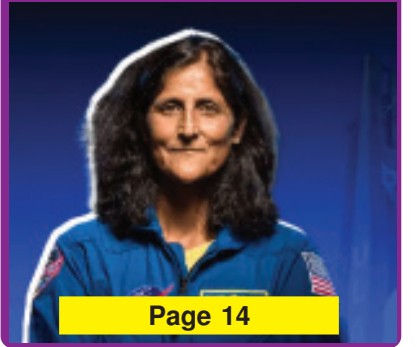




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Sunita Williams to return soon



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TRUMP OR HARRIS

"Double Haters", a voter group much talked about, that held unfavorable views of both President Biden and former President Trump, seems to be disappearing.

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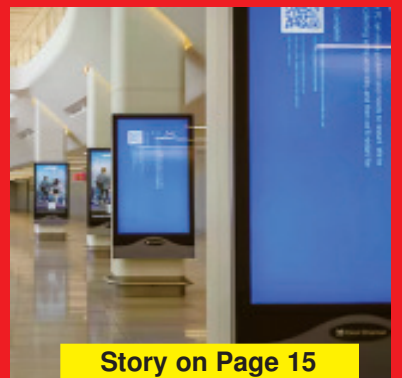
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Why the Khedkars Case Highlights an Unspoken Malaise



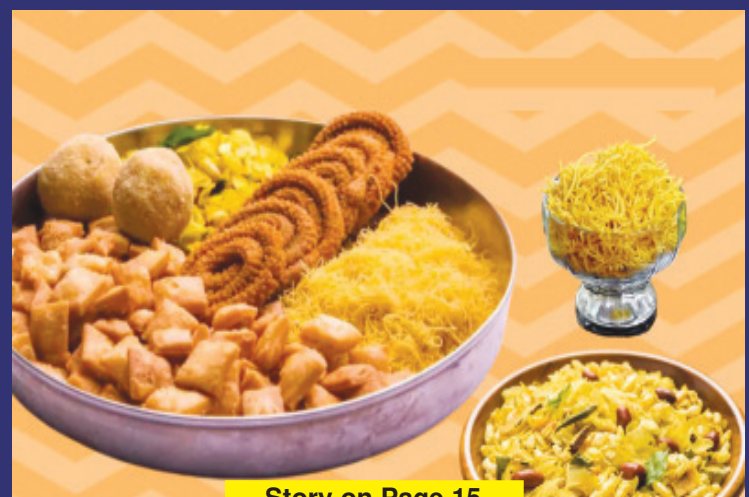
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Blue Screen Blues: Microsoft Triggered Cyber Meltdown and the Case for Atmanirbharta



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Move Over, Potato Chips. Indian Snacks Are Taking Over The Market



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US revises travel advisory for India: Don't travel to Manipur, Jammu and Kashmir

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Former Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra named new Indian Ambassador to the U.S, to take charge soon

(Sai Bureau)-Amidst "differences" with the United States over India's ties with Russia and a number of other issues, New Delhi has announced that it will send Vinay Kwatra, who retired as Foreign Secretary just last week, to Washington as India's new Ambassador, filling a position that has been lying vacant for more than six months. According to a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs, Mr. Kwatra will "take up the assignment shortly". Mr. Kwatra's larger task ahead will be to assess the upcoming U.S. Presidential elections in November and engage with the new administration. He will also be expected to prepare for a possible visit by U.S. President Joseph Biden for the Quad Summit that India is due to host later this year. His challenge will be to smooth over recent differences between the two countries over the Pannun case, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, as well as recent U.S. pronouncements on the human rights situation in India.

Speedy appointment

Officials said both New Delhi and Washington sought to expedite the process of appointing the new Ambassador, as indicated by the speed with which requests were made and

approved: Mr. Kwatra handed over charge to the new Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on July 15, after which his Ambassadorial appointment was approved by Washington in less than a week. It is also significant that New Delhi has decided to post an Indian Foreign Service officer who retired in a senior position, rather than an officer still in service, as has been the practice for most of the past two decades.

Through much of the 1980s and 1990s, New Delhi had posted "political appointees" as U.S. Ambassadors, including former Minister and Jammu and Kashmir Governor Karan Singh, former West Bengal Governor Siddhartha Shankar Ray, and former Cabinet Secretary Naresh Chandra. In 2001, the government had appointed retiring Foreign Secretary Lalit Mansingh to the US, and in 2011 Nirupama Rao after her retirement, but all other Indian Ambassadors in Washington between 2004 and 2024 were serving Foreign Service officers.

Mr. Kwatra's predecessor in South Block, Harsh Shringla, had in fact been Ambassador to the U.S. before he became Foreign Secretary.

'Agree to disagree'

In a sign that the government is also taking a more conciliatory position on criticism

Biden Or Trump, It's Still A Long Wait For Indian 'Dreamers' In US

(Sai Bureau)-For the 725,000 Indian immigrants living in the U.S. without a visa, the third-largest group of undocumented immigrants, President Joe Biden's recent executive order on immigration brings much-needed relief. It eases the path to employment and citizenship for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, or 'dreamers', that is, undocumented residents who were brought to the US as children. Around 2,000 of such "dreamers" in the US are Indian, and they are now eligible to apply for employment-based visas, like the H1-B. The executive order also lifted some application requirements for undocumented spouses of US citizens. However, for the nearly 1.6 million Indian citizens residing legally in the U.S., neither Biden nor Trump have delivered meaningful reforms, though both presidential candidates have indicated support for high-skilled, employment-based immigration from India. Dip Patel is a "documented dreamer." Brought to the US as a child by Indian parents on H1-B visas, he faced self-deportation (voluntary departure from the country in advance of legal

proceedings) at the age of 21 if he did not qualify for an employment visa. "When I was in high school, I realised that every decision and choice that I was making would impact my ability to remain in the country," he said. "Later, I would learn that this is something that's affecting not just me but thousands of people like me."

Narrow Avenues - Patel founded Improve the



Dream, a youth-led grassroots organisation, to advocate for around 2 lakh "documented dreamers" in the US, most of whom are Indian-American. These are immigrants like Patel who face self-deportation because their parents did not receive a green card - for which the wait could be 134 years - before they turned 21. The H1-B lottery, the primary pathway to remaining in the states for 'documented dreamers', had an approval rate of 14.6% in FY2024.

India Association of Long Island Celebrated HOLI



(Sai Bureau)- The India Association of Long Island (IALI) celebrated Holi on recently at the Asa Mai Temple Auditorium in Hicksville, NY, attracting a crowd of over 300 people. Guests were warmly welcomed with smiles and colorful Tika Milan. Before the program began, a traditional sumptuous lunch was served to all attendees.

The event kicked off with a Vandana dance performed by students of Vivarta Arts, followed by Vice President Sushil Khana thanking the members for electing him. He introduced President Pradeep Tandon as an exceptional leader with unwavering commitment and vision for IALI, crediting his success to dedication and hard work.

President Pradeep Tandon extended warm Holi wishes, hoping the vibrant colors bring joy and prosperity, celebrating the triumph of good over adversity. He thanked the audience for

enriching the festivities with their enthusiastic participation and unwavering support. President Tandon also expressed sincere gratitude to the sponsors and appreciated the young performers for their joyous contribution. He acknowledged and recognized the Executive Committee members, requesting their presence for a group photo.

Additionally, President Tandon thanked the Dance Gurus for their unwavering dedication to preserving and promoting Indian Arts and Culture through dance. President Tandon highlighted their efforts in fostering cultural understanding and community engagement, beyond the confines of the studio.

Lastly, he appreciated his team's tireless dedication in preparing for the celebration, emphasizing their commitment to excellence.

(Complied from a Press Release by Neeru Bhambri)



Asamai Hindu Temple & Shri Sai Darbar Guru Poornima - 2024 Celebration



(Sai Bureau)-Guru Purnima is a day on which Hindus offer salutations to their Gurus and express their gratitude for guiding them in all stages of life. It is celebrated on the full moon day in the month of Ashada (corresponds to June/July of Gregorian calendar). Throughout the day, several special pujas are performed, including the Shri Sai Satyanarayana Vrat Puja, which involves recitation of specific prayers, singing Shri

Sai Baba's glory and offerings to Shri Sai Baba. This year the festival occurred on Sunday, July 21, 2024. This auspicious day was celebrated by all the devotees of Shri Sai Darbar of AsaMai Hindu Temple in Hicksville, NY. The temple had a full day program starting with Kakad Aarti at 8:30 am, the ceremonial awakening of Shri Sai Baba. This was followed by Abhishek

(ceremonial bath) to the larger-than-life statue of Shirdi Shri Sai Baba along with Charan (Feet) Puja and chanting of Vishnu Sahastra Namavali by the priests. Followed by Abhishek, Shri Sai Baba's Idol was decorated with beautiful Vastra, Garland, Mukut, and Ornaments. The priest chanted Shri Sai Baba's Ashtotram (108 names). **(Compiled from a Press Release by Kamini Sharma)**

Hindu statesman Rajan Zed to open US Senate with Hindu prayer for second time on July 30

(Sai Bureau)-Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, who read the invocation (opening-prayer) in the United States (US) Senate in Washington DC on July 12, 2007; has been scheduled to deliver the opening-prayer again in the Senate on July 30. Besides US Senate and US House of Representatives; Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, has read Hindu opening-prayers in 310 other legislative bodies in 44 US states and Canada; including state senates, state houses-of-representatives/assemblies, county commissions, city/town councils; which is an record in itself. Most of these were the first Hindu prayers of these legislative bodies.

the Lord), both ancient Hindu scriptures. Instructions to Senate guest chaplains clearly state that the opening-prayer "must be given exclusively and entirely in the English language".

Beginning with Gayatri-Mantra, considered the most sacred mantra of Hinduism, Zed plans to say from Brahadaranyakopanishad: "Lead us from the unreal to the real, Lead us from darkness to light, and Lead us from death to immortality." Reciting from Bhagavad-Gita, he proposes to urge senators and others present to keep the welfare of others always in mind.

Rajan Zed will be wearing traditional saffron-colored kurta-pajama, a rudraksh mala (rosary); besides sandal-paste tilak on his forehead. Zed, a global Hindu and interfaith leader, has been bestowed with the World Interfaith Leader Award. Zed is on the Advisory Board of The Interfaith Peace Project, etc. He has been panelist for "On Faith", a prestigious interactive conversation on religion used to be produced by The Washington Post; and produces a weekly multi-faith panel "Faith Forum" in a Gannett publication for over 13 years.



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Russia's new punching bag: Kamala Harris

(News Agency)-From the moment U.S. President Joe Biden dropped out of the race for president and backed Kamala Harris as his replacement on Sunday, Russia's propagandists have whipped up a cacophony of unbridled racism, sexism and conspiracies.

Faced with political turmoil in Washington, Russia's main geopolitical foe, the Kremlin itself has put on a show of restraint.

But its foot soldiers in the Russian-language disinformation sphere have more than made up for that. "Kamala with the nuclear button is worse than a monkey with a grenade," Andrei Sidorov, the dean of the global politics department at Moscow State University (a once highly respected institution) said Sunday evening on state television's prime weekly talk show.

The show's host, Vladimir Solovyov, made his own feelings known by showing a clip of Republican candidate Donald Trump commenting on Harris' laugh as a sign she was "crazy" followed by a compilation of clips showing Harris, well, laughing.

The caustic tone from Sidorov and Solovyov provided a stark contrast with that of Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov that same evening, who had personified



cool aloofness, saying that, with four months to go until the election, "much could still change."

"The priority for us is to achieve the aims of the special military operation," he added, using a Kremlin euphemism for the war.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, Peskov has often suggested, has bigger things on his mind than the fracas among his political enemies overseas. But despite putting on an air of neutrality and insisting

time and time again that Moscow does not intervene in countries' domestic affairs (flying in the face of evidence of Russian meddling in the 2016 election), Russian propagandists tell a very different, and very biased, story. With Moscow in its third year of war against Ukraine, they have jumped on the chaos in the United States as an opportunity to frame Russia as superior to the West and distract from domestic problems.

Broadcasts on state media and countless

posts by pro-Kremlin commentators on social media offered iterations of the same one-two-three punch: Biden is a loser; Harris is evil; And American democracy is fundamentally screwed (a point also argued by Trump).

Maria Zakharova, a spokesperson for Russia's Foreign Ministry who often acts as the Kremlin's attack dog, on Sunday called for an investigation into "collusion between the American media and certain political circles to cover up the truth about [Biden's] mental condition, manipulating public opinion to the benefit of one political party [the Democrats]."

Appearing on Solovyov's show later that evening, she took another jab at American democracy saying "everyone knows" Biden did not write the statement announcing he would be pulling out. "The only thing that is still a guessing matter is whether he actually read it or not."

But the sharpest vitriol has been reserved for Harris. Although the Kremlin said on Monday that Harris never had any direct contact with Putin, she has called Russia's war "barbaric and inhumane" and Putin an "authoritarian imperialist." Without specifying which remarks he was referring to, Peskov on Monday accused Harris of "unfriendly rhetoric."

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The Democrats' Crisis Isn't Over

Since Joe Biden's disastrous debate on June 27, the Democratic Party has been in crisis, and his withdrawal from the race does not end that crisis. But it does offer an opportunity.

Democrats now have a chance to present a vigorous, compelling case to voters who made clear they hated having to choose between the frail, uninspiring incumbent and his egomaniacal, eternally vengeful adversary. They court danger, however, if they believe that simply replacing the old white guy with a younger woman of color will magically carry them to victory, much less lay the groundwork for winning a durable majority again. To take advantage of the opportunity, Democrats might reflect on how their party managed to recover from serious crises in their past. Unlike the current one, all involved bitter conflicts about policy rather than the cognitive decline of their nominee or doubts about their ability to win the election. And only when Democrats united around a progressive economic agenda that promotes a more moral capitalism, or when their opponents collapsed on their own accord, did they succeed. In 1860, Democrats in the North and South disagreed so strongly about the expansion of slavery that they ended up holding two separate conventions, each of which nominated a candidate entirely unacceptable to the other. With the party split in two, Abraham Lincoln's Republicans won a clear majority in the Electoral College, even with only 40 percent of the popular vote. Democrats ultimately rebounded in the mid-1870s, thanks to a sharp depression and a racist backlash against the GOP-led Reconstruction in the South.

In 1896, William Jennings Bryan's populist campaign won over hard-pressed farmers and miners in states Republicans had always dominated before. But the eloquent insurgent's demands to inflate the money supply to aid debtors and his attacks on judges who punished unions for strikes and boycotts led Democratic conservatives to bolt the party. Some ran a splinter campaign, while others endorsed the Republican William McKinley — who scored an easy victory that fall. A Democratic comeback occurred in 1912 when the GOP itself split between William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt, who ran on the Progressive Party line. Woodrow Wilson took the presidency and carried out a progressive agenda on money and labor that Bryan had initiated. In the 1920s, the crisis for Democrats swirled around issues of culture and race instead of who won and lost in what was then a booming economy. White Southerners who worshipped at evangelical churches clashed with Catholics and liberals in the North about prohibition and the rise of the second Ku Klux Klan, many of whose members terrorized non-Protestants as well as African Americans. It took the worst depression in U.S. history that began under a Republican president,

Herbert Hoover, to provide Democrats an opportunity to put those differences behind them. In 1932, with Franklin Roosevelt as their leader, they won big majorities in Congress and created the largest expansion in the domestic powers of the federal government in the nation's history.

Then came 1968. Lyndon Johnson's withdrawal from the race may seem to resemble Biden's this year. After all, both were incumbents who planned to run for reelection but were dissuaded by fierce opposition within their own party. Now as then, the vice president took his place at the top of the ticket.

But the dissent against Johnson in 1968 was over a far more momentous reason than concern about how the president performed on television or on the stump. The conflict in Vietnam, in which 500,000 Americans were fighting, set pro-war against anti-war Democrats in a battle for the soul of the party. It spurred two liberal senators, Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, to run against LBJ and then against Hubert Humphrey, his anointed successor. The pitched battles in the streets of Chicago and inside the convention hall propelled Richard Nixon, the Republican, to victory. Democrats only recovered a few years later because Nixon destroyed his presidency by allowing his underlings to sabotage his anti-war critics — most famously breaking into the DNC headquarters inside the Watergate complex. In contrast, Democrats today — except for the war in Gaza — are remarkably unified about the issues on which Biden campaigned and has sought to govern. With hardly any exceptions, their representatives and senators agree on encouraging workers to form unions and want to make serious investments in renewable energy. They unanimously favor increasing taxes on the rich and arming Ukraine. That such harsh critics of Israel as Rep. Ilhan Omar and Sen. Bernie Sanders stuck with the president until he pulled out of the race demonstrates that the danger of another Trump administration overshadowed their discontent with Biden. But if Biden's withdrawal gives Democrats an opportunity to revive their fortunes in what looked like a losing race, it may do little to address the deeper crisis they have faced since Donald Trump remade the Republican Party. Kamala Harris can be a dynamic speaker, but many Americans perceive her as a liberal from San Francisco — a stalwart progressive who cares deeply about reproductive rights and racial diversity. At least so far, she has not shown an ability to reach out with the same passion to working-class voters who believe that neither the Democratic Party nor the government has shown the same concern for their economic woes and fear that their children's lives may be worse than theirs. For some years now, polls have reported that most people think the U.S. is "on the wrong track."

A Shooting Changed Reagan's Presidency. Will It Change Trump?

The assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump was as harrowing as it was inexcusable, but it was not an aberration in American politics. The last time an American president was injured in an assassination attempt was 43 years ago, when 25-year-old John Hinckley Jr. shot President Ronald Reagan in Washington. How Trump's brush with death will affect his campaign remains to be seen. But in Reagan's case, the shooting changed him as a political figure and even influenced his policy thinking.

The most obvious effect of the shooting on Reagan's presidency was a popularity boost. When he became president, his national approval was around 51 percent across the country. But following the assassination attempt, Reagan's popularity, already on an uptick, soared — fueled in part by his sympathetic handling of the incident. (Reagan reportedly told a joke to his wife before he went into surgery: "Honey," he said, borrowing a line from boxer Jack Dempsey, "I forgot to duck." He treated the medical personnel at George Washington University Hospital with humor as well: "I hope they are all Republicans," he quipped. His doctor, a liberal named Joseph Giordano, replied, "Today, Mr. President, we are all Republicans.") By May, his approval rating had risen to 68 percent, suggesting some support even from registered Democrats. Reagan spoke about being shot during his first term. In his first address to Congress after taking a bullet, in April 1981, Reagan expressed immense gratitude for the prayers of a nation and the support of its representatives: "I'd like to say a few words directly to all of you and to those who are watching and listening

tonight, because this is the only way I know to express to all of you on behalf of Nancy and myself our appreciation for your messages and flowers and, most of all, your prayers, not only for me but for those others who fell beside me," he said.

The assassination attempt also had a concrete effect on Reagan's advocacy concerning gun policy. By the standards of today's GOP, Reagan was already somewhat moderate on guns; as governor of California, in 1967, he signed into law a ban on the open carrying of loaded firearms in the state — a response to armed demonstrations by the Black Panthers that remains on the books to this day. And he did it with the blessing of the NRA, which endorsed the law and, later, his presidential run in 1980. But after the shooting, Reagan went further. Under the Clinton administration, then-Rep. Chuck Schumer introduced the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, named for James Brady, Reagan's press secretary who was shot in the head in the same attack and who died as a result of those injuries decades later in 2014. It is the most sweeping gun reform bill passed by Congress to date. Before it passed, it underwent various iterations, several of which failed. But in 1991, Reagan did something few presidents do: He penned an op-ed in *The New York Times*. It was one of Reagan's most graphic descriptions of his shooting: "It was on that day 10 years ago that a deranged young man standing among reporters and photographers shot a policeman, a Secret Service agent, my press secretary and me on a Washington sidewalk," he wrote.

By JONATHON L. EARLE



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Editor in Chief & Publisher :

Sharanjit Singh Thind

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Amaninder Singh Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) : Aruna Singh

Special Correspondents: Gagandeep Singh (India)

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

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Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

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A Trump-Vance Team Is A Nightmare For Europe

By Syed Zubair Ahmed

President Joe Biden's decision to drop out of the presidential race on Sunday has left everyone guessing who his replacement will be. He has backed his Vice-President, half-Indian Kamala Harris. But it's unclear at this stage whether she will indeed be the party's nominee. The Democratic Party convention next month in Chicago (August 19-22) is going to be a tumultuous one. But it is believed the party delegates might just endorse Harris before that. The endorsement at the convention will become a mere formality by then.

Not since Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1968 has any Presidential candidate dropped out of a re-election campaign. The Democratic Party appears to be in disarray. If Harris becomes the party's presidential nominee, will she be able to take on Donald Trump, who is riding on a sympathy wave since his brush with death last week?

Many say the selection of Harris will be music to Trump's ear. Two days after the assassination attempt, the latter announced that J.D. Vance would be his running mate. The Trump-Vance team will be too hot to handle for any Democratic Party candidate, who will have no time on his or her side to give a tough fight to the duo. This might make Europe



even more despondent because the last thing the Europeans want to see is the return of Trump, and his deputy becoming the Vice President.

Doom And Gloom In Europe

In his poem *The Second Coming*, William Butler Yeats questions whether humanity is on the brink of a revelation or heading towards further devastation. His angst is reflected in these famous words: "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world..." They captured the dark mood prevailing across a war-torn Europe, symbolised by the ominous image of a "rough beast slouching towards Bethlehem to be born".

Yeats's Europe was reeling from the aftermath of the First World

War. Today's Europe is gripped by a similar sense of unease and chaos as the Russian onslaught in Ukraine continues to rage with no peace deal in sight. On top of that, Europe's anxiety and fear over Trump's potential return to power, especially with Vance, appears to be at its peak. The parallels between the post-war disarray that inspired Yeats to write *The Second Coming* and the current commotions in Europe cannot be overstated.

Understanding Vance

The prospect of a second coming of Trump was already troubling Europe's globalised, liberal world order. But the entry of Vance, a 39-year-old first-term senator from Ohio, has pushed Europeans to the edge. The possibility of Vance

becoming the US Vice-President and potentially succeeding Trump as President later has raised huge concerns in Europe.

Vance shot to fame in 2016 with his memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy*, which depicted his upbringing in a struggling working-class family in the 'Rust Belt'. The book, which was later adapted as a Netflix drama, is both a personal story and a sociological analysis of the white working-class experience in America. Vance's narrative resonated with many Americans, particularly those who felt left behind by globalisation and economic change.

Vance is married to Usha Chilukuri, who is of Indian descent and a practising Hindu. They met at Yale Law School and got married in

2014. He is believed to have been influenced by his wife's Hindu faith, but not enough to prevent him from converting to Catholicism in 2019.

Why Did Trump Pick Him?

In his early years as a politician, Vance called Trump "America's Hitler". But later, he completely surrendered to Trumpism.

So why did Trump pick him as his running mate?

Vance, with a working-class background, is from Ohio and has considerable influence in the "Rust Belt" states that were once industrialised and manufacturing hubs. Trump has said in one of his social media posts that his running mate "will be strongly focused on the people he fought so brilliantly for, the American workers and farmers in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Minnesota, and far beyond".

But Vance's influence in the "Rust Belt" region was not the only reason he was picked. His views on globalisation, immigration, NATO, and China complement those of Trump. He is being seen more as an heir apparent to Trump, considering he is not even 40. Indians may like to see Harris win the nomination, because of her Indian connection. But Europe will certainly pin all its hope on her and pray that she comes out victorious in the November election.

Biden Lost His Voice, Then His Power

By JOHN F. HARRIS

In most respects, President Joseph R. Biden is a thoroughly conventional president — a leader deeply respectful of precedent, a man whose style and values are shaped by living through more than half of the 20th century even as he ends his career navigating the disruptive politics of the 21st.

By contrast, the great foil of his presidency — predecessor Donald Trump — is in style and contempt for precedent the most radical person ever to hold the office. Biden's Oval Office address Wednesday night, however, underlined a paradox. There is one way that Trump represents continuity and Biden is the anomaly. This paradox is also the reason Biden won't be his party's nominee for a second term. For



most of American history — certainly since the start of the 20th century — the presidency has taken much of its power from the ability of its occupants to communicate. In other words, to use the singular power of the Oval Office to command the attention of the nation — more or less at

will, on any topic or occasion — and shape the thoughts and mood of the country through the power of words and image. There is no better place to wage a national argument.

By this narrow but critical standard, it is Trump who used the presidential pulpit — and the

mania and obsessive interest that followed him even after he lost it — in ways consistent with the grain of American history. He preoccupies the psyche of the nation, no less among those who loathe him as among the half or nearly half who are open to returning him to power.

It was Biden who is the tragic exception. He has been essentially a half president.

He has carried out the programmatic portion of the presidency — presiding over far-reaching legislation and aggressively using the policymaking tools of the executive branch — as effectively as any president in recent decades. On the performative dimension of the presidency — using words to inspire his supporters, box in his enemies,

to reframe debates — he has been arguably the weakest Oval Office occupant in more than a century, back to the days before television or even radio, when most Americans might read about a presidential speech but had never heard the president's voice.

At the start of his presidency Biden's voice was often inarticulate, except in a few grand set-piece speeches. (Many were written with influence by historian and former journalist Jon Meacham.) Now, at the end of his presidency, his voice has grown ever fainter, and a growing number of his thoughts straddle a line between discursive and incoherent. There is yet more paradox here. Biden across his career has plainly wanted to be known as an exciting speaker, skilled in the theater of politics.

Budget 2024: A Budget sans poetry, but filled with political pragmatism

Budget provides internships and incentives for first-term employees; citing similarities to Congress manifesto, Rahul Gandhi terms it a “copy-paste” Budget; substantial sops for States ruled by NDA allies

In a Budget speech sans poetry but filled with political pragmatism, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman kept her focus on addressing youth unemployment, while also offering special packages to keep crucial allies — the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) governing Andhra Pradesh, and the Janata Dal (U) in power in Bihar — on her side.

Rising unemployment, the lack of avenues to government jobs, and the leakage of question papers for recruitment exams even when vacancies were announced were all issues that weighed heavily on the BJP in the recent Lok Sabha election. In the Union Budget for this year, therefore, this sector has been addressed via a series of incentive schemes that will, it is hoped, help young, first-time job seekers with finding employment.

Internships and incentives

An internship scheme to place young people at 500 top companies, with an allowance of ₹5,000 per month to be provided by the government and a one-time assistance of ₹6,000, is expected to help generate employment, as is the payment of a month's wage to those newly entering the



workforce in all formal sectors, which will be provided by the government in three installments. This will be applicable to those getting salaries up to ₹1 lakh per month. This move is expected to benefit 2.1 crore young people.

Incentives, directly paid out to employees and employers in the first four years of employment will be paid out for those entering the manufacturing sector, with those producing additional employment across sectors for jobs within a salary of ₹1 lakh per month to be provided by ₹3000 per month for two years to cover EPFO charges. Skilling of more youth, and education loans of upto ₹10

lakh for higher education in domestic educational institutions, with e-vouchers providing annual 3% interest subvention on these loans, was also announced.

‘Copy-paste Budget’

The Opposition was quick to point out that these incentives for internships and first-time employees announced by the Finance Minister were uncannily reminiscent of the Congress party's Lok Sabha manifesto promise of ‘Pehli Naukri Pakki’, to provide paid internships in top companies.

Credit: ANI

In a Budget speech sans poetry but filled with political pragmatism, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman kept her focus on

addressing youth unemployment, while also offering special packages to keep crucial allies — the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) governing Andhra Pradesh, and the Janata Dal (U) in power in Bihar — on her side.

Rising unemployment, the lack of avenues to government jobs, and the leakage of question papers for recruitment exams even when vacancies were announced were all issues that weighed heavily on the BJP in the recent Lok Sabha election. In the Union Budget for this year, therefore, this sector has been addressed via a series of incentive schemes that will, it is hoped, help young, first-time job seekers with finding employment.

Internships and incentives

An internship scheme to place young people at 500 top companies, with an allowance of ₹5,000 per month to be provided by the government and a one-time assistance of ₹6,000, is expected to help generate employment, as is the payment of a month's wage to those newly entering the workforce in all formal sectors, which will be provided by the government in three installments. This will be applicable to those

getting salaries up to ₹1 lakh per month. This move is expected to benefit 2.1 crore young people.

Incentives, directly paid out to employees and employers in the first four years of employment will be paid out for those entering the manufacturing sector, with those producing additional employment across sectors for jobs within a salary of ₹1 lakh per month to be provided by ₹3000 per month for two years to cover EPFO charges. Skilling of more youth, and education loans of upto ₹10 lakh for higher education in domestic educational institutions, with e-vouchers providing annual 3% interest subvention on these loans, was also announced.

‘Copy-paste Budget’

The Opposition was quick to point out that these incentives for internships and first-time employees announced by the Finance Minister were uncannily reminiscent of the Congress party's Lok Sabha manifesto promise of ‘Pehli Naukri Pakki’, to provide paid internships in top companies.

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs: On Budget 2024's Laser Focus On Employment

By Bibek Debroy, Aditya Sinha

John Maynard Keynes, the renowned British economist, once proposed a rather unconventional method for employment generation: burying bottles filled with banknotes in disused coal mines and letting people dig them up. His point was that any form of employment could help boost the economy during a downturn, no matter how absurd. While Keynes's suggestion was meant to illustrate the power of government spending in stimulating job creation, it also serves as a humorous reminder of the lengths one might go to generate employment. This year's Union Budget has thankfully taken a more practical approach, focusing on employment and skilling with clear, strategic initiatives to ensure that the jobs created are meaningful and sustainable.

What The Economic Survey



Flagged

Previously, the Economic Survey flagged several pressing issues with employment in India. It spoke about the significant share of regular wage/salaried employees lacking social security benefits, the low proportion of formally skilled young workforce, and the need for job creation in sectors that can absorb workers transitioning from agriculture. Regulatory

hurdles, particularly for MSMEs, and the need to improve the quality of employment, including decent wages and job security, are critical. Female labour force participation remains low, requiring measures to address barriers such as unpaid care work. Despite a declining trend, youth unemployment and the impact of rapid technological change on job displacement are also concerns. The rise of the gig and informal

economy presents challenges in ensuring fair wages and social protection.

The Union Budget has made a concerted effort to tackle these challenges head-on, with employment and skilling being the second-highest priorities among its nine focus areas. The budget has proposed three important schemes under the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) programme, designed to stimulate formal employment, support new entrants to the workforce, and incentivise job creation in the manufacturing sector. Additionally, targeted efforts to increase women's participation in the workforce and a new skilling programme in collaboration with state governments and industry underscore a multifaceted approach to addressing employment challenges.

Direct Benefits For First-Time

Employees

Scheme A targets first-time employees by offering direct benefit transfers (DBT) equivalent to one month's wage, distributed in three instalments to newly registered workers in the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). With a cap of ₹1 lakh per month, this initiative is anticipated to benefit approximately 210 lakh youth. By lowering the initial entry barriers for formal employment, this scheme leverages economic theories suggesting that reducing the cost of entry can significantly enhance workforce participation. Neumark and Grijalva (2017) support the notion that such incentives can lead to increased job creation and reduce informal employment, fostering a more structured labour market.

Houthi attacks on Israel could mark dangerous escalation in Gaza war

By Col Rajeev Agarwal (Retd)

On July 19, a Houthi drone flew over 2,000 km from Yemen, evaded Israel's air defences, and struck an apartment building in Tel Aviv, killing one civilian and injuring at least 10. In an immediate retaliation, Israeli fighter aircraft struck the Houthi-controlled port of Hodeidah in Yemen the next day, setting a major oil storage dump on fire while killing six people. The Houthis replied by launching a long-range ballistic missile on the Israeli port city of Eilat on July 21. But it was intercepted by the Israeli air defence. This is, of course, not the first time the Houthis targeted Israel amid the ongoing war in Gaza. But in all past instances, such strikes landed in deserted areas or were intercepted. Israel's Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said they wanted to send a clear message to the Houthis, adding that "the fire that is currently burning in Hodeidah, is seen across the Middle East and the significance is clear." In response, Houthi spokesperson Mohammed Abdulsalam said that Israel "has opened an open-ended war." Hezbollah, which is fighting Israel in the north, released a statement calling the attack "a new and dangerous phase of the extremely important ongoing confrontation." Both the Houthis and Hezbollah are Iran-backed militia groups who, along with Hamas, form part of the "Axis of Resistance" against Israel. This latest episode of a successful drone strike into Israel by the Houthis and Israel's retaliation threatens to add a dangerous dimension to the ongoing conflict in Gaza — if repeated.

Who are the Houthis?

The Houthi movement, also known as Ansar Allah (supporters of God), is an armed group that emerged in Yemen in the 1990s during the civil war that has ideological roots in Yemen's ethnic Shia Muslim minorities, the Zaidis. The group owes allegiance to Iran, which acknowledges its ideological, financial and (military) support to the group.

The group shot into prominence when it overthrew the government in Yemen, following the unrest after the Arab Spring protests of 2010-11. In September 2014, the Houthis took over Yemen's capital Sana'a and later placed

President Hadi and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah (along with the cabinet) under house arrest. In response, Saudi Arabia, in coordination with regional Arab allies and the US, launched airstrikes in Yemen in March 2015 in an operation codenamed "Operation

Decisive Storm". The armed conflict between the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and the Houthis continued till March 2023. The internationally recognised government of Yemen called the Presidential Leadership Council, formed in April 2022 and led by Rashad al-Alimi has limited

control over the country. The Houthis currently control the northern and western parts of Yemen, including the capital Sana'a and the port city of Hodeidah.

Houthis in the Gaza War

Following Israel's invasion of Gaza, the Houthis offered support

to the Palestinian cause and undertook the task of not permitting Israeli-flagged ships (or any Western alliance ships) to cross the Red Sea. The US then deployed an aircraft carrier group in the Red Sea under Operation Prosperity Guardian.

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Countering the Dragon: India's Strategic Buildup in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

By: Omer Ghazi

As tensions simmer in the Indo-Pacific, India is transforming the Andaman and Nicobar Islands into a formidable bastion of power, a strategic counter to China's assertive manoeuvres in Southeast Asia. Nestled at the crossroads of crucial maritime routes, these islands are no longer just a remote outpost but a key player in the high-stakes game of regional dominance. India's recent surge in military and infrastructural developments here sends an unequivocal message: the era of passive defence is over. In its place, a robust, proactive stance is emerging, aimed squarely at curbing Beijing's ambitions and asserting India's influence over the vital sea lanes that connect the world's largest economies.

The Maldives, for instance, recently faced a crisis after adopting an "India Out" strategy and aligning itself with China. This pro-China stance backfired, leading to internal instability and eventually forcing the Maldives to apologise to India. Recognising the volatility in its neighbourhood, India is not only developing the Lakshadweep Islands as an alternative strategic location but is also heavily investing in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which hold unique and significant strategic importance of their own.

Historically, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands



have been a strategic asset for India, but recent developments underscore their growing importance. The islands are home to two main airports: Veer Savarkar International Airport at Port Blair and Car Nicobar Air Force Station. However, India's efforts have extended beyond these initial facilities.

The Indian Navy is expanding its capabilities by building a longer runway at Shibpur, now known as INS Kohassa, located in the northern part of the islands. This new runway is designed to support larger and more advanced military aircraft,

enhancing the operational readiness of India's forces in the region.

In addition to INS Kohassa, the Indian government has embarked on a comprehensive 10-year infrastructure development plan for the islands. This plan includes the extension of the Campbell Bay (INS Baaz) runway in the southern part of the islands to 10,000 feet. This extension will enable the operation of larger aircraft, thereby increasing the strategic reach of India's air power. Another 10,000-foot runway is planned for Kamorta, further

bolstering the islands' capacity to host significant military assets.

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What it will take to calm America

By Julian Zelizer

On Sunday evening, President Joe Biden spoke from the Oval Office, calling on Americans to temper their passions. In the aftermath of the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump, Biden reiterated his message that there is no room for violence in our politics and that everyone needs to take a breath and calm down. The nation needs to “lower the temperature,” he said. “No matter how strong our convictions,” Biden added, we must “never descend into violence.”

Will the message work? Coming at a pivotal moment in his own reelection campaign against Trump, Biden’s address is something of a stress test for what presidents can accomplish when political tensions spin out of control. Biden’s appeal is not coming in a vacuum; many political leaders across the spectrum have denounced the attack on Trump and called for calm. House Speaker Mike Johnson said on CNN Sunday,

“The rhetoric has consequences. When you have a heated environment and you have political division in this country, like we have in the age of social media, everything is amplified, and everyone can go on and turn the dial. So we need to work on bringing that down so that we can have thoughtful debate and we can have policy discussions.”

By virtue of his office, Biden is singularly positioned to attempt to soothe America. But sadly, even if Biden was not in such a



fragile political position, the odds would be stacked against the president, as history suggests. Americans lived through a horrendous moment on November 22, 1963 when a gunman, Lee Harvey Oswald, shot and killed President John F. Kennedy. The event, which was of greater magnitude given the fatal outcome, traumatized the nation. A president who embodied the promise of a new generation had been slain. All sorts of theories swirled about what happened in Dallas, most of which were connected to the divisive issues of the era — civil rights, anti-communism, right-wing extremism and more.

As soon as Lyndon Johnson took over the presidency, he too appealed to the nation to restore its better angels. Let us continue, he said, urging Americans to move forward with Kennedy’s agenda as the best

memorial to the fallen leader. He said: “Our American unity does not depend upon unanimity. We have differences; but now, as in the past, we can derive from those differences strength, not weakness; wisdom, not despair. Both as a people and a government we can unite upon a program, a program which is wise, and just, enlightened and constructive.”

But Johnson soon learned that presidential appeals to moderation often fall flat. The huge fault lines created by divisive issues that predated Kennedy’s assassination only widened. The civil rights movement intensified its effort to achieve racial justice through legislation while the White backlash grew worse and more violent. The pressure from America’s youth to abandon traditional social and cultural values involving matters such as sexuality

and style only grew stronger, as was on display at the Woodstock concert in 1969. At the same time, the growing culture wars between college students and the people whom President Richard Nixon would call the “silent majority” intensified.

And Johnson made things worse himself, as he accelerated a war in Vietnam that turned into one of the most divisive issues the nation ever faced. Americans fought bitterly over the military conflict, driving many further and further apart by the time Johnson stunned the political world when he announced that he would not run for reelection on March 31, 1968.

Throughout the 1960s, political violence flared. President Kennedy’s tragic death did not become a basis for reconciliation. Instead, Americans endured more assassinations that created shock and dismay. Malcolm X was slain in February 1965. In 1968, the horrors intensified with the killing of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in April and the killing in June of Senator Robert F. Kennedy after he won the California Democratic primary.

The bloody police crackdown on protesters in the streets of Chicago during the Democratic Convention in 1968 symbolized how deep the anger had become in the body politic. In his 1968 campaign, Nixon stoked the divisions with his appeal to “law and order” and blasts against the protesters who had taken to the streets.

Politics And The Deterioration Of Arvind Kejriwal's Health

By Gagandeep Singh Rajput

According to recent reports from Tihar Jail, Delhi’s Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, is grappling with substantial health issues. His declining health prompts urgent inquiries regarding the political manoeuvres that are currently underway and the potential consequences for India’s political landscape.

Kejriwal, a prominent figure in Indian politics, is recognised for his unwavering activism and vocal opposition to corruption. His current health issues, which have been reportedly exacerbated by his incarceration, have prompted widespread concern. There is scepticism regarding the provision of sufficient medical care and the intentional neglect of his health.

The Political Perspective

Kejriwal’s principal political adversary, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is implicated in these allegations. Critics contend that the BJP may be employing



Kejriwal’s health as an instrument in a more extensive political strategy. They have the potential to destabilise his party, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and undermine his influence by undermining his health. This strategy, if accurate, would establish a perilous precedent by implying that political conflicts are being waged at the expense of human welfare.

Beneficiaries of Kejriwal's Poor Health

The BJP would be the primary beneficiary of Kejriwal’s health issues. Kejriwal’s capacity to effectively campaign and lead is diminished as his health continues to deteriorate. This could result in a political leadership deficit in Delhi, which the BJP could exploit to consolidate power. Furthermore, Kejriwal may not be able to effectively oppose BJP policies or mobilise public support in Delhi or at the national level if he is diminished.

Consequences for Indian Democracy

The potential political exploitation of Kejriwal’s health crisis is a concerning development for the Indian democracy. It poses significant ethical concerns regarding the extent to which political parties may go to secure an advantage. A perilous precedent is established that undermines the integrity of democratic processes when political adversaries can employ health as a weapon.

Additionally, it underscores the necessity of increased accountability and scrutiny regarding the treatment of political detainees. It is imperative to guarantee that all individuals, irrespective of their political affiliations, receive sufficient medical care in order to maintain the principles of justice and human rights.

Fair and Humane politics

Arvind Kejriwal’s declining health is not merely a personal matter; it is also a matter of substantial political and ethical concern. All aspects of the BJP’s involvement in this circumstance, whether direct or indirect, must be meticulously examined. Ensuring that political competition is equitable and humane is imperative as India continues to develop as a democracy. The integrity of the nation’s democratic fabric must be preserved by ensuring the health of leaders such as Kejriwal, and the well-being of individuals, should never be sacrificed for political gain.

If Biden is Unfit to Run Again, How is He Fit to Stay on as President?

By: Reshmi Dasgupta

It is ironic that despite its scorn for North Korea and the tradition of secrecy that shrouds the health of its top leaders, the US appears to be going down a similar path with its political leaders. While the partisan US media has been questioning the lack of a proper bulletin on the condition of Republican presidential contender Donald Trump after the failed assassination attempt, there is less than optimal information on the health parameters of incumbent President Joe Biden. As there is a visible change in Trump's demeanour after an assassin's bullet clipped his right ear, an update on his mental state after that near-miss is certainly warranted. He seems mellowed, subdued, quieter, even reflective. Although the media seems less concerned about his overall well-being than a more popular political personage, the impact of that event cannot be discounted. The nation—the US—needs to know to what extent he has been affected by this ordeal. But even more imperative are medical updates on the man who still has control over the nuclear balloon



but cannot remember the name of his own Secretary of Defence or a Supreme Court justice's full name. Whether Biden remains in the race or steps aside in favour of someone younger and compos mentis, he will still be in charge of the US at least till January 2025 and (supposedly) taking decisions that can have wide-ranging consequences. So his health is a crucial matter. Yet, the media and commentariat in the US is focusing voter attention only on the fact that he is doing well after being diagnosed with Covid-19 yet again. Despite having taken multiple booster shots of the

vaccine in the past four years. The only question being mildly raised is whether he has the stamina to keep up with the pace of the Presidential elections. They are glossing over the more important issue of Biden's fitness to handle the day-to-day challenges of his high office. Stumbling and shuffling while walking, a very visible stiffness in his arms and legs, wooden smiles and all-too-frequent moments of blank incomprehension on his face do not portend well for a man who is one of the world's most powerful leaders. That the White House is behaving as if

"aall izz well" is even more alarming in that context. One commentator observed that not since the Nixon era has the White House been so busy hiding information about a President.

It is as if the Biden clan and White House officials willed the US—the mainstream media at least—to ignore evidence of his decrepitude. His decline did not happen overnight, yet it may not have come into focus at all had he not flubbed the debate with Trump on primetime TV so spectacularly, forcing the media to take note. Media posited every stumble of Trump while in office as evidence of debility, but Biden's procession of fumbles and tumbles had always been downplayed. The decline in Biden's physical—and by implication, possibly mental—fitness has been obvious for years, so the secretive attitude of his close confidantes is confounding. While it may not be 'elder abuse' as some have alleged, the danger of a President not being at the top of his game is manifest. There is no problem with your average Grandpa being creaky and forgetful, but if that

old man also happens to be POTUS, it becomes a matter of international consternation.

There are precedents of US presidents not being open about their health. No one knew then, for instance, that John F Kennedy was taking a strong cocktail of steroids to deal with health issues though he exuded an image of robustness. And Franklin Roosevelt took great care—with the cooperation of the media—to keep his wheelchair mostly out of sight of the public and conducted a very successful political career ending with his winning the Presidency a record four times.

In fact, Roosevelt's time has some curious parallels with the current situation in the US. His health began to fail at the end of his third term due to heart disease, yet he was adamant about contesting. Democratic Party leaders were worried about his chances, but his vice president was not seen as a viable replacement candidate. Roosevelt stayed as the candidate, the veep was replaced and he won again. But just a year into his fourth and final term, he died due to a stroke.

Why Yogi govt order on Kawad yatra route shops, now stayed by SC, drew ire

By Prashant Srivastava

An order mandating owners of eateries along the Kawad yatra route in Uttar Pradesh to prominently display their names on shops landed the Yogi Adityanath government in a huge controversy, with the Supreme Court putting a stay on it on July 22.

The government's move, which drew criticism from the Opposition as well as the BJP's allies at the Centre, had followed the Muzaffarnagar police's reversal of a similar order just days ago.

The order had triggered widespread outrage, with leaders of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) saying it will create division in society. On the ground, it was seen as potentially creating economic disparity between Hindu and Muslim shop-owners.

The advisory invited strong



criticism from Union minister and Rastriya Lok Dal chief Jayant Chaudhary, who visited Muzaffarnagar on July 21. "It seems the order was issued without much thought, and the government is adamant on it because the decision has been taken," Chaudhary said. "There is still time. It (rollback) should happen or the government should not put much emphasis on [implementing] it," Chaudhary had

said, emphasising that no decision should threaten communal harmony or the wellbeing of any community. Earlier, Union minister Chirag Paswan, who heads the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), had opposed the order, saying he would "absolutely never support or encourage" any divide in the name of caste or religion. Another BJP ally, Ajit Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP),

also questioned the order. NCP leader Praful Patel said the BJP government in UP should withdraw it. The annual Kawad yatra is a month-long affair during the Sawan period, falling between July 22 and August 19 this year. It's a major pilgrimage in northern India for devotees of Lord Shiva, scores of whom travel to the banks of the Ganga or its tributaries to collect holy water and offer it at Shiva temples back home or at prominent shrines dedicated to the god. The arduous pilgrimage has traditionally been a solo walkathon, with the participants, popularly called 'Kawadiyas', barefoot carrying the water in two vessels suspended over their shoulders by a bamboo stick. During the days-long journey to the river and back, the 'Kawadiyas' have to cover hundreds of kilometres through towns and

cities. As enablers, both the administration as well as social and religious outfits make arrangements for their food and overnight halt.

Over the years, the pilgrimage has acquired some of the modern-day trappings, with many 'Kawadiyas' preferring to travel on motorbikes, or in groups on tempos and trucks, which boast of huge portraits of Shiva and more often than not flashlights and loud fast-paced music dedicated to the god. In UP, the scale of the festival can be gauged from the number of participants—an estimated 12 million Kawadiyas every year—and the hundreds of points along the Ganga and its tributaries where they converge, often in thousands on a single day. And therefore, the outcry against the potential magnitude of the impact of the UP government's order.

TRUMP OR HARRIS

"Double Haters", a voter group much talked about, that held unfavorable views of both President Biden and former President Trump, seems to be disappearing.

Vice President Kamala Harris' entrance into the race and the attack on former President Trump have dramatically shrunk one of this election cycle's most-talked-about groups — the "double haters," according to a new NYT/Siena poll.

Why it matters: Until last week, an unprecedented share of voters held unfavorable views of both President Biden and former President Trump.

With Harris in the race, that double hater percentage has fallen to 8%, down from around 20% in previous polls of a Trump vs. Biden race, NYT polling guru Nate Cohn writes. Breaking it down: That's in part because left-leaning voters are happy that Biden is out and Harris is in.

Nearly nine-in-ten voters — including Republicans and Independents — think Biden made the right call.

His approval rating jumped from 36% to 43% after his withdrawal. Meanwhile, Harris' rose to 46%. The other side: It's also because some voters are viewing Trump more favorably, possibly due to his response to the assassination attempt against him. His approval rating is at a new high of 47% in the NYT/Siena poll, up from 42% in early July. The percentage of



registered voters who said they would sit out the election "if those were the choices" fell from 4% to 2%. State of play: This is starting to look like a more typical matchup: Republicans are mostly happy with their candidate and

disapprove of his opponent, while Democrats feel just the opposite. What to watch: Both candidates are currently riding high from big, improbable events. We could still see a double-hater resurgence before November. The poll of

1,142 registered voters was conducted from July 22-24. The previous poll was conducted June 28-July 2.

(By Noah Bressner, Dave Lawler, as reported on Axios.com)

Harris vs. Trump Polls: It's a New Race

It's been an exciting week for Kamala Harris. On Sunday, Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential race and endorsed his vice-president. In the ensuing days, she has quickly locked up the Democratic nomination as every potential rival endorsed her. And while it's early yet, there's now enough polling data to indicate that it's a brand-new race — with Democrats obtaining some badly needed momentum and perhaps some new avenues for victory.

When Biden dropped out on July 21, he was trailing Donald Trump by 3.2 percent in the FiveThirtyEight polling averages and by 3.1 percent in the RealClearPolitics averages. FiveThirtyEight hasn't posted averages with Harris, but RCP has her trailing Trump by 1.9 percent, and that's with two outlierish polls from Rasmussen and Forbes-HarrisX giving Trump big leads (7 percent and 6 percent, respectively). Perhaps more significant are the trend lines in major polls taken before and after the Biden-Harris switch.

On July 17, the Morning Consult tracking poll had Trump leading Biden by four points (46 percent to 42 percent). On July 24, the same poll had Harris leading Trump by a point (46 percent to 45 percent). On July 16, Reuters-Ipsos showed Trump ahead of Biden by two points (43 percent to 41 percent). On July 23, the same poll gave Harris a two-point lead (44 percent to 42 percent). On July 2, the New York Times-Siena showed Trump leading by six points (49 percent to 43 percent). On July 24, that pollster showed Trump leading by one point (48 percent to 47 percent). The only counter-indicator to those polls was NPR-Marist, in which Biden led by two points (50 percent to 48 percent) on July 11, while Trump led by one point (46 percent to 45 percent) in a one-day July 22 survey.

All of these polls show a close national race. Battleground-state data has been slower to arrive, but what we have shows Harris improving on Biden's performance. A battery of Emerson-The Hill polls taken

from July 22 to July 23 of five battleground states showed Wisconsin tied at 47 percent and Trump leading Harris by five points (49 percent to 44 percent) in Arizona, two points (48 percent to 46 percent) in Georgia, one point (46 percent to 45 percent) in Michigan, and two points (48 percent to 46 percent) in Pennsylvania. What's more significant are the trend lines since the last polls from Emerson in mid-July, testing Biden against Trump:

A separate poll of Georgia from Landmark Communications also showed a close race there with Trump leading Harris by one point (48 percent to 47 percent). A new poll of Pennsylvania from NSOR-American Greatness showed Trump up by two points in that state (47 percent to 45 percent). And a poll of Michigan including non-major-party candidates from Detroit News/WDIV gave Harris a one-point lead (42 to 41 percent).

There is growing evidence that (as Democrats had hoped) Harris is doing significantly better than Biden among the

young, Black, and Latino voting categories on which the Biden-Harris 2020 win depended. In the new Times-Siena poll, she leads Trump among under-30 likely voters by 59 percent to 38 percent, among Black likely voters by 72 percent to 19 percent, and among Latino likely voters by 60 percent to 36 percent. A new Axios-Generation Lab poll of 18-to-34-year-old voters showed Harris expanding a six-point Biden lead (53 percent to 47 percent) to 20 points (60 percent to 40 percent). All these trends could help Harris put Sun Belt states (particularly Georgia) back into play after Trump has held big leads for months.

In general, there's a sense of momentum for Harris that may not last, but it has lifted Democratic spirits — and perhaps even reengaged an electorate unhappy with a Biden-Trump rematch (the new Times-Siena poll showed the number of "double haters" declining by more than half). It would be wise to stay very tuned for this contest.



Why Biden finally quit

For 23 days, President Joe Biden insisted on pushing forward with his reelection bid in the face of calls from Democratic lawmakers and donors for him to step aside. Early Saturday, Biden told senior aides it was “full steam ahead” for the campaign. But by later that evening, he had changed his mind following a long discussion with his two closest aides. Steve Ricchetti, who’s been with Biden since his days in the Senate, drove to see the president at his house on the Delaware shore on Friday. Mike Donilon arrived on Saturday. The two men, both of whom had been by Biden’s side during key decisions about whether to seek the presidency in 2016 and 2020, sat at a distance from the president, still testing positive for Covid, and presented damning new information in a meeting that would hasten the end of Biden’s political career.

In addition to presenting new concerns from lawmakers and updates on a fundraising operation that had slowed considerably, they carried the campaign’s own polls, which came back this week and showed his path to victory in November was gone, according to five people familiar with the matter, who, like others interviewed for this article, were granted anonymity to discuss private conversations. Biden asked several questions during the exchange.

The only other people with Biden in the residence when he arose Sunday were first lady Jill Biden and two other trusted aides: deputy chief of staff Annie Tomasini and assistant to the first lady Anthony Bernal. At 1:45 p.m., he notified a somewhat larger group of close aides that he had decided the night before to end his quest for another term, reading his letter and thanking them for their service. A minute later, before any other campaign and White House staffers could be notified, he posted the historic letter from his campaign account on the social media site X.

The announcement, which shocked the political world, almost immediately flipped the narrative around Biden: His own party, after three weeks of deriding him privately as an isolated, deluded lion in winter dragging other Democrats down with him, was showering him with loving tributes, praising his record, career of public service and a selfless decision they said put his country first. It wasn’t that the president had grown tired of the drip of defections from within his own party — although he had. Rather, it was that Biden himself was finally convinced of what so many other Democrats had come to

believe since his poor debate performance last month: He couldn’t win.

When the campaign commissioned new battleground polling over the last week, it was the first time they had done surveys in some key states in more than two months, according to two people familiar with the surveys. And the numbers were grim, showing Biden not just trailing in all six critical swing states but collapsing in places like Virginia and New Mexico where Democrats had not planned on needing to spend massive resources to win.

With that knowledge and the awareness that more party elders, including more of his former Senate colleagues, would pile on the public pressure campaign, a sudden exit offered the president his best chance to make it appear that the decision came on his own terms. It was a face-saving move of high importance to Jill Biden, who, according to people familiar with recent conversations, was adamant that her husband’s dignity be preserved. Senior Biden aides were bracing for former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who’d worked behind the scenes to encourage others in the party toward the kind of collective action that might finally push the president to end his campaign, to go public this week and possibly even disclose Democratic polling clarifying Biden’s dire political straits.

“Nancy made clear that they could do this the easy way or the hard way,” said one Democrat familiar with private conversations who was granted anonymity to speak candidly. “She gave them three weeks of the easy way. It was about to be the hard way.”

With Biden vowing in a statement to return to the campaign trail next week, some in the party came to believe that more direct and public opposition might be the only way left to convince Biden to step aside. At least a half-dozen House and Senate Democrats — including senior lawmakers — had planned to call for the president to leave the campaign on Monday and Tuesday, according to one lawmaker who had a pre-drafted statement.

“We were giving him the respect of the weekend to make his decision. We were hopeful that this is the decision we would make,” the Democrat said. This lawmaker, who had personally spoken with dozens of lawmakers in recent weeks about their district-level polling and voter concerns back home, said they had already been sharing that data with the Biden

campaign team on a regular basis.

On Capitol Hill, Democratic leadership sensed Biden’s decision was coming. A lawmaker close to leadership, granted anonymity to speak candidly, said the president had “gone offline” in recent days as he spent time with his family, a signal that he was digesting several weeks of firm Democratic messages that he needed to step aside.

“He got the message,” said the House Democrat, granted anonymity to speak frankly. Referring to the Senate Majority Leader, House Minority Leader and Speaker Emeritus, the lawmaker said: “It was from Chuck, Hakeem, Pelosi.”

This account of what led to the president’s reversal is based on conversations with 22 people who were granted anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Ever since the debate, Biden and his closest aides had been determined to rebound, convinced that he remained his party’s best chance to defeat former President Donald Trump and optimistic that they could contain the fallout. An energetic rally in Raleigh, North Carolina, the day after the debate offered the president a chance to reframe his disastrous performance and more directly address the questions about his age and stamina, which exploded after his halting, confused and soft-spoken utterances beside Trump. And, aides hoped, a series of sit-down television interviews would show the country that Biden’s debate could indeed be chalked up to just a bad night. But the country had seen what it had seen on the debate stage.

At 81, Biden was clearly no longer the same figure he had been just four years earlier. And as the president and his team maintained a determined posture to push forward, more of the party’s most important voices began to act, determined to escalate a delicate pressure campaign aimed at replacing him as the Democratic nominee. At a moment when it seemed like Biden might be able to withstand calls for him to step aside, Pelosi appeared on MSNBC’s “Morning Joe” and said that the party would give the president, who’d been adamant that he was staying in, more time to come to a decision. The comment ricocheted around the Capitol, a signal to the party she long led that the president’s candidacy and looming nomination were not yet a settled matter.

Over three days late last week, Biden spoke privately with Pelosi, Jeffries and Schumer. The Senate

leader traveled to visit the president last Saturday at his vacation home in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

Jeffries put out a statement about his meeting with Biden at the White House but did not tip his hand about the tenor of the conversation. Shortly after the NATO Summit, which the president hosted, closed up, news leaked that Pelosi, in her private conversations with Biden, had urged him to consider stepping aside. Within 24 hours, stories emerged that Schumer, whose visit to see Biden had gone undetected by the media, had delivered a similar message.

Those leaks, which coincided with a Washington Post report that former President Barack Obama was also expressing concerns about Biden’s campaign privately, signaled to other Democrats who’d yet to express private concerns publicly that the time to do so was at hand.

But Biden’s sharp broadsides toward Trump during a rally in Detroit last Friday night seemed to bolster his inner circle and allies who wanted him to stick it out. It was the president’s best attempt since his feckless debate to take the fight more directly at the controversial former president and to shift the narrative driving the campaign away from his teetering candidacy and back toward the contrast Democrats viewed as essential to Biden’s chances.

But that shift was short-lived.

The following day, an assassin’s bullet came within millimeters of killing Trump, who was struck in the ear while speaking at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. After Secret Service agents pulled him to the ground, Trump, his face streaked with blood, raised a defiant fist in the air before being carried off the stage. His exhortation of “Fight! Fight! Fight!” set the stage for a rapturous four days of programming at the Republican convention in Milwaukee. More importantly, they sharpened the contrast at the center of Trump’s campaign strategy, presenting the former president as the embodiment of strength against an increasingly frail Biden.

In the midst of the GOP convention, Biden abruptly ended a two-day campaign swing in Las Vegas after testing positive for Covid, flying back to Rehoboth Beach, where he has remained out of sight since Wednesday evening.

We built our world for a climate that no longer exists

Earlier this week, the Third Avenue Bridge in Manhattan had to be shut down because the bridge – which pivots to allow ships to pass – wouldn't close correctly. Why? Because it was so hot in New York City that day the metal in the bridge swelled, and the closing mechanism wouldn't work. Firefighters had to spray water on the structure for several hours to cool it off before the bridge could be reopened to traffic. A tragedy? Hardly. But it's evidence of one of the central truths of our time, and one that is becoming more and more apparent every day: We have built our world for a climate that no longer exists. Consider Houston, the throne of Big Oil, where the electric grid has the same hub-and-spoke basic architecture as it did 100 years ago. This week, Hurricane Beryl knocked out power to more than 2 million homes. Yes, hurricanes are devastating. But less than two months earlier, a sudden windstorm in the city blacked out electricity for more than a million people. Or consider the wildfires in California earlier this month. They occurred during a heatwave that broke many all-time temperature records in the West, including an astonishing 122 degrees Fahrenheit in Palm Springs. One consequence of this heat was that it was too hot for firefighters to fight the fires without risking heatstroke.

If it were much hotter, water bombers and helicopters could not fly, radically diminishing firefighters' ability to control the flames. Once you start to look, danger signs of Old World infrastructure are everywhere. The vast majority of buildings and homes in European cities like London, Paris and Madrid have no air conditioning. When an extreme heat wave hits, the people who live and work in them are increasingly vulnerable (one recent study published in *Nature Medicine* estimated there were more than 60,000 heat-related deaths in Europe during the summer of 2022). Reservoir dams around the world are stressed by extreme rainfall events. Airport tarmacs soften in the heat, causing flights cancellations. Sea walls that protect coastal cities from flooding are more and more ineffective as sea level rises and storm surges become more powerful. Cities are becoming human frying pans. In Phoenix this summer, surface temperatures on streets and sidewalks hit 160 degrees Fahrenheit – even a few seconds of contact could cause severe burns.

And it's not just infrastructure that is maladapted to our rapidly warming world. Our economic systems and cultural lives are out of sync, too. The Summer Olympics (and American football) become dangerous games in 100-degree heat. The insurance business was not structured to deal with permanent flooding from sea level rise. Religious pilgrimages, such as the Hajj in Saudi Arabia, during which more than 1,300 people died amid blistering temperatures last month, are not supposed to be essentially death marches.

Big automakers like Toyota and GM, both of which have been slow to adapt to the EV revolution, risk sharing the fate of Kodak at the dawn of the digital age. Even Big Oil executives – the ones that I've talked to, anyway – know their days are numbered (which is why they are fighting so hard to derail or stall the clean energy revolution).

It's tempting to believe that we can adapt to all these changes with better technology. And it's certainly true that better technology is a powerful force. One clear example: the incredible decline in the cost of renewable power in recent years. Twenty years ago, when I started writing about climate

change, fossil fuel executives argued that we needed to keep burning fossil fuels because they were cheaper than renewable power, and access to cheap energy was important for economic development, especially in the Global South. Now, that economic paradigm has been reversed. In virtually every part of the world, electricity generated by renewable power is cheaper than electricity generated by fossil fuels. As a result, the amount of electricity created by wind, geothermal and especially solar is increasing fast. Here in Texas where I live – hardly a bastion of tree-huggers – as much as 70% of the power on the grid this

year is coming from renewable sources. Despite this progress, the clean energy revolution is still happening too slowly to stop the rising heat and extreme weather we are experiencing. In fact, global oil and gas consumption hit an all-time high in 2023 – not surprisingly, so did the level of climate-warming CO2 emissions. Air conditioning is another example of the complexity of technological progress. When I talk with people about my book, "The Heat Will Kill You First: Life and Death on a Scorched Planet," I often hear some version of this: Yeah, the heat can be brutal. Good thing we have air conditioning!

Sunita Williams to return soon, hints Nasa as work begins on tuning Starliner

Nasa Flight Director Ed Van Cise announced that a subset of the NASA team is working closely with Boeing's CST-100 Starliner spacecraft and its crew members astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams. This collaboration aims to fine-tune the spacecraft's systems and prepare for its upcoming departure.

The two astronauts have been aboard the Space Station for over a month as work continued on fixing several issues a glitches with the Starliner spacecraft. Van Cise explained that the team is updating crucial software files essential for the spacecraft's operations.

These updates are part of a broader effort to ensure that all onboard systems function optimally. "We're adjusting some onboard systems to continue gathering test flight data," said Van Cise, highlighting the importance of these modifications in improving the spacecraft's performance.

In addition to software and system updates, the crew will be taking various measurements inside the Starliner's cabin. This process is critical for assessing the spacecraft's habitability

and functionality over extended periods.

The data collected will provide valuable insights into the spacecraft's long-duration performance, which is vital for planning future missions.

One of the significant advantages of this extended stay is the opportunity to observe and measure the spacecraft's performance over a longer duration. This allows NASA to gather comprehensive data on how the Starliner behaves in space, ensuring that it can support a six-month mission.

"Getting to see and measure spacecraft long duration performance prior to our first six-month mission is a considerable benefit," Van Cise noted.

The work being done now is laying the groundwork for future long-term missions, ensuring that both the spacecraft and the crew are well-prepared.

Nasa will also be conducting a press conference later to update about the potential return plans of the two astronauts, who have been in space and are currently engaged in several scientific research.

US revises travel advisory for India: Don't travel to Manipur, Jammu and Kashmir

The United States has asked its nationals not to travel to Manipur, Jammu and Kashmir, the India-Pakistan border, and parts of central and eastern parts of the country where Naxalites are active. In a revised travel advisory for India, the State Department said it has updated to reflect information on the northeastern states. "Exercise increased caution in India due to crime and terrorism. Some areas have increased risk," it said. Overall India has been placed at Level 2. But several parts of the country have been placed on Level 4: Jammu and Kashmir, the India-Pak border, Manipur and parts of Central and East India.

"Do not travel to: The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir (except the eastern Ladakh region and its capital, Leh) due to terrorism and civil unrest; within 10 km of the India-Pakistan border due to the potential for armed conflict; portions of Central and East India due to terrorism and Manipur due to violence and crime," said the State Department. In addition, it recommended Americans to reconsider

travel to the northeastern states due to terrorism and violence. "Indian authorities report that rape is one of the fastest growing crimes in India. Violent crime, such as sexual assault, has happened at tourist sites and other locations. Terrorists may attack with little or no warning. They target tourist locations, transportation hubs, markets/shopping malls, and government facilities," the travel advisory said.

The US government has limited ability to provide emergency services to US citizens in rural areas. These areas stretch from eastern Maharashtra and northern Telangana through western West Bengal. US government employees must get special authorisation to travel to these areas, it said. Placing Manipur at "Level 4: Do Not Travel", the State Department said: "Do not travel to Manipur due to the threat of violence and crime. Ongoing ethnic-based civil conflict has resulted in reports of extensive violence and community displacement. Attacks against Indian government targets occur on a

regular basis. US government employees travelling in India require prior approval before visiting Manipur."

"Do not travel to this state (with the exception of visits to the eastern Ladakh region and its capital, Leh). Violence happens sporadically in this area and is common along the Line of Control (LOC) between India and Pakistan. It also occurs in tourist spots in the Kashmir Valley: Srinagar, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam. The Indian government does not allow foreign tourists to visit certain areas along the LOC," it said. "India and Pakistan have a strong military presence on both sides of the border. The only official border crossing for non-citizens of India or Pakistan is in Punjab. It is between Attari, India, and Wagah, Pakistan. The border crossing is usually open, but check its current status before you travel. To enter Pakistan, you need a Pakistani visa. Only US citizens residing in India may apply for a Pakistani visa in India. Otherwise, apply for a Pakistani visa in your home country before traveling to India," it said.

Blue Screen Blues: Microsoft Triggered Cyber Meltdown and the Case for Atmanirbharta

The champions of Atmanirbhara Bharat, isolationists among conservatives and the malcontents of globalisation are having a "told you so moment." The Microsoft outage has given all of them a chance to have a right royal moan about the perils of blind belief in the overarching credo of the liberal world order: that international post-World War II system characterised, at least in one context, by the encouragement of global trade, economic interdependence, and multi-lateral agreements.

And it's not hard to see why. Look at the mayhem caused by a single rogue file called c-00000291*.sys. This teeny-weeny alpha-numeric code in a single content update virtually fried the dendrites of the Microsoft Operating System that literally turned blue – the pallor of death. Questions abound: did the firm tasked by Microsoft to ward off viruses and malware itself violate zealously adhered to software testing and development guidelines? Software updates are stringently tested

at many levels before they are rolled out globally. The fact that this one slipped past shows that the checks and balances aren't as foolproof as they ought to be. The descent into defective code-induced dysfunction triggered global mayhem. The cost to businesses and economies could run into billions of dollars. This disruption was because of negligence, what if the next cyber pandemic is because of malevolence?

No country except autarkies like China, Russia and North Korea, and the less technologically leveraged in the Global South, were spared. But because India is a paid-up member of the globalised, rules-based world order, it was strongly buffeted. Indeed, in a less connected world, a freak outage such as this would have had less impact. But that a single misplaced bit of computer code could bring nations to their knees reveals just how uncritically accepting we continue to be of "globalisation" as a project for the advancement of the human race. One

would have imagined that we would have been less credulous by now, three years after a single sneeze triggered a global pandemic that stilled the globe and our lives. But clearly, some lessons are hard learnt.

While no one needs to take the sledgehammer to globalisation, it is becoming obvious that there is a need to minimise risks. Perhaps, as a first step, by improving vigilance and incorporating redundancies throughout the global supply chain. This imperative of building self-reliance, however, will only gain ground when any prospective autopsy of the costs of globalisation is freed from politics.

As of today, any inquiry into the status quo is dismissed by the Left as a "right-wing" lurch towards protectionism, spawned by a crude inward-looking parochialism.

In India, examples abound. A certain section of the political class and commentariat mocked Prime Minister Modi for being blinded by exclusivism for

deciding against joining an influential trading bloc like the RCEP. The decision, as it turned out, was the right one. Thailand joined the RCEP but in the last 18 months, its GDP growth has slumped to 2.7 per cent. This is largely due to trade imbalances after the RCEP's lead member, China, dumped goods, wantonly taking advantage of favourable tariff rates that its economic heft allowed it to impose across the RCEP. Of course, the stigmatisation of Atmanirbharta is not only confined to trade-related policies but also foreign policy. Modi's "keep all options open" policy-driven engagement with Russia was the subject of scorn just a few weeks ago. Global interconnectedness has brought many benefits to many people. But the prohibitive costs of its many misses have brought ruin upon millions too. At what point will the costs of inter-connectedness outweigh their benefits? Or are we already beyond the tipping point?

Move Over, Potato Chips. Indian Snacks Are Taking Over The Market

Indian brands seem to have captured the snack market in the country. According to NielsenIQ, at ₹ 50,800 crore, desi munchies such as bhujia, dal, chivda, chanachur and fried nuts accounted for half the sales of salty snacks during the financial year 2023-24. It reflects the growing demand for hygienically packaged, branded ethnic snacks.

Both overseas and domestic companies have seen a push in demand in the interior parts of the country. From sev and mixture to chivda and banana chips, munchies are sold even at the smallest of dhabas, tea stalls and paan shops across India. All these traditionally salty snacks can be broadly categorised as namkeen. Bikaneri bhujia, one of the oldest namkeens made reportedly in 1877, can be traced to Bikaner and is one of the most popular snacks in India today. But Haldiram's leads the market, with presence in almost all snacking categories, including traditional namkeens. In 2023-24, its snacks sales hit ₹ 12,161 crore, up 18% year-on-year. In comparison, PepsiCo's snack sales grew 14% to ₹ 7,336 crore, while Gujarat-based Balaji Wafers saw sales of ₹ 5,931 crore, an increase of 12% year-on-year.

Why People Are Turning To Indian Snacks Earlier, the Indian market was dominated by Western snacks like potato chips and finger sticks sold largely by multinational companies like Pepsi Frito Lays and ITC Foods. A branded desi 'farsan' still does not command the same price as a branded potato wafers sold by an MNC. However,

with little innovation and makeover, traditional snacks have come a long way. That's only understandable given India's love for munchies. Khushi Saraf, a Gwalia Sweets franchise owner in Ahmedabad, says, "Where western snacking companies try to standardise the taste, desi snacking companies try to personalise the flavours for locals, which remind them of their culture, their hometown, festivals and their roots." She adds, "For example, in Gujarat, people would opt for fafda, khakhra and chorafali for breakfast after Dussehra and Uttarayan and not chips. Even when Gujaratis go on foreign trips, they take theplas with them."

Ethnic/Desi Flavours

Various factors such as a change in lifestyles, urbanisation, growing middle-class population, accessibility and availability of snacks in small packages and low prices have resulted in the growth of the traditional snacks market, which earlier was limited mostly to the unorganised sector.

Companies too have initiated strategies to promote regional and traditional tastes. "The fusion of traditional Indian flavours and spices with globally palatable snacks like foxnuts, crackers, puffs, and cookies allow us to resonate with the global food palette while catering to the Indian market as well," says Vaishnavi Rao, co-founder, The Snack Company. "We also stand out in the usage of functional ingredients to create snacks that not only taste good but also offer health benefits - something that sets us apart from many Western snack brands," she adds.

Why the Khedkars Case Highlights an Unspoken Malaise

No other country in the world values an apex civil service as India does: the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) are modern India's 'dwija' or twice-born. Clearing the all-India examination is the contemporary equivalent of the age-old initiation ceremonies once conducted by the upper castes, sealing their exalted position since ancient times. The compulsion to qualify for one of the coveted all-India services is so high that aspirants resort to any means to achieve it.

If what is being alleged about how IAS trainee Pooja Khedkar made it to that hallowed service turns out to be true, a thorough forensic audit of all government recruitments of at least the past 10 years is imperative. If she gamed the system by taking advantage of the affirmative action provisions in government service recruitment, her case may not be unique. The way she went about getting certificates to do so certainly points to a tried and tested method. The action of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to issue a show cause notice and move to cancel Khedkar's appointment on evidence that she manipulated the system to get an unfair advantage is very welcome. That she obtained fake certificates to get more chances to clear the exam using provisions for certain disadvantaged segments is a travesty of affirmative action. Misuse of provisos by "creamy layers" of weaker sections is particularly heinous.

The tremendous pressure to get into any government job, especially the IAS, is evident from the number of coaching institutes offering better chances of making it to the list. But everyone looks for ways to get further advantage when so many are vying for every single job. Caste and disability certificates offer that extra edge, which Khedkar allegedly used repeatedly, first to obtain her medical seat and help her get into the IAS despite not getting a high rank in the exam. That small-town hospitals and amenable government departments in her home state—where her father appears to be an influential retired government employee turned politician—were used to procure the disability and caste certificates points to the likelihood of a well-established scam. It also calls into question the veracity of even government-issued certificates, which is a very depressing prospect indeed. If the malaise is indeed widespread, how can it be stamped out? As more and more evidence surfaces about the extent of her family's wealth—her father's assets are reportedly around Rs 40 crore and her own around Rs 17 crore—why she chose to enter government service also needs to be examined. Public service is unlikely to have been a motivating factor given her display of attitude and demands for trappings of office including a sarkari blue beacon light for her private vehicle, which happened to be a luxury Audi sedan, no less!

Telegram flaw allowing hackers to send harmful files through chats, users urged to update app immediately

(News Agency)-Cybersecurity researchers at ESET have discovered a serious problem in the Telegram app for Android phones. This problem, called a "zero-day exploit," allows hackers to send harmful files that look like regular videos through Telegram chats. The exploit was found being sold on a secret online forum in June 2024.

Here's how it works: hackers can use this exploit, named "EvilVideo," to send dangerous files that appear as harmless 30-second videos. These files are shared in Telegram channels, groups, or private chats. Normally, when someone receives a video on Telegram, it downloads automatically. So, if a user has this setting turned on, the harmful file gets downloaded as soon as they open the chat. ESET researcher Lukas Stefanko and his team found this exploit while looking through secret online forums. They saw a seller showing pictures and a video of how the exploit works in a public Telegram channel. ESET then found this



channel and got hold of the harmful file to test it. Their tests showed that the exploit works on older versions of Telegram, specifically those before version 10.14.5. It seems the hackers used the Telegram API, a tool that developers use to create and upload content on Telegram, to make these harmful files look like videos instead of regular app files. When someone tries

to play the "video," Telegram says it can't play the video and suggests using another app. If the user agrees, they are tricked into installing a harmful app.

ESET discovered this problem on June 26, 2024, and immediately informed Telegram. However, there was no response at first. ESET reported it again on July 4, and this time, Telegram

responded quickly, confirming they were looking into it. Telegram fixed the problem by releasing a new version of the app, 10.14.5, on July 11, 2024. This update makes sure that users are no longer at risk from this exploit if they update their app.

To stay safe, users should update their Telegram app to the latest version. For more detailed information, ESET has a blog post titled "Cursed tapes: Exploiting the EvilVideo vulnerability in Telegram for Android" on their website, WeLiveSecurity.com. Additionally, users can follow ESET Research on Twitter (now called X) for the latest updates.

In summary, this exploit was a serious threat because it could trick people into downloading harmful files just by opening a chat. But thanks to ESET's quick action and Telegram's response, the problem has been fixed in the latest app update. Make sure to keep your apps updated to stay protected from such threats.

Google scraps plan to remove cookies from Chrome

(News Agency)-Google is planning to keep third-party cookies in its Chrome browser, it said on Monday, after years of pledging to phase out the tiny packets of code meant to track users on the internet. The major reversal follows concerns from advertisers - the company's biggest source of income - saying the loss of cookies in the world's most popular browser will limit their ability to collect information for personalising ads, making them dependent

digital businesses, with a key goal being the phase-out of third-party cookies. Cookies are packets of information that allow websites and advertisers to identify individual web surfers and track their browsing habits, but they can also be used for unwanted surveillance.

In the European Union, the use of cookies is governed by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which stipulates that publishers secure explicit consent from users to store their cookies. Major browsers also give the option to delete cookies on command.

Chavez said Google was working with regulators such as the UK's CMA and Information Commissioner's Office as well as publishers and privacy groups on the new approach,

while continuing to invest in the Privacy Sandbox program. The announcement drew mixed reactions.

"Advertising stakeholders will no longer have to prepare to quit third-party cookies cold turkey," eMarketer analyst Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf said in a statement. Lena Cohen, staff technologist at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said cookies can lead to consumer harm, for instance predatory ads that target vulnerable groups. "Google's decision to continue allowing third-party cookies, despite other major browsers blocking them for years, is a direct consequence of their advertising-driven business model," Cohen said in a statement.



on Google's user databases.

The UK's Competition and Markets Authority had also scrutinised Google's plan over concerns it would impede competition in digital advertising. "Instead of deprecating third-party cookies, we would introduce a new experience in Chrome that lets people make an informed choice that applies across their web browsing, and they'd be able to adjust that choice at any time," Anthony Chavez, vice president of the Google-backed Privacy Sandbox initiative, said in a blog post. Since 2019, the Alphabet unit has been working on the Privacy Sandbox initiative aimed at enhancing online privacy while supporting

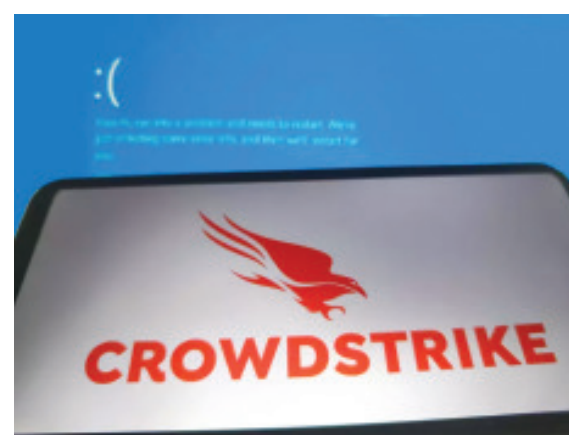
CrowdStrike: A digital storm

(News Agency)- "Yesterday, CrowdStrike released an update that began impacting IT systems globally. We are aware of this issue and are working closely with CrowdStrike and across the industry to provide customers technical guidance and support to safely bring their systems back online," posted Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella on X on July 19.

The statement did not capture the hours

Railways, Information & Broadcasting, Electronics & Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnav, said the government was in touch with Microsoft and its associates. The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team, CERT-In, issued a severity rating of 'Critical' for the incident. In the U.S., the White House said President Joe Biden was briefed about the situation.

At the centre of this digital mayhem was CrowdStrike, a U.S.-based cybersecurity company. Its CEO George Kurtz announced later a defect was found in a Falcon content update for Windows hosts, meaning Mac and Linux hosts were not affected during the outage. Falcon is CrowdStrike's security platform. The company "quickly identified the issue and deployed a fix".



of global chaos, fear, and frustration that preceded his words. That day, airports in India switched to giving stranded flyers hand-written boarding passes while airlines in the U.S. grounded flights. Shoppers in Australia could not carry out digital payments and U.K. hospitals had to cancel patient appointments. The outage also affected thousands of everyday users who rely on Windows or other Microsoft offerings. Many opened their devices to see a 'Blue Screen of Death' error message, and had to scramble to find other devices and platforms. The issue only escalated through the day. India's Minister for

Outage to outrage

The CrowdStrike CEO stressed that the incident was not a cyberattack as many had feared, though he warned that "adversaries and bad actors" could still try to exploit the incident. While most might think of scammers impersonating CrowdStrike company officials, the incident was instead exploited for political gain. Users on X quickly found CrowdStrike's pro-diversity messaging and its recent posts celebrating the LGBTQ+ community. Many replied with homophobic and racist comments, blaming the IT outage on the company's DEI (Diversity, equity, and inclusion) policies.

'Yodha' Is A Mammoth Documentation Of India's Wars And Battles

By Rajiv Tuli

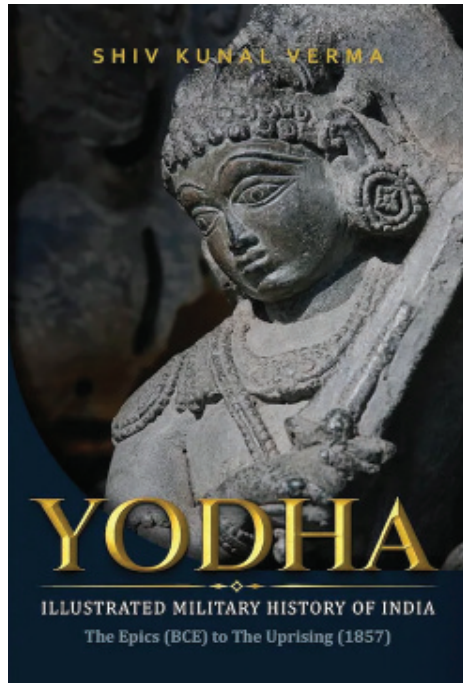
Battles and wars are companions of mankind. Culture and values survive on the strength of warriors. Wars and battles are still being fought in parts of the world. India has seen many of the wars, as late as the Kargil War, while the 20th century went into the sunset.

If Prithviraj Chouhan had not forgiven Mohammed Ghor after the Battle of Terain, the history of India would have possibly been different. But Chouhan held his value system high, and forgave the invader. The cost of forgiveness was defeat a year later in the second Battle of Terain.

Military historian Shiv Kunal Verma has come out with a mammoth exercise in the documentation of battles and wars in his book *Yodha: Illustrated Military History Of India - The Epics (BCE) To The Uprising (1857)*. This book adds to Verma's several works, including *1962: The War That Wasn't*, *1965: A Western Sunrise*, *Life of an Industani: Six Degrees Separation*, and others.

Verma entices readers to engage with the vivid accounts of battles fought in India with as many as 1600 illustrations in the book. The pages become visually appealing as one turns from one battle to another.

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It is lamentable that many of the heroes of India are not widely known. Verma brings them alive by telling tales of their valour. Lachit Borphukan gains the limelight in the book for his military tactics that helped him crush the armies sent by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Borphukan freed Guwahati and parts of Assam from the Mughals on the might of his sheer military tactics.

Aurangzeb had sent a naval fleet from Dhaka under the command of Ram Singh to crush the Ahoms. "In 1671, Ram Singh led a naval fleet along the Brahmaputra River. In the vicinity of Saraighat, they came across the Ahom boats commanded by

Lachit Borphukan that were waiting for them," writes Verma in the book.

The author further writes that while "Lachit was very ill, he led from the front, declaring that he would die carrying out his duty for his king and the country, even if it meant doing it alone." The Mughal army fled from the Manas River as Lachit led frontal attacks on the invaders.

Verma rightly states in the book that disunity among the rulers allowed the invaders to set their feet in the country.

The porous frontiers in Afghanistan allowed the invaders to attack India, from Alexander to Taimur and the Mughals. The Porus versus Alexander battle of 326 BCE sets the tone for the book as it gives graphic accounts of military tactics employed by the Macedonian and the Pourava armies. Indians never gave up in their resolve to evict the invaders. From Qutb-ud-din Aibak to Aurangzeb, they all faced uprisings against the rule of the foreigners. Historians have rightly stated that the invaders proved successful because of their military tactics and war innovations. They ran through the terrains of India with the help of agile armies.

Cavalry played a key role in their victories. The Indian rulers were divided, and they were less innovative in adopting changes in methods and means of war.

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Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina blames opposition for job quota violence

Bangladesh's Supreme Court on Sunday ordered scaling down quotas in state jobs, previously reserved for groups including families of freedom fighters, women and so-called disadvantaged groups, to 7 per cent from 56 per cent.

(News Agency)-Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina blamed her political opponents for deadly violence that swept the country during recent student-led protests against quotas in government jobs, stating on Monday that a curfew would be lifted when the situation improved. Her comments came a day after the South Asian country's top court agreed to scrap most quotas in a ruling on Sunday, following days of clashes between protesters and security forces that prompted the government to shut down internet services, impose a curfew and deploy the army.

Hospital data showed at least 147 people were killed in one of the worst outbreaks of violence in recent years. Hasina, 76, won a fourth-straight term in power in January in a national election boycotted by the main opposition party.

"When arson terrorism started, the protesting students said they were not involved in it", Hasina said in an address to business leaders in the capital Dhaka, her first comments since her government ordered a curfew late on Friday.

"We were forced to impose a curfew to protect the lives and property of the citizens. I never wanted it", she said. "We will lift the curfew whenever the situation gets better".

Hasina blamed the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami party and its student wing for the violence that started last week.

The parties did not immediately respond



to requests for comment but critics, including the BNP, have previously accused Hasina of authoritarianism, human rights violations and crackdowns on free speech and dissent - charges her government denies.

The streets appeared calm in Dhaka on Monday, a day after the Supreme Court ruled in favour of an appeal from the government against a lower court order and directed that 93% of government jobs should be open to candidates on merit. The ruling scaled down quotas in state jobs previously reserved for groups including families of freedom fighters, women and so-called disadvantaged groups, cutting it to 7 per cent from 56 per cent.

Experts have blamed the unrest on stagnant job growth in the private sector and high rates of youth unemployment that

have made government jobs, with their regular wage hikes and other privileges, more attractive.

'48-HOUR ULTIMATUM'

Late on Sunday, protesters gave the government 48 hours to meet a string of new demands, but most appeared to be obeying the curfew on Monday in cities that had seen regular demonstrations after a high court in June reinstated the old quotas.

Thousands were injured in protests that turned violent last week, as security forces fired tear gas, rubber bullets and sound grenades to scatter the demonstrators. Tanks were seen stationed at several places in Dhaka on Monday, while armed security patrols directed the few motorists who ventured out. There were no reports of violence in the country, officials said.

The new demands from protesters included a public apology from Hasina for the violence, restoration of internet connections and reopening of campuses. The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement also called for the resignation of some ministers and university officials and the dismissal of police officers deployed in the areas where students were killed.

"We are giving an ultimatum to the government to fulfil our eight-point demand within 48 hours", one of the Movement's leaders, Hasnat Abdullah, told reporters.

He did not say what would happen if the government did not meet the demands. The government did not immediately comment.

Dhaka police said they had arrested 516 people for involvement in "destructive attacks". Police spokesperson Faruq Hossain said three policemen were killed in the violence and more than 1,000 injured.

"Normalcy will return within one or two days", Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters. The government issued a notification that extended a public holiday declared over the last two days to Tuesday. Protesters said some of their leaders were detained, including Nahid Islam, who told the media he was picked up by "20-30 people" claiming to be police early on Sunday morning and taken to a room where he said he was tortured until he lost consciousness.

Pakistan police arrests jailed ex-PM Imran Khan's aides

(News Agency)-Pakistan police arrested two aides of former prime minister Imran Khan on Monday in a raid on his party's secretariat, despite the jailed ex-leader having won a series of legal cases brought against him since he was ousted from power in 2022. A police contingent cordoned off the secretariat in Islamabad and detained the party's acting chairman Gohar Khan and its secretary information Rauf Hasan, a party spokesman Zulfikar Bukhari told Reuters in a Whatsapp message.

His Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party later said the acting chairman had been released shortly after being detained.

However, Pakistan's ministry of interior identified the detained aides as Hasan and Ahmad Waqas Janjua, the party's coordinator for international media coverage. The ministry did not mention Gohar Khan in its statement.



The ministry said the two detained men were being investigated but did not say whether they had been charged.

PTI had said over the weekend that Janjua was picked up by police from his house in Islamabad.

The ministry also said the secretariat's digital media wing had been raided by the police and the country's Federal

Investigation Agency (FIA). "PTI is involved in anti-state propaganda," the ministry's statement said.

The party denies the accusation.

Former prime minister Khan has been in jail for about one year, even though all four convictions handed down to him ahead of a parliamentary election in February have either been suspended or

overturned.

After being acquitted on the last of those four convictions, authorities rearrested Khan and his wife in an old corruption case on charges of selling state gifts unlawfully. He also faces an accusation of inciting his supporters to attack military installations last year.

Khan denies all the accusations against him.

His party secured the largest number of seats in parliament in the February election despite what Khan's party says is a military-backed crackdown that aims to keep him out of power.

It also won nearly two dozen extra parliament seats in a court ruling last week.

Khan blames his 2022 ouster in a no-confidence vote on Pakistan's powerful army generals after he fell out with them, a charge the army denies.

Can you eat mangoes if you have diabetes? Only if...

Although mangoes are high in sugar content, they also contain lower carbohydrates, which could be beneficial for diabetics.

Millions in India are suffering from the chronic condition - diabetes. While type 1 diabetes is caused by an autoimmune reaction, type 2 diabetes is caused by various lifestyle habits.

The disease is a result in too much sugar in the blood (high blood sugar level) due to the pancreas either not able to produce enough insulin or cannot effectively use the insulin produced. In most cases, diabetics have to lower their sugar intake and have foods that have a low glycemic index i.e., foods that do not spike the body's blood sugar level. Most

fruits are discouraged from being consumed if you have diabetes.

In the summer season, mangoes are quite prominent and widely available. Most people think that diabetics cannot consume mangoes due to its high level of sugar content. However, according to experts, having mangoes in moderation can be quite beneficial for the body. Dr Pullela Srikar Krishna, Internal Medicine and Diabetologist, Apollo Clinics, told IndiaToday.in that in small quantity, mangoes can control the blood sugar level. "Diabetics with good sugar control can eat

mangoes in small quantities. Although mangoes are high in sugar content, they also contain lower carbohydrates," said Dr Pullela Srikar Krishna. Mango contains significant amount of vitamin E, K and B complex, and high in fibre including calcium, potassium and copper. Research has shown that mangoes have a significant role in the treatment of metabolic disorders. "Eating a mango every day could protect people against high cholesterol as well as diabetes," said Dr Krishna. But eating a lot of them can disbalance the blood sugar level. In fact, Dr Krishna advised not



to eat mangoes and not to consume it in the form of juice. "Diabetics should eat mangoes in moderation. They should check their sugar levels regularly. But they should not consume mango juice and only eat mangoes as a whole fruit. Consuming raw mangoes with yogurt or rice helps to cut the sugar levels in the body," as per the expert. Other summer fruits that diabetics can eat regularly include guava, papaya, kiwi, pear and cantaloupe.

The perils of indoor pollution: How it makes asthma worse

Indoor pollution is, sometimes, more harmful to the lungs than outdoor pollution.



Air pollution has been the leading cause of not only catalyzing but also causing asthma across the world. The situation is even grim in countries like India and China, which suffer regular bouts of pollution.

With over 300 million people suffering from this breathing disease across the world, studies have shown that particulate matter can cause various symptoms like coughing, breathlessness, and wheezing, especially when someone is asthmatic. Caused by the inflammation and narrowing of the airways in the lungs, this chronic disease is often

underdiagnosed or under-treated, particularly in low and middle-income countries.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), people who have under-treated asthma can suffer sleep disturbance, tiredness during the day, and poor concentration. While it is mostly believed that the situation is triggered by outdoor pollution, indoor pollution is also a leading cause.

Dr Azmat Karim, Consultant, Pulmonary Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Fortis Escorts, Okhla Road, New Delhi, told IndiaToday.in that indoor pollution is, sometimes, more harmful to the lungs than outdoor pollution.

"Indoor pollution is more dangerous, sometimes, than outdoor pollution because it is settled dust. Settled dust goes directly in the air and you will persistently inhale the particles in the house, whereas in outdoor pollution the air particles are more scattered and sparser and you might not keep inhaling it continuously," said Dr Azmat Karim. He added that when the air quality changes (lowers) and there is turbulence in the climate, more dust is inhaled and it can make breathing worse.

"For someone who has asthma, these dust particles can cause exacerbation like bronchial asthma and type 1 respiratory failure. As a result, a person might even have to go to the ICU (intensive care unit)," said Dr Karim.

WHAT DOES INDOOR POLLUTION INCLUDE?

Indoor pollutants include products of combustion, including particulate matter (PM) and oxides of nitrogen, as well as airborne allergens and endotoxin.

Can belly fat be the reason for your hair loss? Find out



Speaking to healthy hair growth. These IndiaToday.in, Dr Navya Handa, Consultant Dermatologist and Cosmetologist, Primus Super Speciality Hospital, New Delhi, said that having excess belly fat can be a sign of an unhealthy lifestyle, which can contribute to hair loss. "One of the main culprits behind hair loss is an imbalance in hormones. Excess belly fat can lead to higher levels of the hormone dihydrotestosterone (DHT), which can shrink hair follicles and cause hair to fall out," said Dr Navya Handa. As per the expert, an unhealthy diet and lifestyle can lead to nutrient deficiencies, such as iron and biotin, which are essential for

to healthy hair growth. These deficiencies can cause hair to become weak, brittle, and prone to falling out. Furthermore, stress is a common cause of hair loss, and having excess belly fat can be a sign of chronic stress. "High levels of stress can disrupt the hair growth cycle and lead to hair loss. Therefore, while belly fat may not be directly responsible for hair loss, it can be a sign of an unhealthy lifestyle that can contribute to hair loss. Maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, and managing stress levels can help promote healthy hair growth," said Dr Handa.

Palace hopping in God's own country



A visit to the palaces in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, gives an insight into the myriad opulence of the bygone eras



Ancient forts and palaces are often considered to be portholes for travelling back in time. Standing strong since centuries, they take us on a visual expedition through the many journeys that have shaped history. During a recent trip to Kerala, we decided to explore the lesser-known palaces of the Kingdom of Travancore. These palaces do not seem massive at first sight. However, they have several sections that spread out across acres of grounds. We get to see a cluster of smaller single or double-storeyed structures with gabled and tiled roofs. The architectural brilliance of the place, is reflected through intricate carvings and functionality of layout. Several centuries old, each palace tells

the story of the kingdom and its relations with other kingdoms within and outside India.

Kuthiramalika (150+ years old) Literally meaning the horse palace, it derives its name from the 122 smiling horse heads - visible from the palace's main entrance - carved into the beams that support the roof. Built in the 1840s by the then Maharaja of Travancore, Swathi Thirunal Balarama Varma, the palace is situated near the Padmanabhaswamy Temple. Given that you have adhered to the dress code of the temple, you can club your visit to both the places. Also called Puthen Malika, the palace's architecture boasts of the use of rosewood,

teakwood, marble and granite. While visiting the interiors, you're not allowed to wear footwear. So, it is hard to miss the glossy smoothness of some sections of the floor. The reason behind it is the use of a mixture made of egg whites, charcoal, and limestone, which keeps the floor cool even on hot days. The well-trained guides here take you on a systematic journey explaining to you the many sections of the palace. It is truly a travel back in time as we see the thrones, the ivory cradles, the palanquins, the arms and other artefacts, once used by the royals. Also known as Nedumangad Valiya Koyikkal Palace, it was the royal headquarters of the Perakam

dynasty. It was built in the 16th century for Queen Umayamma of the Venad Royal Family. Currently, the Kerala State Department of Archaeology is the custodian of the palace and maintains the Folklore and Numismatic museums inside the property. The former has a huge collection of ancient artefacts that played a vital role in the day-to-day activities of common people as well as the royals. One can see the rare chandravalayam, the small percussion instrument of Lord Rama, here. The latter has an exhaustive collection of coins and is a must-visit for those who collect them. The coins on display here reflect the ancient kingdom's trade relations with the Roman and Venetian dynasties, among others. Apart from guides, there are kiosks that tell you all about palace's history. Unlike our previous visits, the trip to Kilimanoor Palace, famous for being the birthplace of Raja Ravi Varma (RRV), was filled with surprises. To begin with, we couldn't spot a single tourist, and it was eerily quiet, except for the distant sounds of someone practising Carnatic vocals. The palace was devoid of any signs or guardsmen, too. Past the imposing gate, called padippura,

we found the source of the Carnatic music - a guru and shishya with a harmonium placed at the centre. The room turned out to be the former studio of RRV. Now, it was filled with his paintings and a lamp was lit in his honour, below a massive picture of him at the farthest end. The guru introduced himself as Rama Varma Thamburan, the sixth descendant of RRV, and apologised that he won't be able to let us in for "it was private property". However, as soon as he got to know that we had come from out of state, he showed us the palace grounds and explained the architecture. It resembled most of Kerala's residential homes from that era, adhering to the 'nalukettu', meaning beyond the imposing arch or the main gate, there were clusters of small and medium-sized houses, two ponds, wells, and sacred groves (kaavu). We were denied entry to the sacred forest, but we could witness the exterior architecture - there was a blue French-inspired building, commissioned by RRV, which clearly stood out - the ancient wooden carvings, and paintings. We also got to see one of the two ponds, which in a surreal manner seemed to reflect the stillness of time.

Janhvi Kapoor On Telugu Debut Devara: 'Had A Great Time On Sets'

Telugu actor Jr NTR and Janhvi Kapoor are all set to showcase their magical chemistry for the first time on screen in their upcoming film Devara: Part 1. In the latest update, the latter has hinted that she will be shooting another song with Jr NTR and she is very excited about the song. Bollywood star Janhvi Kapoor, who is gearing up for her Telugu debut with star Jr NTR, recently said that she is looking forward to shooting another song with the actor. She was asked if she would rather act with Amitabh Bachchan or do a dance number with Hrithik Roshan or Vicky Kaushal. The Dhadak actress said in an

interview with Mashable India, "I just shot a song with Jr NTR sir and I can't wait to shoot our next song together. I will choose that; I want to dance with Jr NTR." For the unversed, the duo reportedly shot the first song of the film in Thailand. Earlier, Janhvi had spoken at length about her role in Koratala Siva's Devara during the promotions of her film Mr & Mrs Mahi. Talking about her role, she said that it was very entertaining. Janhvi also revealed that she had a great time on the sets and was overwhelmed to see people doing their work with love, conviction and passion. The actress also said that she feels

lucky to have got this opportunity. The upcoming film Devara: Part 1, starring Jr NTR and Janhvi Kapoor in the lead roles, is directed by Koratala Siva. It will be the first part of a two-part film series. The action film stars Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan in the lead role of the antagonist. Devara: Part 1 also features brilliant actors like Prakash Raj, Srikanth, Shine Tom Chacko, Narain and many others in pivotal roles.

The song was originally scheduled to release on May 19 but was postponed to September 27, due to the general elections and upcoming post-production work.

Kajol Has Wrapped Up Major Stunt Scenes in Maharagni, Reveals Samyuktha: 'Action Done By Us'



18 years after starting her acting career, south actor Samyuktha is all set to make her Bollywood debut with Maharagni: Queen Of Queens, which also marks Kajol and Prabhu Deva's onscreen reunion 27 years after Minsara Kanavu (also known as Sapnay in Hindi). The teaser of Maharagni featured Kajol in a never-seen-before-action avatar beating up bad guys and making an entry like a quintessential and larger-than-life south hero. The film will also see Samyuktha pack some solid punches.

Sharing an update on Maharagni, Samyuktha exclusively tells News18 Showsha, "We've been shooting part-by-part. They've wrapped up a schedule that included major portions of Kajol

ma'am's action sequences. Another schedule that included my introduction and some car chase sequences featuring me have also been wrapped. We had a blast! They got an action director from abroad and the way they planned everything was wonderful. I feel so grateful." While 95 percent of the film shoot is still pending, Samyuktha is thrilled that she already got the opportunity to film some scenes with Kajol and Naseeruddin Shah. So, was she nervous about the same? "If your co-stars are cool, good to talk to and ready to strike up conversations, it's always nice. We had a photoshoot with all three of us and it was really fun!" she says. The Bheemla Nayak and Vaathi actor lauds her senior co-

actors for putting in the effort to make her feel comfortable. Sharing an anecdote, she remarks, "With Naseeruddin sir, I felt like I was interacting with my own grandfather (laughs). During the shoot, he was to hold a glass of wine and he began explaining to me how 'daaru' actually means medicine. Since he was freely talking to me, I could be myself. It was only when I took a step back and took a moment that I realised where I'm and who I was working with." She further adds, "Kajol ma'am was helping me on the side with cues when I was shooting for my close-ups. It was really lovely of her. I was tense not because of them but because I wanted to get my Hindi dialect right.



When Rajesh Khanna Asked 'Aap Jamme Rehte toh Amitabh Bachchan Superstar Na Hote': 'I'll Envy Him...



In a memorable throwback interview, late actor Rajesh Khanna addressed the popular notion that if he had stayed active in the film industry, Amitabh Bachchan might never have risen to superstardom. The statement, often debated among fans and critics alike, surfaced during a conversation about the trajectory of Bollywood's iconic stars. Rajesh Khanna, who worked with Amitabh Bachchan in the classic film Anand, shared his thoughts with Lehren, emphasising the role of fate. Reflecting on Amitabh's journey from their collaboration on Anand to his superstardom, Khanna extended his heartfelt congratulations to Big B. "I would

envy him because achieving this status and success is truly a matter of pride, not just for him but for the entire industry, for us, and for the public as well," Khanna added. "Khair jo jiski kismat hai aur jo jiska kaam hai, ye toh upar wale ki marzi hoti hai. Main toh ye kehna chaahunga jab unhone mere saath 'Anand' mein kaam shuru kiya aur aaj iss mukaam par pahuche, main bahut hi unko mubarakbaad dunga. I'll be happy for him and I'll envy him ki iss mukaam par pahuchna ye kamiyaabi haasil karna bahut hi garv ki baat hai, sirf unke liye hi nahi par industry ke liye bhi, humare liye bhi aur janta ke liye bhi," Khanna said.

9 possible running mates Kamala Harris could pick

By **KIERRA FRAZIER, HAILEY FUCHS and HEIDI PRZYBYLA**

The race to be Kamala Harris' running mate has already started.

Moments after President Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential contest and endorsed his vice president on Sunday, speculation began swirling over who would be Kamala Harris' running mate. Some Democrats started floating their preferred picks. Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, for instance, "would be an excellent choice" to share the ticket, said Philadelphia Democratic Party chair and former Rep. Bob Brady. Govs. Andy Beshear of Kentucky and Gov. Roy Cooper of North Carolina are both being considered as running mates, according to a person familiar with the conversations. And a Democratic strategist close to the White House said that Sen. Mark Kelly (D-Ariz.) is also under consideration. The people were granted anonymity to speak freely about the new political dynamic.

"The question is: who can beat Trump in their home state?" said the Democratic strategist close to the White House. The strategist noted that Kelly, who easily won his reelection in a state Biden carried four years ago, is being eyed for his unique biography, having flown combat missions in the Navy and commanded the International Space Station as an astronaut. His wife, former Rep. Gabby Giffords, has become a hero to grassroots Democratic organizations fighting gun violence after she was a victim of it at a campaign rally for her reelection. The attack left her severely injured. "The good thing is she's got a lot of unbelievable options," the strategist said of Harris.

A number of names have been floated and all of them spoke out in support of Biden's decision to step down — and even some are already voicing support of Harris as the nominee.

Here's a snapshot of potential vice presidential candidates and what they said after Biden's historic decision on Sunday. Pennsylvania Gov. Josh



Shapiro, 51, has served as governor since 2023 and prior to that, he was Pennsylvania's attorney general since 2017, county commissioner and state representative. If Harris were to pick Shapiro, it could bring in some extra votes from a swing state that Democrats desperately need to hold if they want to hold onto the White House.

"President Biden is a patriot who has served our country honorably in the Senate, as Vice President, and as one of the most consequential presidents in modern history," Shapiro said on X.

Shapiro also vowed to support Harris as the nominee on Sunday and called for members of his party to unite behind her.

"I've known Kamala Harris for nearly two decades — we've both been prosecutors, we've both stood up for the rule of law, we've both fought for the people and delivered results," he said in a statement on X. "Kamala Harris is a patriot worthy of our support."

Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly, 60, has served as a senator since 2020 and prior to that was a NASA astronaut and a Navy combat pilot. He's married to former Rep. Gabby Giffords and represents a key battleground state. When he beat incumbent Republican Martha McSally four years ago in a special election for former Sen. John McCain's seat, he became the first Democrat to hold the seat since 1962. He won reelection two years later easily.

As a border state Democrat, he has more authority to speak on migration issues — a big plus as Republicans attack Harris over the border.

"I couldn't be more confident that Vice President @KamalaHarris is the right person to defeat Donald Trump and lead our country into the future," Kelly said on X. "She has my support for the nomination, and Gabby and I will do everything we can to elect her President of the United States."

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, 52, has served as governor since 2019. Prior to that, she served in the Michigan House of Representatives and in the Michigan Senate. She's been considered a potential 2028 successor since she won the gubernatorial race in 2022 by nearly 11 points in a battleground state.

Michigan was a key part of Biden's pathway to the presidency in 2020, after former Sec. of State Hillary Clinton narrowly lost the state in 2016. She also reportedly threw her support behind Harris Sunday.

"President Biden is a great public servant who knows better than anyone what it takes to defeat Donald Trump," Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said on X. "My job in this election will remain the same: doing everything I can to elect Democrats and stop Donald Trump, a convicted felon whose agenda of raising families' costs, banning abortion nationwide, and abusing the power of the White House to settle his own scores is completely wrong for Michigan." Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear

Beshear, 46, was elected governor in 2019 and recently won reelection in November in a five-point victory, a significant win for Democrats in a deeply red state. Beshear was also elected the state's attorney general in 2015. Beshear, who has moderate bonafides, also comes from Kentucky political royalty. His father, Steve Beshear, also beat the odds as a Democrat in the overwhelmingly red state when he won the governorship in 2007 and 2011.

"While his decision today could not have been easy, it is in the best interest of our country, and our party. I want to thank him for his leadership, kindness, and for a successful presidency that got big, important things done," Beshear said on X.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, 67, has served as North Carolina's governor since 2017 and is prevented from running again due to term limits. Prior to that he served as the state's attorney general for 16 years and served in North Carolina's Senate and House. Rep. Jim Clyburn has floated Cooper's name among the next generation of Democratic leaders. Clyburn told POLITICO, "He is a guy that I would keep my eyes on, if I were you guys in the media."

After Trump won North Carolina in 2020 by less than two percentage points, the Biden campaign has moved to target North Carolina with the hopes that it could become a swing state once again.

"President Biden has cemented

his place among our nation's finest Presidents," Cooper said on X. "When our democracy faced danger, President Biden stood strong as the rarest type of leader who could help us forge ahead with a vision to repair our country's soul."

California Gov. Gavin Newsom

Newsom, 56, was a prominent surrogate for Biden and has been governor since 2019. Prior to that, he served as San Francisco's mayor and then the lieutenant governor of California.

Newsom is often discussed as a potential presidential candidate but would face a huge hurdle serving as Harris' running mate for one simple reason: They both hail from California. Under the 12th Amendment, Electoral College members vote for the president and vice president but one of them "shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves." So that means if Harris picked Newsom as a running mate, they would forgo all of California's 54 Electoral College votes.

"President Biden has been an extraordinary, history-making president — a leader who has fought hard for working people and delivered astonishing results for all Americans," Newsom said on X. "He will go down in history as one of the most impactful and selfless presidents."

Newsom has already endorsed Harris, writing on X that "no one is better to prosecute the case against Donald Trump's dark vision."

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker

Pritzker, 59, is seen as a possible presidential candidate in part for his standing in the party and his ability to self-fund a campaign. His family started the Hyatt hotel empire. He's in his second term as governor and before that was active in Democratic fundraising circles.

Pritzker has been a pit bull in attacking Trump, a practice that started during his first term as governor trying to get the former president to act quicker on delivering personal protective equipment during the pandemic.

Kamala Harris: Pioneering Paths to Power in American Politics

By Susmita Ghosh

In the ever-evolving landscape of American politics, few stories have captured the imagination and scrutiny of the public quite like the ascent of Kamala Harris. Starting from her early days as a district attorney to her groundbreaking role as the first female, first Black, and first South Asian Vice President of the United States, Harris has navigated a trail marked by challenges, triumphs, and a ruthless search of change.

The Early Career Curve

Kamala Harris's journey to prominence began in California, where she served as District Attorney of San Francisco and later as Attorney General of the state. These roles not only established her reputation as a tough and savvy prosecutor but also provided her with the necessary experience to traverse the complications of law and public policy.

Harris's tenure as California's Attorney General was particularly notable for her support on issues like criminal justice reform, environmental protection, and consumer rights. Her realistic approach to supremacy and her ability to tackle rooted problems earned her respect as well across party lines, help set the stage for her national ambitions.

Breaking Barriers as Vice President

In 2020, Kamala Harris made history by becoming the first woman, first Black person, and first South Asian American to be elected Vice President of the United States. Her selection as Joe Biden's running mate was seen as a strategic move to unite the Democratic Party and appeal to a diverse electorate.

As Vice President, Harris has played a vital role in shaping the Biden administration's policies, particularly on issues like immigration, voting rights, and economic recovery. Her leadership style, characterized by a combination of empathy and pragmatism, has been instrumental in crossing the challenges facing the nation, including the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic aftermath.

Challenges and Criticisms

Despite her trailblazing achievements, Kamala Harris has faced criticism from various quarters. Some critics argue that she has not gone far enough on certain advanced issues, while others question her record as a prosecutor and her approach to criminal justice reform.

Moreover, Harris's political future has been the subject of assumption, with experts and

observers closely watching her every move. As the presumptive heir to the Democratic Party's leadership, Harris faces the daunting task of balancing the expectations of various constituencies while staying true to her own principles and vision for the country.

Looking Ahead

As Kamala Harris continues to chart her path forward, her journey serves as a testament to

the evolving nature of American politics and the enduring significance of diversity and representation in leadership. Her rise to prominence has not only shattered glass ceilings but has also inspired a new generation of leaders to aim higher office. In a nutshell, Kamala Harris's rise to the top levels of American politics is a testament to her flexibility, determination, and steady commitment to public

services. While challenges undoubtedly lie ahead, Harris's journey serves as a reminder of the transformative power of leadership and the limitless possibilities that expect those who dare to dream.

As the political landscape continues to evolve, one thing remains certain: Kamala Harris's impact on American politics will be felt for generations to come.

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In charts: Key takeaways from Union Budget 2024-25

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget for the Financial Year 2024-25 on July 23, 2024, her seventh consecutive Budget presentation. This is the first Budget during Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's third term in office.

People of India have reinforced their faith in the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and re-elected it for the third term, she said, while presenting the Budget in Lok Sabha. India's economic growth continues to shine while the global economy is still in the grip of policy uncertainty, Sitharaman added.

The country's inflation continues to be stable and is moving towards 4 per cent, and core inflation stands at 3.1 pc.

The finance minister announced nine priorities in the Union Budget 2024-25 for generating ample opportunities in the economy. The nine priorities include productivity, jobs, social justice, urban development, energy security, infrastructure, innovation and reforms.

Here are the charts that show key numbers from the Union Budget 2024-25:

Receipts and Expenditure

The Finance Minister said that the Revised Estimate of the total receipts other than borrowings is ₹32.07 lakh crore. The Revised Estimate of the total expenditure is Rs 48.21 lakh crore. The government has retained ₹11.11 lakh crore for capital expenditure, not changing from the Interim Budget 2024-



24 presented back in February

Rupee comes from

Borrowings and other liabilities account for the largest avenue from where the Budget money comes, followed by income tax, GST & other taxes, and corporation tax.

Rupee goes to

When it comes to expenditure, the highest amount goes towards States' share of taxes and duties - 21%. In the Interim budget presented earlier this year,

the major share of expenditure was marked to paying interest and the money given to the states, accounting for 20 per cent each of the total expenditure.

State-wise allocation of central taxes and duties

The Union Government had ₹1247211.28 crores

of Union taxes and duties to distribute to the states. In statement showing the state-wise distribution of net proceeds of Union Taxes and Duties for Budget Estimates 2024-25, Uttar Pradesh receives the highest share at around 18% with ₹223737.23 crores.

Major expenditures

This year's total budget expenditure amounts to 48.21 lakh crore rupees. Of this, a large part went to central sector schemes and other central sector expenditure - 30.07

lakh crore. Central sector scheme expenditure involves expenditure related to economic services, general services, subsidies, social services and others.

Other central expenditure involves interest payments, payments to autonomous bodies and others. Establishment expenditure involves the centre's expenses for paying salaries, pensions and other payments. Finance commission grants and other transfers fall under transfers to states.

Allocation to ministries

The government allocated an outlay of ₹6,21,940.85 crore for defence for FY25, which is the highest among all the Union ministries. The total allocation comes out as approximately 12.90 per cent of the total budget of Union of India. In the interim budget, the outlay was pegged at ₹6,21,540.85 crore.

Railways

The allocation to the ministry of railways in FY25 from the total expenditure budget of Rs. 48,20,512.88 lakh crores, is Rs. 2,55,393 lakh crores which is around 5.3% of the total expenditure. On viewing the railway budget at a glance, the net revenue in FY '25 is budgeted to be at ₹2,800 crores, as compared to the revised estimate of ₹2,000 crores in FY '24. While the earnings from freights in FY '25 is estimated (₹1,80,000) to be similar to the previous year's budgeted estimate of ₹1,79,500, the earnings from passengers is estimated to be ₹80,000 crores in FY '25, which is around 9.5% higher than previous year's revised estimate of ₹73,000 crores, as shown in the graphs below.

Ask NAPCA

Congress recently made some big changes to Medicare's Part D benefit through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). We selected some questions about these big changes and would like to share the information.

<Q1> What Are the Changes to Medicare Part D?

The new rules are designed to make it easier for seniors to afford their prescription drugs. For the first time, the federal government negotiates prices on certain drugs covered through Medicare. The law establishes annual limits on your out-of-pocket spending for all drugs, with a special cap for insulin. Beneficiaries are also able to spread out their cost sharing throughout the plan year, and you no longer have to pay out of pocket for adult vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control.

<Q2> How will my drug costs be affected?

First, if you use insulin, your spending is now capped at \$35 per month. This is great news for many



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seniors with diabetes, especially those in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, who are more likely to have diabetes.

Second, starting 2025, there will be a \$2,000 annual limit on how much you pay for all prescription drugs covered through Medicare. This means that no matter how many medications you need, your total yearly cost won't go over \$2,000. Note that the annual limit is \$8,000 in 2024.

Third, starting next year, you can choose to spread your drug costs evenly over the year instead of paying large amounts all at once. This option could make it easier to manage your budget if you're on a fixed income. But remember, you need to opt-in for this option -- it won't happen automatically. If you have questions, we

encourage you to reach out directly to your Medicare drug plan insurer.

<Q3> Can I receive more assistance with my Medicare prescription drug costs?

Medicare beneficiaries may qualify for even more savings through the Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) program, also called Extra Help program. In 2024, Extra Help is expanded so that beneficiaries who earn between 135% and 150% of the federal poverty level and meet the resource limit requirements can receive full Extra Help benefits. In other words, if your monthly income is up to \$1,903 (or up to \$2,575.00 for a couple), you will pay \$0 for your Medicare drug plan premium and plan deductible, and a reduced amount for both generic and

brand-name drugs. These limits are updated annually.

<Q4> I have heard that the new legislation may impact some of the medications I take -- is that true?

Some experts are worried that the price-setting rules of the IRA could have unintended consequences -- like slowing down the development of new drugs, especially pills that are easy to take at home, and making it harder for seniors to access medicines they currently take. A balanced approach to implementing the law could help mitigate these access and affordability challenges. For instance, Medicare officials could monitor insurers to make sure they don't put certain brand name drugs into higher cost categories -- which forces seniors to pay more out-of-pocket. Giving the same level of protection to pills that injectable drugs receive would encourage drug companies to keep developing both types of medicines. This will help ensure seniors can access the best treatments for their personal health needs.

The Great Immigration Experiment

The mass intake of foreigners has decisively failed. Can we decolonize America?

You are living in an experiment.

In March of this year, the foreign-born or immigrant population in the U.S.—both legal and illegal—hit record highs.

51.6 million people in the U.S. are foreign-born

That is more than 15 percent of the population of this country—higher than at any time in our nation's history.

Many consider these immigrants to be “workers,” but more than half of the immigrants who arrived since 2022 are not employed.

And of the approximately 2.5 million recent arrivals who are not employed only about 8 percent say they are actively looking for work.

Immigrants make up over a fifth of residents in California, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and Florida.

But less populous states are also seeing unprecedented immigration growth, with immigrant populations growing by 40 percent or more in Delaware, North and South Dakota, and West Virginia.

An experiment is a test to



discover if something works.

The numbers I've just described are a national experiment. And the American people are the guinea pigs.

We know this is an experiment—a test, for which we don't know the outcome—because this level of immigration is new and different in at least three ways. First, the scale. The amount of immigration we are experiencing is unlike anything our country has experienced before. The U.S. is home to more international migrants than any other country in the world, and more than the next four countries on the list combined. And in fact, no country in modern history has experienced numbers like these.

Second, the speed. Nine million aliens entered the country in all of the 1990s; now 10 million have entered during just the first three years of the Biden administration, with 58 percent of that increase coming as illegal immigration. This growth is far greater than even our government predictions would expect. The federal census data from 2020 predicted that the foreign-born population of the U.S. would not hit 15 percent until 2033. Yet it is 2024 and we have already surpassed that prediction.

Third, this wave of immigration is unprecedented in its diversity. Previous waves of

immigration tended to come from particular parts of the world, that made absorption easier. But now, immigrants come from every corner of the globe, speak every language and dialect, worship every kind of god, and reflect every culture that exists on the planet.

And all of this matters because immigration can only be sustained when it can be assimilated. This is not a new idea—our Founders discussed and agreed on this point. As Jefferson put it: immigrants “should distribute themselves sparsely among the natives for quicker amalgamation.”

Consider the practical implications of immigration. Immigrants are more likely to be low-skilled compared to native-born Americans. According to one study, nearly a third of adult immigrants to the United States lack even a high school diploma. And about half of immigrants to the U.S. have limited—if any—English proficiency.

So imagine a newly-arrived immigrant to this country, who is low-skilled, has fewer than 12

years of education, speaks little (if any) English, and generally knows little about American culture, government, our Constitution, or their legal rights. Of course, that person can succeed here, and there are inspiring stories of those who have. But that person cannot succeed without a lot of help. Education, language remediation, instruction about citizenship and history, a supportive and high-trust community that is capable of conveying and reinforcing this information; plus job training; public assistance; housing assistance; healthcare assistance...the list goes on. Now multiply that one person by tens of millions.

We do not have a system for providing the help that millions of immigrants need to succeed in this country. And of course, a government confused about basic biology and incapable of fulfilling basic functions, like holding free and fair elections, is not well-equipped to assimilate tens of millions of foreign nationals.

With Biden out, Vance may be the wrong pick for Trump

BY Jamie Dettmer

Could Republican vice-presidential candidate JD Vance turn out to be the entirely wrong pick as Donald Trump's running mate?

U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw from the White House race may well turn 2024 into the Year of the Woman—namely, that of Vice President Kamala Harris who, armed with the outgoing president's endorsement, can now be considered the front-runner to replace him atop the Democratic ticket. Truth is, if Harris is successful in getting the nod from the Democratic Party, much of the subsequent election campaign is likely to domestically focus on abortion and women's rights. Trump already has a problem with women voters—polls have consistently shown that the proportion of women planning to vote for him this November is smaller than those who did in 2020. And Vance has nothing to

offer Trump on this score—quite the reverse, he risks compounding his boss's problem.

Presumably, Trump chose Vance as his VP candidate largely to fire up



the MAGA base and boost the Republican ticket in Rust Belt states. But that was a choice made when Biden was still heading the Democratic ticket. Now that he's not, Vance may well become a liability.

Vance's strict anti-abortion positions

of the past, and a string of highly contentious statements he's made about divorce, implying that women trapped in abusive marriages should remain

married for the sake of the kids, aren't likely to be forgotten. In 2021, he suggested ending marriages that were “maybe even violent” as selfish. “This is one of the great tricks that the sexual revolution pulled on the American populace,” he said.

“Making it easier for people to shift spouses like they change their underwear.”

He's also a strict pro-natalist, characterizing those who don't have kids as “childless cat ladies,” and suggesting that people with children should be given additional votes. He has taken aim at childcare subsidies as “class war against normal people,” despite—or maybe because—such subsidies provide women with young kids more opportunities to work or go to school and be independent.

Furthermore, Vance has only recently moderated his position on abortion to fall into line with Trump, who argues that abortion should be left up to states to decide individually. But in 2022, when he was an Ohio Senate candidate, Vance said on a podcast that he would like to see a national abortion ban with no exceptions—even for rape or incest. That was before Trump's Supreme Court appointees overturned Roe

v. Wade, the landmark 1973 decision that protected the right to have an abortion. And Vance has even argued that federal action is needed to stop women seeking terminations traveling from states where abortion is illegal to states where it's allowed.

Women currently comprise 51 percent of the voting-age population in the U.S., and they've been making their vote felt since Roe v. Wade was overturned in June 2022. In the midterm elections held soon after the Supreme Court decision, it was the women's vote that was credited with saving Democrats from electoral doom and denying Republicans some of the big wins they were hoping for. Democrats put abortion on the ballot, and Harris was front and center of that effort—involving activist groups like Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America and EMILY's List—framing the election as one about the erosion of women's reproductive rights.

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Why Biden finally quit



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