. However, ultimately, it may be said that while there were instances of deepfakes being used for mudslinging, targeted political attacks and even spreading misinformation about exit polls, parties used technology largely for their own voter outreach and engagement and to overcome language

barriers. Deepfakes were also used by parties to 'resurrect' their dead leaders to enhance the emotional connection with voters. In Tamil Nadu, an AI-generated voice message from former chief minister J. Jayalalithaa, who died in 2016, was circulated to criticise the current governing party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). The DMK in turn used AI-generated videos of their own deceased leader, M. Karunanidhi, to praise his son and current chief minister, M.K. Stalin.

Cheapfakes vs Deepfakes

While the risk posed by AI-generated content during the elections wasn't as deep as expected, even edited videos were often misattributed as AI-generated or "deepfake" content. For instance, an edited video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah that was circulated before the polls

falsely claimed that he promised to scrap reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) if elected. While the clip was edited using simple video editing tools, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and several mainstream media organisations mislabelled it as a "deepfake".

It is important to remember that deepfakes are AI-generated media created using machine learning algorithms that can map one person's face onto another's body, and even alter their speech. Creating such media requires significant computational power. In contrast, 'cheapfakes' are manipulated media created using relatively simple editing tools. They are less sophisticated than deepfakes but can still effectively spread misinformation. They continue to be used widely in India.

What India Should Do

From detection algorithms for deepfakes to media literacy for cheapfakes, India can and should develop more targeted countermeasures for the various kinds of manipulated media. The creation of deepfakes, which was once a complex and time-consuming process, has increasingly become very accessible. The turnaround time has reduced from days to minutes, even seconds. Such rapid evolution in technology poses a significant challenge for fact-checkers and content moderators, who struggle to keep up with the pace of misinformation. Fact-checkers in India have found it an uphill battle to debunk deepfake content when it is spread at speed and scale or during heightened activity, such as election seasons. The disparity in the speed of information dissemination underscores the urgent need for more efficient and streamlined verification processes. A multifaceted approach is required to safeguard the integrity of its democratic processes. This approach must encompass technological advancements, regulatory frameworks, and a shift in societal mindsets. While deepfakes have become increasingly difficult to detect, developing AI-powered tools to identify and counter such manipulated content holds promise. Tech giants like Google, Meta, and OpenAI have pledged to work closely with the Indian government and voters to protect access to truthful information. However, the effectiveness of the currently proposed measures, such as labelling and watermarking, remains to be seen. Continued innovation and collaboration in this domain is paramount. By leveraging AI-powered tools, fact-checkers and content moderators can expedite the time it takes to discover false claims, pre-empt them before they cause harm and, in time, even automate deepfake detection, freeing up valuable human resources to focus on more nuanced and contextual analysis.

Interpol arrests 300 people in a global crackdown on West African crime groups

(News Agency)- In a global operation targeting West African organized crime groups across five continents, police arrested 300 people, seized \$3 million and blocked 720 bank accounts, Interpol said Tuesday. Operation Jackal III, which ran from 10 April to 3 July in 21 countries, aimed to fight online financial fraud and the West African syndicates behind it, the agency said in a statement. "The volume of financial fraud stemming from West Africa is alarming and increasing," said Isaac Oginni, director of Interpol's Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre. "This operation's results underscore the critical need for international law enforcement collaboration to combat these extensive criminal networks." One of the targeted groups was Black Axe, one of the most prominent criminal networks in West Africa. Black Axe operates in cyber fraud, human trafficking, drug smuggling, and is responsible for violent crimes both within Africa and globally, the agency added. Black Axe used money mules to open bank accounts worldwide and is now under investigation in over 40 countries for related money laundering activities, the

agency said. The suspects include citizens from Argentina, Colombia, Nigeria and Venezuela. In Argentina, following a five-year investigation, the police cracked down on Black Axe and seized \$1.2 million in high-quality counterfeit banknotes, arrested 72 suspects and froze approximately 100 bank accounts. Interpol, which has 196 member countries and celebrated its centennial last year, works to help national police forces communicate with each other and track suspects and criminals in fields like counterterrorism, financial crime, child pornography, cybercrime and organized crime. The world's biggest — if not best-funded — police organization has been grappling with new challenges including a growing caseload of cybercrime and child sex abuse, and increasing divisions among its member countries. Interpol had a total budget of about 176 million euros (about \$188 million) last year, compared to more than 200 million euros at the European Union's police agency, Europol, and some \$11 billion at the FBI in the United States.

UK busts gang of British-Indians over drugs, money laundering after 2-year probe

(News Agency)- A UK-based organised crime gang of Indian-origin people has been busted after a two-year investigation by the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA). The gang, involved in laundering millions of pounds, distributed class A and B drugs, and attempted to illegally obtain £1.5 million in government grants, according to the NCA. One of the British-Indians was sentenced to 13 years in jail. The gang consisted of three Indian-origin individuals -- Rickinder Hare, Neelen Balarajah, and Hitesh Vadolia. To date, the NCA has seized over £1.2 million in cash and £3,50,000 in assets, including a 'Gucci' embossed box containing over £20,000 in cash and a diamond-encrusted Rolex Daytona watch worth over £2,00,000. Neelen Balarajah was sentenced to 13 years and six months imprisonment on Monday, while Rickinder Hare has been handed a one-year suspension, 400 hours of community service, and two years of probation on June 6. Vadolia, who according to the NCA was the group's cash courier, died before facing trial on multiple money laundering charges. The investigation intensified in January 2022 when NCA officers saw Balarajah receiving a 'Gucci' embossed box from Hitesh Vadolia. Following intervention, Balarajah attempted to flee, driving his car at the officers. The box contained over £20,000 in cash.

Analysing telecoms data, investigators identified Hare, who had organised the exchange. He was later arrested on July 20, 2022.

A search of Balarajah's north London home uncovered substantial amounts of cash, herbal cannabis, cocaine, and empty wrappings that tested positive for cocaine. Further investigations linked Hare and Balarajah to other cash couriers and members of the crime group.

Surveillance showed the gang used scrap metal dealers to launder cash.

A courier was seen collecting cash and visiting a commercial premises for scrap metal and waste, suspected to be used to pay for stolen metal.

Coordinated action was taken against the scrap metal dealer by the British Transport Police, HMRC, and the Environment Agency, reported news agency PTI.

The gang also attempted to secure government grants to remove waste from a commercial site they controlled, intending to divert the funds for other criminal ventures.

NCA investigations revealed they lacked the capacity to legally dispose of the waste. Balarajah pleaded guilty in February, with phone images confirming the empty wrappings in his home had contained kilogram blocks of cocaine.

CANNABIS PRODUCT RECALL

(Sai Bureau)- New York State's Office of Cannabis Management is issuing a recall on all cannabinoid hemp products, including the "Sky High" brand, produced by Eat Sky High LLC. The unregulated products were sold through licensed cannabis and cannabinoid hemp dispensaries throughout New York State.

The affected products were produced by an unlicensed cannabinoid hemp processor and have multiple safety violations posing a risk to public health and safety.

This recall is a precautionary measure because the required testing for consumer safety and product quality cannot be confirmed. The Office of Cannabis Management has not received any reports of adverse effects caused by the consumption of

these products.

Investigation into this matter is ongoing.

Violations pertaining to these products include, but are not limited to:

Processing by an unlicensed facility;

Amount of THC-A present in the product;

Unverified testing of product to OCM standards;

Labeling violations, including but not limited to: missing warnings, processor information, and lot numbers;

Production with hazardous food products, as defined in 10 NYCRR § 14-1.31; and

Misleading labeling, making the product appear to be an authorized adult-use product with NYS Universal Symbol imagery

These products include, but are not limited to the following:

Dessert Toppings:

Carmel Drizzle 500mg THC-A

White Chocolate 500mg THC-A

Strawberry Drizzle 500mg THC-A

Chocolate Drizzle 500mg THC-A

Dipping Sauces:

Honey Mustard 500mg THC-A

Honey Garlic 500mg THC-A

Ranch Dressing 500mg THC-A

Sweet N' Sour 500mg THC-A

Chipotle Mayo 500mg THC-A

Condiments:

Ketchup 500mg THC-A

BBQ Sauce 500mg THC-A

Hot Sauce 500mg THC-A

Mayo Ketchup 500mg THC-A

Sweet Chili 500mg THC-A

Ice Cream/Gelato/Sorbet:

Grape 200mg/500mg THC-A

Guava 200mg/500mg THC-A

Mango 200mg/500mg THC-A

Coconut 200mg/500mg THC-A

Snickers 200mg/500mg THC-A

Chocolate 200mg/500mg THC-A

Green Apple 200mg/500mg THC-A

Watermelon 200mg/500mg THC-A

Passion Fruit 200mg/500mg THC-A

Fruity Pebbles 200mg/500mg THC-A

Cookie Monster 200mg/500mg THC-A

Dispensaries and distributors must cease distribution and sales of the affected products immediately.

If you are a consumer who purchased any products produced by Eat Sky High LLC and you

wish to return the recalled product, please contact the retail dispensary

where you purchased these products. You can return a recalled product even if you have opened it.

The Office of Cannabis Management would like to remind consumers to report any incidents related to the use of this cannabis product or any other cannabis product by completing an incident form <https://cannabis.ny.gov/report-an-incident>. Seek immediate medical attention or advice if you are currently experiencing a serious or troublesome cannabis-related symptom(s). Call your health care provider or the Poison Center at (800) 222-1222.

ALLEGED VANDAL CHARGED WITH FELONY HATE CRIME AFTER TARGETED ATTACK ON RELIGIOUS STATUE IN FRONT OF CATHOLIC CHURCH

(Sai Bureau)- Attack Resulted in Thousands of Dollars of Damage, Decapitation of a Child Jesus Statue Defendant Faces Up to Five to 15 Years In Prison If Convicted Of The Top Count

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Jamshaid Choudhry has been charged with criminal mischief as a hate crime and other related crimes for allegedly smashing a Holy Family statue outside of the Holy Family Roman Catholic Church in Fresh Meadows on June 30. The attack caused the head of

one of the statues, the depiction of a child Jesus, to break off.

District Attorney Katz said: "We will not tolerate unprovoked attacks, especially those driven by hate.

Queens stands as a beacon of diversity and inclusivity, where freedom of religion and expression are celebrated as fundamental pillars of our democracy. Thanks to my Hate Crimes Bureau and the NYPD's Hate Crime Task Force, this individual has been apprehended."

Choudhry, 44, of 186th Street in Hollis, was arraigned today in

Queens Criminal Court and charged with criminal mischief in the second degree as a hate crime, criminal mischief in the third degree as a hate crime, criminal mischief in the fourth degree as a hate crime, criminal mischief in the second degree, criminal mischief in the third degree, criminal mischief in the fourth degree and aggravated harassment in the first degree.

If convicted of the top count, Choudhry faces a potential maximum sentence of five to 15 years in prison. Judge Srividya

Pappachan ordered him to return to court on August 1.

According to the charges:

On June 30, at approximately 5:30 a.m., Choudhry was seen on video surveillance parking a yellow cab across the street from the church and running up to the statue depicting Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Once next to the statue, Choudhry can be seen taking off his shoe and then spitting on and hitting the statue repeatedly with the shoe.

The attack caused the head of the

Jesus statue to break off completely.

The amount of damage caused by the attack is estimated at \$3,000. Choudhry was arrested yesterday evening.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Brian Lukowsky of the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force. Assistant District Attorney Michael Brovner, Chief of the District Attorney's Hate Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for the Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

JAMAICA RESIDENT SENTENCED TO 36 YEARS IN PRISON FOR FATAL SHOOTING IN JANUARY 2020 AND SECOND HOMICIDE IN APRIL 2021

(Sai Bureau)- Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Ashik Zaman was sentenced today to 36 years in prison for killing a 39-year-old man in 2020 in a dispute over money and for fatally shooting another man in 2021 outside a liquor store in South Ozone Park. That victim died the next day, his 29th birthday.

District Attorney Katz said: "Two acts of senseless gun violence by this defendant cost two men their lives and left their families shattered. In our relentless effort to take illegal guns off our streets, we build strong cases against those who are accused of using these weapons. Today that resulted in a dangerous man being sent to prison."

Zaman, 23, of 156th Street in Ja-

maica, pleaded guilty on June 20 to two counts of manslaughter in the first degree and one count of criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree. He was sentenced today by Supreme Court Justice Ushir Pandit-Durant to 36 years in prison.

According to the charges:

On January 21, 2020, at approximately 11:40 a.m, Zaman met with Kevin Williams in front of the 39-year-old man's 118th Avenue home in Jamaica. Zaman confronted Williams about money and the two argued. Zaman pulled out a gun and fired multiple times at the victim, striking him in the chest, abdomen, arm and head. He died less than an hour later.

On April 28, 2021, at approximately

11:40 p.m., Zaman was with a group of others shooting a music video on 134th Street in South Ozone Park. This group encountered another group of people near a liquor store and they began to argue. Video surveillance shows both groups parting ways without incident.

A short time later, Zaman stood by a car outside the liquor store while Kajawan Howard, who was talking on his cell phone, began to walk in the defendant's direction. Zaman removed a gun from his waistband and shot at Howard multiple times. Immediately following the shooting, Zaman jumped into the passenger seat of a black Infiniti and as the car sped off there was an exchange of gunfire between Zaman and a

member of the opposing group. A 26-year-old man was struck and required surgery to remove his spleen and repair his colon.

Howard, who was hit once in the chest, was taken to an area hospital where he died from the bullet wound the following day – on his 29th birthday.

Zaman was arrested on May 20, 2021, after NYPD officers saw him riding a defaced Citi Bike on the sidewalk near Sutphin Boulevard between 109th Avenue and 109th Road in South Jamaica. They asked him to stop and he fled. When the officers caught him, they checked his name and saw that he was a suspect in the two homicides.

On June 17, 2021, NYPD officers

executed a search warrant on a residence where Zaman had resided with his family and recovered a loaded .40-caliber Ruger pistol from a garage. DNA testing connected the firearm to Zaman.

Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Selkove, Vehicular Homicide Unit Chief in the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau, prosecuted the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Emily Santoro under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys John W. Kosinski, Bureau Chief, and Karen Ross, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

Sikh Republican Harmeet Dhillon flamed for 'Ardas' at party meet: 'Blasphemous'

(NewsAgency)- Sikh Republican leader Harmeet Dhillon made headlines by reciting 'Ardas,' a Sikh prayer, at the Republican National Convention on Tuesday. Many hailed it as a notable moment of cultural and religious representation by a party that's seen as predominantly white, conservative, and Christian.

Dhillon recited the opening part of the 'Ardas' in Gurmukhi before praying in English for America, the American voters, and thanking God for protecting Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump from an attempted assassination. However, Dhillon also came under fire from a section of those who deemed the prayer "anti-Christian"

and "blasphemous". Christian fundamentalists and ultra-conservatives took to social media to troll her. "ABSOLUTELY UNACCEPTABLE!!," tweeted conservative Christian commentator Behizy. "I have nothing but respect for Harmeet Dhillon but fire whoever invited her to pray to a foreign god, there is only one true God we pray to and his name is not whatever she said. His name is YAHWEH and his only begotten Son is Jesus Christ." Others accused Dhillon of being a pagan and termed the Sikh blessing "witchcraft". "How about you get deported instead, you pagan blasphemer. God saves our president and the RNC mocks him with this witchcraft," tweeted far-right political

activist Lauren Witzke. "You can worship freely, but you should not promote your non-Christian religion at the GOP convention," said one X user. Another X user said reciting a Sikh prayer at the RNC was "embarrassing."

"America is a Christian country. We literally had an excellent Christian prayer before this that mentioned Jesus Christ. This was unnecessary, performative, and blasphemous," X user Connor Mahoney tweeted. Dhillon, a civil rights attorney, was having none of it. "Blocking quite a few people..." she tweeted.

When Behizy came at her again, saying he has a problem with "going

on a stage full of Christians and declaring your god to be the one true God", Dhillon replied sharply, "There is only one God." Despite the online backlash, Dhillon expressed feeling warmly welcomed by the Republican audience during the event.

"It was silent. People bowed their heads. It was very respectful," she told the New York Post. "And when I left the stage, I was hugged and people took selfies with me. Not a single word of criticism inside the room." Dhillon added, "Overall, while the voices of haters can be amplified artificially online, I would say the vast majority of the response to my prayer by mainstream Republicans has been positive, and I'm grateful for that."

Sen. Bob Menendez found guilty on all counts, including acting as foreign agent, in federal corruption trial

(NewsAgency)- Sen. Bob Menendez was found guilty on all counts Tuesday in his federal corruption trial.

Federal prosecutors in New York alleged the New Jersey Democrat accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes in the form of cash, gold bars, mortgage payments and more in exchange for the senator's political clout. Three New Jersey businessmen who were also charged, along with the governments of Egypt and Qatar, were the alleged recipients. Two of those co-defendants, Wael Hana and Fred Daibes, were also convicted of all counts they faced.

The jury deliberated for about 13 hours over three days.

"I have never, ever been a foreign agent," Menendez says

Menendez pleaded not guilty to 16 federal charges including bribery, fraud, acting as a foreign agent and obstruction. He said he plans to appeal his conviction and is "deeply disappointed" by the jury's decision.

"I have never violated my oath," he said outside the courthouse Tuesday. "I have never been anything but a patriot of my country and for my country. I have never, ever been a foreign agent." He added that the jury's decision would "put at risk every member of the United States Senate in terms of what they think a foreign agent would be."

Menendez did not respond to questions on whether he will resign.

He will be sentenced on Oct. 29 and faces decades in prison. Calls to resign

Menendez is not required to resign despite his conviction, though could be expelled.

Majority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., called for his resignation immediately after the verdict.

"In light of this guilty verdict, Senator Menendez must now do what is right for his constituents, the Senate, and our country, and resign," he said.

Sen. Cory Booker, Menendez's New Jersey counterpart, and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy joined in the calls for his immediate

resignation. If the senator refuses to vacate his office, Murphy said he will call on the U.S. Senate to expel him. The Senate Ethics Committee said it will "promptly" complete the investigation into Menendez's conduct that it undertook when the allegations against him first surfaced.

The committee said it will consider the "full range of disciplinary actions available under the Rules of Procedure," which include expulsion and censure.

He is not required to resign despite his conviction, though could be expelled.

'Shocking levels of corruption'

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams, whose office prosecuted the case, said following the verdict that this "has always been about shocking levels of corruption."

"Hundreds of thousands of dollars of bribes, including gold, cash, and a Mercedes-Benz. This wasn't politics as usual; this was politics for profit," Williams said in a statement. "Because

Senator Menendez has now been found guilty, his years of selling his office to the highest bidder have finally come to an end. Corruption isn't costless: it erodes public trust, and it undermines the rule of law. That's why we're so committed to fighting it, regardless of political party." Prosecutors claimed Menendez, 70, "put his power up for sale" in exchange for the gold, envelopes stuffed with money, checks to his wife for a no-show job and a Mercedes-Benz convertible. The FBI found gold bars and more than \$400,000 in cash stashed in places including jackets and shoes throughout his home, prosecutors said.

"It wasn't enough for him to be one of the most powerful people in Washington," federal prosecutor Paul Monteleoni said during his closing argument on July 8. "Robert Menendez wanted all that power and he also wanted to use it to pile up riches for himself and his wife."

New trans sports restrictions in New York hit with legal battles

(Sai Bureau)- The legal battle over a transgender sports ban in New York's Nassau County has begun.

Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman signed Local Law 121-24, the "Fairness for Women and Girls in Sports" policy, into law on Monday.

The law requires sports leagues and programs to "expressly designate" teams based on the sex assigned to participants at birth. Permits will not be given to organizations that allow trans women to compete on women's teams but will allow trans men to compete on men's teams. The law is similar to the executive order Blakeman signed in February that aimed to ban transgender girls and women from

participating in women's sporting events on county-run property. That order stated, in part, "women and girls deserve the opportunity to demonstrate their strength, skills and athletic abilities and to provide them with equal and fair opportunities to obtain recognition and accolades, college scholarships, and the numerous other long-term benefits that result from participating and competing in athletic endeavors."

However, the executive order was struck down by the Nassau County Supreme Court in May, after it was challenged by both the NYCLU and New York Attorney General Letitia James.

Now, the NYCLU and James have once again filed independent lawsuits against the

county over the new law, arguing that it violates state laws protecting New Yorkers from discrimination based on their gender identity or expression. "It is abundantly clear that any attempt to ban trans women and girls from sports is prohibited by our state's antidiscrimination laws," said Gabriella Larios, staff attorney at the New York Civil Liberties Union. "This latest round of hateful legislation is unacceptable and we won't let it stand in New York."

Blakeman criticized the response, defending the legislation on X.

"I am very disappointed that the Attorney General would attempt to frustrate Nassau County's desire to protect the

integrity of women's sports, ensure the safety of its participants and provide a safe environment for girls and women to compete," he posted on social media. ABC News has reached out to Blakeman for further comment.

The law goes against guidelines from local and national sports associations. The New York State Public High School Athletic Association's transgender policy states that it is "committed to providing all students with the opportunity to participate ... in a manner consistent with their gender identity and the New York State Commissioner of Education's Regulations."

'Greatest Bubble' Nearing Its Peak, Says Black Swan Manager



Universa's Mark Spitznagel, who has made billions from past crashes, sees last hurrah for stocks before severe reckoning

(By Spencer JakabFollow, Wall Street Journal)-

Talk is cheap when it comes to where stocks are headed, but investors' ears perk up when Mark Spitznagel speaks.

One reason is that he has made some spectacular scores, including earning \$1 billion in a single day, since setting up tail risk hedge fund Universa Investments in 2008. The other is that he steadfastly hasn't relied on any sort of short-term view to do so. The enigmatic quant, a protégé of "Black Swan" author Nassim Nicholas Taleb, loses money almost every day through a complex strategy that pays off only during very volatile periods. A few calamities—the 2008 crisis, the 2015 Flash Crash and the Covid-19 market meltdown in 2020—

have been enough for a stock investor with a small allocation to his fund to trounce a classically diversified 60/40 stock and bond portfolio.

But now he sees a major selloff approaching with stocks potentially losing more than half of their value. Yet predicting even approximately when the market will crash is a lot harder than hedging a portfolio against it—many would say impossible. In the same way that so many fund managers and strategists always sound optimistic, scary talk sounds like a shrewd marketing exercise for someone insuring against tail risk.

"I think we're on the way to something really, really bad—but of course I'd say that," joked Spitznagel in an interview this

week.

Universa's business is hardly begging for clients these days, though, despite an unusually calm market with stocks near record highs. Spitznagel thinks the rally will continue for months and get even wilder. That is because the market is in a "Goldilocks phase" as inflation falls and Fed easing fuels bets on further gains. But rate cuts are often the starting gun for big market reversals, he says. Another contrarian sign: Some holdouts in the investing community remain cautious.

"You don't feel like a fool for making a bearish argument," he says. Until recently, that is. In May, Morgan Stanley strategist Mike Wilson turned bullish shortly after losing his spot on the firm's global investment committee. And just recently JPMorgan's Marko Kolanovic, who stuck to his pessimistic guns through the AI rally, lost his job. Fund managers who haven't jumped on the AI bandwagon, owning stocks like Nvidia NVDA -2.61% decrease; red down pointing triangle, are licking their wounds. These episodes have echoes of

the dot-com boom: In late 1999, months before the S&P 500 peaked, Merrill Lynch's bearish strategist Charles Clough left the firm.

Spitznagel predicts an even worse shakeout than a quarter-century ago because the excesses are more extreme—the "greatest bubble in human history." High public indebtedness and valuations make a Washington-led rescue harder to pull off. He sees today's benign slowdown in inflation overshooting and says the U.S. economy could enter a recession by the end of the year.

The ominous language Spitznagel uses to describe the macroeconomic situation is a "Mega-Tinderbox-Timebomb." His analogy is subtler than it sounds: Governments have been so active tamping down any conflagration in the economy that the dry brush of debt and other hidden risks have built into the ingredients for a severe blaze.

How should mere mortals without access to tail risk hedges respond to his prediction? Probably by doing nothing, says Spitznagel.

"Cassandras make terrible investors."

Do you agree that we are in a market bubble? Why or why not? Join the conversation below.

Staying passively invested in stocks is the best long-term strategy, he says. The basic purpose of the protection Universa sells is to make professional fund managers comfortable taking that risk and then to provide them with extra cash when bargains appear. Individual investors won't have clients yank their money away in a bad year so those who can stomach steady contributions to an index fund despite scary headlines will do fine.

They should do better in the long run than wealthy investors who buy increasingly popular structured products designed to blunt market volatility. Why does he think so? One reason is that their building blocks, like put-spread collars, include the derivatives Universa buys for its fund. The long-term drag it creates on buyers' returns represents his edge.

"We love the put-spread collar guys," he says. "It's never been a good trade."

Chick-Fil-A is dethroned as America's favorite fast food restaurant by two rivals

(Sai Bureau)- Chick-fil-A was ousted as America's favorite fast food restaurant by KFC and Del Taco in a new survey. Last year, Chick-fil-A finished first in USA Today's rankings, which were determined by readers' votes. The restaurant drew high marks for its chicken items and its waffle fries. This year, KFC and Del Taco were something of dark horses. Neither of them even appeared in the previous top ten. But this time around, they not only made the list—they soared to the top. At the bottom of the pack was Arby's, who dropped four spots from their ranking last year. Known for their slogan, 'we have the meats,' Arby's offers diners trademark roast beef sandwiches, as well as deli-style sandwiches, chicken sandwiches, and wraps. In ninth place was Zaxby's, a restaurant that's renowned for its fried chicken. Some of their chicken-related items include chicken sandwiches, fingers, and wings.

Zaxby's menu also features unique foods like white cheddar bites, loaded fries, and fried pickles. The restaurant also lures customers with its assortment of chocolate chip cookies. In the number eight spot was Popeyes, who moved up two places in the rankings from

2023. Created in New Orleans, Popeyes is internationally recognized for their southern fried chicken. The chicken meals are served with a biscuit and the customer's choice of Cajun fries, mac and cheese, red beans and rice, coleslaw, or mashed potatoes and Cajun gravy.

Taco Bell retained its title as the seventh best fast food restaurant. Boasting a wide range of menu items, the restaurant can accommodate customers any time of day. Taco Bell is known for its Mexican-themed cuisine, including tacos, quesadillas, burritos, nachos, and Mexican pizza. In sixth place was Captain D's—a beloved seafood restaurant. At Captain D's, diners can order items like fried catfish or whitefish, blackened tilapia, fried shrimp, and grilled salmon. Any of these options can be served in combination with Southern-inspired sides, such as corn and okra.

At number five was Hardee's, a

fast food restaurant acclaimed for its hearty fare. Founded in North Carolina 64 years ago, Hardee's enjoys a solid reputation for its succulent burgers and homemade biscuits. In fourth place was California's In-N-Out Burger, which dropped two spots from their second



place finish last year. Despite their no-frills menu, the restaurant continues to garner accolades for their delicious food. At In-N-Out, there are no freezers because the chain uses exclusively fresh ingredients. Diners can also opt to order from the restaurant's 'Not So Secret Menu.' After being bumped from the top spot, Chick-fil-A finished in third. The

restaurant's menu is built around chicken and offers a number of items that feature the bird, including salads and nuggets.

But the most popular menu option at Chick-fil-A remains to be the classic chicken sandwich, which has been the most-ordered item at the restaurant for the past two years. In second place was KFC, which was an impressive feat considering they weren't ranked last year. Founded by Colonel Sanders in 1930, KFC is celebrated for its chicken and its slogan, 'it's finger-lickin' good.'

With over 25,000 restaurants scattered throughout the world, the chain is one of the most successful. Del Taco finished first, claiming the coveted top spot of the ten best fast food restaurants in America. With only 600 locations in 16 states, Del Taco is a more modest chain. However, the restaurant boasts a loyal customer base, who helped propel them to victory in the rankings. Del Taco's menu features a mouthwatering blend of Mexican food, like burritos, nachos, quesadillas, as well as items like burgers and fries.

In addition to their standard menu, the California-based restaurant also offers breakfast, vegan, and vegetarian menus.

Universities in Bangladesh shut their doors and authorities raid opposition HQ after deadly protests

(News Agency)-DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Several major universities in Bangladesh agreed to shut their doors Wednesday after at least six people died in violent campus protests over the allocation of government jobs, police raided the main opposition party's headquarters, and student protesters announced a total shutdown of all but essential services. After two days of clashes, the University Grants Commission urged all public and private universities to close until further notice, and about a dozen major public universities said they would, according to officials and media reports. Wednesday was a public holiday in Bangladesh, so the actual number of universities that closed was expected to become clearer on Thursday. Among them was Dhaka University, which was at the center of the violence. It has suspended classes and closed its dormitories indefinitely, a university official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media. On Wednesday, the protesters announced they would enforce "a complete shutdown" across the country



on Thursday in response to security officials' continued attacks on the campus demonstrations. Asif Mahmud, one of the protest organizers, said in a Facebook post that they would allow only hospitals and other emergency services to operate. There was no immediate response from authorities to the protesters' plans. Protesters are demanding an end to a quota system that reserves up to 30% of

government jobs for family members of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971. They argue that the system is discriminatory and benefits supporters of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement, and they want it replaced with a merit-based system. Quotas were halted by a court order after mass student protests in 2018.

But last month, Bangladesh's High Court nullified that decision, reinstating the system and triggering new demonstrations. That court order has since been suspended, but the protests continued, turning violent this week. The clashes come months after Hasina held onto power in an election that was boycotted by opposition parties. Some opposition members were jailed ahead of the polls.

The protests began late last month but turned violent on Monday as protesters at Dhaka University clashed with police and counterprotesters organized by the student wing of the governing Awami League party, leaving 100 people injured. At least six people were killed Tuesday in continued violence in the capital Dhaka, the southeastern city of Chattogram and the northern city of Rangpur, authorities said. There were new clashes on Wednesday at Dhaka University, where police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse protesters who carried empty coffins to represent the people killed, witnesses said. Paramilitary forces patrolled the streets of the capital and other big cities.

Why Pakistan cannot resist going back to the IMF for another fix



(News Agency)-Earlier this month, hundreds of people marched through Islamabad's central commercial district on a Friday afternoon carrying signs and chanting slogans such as "Tax the rich" and "Reduce tax on salaried people." The protest passed peacefully but was still an ominous signal for the government of Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. His coalition administration took power in March after almost a month of bargaining in the wake of a general election marred by alleged military-directed manipulation. It excludes Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) even though candidates from the party, founded by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan, have the most seats in Parliament. While Pakistan has so far avoided defaulting on its debts like Sri Lanka did in 2022, its economic and financial position remains precarious. Of Pakistan's \$130.4

billion in external debt, credit rating agency Fitch Ratings estimates that around \$20 billion is due for repayment in the new fiscal year that started this month. The country, however, has only \$9.4 billion in foreign reserves. Its position is all too familiar for Pakistan. As it has done so many times before, Islamabad has turned to the International Monetary Fund to bridge a gap and avert default. Last Friday, the fund announced it had preliminarily agreed to provide about \$7 billion to the government under a 37-month extended fund facility (EFF). "The program aims to capitalize on the hard-won macroeconomic stability achieved over the past year by furthering efforts to strengthen public finances, reduce inflation, rebuild external buffers and remove economic distortions to spur private-sector led growth," Nathan Porter, the fund's Pakistan mission chief, said in the announcement.

Pakistani journalist hints India's role in Trump shooting. Redirected to FBI, Secret Service

(News Agency)- A Pakistani journalist has implied the role of Indian agencies in the assassination attempt on former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. In a press briefing by the Pentagon's Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder Tuesday, Jahanzaib Ali, the Washington Correspondent for ARY News, sparked controversy by asking him about a foreign country's involvement in the attack against Trump. Without naming India, Ali pointed out the recent allegations of foreign involvement in assassination attempts of citizens of the US and Canada. India has been at

foreign intelligence agencies involved in the assassination attempt on a US citizen here in New York and also in Canada. So, do you think that any foreign country can perform this?," asked Ali. Ryder directed Ali to the FBI and the Secret Service for any questions relating to an investigation into Trump's attempted assassination. Ryder in this



the centre of controversy after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau levelled allegations against the country in the Canadian parliament over the death of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Similar controversy steamed over an alleged assassination plot against Gurpatwant Singh Pannun—an American citizen—in New York. "But do you think that any foreign country involved in this kind of assassination attempts to create disturbance in this country? ... Recently we have seen a foreign government and

briefing, also expressed regret on the 'saddening incident' where a terror attack took the lives of eight Pakistani soldiers and injured dozens. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those soldiers that were lost," Ryder said. The Pakistani journalist's questions have been ridiculed online, with some users on the internet calling the Pentagon press briefing "a standup comedy show", and others calling Ali out on his purposeful instinct "to speak of India in every press conference."

6 exercises that address an often overlooked key to longevity

(News Agency) A strong handshake generally makes a good first impression, but there is more to your grip than conveying confidence and trustworthiness. Science points to a stronger grip as an important key to overall strength and longevity. The strength of your handshake even indicates heart health, research has found.

While it may seem like a small part of your body's total strength, grip strength is a foundational component of physical fitness, linked to injury prevention, as well as a reliable benchmark for many aspects of health and functional independence as we age.

Stronger grip muscles help stabilize wrists, reducing the risk of strains and injuries during daily activities and physical exercise. Tasks such as carrying groceries, opening doors and jars, and even getting out of a chair all require adequate grip strength. A stronger grip also enables more progressions in fitness training, increasing the ability to get stronger by enabling people to lift more weight and perform more repetitions.

Pro sports prioritize grip strength training for obvious reasons (such as gripping a bat or a ball), but it's seldom considered a staple in general fitness programs. To help you get a better grasp on how your hands measure up, here's a road map to assess and strengthen your grip at home. What makes up grip strength? Grip strength refers to the force generated by the muscles in the hand and forearm



to grasp and hold objects, and has three different aspects:

Crushing strength is how strongly you can grip with your fingers and the palm of your hand.

Supporting strength refers to your ability to hold onto something or to hang from something.

Pinching strength is how firmly you can pinch something between your fingers and thumb.

How to assess and track your grip strength at home

In clinical settings, a hand dynamometer measures grip strength by gauging the force applied when squeezing its handle.

The device provides a quantitative assessment typically expressed in units of force, such as pounds or kilograms.

To test your grip strength at

home without a dynamometer, use a bathroom scale or tennis ball to give you rough, trackable measurements.

Scale squeeze test

While standing, hold the scale in both hands, one on either side with the heels of your hands on top and fingers wrapped underneath the sides. Squeeze for five seconds.

Then perform the test using only one hand at a time. Repeat with both hands and again with each hand.

Record your highest scores for both hands, left and right. Watch this video for a demo.

Tennis ball squeeze test

From a relaxed, seated position, hold a tennis ball in one hand and squeeze it as hard as you can for five seconds. Repeat three times with each hand, resting for 30 seconds in between repetitions.

A stronger grip will result in a

firmer squeeze that you can maintain longer. Compare how tightly you can squeeze the ball with each hand.

These simple tests can provide a rough estimate of your grip strength. To track your progress over time, note the date and your observations of your grip during testing. Reassess your grip strength periodically every two to four weeks to monitor improvements and adjust your training program accordingly.

Be patient and consistent with your training efforts as improvements may take time. Editor's note: Before beginning any new exercise program, consult your doctor. Stop immediately if you experience pain.

Exercises to strengthen your grip Improving grip strength involves incorporating specific exercises to address all three aspects of grip strength.

Below, I've outlined exercises for each, noting basic exercises as No. 1 and advanced progressions as No. 2.

Incorporate the appropriate exercises for your current strength level into your training regimen three to five times per week, allowing for rest between sessions to facilitate recovery and muscle growth. **Crushing strength exercises**

The tennis ball squeeze test noted above also can be used as a basic strengthening exercise. You can increase the difficulty by increasing the duration of your squeeze and number of repetitions.

Dowel rod roll

While sitting or standing, hold on to a dowel rod, stick or rolling pin, with your palms facing down. Moving your wrists alternately, rotate the dowel rod so that it rolls inside your hands in one direction for 15 to 30 seconds and then the other. To make the exercise more challenging, speed up the rolling. You also can perform this exercise with the palms facing up as a variation. Do two to three sets of 10 to 15 repetitions, resting in between sets.

Wrist curls

Sit on a bench or chair with your forearms resting on your thighs, palms facing up and wrists hanging over the knees. Hold a light dumbbell of 1 to 5 pounds in each hand with an underhand grip. The weight should be enough for a slight challenge but should not feel like a strain.

CDC alerts doctors to watch for rare, serious bacterial infection appearing with unusual symptoms

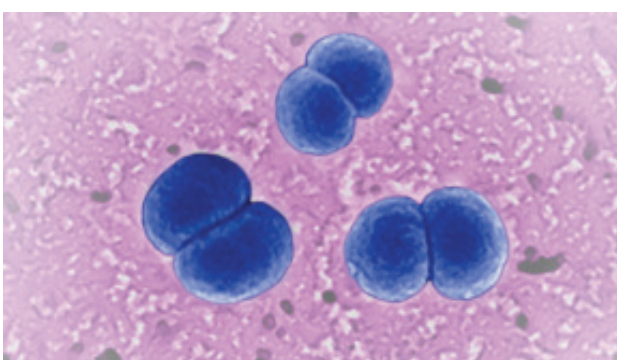
(News Agency) Health officials are alerting doctors to be on the lookout for certain types of rare, serious meningococcal infections that are on the rise in the United States. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a new health alert that these infections, which are caused by a certain strain of *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria, may present with unusual symptoms. In the cases identified so far this year, about 1 in 6 people have died, a higher fatality rate than they typically see with meningococcal infections. These cases are also unusual

because they are striking middle-aged adults. Typically, meningitis infections strike babies or adolescents and young adults.

The CDC's alert comes after the Virginia Department of Health warned about five deaths from the same rare, serious form of meningococcal disease in September. Meningococcal

disease refers to any sickness caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*. The infection can lead to both meningitis and a

serious infection of the bloodstream called septicemia, or blood poisoning.



The bacteria can spread from person to person through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions, and typically occurs

via kissing, coughing, sneezing or living in close contact with others who are infected. There are four

different groups of meningococcal bacteria known to circulate in the United States — B, C, W and Y. The CDC says that in 2023, there were 422 cases of disease caused by these bacteria reported in

the United States, the highest number reported since 2014. Most of them were caused by a particular strain, ST-1466, which

is in the Y subgroup. So far, 2024 is on track to top that number. To date, 143 cases have been reported in the United States — almost 80% more than had been reported at the same point in 2023.

The CDC says most people being diagnosed with this particular strain are adults ages 30 to 60. A disproportionate number of cases, 63%, are among Black people and 15% are in people who have HIV.

Typical symptoms of meningitis infections include fever, headache, a stiff neck, an aversion to light and nausea.

Free festival featuring Bollywood singer Kavita Krishnamurti (singer of “Bole Chudiyan”) and other stars coming to Mississauga

#BollywoodMonster Mashup offers Bollywood x psychedelic 60s-inspired music, dance performances and more on July 26 & 27

(Sai Bureau)- Mississauga, ON: #BollywoodMonster Mashup, the heart of Bollywood music & dance and food in Canada, is returning to Mississauga Celebration Square with two free #BollywoodMonster Concerts presented by TD Bank Group, a laser show, mouth-watering food and family activities. On Friday, July 26, Bollywood singer and voice of Kajol in “Bole Chudiyan” from the film Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham, Kavita Krishnamurti, brought to you by Tourism



Mississauga, will take the stage. Performing alongside Krishnamurti is India's Carnatic violin maestro Dr. L Subramaniam, brought to you by Tourism Mississauga, known for collaborations with Stevie Wonder and George Harrison. On Saturday, July 27th, Bollywood singer and voice of Sushant Singh Rajput in “Makhna” from the film Drive, Yasser Desai, will close off the event. The festival is Krishnamurti's only Canadian tour stop this year.

Riteish Deshmukh: I'm doing 'Masti 4', 'Dhamaal 4' and 'Housefull 5'

Riteish Deshmukh spoke to IndiaToday.in about his upcoming projects, including sequels to popular franchises like 'Masti', 'Dhamaal', and 'Housefull'. He also shared insights into his two-decade-long career and his approach to staying relevant in the industry.

Riteish Deshmukh has an array of projects in the pipeline. Most of them are sequels to blockbuster projects such as 'Masti', 'Dhamaal', and 'Housefull'. In an exclusive chat with IndiaToday.in, Riteish spoke about his upcoming films, completing two decades in the film industry, and exploring different genres.

Riteish, currently seen in 'Pill X', spoke to us about his upcoming films. He said, “I have three back-to-back projects. I'm doing 'Masti 4', 'Dhamaal 4' and 'Housefull 5'. I'm super-excited for this reunion to happen with my fellow co-actors and directors.”

The actor also threw light on what are the key factors in being relevant. He said, “I feel that choices are in our hands when we choose a film but the outcome of that film is not. One really cannot dictate whether it's going to be a success or not. Any actor who has to stay on for long, it's very important that the work we do is appreciated. Whether we come again on screen or not, is dependent on the success of a film. I have been lucky enough that these successes have

come intermittently or more often and that, in my case, has worked for me. So, I have been very lucky that way.”

Riteish spoke to us about what his mantra in life is, as far as surviving competition is concerned. He shared, “I truly believe that everyone's talents vary. One might be great at something while the other at something else. You have to be a very easy person to work with; very respectful of your co-actors, value your and other's time, do your job well and go back home.”

The actor continued, “If you can manage just this then you will be surviving in this industry far more than anyone else who might be more talented than you but not respect his job or the people he or she is working with. Till the time you're successful, one might tolerate you being disrespectful towards them. But once your time is gone and you're not as successful or not successful at all, you won't be respected. But your good behaviour is a good push and a great buffer for those times when the tide is against you.”

Riteish also spoke about maintaining a work-life balance, “I have a great support system back home. I'm able to detach from my work and live my personal life too because I have great family support. When I go back home, I forget all the things, whether good or bad that have happened on the set. I only care about enjoying a good meal with my family. I don't carry the baggage of my set, I just leave it at the doorstep. The most gratifying part about being an actor for me is that through my roles, I have been able to play a valuable part in making them smile or laugh when they are going through their dull moments.” He also said, “With time, my selection process has also evolved and changed, as far as picking my movies is concerned. Today, I'm at that space where I want to work with people who I respect and also enjoy working with and do the kind of work that I haven't done before. I also have a small production house where I'm working on a few Marathi films which also takes up most of my time.” Apart from 'Pill X', Riteish was also seen in 'Kakuda'.



Kareena Kapoor on sister Karisma's Bollywood debut: She resurrected a home

Actor Kareena Kapoor recently reminisced about her sister Karisma's Bollywood debut. She also shared how her father reacted to their decision to pursue acting.



Actor Kareena Kapoor recently recollected about her and her sister Karisma Kapoor's decision to pursue acting. In an interview, the actor also reminisced about her father Randhir Kapoor's reaction to the same.

During an interview with *The Week*, Kareena Kapoor Khan shared that when her sister Karisma decided to pursue acting, their family was very supportive of it. She said, "My mother was very supportive of my sister, and she was like 'I want you to do what you want to do and, strangely, at that time, my father, who people actually think, would be like 'no, don't do this', he said, 'if you want to do this, you must try on your own and figure it out. I am not going to help you in any way.' She said that her father, who wasn't working at that time (90s), had asked Karisma to 'figure it out' herself. She recalled her father saying, "'It's not that because you come from this legacy, there's a 100 percent that you are going to be a big star, or I am go-

ing to help you become an actor, or get you a film, or produce a film, nothing of that sort was ever on the line.' He pushed us to do it on our own."

During the same interview, she added that Karisma 'resurrected a home' with her decision to pursue acting. She shared, "My grandfather had passed away, my father had made one film, *Henna*. Of course, Chintu uncle (Rishi Kapoor) was this illustrious superstar actor, but apart from that no one was working at that time. So Karisma was actually the first female Kapoor who became this big sensation and star." Karisma made her Bollywood debut in 1991 with the film '*Prem Qaidi*', co-starring Harish Kumar. She was 17. She subsequently featured in films such as '*Anari*', '*Coolie No 1*' and '*Raja Hindustani*', among others. Karisma was last seen in the 2024 film '*Murder Mubarak*'. Streaming on Prime Video, it also featured Sara Ali Khan, Vijay Varma, Pankaj Tripathi, Tisca Chopra, among others.

'Too much fun': Katrina Kaif praises Vicky, Ammy, Triptii's 'Bad Newz'

Katrina Kaif praised Vicky Kaushal, Ammy Virk, and Triptii Dimri's 'Bad Newz'. She called the film 'too much fun' and appreciated the stars' on-screen chemistry.

Vicky Kaushal, Ammy Virk and Triptii Dimri's '*Bad Newz*' got a stamp of approval from Katrina Kaif. The actor watched her husband's film and praised it on her Instagram story. The film, directed by Anand Tiwari, released on July 19. After approving Vicky Kaushal's '*Tauba Tauba*', Katrina Kaif has now shared her take on the film. Sharing a poster of '*Bad Newz*' on her Instagram story, she wrote, "And it's hereeee! Just too much fun this was, Bromance gets a new meaning with the Punjabi boys, effortless timing and chemistry." She added, "@vickykaushal09 is u always amaze me with your ease and the joy u bring on screen @amy_virk official loved you @tripti dimri you are just [star-eyes emoji] Congratulations to @bindraa.mritpal @karanjohar (sic)." Previously, Vicky spoke about Katrina's reaction to '*Tauba Tauba*'. In an interview with *Film Companion*, he said, "The biggest relief was when she



approved of the song. She was like this is good. And I was like shukar hai (thank god)." Vicky continued, "She keeps telling me, 'I know you love to dance. But you are a baraati dancer, and not a trained one'. That's because I get carried away, and she tells me



that is fine in real life, but I need to preserve the energy for the camera." However, this time, Vicky mentioned how Katrina was happy with his performance in the song, as he was on point with everything. "This time, she was happy because I held it back

in terms of expression, moves and attitude. She was talking on those lines when she said that dancing is good. And she was happier on that front, and I kept it cool," he added. Apart from the lead cast, '*Bad Newz*' also stars Neha Dhupia.

Elon Musk says SpaceX and X headquarters moving to Texas, blames California trans student privacy law

(NewsAgency) SpaceX CEO and X owner Elon Musk said Tuesday he will move the headquarters of both companies from California to Texas.

Musk had vowed to make the moves in response to Gov. Gavin Newsom (D-Calif.) signing a new law that bars school districts in that state from requiring parents to be notified of a child's gender identification change. Newsom signed the student transgender law on Monday. "This is the final straw. Because of this law and the many others that preceded it, attacking both families and companies, SpaceX will now move its HQ from Hawthorne, California to Starbase, Texas," Musk posted on X. He later added that X HQ will also move from San Francisco to Austin. "I did make it clear to Governor Newsom about a year ago that laws of this nature would force families and companies to leave California to protect their children," he added.

In 2022, People magazine reported Elon Musk's then 18-year-old daughter was granted permission to legally change her name and gender to Vivian Jenna Wilson. She shed the Musk family name and took the maiden name of her mother, Justine Wilson, instead.

When asked about his estranged



transgender daughter in October 2022, Musk told the Financial Times "Can't win them all," and claimed to have good relationships with all his other children. Musk also told the Financial Times that his daughter's decision was caused by "neo-Marxists" at educational institutions.

Musk recently endorsed former President Donald Trump and reportedly plans to contribute \$45 million per month to a pro-Trump super PAC called the America PAC. Trump is expected to roll back transgender rights if elected president again this year. The 19th News reported, citing a February

2023 Trump campaign video, that his proposals would "terminate Medicare and Medicaid funding for hospitals that provide gender-affirming care to trans youth, attempt to charge teachers with sex discrimination for affirming students' gender identities, and order federal agencies to cease all programs that promote the concept of sex and gender transition at any age."

The American Academy of Pediatrics and other major medical organizations including the American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the

World Health Organization all "support giving transgender adolescents access to the health care they need."

On Tuesday, Newsom shot back at Musk in a post on X (formerly Twitter) saying, "You bent the knee," and including a screenshot of a 2022 post on Truth Social in which Trump had berated Musk. In the 2022 post, Trump had written, "When Elon Musk came to the White House asking me for help on all of his many subsidized projects, whether it's electric cars that don't drive long enough, driverless cars that crash, or rocketships to nowhere, without which subsidies he'd be worthless, and telling me how he was a big Trump fan and Republican, I could have said, 'drop to your knees and beg,' and he would have done it." In 2021 Musk, who is also the CEO of Tesla, moved his automaker's corporate headquarters from Palo Alto, California, to Austin. SpaceX did not immediately respond to requests for further information including about whether the company would potentially shut down its Hawthorne operations. When Tesla moved its headquarters to Texas, it maintained its Palo Alto office as an "engineering headquarters." Tesla even expanded at that location and held a press event there with Newsom in February 2023.

Trump says Taiwan should pay the U.S. for defense; shares of chip giant TSMC fall



(Sai Bureau)- Former U.S. President Donald Trump, who is vying for another White House mandate, said he thinks that Taiwan should pay the U.S. for defense, claiming that the country "doesn't give us anything." His comment was in response to a question on whether he would defend Taiwan against China, as part of an interview with Bloomberg Businessweek published Tuesday. Beijing considers democratically governed Taiwan as a part of its territory, and Chinese President Xi Jinping has previously said reunification with the mainland was "a historical inevitability."

Trump said, "Taiwan should pay us for defense." "You know, we're no different than

an insurance company. Taiwan doesn't give us anything," he added. Trump, a Republican, appeared to link his comments to Taiwan's semiconductor industry, which is one of the most advanced in the world. "[Taiwan] did take about 100% of our chip business," Trump said. The U.S. was once a major player in semiconductor manufacturing, but shifting trends in the industry, such as companies moving away from making their own chips, led to the rise of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., or TSMC, and other major Taiwanese firms. Taiwan is expected to account for 66% of production of the world's most advanced chips this year, according to TrendForce data.

Discover sells student loan portfolio to Carlyle, KKR for up to \$10.8 billion



(Sai Bureau)- Discover Financial Services will sell a portfolio of student loans to buyout giants Carlyle and KKR for up to \$10.8 billion, the credit card-focused lender said on Wednesday. The loans will be sold at a premium to their principal balance of nearly \$10.1 billion, the company said. Discover, which had been weighing a sale of the portfolio since November, is one of a handful of lenders that have exited the space in recent years. The deal could also de-risk Discover's loan book as it prepares to be acquired by Capital One.

Student debt has become a political

hot-button in the U.S.

In 2022, President Joe Biden rolled out a measure that would have forgiven \$430 billion of such debt, but his plan was thwarted by the Supreme Court last year after opposition from conservative-leaning states.

Nearly one in five adults say the issue will influence their vote, according to a survey from Bankrate.

Separately, Capital One said on Wednesday it would commit \$265 billion over five years to lending, philanthropy and investment if its takeover of Discover goes through.

Why this sudden Desi dhamaka in US politics? 3 big points

By Priyanjali Narayan

In 2013, a solitary member represented Desis in the US House of Representatives. It was Ami Bera. No Indian-American politician had been elected to the Senate, and only a few Indian-origin legislators were part of the state Houses. In the span of a decade, the House of Representatives has seen five and the Senate one Indian-American member. Not just that, the Vice-President, Kamala Harris, is an Indian-origin woman. Then there is Nikki Haley, the Indian-origin former governor of South Carolina, who has run for the seat of President for the third time, this year. To top that, even the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate, JD Vance, has an Indian wife, which helps him gain the support of desires in the US. There are reasons behind the rise of Indian-Americans on the US political platform. The times have surely changed. Congress has sworn in five Indian-Americans. One has made it to the Senate and 50 Indian-Americans have been elected to the state legislature. Indian Americans represent 1% of the US population. Now, they also represent 1% of the US Congress. This is so far the best time for



the Desis in American politics.

1. RISE OF THE SECOND-THIRD-GENERATION AND FUNDING

Indians began moving to the US in 1965 after an immigration law facilitating the migration of people was passed. Since then, Indians have gained wealth, better education and status in the US. This has led to a rise of second and third generation Desis in the US. Many advocacy groups such as Impact and the AAPI Victory Fund have facilitated the rise of Indians in US politics.

"It's really all working in tandem," said Raj Goyle, a former state lawmaker in Kansas, who also helped establish Impact, told the

New York Times. "There's a natural trend, society is more accepting, and there is deliberate political strategy to make it happen."

"It was inconceivable that someone named Raj Goyle — let alone Rajeev Goyle — would run for office in Wichita," he said. Today, "the average voter's a lot more familiar with an Indian American face on TV, in their examining room, in their classroom, at their university, leading their company."

Something like this would have been inconceivable to Dalip Singh Saund, who, in 1957, became the first Indian-origin politician to get elected to the

House of Representatives. Saund was, in fact, the first Asian-American to be elected to the Congress. However, the Indian-American community would have to wait for more than 50 years to see another person from it get to the House of Representatives. It was only in 2004 that Bobby Jindal would represent a Congressional district in Louisiana, before becoming the governor of the state.

Then came Ami Bera. When Bera was elected to the House of Representatives in 2012, he was only the third Indian-American to serve in Congress in its 224-year history, says a Forbes report.

2. HOW REPRESENTATION

LEADS TO MORE REPRESENTATION

The watershed moment came in 2016. Bobby Jindal, then the Governor of Louisiana, became the first Indian-American to run for the post of US President.

That year, Pramila Jayapal of Washington, Ro Khanna of California and Raja Krishnamoorthi of Illinois were also elected to the House of Representatives.

In 2016, Kamala Harris became the first Indian-American to be elected to the Senate.

Finally, in 2023, Shri Thanedar joined the Samosa Caucus of the four Representatives.

Political experts believe this is a result of increasing representation. The more Indian-origin politicians became visible, the more were elected. It is a unique case of visibility and rise of a community.

Indians, who by now had acquired wealth and standing in America society, were looking for posts of power. "Within the Indian American community, political involvement wasn't really a high priority, because I think people were much more focused on establishing themselves economically and supporting their community endeavours," said Raj Krishnamoorthi, a Congressman from Illinois.

China's Weaponisation of Water Resources is a Grave Threat to South Asia

By: Arun Anand

Since the annexation of Tibet in 1950, China has been exploiting Tibet's rich natural resources, especially water, along with violating the human rights of the Tibetan population. Known as Asia's Water Tower, Tibet is the world's largest freshwater reserve outside the polar regions. Tibetan plateau and the Himalayas are also the primary sources of some of the major river basins in South and Southeast Asia such as the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Meghna, Indus and Mekong. Most of these rivers are transboundary in nature and flow through many South and Southeast Asian nations. This inevitably makes these low-riparian nations dependent on transboundary rivers.

To give a clearer picture, Bangladesh has over 57 transboundary rivers, while it

shares 54 of them with India. These river basins, thus, are vital not only for meeting the economic needs, but also for the preservation of the ecosystem and biodiversity of the lower riparian nations. With Tibet under Chinese control, water resources have emerged as China's new weapon to achieve hydro-hegemony. Pertinently, China has undertaken substantial hydroelectricity projects as hydroelectricity is Tibet's second largest energy source for China, after coal. China's hydro-hegemonic ambitions, however, are coming in the way of lower riparian countries' reliance on transboundary rivers flowing through these countries and their increasing demand for water in the face of rapid climate change. China's hydro

hegemonic ambitions are reflected in its big dam construction projects, aimed at water diversion and the use of artificial rain projects to regulate rainfall in barren areas



of the Tibetan plateau. China's mega dam construction projects are rooted in its motive of meeting the country's large energy demands, accounting for about 31 per cent of global

hydropower as per 2022 data. The development of hydropower based on the Yarlung Tsangpo River finds mention as a 'priority' in China's current 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25). Because of its dominant position as an upper riparian nation and in order to cater to its increasing hydro-energy demands, the development of China's infrastructure on upper riparian rivers has had a significant impact on water flow, adversely affecting the Mekong and Yarlung Tsangpo rivers.

Meeting energy demands, however, is not China's only interest here. Beijing's control of water flow and river diversion through the operationalisation of mega dams aims to have

influence and exert dominance over its neighbouring lower riparian nations. In order to understand this game, it is important to see the flow of upper riparian rivers in China; the Yarlung Tsangpo and Mekong, are both known to be major transboundary rivers. Yarlung Tsangpo River, the world's highest river, originates in the Manasarovar Lake in Tibet that eventually flows through the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh (as Siang River) and Assam (as Brahmaputra) and bordering country Bangladesh before draining into the Bay of Bengal. The Mekong River, which also originates in the Tibetan plateau of the upper Mekong Basin, flows through six nations in Southeast Asia before flowing out to the South China Sea.

What's behind Bangladesh's violent student protests that have led to shut down of universities?

Universities across Bangladesh have erupted in protests. The demonstrations have turned violent – at least five people have died and hundreds of others have been injured, as students raise their voices against job quota.

The government has cancelled classes in public and private campuses across the country. It has also decided to close medical, textile, engineering and other colleges affiliated with the universities until further notice, according to bdnews24, Bangladesh's leading news publisher. We take a look at the reason behind the protests and how the situation has escalated.

Why are students protesting in Bangladesh?

The protests in Bangladesh started on 1 July, days after a decision by the Bangladesh High Court to reinstate a 30 per cent government job quota for descendants of those who fought in the country's 1971 war of independence.

Thousands of students from government and private universities in the country are demonstrating against the quotas, fearing that they will be deprived of opportunities if 30 per cent are reserved for family members of war veterans. While protesters support reservation for other marginalised groups like women, ethnic



minorities and the disabled, the demand is that the quota of kin of freedom fighters be scrapped. "We are not against the quota system in general, but we want the 30 per cent quota for the descendants of 1971 freedom fighters to be abolished," Nahid Islam, the coordinator of the anti-quota protests told Reuters. "Government jobs are the only hope for many young people in Bangladesh, and this quota system is depriving them of opportunities." Many of the protesters are also concerned about the accuracy of the list of veteran's families, believing that some might unfairly benefit from the provision. They argue the quota is discriminatory, and should be

replaced with a merit-based system. They also say it benefits supporters of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement. This quota system was abolished in 2018 by Hasina after widespread protests in Bangladesh. The June 5 court order, which said the abolition was illegal, has again angered the youth. Government jobs are sought-after in the country because they pay well. More than half of the positions are reserved for certain groups.

Who is behind the protests?

The protesters claim that they are not aligned with any political group. According

to a report in Al-Jazeera, the movement has come to be known as the Students Against Discrimination movement.

Thousands of students from Dhaka University in the capital and Chittagong University have joined the anti-quota stir. It has also spread to other universities in the country. How did the protests turn violent?

During a press conference on Sunday, Hasina was asked about the student protests and the quota system. She responded by saying, "If the grandchildren of freedom fighters do not receive [quota] benefits, who would get it? The grandchildren of Razakars?"

"Razakar" is a derogatory term in Bangladesh, referring to those who collaborated with the Pakistani military during the 1971 Liberation War. It is considered a betrayal of their country.

The Bangladesh PM's comments were considered demeaning by student protesters, further angering them.

On Sunday night, thousands of students marched through the Dhaka University campus chanting the slogan, "Who are you? Who are you? I am Razakar, I am Razakar." It is an adaptation of the famous chat during the Liberation War, "Who are we? Bengali", according to a report in Scroll.in.

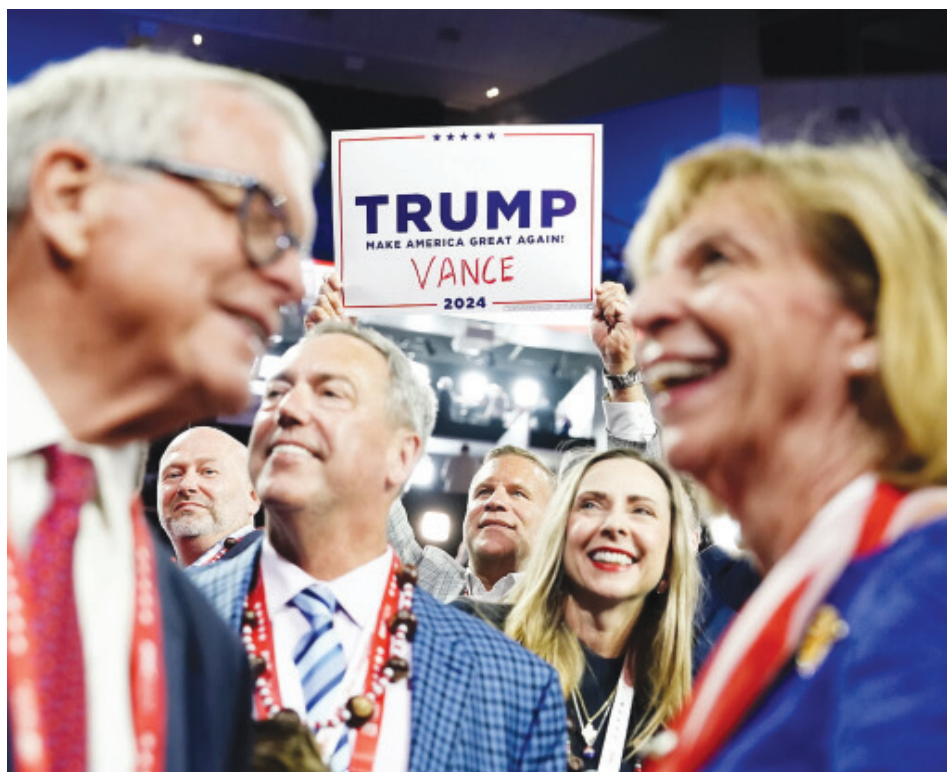
Why Donald Trump chose J.D. Vance to be his running mate.

(SAI Bureau) New York- Donald Trump did something yesterday that he's never before done. He picked a successor.

Trump chose Senator J.D. Vance of Ohio as his running mate, a strategic move driven by the former president's belief that he'll win in November by recapturing the Midwestern states he lost in 2020. With Vance's hardscrabble upbringing and Trump-aligned ideology, the senator is Trump's attempt to appeal to those voters.

Selecting Vance also signals the party's final commitment to Trumpism. Vance is one of the most aggressive and ideological disciples of the MAGA movement. Instead of balancing the ticket with someone who could expand Trump's appeal to new voters, Trump has anointed the senator as the future of the Republican Party.

The party that Trump took over in 2016 — one guided by establishmentarians like Mitt Romney, Paul Ryan and John McCain — is now unrecognizable. Trump ushered in economic populism and pushed out the quest for limited government spending. He traded foreign interventionism for restrictive trade



policies and downgraded the importance of country-club Republicans while prioritizing blue-collar workers. The arrival of Vance on the ticket shows there is no going back.

At first blush, it may seem surprising that Trump would put the future of the

party in the hands of a relatively new convert to his brand of conservatism. (As an author and private citizen, Vance said in 2016 that Trump might be "America's Hitler." Later, as he ran for office, the Ohioan embraced Trumpism.) But Trump is focused on winning, and he

believes Vance is an asset.

An unusual path

There are several reasons Trump was drawn to Vance. The senator is an articulate communicator on television. Even his most ardent critics respect his expertise as a MAGA spokesman, a skill that Trump highly prizes. Vance also served in the Marines and deployed to Iraq, making him the only candidate on either party's ticket with military experience. Vance, a Yale Law School graduate and former venture capitalist, was previously known for his best-selling book, "Hillbilly Elogy," which later became a film starring Amy Adams. The subject is Vance's upbringing in a poor family, but the context is about an often overlooked segment of the country: white, working-class people in Middle America. The book turned him into a renowned explainer of Trumpism's appeal even as he criticized Trump.

But Vance carries risk, too. At 39, he's the second-youngest member of the Senate. He was sworn into office for the first time last year. That limited political résumé could undercut Trump's attack on Vice President Kamala Harris as ill-prepared to step in for President Biden if necessary.

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Here He Comes

Donald Trump's long and winding road to a 3rd presidential nomination at RNC. Trump urges unity after assassination attempt while proposing sweeping populist agenda in RNC finale

